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# **Podzemníci a jejich vztah k literatuře undergroundu**

*The Subterraneans and its Relation  
to Underground Literature*

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V Českých Budějovicích dne 23.6. 2015

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Barbora Michalová

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## **Abstract**

In the beginning, the author defines the cultural and social context of the 1950s, mentions the importance and role of the City Lights publishing house in American literature and thinks about the popularity of the Beat Generation. The core of the work will be to analyze the works of Jack Kerouac, the main representative of the Beat Generation in prose and critical appreciation of his unreleased or recently published works and their comparison with the “manifesto” of the beatniks “On the Road”. The work aims to define the importance/ popularity of Kerouac’s works in the context of American literature.

## **Anotace**

V úvodu práce autorka vymezí kulturní a společenský kontext 50. let, zmíní důležitost a roli nakladatelství City Lights v americké literatuře a zamyslí se nad popularitou beatnické generace. Jádrem práce bude analýza děl Jacka Kerouaca jako hlavního představitele beatnické generace v próze a kritické zhodnocení jeho dosud nevydaných nebo nedávno vydaných textů a jejich srovnání s "manifestem" beatníků "On theRoad". Práce si klade za cíl vymezit důležitost respektive oblibu Kerouacových děl v kontextu americké literatury.



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## **1 Introduction**

This bachelor thesis focuses on the works of the key figure of the Beat Generation Jack Kerouac. It not only analyzes his books but also thinks about his life and tries to figure out what made him destroy both his huge talent and life with alcohol.

In the first chapter it is important to mention the situation in the United States after the Second World War and in the beginning of the Cold War. The chapter also introduces the figure of Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the most important publishing house for all the writers of the Beat Generation, City Lights.

Based on the evidence gathered during the writing of this work the thesis is trying to explain the reason for the creation of the Beat Generation and also mentions the beginnings of the group of writers including how they met and what connected them from the start.

The fourth and the largest chapter of the whole thesis focuses primarily on the life of Jack Kerouac, his hometown, family background, life on university, friends, women, alcohol. It brings testimonies of several people from his neighborhood that indirectly challenge the view of him as a unrestrained adventurer. The chapter examines the reasons that caused his aversion to stardom and then focuses on four of his works and analyzes them. It starts with the analysis of *The Subterraneans* and continues with *Satori in Paris*, three short stories from *Lonesome Traveler* and ends up with his recently published novel *The Sea Is My Brother*.

The thesis then compares single books and raises questions about the impact of Kerouac's age on his style of writing. The conclusion is trying to explain the reason for the popularity of his works in the context of literature in general.

## **2 The 1950s in the USA**

### **2.1 Cultural and Social Context**

The years after Second World War were in the name of a huge tension between America and the Soviet Union. In the United States it brought out political conservatism which led to the fact that people with different opinions had almost no toleration. However, the whites from the middle class had a chance to move from centers of the cities to suburbs and superior schools. The crime spread but so did the expectations of the youths, the overall position of the American middle class was rising, especially consumerism, the Americans believed in their superiority. The biggest problem of the 1950s was definitely politics. The Korean War in the beginning of the fifties was only used for building the foundations of the Cold War period that followed. Communism was more feared than crime, the American lifestyle had a lot of opponents and many of them belonged to the cultural spectrum (Joseph McCarthy's Un-American Activities Committee was stated to take away Communists from any places that could influence American society).<sup>1</sup>

In the 1950s America was still highly influenced by its racial problems but there were numerous attempts to change that situation. The leading figure was definitely Martin Luther King, a minister whose philosophy was affected by Gandhi. Although he was murdered in the 1960s his efforts had a significant impact on the following generations. African-Americans soon started to create significant works in the field of literature and also in music where the creation of rock music was allowed thanks to jazz, blues or folk, which came to awareness of the population because of for example Bob Dylan or Pete Seeger. These musicians were influenced by the Civil Rights movement and some kind of protest was to be found in their work. Rock music was also connected with the hippie movement in the 1960s. Both hippies and the Beats accepted using hallucinogens because they allowed them to perceive deeper levels of being.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>PROCHÁZKA, Martin. Lectures on American literature.3.,vyd. Praha 2011

<sup>2</sup>PROCHÁZKA, Martin. Lectures.

*“Most of the Beats had been writing since at least the early 1950s, and in the succeeding decade their work became more prominent as it connected with, and in part inspired, the hippie movement, which climaxed in the Summer of Love in the Haight-Ashbury neighborhood of San Francisco in 1967.”*<sup>3</sup>

When it comes to popular culture after war, the United States had a huge number of cinemas and in 1960s the popularity of comedies and western movies grew. Television was not there only to entertain but also it promoted the Civil Rights and opposition to the Vietnam War. In cinemas and music, especially rock 'n' roll, we could see a lot of rebels and confused and undecided teenagers and young people- for example in the movie Rebel without a Cause (starring James Dean) or in music of Bob Dylan or Jimi Hendrix (who is connected with the huge festival called Woodstock).<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>PROCHÁZKA, Martin. Lectures on American literature. 3. vyd. Praha: Univerzita Karlova v Praze, nakladatelství Karolinum, 2011, s. 241

<sup>4</sup>PROCHÁZKA, Martin. Lectures.

## 2.2 City Lights Bookstore & Lawrence Ferlinghetti

In the 20th century California, especially San Francisco Bay Area became literary center and by that questioned the importance of the northeastern region. San Francisco is believed to be beautiful and open when it comes to unusual lifestyles, and the term San Francisco Renaissance meant the development of literary culture and artists and it experienced its boom after the Second World War. One of the most important names in San Francisco Renaissance is definitely Lawrence Ferlinghetti. He said that the loudest poetry is the street one. It is about getting poetry back to public because the printed word completely silenced poetry. After the Second World War there were lots of little magazines (for example Circle, City Lights, Inferno or Beatitude) and alternative publishing houses but the one that is worth mentioning is definitely City Lights owned by Lawrence Ferlinghetti himself who published for example *Howl and Other Poems* by Allen Ginsberg. The important fact about City Lights is that it published alternative art in paperback edition so it was cheaper and any literary fan could afford it.<sup>5</sup>

Lawrence Ferlinghetti became a huge support for writers of the Beat Generation in the 1950s, when his City Lights bookstore was opened. He was definitely an important figure for being not just a publisher but also a translator, critic, painter or a poet who was interested in society and politics (he became interested in politics after the Second World War when he saw the damage in Japanese Nagasaki after the bomb being dropped there). City Lights never changed location and it was this publishing house that introduced *Howl and Other Poems* from Allen Ginsberg to the general public which unfortunately led to Ferlinghetti's arresting because of the obscenity of the work but at the end he was released. As well as some of the members of the Beat Generation, he studied Columbia University and later he even became a French teacher.<sup>6</sup>

By the year he stopped teaching his bookshop was opened with help of a co-founder Peter D. Martin and soon the bookstore added a publishing house. The bookstore has worked as a club-room for a long time for all the creative people. City

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<sup>5</sup>FLAJŠAR, Jiří. *Dějiny americké poezie*. Vyd. 1. Ústí nad Orlicí 2006

<sup>6</sup>City Lights. In: *City Lights Bookstore & Publishers*. [online]. [cit. 2015-04-06]. Dostupné z: <http://www.citylights.com/>

Lights was not like any other bookstore from the start. It was open during the night and it even had a stand with magazines and periodicals, which was very rare back then. Ferlinghetti is not only famous when it comes to literature he is also successful as a painter, especially in Italian cities, where he was presenting his poetry and won many awards for it.<sup>7</sup>

Some people might be amazed that New York did not become the main place for young people after the Second World War but as Ferlinghetti explains, in New York he was not able to make a living out of what he wanted. On the other hand he saw much more and bigger opportunities in the West coast specially San Francisco. Ferlinghetti also explains one of the differences between the Beats and writers that were active before the war, such as Ernest Hemingway- as he says these writers enjoyed the taste of alcohol very much and suddenly there came the Beat generation – writers that rather than with alcohol, spent time doing drugs. Ferlinghetti admits that the popularity of the Beat Generation falls down because even though he happens to come across a lot of publications by Jack Kerouac, for example Allen Ginsberg's works or quotes are difficult to be found.<sup>8</sup>

When he is asked about fame related to the Beat Generation, his statement about Kerouac is clear: *“They were all separate cases. After Kerouac published On the Road and became nationally famous, he cut out. He didn't go on the road with them anymore. He didn't hang out with them. He went home and took care of his mother. He lived in various parts of the country—Florida and Lowell, Massachusetts. Also, you could say it was alcohol that destroyed Kerouac's career, but he did publish an enormous amount in spite of how much he drank. So I don't think you can blame the fame. It wasn't the fame that destroyed him; it was the alcohol.”*<sup>9</sup>

When the City Lights bookstore was opened, more than sixty years ago, it was a very tiny place and it fulfilled the definition of underground. The bookstore drove off by giving it a name “City Lights”, which comes from a homonymous

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<sup>7</sup>City Lights. In: City LightsBookstore&Publishers. [online]. [cit. 2015-04-06]. Dostupné z: <http://www.citylights.com/>

<sup>8</sup>BOLLEN, Christopher. LawrenceFerlinghetti. In. Interview Magazine [online]. [cit. 2015-04-07]. Dostupné z: [http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/lawrence-ferlinghetti#\\_](http://www.interviewmagazine.com/culture/lawrence-ferlinghetti#_)

<sup>9</sup>BOLLEN, Christopher. In. Interview Magazine [online]. [cit. 2015-04-07].

movie with Charlie Chaplin acting in it. Ferlinghetti explains they even got permission saying they can use the name “City Lights” for their project. At the same time he never truly accepted the term “beat” as characteristics of the company of writers and he was not familiar with them until opening his bookstore (which quickly became a place for writers to meet and spend time together) and being able to present their works. *“Well, I never liked the term, and especially the word “beatnik” was never used by any of the poets, because that was a term evidently invented by Herb Caen, the San Francisco gossip columnist. It was the time of Sputnik, so this was a handy way for straight people to put down these dirty unwashed bohemians, call them “beatniks.”*<sup>10</sup>

According to Ferlinghetti Allen Ginsberg was the real brain of the organization of the Beat Generation, which may seem as a surprise because Jack Kerouac is usually considered the most important figure of the company but Ferlinghetti is convinced that without Ginsberg and his kind nature the Beat Generation would look completely different.<sup>11</sup>

Before opening the City Lights Bookstore or even having any idea of it Ferlinghetti had a favorite radio station called KPFA, it was unattached and free and it was this station where he listened to Kenneth Rexroth, who was an anarchist and wrote poetry. The idea of owning a bookstore was not necessarily a dream of Ferlinghetti, but one day he was driving by a street and noticed a man he wanted to become acquainted with. The man told him about his pursuit of opening a paperback bookstore and confided to him the problem of not having enough money, then they put together all money held by them and Ferlinghetti with Peter Martin could open their bookstore.<sup>12</sup>

### **3 Jack Kerouac**

There is no doubt that critics in the 1950s could find more respectable writers than Jack Kerouac but no one else was that successful to formulate the complete

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<sup>10</sup> GOODMAN, Amy. In. Democracy Now [online]. [cit. 2015-04-09]. Dostupné z: [http://www.democracynow.org/2007/12/24/legendary\\_beat\\_generation\\_bookseller\\_and\\_poet](http://www.democracynow.org/2007/12/24/legendary_beat_generation_bookseller_and_poet)

<sup>11</sup> GOODMAN, Amy. In. DemocracyNow. [online]. [cit. 2015-04-09].

<sup>12</sup> GUTHRIE, Julien. Lawrence Ferlinghetti's indelible image. In. San Francisco Gate [online]. [cit. 2015-04-09]. Dostupné z: <http://www.sfgate.com/books/article/Lawrence-Ferlinghetti-s-indelible-image-3886925.php>

uncertainty of post-war events. In his stories Kerouac focused on youth trying to reach for the unlimited way of being and unlike the other authors, Kerouac drew up his stories on endless rolls of paper and took it as amusement and thrill. He was not the type of writer hidden in a room full of rundown books, his writing was much more associated with driving cars, listening to music and looking for that something that gives life a purpose. During the 1950s public readings became more desirable thanks to Kerouac, Dylan Thomas and Kenneth Rexroth, who cared about taking poems away from books to public places like galleries or music clubs. Because of the public reading of a text, authors believed poems to become livelier. Kerouac adored music very much. He even made a few records of his writings together with the accompaniment of jazz musicians. He considered himself to be a person, who could give a hand to all Americans and free them from their stereotypes by suggesting them to care more about unknown, alternative conditions, ecology or mysticism. On the other hand the people who disagreed with him connected the Beat Generation with a total disintegration of classical values such as family and believed that this way of thinking can only lead to using drugs, increase of crime, promiscuity, sexual diseases or inability to deal with authorities.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>13</sup>TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou. Brno, 2006

### 3.1 Life

Kerouac was born in Lowell, Massachusetts and even though Jack's friend George Constantinides does not speak of Lowell in superlatives (he was convinced that it was a bleak town and definitely not a place for any creative people), Kerouac used to contemplate about his hometown in many of his books and felt save whenever he came back. Roger Brunelle, a Lowell's Kerouac expert, mentions Jack as someone who was scared of the world outside Lowell and says he was no adventurer- this opinion may seem as a huge paradox considering topics and experiences of Kerouac's novels and life. Kerouac was having a hard time dealing with an early death of his brother Gerard, who died when Jack was only four years old. It is believed that Kerouac saw his brother as a blessed little boy who possessed the knowing of communication with animals and even was able to come across angels. Gerard was very devout which had an effect on Kerouac's later caring about the spiritual life. Jack was interested in writing even as a kid, his bedroom was his favorite place to spend time and write his own short stories, news or magazines because of not exactly an idyllic household. Kerouac's stories written in his early age were so well processed that he was once accused of copying it, which made him feel very upset. When he was a successful sportsman on high school, a flash flood destroyed his father's printing house and one opinion may be that that was the first time Jack started to question the truthfulness of the American dream.<sup>14</sup>

Thanks to his talent for football he was invited to study both the Boston College and the Columbia University by their trainers, regardless of his father's wish he went to study at Columbia because leaving to New York City was always his dream. When he left to New York, he was still quiet and thinking but soon he adapted to surroundings that showed him improved social conditions and jazz music that had a huge impact on him. During the first year in Columbia University Kerouac broke his leg so he could afford to spend more time reading, watching movies or listening to his favorite music. Jack's friend wanted to help him shorten time and so suggested he should read Thomas Wolf's novels and that appeared to electrify Kerouac a lot and make him want to discover the places in America he

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<sup>14</sup>TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou. Brno, 2006

could only think of before. It all happened because of Wolf's ability to depict America in a different way than usual - with all of its nature.<sup>15</sup>

After having different opinions with a trainer about future of his football team, Kerouac decided to leave school and then found various jobs, which were rather short-term. During that time everyone could see an important change in Jack's personality; he was no longer a quiet kid, he rather spent much more time making sexual contacts with a lot of women. During the Second World War Kerouac made the decision to join the Navy but he did not experience war in the true sense of the word – he washed the dishes on a merchant ship and when it came back to Boston, he was convinced that he has to get back to Columbia University. There he started seeing Frankie Edith Parker (who became his first wife later) who was introduced to him by their mutual friend Henri Cru, but Jack continued to have issues with his objectionable trainer which led to leaving school again. As a soldier he was having a hard time dealing with both younger colleagues and authorities and he was later released from the Navy. Kerouac was convinced that he wanted to spend his life writing about his time and by that let the future generations know the thinking of people and true events. He spent a lot of time in Edith's apartment in New York City and it was her who introduced him to Lucien Carr who was also a student at Columbia University; he led long debates with Kerouac about literature. One day Lucien Carr sent young Allen Ginsberg, his new friend, to Edith's apartment because he was sure Allen needed to meet Kerouac and genuinely they both appeared to have a lot of common interests. Very soon it was William Seward Burroughs who joined the crew of young writers. He was a friend of David Kammerer, a doorkeeper who was more or less obsessed with Lucien Carr.<sup>16</sup>

The young writers were linked among others by similar thinking about the society; they believed that people living by the law could not gain experience and were somewhat corrupt. In 1944 Kammerer's presence started to be dangerous not only for Lucien Carr but also for Carr's girlfriend. David Kammerer tried to rape Lucien in Riverside Park and so Carr stabbed him to death and sank his body in Hudson River. He told his friends Kerouac and Burroughs about the accident and

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<sup>15</sup> TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou. Brno, 2006

<sup>16</sup>TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac.

Jack helped him hide the items that could incriminate him, although Burroughs was convinced he should make a confession about what happened, which he did few days later. Kerouac's father, being very disappointed about his son, refused to pay for Jack's bail and so Edith's family did. Jack had to promise he would marry Edith and so he did although he was not born for a monogamous relationship.<sup>17</sup>

All the future representatives of the Beat Generation and some of their friends were gathering in a huge flat in New York City, where they tried various drugs (which later turned Kerouac into a sick sad man) with Herbert Huncke who frequently used the word "beat" meaning exhausted. Kerouac was interested in this meaning because it reminded him of the people around him, people that were not wealthy but were intelligent and thoughtful. The members of the Beat Generation believed in the purity of people but they also believed that people are spoiled by civilization. Another major character from the Beat Generation story is Neal Cassady. A poor youngster from Denver with incredible charisma, as well as Kerouac he enjoyed ladies' attention or cars. He was keen and enjoyed reading. Although Cassady and Kerouac were very similar, there were cases in which they differed, which made Jack impressed by Neal's spontaneity. Substantially one of them dreamed about what the other one had which made them perfectly compatible, one completed the other. In 1947 Kerouac began planning various expeditions and trips and eventually decided to follow Cassady to Denver. This trip must have been very rewarding for him. He took notes about most of the moments he lived through. He enjoyed seeing many natural scenes he used to read about and meeting diverse people. Right after his visitation at Neal's ended he decided to visit San Francisco, a city he was fascinated by because of Jack London, his idol, who spent his life there. Perhaps because Kerouac wanted to avoid the decay of the company of friends, he kept comprehensive correspondence with them writing about his wishes and plans for future. He described people around him as "the Beat Generation" meaning exhausted and worn out by society and a few years later there was an article published in the New York Times using this designation.<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou. Brno, 2006

<sup>18</sup> TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac.

All the representatives of the Beat Generation spent a lot of time thinking about God and unsurprisingly religion later became an essential component of their writing. With the arrival of Neal Cassady began the adventurous travelling part of Kerouac's life which he even mentions on the first page of *On the Road*. Because of inevitable financial problems both Jack and Neal were forced to steal and take hitchhikers in order to be able to get food.<sup>19</sup>

*On the Road* is not a classical story about adventures of a young man and his company of friends. Kerouac traveled alone several times, met new people and sometimes he traveled with Cassady. At times other acquaintances joined them and then separated during the journey so the standard pattern of this type of literature, where a fixed group of people is travelling, is missing, which a lot of readers may find unconventional and original. Among white citizens Kerouac lacked proper excitement, delight or solidarity and he sometimes suffered from feelings of loneliness and for these reasons he felt sorry for not being black. Thanks to his travels he was convinced that black citizens dispose of all these characteristics. Jack Kerouac became distinguished right after publishing his first novel *The Town and the City*, but the whole event was not without difficulties due to the nature of the text, which displayed sex, drugs and was not written in literary language and those were the reasons why the book was no longer sold. Kerouac married Joan Haverty after only two weeks of acquaintance but it was not a case of a great love story, Kerouac believed that thanks to his wife he would not have to worry about his mother, because his new wife could take care of her, which suited him.<sup>20</sup>

Because of the letters he received from Neal Cassady Kerouac believed that for writing stories it is not suitable to spin control. He thought it is much better to write stories as if a person would tell them exactly how they happened which would help to maintain their authenticity. This was another one of the cases when Kerouac envied Cassady. While writing Jack found it difficult to keep the idea when he ran out of paper in his typewriter, so he started writing on long rolls of paper. Thanks to this innovation it was much easier for him to approach Cassady's style of writing

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<sup>19</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>20</sup>TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac*.

letters and storytelling and thus the authenticity. That is why we can be sure about the truthfulness of the stories described in *On the Road*.<sup>21</sup>

Although *On the Road* includes many descriptions of the American nature, Kerouac and Cassady's traveling was not focused on a certain place they wanted to achieve, it was much more about finding meaning of life or a particular state of mind. The problem was that several publishing houses refused to publish *On the Road* being unsatisfied with the text, so Kerouac started to remake the original version with help of Allen Ginsberg. The Beat Generation was later enriched by Gregory Corso who wrote poetry and spent several years in prison, but he considered himself more of a writer rather than a jailbird. When Kerouac moved to Neal Cassady and his second wife Carolyn, he was very satisfied with the environment around him. No one disturbed him when he was working but during times he wanted to share his visions or simply talk to someone, he always could. He particularly appreciated the presence of Cassady's wife Carolyn. The main reason could be that he was used to staying in a presence of his mother, although his relationship with Carolyn was no longer just friendly, moreover Carolyn did not find Neal Cassady physically attractive. The main problem in a marriage of Carolyn and Neal was that Neal was unable to maintain a monogamous relationship and calculated that his wife feels the same way, which made her very angry. The result of all problems was Jack and Carolyn's love affair. Time, however, was such that even though everyone knew, the whole trio was silent on the whole matter. Kerouac refers to Neal Cassady's important role in his life not only in *On the Road* but also in a novel (that many connoisseurs talk about as his finest book) called *Visions of Cody*.<sup>22</sup>

During his thirties he was trying really hard to work for example as a brakeman but unlike Neal he had a hard time getting used to this job because it represented nothing interesting for him. Because of his temperament and penchant for drugs and alcohol he was simply unable to keep employment of any type so he travelled back to New York City where he spent most of the time among other young hipsters and still urged to publish *On the Road*. It was back then, when he met

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<sup>21</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>22</sup>TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac*.

the heroine of his later novella about an unhealthy relationship of two young people who very much enjoy drinking alcohol *The Subterraneans* named Alene Lee, but she was not very happy about the intimacy and openness of the book. Many of the sentences in the book are incredibly long which makes it a fast-paced work. If he wanted this book to be energetic, he did succeed and using of Benzedrine and subsequent rush helped him. Kerouac as well as all the other members of the Beat Generation believed that under the influence of Benzedrine one is capable of much deeper knowledge of what one has experienced therefore a person is disengaged and more capable of expressing the thoughts. What people around the world appreciate about Kerouac's way of both thinking and writing is his books always cared more about being honest and truthful rather than become a quality literature, on the other hand that does not exclude one another.<sup>23</sup>

Losing of Alene Lee was probably the first impulse that made Kerouac think more about religion, especially Buddhism and Allen Ginsberg shared his enthusiasm. During the 1950s he was spending a lot of time reading books about Buddhism. He found out that a person feels depressed because of their own illusions and to be free of these illusions makes a person feel much happier. This learning goes hand in hand with meditation which Jack studied in order to lose his illusions. This generation was characterized by its complicated relationships, which was probably caused by homosexual tendencies of many of its members. William S. Burroughs was unhappily in love with Allen Ginsberg who lusted after Carolyn's husband and she still wanted Jack. Although Kerouac had long term problems with inability to publish his books, in 1950s a part of *On the Road* was published after all by *New York Writing Magazine*, but the event that completely changed previous actions of the whole generation was Allen Ginsberg's public reading of his remarkable poem *Howl* in 1955. Both Kerouac and Cassady were too afraid to express their thoughts in public but at least Jack attended this very important event.<sup>24</sup>

Later Kerouac became a fire watcher in the woods hoping to be able to stay calm, think, meditate and in general deepen his Buddhist sentiment. He also longed for determining why we are here in this world and what our purpose is. This idea did

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<sup>23</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>24</sup>TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac*.

not help him at all because the job in the woods made him feel meaningless about himself. It was not the remarkable experience he was hoping for. Almost a year later, Jack came out of wasteland and saw that the atmosphere around the Beat Generation has changed. *Howl* was about to be published at City Lights and the public has finally begun to take a closer interest on the young writers including Kerouac. It was probably this event that made Viking Press care about publishing *On the Road*. Sudden fame of the Beat Generation directly led to various changes in behavior of the young people. They were unsatisfied with the system and in substance they dared more in general, they were less bound by conventions. The change in people's behavior was not the only thing that changed during the 1950s. Rock 'n' roll music was also an expression of freedom of an individual and a famous representative of that culture was for example Elvis Presley.<sup>25</sup>

It is hardly a surprise that the sudden rush of fame brought about serious problems to Jack. His energy and enthusiasm were suddenly gone. All at once his life was empty and excessive alcohol consumption got him to considerable social problems that surprised even his loved ones. Although the first review of *On the Road* was very successful and full of strong words, Kerouac did not seem to be satisfied, which was probably caused by sudden pressure on his person or simple fear of being known and thus of being judged. It may be shocking for current young generation that some of former critics thought of *On the Road* as something inappropriate largely because of the behavior of a free-spirited and impulsive character of Dean Moriarty. For some it is equally absurd as a ban of distribution and a following lawsuit of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*. It is interesting that Ginsberg himself accepted the problems around *Howl* as something that might help his career and make him better known around people. That was convenient because Allen Ginsberg was probably the only member of the generation who could share his thoughts with people in public, other members, especially Kerouac, did not share his confidence.<sup>26</sup>

1958's reviews on *The Subterraneans* were not nearly as good as on *On the Road*. In general critics thought that the book is rather boring and somewhat simple.

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<sup>25</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>26</sup>TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac*.

Some critics also talked about some association with the rebels and troublemakers of that time, which made restrained Kerouac unpleasantly surprised. Although he finally did not suffer financially, he could have never got used to the attention around him and the only thing that made the situation better was alcohol. The repeated linking of the Beat Generation to troublemakers certainly did not help his condition. Although Kerouac had a hard time trying to understand his newly found fame, he managed to find some positives in this difficult situation. First of all he needed money and appearance in media solved this problem and secondly thanks to travelling he was not only able to come across his old friends but also to get to know a lot of another creative people such as poets, writers or photographers. Maybe thanks to new opportunities or because of a sudden pressure from media Kerouac began to drink alcohol much more than ever before which caused him not only expected health problems but also made his mental difficulties even worse which was noticed by Lawrence Ferlinghetti who tried to help him by lending him a cabin where he would be able to rest and write. It was crucial for him to spend time in the cabin anonymously but during the first few weeks he realized it is not healthy for him to spend that much time alone with the inability to talk to anyone. He simply could not live without women and alcohol probably because both of them made him feel less alone and miserable.<sup>27</sup>

As time progressed Kerouac realized that he can no longer be saved from his mental problems by being in the company of friends. His health condition was getting worse every day, he was even afraid his friends want to hurt him and he also started to hear voices but his problems were probably not caused by just one starter. Besides of all he could not manage to grow up and become adult with all the obligations that bind to it and most of all he did not want to grow old, which is not surprising when we realize that most of his actions were very impulsive and utterly thoughtless. Although it might seem that Kerouac was very fortunate when it came to his loyal friends who always helped him when he for example needed a place to stay, as he kept drinking lots of alcohol, especially whisky, they started to distance themselves from him because it was grueling to spend time around his drunk, diseased and weak self. As he got back home to Lowell he thought that his

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<sup>27</sup> TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskou hlavou. Brno, 2006.

birthplace could make the situation less complicated but even here the residents were rather disappointed by the way Kerouac chose to live his promising life. The truth is, his unpredictable behavior became a serious problem for example during interviews and live shows where creators had to do whatever they could to at least try to save in many cases embarrassing situations caused by Kerouac. It was not uncommon to see him drink alcohol right after waking up. Kerouac's complete change of lifestyle including rather having peace and not being able to understand the youth anymore caused that he more or less lost the connection and relationship with Neal Cassady. The reason could be that Cassady did not change at all during all these years, he was still very impulsive and found it difficult to be fully responsible for his actions while Kerouac simply wanted to find and keep his composure and their adventures began to be foreign to him. Above that Neal Cassady did not find it easy not to act like his character from *On the Road* Dean Moriarty.<sup>28</sup>

Sudden death of Kerouac's sister Caroline continued to worsen his already miserable condition, he was no longer in touch with any of the colleagues from the Beat Generation, some of them even refused to talk to him because of being disgusted about his way of treating his friends and loved ones. It was at this time, when he decided to undertake an excursion to France where he hoped to find out more about his ancestors and due to his miserable condition it may be surprising that he managed to write one of his books *Satori in Paris* about this trip with the term "satori" meaning awakening connected to Buddhism but probably not in this case because of his statement from this book being:

*"But I'm not a Buddhist, I'm a Catholic revisiting the ancestral land that fought for Catholicism against impossible odds yet won in the end, as certes, at dawn, I'll hear the tolling of the tocsin churchbells for the dead."*<sup>29</sup>

To keep his life interesting like when he was younger Kerouac decided to produce a constant dispute with both his friends and strangers he met for example while drinking on social events. Almost at the end of his life he got married once again, this time with Stella Sampas, a lady from his native Lowell, whom he has

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<sup>28</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>29</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *Satori in Paris*. New York: Grove Press, [1966]. s.71

known his whole life. It was not exactly a love-match because before marrying Stella Kerouac visited Mary Carney and begged her to stay with him, otherwise threatened to leave for good and die. Unfortunately Mary was as well as the others disappointed by his drinking and so refused. Gregory Corso was convinced that Kerouac really suffered and so wanted to die already but was not able to take his life because of his religious faith. Only a year before Kerouac died he was hit by terrible news about Neal Cassady's death. It is not yet exactly known how he died but he stayed reckless until the very end. At the end of his life Kerouac did not communicate with anyone, he was surrounded by alcohol and cigarettes and among the few topics that did not make him sullen, were sports, his favorite music and recollection about his childhood and Neal Cassady. Although Kerouac had one dream after all, wandering through the woods and experiencing a peaceful old age or maybe being in a presence of children whom he loved, luck was not with him because in 1969 at the age of only 47 years he died in a hospital because of his health problems caused by constant heavy drinking.<sup>30</sup>

Despite the problems in recent years his funeral was attended by many of his close friends like Allen Ginsberg. His hometown wanted to honor his memory, and so built a monument with Kerouac's texts and quotes almost twenty years after his death. It was not exactly easy to explain the important legacy of a remarkable writer to Lowell's citizens because they could not get rid of their opinion that Jack wasted his life. Many of Kerouac's acquaintances decided to write books about their experiences with him, for example Carolyn Cassady or Herbert Huncke. Thanks to that, we are now able to get to know more about the details of his journey as well as the purpose of his writing. On top of that after death of Kerouac's last wife Stella in 1990 a lot of Jack's yet unreleased writings and materials came to public and people seemed to care about them. It is obvious that Kerouac is not considered to be a quality author acclaimed by critics but still he has built a huge fan base among musicians, travel enthusiasts, film makers. The fact that many of both common

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<sup>30</sup>TURNER, Steve. Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou. Brno, 2006.

people and artists still find him inspiring proves that his legacy did not die with the end of the twentieth century.<sup>31</sup>

For example Kerouac's *On the Road* had a huge impact on society after J. D. Salinger's *The Catcher in the Rye*, a novel about an unsatisfied teenager Holden Caulfield.<sup>32</sup>

Kerouac had a bad feeling about how people understood him, they saw him as a rebellious troublemaker, as Dean Moriarty from *On the Road* and as someone who urgently needs to resist but conversely he was not a liberal at all. It is true that he did not agree with the way society worked but he only wanted exploring and emphasis on the individual to matter again. Another misunderstanding about his creativity was that people knew *On the Road* and by that they gave Kerouac some kind of label and forgot to care about his other and probably much more quality books. What made Kerouac unforgettable around many was not any kind of defiance but simply the fact that his books are truthful and represent freedom of an individual, freedom that many residents lost or plainly never had thanks to the way the society worked in the 1950s when most of the people wanted to raise a family and in order to do that find a successful job. In other words they were forced to stay in one place meaning they were not able to move both physically and mentally in the way it was offered by travelling. There is a possibility that many of these people envied Kerouac the opportunity to do that even though they themselves would not take this chance even if they could.<sup>33</sup>

The Beat Generation was closely connected not only with the faith in oneself but also with the religious faith which is obvious from Kerouac's writings as he was growing older. His colleague John Clellon Holmes even said: *"How to live seems to them much more crucial than why. And it is precisely at this point that the copywriter and the hot-rod driver meet, and their identical beatness becomes significant, for, unlike the Lost Generation, which was occupied with the loss of*

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<sup>31</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

<sup>32</sup>BERCOVITCH, Sacvan a Cyrus R PATELL. *The Cambridge history of American literature*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005

<sup>33</sup> TURNER, Steve. *Jack Kerouac: Hipster s andělskouhlavou*. Brno, 2006

*faith, the Beat Generation is becoming more and more occupied with the need for it.*"<sup>34</sup>

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<sup>34</sup>The Beat Page. HOLMES, John Clellon. [online]. [cit. 2015-06-09]. Dostupné z: <http://www.rooknet.net/beatpage/writers/holmes.html>

## 3.2 Work

### 3.2.1 The Subterraneans

Before saying something about the plot, it is important to quote Adam Moorad, a character from the book, who is based on Allen Ginsberg and explains what kind of people the subterraneans are: *“They are hip without being slick, they are intelligent without being corny, they are intellectual as hell and know all about Pound without being pretentious or talking too much about it, they are very quiet, they are very Christlike.”*<sup>35</sup>

So we can see, that the subterraneans are writers, painters or at least wannabe artists, in many cases they don't have money, they like whiskey, wine and beer and smoking marijuana. Not just in bars, but in flats of the artists themselves. They talk about literature a lot and they are influenced by bebop music, which is a style of jazz. It is clearly stated from the first rows what the book is about. It is a story about love, not so much about travelling like we are used to from most of Kerouac's books but even in this one a major role is played by drugs, alcohol and trying to find a certain sense of living. Even though the girl is mentioned from the very beginning, Kerouac does not rush with exposing her name but he does not have the problem with mentioning the names of other characters.

Finally he talks about meeting the girl, called Mardou Fox, for the very first time and it is obvious that he mentions an instant lust rather than love at first sight. The main character Leo Percepied, who is based on Jack Kerouac himself, suffers from initial feeling that Mardou does not want him. She is much younger than him and he is afraid she cannot really appreciate his character and that maybe he does not have anything to offer to her, as he says:<sup>36</sup>

*“I got to get involved with her” —I tried to shoot her the glad eye the sex eye she never had a notion of looking up or seeing—I must explain, I'd just come off a ship in New York, paid off before the trip to Kobe Japan because of trouble with the*

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<sup>35</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*. New York: Grove Press, [1958]. s.5

<sup>36</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*.

*steward and my inability to be gracious and in fact human and like an ordinary guy...*<sup>37</sup>

The whole book seems to be very spontaneously written because of the sudden and frequent remembering the past and very long and sometimes confused sentences in many cases about unfulfilled chances or how he should have chosen to do things differently. While reading and thinking about how delicately Kerouac writes about a starting relationship between his character Leo and Mardou it is very easy to get into some sort of trance that makes a person want to experience the same thing even though it is obvious that none of it can last. Kerouac writes about how they spent the evening together for the first time or how Allen Ginsberg's character Adam Moorad helped him make it happen. With sincerity and confusion shares innermost feelings about knowing that he should leave her before the start but is not capable of it even though he wanted to focus on writing and not getting involved with a woman.

Although in the beginning Mardou makes a clear statement that she wants to remain independent and does not want to be bound with anyone, after their first night together she completely opens herself to Leo and shares her inner feelings with him. But despite that Kerouac still has a need to change the subject at times and write spontaneously about his then thoughts, which do not always directly relate to the topic. It soon becomes apparent that the relationship between Mardou Fox and Leo Percepied is hardly a healthy one. Although Leo is being a complicated character, it is Mardou's unsearchable behavior and frightened moments that can surprise him occasionally. Both lust and attraction proved to be stronger, because Leo was warned about Mardou's disturbed personality by Adam Moorad, but did not really care.<sup>38</sup>

Sometimes it was not easy keeping attention while reading this particular book precisely because of the already mentioned constant changing of the topic although the whole situation was relatively simplified by the frequent use of the direct speech. Dialogues in this book are sincere, there is no artificial attempt to

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<sup>37</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*. New York: Grove Press, [1958]. s.6-7

<sup>38</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*.

make the story look more interesting and it is not even necessary because the authenticity of the book is enough for readers to be able to align with it.

A couple started to plan a spontaneous trip to Mexico and Leo was surprised that Mardou agreed so quickly, maybe it reminded him of her words that she wants to stay independent and not bound to anyone but suddenly their story did not differ from the true love anymore and Leo happened to be very pleased by that. Still in the first half of the book Kerouac in the heat of storytelling reveals the biggest problem of the love story of Leo and Mardou, which is someone called Yuri who manages to destroy their whole relationship and while mentioning him Leo is full of doubts and wishes to have acted differently because it might have saved the two main characters. In addition several times during the story Leo admits sincerely and resignedly with the fact that he sometimes feels some kind of antipathy towards Mardou and it does not happen for any particular reason and even though it is not directly stated in the book it is obvious that she sometimes feels the same way about him, which is understandable according to the fact, that their relationship is full of unspoken questions and doubts that mainly Leo has a problem to speak about directly with Mardou. Soon we begin to explore radically different natures of both Leo and Mardou. He likes to go to bars and get drunk every night because the company of other people simply makes him feel good, but Mardou is a frightened little girl who does not care about Leo's friends because she would prefer if they could just spend time with each other without any unnecessary noise, maybe seeing Leo around so many people every night makes her feel even more insecure about their relationship so it is safer for her to keep him to herself, but it is not possible to tie him down like this because meeting new people and being around them is much more imaginative for Leo.<sup>39</sup>

On one night Leo seems to have a very bad dream about being in bed with Mardou when suddenly Yuri appears and has an affair with Mardou right in front of Leo's eyes, which of course makes him incredibly angry. Many people he knew appeared in the dream but not of them did anything like this so when Leo wakes up he immediately confesses to Mardou and even admits being very jealous and thinks

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<sup>39</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*. New York: Grove Press, [1958].

about the connection of his nightmares and heavy alcohol drinking. At the first subsequent meeting Leo is totally consumed by his nightmare and memories of it and so he shares it even with Yuri himself whose response at the moment is not completely clear in the book. A logical outcome of the sudden situation was that thanks to jealousy Leo wanted Mardou even more.<sup>40</sup>

Leo became a little paranoid whenever he saw Mardou and Yuri together, he started to notice every little detail and was convinced there is something going on between them and it was quite difficult for him to understand how Yuri and Mardou kept acting childish when they were together even if it was probably caused only by their similar age. As the story escalates, it is much more difficult for Leo to even try to trust Mardou again and it is obvious that it is her he has a problem with, not Yuri, because he confesses to Leo that he has no intentions of getting involved with Mardou even though he believes she does. And then the sudden rush of jealousy finally makes Leo talk about everything that troubles him with both Yuri and Mardou but for some unknown reason it is impossible to improve the atmosphere and the fights continue.

The story ends when Mardou decides to confess to Leo about making love to Yuri once and it is surprising that Leo keeps all his angry thoughts to himself and does not say anything to her. It is almost like his madness is suddenly too much for him to handle and so he is unable to react. The book is written so authentically that a reader is almost glad and relieved when it finally ends because the last pages are especially difficult to handle from Leo's point of view when his lover basically does not even talk to him and at the same time he is mad with jealousy and cannot do anything about it.

The book is not clearly organized, many times it can get very confusing but it goes hand in hand with rawness and authenticity of the story that is based on actual events. The intensity and importance of the story for Kerouac's life is appreciable not only from the fact that it only took him three days to write *The Subterraneans*, but also due to the fact that Kerouac showed the manuscript to a real Mardou Fox,

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<sup>40</sup>KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*. New York: Grove Press, [1958].

but she disliked it for obvious reasons that she did not want public to know about the details of their love.<sup>41</sup>

### 3.2.2 Satori in Paris

This story is connected with travelling, but Kerouac does not travel with friends to gain experiences, he travels to France to find out more about his ancestors and during this trip he reaches a certain Satori although he is not able to determine at which point it happened. As well as his other works, this is also based on actual events, it is unimaginative, which he fittingly explains by: “...*made-up stories and romances about what would happen IF are for children and adult cretins who are afraid to read themselves in a book just as they might be afraid to look in the mirror when they’re sick or injured or hungover or insane.*”<sup>42</sup>

The book is full of references to the French countryside, sights and people that Kerouac came across while travelling, maybe those people did not have any influence on writer’s life but in those given moments they helped him at some point and so were worth writing about. As it is typical for Kerouac, while travelling he spends a lot of time in bars looking for having fun with French women plus he writes about everything that crosses his mind at the moment so again we experience Kerouac’s sudden changing of topics.

Although it was probably not his primary intent, Kerouac spends a lot of time comparing French citizens to Americans, especially in French restaurants where he quietly watches his surroundings, and by that exploring their completely different mentalities. To fully understand the purpose of this book it is important to accept the fact that the research may not necessarily be successful but the travelling itself should still give one something new or change the worldview of a person which perfectly corresponds with Kerouac’s opinion on travel known so well from *On the Road*, that it is not crucial to get to a specific place but it is much more important to get to a certain state of mind.

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<sup>41</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *The Subterraneans*. New York: Grove Press, [1958].

<sup>42</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *Satori in Paris*. New York: Grove Press, [1966]. s.8

Kerouac is not sure which part of his travel caused his Satori, but he admits it might have been simply the fact that he could speak French to lots of people he met. The book is after all full of original French expressions. After being unsuccessful with searching in Parisian libraries Kerouac decides to go to Bretagne, he takes a train because of being unable to catch his flight and when travelling he chats with lots of passengers. It is obvious that Kerouac wrote this book almost at the end of his life, because many of his conversations with people from the train are related to religion and also he spends too much time drinking beer and cognac.

The story ends when Kerouac is not capable of finding anything about his family's name in Bretagne and so he goes back to Paris by train and then wants to fly home to Florida. He is not sober at any point of the story but even though he was not successful in getting to know more about his ancestors, he does not find the trip senseless probably because of the mentioned moment of Satori. Also it is not important that Kerouac is not sure when it took place. Despite this the message of the book is quite clear. We should not forget where we are coming from and we definitely should not be ashamed about our origin and name.<sup>43</sup>

### **3.2.3 Lonesome Traveler**

This is another one of Kerouac's books that is closely connected with his favorite topic of travelling, but unlike the other works this one does not include one coherent story, it is made of eight short stories, each of which focuses on a different part of his life as a traveller. Because of another analyzed books, it is advisable to choose such stories that are connected with Kerouac's life on sea (Slobs of the Kitchen Sea), his European travelling (Big Trip to Europe) and a typical life of a beatnik (New York Scenes).

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<sup>43</sup>KEROUAC, Jack. Satori in Paris. New York: Grove Press, [1966].

### **3.2.3.1 Slobs of the Kitchen Sea**

Right from the beginning it is evident, that Kerouac takes voyage as something sacred and shows a lot of respect. His entire describing of the life on the ship sounds almost romantic but the whole text is relatively confusing because of missing periods and commas. In this story Kerouac does not work as a proper sailor but as a steward's assistant and it is showing that he is really looking forward to sailing. Before that he meets his new partner called George who is used to losing his jobs because of excessive drinking which sounds familiar according to Kerouac's later problems. One of the things in this work, however, is not so common in his books and that is a hint of irony and humor.

When describing other employees on the ship Kerouac is very straightforward and honest so it is easy to guess which of them he respected, did not like or made fun of. Although it is showing that Kerouac admires life on the ship, when he decides to spend the night on land with his friends, his telling and describing of streets and bars sounds almost like he is talking about boring routine. It is not surprising that Kerouac decides to leave the ship when the first major problem appears and he realizes that other employees and his friends are no longer talking to him probably because they take his departure as a betrayal, on the other hand it does not seem to worry him at all.<sup>44</sup>

### **3.2.3.2 New York Scenes**

This story might represent the life of the whole Beat Generation and also be ode to New York City and its streets and bars that Kerouac adored as much as being able to be close to his mother which brought him some sort of comfort. He is also entertained by diversity of people who walk the streets of New York.

Although the story has some direct speech, it is basically "New York advertising" and Kerouac talks to all the readers and invite them to experience the beauty of certain parts of New York City, the author realizes that his readers may

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<sup>44</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. Osamělýpoutník. Vyd. 2., V Argu 1., rev. Praha: Argo, 2004

have different hobbies and accordingly to that refers to a variety of bars and other places. He admires jazz clubs, but does not like the fact that jazz is becoming too commercial, he admires the places where the painters meet and also has tips on where to eat well and inexpensively. The whole story is then finished off by claiming that this is the night life of his generation and according to his words it must be very entertaining and intensive.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.2.3.3 Big Trip to Europe**

After saving money for some time Kerouac decides to spend it on travelling and he leaves New York City to get to Morocco by ship. This way of travelling seems to be quite hysterical because of the bad weather and dangerously high waves. During one of the most difficult moments on the ship Kerouac is even confronted with God, who tells him not to worry, but it is not his only connection with God during his trip. In France he visits a cathedral and starts to cry because of having a feeling of seeing angels. When the ship arrives, Kerouac wanders around with his friend Bill and it is clear later that he is talking about William Burroughs himself, but he also likes to wander alone and he finds those walks very entertaining. From Morocco Kerouac travels to the big cities of Europe, such as Paris or London and he spends his time there admiring local women and thinking about God. He is also fascinated by European nature and architecture and sometimes even by people thanks to their mentality, which differs from the American one, but in France he is absolutely thrilled by Montmartre and the fact that people can find absolutely everything there, such as markets, women, roundabouts. He even thinks about family life while mentioning Montmartre and it is showing that the place made his mood better. Kerouac then visits Louvre and talks about the painters such as Rembrandt or Vincent van Gogh with awe.<sup>46</sup>

His next stop is England and Kerouac even compares Paris to London talking about Paris as a woman and London being an independent man. That may be because of Paris being harder to feel comfortable in. In England Kerouac has a

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<sup>45</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. Osamělýpoutník. Vyd. 2., V Argu 1., rev. Praha: Argo, 2004

<sup>46</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. Osamělýpoutník.

vision of God once again, this time he sees angels and starts to miss his home and whole America and he is convinced that people should stay calm and do not sin because it does not matter anyway. Before Kerouac left England and went home, he visited the British Museum and found out that his family originally comes from Bretagne.

In this case it does not seem important for Kerouac to travel to find a certain state of mind, his purpose is probably much simpler this time and that is to travel in order to get to know new places and maybe people rather than change necessarily, also in this case he prefers to travel alone rather than be surrounded by friends and people in general and it seems like he is more capable of enjoying the road when being alone.

### **3.2.4 The Sea Is My Brother**

A novel that is interesting because it was written in the early 1940s but was not published in the United States until 2010 and it “...offers plenty of disarming insights into who Kerouac was as a person and writer before he slipped behind the mask of Beat Generation Zen-master channeling literature from the ionosphere. The book is enjoyable because, unlike Kerouac’s later canonized work, it comes to its faults honestly, out of simple inexperience.”<sup>47</sup>

The novel is about two men working on the ship but each of them has a different reason to do so, one of them is simply adventurous and the other one takes it as a chance to escape his problems. At the beginning we get to know the hero of the story called Wesley Martin, ostensibly lonely and quiet young man, who meets a crew of young people at the bar not far away from the Columbia University. Although he has a lot of fun with them and meet some interesting people, as a sailor he only wishes to go back to the ship, where he manages to achieve a balanced state of mind and a proper excitement.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>47</sup>SACKS, sam. The wall street journal [online]. In: . [cit. 2015-06-17]. Dostupné z: <http://www.wsj.com/articles/SB10001424052970204603004577271283247107866>

<sup>48</sup>KEROUAC, Jack. Můjbratraceán. Vyd. 1. Praha: Argo, 2012

One of the people he meets, Everhart, who teaches at the Columbia University, wishes to join Wesley on his sea journeys even though he has certain obligations to his family, he yearns for change and possibly even adventure, which is something that the university cannot give him. Although they do not even know each other, they decide to hitch a ride to Boston, where Everhart could get his documents done to be able to work on the ship. It is obvious that Wesley lives for the moment and on the other hand Everhart is the responsible one, even though he has no experiences with traveling and not at all with traveling without money. Soon they succeed to get to Boston and indeed they both manage to get the job on the ship, although Everhart is very nervous about it and once he actually walks into the ship his inner confusion is still increasing but at the same time he is very satisfied with his decision to leave both home and university. The night before sailing both Wesley and Everhart decide to go drinking to a local bar and they take few sailors with them. They start a political discussion and it begins to show that Everhart as a newest sailor does not know much about war and its purpose probably because he never had to care about it as a lecturer. While Wesley is drinking quietly, it starts to show that he is not that carefree as he looks like when his wife Edna he married ten years ago shows up at the bar saying she still loves him and wants him back. Although it is not clear yet what bad things happened between them, it is obvious that she hurt him very bad in the past and now he does not know what to do but still he cares and feels a bit miserably in her presence.<sup>49</sup>

The next days are very stressful for Bill Everhart, because he keeps fighting with other sailors about politics thinking that his conviction is the only one that is right. Soon he starts to realize that it is not truth and that it is normal to have different thinking and still get along well with others but it is still difficult for him as a lecturer to be around ordinary sailors that are probably not so well-educated. On top of that he tries hard to make some friends on the ship because Wesley is nowhere to be found since the evening he got away with his wife. After few days Wesley finally arrives explaining that he was in jail because of making noise while arguing with Edna and it looks like he is very confused and sad about meeting her once again. The next day the ship finally comes out and there is a fight among few

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<sup>49</sup>KEROUAC, Jack. *Můjbratroceán*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Argo, 2012

fuddled sailors and even though Everhart still thinks of Wesley as an irresponsible young man with no values it is him who manages to stop the fight explaining to the others that the sailors must stick together because there is no escape from the ship. Everhart begins to learn his job as an assistant and respectfully explores all that is happening on the ship but he cannot help but notice that Wesley is completely different since he got back and it is clear that it has something to do with his wife, but Wesley does not want to say anything about it and Everhart is not asking when he sees him suffering in silence. He is also scared that the loneliness of Wesley's job is not helping his state, especially when he is supposed to guard the deck and just stare at the huge area of ocean but he soon realizes that Wesley is really at home when being on the ship and that he needs that simple staring at the ocean to be able to stay alive.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> KEROUAC, Jack. *Můjbratroceán*. Vyd. 1. Praha: Argo, 2012

### 3.3 Comparison

In the case of Kerouac it is important to know when he wrote certain books to be able to compare them. The first of the books analyzed above, is *The Sea Is My Brother*. Although it is the last one to be published, after reading it is clear he wrote it at a very young age. The second to be written is *The Subterraneans* (1953) followed by *Lonesome Traveler* (1960) and then five years later *Satori in Paris*.<sup>51</sup>

*The Subterraneans* is different from the other books simply by its concept. It is a love story that does not end well and it is surprising in Kerouac's case that the whole time of the story he stays at one place, although he wants to take his girlfriend to Mexico which he never does. From all of his books this one seems to be the most authentic. Kerouac's character Leo is not afraid to reveal his internal feelings and fears. He does not know what to do in the given situation where he is afraid of losing the loved one. Out of all his books he seems to be hopelessly lost in this one. It differs from *New York Scenes*, one of the short stories from *Lonesome Traveler*, which is also connected to drinking, partying, meeting new people, listening to jazz. Even though *The Subterraneans* as a book was written sooner than *Lonesome Traveler*, Kerouac seems to be older and more troubled here which can be caused by his failing relationship. In *New York Scenes* he does not have any, he simply enjoys the way the Beat Generation writers live their lives. In *Lonesome Traveler* he seems to be over his emotional issues from early age.

*Satori in Paris* is similar to one of the short stories of *Lonesome Traveler* called *Big Trip to Europe*. In *Satori in Paris* Kerouac travels to France to find out more about his family origins and while travelling experiences some sort of enlightenment or awakening. In *Big Trip to Europe* he does not have these ambitions. His travelling does not have any certain purpose in this case but it is clear that his trips are never a waste of time or money because he can take something out of every trip he experiences. It makes the story interesting and readers do not have to be disappointed when Kerouac fails to learn much about his family.

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<sup>51</sup> ENCK, Denise. *Empty Mirror: Jack Kerouac's books* [online]. [cit. 2015-06-18]. Dostupné z: <http://www.emptymirrorbooks.com/beat/kerouac.html>

Lonesome Traveler's last analyzed story called Slobs of the Kitchen Sea reveals Kerouac's experiences as a sailor as well as one of his first novels *The Sea Is My Brother*. These books are separated by nearly twenty years and there are few things common for both *Slobs of the Kitchen Sea* and his other more famous books. There is some uncertainty, stubbornness, irresponsibility that reminds of the character of Dean Moriarty from *On the Road*. But all these characteristics are much harder to find in *The Sea Is My Brother*. Even this story has its discursive character that wants to change a lot of things but is afraid to do it. There are elements that are later fully developed in Kerouac's other work such as travelling, alcohol, the power of friendship, the urge to do something new and unexpected. But at the same time the book is sleek, appealing and even loveable.

*"The Sea Is My Brother is startling if only because it reveals how early Kerouac's key obsessions began. All the major motifs of his later work are here, albeit in a clumsy and sketchy form. Kerouac was a sucker for passionate male-on-male friendships. At their core, his novels feature garrulous men on the move."*<sup>52</sup>

Although one might assume that a person calms with age, it is certainly not the case of Kerouac's writing. With plenty of experience gained and alcohol consumed it seems that Kerouac's style of storytelling became wilder, more adventurous and less tied which many of readers find more exciting. But this outcome is logical thanks to knowing how Kerouac managed to destroy himself with alcohol.

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<sup>52</sup>THE TELEGRAPH. *The Sea Is My Brother: the Lost Novel by Jack Kerouac: review*. [online]. [cit. 2015-06-21]. Dostupné z: <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/culture/books/bookreviews/8928897/The-Sea-Is-My-Brother-the-LostNovel-by-Jack-Kerouac-review.html>

## 4 Conclusion

The bachelor thesis focused on the Beat Generation since its establishment and on its main character Jack Kerouac and his remarkable life and works. It also deals with the context of the 1950s in the United States of America and what led to the creation of such a generation of authors. A large part of the thesis is dedicated to Lawrence Ferlinghetti and his City Lights publishing house that supported the members of the Beat Generation and offered help to them when they needed it.

A large part of the thesis consists of the analyses of four different books from Jack Kerouac, such as *The Subterraneans*, *Satori in Paris*, *Lonesome Traveler* and his recently published novel *The Sea Is My Brother*. All of these books are closely connected with travelling but still each one of them is at some point completely different.

*The Subterraneans* is essentially a love story. There are no trips, but a lot of dreaming about travelling and going away and generally finding a place in life. The book identifies the indirect danger of love that goes hand in hand with the situation when love becomes unhealthy thanks to obsession and jealousy probably caused by suspicion. It also points to a certain naivety of a young and inexperienced person which leads to irrational behavior. Lots of alcohol, marijuana and parties until dawn are an integral part of the story. It also deals with thinking about what would happen if a person did things differently.

In *Satori in Paris* Kerouac is looking for the origin of his family. The search takes him all the way to France but even though his quest is not as successful as he hoped, it highlights the purpose and importance of having a family and remembering where one is coming from. This road, as well as the others, is filled with alcohol drinking, getting to know new people, mostly women and in general enjoying each day as if it was the last. The different natures of both French and Americans can also be noticed from the story.

*Lonesome Traveler* differs from the other Kerouac's books, because it is a series of eight short stories. They are all connected with travelling but this thesis

focuses on three of them- Slobs of the Kitchen Sea, New York Scenes and Big Trip to Europe. A story called Slobs of the Kitchen Sea speaks about Kerouac's time spent on sea as a sailor. This story is analyzed in the thesis for a reason. It corresponds nicely with his recently published book *The Sea Is My Brother*, which also tells the story of Kerouac as a sailor but was written much sooner.

On the other hand *New York Scenes* can be described as an excerpt of everyday life of a member of the Beat Generation. The story shows that Kerouac is a big fan of New York City and its noise, diversity of both people and places and finally jazz music. This short story is selected because in an uncomplicated way it tells the readers how the ordinary life of the Beat Generation writer and his friends looks like.

Although *Big Trip to Europe* may seem similar to *Satori in Paris* in a way that Kerouac travels all over European's big cities and even gets to know something about his family, the biggest difference between these two stories is the author's age. Even though the two stories are separated by just five years, thanks to similar topic it easily shows writer's progressive decline, nervous behavior and the growing need of drinking alcohol. In *Big Trip to Europe* the purpose is not to find one's family origins. The author is calmer and rather enjoying nature, monuments, foreign country and the people he meets.

*The Sea Is My Brother* is the last analyzed book in the thesis and what makes it completely different from the other books is once again the question of age. Although it was not published in the United States until 2010, the author wrote it at the age of 20 and it is one of the first novels ever written by Kerouac. It is not the only time he shares his experiences as a sailor but in this case his storytelling is more graceful than might be expected of him as a writer with certain style of writing. His main character Wesley keeps his thoughts to himself and we do not know much about him. Kerouac's early work is easier to understand, it is not confusing and the author cares more about editing of the text. Although the book is considered by many as clumsy, it might be hard to agree with them this time. Writer's authentic description of life on the ship before sailing is engrossing.

The fact that there are movies made based on Kerouac's books (*On the Road*, *Big Sur*) and that he generally affects a lot of contemporary artists such as painters or musicians proves that literature of the Beat Generation is still popular and people look for it even in the 21st century. This may be due to a specific feature of the current situation in the world and the fact that when it comes to travelling we now have more opportunities than ever before. Young people all over the world do not hurry to start a family or build a career. Their principles have changed, rather than staying at one place and trying to learn something at work, they desire to travel, to get to know new people, countries and cultures because these days young people believe that by travelling they can learn more than they would have learned elsewhere. In this case, it is the logical conclusion that people now seek out the Beat Generation literature, because it inspires them in shaping their life attitudes.

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