

Kerouac, the Buddha, and the Anti-Hero: the Making of a Post-Modern Myth

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"The intellect of man is forced to choose
Perfection of the life or of the work"

With the above words, William Butler Yeats, one of the first to prophetically articulate the post-modern vision of a de-centered culture ("things fall apart - the center cannot hold"), frames an ongoing, pressing affliction to the post-enlightenment Western imagination. Can the great works truly educate and edify if they are read without the presence of someone who embodies their wisdom? Can the canonizing of texts and authors, without a corresponding living personality as paradigmatic example, be anything more than an academic parlor game?

Long standing traditions of subject-object dualism suggest that what is valuable is to be found outside, to be acquired, accumulated; but not embodied. Romanticism suggests the opposite, that what is valuable is inside, that it can be deeply felt, but not necessarily enacted on the stage of the world. Thoreau, on the other hand, declared that he had set out into the woods in order to "*live*," to "*live deliberately*," and his literary activity sought to chronicle his experiments in living, as short-lived and partial as they might have been.¹ Thus Rick Fields (who's *How the Swans Came to the Lake* chronicles the emergence of Buddhist traditions in America) declared Thoreau to be a "proto American Buddhist."²

Jean Paul Sartre, the activist philosopher, also trying to tie his life and the work together, spoke of literature as reflective, as the mirror through which we see ourselves. But the figure and the ground, the life and the work, can blur all too easily, Sartre spent the later end of his life "grounded," hawking left-wing newspapers on the street. And although most people were not buying, the thousands who followed his funeral casket through Paris attested to the nobility of his philosophical-activist effort.

In classical Hindu and Buddhist Lineage traditions, on the other hand, you cannot read a work without engaging someone invested in that work: not necessarily the author of the work, but a person who is believed to embody the work in their life. And thus, despite the post-modern "death of the author," I choose Kerouac: not as man or a literary figure, not even in terms of the profound and chaotically convoluted body of his work, but rather as a personal icon that continues to engage the contemporary imagination.

When I was a graduate student, I remember my excitement at being invited to attend a post-poetry reading dinner with the senior beat poets, Corso, Ginsberg, Snyder. And I was surprised to discover that they were just like ordinary folks: Snyder impatiently waiting for his Curry, Ginsberg chain-smoking and declaring to a guest Pakistani poet that "America is doomed," Corso reminiscing about getting naked and "flashing poetry." But Kerouac, as he told the interviewer Ben Hecht, did not fully share the views of his confreres. His political viewpoint was not the important issue, however, and neither was his social persona. Often, Gary Snyder remarked, Kerouac would come into a party, slap everyone on the back like an extroverted football hero, and then retreat into a corner and remain silent for the evening. After all, tough guys don't dance (and neither do introverts). But afterward, he

would repeat entire conversations verbatim, recalling the nuances, idiosyncrasies, and speech-cadences of those present. Kerouac in this way chronicled the lingo of his community, but he ventured further. He tried to portray embodiments of its idealized disposition.

Kerouac's own life ended tragically and his work did as well, unfinished and ill-considered, although this too may be an essential aspect of his mythic allure. What I want to explore here, though, is that tragedy in the wider context of his deeply heroic sensibility and what it may have offered to the prevailing culture, for the "cult of the individual" is ironically a deeply collective phenomenon, and it therefore demands an audience.

Kerouac often conceived of his work as an ongoing heroic saga; the final version to model that of Marcel Proust, with all of his works strung together as the autobiographical *Duluoz* legend, including *Vanities of Duluoz*, appropriately named considering Kerouac's loss of faith in both his own heroic saga and that of America's as well. Nevertheless Kerouac's "heroic" is essentially a religious one, even if in a de-ritualized civil context, and there is something particularly resonant about the heroic icon of Kerouac that makes it endure and expand through specific interstices of the contemporary imagination, more than Ginsberg and the other Beats even. This is something that I discovered the first time I taught an "*East-West Encounters*" course at Columbia. We read Emerson, Thoreau, Whitman, Ginsberg, and others. Students wrote about them, and discussed them, but Kerouac was not envisioned like the others. Students spoke of "Emerson," "Thoreau," "Burroughs," "Snyder," and "Ginsberg," but when referring to Kerouac, some of them instinctively called him "Jack." They often identified with him in a very different way. I, too, remember the first time I read *Maggie Cassidy*, lying in my room in ethnic-immigrant Bensonhurst. I felt like, "That's me and my own high school." Unlike Thoreau, the ascetic man-apart, Emerson, the frail-constituted upper-echelon transcendent orator, Burroughs the expatriate trickster of dope, and Ginsberg, the cathartic non-conformist, Kerouac remained as truly American as he could be, holding with mom and apple-pie to the end, this despite his French-Canadian background.

Therefore, he is an accessible icon, a world icon as well as an American-hipster one. From the French bookseller who told Ann Charters, Kerouac's most popular biographer, "That man Kerouac is a model for the young," to my friend Peter Theiss, a successful German health-food and products entrepreneur, who still raves about the Kerouac he read thirty years ago (and who has made sure that his own son reads *On The Road*), Kerouac seems to show up everywhere. He is perhaps not quite like Elvis, but with over four and a half million web sites attributed to his name, and over three million copies of *On the Road* in print, he may be moving in that direction. Indeed, according to Ginsberg (circa 1983) Kerouac is more widely taught in French university literature departments than in the States.³

Kerouac also emerged in the American Buddhist imagination as a *dharma*-hero. One of the reasons I was drawn to this inquiry was my intrigue and sometime bewilderment at the way that a certain segment of the American Buddhist community has canonized Kerouac (articles by or about Kerouac appear regularly in *Buddhist Review*, *Tricycle Magazine*). Why Kerouac? He did not meditate in any sustained or serious way, he renounced Buddhism at the end of his life for Christianity, and he was part of no lineage. But Kerouac endures, the iconic Kerouac of *On The Road* and *Dharma Bums* in particular, for very few people have read his other works, some of which are arguably more interesting, and others of which are certainly more Buddhist. It is through the popular works and attendant media hype, however, that the "Beat Icon" was generated.

So part of my project here is to try and understand this phenomenon. Another part is to explore Kerouac within a context of a certain line of American culture heroes (and thus to see how Buddha roots into this land and morphs into appropriate forms). I like to think of them as sacrificial (albeit still secular) figures, young males who challenge the prevailing culture, who - in their own way - overthrow the tables of the money changers in the temple, and who invariably die young. They take on various forms, like James Dean on a motorcycle, or Kurt Cobain behind a microphone declaring, "I hate myself and I want to die," or the oft-rumored resurrected Tupac Shakur. Kerouac is a major part of this lineage, a lineage that has yet to be institutionally recognized (unless you put Graceland in this category, and I am still somewhat hesitant to make that leap).

As a student of Hindu and Buddhist traditions, I also have a natural inclination to research the "Eastern Romance" of Kerouac, to examine it in terms of an unprecedented religious pluralism that has emerged in America, and to perhaps see Kerouac as riding upon this wave. But as far as the "Eastern Romance and the "East/West encounter" is concerned, it is old news. It has already happened (the Parliament of World Religions took place on the shores of Lake Michigan in 1893), and while the dynamics of such hybridization are not only fascinating and can yield insights about how religious cultures are formed, there is another, and perhaps more powerful dynamic at work here. I am tempted to cast this phenomenon within the frame of "redemptive ventures in America." But, I do not want to lend too much credence to projects of categorization. For the current conglomeration of contingencies, multi-cultural formations, and mass-media leveling is unclassifiable. A more appropriate method of meeting this curious icon may be through its own sensibility, as a fragmented poetic response, a response as non-absolutist as the open road might be, coupled with the repetition of *koans*, those unanswerable conundrums that stick in your craw. In this case, one *koan*, in particular, seems appropriate, one that was incorporated into the *Ch'an* Chinese Buddhist canon: "Why did Bodhidharma come to China?" And I would slightly recast it, as Joshu Sasaki Roshi did to traditional Japanese *koans* by asking American students (for example) "How does Buddha drive a car?" Within this frame, let me ask, "Why did the Buddha-dharma come to Kerouac?" After all, in both China and America, the Buddha had to surreptitiously enter and attach himself to an already established culture, not an easy task, "like holding a lotus to a rock!" it is said. And therefore, more pointedly, how did this lotus of Kerouac manage to emerge and thrive?⁴

There is no definitive answer of course, so my initial response will be given in the conditional (a tense that no self-respecting Roshi would accept, and which I shall try to somewhat change by the end of this work). Perhaps the Buddha came to the West to help underwrite the ethos of secular enlightenment. How? Through popular appearances in books and movies, through redemption hinted at through education, through the college that is a shadow of the ancient monastic tradition, through a "balanced" and aesthetic accumulation of goods, or through the various post-puritan projects of "feeling good," redemption, but certainly not through a redeeming divine other: to paraphrase a number of contemporary Buddhists, "Let's be sensible and keep God out of this." The Buddha, then, has everything to do with Kerouac's redemptive vision, because with the loss of an agreed upon Absolute or symbol for the Absolute, and with the loss of a collective sense of sin and its concomitant need for redemption, there was little place for overt religious discourse in American letters - at least not through the front door.

And while a scholar like Jonathan Z. Smith makes a strong point by calling the Humanities quasi-religious enterprises, things took a new turn when the Buddha came upon

the scene. For the Buddha himself refused to discuss the existence of God and likewise refused to entertain the concept of a transcendental law-giver or a "Holy Other," not to deny these realities necessarily, but to shift the locus of discourse from metaphysics to the imminent awareness of suffering, its cause, and its ending. Thus, the embrace of the Buddha, as I shall describe, opened the dharma-door of secular enlightenment discourse. Through Kerouac, we bring "God" back into the book, through an immensely panoramic and yet immanent sense of illumination in which dogs bark, cigarette smoke spreads throughout the room, fans whir, and sirens wail.

Unlike the implacable Buddha, Bodhidharma, the first *Ch'an* (which became *Zen* in Japan) patriarch, is depicted as an antihero. His sneering face, covered by immense bushy eyebrows, is envisioned as staring blankly at the wall instead of humanistic-like at his students. Entering Chinese territory, he is said to have greeted the waiting Emperor Wu and his retinue by wearing his shoes on his head. Perhaps this was an appropriate *upaya*, a skillful means for entering a realm that would not welcome what it could not understand, even if it needed that very thing desperately. The Buddha, through Bodhidharma, finds a habitable niche in the cult of the anti-hero and grafts himself compassionately onto the cultural forms that are somehow able to receive him.

The anti-hero is also an essential character in the play of post-modern mythology, appearing as the dark, pathos-ridden cynic, the hipster, the gangster, and the natural-born killer - in chronological and descending progression. For in an age of institutionalized dementia, perhaps only an anti-hero can speak to anybody. And how appropriate a response to the age of Eisenhower and McCarthy was Dean Moriarty and Cody (the portrayals of Neal Cassady and Japhy Ryder) - these are the principle heroes of Kerouac's more popular works, heroes that play in reflecting pairs much like Joyce's *Ulysses* and Leopold Bloom or Ferdinand Celine with his companion, "Robinson" in *Voyage au Bout de la Nuit*. These heroes in t-shirts and jeans are not magnified or highlighted through the shadows of Greek or other myths. Their grandeur is achieved through pronounced attention to their own moment, in their own time, generating a particular kind of hagiography: neither a Buddha, prevailing over all conditions, nor a Jesus suffering while saving man, but a wild, bucking-bronco-crazy-car-driving sociopath and a fully accredited Zen-lunatic. Perhaps these may be seen as therapeutic images of some sort, alternatives to prevailing "high-noon" narratives of the man in uniform. Both the edge-city, Moriarty, and the natural lover-poet, Ryder, are large, mythic personas moving through the American imagination. And the Beats were quite aware of the power of myth. Perhaps Ginsberg knew it best when he carefully instigated the myth of the Beats themselves by placing Corso, Ferlinghetti, and other members of his boys club in a pose for a cover of *Life Magazine*. *Life* did for the Beats what it did for "Papa Hemingway;" it created a popular icon, which helped "beat" become a household word.

Visions of a New Heroic

Kerouac's characters, while itinerant and sloppy, manage to radiate in their own mythic dimensions. They move through a Neptunian glow, reflecting perhaps the high from the particular type of drug used to inspire every one of his books.⁵ His figures are imbued with stardom - contemporary celebrity as the sparkling reflection of divinity - manifest in the star-dust of Hollywood or as a hometown hero made good on the local news. Myths amplify experience and overtake their authorial origins, developing a life of their own. Breaking free from the covers of books, from historical or

personal origins, they evolve in their own peculiar ways, sometimes up and sometimes down. And mythical figures like super-nova stars can undergo a breathtaking expanse right before they implode and expel their remains. And the base, game-level drama of cold war heroes, Nixon and Khrushchev in the kitchen, and the perfectly bland man in the grey flannel suit, may have been just that; images that had fallen flat, along with the World's Fair vision of a great, big, beautiful tomorrow homogeneity of the American commercialized landscape. And fallen with them, were their myths of the *polis*, of quasi-religious identifications with the state, branching the spectrum from fascism to American Civil-Religion.

Old stars, like old gods, disperse, but they may seed new ones who often remain locked in the battles of the previous era. The myths that emerged through Kerouac were not so much new as they were familiar forms recast, acting like mutated variants of the cowboy on-the-range. They were known and were thus attractive, but they were strangely unfamiliar as well, for they retreated from the civil sphere of communal concern into a new theater of personal experience.

The new American man (for Kerouac trafficked exclusively in men) stands alone, like the old frontier hero, "horse exchanged for a hot car," pointing the way toward the cult of experience.⁶ This heroic "turning away" from the civil-social-normative world is seen in various cultural hagiographies: The "Old Man, Master, Babe" Lao Tzu, leaving his post as court historian, dashing off the *Dao de Jing* (a text which some scholars view as a response to a repressive regime) at the request of the gate-keeper, and tossing it behind him as he exits the social sphere, comes to mind. More recent, and perhaps more germane is the late Timothy Leary, an heir of sorts to Kerouac (although Kerouac, after taking LSD, declared it to be part of a Russian plot against America). Leary, unlike college graduation speakers exhorting students from their podiums to be civically engaged and make their voice heard, exhorted his audience to follow the intelligence of the majority of Americans who had stopped voting. For Leary, lower voting roles were seen as a true sign of progress, since people were now realizing en masse that the real life-drama was not taking place in Washington, D.C., but inside of their own nervous systems.

Whether Kerouac's new hero-gods rose as a result of deep depression and hopelessness in the face of homogeneous suburban dementia - the world on its way to becoming a series of fast-food chains, with war or mock-war as the only outlet for a fear-based populace - or whether it was just their time to return, Kerouac's hero walks away from social engagements to go on his own individual journey, and he never really finds a way back.

Dean Moriarty

Kerouac's mythic figures are so enticing because they are all-American, even when cloaked in Buddhist drag. And of all his heroes, none has been more enduring than Dean Moriarty.

"Dean had never seen his mother's face. Every new girl, every new wife, every new child, was an addition to his bleak impoverishment." And where was his father? - old Bum Dean Moriarty the Tinsmith, riding freights, working as a scullion in railroad cookshacks, stumbling down, crashing into wino alley nights, expiring on coal piles, dropping his yellowed teeth one by one into the gutters of the West..."⁷

Like celebrated heroes of old, Kerouac's hero has a miraculous birth of sorts. But he does not have to go through the separation stage of "leaving home," as the Buddha did for example, because he has never had one, or - as the old cowboy song says:

You ain't got no father, you ain't got no mother
You left them behind when you first did roam
You ain't got no sister, you ain't got no brother
You're just like a cowboy, a long way from home.⁸

Moriarty, a solitary from the beginning, is quickly raised to a mythical level. He is the "side-burned hero of the snowy west." Compared to Gene Autry, he is a "new kind of American saint." Like so many Americans, he has, in the words of Gary Snyder "inherited that taste for the limitless." Again Dean is not new, he typifies what Erik Erikson noted about the American character in the fifties:

"the individual must be able to convince himself that the next step is up to him and that no matter where he is staying or going he always has the choice of leaving, of turning in the opposite direction if he chooses to do so."⁹

In this sense Dean is an earlier variant of the Marlboro Man, described through the wild western mythology of heroic masculinity. His talents, like the knight's romantic medieval legends, Paul Collins writes, consist of horsemanship (in the form of the mastery of fast cars) and courtliness (in the form of chasing women).

Above all, however, Kerouac's hero is free to roam, and the road, which from Huck Finn to Walt Whitman heralds the call to adventure, is the heroic realm of America. Perhaps a step down from the chivalrous knight, Kerouac's hero is an embodiment of the migratory, the individualistic, the free-thinking, pure *puer*, for the road extends away from the city, from the state, and from society, and the boys club bond of brotherhood that is formed on the road tends to view women either as roadblocks, as "babes," or as "pure and off limits."

Dean exhibits the anti-heroic qualities of compulsiveness, pointless meandering, and egocentric disinterest in others. He is ready to sacrifice anyone and anything for his next impulse. He and Sal, described as "blood brothers" at one point - about as close as Kerouac would get to acknowledging any kind of homoerotic connection - move together like Tom Sawyer and Huck Finn, the archetypal twins banding together to leave home and everything that home entails, to stay forever young.¹⁰ The sociopath as hero is, however, a far cry from the likable Tom and Huck, and although Sal cannot remain with Dean, who only "thinks about what's hanging between his legs and how much money or fun he can get out of people before throwing them aside," he cannot forget him either. While he says Dean's "madness would lead me nowhere (*On the Road*, 107)," he is enthralled with it. Why? Because:

"Dean has the secret that we're all busting to find and it's splitting his head wide open, and if he goes mad don't worry, it won't be your fault but the fault of God." (*On The Road*, 161)

Dean remains Dean, a new American saint, the "holy Goof" because he has "It." "It" is what everyone is busting to find. And in an anti-heroic landscape, some people have "it" and some do not.

Civilized, self-important money-bagged white Americans don't have it. Blacks, Indians, and Jazz musicians do. Rollo Greb, the New Orleans musician god-figure has it, "he's never hung-up, he goes every direction, he lets it all out, he knows time, he has nothing to do but rock back and forth, Man, he's the end!"

Although Whites generally do not have it, Kerouac's heroes are not Blacks, Indians, or Jazz Musicians. They are semi-outcaste itinerant whites participating in a forlorn version of an anti-social, saintly wanderer archetype. Dean is detached: ultimately not even caring about his own body: his broken, infected, and partly amputated thumb remains unattended and wrapped in a white bandage. But although Dean is said to have what everyone else wants, his realm of adventure is ultimately reduced to pool halls, seedy tenements, and old banged up cars. He is heading headlong for an anti-heroic fate, a sacrifice of *élan* into manic movement, sociopathic irresponsibility, and loss. And the thumb, the broken phallus, the broken *puer* approaching the end of youth (Freud would have a field day with this), writes Kerouac, "became the symbol of Dean's final development."

"He no longer cared about anything (as before) but now he also *cared about everything in principle*; that is to say it was all the same to him and he belonged to the world and there was nothing he could do about it." The key word to notice here might be "principle," which abstracts "caring" out of the human realm. Whitman exhibited a similar bravado and universality, but ultimately, it was the personal (rather than the principle) that brought Whitman back into relationship with others, bandaging wounds in hospitals. Dean, on the other hand, maintaining his "over-vision" through excessive hyperbole and energy, becomes a tragic hero, holding on to his moment of *cleos* as the road winds down through some strange canyons and threatens to disappear all together, as the Buddha said all adventures must.

The Road

The road always looms ahead, inviting incessant forward motion; it is rootless, offering the promise of experience, of successive fantasies of freedom, the rise of "being yourself," and lightening your heart by leaving your past behind. It holds the vision of the *puer*, the divine youth ever adrift.

"The source of this thing is-what do you see when you move across the Plains day after day? That's a mind bending experience, a wild ecology and unpopulated terrain. That becomes an archetype immediately for America, literally mythical," that was Snyder's reading.¹¹

This road has always been one of the fundamental American fantasies: the great westward stage routes, the lone-year of the pony express, the transcontinental railroad, route sixty-six, Dylan's highway sixty-one. The road is outward bound, far from any Main Street, and it leads to adventure, to openness, and above all to the promise of what everyone is hoping to find. And this promise of the wide open road that has come from nowhere, that does not need to account for what is beneath it (much like the early Smithsonian Institute "estimates" of the pre-colonial population of the Americas), and that eschews the tyranny of a destination (and hence, any fixed "destiny" in terms of a social role), fit well into the mythos of a vast land whose dominant developing factor was the frontier. But what do you do when the frontier is reached? Observers of American culture from Snyder to Jean Baudrillard tell us that what you end up doing is driving back and forth in cars as fast

as you can with wide open space translating into ever increasing speed, or else you take trains and planes to dead end destinations like James Jarmusch's "Mechanicsville" in the movie *Dead Man*.¹²

For Kerouac, in the life as opposed to the work, however, all the careening deliciousness of the open-road fantasy; the meeting, the moving, the be-bopping, never lasted very long; a few weeks, sometimes a few months, says Charters, and then - like Henry David Thoreau leaving the pristine environment of Walden for his mother's kitchen, Kerouac would be back with his own mother, watching television, drinking beer, and writing it all down. Kerouac wrote about life, but he chose the work, writing, over living. And perhaps this position deserves reconsideration. "Life exists," said Mallarme, "to be written in a book." And fantasy exists to illumine the paltry day-to-day grind that we call reality, the human-realm sidewalk sitcom where even holy wars are filtered through corporate sponsored networks, buffering the hungry-ghost ghastly horrors that lie behind the lens.

The late A.K. Ramanujan speculated that the saints, who are the culture heroes of India, rose to their position through a type of mass Freudian wish-fulfillment. In India, where a great majority of people are ineluctably stuck in deep extended family and class structures, the hero is one who has escaped what some texts call the "dark well of household life."¹³ Likewise, if the street-walkers of contemporary consensus culture are not doing much more than staggering from one fast food outpost to another, then the mass collective fantasy will be one of the "wide open spaces" of the Marlboro Man. And this fantasy will be further amplified by the notion that distinctions between life and art can be erased, sacrificed over to reality television

The Dharma Bum

Another popular culture hero emerged from Kerouac's work who affirmed a more overtly religious dream of living a life apart from social responsibilities - the wandering, *bhikku*, the *dharma* bum.

Kerouac's interest in Buddhism was ironically piqued by Neal Cassady himself, through Cassady's involvement with the work of Edgar Cayce, the American sleeping prophet who would go into trance states and read "akashic records" giving petitioners medical and spiritual advice. Cayce was a child of the Bible belt, and when he started receiving clairvoyant messages about reincarnation he feared that the devil was trying to possess him. Eventually, Cayce widened the sphere of his cosmology to include ancient Egypt, and the lost continents of Atlantis and Lemuria, corresponding to successive incarnations of culture as well as of individuals.

Kerouac ridiculed Cassady's interest in this "home-made American Billy Sunday with a suit" show, but nevertheless was interested in the material and traced down its historic sources in the library of San Jose, where he first read Dwight Goddard's *Buddhist Bible*-an adequate anthology of classical Buddhist texts in translation.¹⁴

Kerouac immediately and deeply connected with the "first noble truth" of "anguish," (trans. Ginsberg), for the Buddhist awareness of impermanence had haunted Kerouac since his childhood, stemming from the death of his brother Gerard at age nine. "Come back in a million years and tell me if this is real," he would ask Ginsberg. And his works, particularly pathos-ridden later works like *Big Sur*, are haunted by the scars of loss and fears of death. Perhaps due to these circumstances, or to *samskaras* (latent impressions in the mind, said to be from previous lives) that can only be speculated upon, Kerouac deeply intuited the depth and breadth of *sunyata* ("emptiness"), previously interpreted by mainstream Western academicism as, in the words of Ginsberg, "a claustrophobic

bummer." These intuitions arguably inspired his writings and work. "After all," says Jack, "I wrote this because we're all gonna die."¹⁵ Moreover, Buddhist discourse offered a different language, along with perspectives that could be molded into an obliquely hip form, one that allowed anguish to be expressed along with the expansive vision of all things as no things, the *prajna paramita* or supreme insight into the nature of reality.

Kerouac attuned to the panoramic sense of *śūnyatā* as freedom from the limitations of monotheism, mono-culturalism, from the need to apologize for being human, fallen, or whatever, and was thus able to embrace "the ten thousand things." This may be why Ginsberg loved him; for his ability to transmit Whitman's unconditional proclamation "not until the sun rejects you do I reject you." For the gates of *dharma* are endless, much like the open road, holy or unholy, no one is excluded. Kerouac's most overtly Buddhist works, posthumously published as *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity* and *Some of the Dharma*, range from sustained visionary prose, to confused spiritual pronouncements. They did not, however, magnetize public attention as the popular novels, with heroic characters and charged landscapes did; perhaps because there was no offered praxis (and no practitioner) to infuse this new language with enduring power, or perhaps because the book buying public was not as open to American Buddhist scriptures as to oriental-tinged novels. Aside from his publisher's instigations to produce *Dharma Bums* as soon as possible (to capitalize upon the media event and commercial success of *On the Road*) Kerouac received almost no support for his Buddhist writings. They were discouraged by family members, publishers, colleagues, critics, and the mainstream press. The two above mentioned works that deal most directly with Buddhist thought and ideals, never saw the light of day until they were anthologized in *Buddhist Review*, *Tricycle*, thirty years or so after his death.¹⁶

And thus, Kerouac the *dharma* hero becomes a tragic hero, a prophet scorned in his own country. And without a lineage, a tradition, a mentor, or a practice to sustain it, Kerouac's Buddhism staggered into free fall.

Practice has been a charged issue throughout Buddhist discourse. How does one practice nothing? How does one practice without self-defeating ego-motivation? How can the ego become egoless with no Holy Other to abandon to? How can one practice or "not practice" and still awaken? Responses have been varied and often paradoxical, with the image of the Zen *koan*, as an incomprehensible "riddle" becoming a popular icon of for "eastern" meta-intellectual awakening.

Kerouac seems to have resonated to this in a way that piqued a certain vein of the contemporary spiritual imagination. Uninterested (like the American transcendentalist authors Emerson and Thoreau) in the cultural particularities, rigorous meditation trainings, or *sangha*-based lineage teachings of Buddhist traditions, Kerouac took refuge in the Buddha as the *dharmakaya* - the universal awakened mind. And he re-envisioned *dharma* practice as his own imagined and idealized writing; spontaneous prose awakening into vast emptiness, the panoramic space of the road; and he imagined the *sangha* (group of practitioners) to be his confreres, the in-group of beat poets, writers, musicians, and hangers on.

But underneath this, as underneath the road, and underneath Moriarty's bravado, his Buddhism was partial and particular. Ray Smith, the first person narrator of the *Dharma Bums*, tells Ryder that he "didn't give a goddamn about the mythology of all those names and national flavors of Buddhism." Anything with alien cultural trappings is suspect. The original languages, like the texts themselves, remain foreign. There is never any relationship with a lineage holder, hardly any formal practice, or

bhavana (mental cultivation), at least not outside of writing. In many ways, Kerouac follows Emerson and Thoreau, who appropriated Asian religious sensibilities and ideas into their individual lives, as they sought to assimilate all traditions and be beholden to none. In Whitmanesque fashion, America would be the cradle of a new world revelation, the harbinger of the rucksack revolution. Who would have imagined that the rucksack revolution would evolve into the RV revolution, with families loaded with goods moving from one campground to another, practice overwhelmed by economies.¹⁷

The spiritual founder of the rucksack revolution is portrayed through the character of Japhy Ryder, who, like Dean, is labeled as "the great new hero of American culture." Seemingly immune to the problems of social and political reality, Ryder - painted in mythic hues as a *Bodhisattva*, a "great wise angel" (and this is how many Americans first heard the word) is "amusing himself in the void." And while Japhy Ryder combines the qualities of rugged outdoorsman, non-conformist, studious scholar of Asian languages, and master of esoteric sexual yoga, he is afraid to walk into a restaurant where rich folks are eating à la mode. Like Sal and Dean, Japhy and Ray (for the two are easily one) are poor (Japhy proudly shows Ray how to buy clothes from Salvation Army second stores), but this poverty is all too easily idealized. It is delightful to camp out in the mountains or in the living quarters of Mexican field workers as long as one need not remain a solitary mountain hermit or cotton picker. This is where practice would be required, but Sal could always wire his aunt for money, and Jack and Henry (Thoreau) spent a lot of time at their mothers' dinner tables. Still, Ryder is heralded as a modern-day incarnation of Han Shan, who leaves the monastery as well as society to go to Cold Mountain and write poetry.

Spontaneous Prose: At the End of the Road

One contemporary mythical narrative states that that *On the Road* was written in an inspired three week rush in April of 1951 on a 120 foot roll of teletype paper, later variants of this story (some of them narrated by my own students), say it was written in three hours on an enormous roll of toilet paper. In fact, *On the Road* was begun formally in 1948, and was revised several times, at least once with an outside editor (Malcolm Cowley) before the Viking Press edition was published in 1957, with about one third of the earlier manuscript edited out.¹⁸

The myth of spontaneity, which is a particular variant on the open road theme, played into the scenario of "The be-bop Buddha, New Reality Jam session." Spontaneity, of course, more often than not emerged through the particular drug of choice. As late night talk show jokes continue to confirm, it is hard to imagine a jazz musician without the accoutrement of marijuana. *On The Road*, itself, was said to be dashed off in a "Benedrine haze." More importantly perhaps, was the fact that the cult of spontaneity played right into the hand of the imagined Zen lunatic, composing Haiku with one hand and holding a bottle of wine in the other. The grafting of the images of spontaneity and drug-use onto the imagined practitioner of what is known in the *tantric* tradition as *Crazy Wisdom* became part of the ideal of the open road. Never mind the mainstream Buddhist prohibition against intoxicants, or the years of meditative discipline said to be behind one line of *haiku*. It all makes me wonder about, the famed teacher, Trungpa Rimpoche's celebrated drinking: to what degree did he consciously appropriate this image as a form of skillful means to further entice would be American Buddhists by offering them an anti-heroic ideal? Like Bodhidharma's entry into China wearing his shoes on his head and perplexing the welcoming entourage, we will never know.

Whatever the actual case may be, the road often became heavy, Trungpa's speech would slur (he died as did Kerouac at age forty-seven, largely from alcohol consumption), and death before one's "expected time" made the end of the road become an imminent, pressing reality. In *On the Road* Kerouac had articulated that "the only people for me are the mad ones...the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, that burn burn burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars." And yet the writing was like the road that appeared at times to be going nowhere while he moved faster and faster. In his private life, says Charters, Kerouac was continually haunted by a vision of himself running into a brick wall.

The "brick wall" may be seen as the "*senex*," the wall of Chronos, the solidified, freeze-dried energy of Saturn, keeper of the karmic book. And, reincarnation notwithstanding, nothing epitomized the "wall" more than the awareness of impending death, what the Buddhists call, *anitya*, "the truth of impermanence." For some, this awareness leads to a "laissez-faire" nihilism that bleeds right through the thin fabric of "fun-on-the-run open road," the desperate call to the cult of downward spiraling experience. But Kerouac would insist that "hysterical critics" had failed to notice the pursuit of compassion or the preaching of universal kindness beneath the frenetic activity of his true-story novels, or the "tender consciousness" found on the road in the sacramental experience, that Ginsberg pointed to, of all too mortal companionship.

Certainly, a grief-ridden sensitivity to personal loss is present with Kerouac from the very beginning, from the loss of Gerard, to the ongoing nightmare vision, described in *On the Road*, of being pursued by a strange Arabian figure who would catch up with him just as he reached the safety of a protective city. Dean interprets this shrouded traveler as Sal's longing for "pure death." But "pure death" can be another youthful *puer* fantasy of sorts, quite opposed to wheezing down in a wino bed or to winding up smack against a brick wall.

The "end of the hard, hard road" for Sal comes in Mexico, in a rainbow orgiastic romp of excess through a "strange Arabian paradise" (described in classic orientalist language). Mexican men and hipsters, who cannot speak each others' language, commune over the sacrament of marijuana, and the party in which "the whole world is turned on" continues with a wild romp through a whorehouse with mambo music and "Ali Baba and the alleys and the courtesans," until the money runs out. That is when the curtain comes down. But the lived fantasy of ultimate oriental excess leads to an even more bitter end in the "wild uninhibited Fellahin-childlike" Mexico City, with Sal on his back, delirious with dysentery, and "bold, noble" Dean with his old broken trunk looking down at Sal, saying, "Yes, yes, yes, I've got to go now," leaving him there without a second thought, to hop into his car and drive away to new adventures.

The end of the road in *Dharma Bums* comes with Ray's stint as a Forest Ranger on top of a mountain known appropriately as "Desolation Peak." Here, the life and the work tell different stories. Ann Charters writes that before his trip to Desolation Peak became a memory, he asked himself what he had learned. The reply:

I learned that I hate myself because by myself I am only myself and not even that and how monotonous it is to be monotonous. I want to come down Right Away because the smell of the onions on my hands as I bring the blueberries to my lips on the mountainside suddenly reminds me of the smell of hamburgers and raw onions and

coffee and dishwater in lunch carts of the World to which I want to return at once..."
(Dharma Bums 266)

Jack went up to the mountain looking for solitude, for *satori*, but he says, "It was too dark and dismal to like it." Moreover, when he got there, with no liquor and no drugs, he ran into the brick wall, a Buddhist vision without a human face. And that gave no solace:

"But night would come and with it the mountain moon and the lake would be moonlaned and I'd go out and sit on the grass and meditate facing west, wishing there were a Personal God in all this impersonal matter. (*Dharma Bums*, p.237)

Religion in the Sibling Society

Just as Carlos Castaneda would be accused, a couple of generations later, of "sham anthropology," Kerouac was accused of "sham religion," of all too easily strip-mining other cultures for their images. The American practice of arriving at one's own religious beliefs without institutional trappings - from Thomas Paine's rather Buddhist assertion that "my mind is my own church," to Jefferson's saying "I am a sect myself" - is described in Bellah's, *Habits of the Heart* and in a host of following volumes on civil religion. And one incarnation of this phenomenon is well-known in certain circles of Sociology as "Sheila-ism", named after the informant nurse Sheila Larson, who defines her own religion apart from any over-determined creed or institution.¹⁹ "Sheilaism" has been somewhat cursorily put down, by Bellah who describes it as Sheila's effort to find a center after liberating herself from an oppressive and conformist early family life."²⁰ More recently, Diana Eck's focus on Religions Pluralism in America continues the marginalization even further by constructing a round table of solemnly garbed "World Religions" figures while ignoring be-bop religion, rock 'n roll, Halloween, trans-denominational hybridization, and other genuine sacramental forces at work in a secular culture. The imagined beat community, which evolved into counter-cultural and New-Age experimental forms of all sorts, having in fact become meta-national, meta-cultural, and meta-organizational, remains marginalized as Kerouac does to a certain extent. What is too often ignored, in this regard, is that the now reified religious "classics" were once hybrid texts themselves. The Hebrew Scriptures, New Testament, and the *Bhagavadgita* are all highly interwoven texts drawing from a wide-variety of source threads. If one hallmark of modernity is people's ability to choose, or better yet to create, one's own religion, this automatically entails bricolage. Kerouac's point, in his manifesto on spontaneous prose, offers a striking critique to the detractors of "Sheilaism." Kerouac charges the individual to obliterate all censorship, both self and other imposed, to write to the limits of one's unique individuality ("no selectivity of expression but following 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 rhetorical exhalation and expostulated statement"- *Spontaneous Prose*). Such writing, it is claimed, will positively communicate, because the authenticity of individual experience touches the collective ("Blow as deep as you want-write as deeply, fish as far down as you want, satisfy yourself first, then reader cannot fail to receive telepathic shock and meaning-excitement by laws operating in his own human mind" - *Spontaneous Prose*).²¹

Kerouac's religious energy is real and communicative, and his Buddhism is more than a device to frame his own suffering (as is sometimes charged). Jack's Buddhism is a universal religion, open to

both the sublime and the ridiculous in "the great basketbally game of eternity." On the ridiculous side, it includes, *yabhyam*, ceremonial sexual yoga, reduced to its most gross and simplistic American variety ("he told her to take her clothes off which she did at once), generous amounts of alcohol, and the freedom to take off anywhere and anytime you want to. It waxes naively universal, in the sense that it portrays a lifestyle without binding commitments, a literary precursor to Maslow's transpersonal psychology, with its own re-writing of the protestant ethic as an ideal of individual freedom and fulfillment without struggle. Kerouac's religion is also one of poignant complexity, however. It is haunted by the shadows of the past, by ruptured roots, by the desolation angels, and it is sensitive to the particular: Cody in the seedy pool hall, Slim the "pure" horn player, boxcar riders, diners, beans and coffee over a mountain fire, the specter of "Mother" in a store window, and the father of Dean Moriarty, "Old Dean Moriarty, the father we never found."

The basketball field of eternity thus had its downside for Kerouac, who never fully bought into the ease of "amusing oneself in the void" just as he never could accept Dean's non-conscience ease in leaving him. Ginsberg sees this as a flaw: that Kerouac was so obsessed with a suffering that was amplified by alcohol and by being occasionally "frozen in hashish hell," that he couldn't let go. As Kerouac grew older, so did his despair.²²

Moreover, Kerouac for all his powerful descriptions of the life of the Buddha written in a manner clearly informed by the rhetorical style of the *Mahayana* scriptures he read in translation (and ultimately published as *Some of the Dharma*), and his panoramic, visionary synthesis of everything in *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity*, never had a teacher and never had any training in calming the mind and discerning the real. And while this is not any kind of disqualification, particularly in the land of the self-made man, it may have helped separate the life from the work. As Kerouac grew older, the images of his own hereditary Christianity began to assert themselves. The cross came more and more strongly into his being as the nostalgia for, and pain at, the loss of a personal God would not go away. And the grim desolation of loss that moves through his work, as in the sad parting of Sal and Dean and the recognition of their relational impossibility, appears most powerfully as regret, regret over the rejection by the mother, whose apparition appears in *On the Road* in a shop window, and regret over "the father who was never found."

God Talk

William James characterized Walt Whitman as an optimist "pagan," "a natural animal man without a sense of sin."²³ And many, like Ginsberg, would have liked Kerouac's Buddhism to follow suit. But even in the be-bop, smooth-jazz, amusement upon the void world, a longing for another kind of redemption breaks through. Kerouac could not be naturally at ease as Whitman appeared to be; for (to use James' terminology) he was hardly a healthy soul. This is what is so powerfully touching about Kerouac: he could never accept his own hip Americanized Buddhist vision of amusement in which cats yawn because they realize that there is nothing to do."²⁴

I knew a student who belonged to an underground punk rock community that included Kerouac on its altar of heroes, along with various underground writers, singers, and serial killers. This student explained to me that he valued Kerouac as much for his mistakes as for his upside.

"What were his mistakes?" I asked?

“Succumbing to alcoholism, holding an exclusionary attitude toward women, and letting the spotlight bring you down,” he unhesitatingly answered. For the icon of Kerouac is made of the flesh and fabric of the American experience: a land where an estimated fourteen million people have alcohol problems (the only drug that is deemed fit for mass-consumption), where women may gather around the cross, but must remain at the margins of social power, and where hero-kings are regularly crucified, brought down from their pedestals in mass-media assassination.²⁵ Kurt Cobain, who achieved what Kerouac did not, commercial success and a popular versus subterranean cult following, committed abrupt and dramatic suicide. Kerouac went the route of slow dismemberment through alcohol. Perhaps one reason why Ginsberg actually made it into some form of adulthood, while Kerouac did not, was the fact that Ginsberg, although a later-comer to Buddhism than Kerouac, did find a teacher, Chogyam Trungpa Rimpoche, meeting him as they hailed the same taxicab on the corner of Second Avenue and Ninth Street (along with the fact that Ginsberg disliked alcohol and was never addicted to drugs). Trungpa, who was well aware of the end of the road, guided psychedelic hippies down from the mountains of Boulder and on into McDonalds. He claimed that he was teaching “American” as opposed to Tibetan Buddhism, a Buddhism which encouraged its adherents to continue to play Monopoly and drink Coca-cola. Trungpa liked Kerouac's work, and agreed to name Naropa Institute's school of "Disembodied Poetics" after him, perhaps offering a redemptive memorial by doing what Kerouac could not do - creating an institution (Naropa) as well as specific meditative disciplines to work with the Western mind.

The Aftermath

In many myths and legends of classical texts nothing is seen to be more dangerous than a land without a king, a land without a cohesive imago, a collective centering ego, a symbolic throne or center. Current religious apologists raise the banner of a committed religious pluralism, while decrying the position of an uncommitted relativism that has no church, no community, and no institutional affiliation. Elder poets like Robert Bly complain about the loss of tradition, of a cultural leveling, and of the descent into a “sibling society.” Youthful energies of religious and social experimentation are seen by them to be a form of spiritual shopping. But vast emptiness haunts the store windows, and some like Andy Warhol, after being demythologized and re-mythologized so many times, turned shopping into the quintessential sacral activity.

These voices point out that the “Imperial Self” and “Universal Self” heresies in which the “I” becomes the center, in which autobiographical genre becomes the norm, and in which the only social contract is unilateral, and is impossible to maintain. Amusing one-self in the void dis-involves the other, and in being everything to everybody, it becomes impossible to be something to somebody. Like Tagore's image of emerging India in the play *Sacrifice*, in which the principal character, Jai Sing is caught between allegiances to an emerging state-sponsored humanism and the traditional priesthood, Kerouac is suspended between the cult of personal freedom and a deep-seated guilt and regret for those he has left behind. For the “other” haunts Kerouac's work as well as his life. And the same American Buddhist community that publishes Kerouac in its magazines also collects money for the daughter that Kerouac abandoned. I will illustrate this and close by going back to, what for me, are the most haunting images in *On the Road*, the scene where Sal, while drunk and picking up butts on the streets of San Francisco, looks up and sees a woman in the store window looking at him with disgust and horror. It suddenly occurs to Sal that this woman was his mother about two hundred years ago in England and that

"I was her footpad son returning from gaol to haunt her honest labors in the hashery. I stopped frozen with ecstasy on the sidewalk, with a whole host of memories leading aback to 1750 England although I was in San Francisco in another life in another body." "No, that woman seemed to say with that terrified glance, don't come back and plague your honest hard working mother."

Kerouac's own mother, by the way, never let him forget that it was her slaving away for years in a shoe factory that allowed him to write his books. The "mother" goes on,

"You are no longer a son to me. You are no good inclined to drunkenness and routs and final disgraceful robbery. O son did you not ever go on your knees and pray for deliverance for all your sins and scoundrel acts? Lost boy depart! Don't haunt my soul."

This vision pushes Sal over the edge of chronological time, through the grim mortal realm, and onto a plane where

"all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, with the potent inconceivable radiances shining in the bright mind essence of innumerable lotus lands."

At this moment Sal realizes that he has died and been reborn numberless times, but did not remember the transitions from life to death and back again because they were so ghostly easy. "Many births you and I have had," declares Krishna in the *Bhagavadgita*, "I can remember them all but you cannot O conqueror of the enemy." Sal's theophany continues:

I realized that it was only because of the stability of intrinsic Mind that birth and death took place like the action of wind on a sheet of pure, serene, mirror-like water. I felt sweet, swinging bliss, like a big shot of heroine in the mainline vein, like a gulp of wine in the late afternoon and it makes you shudder. My feet tingled. I thought I was going to die the very next moment

But Sal does not die. And even though the mother in the window fits the fifties "moms as a generation of vipers" description Sal walks right back to his mother in the form of food. Too young to know what has happened in the window he says:

I smelled all the food in San Francisco. There were seafood places out there where buns were hot, and the baskets were good enough to eat too, where the menus themselves were soft with food esculence as though dipped in hot broths and roasted dry and good enough to eat too. Just show me the blue fish spangle on the seafood menu and I'd eat it; let me smell the drawn butter and the lobster claws. There were places that specialized in thick, red roast beef au jus, and roast chicken basted in wine. There were places where hamburgers sizzled on grills and the coffee was only a nickel. And oh that pan fried chow mein flavored air, that blew into my room in Chinatown vying with the spaghetti sauces of North Beach, the soft shell crab of the Fisherman's Wharf-nay the ribs of Filmore turning on spits! Throw in the Market Street chili beans red hot, and french fried potatoes of Embradero wino night and steamed clams from Susalito, across the bay, and that's my ah-dream of San Francisco."

As Joyce does in the Molly Bloom soliloquy, Kerouac returns fully to his senses, to the earth, the mother-imago that the adolescent hero must come to terms with, but the celebration does not last. John Wills recounts the legend of the Neo-Confucian philosopher Wang Yang Ming who visited one of the beautiful monasteries near the poet Su Dongpo's West Lake, and met a Ch'an monk who had been sitting in silent meditation for three years. Wang asked him about his family, found out that his mother was still alive, and asked the monk if he ever missed her. "It is impossible to eliminate these thoughts," replied the monk. Wang then argued that the monk's meditation was artificial, insisting that filial piety was actually part of the basic structure of the mind. The monk was moved to tears. When Wang Yang Ming asked about him the next day, the monk had already left for home.

In a not completely dissimilar way, Kerouac sadly leaves Dean at the end of the road, leaves the adolescent dream of electric, illumined, roaming on a cold winter night as Dean stands outside with his bag ready to go to Penn station and back across the country. Sal sits in the back of Remi Boncoeur's Cadillac and waves to him, ending his sketch in a meditation on absence: "I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty."

Ginsberg found an anchor, a post-modern father of sorts that Kerouac did not. But it was not easy. At one moment, it is said, while doing dharma-combat with the sad-eyed Bhaktivedanta Swami, the founder of the Hare Krishna movement, Ginsberg was challenged by the elder traditional swami, asking, "How he could not believe in authority?"

"I have to love authority," was Ginsberg's said reply.

The mother abandoned, the father never found, but neither forgotten. The curtain opens onto the sibling society. And Kerouac remains suspended between allegiances. He never shook himself of self-hate, sin, and guilt, remaining true to his inborn Catholicism, while likewise becoming an American icon, a hero of all ages, participating in a lineage of martyrs, who die young in their reckless bids for immortality. But then we are left with the question, why did the Buddha come to America?" For we have seen the dying gods many times before. Perhaps he came to offer bas-relief, or a meditative hiatus allowing space to revision what we already are, or to point to a way in which the life may stand with the work, and living rather than dying will be seen as the truly heroic venture.

¹ Even while living in the woods by Walden Pond, Thoreau is said to have gone home to his family's house once a week.

² Rick Fields, *How the Swans Came to the Lake: A Narrative History of Buddhism in America*. Boston & London: Shambhala, 1992 (3rd edition)

³ Allen Ginsberg, *Un Homme Grand: Jack Kerouac à la Confluence des Cultures* (Carleton University Press, 1990), edited by Pierre Ancil

⁴ The Zen Buddhist teacher Sokei-an, who incorporated the Buddhist Society of America in 1931, likened the challenge of the *Dharma's* taking hold in America (and the patience required for it) to holding a lotus to a rock. If it had taken three hundred years or so for Zen to take root in China, he felt that it would take an equally long time in America. Fields, p. 181.

⁵ Ann Charters, *Kerouac: a Biography* (New York: Saitn Martin's Press, 1973) chronicles the specific substances behind the particular works of Kerouac.

⁶ I am indebted to the work of Paul Collins for the words in quotes and probably for some others. Collins wrote his Master's Thesis on Kerouac and strongly articulates the "new cowboy" heroic of Kerouac in an article on the web that I can no longer locate.

⁷ Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York, New American Library, 1955), p. 10

⁸ From *Singing America*, cited in Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, New York: Norton & Norton, 1950, p. 304

⁹ Erikson, (1950), p. 186

¹⁰ Ellis Amburn, in *Subterranean Kerouac* (New York:St. Martin's Press, 1998) makes an extended case for Kerouac's fear and loathing of his own homoeroticism.

¹¹ Cited in Charters (1973), p. 289.

¹² Ibid. Also see Baudrillard's *Amérique* for a discussion of speed as the quintessential American value (translated by Chris Turner as *America*, New York, London: Verso, 1988).

¹³ See A.K. Ramanujan, "On Women Saints," in Hawley and Wulff, *The Divine Consort: Radha and the Goddesses of India* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1982, 1986).

¹⁴ Ginsberg, op. cit.

¹⁵ Kerouac, *The Beats*, Audio Recording

¹⁶ Tomkinson, Carol, ed. *Big Sky Mind: Buddhism and the Beat Generation* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995), p. 27

¹⁷ Thoreau exhibits a similar attitude toward the traditions that he studied. "While commentators and translators are disputing about the meaning of this word or that, I hear only the resounding of the ancient sea and put into it all meaning I am possessed of, the deepest murmurs I can recall, for I do not the least care where I get my ideas or what suggests them." (Journals VIII 135)

¹⁸ Charters, 198

¹⁹ Bellah et al., *Habits of the Heart: Individualism and Commitment in American Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1985), p.221

²⁰ Ibid, p 235

²¹ The well known Spontaneous Prose manifesto appears all over the web and in various articles on writing. The earliest source I can trace down is in a collection of essays, *Good Blonde and Others* (San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1993) where it is listed as being written in 1953 as "Essentials of Spontaneous Prose."

²² Ginsberg, op. cit. p. 20

²³ James, *Varieties of Religious Experience* (New York: Collier Books, 1961), p. 83

²⁴ *Scripture of the Golden Eternity*, 21 (electronic edition)

²⁵ According to the 1992 National Longitudinal Alcohol Epidemiologic Survey, a national household survey, approximately 7.5 percent of the U.S. population (about 14 million + Americans) abuse and/or are dependent on alcohol (Grant et al. 1994). According to recent National Drug and Alcoholism Treatment Unit Surveys, more than 700,000 people receive alcoholism treatment on any given day (*Alcohol Research and Health*, Spring 1999, Rickard K. Fuller, Susan Hills Sturmhofel)