

**A Comparative Study of Jack Kerouac & Ernest Hemingway
as Representatives of Their Respective Generations**

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ABSTRACT

Both Jack Kerouac and Ernest Hemingway were once regarded as spokespersons for their generations. One was a member of the Beat Generation, while the other was associated with the “Lost Generation.” This thesis is a comparative analysis of four texts; two by Kerouac and two by Hemingway. The primary texts are as follows: *On the Road*, *Satori in Paris*, *The Sun Also Rises*, and *A Moveable Feast*. The first three have been defined as *roman à clef*, while the last is a memoir. In terms of composition, it is clear that all of these texts have their geneses in biography. One of the main focuses of this thesis is the problematic relationship between fact and fiction. How do we distinguish autobiographical writing from fiction when narratives, such as the *roman à clef*, are derived from actual experiences in the author’s life? As constructs, the “Beat Generation” and the “Lost Generation” both seem to be founded upon what critics have termed “the dialectics of the sacred and the profane.” In relation to this concept, *Myth* is also an important subject in this thesis. Besides myth, this thesis also discusses *mythopoeia*, i.e. myth-making, in terms of how the authors construct their personas through narrative writing. Critics have often spoken of thematic similarities between *The Sun Also Rises* and *On the Road*; this thesis is also an investigation of the thematic similarities and dissimilarities between the two writers.

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This thesis is dedicated to my mother and father.

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INTRODUCTION

When *On the Road* was published in 1957, it was heralded by the *New York Times* as a “historic occasion.” Gilbert Millstein described the novel as “the most beautifully executed, the clearest and the most important utterance yet made by the generation Kerouac himself named years ago as ‘beat,’ and whose principal avatar he is” (“Book of the Times”). *On the Road* transformed Jack Kerouac into a literary celebrity, and as a result, the “Beat Generation” also caught nationwide attention in the United States. Although published more than half a century ago, the presence of *On the Road* can still be felt in the 21st century. In 2007, the original scroll version, i.e. Kerouac’s legendary first draft of the novel, was released to the reading public in book form. A long-awaited film adaptation, directed by Walter Salles, is also slated for distribution in 2012.

At the time of its publication, many critics felt that *On the Road* captured the essence of post-WWII America. Similarly, when *The Sun Also Rises* was published 31 years earlier, critics asserted that Ernest Hemingway had presented a portrait of his generation, i.e. the WWI cohort. Gilbert Millstein wrote: “‘The Sun Also Rises’ came to be regarded as the testament of the ‘Lost Generation,’ so it seems certain that ‘On the Road’ will come to be known as that of the ‘Beat Generation’” (“Book of the Times”). First of all, how did the Beat Generation come about? And secondly, was there a connection between the Beat Generation and the Lost Generation?

Millstein believed that the Beat Generation and the Lost Generation had little in common: “There is . . . no similarity between the two; technically and philosophically, Hemingway and Kerouac are, at the very least, a depression and a world war apart” (“Book of the Times”). Although there certainly are many differences between the writers of the Beat Generation and the writers that were associated with the “Lost Generation,” such as Hemingway, John Dos Passos, and F. Scott Fitzgerald, Millstein, I believe, is not entirely correct on this issue. As we shall see shortly, it is quite possible that there would not have been a “Beat Generation” without a “Lost Generation.” Please note that the terms “Beat Generation” and “Lost Generation” are enclosed within quotation marks (I am referring to these terms as proper nouns); hopefully, my reasoning will become clear as the introduction unfolds. As I see it, Millstein’s argument was somewhat misguided, because unlike the Beat Generation, the Lost Generation never actually existed as a self-conscious literary movement *or* a coherent sociocultural demography. It may seem that I am contradicting myself by pointing out the non-existence of the Lost Generation (as the aforementioned items) on the

one hand, whilst, on the other hand, also claiming that the “Beat Generation” could not have existed without it; however, this is a paradox easily solved once we answer the first question that I raised earlier: “How did the Beat Generation come about?”

In “The Origins of the Beat Generation,” Jack Kerouac wrote: “John Clellon Holmes (author of *Go and The Horn*) and I were sitting around trying to think up the meaning of the Lost Generation and the subsequent existentialism and I said ‘You know, this is really a beat generation’ and he leapt up and said ‘That’s it, that’s right!’” (359). As we can see, there *is* a relation between the “Beat Generation” and the “Lost Generation.” Kerouac’s own words indicate that the term “Beat Generation” came about from a contemplation on “the meaning of the Lost Generation.” If Hemingway had not written *The Sun Also Rises*, it is quite possible that there would not have been a “Beat Generation,” because the proper noun “Lost Generation” would not have existed for Holmes and Kerouac to think about. In this particular case, proper nouns are important, because the term “Beat,” which came about from a contemplation on the term “Lost,” carried connotations, e.g. beat-up, beatific, and jazz beat, etc., that *defined* “Beat” discourse. If the literary circle comprising Kerouac, Ginsberg, Burroughs, and others had dubbed itself differently, “Beat” discourse might have been different from what it actually became. To point out the obvious, a different moniker would have generated different connotations and therefore different meanings which would then lead to different discourses.

In *A Moveable Feast*, we learn that the “Lost Generation” was essentially a sociocultural construct. It began as an impression of the young men who returned from the First World War. In the eyes of Gertrude Stein, these people seemed to have lost their sense of value; they drank themselves to death (29); they had “no respect for anything” (29). When T. S. Eliot’s *The Waste Land* was published, critics such as I. A. Richards read the poem as an illustration of the postwar generation’s “sense of desolation, of uncertainty, of futility, of the groundlessness of aspirations, of the vanity of endeavour, and a thirst for a life-giving water which seems suddenly to have failed” (qtd. in Lewis 130). Although the war had undoubtedly left many traumatized, it ought to be understood that the term “Lost Generation” is essentially a literary invention, but in spite of this fact, it does have a corresponding basis in historical reality.

The First World War caused at least 9 million deaths. By the end of the war, four empires had ceased to exist. People, such as John Maynard Keynes, were appalled by the outcome of the Paris Peace Conference. Without a doubt, the European continent had gone through a major upheaval during the four years of the “Great War.” It was a complete

catastrophe. Afterwards, it was said that a generation of youths were disillusioned. It was said that their ideals and values had been shattered. In response to the critics who read *The Waste Land* as a testament to the disillusionment of the WWI cohort, the author of the poem asserted that any such notion was pure “nonsense” (qtd. in Lewis 130). As we can see, T. S. Eliot did not think of himself as a spokesperson for a disillusioned generation. Similarly, Ernest Hemingway, who served on the Italian front in WWI, never thought of himself as being a part of a Lost Generation:

I thought [he said in 1951] beat-up, maybe, [deleted] in many ways. But damned if we were lost except for deads, gueules cassées, and certified crazies. Lost, no. And Criqui was a real gueules cassées, won the featherweight championship of the world. We were a very solid generation though without education (some of us). But you could always get it. (qtd. in Baker 80 - 81)

There was a perception at the time that the postwar generation was disillusioned. There was a perception that the West had reached a moral crisis. There was a perception that Europe had fallen from what was retrospectively identified as *La Belle Epoque*. When *The Sun Also Rises* was published, contemporary critics found a name for their disillusioned generation. The “Lost Generation” is in fact a fictional construct; however, the term stuck and gained currency. It gained enough currency that several decades after *The Sun Also Rises* was published, Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes began contemplating the “meaning of the Lost Generation,” and out of this came the “Beat Generation.”

In “The Philosophy of the Beat Generation,” John Clellon Holmes writes: “[I]nstead of the cynicism and apathy which accompanies the end of ideals, and which gave the Lost Generation a certain poetic, autumnal quality, the Beat Generation is altogether too vigorous, too intent, too indefatigable, too curious to suit its elders” (371). As I see it, Holmes is basically repeating a popular (mis)conception of the post-WWI era. This notion of an “end of ideals” is, I believe, highly problematic. The “Great War” was a major catastrophe, but it did not bring about the end of Western civilization or Western ideals. The notion of an “end of ideals” implies (or at least it seems to imply) that pre-WWI Europe was some sort of prelapsarian paradise in which idealistic people lived in idealistic harmony. Needless to say, this is a far stretch from the truth. The First World War was precipitated by territorial disputes between colonial powers. There was never any pretense to ideals. There might have been some rhetoric regarding liberty, equality, and the brotherhood of man, but the fact remains that the major powers of Europe were blatantly engaged in imperialistic projects (for

mercantile purposes) at least as far back as the Age of Enlightenment when Western “ideals” might be said to have been born. The notion that WWI brought about an “end of ideals,” I believe, is somewhat idealistic in itself.

When *The Sun Also Rises* was published, Hemingway was seen as a spokesperson for a generation which, first of all, he never intended to speak for, and secondly, he never thought of as disillusioned or *lost*. Millstein wrote: “‘The Sun Also Rises’ came to be regarded as the testament of the ‘Lost Generation.’” This is true. The novel “came to be regarded” as a testament, but it was never *intended* as such. In describing the Beat Generation, John Clellon Holmes also wrote:

It is a postwar generation, and, in a world which seems to mark its cycles by its wars, it is already being compared to that other postwar generation, which dubbed itself 'lost'. The Roaring Twenties, and the generation that made them roar, are going through a sentimental revival, and the comparison is valuable. (“This Is the Beat Generation”)

Here is the biggest problem of all; at no point did either Hemingway, Fitzgerald, or Dos Passos “dub” themselves the Lost Generation. In 1958, Hemingway was asked if there was a “group feeling” amongst the expatriate writers during the 1920’s. He replied: “No. There was no group feeling” (Plimpton 21 - 22).

With regard to Holmes’ statement, I do agree with one point, i.e. “the comparison is valuable.” In order to understand the Beat Generation, it is useful, I think, to determine what the “Lost Generation” meant to the Beats. What is the meaning of being *lost*? What is the meaning of being *beat*? What are their similarities and what are their dissimilarities? This is the starting point of this thesis.

The birth of the Beat Generation took place before the success of *On the Road*. John Clellon Holmes’ *Go* was published in 1952. Later that year, he was to publish an article entitled “This Is the Beat Generation” in the *New York Times*. In 1955, Allen Ginsberg completed “Howl.” By 1957, Lawrence Ferlinghetti was caught up in an obscenity trial for publishing Ginsberg’s poem. The trial received a lot of press and attention. Several months later, Kerouac’s second novel, *On the Road*, was published. It was regarded as a “historic occasion.” It marked the full-blown emergence of the Beat Generation. The novel became a “testament” to the post-WWII generation. The reasons for choosing *On the Road* as a representative text for the Beat Generation (in this thesis) should thus be self-explanatory.

In 1926, Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* was published. It brought the term “Lost Generation” to public awareness. Critics maintained that the novel captured the

zeitgeist of post-WWI Europe. *The Sun Also Rises* is still considered by many today to be Hemingway's magnum opus. As far as I can tell, it may very well be *the* narrative that came closest to epitomizing the "Lost Generation." Without it, the term "Lost Generation" (in the sense that we understand it today) might never have existed. The reasons for choosing this text over others in order to discover the "meaning of the lost generation" should therefore also be self-evident.

In 1997, Robert Stone wrote:

The overwhelming gratifying element in "On the Road" for its contemporary readers was the dream, the promise of life more abundant available to the young American adventurer, the intrepid traveler. Thirty or so years before, "The Sun Also Rises" had offered similar dreams, though it made them appear more difficult of access. "The Sun Also Rises" was a better book, of course, and it seems wiser, though that may be only because Hemingway was tougher and meaner and more realistic about people than Kerouac.

Due to the fact that the formulation of the "Beat Generation" was related (in certain respects) to the "Lost Generation," it is only natural that critics and writers alike have spoken of *On the Road* and *The Sun Also Rises* in the same breath. Contrary to Millstein's argument, readers such as Stone seem to have identified thematic similarities between the two novels. As Stone's statement suggests, Kerouac and Hemingway dealt with similar themes, but their attitudes towards those themes were different. With regard to this difference, Holmes writes: "[U]nlike the Lost Generation, which was occupied with the loss of faith, the Beat Generation is becoming more and more occupied with the need for it" ("This Is the Beat Generation").

The idea of a "loss of faith" as well as a concomitant "need for it" is worth investigating. In "The Origins of the Beat Generation," Kerouac tells us that Existentialism played a part in the formulation of the "Beat Generation." Robert A. Hipkiss writes: "*On the Road* [among other novels by Kerouac] remain as living testimony to the *angst* of the lost generation of World War II" (v). In order to see how *On the Road* functions as an exposition of "angst," it would be useful to approach the narrative from the perspective of Existentialism. The same angle can also be applied to *The Sun Also Rises* in order to determine how the novel differs from (or resembles) Kerouac's work. *The Sun Also Rises* contains two epigraphs; one of which is taken from the Book of Ecclesiastes:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever... The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose... The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it

whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits... All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again.

In this passage, there is a subtle sense of futility. As a matter of fact, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes begins by declaring that all is “vanity.” In the King James Version of the Bible, the hebrew word “hebel” is rendered as “vanity,” but it can also be translated as “absurdity” (Whyte). At least on a surface level, there seem to be thematic similarities between Hemingway’s epigraph and Existentialist thought. This is one of the reasons why I think it is also worth approaching *The Sun Also Rises* from the perspective of Existentialism.

As a third primary text, I have chosen *A Moveable Feast*. Hemingway’s memoir takes us back to the time when the Lost Generation was believed to have come of age. In order to understand the “Lost Generation,” *A Moveable Feast* is an invaluable source, as it contains information regarding the genesis of that term. Furthermore, the memoir is also especially useful for the purposes of this thesis, because it provides us with an autobiographical account of the Parisian milieu that was also portrayed in *The Sun Also Rises*. Hemingway began working on his first novel in 1925. Since *A Moveable Feast* encompasses the years 1921 to 1926, we may also gain further insight into *The Sun Also Rises* by using the author’s memoir as a point of reference.

I have chosen *Satori in Paris* by Kerouac as a fourth primary text to provide a counter balance to *A Moveable Feast*. Although *Satori in Paris* is marketed as a “novel,” it is, as far as I can tell, a memoir. If the reader was to measure the account given in *Satori in Paris* against the same account documented by Ann Charters (in her biography on Kerouac), the reader would not find any inconsistencies. Furthermore, it is clear that Kerouac intended *Satori in Paris* to be read as a work of non-fiction. Although much neglected by critics, *Satori in Paris* is quite interesting because it marks Kerouac’s foray into metafiction. Given the metafictional aspects of the text, the question of (self-)representation is brought to the forefront. According to Postmodern theorists, all texts are inherently metafictional. For this reason, I will be discussing not only the metafictional aspects of *Satori in Paris*, but also issues such as self-representation in *A Moveable Feast*. Autobiographical writing, it has been argued, tends to result in a form of self-enhancement (Grace 8); therefore, it would be interesting, I think, to see how Kerouac and Hemingway construct their personas.

Both *The Sun Also Rises* and *On the Road* have been defined as *romans a clef*. Both narratives are clearly derived from actual experiences in their authors’ lives. The boundaries between fact and fiction in both works present interesting implications with regard to the

question of genre-definition. How do we distinguish autobiographical writing from fiction? If a fictional narrative is derived from actual experience, does it or does it not constitute as autobiography? In a similar vein, if metafictionality is inherent in all narrative texts, to what extent are autobiographies fictional? As I see it, the “roman à clef” (i.e. novel with a key) as a term inherently signifies the problematic relationship between fact and fiction in narrative writing; this is one of the reasons why I will be looking into the problem of genre-definition in relation to *The Sun Also Rises* and *On the Road*.

Marcel Proust once wrote that “the only paradise is paradise lost.” The notions of “lost” and “beat” seem to strike a chord of resonance with certain mythic concepts. For example, both terms evoke a sense of *nostalgia* (in the original sense of the word). In order to be “lost,” one must posit an opposite to the state of being lost. Similarly, in order to be “beat,” one must posit an opposite state of ideal be-ing. Both of these concepts are dialectical formulations in the sense that they are necessarily defined *against* an opposite. To use a simplistic example, a thing cannot be “bad” without our having a notion of what “good” (or at least *non-bad*) is. Those who are familiar with the Beat Generation will know that the term “beat” signifies not only a sense of “down and out,” but also a sense of “Beatitude.” Matt Theado asserts that *On the Road* is a story about “two young men [who] travel the American continent looking outwardly for kicks and inwardly for salvation” (57). In other words, the narrative is also eschatological. From a structural point of view, I believe it is possible to read *On the Road* as a variant on certain types of myth. By quoting the Book of Ecclesiastes, Hemingway was invoking the Judeo-Christian heritage, a heritage consisting of narratives that can also be seen as variants of older myths. To what extent does “myth” inform *The Sun Also Rises*? This is also a topic I will be pursuing in this thesis.

Nancy M. Grace writes: “Kerouac inherited the modernist turn away from social realism and naturalism to more abstract and ethereal forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romanticism” (15). To what extent is this true? Is it possible to locate Kerouac’s work within the conventions set down by the poets of the Romantic era? In “Belief and Technique for Modern Prose,” Kerouac compiled a list of things that he thought were “essential” to being a writer. A cursory glance at the list does seem to bring to mind the poetics and preferred themes of the Romantic poets. Kerouac urges the writer “to sketch the flow that already exists intact in mind.” For Wordsworth, the act of poetic writing consists of “follow[ing] the fluxes and refluxes of the mind” (241). Kerouac urges the writer to be “[s]ubmissive to everything, open, listening,” which in a way recalls Wordsworth’s “organic sensibility” (240). In a somewhat mystical vein, Kerouac also wrote: “In trance fixated dreaming upon object before

you,” which reminds me personally of Coleridge’s preface to “Kubla Khan.” Judging from this list of essentials, Kerouac’s conception of what a writer is and how a writer ought to write, in my opinion, seems to evoke the notion of a Romantic Genius. Furthermore, Kerouac’s words contain a definite orientation towards mysticism, which I also propose to investigate in this thesis. Kerouac’s wild, ecstatic statements with regard to poetics stand in stark contrast to Hemingway who was renowned for terse, restrained writing. Perhaps this is the main difference between Kerouac and Hemingway. Robert Stone argued that Hemingway was the “wiser” writer because he was more “realistic.” While I don’t necessarily agree with Stone’s evaluation, I do think that the two writers seem to have dissimilar attitudes (perhaps realistic vs. idealistic) towards shared themes. If it is possible to locate Kerouac within the Romantic tradition, to what extent is Hemingway’s work non-Romantic (or perhaps also Romantic)? In *Ivory Towers and Sacred Founts*, Maurice Beebe discusses the the three waves of “Bohemianism.” He tells us that:

the third major wave of popularity came in the 1920’s, and books like Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises* kept the tradition of the Latin Quarter alive for a new generation of aspiring artists. That the Bohemian tradition is still powerful is shown by the ‘beatnik’ vogue of our time which, like all previous manifestations of Bohemianism, seems rooted in the Romantic concept of art as experience. (78)

As the passage suggests, a “Romantic conception of art” could very well be the connection between Hemingway and the Beats.

The four primary texts of this thesis are then as follows: *On the Road* and *Satori in Paris* by Jack Kerouac; *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Moveable Feast* by Ernest Hemingway. Two novels and two memoirs by two different writers: one who was considered as a spokesman for the Beat Generation, and the other who was responsible for bringing the term “Lost Generation” to public awareness. The main topics that I will be discussing in this thesis are as follows: Romanticism, Existentialism, myth, genre-definition, and representation. In relation to the topics of “genre-definition” and “representation,” I will be drawing upon author theory, postmodernism, and narratology among other critical theories and methods. I will also be using texts by writers and critics such as G. K. Chesterton, T. S. Eliot, Boris Tomasevskij, William Blake, Friedrich Nietzsche, and Michel Foucault to illustrate some of the concerns related to the four primary texts. Although this may seem like a random collection of secondary sources, each quotation from the aforementioned writers and critics will serve a purpose that is directly related to the primary texts.

CHAPTER I: KEROUAC

The primary texts of this chapter are *On the Road* and *Satori in Paris*. In relation to these texts, I will be touching upon the following subjects: Romanticism, Existentialism, myth, genre-definiton, and representation. As incongruous as these topics may seem, I hope that I will be able to demonstrate how they are related to each other, and perhaps also to illustrate how they might inform one another. The topics form a linear unity, but for the sake of clarity, I will present each topic under a separate heading. The primary texts will be referred to by the abbreviations *OTR* and *SIP*.

The Beat Generation & "Romanticism"

In this section, I will be looking at the similarities between *OTR* and Romantic literature. The purpose of this will become self-evident as the thesis unfolds. Before I cut to the chase, I'd like to address the question: "What is Romanticism?" When describing texts that do not belong to the Romantic era, the adjective "Romantic" is actually quite difficult to use with precision. As we shall see, this lack of precision has to do with the very definition of "Romanticism" itself. Aidan Day argues that "attempts to summarize Romanticism inevitably end up over-systematizing and simplifying the phenomenon" (5). To say the least, Romanticism is much more complex than it is often thought to be.

Traces of what we might identify as Romantic characteristics can be found throughout the literary history of the West. There are those who will argue that using the term "Romantic" to describe texts written either before or after the Romantic period is essentially an anachronistic mistake. However, since all writers are indebted to traditions that precede them, it is only natural that we are able to identify characteristics within certain texts, produced either before or after the late 18th to mid-19th century, that are similar to the characteristics of Romantic literature. Needless to say, there *have been* writers who were influenced by the Romantic poets; not only by their poetry, but also by their poetics. By the same token, there have also been writers who were influenced by a particular *conception* of Romanticism.

Although the Romantic poets lived and wrote during the 18th and mid-19th century, "Romanticism" as an actual term was not defined until later. In other words, it is essentially a construct, e.g. the "Romanticism" popularized by M. H. Abrams in *The Mirror and the Lamp*, the "Romanticism" defined by the *Encyclopedia Britannica*, and the "Romanticism" taught in

secondary schools all over the world. Romanticism as such is generally understood to be a more or less singular and unitary movement. However, modern historians and critics have long argued otherwise. For example, Arthur O. Lovejoy writes:

we should learn to use the word ‘Romanticism’ in the plural. This, of course, is already the practise of the more cautious and observant literary historians, in so far as they recognise that the ‘Romanticism’ of one country may have little in common with that of another. . . . But the discrimination of Romanticisms which I have in mind is not solely or chiefly a division upon lines of nationality or language. What is needed is that any study of the subject should begin with a recognition of a *prima facie* plurality of Romanticisms, of possibly quite distinct thought-complexes, a number of which may appear in one country. (qtd. in Day 181)

In short, the term “Romanticism” in its singular form is at best a *fictional* construct; it is a myth. However, I would like to point out that *fictionality* and *functionality* are two different things. The myth of Romanticism is still very much alive and well today as it has been for more than a century. With regard to the difference between fictionality and functionality, let us consider an analogy:

When [Pushkin] was writing *Mozart and Salieri*, what was important was not the actual historical relationship between these two composers . . . but the fact that there existed a legend about the poisoning of Mozart by Salieri . . . The question of whether these rumors and legends had any foundation in fact was irrelevant to their function. (Tomasevskij 86)

Similarly, whether or not Romanticism (as a singular and unitary movement) has “any foundation in fact” is actually “irrelevant to its function.” The fact that we are able to find courses on “Romanticism” in this very institution attests to its functionality.

What does any of this have to do with Kerouac? Although Romanticism is essentially a fictional construct, there is a great deal of similarity between Kerouac’s writing and what is generally called Romantic literature. In a similar sense, although the Lost Generation never existed as a literary movement, there *is* a connection between the Beat Generation and that fictional construct. As we shall see, Kerouac’s sense of poetics and his use of rhetoric are very similar to the poetics and rhetoric of the so-called Romantic poets. As a matter of fact, we know that he was directly influenced by the poets of that era. For example, Kerouac writes: “I shorten things, after that great poet Robert Burns” (*SIP* 56). It is safe to say, I think, that there are genealogies behind all constructs; the Beat Generation is not an exception.

When applied to the primary texts, I have used the term “Romanticism” (with a capital “R”) and its inflected forms as a shorthand for a collection of literary concepts that emphasize the primacy of the imagination, spontaneity, nature, et cetera, namely characteristics generally ascribed to the work of the canonized British poets that lived and wrote during the late 18th and mid-19th century. In other words, I use the term “Romanticism” in its popular sense. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines the word “Romantic” as such:

7. Freq. as Romantic. Designating, relating to, or characteristic of a movement or style during the late 18th and 19th centuries in Europe marked by an emphasis on feeling, individuality, and passion rather than classical form and order, and typically preferring grandeur, picturesqueness, or naturalness to finish and proportion.

To be precise, this is the definition I refer to whenever I speak of “Romanticism” or the “Romantic.” In *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination*, Nancy M. Grace writes: “Kerouac inherited the modernist turn away from social realism and naturalism to more abstract and ethereal forms of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century romanticism” (15). It is clear that I am not alone in linking Kerouac to the conventions of Romanticism.

According to M. H. Abrams, one of the defining characteristics of Romantic literature is “the assumption by William Blake [1757 -- 1821], William Wordsworth [1770 -- 1850], and Percy Bysshe Shelley [1792 -- 1822] of the persona of a poet-prophet who writes a visionary mode of poetry” (qtd. in Day 2). As we shall see, this image of the poet-prophet or shaman crops up quite frequently in Kerouac’s work, especially in *OTR*. Readers have also been inclined to see Kerouac the author as a shamanic figure too. For example, “Time magazine’s obituary refers to Kerouac’s status as ‘shaman’ of the Beat Generation” (Theado 1). As an aside, it is interesting to note that this particular motif of the “shaman” has in effect bled out of the author’s text and into extra-textual commentary on the author himself. This is something I will be addressing later on in the section entitled “Genre-Definition.”

In order to recognize the Romantic tendencies within Kerouac’s work, I have found it useful to see how literature was conceived by non-Romantic (or anti-Romantic) writers. For example, in “Tradition and the Individual Talent,” T. S. Eliot makes the following statements:

It is not in his personal emotions, the emotions provoked by particular events in his life that the poet is in any way remarkable or interesting . . . There is a great deal, in the writing of poetry, which must be conscious and deliberate . . . Poetry is not a turning loose of emotion, but an escape from emotion; it is not the expression of personality, but an escape from personality. (79 - 80)

These remarks indicate a conception of literature that is radically different from that of Kerouac's. If we were to invert Eliot's arguments, we would have a pretty good description of Kerouac's work. I believe that the contrast (between the two sets of poetics) serves to accentuate the degree of Romanticism present in both Kerouac's work and in the entire corpus of the Beat Generation.

In "Poetry, Violence, and the Trembling Lambs," Allen Ginsberg writes: "Poetry is the record of individual insights into the secret soul of the individual -- and, because all individuals are One in the eyes of their Creator, into the soul of the World" (qtd. in Foster xi). Evidently, "individuality" is of great thematic importance to the Beat poet, and as I see it, this particular brand of individualism can be related to Romantic thought. As we shall see, "selfhood" was expressed in more or less similar terms by both the Beats and the Romantics. With regard to the "Romantic notion of selfhood," Linda Anderson writes: "Each individual possesses a unified, unique selfhood which is also the expression of a universal human nature" (5). Needless to say, the idea expressed here is quite similar to Ginsberg's argument. For both the Beats and the Romantics, the individual man is seen as the epitome of mankind, which is an idea that figures prominently in *OTR*. Furthermore, Ginsberg's rhetoric regarding the mystical unity between the individual and the universe serves to strengthen the Romantic concept of the "poet-prophet" or shaman. The tendency to invoke the mystical and the shamanic is not unique to Ginsberg. For example, Kerouac writes: "I knew like mad that everything I had ever known and would ever know was One" (*OTR* 147). This dialectical formulation of individuality/universality is an important theme of *OTR*.

Picking up from the quotation above, I'd like to discuss another prominent theme of *OTR*, namely *madness*. In *Beat Culture and the New America: 1950 - 1965*, Lisa Philips explains that for the Beats "[m]adness was often privileged over reason" (30). In the narrative, "madness" is repeatedly portrayed as a quality to be revered. The quintessential Beat hero, Dean Moriarty, is described by the narrator as a "mad" prophet several times. By likening Moriarty to a mad prophet, the narrator introduces overtones that are suggestive of a Dionysian tradition in which madness, frenzy, and ecstasy are central tenets. For Sal Paradise, the only people worth knowing are "the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved" (8). Madness is described as a quality that denotes not only vitality and spirituality but also beauty: "the madness of Dean had bloomed into a weird flower" (113). The same metaphor is used again when Sal reflects that "the crazy flowers bloom [in New York] too" (125). By visualizing madness as a "flower," Sal explicitly defines it as something

beautiful. For the protagonist, Dean Moriarty is not only a friend but also a mentor too. Sal portrays him as a mad prophet who possesses the divine secret of Beatitude:

Dean . . . his bony mad face covered with sweat and throbbing veins, saying, "Yes, yes, yes," as though tremendous revelations were pouring into him all the time now, and I am convinced they were, and the others suspected as much and were frightened. He was BEAT — the root, the soul of Beatific. What was he knowing? (195)

Robert A. Hipkiss explains that “experience for Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise must be intensified to produce the ecstatic ‘flash’ that erases one’s rational preoccupations with this world and gives him a sense of oneness with the All-Knowing God” (34). Concepts such as the “primal drive,” the “ecstatic flash,” and irrationality are similar to the “Energy” that William Blake wrote about in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*: “Energy is the only life and is from the Body and Reason is the bound or outward circumference of Energy . . . Energy is Eternal Delight” (xvi). According to Blake, “Energy” is bound by “Reason,” which is also to say that “Energy” is essentially irrational. To my mind, the similarity between Blake’s “Energy” and Kerouac’s “madness” is quite striking. As I see it, Dean Moriarty *is* an embodiment of Blake’s “Energy.”

The French poet Arthur Rimbaud, whom many of the Beats were greatly influenced by, once wrote:

The poet makes himself a visionary by a long immense and reasoned derangement of all the senses. . . . For he comes to the unknown! . . . Though he collapses in his leaping among things unheard-of and nameless, other horrific labourers will come; they will begin at the horizons where the other sank. (qtd. in Coupe 43)

The formulation of the poet-as-visionary is central to the understanding of Beat discourse, especially in the case of Kerouac. In order to “come to the unknown,” the shaman must go through a process of “derangement.” He must embrace the irrational and become “mad” with “Energy,” or so the mythos goes. In defense of Kerouac and the Beat Generation, John Clellon Holmes writes:

Though they rushed back and forth across the country on the slightest pretext, gathering kicks along the way, their real journey was inward; and if they seemed to trespass most boundaries, legal and moral, it was only in the hope of finding a belief on the other side. “The Beat Generation,” Kerouac said, “is basically a religious generation.” (“The Philosophy of the Beat Generation” 369)

Due to the Romantic ideals of the Beat generation, it is made clear within the narrative that consumerism, materialism, and conformity constitute decadence. If Beat philosophy is founded upon the principles of spiritual transcendence, it is only natural that these things are seen to be antithetical. Working ecstatically on a piece of rotten wood in his backyard, Old Bull Lee proclaims: “[T]hey [i.e. the Establishment] prefer making cheap goods so’s everybody’ll have to go on working and punching timeclocks and organizing themselves in sullen unions and floundering around while the big grab goes on in Washington and Moscow” (149). Although I do not find *OTR* to be an overtly political novel, I do think there are certain political implications here that can be associated with Romantic thought. What Old Bull Lee describes in this passage is basically the systematic exploitation of man by power structures enforced by the ruling classes. As an aside, it is noteworthy that he mentions Washington and Moscow in the same breath. Although the argument is ostensibly Marxist, it is not difficult to see its affinities with Romanticism.

The Beats thought of themselves as a generation besieged by the oppressive influences of a predominantly conservative and mechanistic society. However, they also thought it was possible to achieve salvation through their state of marginality. The portraits painted of the dramatis personae in *OTR* are similar to the Byronic heroes depicted in Romantic literature, i.e. anti-authorial figures situated at the peripheries of the Establishment.

In “Howl,” Ginsberg speaks of “Moloch,” which is essentially a metaphor for the mechanistic institutions of capitalist society. In *OTR*, Ginsberg’s counterpart, Carlo Marx, wakes up in the middle of the night and hears “‘the great machine’ descending from the sky” (130). The imagery of the “great machine,” not unlike “Moloch,” symbolizes the Beat’s aversion towards mechanistic institutionalization.

The Romantic poets of the 18th and 19th century wrote about the injustices of capitalism and its marginalizing effects; an example would be “The Female Vagrant” by Wordsworth. It is clear that the Romantics displayed their sympathies towards the disenfranchised through these writings. The Beats, on the other hand, not only sympathized with the disenfranchised, but they also took it a step further by *celebrating* the state of disenfranchisement. However, unlike the lower and working classes of 18th century England, the outcasts described in Beat literature were not so much the victims of socio-economic factors. The economy of post-WWII America was at an unprecedented high, and unemployment rates were correspondingly low. When we take these historical circumstances into consideration, we come to the realization that the outcasts depicted in *OTR* were a tribe of voluntary exiles, not unlike the Byronic heroes of Romanticism, rather than involuntary

victims. For the Beats, to exile oneself signified an attempt to escape a normative lifestyle under a state capitalist society.

The first of the Beatitudes given in the New Testament reads: “Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (*King James Version*, Matthew 5:3). As was mentioned before, this notion of achieving salvation through a state of marginality is an important component of Beat ideology. Robert Holton writes:

[T]he positions occupied by Kerouac and the Beats can be located in terms of debates that arose more than a century earlier, when Parisian bohemians emerged from the tumult of the French Revolution brimming with artistic imagination, radical ideas, and oppositional attitudes. (60)

In the same essay, Holton goes on to talk about “the social category known as the lumpenproletariat, a heterogenous group related to bohemians from the early days of Parisian bohemia to the Beat Generation and beyond” (60). According to Marxist terminology, the “lumpenproletariats” are members of the lowest social stratum who do not contribute to any social cause. Not unlike the Parisian Bohemians, the Beats were escapists rather than revolutionaries. In “This Is the Beat Generation,” John Clellon Holmes explains that “[f]or the wildest hipster, making a mystique of bop, drugs and the night life, there is no desire to shatter the 'square' society in which he lives, only to elude it.” Holton explains that “if modern capitalism’s cultural homogeneity could not be overturned or reversed, it might at least be evaded” (61). This sense of *evasion* is characterized by the Beats through their self-imposed exile and disengagement from the Establishment.

Holton also discusses the concept of “nonproductivity.” He tells us that it is “a hallmark of the lumpens and bohemians, whose activities may include poetry, petty crime, or wandering ragged through narrow romantic streets, but whose proclivities do not extend to productive labor in the industrial or bureaucratic model” (71). The notions of evasion and nonproductivity are alluded to in the following exchange between Sal and Dean:

“You mean we’ll end up old bums?”
 “Why not, man? Of course we will if we want to, and all that. There’s no harm ending that way. You spend a whole life of non-interference with the wishes of others, including politicians and the rich, and nobody bothers you and you cut along and make it your way.” I agreed with him. (251)

In other words, salvation from a dehumanizing existence can be sought by means of non-compliance and self-imposed marginality. As a conclusion, Holton argues that:

Beat discourse contemplated a reversed trajectory of liberation leading from (relative) riches back to lumpen rags. The experience of life might be fuller and the desire to breathe free might be better explored, it seemed to some disenchanting Americans, through a downward mobility, and this led back to a curiosity about the inassimilable lumpen state of homeless refuse (70).

I don't think it is necessary to attach *OTR* to a specific political doctrine, but I do think that the text reveals political implications framed by Romantic thought. Although generally associated with political activism, Romantic ideology also contains non-revolutionary tendencies as seen in *The Prelude* by Wordsworth. If we think about it carefully, this paradox is not at all unnatural. By focusing on themes of spirituality and transcendence, the subject necessarily goes through a stage of *de*-politicization. Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that the biographical subject, i.e. Kerouac, was to a great extent apolitical, and it should not surprise us that his work is basically non-political as well.

Existentialist Angst & Romanticism Revisited

In the previous section, I spoke of *madness* as a motif that the Beats used to assert their individuality against, what was to their minds, the spiritual stagnation of the 1940's and 50's. In "The Philosophy of the Beat Generation," John Clellon Holmes writes, "[The hipster] finds in bop, the milder narcotics, his secretive language and the night itself, affirmation of an individuality (more and more besieged by the conformity of our national life), which can sometimes only be expressed by outright eccentricity" (375). However, one could also argue that the real eccentricity/madness, according to the Beats, was the meaningless existence manifested by the "millions and millions" living within a mechanistic society:

I had traveled eight thousand miles the American continent and I was back on Times Square; and right in the middle of a rush hour, too, seeing with my innocent road-eyes the absolute madness and fantastic hoorair of New York with its millions and millions hustling forever for a buck among themselves, the mad dream -- grabbing, taking, giving, sighing, dying, just so they could be buried in those awful cemetery cities beyond Long Island City. (*OTR* 106)

We have already seen in the previous section how consumerism, materialism, and conformity are antithetical to Beat ideology. In this section, I would like to focus on the Existentialist

implications of this particular passage as it leads to an over-arching theme within the narrative.

I would argue that the “absolute madness” alluded to in the passage above can be seen as an echo of the destructive madness depicted in the opening lines of “Howl.” Both are framed by a very similar sense of despair or angst. Hipkiss maintains that “it was Kerouac who captured best the essential, driving desperation that motivated Beat behaviour” (v). Needless to say, the “absolute madness” ascribed to life in New York is entirely different to the wild, Dionysian madness personified by Dean Moriarty. The “mad dream” of the “millions and millions” signifies death rather than vitality.

It has often been asserted that Existentialism had a great influence upon the Beat Generation, and by reading *OTR*, I think one would be hard pressed to argue otherwise. In *Beat Culture and the New America*, Lisa Philips tells us that “[the Beats] have sometimes been called American existentialists. They indeed shared a sense of acute alienation, of the absurd . . . with their European counterparts” (29). This sense of alienation and despair is encapsulated by the narrator of *OTR* in the followings lines: “the raggedy madness and riot of our actual lives, our actual night, the hell of it, the senseless nightmare road. All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness” (254). Life, as Sal understands it, appears to be “senseless.” However, instead of giving in to nihilism, he tries his best to create meaning and purpose for himself, and in his pursuit of happiness or “Beatitude,” he looks up to Dean as a role model who “stood among them with his ragged face to the sky, looking for the next and highest and final pass, and seemed like the Prophet that had come to them” (299). As Nancy M. Grace puts it: “Dean arrives in Sal’s life as a mysterious shower of glory from the promised land of the West to deliver the ancient call to regenerate his life” (81). The motif of the “prophet” underpins the narrator’s longing for salvation. It has often been noted that his name, Salvatore Paradise, is in itself highly significant.

One of the most important words in *OTR* is the exclamation “Yes!” which Dean Moriarty, the messianic figure, uses extensively throughout the narrative. To my mind, it is a life-affirming exclamation. It is used as a verbalized defiance of the absurdity of everyday existence. Laurence Coupe writes: “Indeed, if we are prepared to say ‘yes’ to life in this context of absurd, cyclical repetition, we are no longer living as mere human beings but have ourselves become gods” (48). Coupe’s remark can also be seen in relation to Nietzsche’s conception of the Overman:

I contradict as has never been contradicted before and am nevertheless the opposite of a No-saying spirit. I am a bringer of glad tidings like no one before me; I know tasks of such elevation that any notion of them has been lacking so far; only beginning with me are there hopes again. (320 - 321)

In my opinion, Dean is presented within the narrative as a Nietzschean Overman. Nietzsche has often been considered as an important forerunner of Existentialism, and it is not difficult to see why: In order to break free from despair, one must become “the opposite of a No-saying spirit,” because once “we are prepared to say ‘yes’ to life in this context of [absurdity],” it is there and then that we become masters of our individual existences.

Sal envisions that “in [the] eyes [of his friends he] would be strange and ragged and like the Prophet who has walked across the land to bring the dark Word, and the only Word [he] had was ‘Wow!’” (37). Sal’s “Wow!” and Dean’s “Yes!” are in many ways conceptually identical. It is through the insistence on the awe-inspiring and the life-affirming, in spite of the Absurd, that Sal aspires to becoming a “Prophet,” not unlike Dean, in order to shake off his Existentialist angst.

In a world that appears to be devoid of reason, Sal realizes that nothing is certain but death: “[N]obody knows what’s going to happen to anybody besides the forlorn rags of growing old” (310). One could argue that *OTR* is also a story of racing against time and death; the idea is that to evade death one must be constantly on the move: “We were all delighted, we all realized we were leaving confusion and nonsense behind and performing our one and noble function of the time, move” (133). In other words, to stay put is to face stagnation. At one point, Dean tells Sal: “[N]o matter where I live, my trunk’s always sticking out from under the bed, I’m ready to leave or get thrown out” (251). There are numerous instances, such as this, in which the life of a vagabond is portrayed as the ideal life. According to the Beats, complacency within middle-class America results in spiritual stagnation. In order to live a fuller existence, one must turn away from the “mad dream” manifested by the “millions and millions” (*OTR* 106), thereby becoming an exile, and in this state of self-imposed marginality, one acquires salvation.

As was mentioned in the previous section, the motif of the shaman or poet-prophet figures prominently in the narrative. I believe that this orientation towards Romanticism is conceptually tied with the characters’ fear of complacency. Laurence Coupe writes:

For the important thing about the shaman is that, in contrast to the priest, he is not instructed in a body of doctrine; rather, he acquires his own powers. There is no logos, no fixed scheme or formula, for him to hold onto: he has to trust to the mythos, the

narrative process of spiritual exploration. Only by transcending all definitions, whether of god or of self, can transformation take place. Orthodox beliefs and systems have to be left behind, and one must proceed by the sheer force of imagination. Only thus may the profane be transformed into the sacred, and time into eternity. (45)

The Beats clearly held beliefs in the spiritual benefits of becoming an exile, of turning away from orthodoxy, and of utilizing the “sheer force of [the] imagination.” As a matter of fact, these characteristics form the core of Beat philosophy, which is not altogether dissimilar to what is conceived as Romantic thought. In the case of *OTR*, Existentialist themes are used as a basis for the reaffirmation of Romantic ideals, just as nihilism provided a conceptual basis for Nietzsche’s Dionysian Romanticism.

To turn away from orthodoxy means to depart from an established order, and the opposite of order is necessarily chaos. With regard to this subject matter, Laurence Coupe writes: “[It is] through the very act of returning to chaos, that archaic humanity is cured of the fall from paradise . . . For neo-shamanism is an attempt to push the experience of the profane to its limit, until a new sense of the sacred becomes possible” (54). The argument laid out by Coupe is very similar to Kerouac’s dialectical formulation of the term “Beat,” i.e. beat/beatific. According to this formulation, it is by descending into the profane and by embracing chaos that the “sacred becomes possible.” After spending a night in a movie theatre, Sal muses that if the attendants had swept him up with the trash while he was asleep, Dean would have to search all over America only to find him “embryonically convoluted among the rubbishes of [his] life” (244). Once found, he fancies that he would confront Dean by asking: “What right have you to come and disturb my reverie in this pukish can?” (245). In this sequence, Kerouac paints a vivid picture of the dialectics between the sacred and the profane, i.e. between “Beatitude” and the state of being “beat.” In a sense, the two opposites are synthesized into one.

For the Beats, being *on the road* is both an escape from Existentialist angst as well as an escape from middle class values. By escaping one set of values, however, they end up espousing another, which could be associated with the “carpe diem religion” discussed in *Heretics* by G. K. Chesterton. Time is an important subject in *OTR*. Sal proclaims that “life is holy and every moment is precious” (57). Dean also speaks of “knowing time” several times throughout the narrative: “[W]e’ll all go off to sweet life, ‘cause now is the time and we all know time!” (114). Needless to say, time is important because life is finite. Sal talks about the palpable “sensation of death kicking at [his] heels” (173) urging him to move on. He dreams of a “Shrouded Traveler” following him about whom he retrospectively identifies as “death”

(124). The realization of death's inevitability forms the imperative to "move," which is suggested in the following lines: "Our battered suitcases were piled on the sidewalk again; we had longer ways to go. But no matter, the road is life" (211). In other words, to *move*, to be *on the road* is ultimately an affirmation of vitality.

I think it is clear how the themes of Existentialism and Romanticism inform each other in Kerouac's text. Driven by an Existentialist understanding of reality, the protagonist arrives at a Romantic solution. An Existentialist understanding of reality precipitates disillusionment and perhaps even despair. These are things that the individual must face and learn to overcome. The following is a summary of M. H. Abram's argument concerning the *The Prelude* by William Wordsworth: "Man's infinite hopes can never be matched by the world as it is . . . But in the magnitude of the disappointment lies its consolation; for the flash of vision also reveals that infinite longings are inherent in the human spirit, and that the gap between the inordinacy of his hope and the limits of possibility is the measure of man's dignity and presence" (Day 98). To paraphrase this argument, we could say that although the finitude of human existence may cause a man to despair, it is precisely between the finitude of his existence and the "inordinacy of his hope" that the "measure of [his] dignity and presence" is asserted. This argument is similar if not identical to that of the Existentialists. Camus writes:

revolt is the certainty of a crushing fate, without the resignation that ought to accompany it . . . revolt gives life its value. Spread out over the whole length of a life, it restores its majesty to that life. To a man devoid of blinkers, there is no finer sight than that of the intelligence at grips with a reality that transcends it. (176 - 177)

With regard to the Existentialist themes within Kerouac's work, Hipkiss maintains that Kerouac "[wrote] novels about the Beat quest for meaning and place in a seemingly mad universe, becoming more despairing of man's future in the world and concomitantly more attracted to mysticism" (v). We know for a fact that many of the Beats were drawn to mysticism at one point or another. Indeed, it is also clear that mysticism played a significant part in the intellectual development of the Beats. Mysticism became, for the Beats, a preferable alternative to bourgeois values. As I see it, the endorsement of mysticism was a result of the Beats' Existentialist understanding of reality combined with their Romantic inclinations.

If life is inherently devoid of meaning and purpose, it is necessary, according to the Beats, to impose personal meaning and purpose on our existence. Their methods implied a Kierkegaardian "leap of faith," which is essentially a blind acceptance of the inexplicable and

the mystical. John Clellon Holmes writes: “To be Beat is to be at the bottom of your personality, looking up; to be existential in the Kierkegaard[ian] . . . sense” (369).

In a hunger-induced semi-trance (172 - 173), Sal wanders the streets of San Francisco contemplating “Mind Essence,” reincarnation, ecstasy, bliss, purity, and the transcendence of temporality. We are reminded that in order to transform the profane into the sacred, the shaman “[proceeds] by the sheer force of imagination” (Coupe 45). In this particular scene, the reader witnesses how the narrator/protagonist utilizes “the sheer force of [his] imagination” to conceive of a mystical cosmos. Needless to say, one cannot speak of a shaman or a poet-prophet without evoking a sense of mysticism.

Hipkiss locates the Beat conception of Beatitude “in the sense of converting alienation into spiritual transcendence” (33). For the Beats, this transcendence from alienation, which is a central tenet of Existentialism, requires an understanding that “life is holy and every moment is precious” (*OTR* 57). Here we return to the theme of “carpe diem.” In reference to the “carpe diem religion,” Chesterton remarks that it is not a happy faith, as we might otherwise think, because although its adherents purport to espouse the finitude of existence, they are, paradoxically, forever in search of the eternal. His argument is worth quoting at length:

It is true enough, of course, that a pungent happiness comes chiefly in certain passing moments; but it is not true that we should think of them as passing, or enjoy them simply “for those moments' sake.” To do this is to rationalize the happiness, and therefore to destroy it. Happiness is a mystery like religion, and should never be rationalized. Suppose a man experiences a really splendid moment of pleasure. I do not mean something connected with a bit of enamel, I mean something with a violent happiness in it - an almost painful happiness. A man may have, for instance, a moment of ecstasy in first love, or a moment of victory in battle. The lover enjoys the moment, but precisely not for the moment's sake. He enjoys it for the woman's sake, or his own sake. The warrior enjoys the moment, but not for the sake of the moment; he enjoys it for the sake of the flag. The cause which the flag stands for may be foolish and fleeting; the love may be calf-love, and last a week. But the patriot thinks of the flag as eternal; the lover thinks of his love as something that cannot end. These moments are filled with eternity; these moments are joyful because they do not seem momentary. (108 - 109)

In a similar vein, Theado also notes that “[e]very joyous moment in *On the Road* ends up in disappointment and regret” (65). After each pilgrimage across the continent, Sal never seems to be content. On the contrary, there is a pervasive sense of disenchantment. However, he does at one point come to a Camus-esque realization claiming that he “was having a wonderful time and the whole world opened up before [him] because [he] had no dreams.”

Camus, similarly, also argued that the appropriate response to the Absurd (and perhaps Kerouac's "absolute madness") would be to shed the shackles of hope and expectation, because the person who imposes hope on an essentially hopeless existence is bound to be disappointed.

The narrative of *OTR* is to a large extent concerned with how the characters reconcile themselves with Existentialist angst. Although I brought up Camus' argument to illustrate the protagonist's predicament, it has to be said that the salvation Sal seeks is altogether different from Camus' solution to the Absurd. To point out the obvious, Absurdism is essentially atheistic, whereas Sal Paradise is not.

Myth

OTR is at heart a story about a friendship. It is a portrayal of a friendship amidst undercurrents of Romantic aspirations and Existentialist angst. Romanticism, Existentialism, and all-that-jazz aside, Sal can also be thought of as a conventional man with conventional dreams. At one point, he says to his friend: "All I hope, Dean, is someday we'll be able to live on the same street with our families and get to be a couple of oldtimers together" (254). By the latter half of the narrative, we learn that many of the characters begin to tire of Dean's antics. For example, Galatea tells him: "For years now you haven't had any sense of responsibility for anyone. You've done so many awful things I don't know what to say to you" (193). Despite the blatancy of Dean's irresponsibility, Sal is convinced that the others simply don't understand him. Sal dubs him the "HOLY GOOF" (194). However, after having been abandoned in Mexico City while bed-ridden with dysentery, Sal finally begins to realize "what a rat" (303) Dean is. In the last chapter, however, despite everything that has happened, we see that Sal still harbors great affection for his friend. The narrative ends on a bittersweet note with Sal thinking about his mentor and friend, Dean Moriarty.

Although the book can be read as a simple story about friendship, the specific relationship between the two main characters, I believe, contains mythic implications. From the very beginning, the narrative sets itself up as a variant on the myth of deliverance. For instance, the text begins with Sal mentioning that just before meeting Dean he had a feeling that "everything was dead" (3). Similarly, 1 Corinthians 15:22 reads: "[A]s in Adam all died, so in Christ all shall be made alive" (qtd. in Coupe 98). By making a comparison to Scripture, we begin to see how Sal can be understood as a *type* (Adam), while Dean is presented to the reader as an *anti-type* (Christ). The messianic overtones in the book are far too obvious to be

ignored. However, the conventional expectations that the narrative produces (in the reader's mind) as a variant on the deliverance myth are ultimately destabilized, because Dean proves not to be a messianic figure but something entirely different. The eschatological trajectory of deliverance is interrupted when Dean abandons Paradise.

The subversion of deliverance does not, I think, detract from the mythic import of the narrative. Although it is revealed in the end that Dean Moriarty does not function as a messianic figure, it is possible to relate him to the "trickster" type of Native American myths. Laurence Coupe describes "the role of the 'trickster'" as "a figure who is mischievous yet creative, and who, while behaving unpredictably, is yet central to the tribe's identity" (154). In this description, we see a good deal of resemblance between the "trickster" and Dean. He is indeed portrayed as a "creative," "mischievous," and "unpredictable" character. He is also, to a large extent, central to the tribe's (i.e. the Beats') "identity." Dean Moriarty is, after all, presented to us as the quintessential Beat hero.

Genre-Definition

With regard to textual criticism, T. S. Eliot maintains that "to divert interest from the poet to the poetry is a laudable aim: for it would conduce to a juster estimation of actual poetry, good and bad" (80), which, I think, is a reasonable argument. Kerouac's "novels," however, seem to draw the reader's interest towards the author at every turn. In "Literature and Biography," Boris Tomasevskij discusses this peculiar phenomenon by way of two French poets: "The late eighteenth-century poets Parny [Évariste de Parny] and Bertin [Antoine Bertin] wrote their elegies with a definite orientation toward autobiography. They arranged those elegies in such a way as to convince the reader that their poems were fragments of a real romance" (83 - 84). Once the reader begins to believe that the text is based on reality, his or her "interest" breaches out from the text to the author. Although Kerouac's work certainly contains a "definite orientation towards autobiography," the reader's interest is drawn to him by extra-textual factors as well. Theodo argues that "the packaging of that book [OTR] -- from rough scroll to Viking bestseller -- is the packaging of Kerouac as he became a salable commodity and a literary figure" (56). He also acknowledges that "Kerouac's most famous novel comes with many associations that work to inform and mislead the reader before the cover is opened. The book is both a story and a cultural event" (53).

It has been rare for critics to discuss Kerouac's "novels" without having to refer to his biography in some way or another. As a matter of fact, virtually all introductory articles on

Kerouac's novels are likely to present the biographical names of the characters in parenthesis next to their pseudonyms. In relation to the phenomenon of "copying characters from life," Tomasevskij explains that:

Once the question of copying characters from life has arisen, writers actually *do* begin to copy from life -- or at least they pretend to do so. The author becomes a witness to and a living participant in his novels, a living hero. A double transformation takes place: heroes are taken for living personages, and poets become living heroes -- their biographies become poems. (84)

The dynamic interplay between biography (or history) and literature in Kerouac's case poses interesting implications for us to consider. For example, it was mentioned earlier that *Time Magazine's* obituary referred to Jack Kerouac as a "shaman" of his generation, whereas the poet-prophet characterization was also used by Kerouac quite frequently in his "novels." Here we have a sense of overlapping between discourse and fiction. Needless to say, Kerouac was *not* a shaman in reality, but I do think that *Time Magazine's* description of Kerouac involves more than a figure of speech, because we wouldn't necessarily project the same kind of image onto other writers. For example, readers aren't likely to characterize Ernest Hemingway as a "shaman." With regard to Kerouac, one might ask: "Where does fiction end and where does reality begin?"

Autobiographies are generally conceived as texts based on fact. However, Postmodern theorists have long argued that all autobiographies are fictional in the sense that textualization, i.e. the transcription of actual experience into narrative form, necessarily implicates degrees of fictionality, because representation is always partial and never comprehensive. Jorge Borges tells us that "[w]riters can extract a story from life only by strict, close selection, and this must mean falsification" (qtd. in Waugh 99). The distinction between a novel and an autobiography (or biography for that matter) is generally thought to be one of fictionality versus factuality. From a conventional perspective, *OTR* is defined as a novel; as such, it ought to be approached as a work of fiction. However, we also find ourselves having to contend with the fact that the narrative is based on actual experience. Should *OTR* be considered as autobiographical writing or fiction? Is it possible to think of the text as both?

According to Postmodern theorists, narratives are necessarily fictional; however, it is clear that not all narratives, e.g. newspaper articles, are *received* as fictional. Although we might doubt the accuracy of a news report, it is understood that the news agency is held

accountable for what it publishes. The question of accountability alters our perception with regard to a given narrative. Although “accountability” is not a concept we would normally associate with literary writers, Philippe Lejeune defines his “autobiographical contract” as something based on the author’s “intention to honour [his or her] signature” (qtd. in Anderson 3), which, in other words, amounts to a *theoretical* if not legal accountability.

Although the boundaries between fact and fiction are less clear-cut than we generally think, there is still a conceptual difference between a text that is predominantly fictive (with factual elements) and another that is predominantly factual (with fictional elements). Somewhere along this narratological continuum, i.e. between the theoretical absolutes of fact and fiction, there is a point at which quantitative differences amount to a qualitative difference; that is to say, there is a point at which the reader begins to regard the text as being biographical/factual rather than fictional. For Lejeune, this occurs when intentionality comes into play. *Intentionality*, in this case, means the author’s “intention to honor [his or her] signature,” which amounts to the *theoretical accountability* mentioned earlier. Although all narratives contain a degree of fictionality, texts are read differently in accordance with the reader’s perception. There is a perceptible difference in signification between texts that are perceived as predominantly factual and those that are perceived as predominantly fictive.

As I see it, due to the fictive elements present within all narratives, it is necessary to measure an autobiography against historical facts. In addition to the obvious reason for doing so, we also gain further insights into the mechanics of self-representation. To say that *OTR* is a novel based on the author’s actual experience is also to say that it works as a *romanticization* (“roman” being the French word for “novel”) of real events. To be clear, I do not propose to evaluate *OTR* on the basis of its historical accuracy; I propose to investigate how this process of romanticization works, and to see what implications it holds.

As soon as we begin to see *OTR* as a romanticization of real events, we may or may not realize that what is left out of the “novel” could be just as revealing as what is presented to us in the text. A perspective such as this gives us a closer approximation of the author’s ideology. Michel Foucault writes:

Silence itself – the things one declines to say, or is forbidden to name, the discretion that is required between different speakers – is less the absolute limit of discourse, the other side from which it is separated by a strict boundary, than an element that functions alongside the things said, with them and in relation to them within over-all strategies. There is no binary division to be made between what one says and what one does not say; we must try to determine the different ways of not saying such things, how those who can and cannot speak of them are distributed, which type of discourse is

authorised, or which form of discretion is required in either case. There is not one but many silences, and they are an integral part of the strategies that underlie and permeate discourses. (27)

If Beat philosophy is indeed oriented towards a departure from cultural norms, it follows that *sexual identity* would be a potentially viable theme for the Beat author to address. As a matter of fact, Ginsberg lists “sexual ‘revolution’ or ‘liberation’” (19) as one of the first items in a list of things he thought were essential to and characteristic of the Beat Generation. We know from historical accounts that Ginsberg and Cassady were sexually involved. It has also been noted that Kerouac had also flirted with bisexuality. However, none of these homoerotic tendencies are exemplified by their counterparts in *OTR*. As a matter of fact, the narrator of the book often displays a certain degree of homophobia. The text’s silence on sexual identity becomes significant when we compare the realities of the Beat generation and the representation of the Beats in the text. In *Authorship*, Sean Burke writes: “[I]n extreme cases, the act of authorship can present itself as self-deflection or indeed as the creation of an aesthetic identity which seeks to transcend or negate the biographical subject” (303). In a way, *OTR* can be seen as a negation of the biographical subject’s homoerotic tendencies; by doing so, Kerouac creates an “aesthetic identity” that conforms to conventional masculinity. This is an example of what I mean by the mechanics of self-representation.

I find myself agreeing, to some extent, with the adherents of New Criticism who argued that biographical positivism (in and of itself) is outmoded and ill-adapted to textual interpretation, but I would also argue that in many cases using historical material as a supplement also contributes towards constructive criticism (as demonstrated by the New Historicists). In relation to *OTR*, Matt Theado mentions that “[t]he term *novel* . . . is problematic, for the story traces, with few variations, the actual events that actual people experienced” (53). He also argues that “[i]n its elevation of life for the sake of art, the book lingers somewhere between truth and artifice” (53). If *OTR* lies somewhere between fact and fiction, which it clearly does, using historical material as a supplement for interpretive purposes becomes justifiable.

In a letter to Neil Cassady, Kerouac wrote: “I have renounced fiction and fear. There is nothing to do but write truth” (qtd. in Theado 34). If the term “novel” is problematic when applied to *OTR*, it is even more so when applied to *Satori in Paris*. First of all, *SIP* is also a “novel” based on “actual events that actual people experienced.” Secondly, it features a protagonist called “Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac,” which is the name Kerouac was baptised with. The author writes: “As in an earlier autobiographical book I’ll use my real name here,

full name in this case, Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac, because this story is about my search for this name in France” (8). From the very beginning, the author single-handedly creates a connection between himself, the narrator, and the main character with one sentence. From a narratological perspective, this connection is the primary criterion for distinguishing autobiographical writing from other narrative forms.

In the same book, Kerouac also defines literature as “the tale that’s told for companionship and to teach something religious, of religious reverence, about real life, in this real world which literature should (and here does) reflect” (10). By spelling this out, Kerouac forces us to contend with the problem of genre-definition that is present not only in this book, but perhaps also in the entire collection of his work. He goes on to write: “In other words . . . 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” (10). We know from Kerouac’s notes and letters that he thought of his work as one over-arching “legend.” By conceiving of his work this way, Nancy M. Grace explains that “[Kerouac] blurs the boundaries between the crude categories of fiction and nonfiction” (7).

In *SIP*, Kerouac talks about “[searching] blindly for that old Breton name Daoulas, of which ‘Duluo  ’ was a variation [he] invented just for fun in [his] writerly youth (to use as [his] name in [his] novels)” (101). The fictional names used (for their real-life counterparts) in books such as *OTR* have long posed as barriers to establishing Kerouac’s texts as autobiography; however, this barrier, I think, could be removed once we take *authorial intention* into consideration. In the case of *OTR*, we know for a fact that the characters were given their real names in the scroll version that Kerouac presented to his publishers. We also know that the publishers had asked him to change the names in fear of potential lawsuits; therefore, the decision to use pseudonyms in the text was prompted by the publishing house rather than the author. This in itself contains interesting implications in terms of authorship. Let us consider the following example: In 1633, the Roman Catholic Church compelled Galileo to renounce his work on heliocentrism, and so he did. No-one, to my knowledge, has ever taken this act of recantation to mean that Galileo had stopped believing in his scientific conclusions. It is understood that the man was forced to recant. Similarly, Kerouac was forced to fabricate pseudonyms in place of real names; though it must be conceded that the stakes involved were much higher for Galileo than they were for Kerouac. For Galileo, a failure to recant would probably have meant a fiery death on a wooden stake. Stakes and consequences aside, the circumstances between the two cases, I think, are quite similar with regard to the

issue of intentionality. In terms of intentionality, why should literary texts be treated differently from scientific texts? Both Galileo's recantation and Kerouac's use of pseudonyms can be seen as disclaimers. The point is that neither of these disclaimers were prompted by the authors. We know that Kerouac had intended to use real names instead of pseudonyms, and according to Lejeune, intention makes all the difference in determining whether a text is autobiographical or not.

The problem of genre-definition, as I see it, causes a significant amount of awkwardness in critical analyses of Kerouac. For example, Ann Charters comments that "[t]here was always a certain amount of glorification in [Kerouac's] novels" (354). If we think about it, the word "novel" sits rather awkwardly in the context of this statement. A novel *is*, after all, a *fictional* narrative. The *OED* defines the word "novel" as a "long fictional prose narrative, usually filling one or more volumes and typically representing character and action with some degree of realism and complexity; a book containing such a narrative." As I see it, we can only talk about "glorification," in the context of Charters' statement, if we were to think of the texts as being autobiographical. As I mentioned earlier, all autobiographies are fictional to an extent. Fictional elements in an autobiography can be construed as instances of "glorification," but if the texts are to be understood as fiction, whom or what is the author glorifying? It is obvious then that Charters conceives of Kerouac's oeuvre as autobiography with fictional elements, rather than a corpus of fiction with autobiographical elements. I believe there is a conceptual difference between the two notions.

Even if we were to disregard intentionality, we would still have to contend with the fact that *OTR* was *received* by informed readers (e.g. Kerouac's peers) as autobiography; although for the sake of academic integrity, we would still define it as a "novel." Charters writes: "As Ginsberg was to say to me later, Kerouac's picture of himself in his books was always true to his life style at the time, all the changes mirrored from *On the Road to Satori in Paris*" (354). As the phrase "picture of himself [i.e. Kerouac]" clearly suggests, we know that Ginsberg thought of Kerouac's work as being self-representational hence autobiographical. Similarly, John Clellon Holmes calls Kerouac the "Great Rememberer" rather than the great *inventor*.

Gustave Flaubert once said, "Madam Bovary c'est moi," and yet it would be preposterous for the critic to suggest that *Madam Bovary* is an autobiography rather than a novel. On the other hand, we have writers like Charles Bukowski, where for some reason, it is almost impossible for critics not to see his novels as being autobiographical. Matt Theado notes: "More than that of most novelists, Kerouac's 'fiction' is generally autobiographical. . . . Kerouac sought to make his life into art, and language was the medium of metamorphosis"

(9). Traditionally speaking, to insist on a text's status as a novel would probably require the responsible critic to approach it as a work of fiction; to focus on the text itself. However, when the narrative in the "novel" is clearly derived from actual experiences, the juxtaposition between text and history becomes necessary.

As I see it, the term "roman a clef" inherently signifies the problematic nature of factuality versus fictionality. The *OED* defines it as "a novel in which actual people or events are represented in disguised form, as by the use of fictitious names," which is clearly the kind of writing that *OTR* belongs to. The question I'd like to ask is this: Once *unlocked*, does the roman a clef remain a novel? Or does it become autobiography?

Mythopoeia

In the case of Kerouac, it is by reading fiction and biography together that we come to understand the mythopoeic nature of the author's work. I take my cue from Boris Tomasevskij who wrote:

for a writer with a biography, the facts of the author's life must be taken into consideration. Indeed, in the works themselves the juxtaposition of the texts and the author's biography plays a structural role. The literary work plays on the potential reality of the author's subjective outpourings and confessions. (89)

With autobiographically oriented texts such as Kerouac's, the necessity of comparing fact and fiction becomes of paramount importance if we are to better understand the mechanics of self-representation. In *Understanding Jack Kerouac*, Matt Theado talks about "[Kerouac's] goal to create a legend of his life in his writing" (2). In *The Spontaneous Poetics of Jack Kerouac*, Regina Weinreich also discusses "his attempt to elevate the legend of his life to the level of myth" (qtd. in Theado 4); these tendencies are what I call mythopoeic instances or "mythopoeia," which means myth-making.

The mythopoeic nature of Kerouac's writings is also, I think, a clear indication of his Romantic orientation. Tomasevskij explains that "[a] biography of a Romantic poet was more than a biography of an author and public figure. The Romantic poet was his own hero. His life was poetry" (83). It seems likely that Kerouac had the intention of transforming his own life into poetry, legend, or myth. Allen Ginsberg once said, "Kerouac encouraged Holmes to develop a certain intellectual style in mythology about Neal and about himself and about me" (Gifford and Lee 170). It is safe to say, I think, that Kerouac would have been apt to follow

his own advice. Even Gary Snyder acknowledges that “Jack was, in a sense, a twentieth-century American mythographer” (Gifford and Lee 202).

In *Jack's Book*, I have found several accounts from Kerouac's acquaintances to be particularly revealing. For example, Malcolm Cowley tells us that “Jack did something that he would never admit to later. He did a good deal of revision, and it was very good revision. Oh, he would never, never admit to that” (Gifford and Lee 206), and Gary Snyder comments that “[Kerouac] was a little bit like an old skid-row wino that rambles in and out from place to place, he liked that image for himself” (Gifford and Lee 213). The first remark shows us that contrary to what Kerouac might have led us to believe, his writings were perhaps less spontaneous than they were often proclaimed to be; *spontaneity* being a gift that the Romantic genius was apt to profess. In the second passage, it is the second clause that I find especially telling, namely the notion of a constructed persona. When we take both passages into consideration, we begin to understand Kerouac's (possible) agenda, i.e. the careful cultivation of a Romantic persona; that of the exile, or that of the “shaman.” I have found this particular persona to be highly consistent throughout many of his books.

In *SIP*, Kerouac writes: “In times to come I'll be known as the fool who rode outa Mongolia on a pony: Genghiz Khan, or the Mongolian Idiot, one” (25). Kerouac was obviously concerned with how posterity would perceive him; otherwise, why would he make such a speculation? If this particular concern was on his mind, it follows then that he would have wanted to cultivate some sort of persona, which he did.

With regard to the subject of autobiographical writing, Nancy M. Grace notes: “Memories remain substantially accurate as one ages, particularly for seminal events in one's life, but distortions occur as older memories are reconstructed to correspond with current self-perceptions, often tilting toward self-enhancement” (8). In other words, all autobiographical writings contain elements of the mythopoeic. This may be particularly applicable to Kerouac, because he was consciously preoccupied with the notion of “myth” and the creation of myths.

Representation

Although often considered a minor work, I have found *Satori in Paris* to be particularly interesting because of its metafictional aspects. Kerouac begins the narrative by saying that he will be using his real name. He also tells us that some of the other characters are given their real names as well. One of these characters is the cab driver, Raymond Baillet, who drives him to the airport. Kerouac writes: “if told by someone that his name [Raymond Baillet]

appears in an American ‘novel’ he’ll probably never find out where to buy it in Paris” (8 - 9). The quotation marks around the word “novel” suggests a sense of irony and playfulness. I believe that it also signals Kerouac’s awareness of the aforementioned problem of genre-definition. As I see it, this playfulness also amounts to a metafictional gesture.

Patricia Waugh explains that “*Metafiction* is a term given to fictional writing which self-consciously and systematically draws attention to its status as an artefact in order to pose questions about the relationship between fiction and reality” (2). We have already established that all narratives are essentially fictional to a certain extent; autobiographies are no exception. Because all autobiographies necessarily contain elements of fact and artificiality, it is a form well suited for metafictional playfulness; an example would be *Roland Barthes by Roland Barthes* by the French theorist, Roland Barthes. In *SIP*, there are various instances in which we are encouraged by the narrator to contemplate this “relationship between fiction and reality.” For example, Kerouac writes: “‘Ere you are, mighty.’ (A pun on ‘matey’ there and let me ask you but one more question, reader :- Where else but in a book can you go back and catch what you missed, and not only that but savor it and keep it up and shove it? D’any Aussie ever tell you that?)” (98). Here the facade of verisimilitude is torn down by the narrator, which causes the reader to take notice of the text’s artificiality. There is another instance in which a minor character is shown thinking to himself, but it quickly becomes apparent that the thoughts belong to the narrator rather than the character. The narrator announces: “(I ingrained [the character’s] thought there for your delectation, and if you didnt like it, call it beanafaction, in other words I beaned ya with my high hard one.)” (83). Here the narrator challenges the reader by descending from the extra-diegetic level of the narrative into the narrative proper (the diegetic level), and by appropriating the guise of another character; gestures like these disturb the pretense of verisimilitude.

Whenever the reader recognizes verisimilitude as an illusion, the nature of representation is brought into question. Kerouac writes: “I’m trying to give you a stylish reproduction of how we talked and what was going on” (104). Kerouac admits here that representation of factual events can often be “stylized,” *glorified*, and of course also *fictionalized*. Waugh explains that “[t]o write about oneself is implicitly to posit oneself as an ‘other,’ to narrate or historicize oneself as a character in one’s own discourse” (135), because “[t]he individual recounting his or her life is a different individual from the one who lived it, in a different world, with a different script” (123). It is in this sense that all autobiographies are necessarily fictional, because autobiographical writings constitute a “reproduction” of the

authorial self. In *Authorship*, Sean Burke also talks about the problematic nature of autobiographical writing:

The peculiar compulsion to achieve an ideal union between author (subject writing) and subject (subject written about) characteristic of autobiography is thwarted on the one side by the impossibility of reducing self to language; on the other, by the conditions of temporality: autobiography as genre requires the recapturing of a self lost in time past and renewable only through memory. (304)

By admitting that events can often be stylishly reproduced, the author/narrator/protagonist of *SIP* allows us to infer that the self can also be romanticized. Patricia Waugh tells us that metafictionality is implicit within all novels (5). Perhaps the best way to circumvent the problem of genre-definition in Kerouac's work would simply be to acknowledge the metafictional aspects inherent in all texts; both fiction and autobiography. Even in the school of Realism, verisimilitude can only ever be a pretense.

Caritas

Satori in Paris is the story of Kerouac's trip to France on a genealogical quest for his family's roots. He had been told as a child that he came from an aristocratic lineage that could be traced back to Brittany. However, during his time in France, Kerouac does not find any of the information that he had set out to look for; as a matter of fact, he spends most of his time in bars rather than libraries or archives. In spite of this failure, he does claim to have received his "satori," which roughly translates as "enlightenment" in English (from the Japanese), while he was in France. He offers several possibilities as to what might have prompted this enlightenment, but he does not tell us explicitly what it is.

I'd like to point out a couple of things that might be misleading in terms of the book's title. First of all, besides Paris, Kerouac also spends time in Brest, and secondly, the book does not focus on Zen Buddhism (as the word "satori" might suggest). Kerouac had flirted with Eastern mysticism in earlier texts, such as *The Dharma Bums* and *On the Road*, but *this* book, thematically speaking, is about Catholicism, or at least Kerouac's personalized version of Catholicism. Kerouac writes: "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" (69).

Kerouac tells us that the function of literature is to “teach something religious, of religious reverence” (10). Ironically, the plot of *SIP* can be characterized as one long escapade involving decidedly unreligious events such as binge drinking and sexual solicitation; furthermore, with regard to his alcoholism, Kerouac takes the stance of an apologist by saying things like: “As I grew older I became a drunk. Why? Because I like ecstasy of the mind” (28). Despite all of this, it does become clear, during the course of the narrative, that Kerouac intends for the reader to learn something of spiritual value. For example, we see him revisiting familiar themes such as the importance of individuality:

I want to tell them that we dont all want to become ants contributing to the social body, but individualists each one counting one by one, but no, try to tell that to the in-and-outers rushing in and out the humming world night as the world turns on one axis. The secret storm has become a public tempest. (47)

But the most important theme of all, as far as I can tell, is “Caritas,” i.e. *Christian love*. Kerouac writes: “[I]t doesn’t matter how charming cultures and art are, they’re useless without sympathy -- All the prettiness of tapestries, lands, people:- worthless if there is no sympathy -- Poets of genius are just decorations on the wall if without the poetry of kindness and Caritas” (88). Of all the possible incidents that might have prompted his “satori,” there are a few which suggest that the satori might have involved an understanding of “Caritas.”

On the train to Brest, Kerouac befriends a man named Noblet. The two of them drink wine together to pass the time on board. In the same compartment, there is also a priest whom Kerouac had taken notice of earlier before he began drinking with Noblet. After having got sufficiently inebriated, Kerouac decides to deliver a sermon about Christ in order to gain the favour of the quiet priest. By the end of the sermon, the priest gives Kerouac a faint nod of recognition, and it is at this point that Kerouac muses: “Was that my satori, that look, or Noblet?” (65). Charters writes: “Somehow to Kerouac these two men [i.e. the priest and Noblet] reflected his true nature” (347). This is interesting, because when we think about it, it does seem that most of his books depict him, or the protagonist, as being caught somewhere between full-blown hedonism and religious reverence.

After having realized what an utter failure the trip had become, Kerouac decides to leave France. To get to the airport, he takes a taxi. Kerouac manages to convince the cabdriver, Raymond Baillet, to make a quick stop and have a drink with him. Kerouac finds Baillet to be an agreeable fellow, and the two of them exchange excited conversations on a wide array of topics while heading towards the airport. After having arrived there, Baillet

reminds Kerouac to “be of good heart” (118) before driving off. This taxi ride is characterized by Kerouac, at the very beginning of the book, as one of the possible incidents that might have led to his satori. Baillet’s simple advice -- “to be of good heart” -- reminds us of the “Caritas” that Kerouac spoke of before. Of the different scenarios that might have been the catalyst for his satori, this is the first one alluded to (in the narrative) and the last one described, thus it leaves the strongest impression.

CHAPTER II: HEMINGWAY

In the previous chapter, I wrote about the Romantic aspects along with the Existentialist themes related to Kerouac's "novels." I also discussed some of the mythic implications as well as the problem of genre-definition in his oeuvre. In this chapter, I will be measuring the two primary texts by Hemingway, i.e. *The Sun Also Rises* and *A Moveable Feast*, by the same parameters in order to determine their similarity (or dissimilarity) to Kerouac's work. The topics are not presented in the same order as the structure of this chapter follows a linear continuity of its own. For comparative purposes, I will also be providing commentaries in relation to Kerouac's texts within each section. The primary texts will be referred to in the following by the abbreviations *TSAR* and *AMF*.

Genre-Definition

In "The Autobiographical Contract," Philippe Lejeune defines autobiography as "[a] retrospective prose narrative produced by a real person concerning his own existence, focusing on his individual life, in particular on the development of his personality" (qtd. in Anderson 2). In other words, autobiography functions as a narrative which informs the reader of an authorial self who perceives, relates, and textualizes people and events that are related to the author's life. In many ways, it would be inconceivable to detach an autobiographical text from its author.

TSAR has sometimes been identified as a "roman à clef" (Donaldson 32). Although it certainly contains traces of the author's life, it is strictly speaking a novel and not an autobiography. As I see it, there are certain barriers towards reading *TSAR* as anything other than a work of fiction. Those who are familiar with Hemingway's biography will be aware of the crucial differences between the novel and the historical facts. To point out the obvious, Hemingway did not suffer from a wound that caused him to be sexually impotent.

Some of the characters in *TSAR* are no doubt inspired by real people, but that is the extent of their correspondence. We might say that Jake Barnes is loosely based on the biographical Hemingway, but it would be impossible, I think, to conclude that "Ernest Hemingway = Jake Barnes" (Donaldson 32). There are several reasons for this. According to Lejeune, one of the definitive characteristics of an autobiography is the "identity between the author, the narrator, and the protagonist" (qtd. in Anderson 2). If we were to take extra-textual

factors into account, we would see how this identity is denied in the case of this novel. In a letter to an editor at Rinehart & Company, Hemingway writes:

Every writer is in much of his work. But it is not as simple as all that. I could have told Mr. Young the whole genesis of *The Sun Also Rises* for example. It came from a personal experience in that when I had been wounded at one time there had been an infection from pieces of wool cloth being driven into the scrotum. Because of this I got to know other kids who had genito [sic] urinary wounds and I wondered what a man's life would have been like after that if his penis had been lost his testicles and and spermatic cord remained intact. I had known a boy that had happened to. So I took him and made him into a foreign correspondent in Paris and, inventing, tried to find out what his problems would be when he was in love with someone who was in love with him and there was nothing that they could do about it . . . I was not Jake Barnes (*Selected Letters* 745)

Here the author disconnects himself from the protagonist. Furthermore, in a letter to a literary critic, Hemingway writes:

The man [Harold Loeb] who identifies himself as Cohn in *The Sun Also Rises* once said to me, "But why did you make me cry all the time?" I said, "Listen, if that is you then the narrator must be me. Do you think that I had my prick shot off . . ." (*Selected Letters* 764)

And here the author disconnects himself from the narrator.

In order for a text to be established as an autobiography, an "autobiographical contract" must exist between the author and the reader. In the case of *TSAR*, we are denied this contract due to the simple fact that the author did not intend for us to read the novel as autobiographical writing. Although the author's real intentions may not be available to us as readers, it is possible to come to an approximation of the author's intentions (with regard to this matter) through his speech and acts. Hemingway's twice-repeated disavowal amounts to a forfeit of the "theoretical accountability" mentioned in the previous chapter. Without this accountability, the book must be read as a novel rather than an autobiography. However, to deny its status as an autobiography is not to deny that it contains traces of the author's life.

In the previous chapter, I posited a "narratological continuum" between the theoretical opposites of fact and fiction. I mentioned that upon this continuum there is an instance in which quantitative differences amount to a qualitative difference; that is to say, there is a certain point at which a text comes to be regarded as fiction rather than non-fiction (and vice versa). When an author writes about historical events, a small amount of factual distortion is permissible (or even inevitable); this is what we call poetic license. The facts are distorted for

dramatic purposes, but the text is still understood to be a portrayal of historical events; biopics would be an example of this category. There is no doubt that *TSAR* contains traces of the author's life, but these traces are not sufficient in themselves to change the informed reader's perception of the text from fiction to autobiography. There is a big difference between what is written in the text and what actually took place.

There is a great deal of similarity between *On the Road* and *TSAR*, but there are also a few essential differences in relation to this matter of genre-definition. When Hemingway began his draft, he named the protagonist "Hem"; some of the other characters in the draft also bore the names of Hemingway's actual acquaintances. J. Gerard Kennedy writes,

[Hemingway] worked furiously . . . on a narrative based so closely upon his recent experience at the fiesta in Pamplona that at first he did not bother to change the names of the actual participants -- Lady Duff Twysden, Pat Guthrie, Donald Ogden Smith, Bill Smith, Harold Loeb, and a young bullfighter named Cayetano Ordoñez. (96)

Not unlike *On the Road*, most of the characters in Hemingway's novel were clearly adapted from real life, but by the time Hemingway presented the draft to his publishers, he had already made several significant changes to the text. Unlike Kerouac, he was not asked to fictionalize his text; the manuscript itself was already sufficiently fictionalized. Before the novel was published, there were at least two drafts and several major revisions between them. If we were to look at the textual history of the novel, we would find that although the narrative was clearly adapted from actual experiences, the manuscript that Hemingway submitted to the publishers was essentially a work of fiction. Frederic Joseph Svoboda argues that "Hemingway was not interested in a literal transcription of reality. Indeed, those sections of the first draft that were mostly literally true to what happened in Paris and Pamplona -- those most closely journalistic or autobiographical -- tended to be cut as Hemingway revised" (9). In other words, the similarities between the text and the actual events in Hemingway's life are not altogether a matter of coincidence; however, the author expressly stated several times that the novel was not meant to be autobiographical. This statement, in my opinion, makes all the difference. Kerouac, on the other hand, had repeatedly stressed that his work was based on his own life (cf. *Satori in Paris*); therefore, it would be valid for critics to examine how Kerouac *represents himself* in the texts, whereas in Hemingway's case, it would be a highly problematic venture. With regard to the literary era that *TSAR* belonged to, Carlos Baker explains that "[i]t was, in fact, an age of indirect or direct 'transcription,' when the perfectly sound esthetic theory was that the author must invent out of his own experience or run the risk

of making hollow men of his characters” (79). In other words, the purpose of transcribing actual experience and actual people into narrative form was not to recount history but to achieve a higher degree of verisimilitude.

Despite its status as a work of fiction, there are, as was mentioned earlier, traces of the author’s life present within the text; in other words, the novel contains traces of the *author*. Knowing that the narrative is derived and adapted from actual experiences, the reader walks away from the novel with an impression of the author. This may be true of any work of art, but texts that are partially non-fictional usually have a greater capacity for this effect. Although *TSAR* is not an autobiography, Hemingway admits that “[e]very writer is in much of his work” (*Selected Letters* 745). In many ways, reading the novel becomes an exercise in reconstructing the author; in so much as the reader relates the implied author to the real author. Since I have already argued that *TSAR* is not an autobiography, it may seem that I am contradicting myself here. However, I’d like to point out a few simple facts: the protagonist of the novel is Jake Barnes (who is not Hemingway); the narrator of the novel is Jake Barnes (who is, again, not Hemingway); however, the “implied author” *is not* Jake Barnes. In narratological terms, the implied author does not equate with the real author, but I think it is possible to make an association between the two. This association could be made through the paratext.

An epigraph is generally used by an author to suggest the themes of his or her text. When the epigraph is drawn from an actual conversation in the actual life of the real author (as is the case with *TSAR*), authorial intention becomes relevant for critics to consider in terms of determining what the themes are and what they mean. Due to the fact that an epigraph is placed at the periphery of a text, it is plausible to conceive of the epigraph as being an utterance of the implied author rather than the narrator. The placement of the epigraphs in *TSAR* compels the reader to see the novel as a response to (or as a contemplation on) Gertrude Stein’s statement. Once we begin to think of the novel in such terms, we might as well ask ourselves “whose” response or “whose” contemplation? It is by asking these questions that we begin to relate (or conflate) the implied author with the real author.

According to Chatman’s diagram, the real author lies outside the communication model; therefore, it is not he or she that “speaks” in a text, just as Arthur Rimbaud’s statement, “Je est un autre” serves to remind us (Burke 303). In any written text, there is, after all, only language and nothing else. In narratological terms, a fictional narrative is “spoken” by the narrator and not the author. However, the epigraph is situated outside the narrative proper; therefore, it is not an utterance of the narrator; because the real author does not speak through

the text, the epigraph could be conceived as an utterance of the implied author. In the case of *TSAR*, it is not altogether correct to say that “you are all a lost generation” is an utterance made by Gertrude Stein, because there must be someone or something that quotes her statement in the first place. Even within the narrative, dialogue is necessarily quoted by a narrator whether we realize it or not; in other words, mimetic speech is always presented through diegetic means. In the case of *TSAR*, the conflation of the implied author with the real author begins when we ascribe the utterance of the epigraph to the implied author with the knowledge that the content of the epigraph is actually derived from an actual conversation in the actual life of the real author.

Although the paratext belongs outside the text, I take my cue from Derrida who, according to Anderson, maintained that “all markers of the ‘outside,’ such as the title and signature, will get drawn into the process of the text’s engendering” (10); that is to say, the paratext is always involved in the construction of the text. This is one of the reasons why it is legitimate to see *TSAR* as a response to (or as a contemplation on) Gertrude Stein’s statement.

The purpose of establishing the connection between the implied author and the real author, in this case, is to validate a return to the author as a site of meaning. Since the introduction of the “intentional fallacy,” critics have often had to face the problem of intentionality when approaching literary texts. In order to refer to the author for interpretive purposes, it has become somewhat necessary to justify authorial intention. The implied author is conceived as a narratological construct which constitutes an ideological basis for the text. If we were to discuss the ideological aspects of the text, establishing this connection grants us leeway in using extra-textual materials such as the author’s biography for interpretive purposes. Naturally, meaning never resides solely with the author; this is true of any literary text. However, if we were to read *TSAR* as a response to Gertrude Stein’s statement, it would be logical to grant authorial intention a degree of relevance.

As an example, let us diverge for a moment and consider “A Modest Proposal” by Jonathan Swift. In spite of what is literally written in the text, it is obviously not a treatise that promotes cannibalism; common sense tells us otherwise, but besides relying on common sense, we can also arrive at a successful interpretation of the text’s message by (1) disassociating the narrator from the implied author, (2) associating the implied author with the real author, and (3) taking the historical context into consideration. Besides being a satire, “A Modest Proposal” is also a fictional narrative; therefore, the rules that apply to it can also be applied to other fictional narratives. The point of this example is to illustrate the necessity, in

certain cases, of taking authorial intention into consideration. In the case of *TSAR*, a return to the author as a site of meaning is, to my mind, conceptually sound.

It is understood that unlike *AMF*, *TSAR* is not an autobiography. However, critics have often associated the character Jake Barnes with the author Ernest Hemingway. For example, Linda Wagner-Martin talks about “the author and his surrogate character Jake” (10). In a similar vein, Raymond S. Nelson also points out that “the autobiographical content of all his works is so high that a certain identification is reasonable” (72). The identification is reasonable insofar as a spokesperson may be identified with his or her organization. It is not entirely a coincidence that the character and the author share many of the same interests and opinions since the character clearly has its origins in the biographical subject. In “Hemingway’s Morality of Compensation,” Scott Donaldson affirms that “[i]t is Jake Barnes who explicitly states the code of Hemingway’s ‘very moral’ novel” (22). Needless to say, it would be foolish to confuse the character with the author, but I do find myself agreeing with the aforementioned critics that there are similarities between the protagonist and the author. There is a difference in saying that Jake Barnes is Ernest Hemingway and in saying that Jake Barnes can be seen as a vehicle for some of the author’s ideas. Philip Young tells us that Hemingway’s protagonist “projects qualities of the man who created him, many of his experiences are still literal or transformed autobiography” (82).

Existentialist Dread & the Fiesta Concept of Life

From the very beginning, the epigraphs of *TSAR* introduce the reader to the theme of *futility*. Philip Young argues that:

The strongest feeling in the book is that for the people in it . . . life is futile, and their motions like the motion of the sun of the title (as it appears to our eyes): endless, circular, and unavailing. Further, for all who remember what the Preacher said in this well-known Biblical passage, the echo of “Vanity of vanities; all is vanity” is rather loud. (87)

TSAR is essentially the story of an individual coming to terms with the “Absurd,” which arises from the “confrontation between the human need and the unreasonable silence of the world” (Camus 164). Thematically speaking, Hemingway’s novel shares pretty much the same Existentialist premise as *OTR*. However, Kerouac’s “novels” lean more toward the Kierkegaardian school of Existentialism, whereas *TSAR* is closer to Camus’ Absurdism in

comparison. Although *TSAR* predates Camus' work, it is not anachronistic, I believe, to say that Hemingway's novel shares similar themes of Absurdism. Similarly, it was not anachronistic of Camus to claim that Sisyphus was an "absurd hero." In any case, Existentialism itself, which Absurdism is said to be a part of, originated in the 19th century before Hemingway's lifetime. Bhim S. Dahiya points out that "the central concern of *The Sun Also Rises* is the hero's subsequent struggle to get over the depression of his disenchantment and learn to live in a world that 'kills the very good and the very gentle and the very brave impartially'" (73). The Existentialist theme of the novel is made apparent, from the very beginning, by the juxtaposition of the two epigraphs. With regard to the practice of reading Hemingway from an Existentialist perspective, Scott Donaldson writes:

Building on the foundation of ["A Clean, Well-Lighted Place"], critics have attempted to make a case for Hemingway as existentialist. His depiction of a meaningless universe matches the *Weltanschauung* of the European existentialists, they point out; his nada parallels Sartre's *néant*, Heidegger's *Nichts*. Furthermore, Hemingway agrees with existentialist doctrine in affirming that only the individual who maintains his separate identity can possibly face down the powers of Nothingness and achieve final dignity. The crucial distinction, however, is that Hemingway was not a philosopher; in his fiction he merely reported on life as he found it. "To Sartre," as John Clellon Holmes commented, "the meaninglessness is basically an idea; to Camus, the absurd is a concept." To Hemingway, on the other hand, they form part of his experience. And what primarily interested him was the individual's attempt to overcome despair in the face of such chaos. (234)

In *AMF*, Hemingway tells us: "[W]hen I wrote my first novel I tried to balance Miss Stein's quotation from the garage keeper with one from Ecclesiastes" (29 - 30). His argument was that regardless of whether his generation was "lost" or not, the point was that "the earth abideth forever" (*Selected Letters* 229). This can be understood in two ways: either that life on earth is ultimately futile and thus all is "lost," or that in recognizing the perpetuity of our world's existence, we enable ourselves to look beyond the absurdities of our individual lives. The latter notion basically constitutes a synthesis between futility and transcendence, which is quite similar to the central argument laid out in *The Myth of Sisyphus*. Despite the fact that Sisyphus is condemned to a never-ending sentence, Camus tells us that it is necessary to imagine the mythological figure as disillusioned and therefore *triumphant* over the Absurd.

Not unlike Sisyphus, Jake Barnes finds himself caught in an insoluble crisis. Dahiya argues that "[t]he two-fold problem of the hero is: (1) to establish a workable relation with Brett whom he cannot give sex and yet cannot help loving; (2) to establish a similar relation with the world where Death rules" (78). The protagonist of *TSAR* tells us: "I did not care what

it was all about. All I wanted to know was how to live in it. Maybe if you found out how to live in it you learned from that what it was all about” (137). In other words, learning how to live takes precedence over understanding the meaning of life. The main objective of the character is to cultivate a sustainable, practical, and constructive perspective on life in spite of his predicament.

Despite his tragic circumstances, Jake Barnes makes an effort to maintain an appearance of sangfroid. While lying in bed and thinking about the “old grievance,” the protagonist reflects:

I never used to realize it, I guess. I try and play it along and just not make trouble for people. Probably I never would have had any trouble if I hadn't run into Brett when they shipped me to England. I suppose she only wanted what she couldn't have. Well, people were that way. To hell with people. The Catholic Church had an awfully good way of handling all that. Good advice, anyway. Not to think about it. Oh, it was swell advice. Try and take it sometime. Try and take it. (35)

Obviously, a denial of one's problems never amounts to a solution of one's problems as the narrator indicates in this passage. Jake's nonchalance also verges on the masochistic as he insists on telling others that this “old grievance” matters not the least, and that it is not only “very funny” but also “a lot of fun” (32). Unable to have sex, he tortures himself by “picturing the bedroom scenes of [his] friends” (19). He admits that it is a “rotten habit,” but he cannot stop himself from doing it. When his friend cracks a joke about sexual impotence, he instinctively reflects: “I was afraid he thought he had hurt me with that crack about being impotent. I wanted to start him again” (109). The reader can only assume that either the character possesses an astonishing amount of fortitude, or that his suppressive nature has led him towards masochistic tendencies.

At one point, the protagonist admits quite frankly that “[i]t is awfully easy to be hard-boiled about everything in the daytime, but at night it is another thing” (38). After having returned home from a party, he undresses before a mirror and studies his reflection. Afterwards, he climbs into bed and gradually breaks down in tears. In a way, this scene functions as an exposition of Existentialist “dread.” Marjorie Grene writes:

. . . dread, whether interpreted as in Heidegger as dread of death or as in Sartre as dread of liberty itself, is contrasted by both of them to an everyday self-deceiving manner of existence, which conceals the tragic terror of the individual's loneliness beneath a soothing multiplicity of conventional and external demands. (54)

During the day, Jake is capable of suppressing the “tragic terror” of his “loneliness.” Similarly, J. Gerard Kennedy argues that “[t]he sense of routine deeply etched in Parisian experience offers a singular comfort; by heading off for the office, inserting himself into the busy, anonymous scheme of everyday life, Jake achieves a certain forgetfulness” (110). In other words, without the distractions that his daily life provides him with, Jake’s facade of nonchalance is momentarily shattered at night while he is lying alone in bed.

In *AMF*, Hemingway talks about the “fiesta concept of life.” He writes: “I wagged my tail in pleasure and plunged into the fiesta concept of life to see if I could not bring some fine attractive stick back, instead of thinking, ‘If these bastards like it, what is wrong with it?’” (209). Given that the bulk of *TSAR* takes place during an actual fiesta, and given that the alternative title of the novel is *Fiesta*, this particular “concept of life” is evidently an important theme of the novel. In a way, *TSAR* can be read as a commentary on this particular lifestyle. It is a lifestyle similar to the kind (i.e. carefree and hedonistic) led by the characters in *OTR*. In relation to this “fiesta concept of life,” the central idea expressed in *TSAR* is quite similar to Chesterton’s disparaging of the “carpe diem religion”:

[it] is not the religion of happy people, but of very unhappy people. Great joy does not gather the rosebuds while it may; its eyes are fixed on the immortal rose which Dante saw. Great joy has in it the sense of immortality; the very splendour of youth is the sense that it has all space to stretch its legs in. (107)

Although the main characters of *TSAR* and *OTR* seem to respond to their Existentialist dread (or angst) in a similar way, i.e. by indulging themselves in hedonistic pleasures, the protagonist of Hemingway’s novel seems to be much more aware of the nihilistic aspects of this particular lifestyle.

The first few days that Jake and his friends spend in Pamplona before the San Fermin festival are for the most part idyllic. Jake tells us: “We all felt good and we felt healthy . . . You could not be upset about anything on a day like that” (139). He also adds: “[T]hat was the last day before the fiesta” (ibid.). This last sentence reveals a sense of foreboding.

As the peasants gather in Pamplona, Jake observes that:

They had come in so recently from the plains and hills that it was necessary that they make their shifting in values gradually. They could not start in paying café prices. They got their money’s worth in the wine-shops. Money still had definite value in hours worked and bushels of grain sold. Late in the fiesta it would not matter what they paid, nor where they bought. (140)

This passage implies that the “fiesta concept of life” eventually distorts people’s sense of values. Having a *correct* sense of values, we are led to believe, is important to Jake. As he lies in bed, trying to sober up, he begins to reflect on what he calls a “just exchange of values”:

You gave up something and got something else . . . Enjoying living was learning to get your money’s worth and knowing when you had it. You could get your money’s worth. The world was a good place to buy in. It seemed like a fine philosophy. In five years, I thought, it will seem just as silly as all the other fine philosophies I’ve had. (137)

In other words, everything comes at a price. Happiness has to be earned. *Quid pro quo*. In “Hemingway’s Morality of Compensation,” Scott Donaldson argues that value and the “cost of things” are important concepts in the novel. Jake’s meticulousness with regard to the “cost of things” stands in stark contrast to Sal’s mystical beliefs. Ironically, having lost something that could be valued “more than [his] life” (35), Jake has gained little in return despite his notion of a “just exchange of values.” Imposing a *quid pro quo* perspective on life ultimately proves to be unrewarding, partly because life is presented as something rife with unpredictability. People don’t always get what they deserve.

Faith is also an interesting subject in the novel. On their fishing trip in Burguete, Bill asks Jake, “[A]re you really a Catholic?” Jake replies, “Technically.” Bill then asks him, “What does that mean?” To which Jake replies that he doesn’t really know (116). Upon arriving in Pamplona (earlier in the narrative), Jake goes off to pray in a cathedral. Of all the things to pray for, his prayer consists of an earthly wish to “make a lot of money” (93). He also admits to becoming drowsy during his prayer. He tells us:

. . . all the time I was kneeling with my forehead on the wood in front of me, and was thinking of myself as praying, I was ashamed, and regretted that I was such a rotten Catholic, but realized there was nothing I could do about it, at least for a while, and maybe never, but that anyway it was a grand religion, and I only wished I felt religious and maybe I would the next time[.] (93)

Religion does not provide Jake with comfort. This is one of the reasons why I think the novel leans more towards Absurdism rather than the Kierkegaardian school of Existentialism. As we can see, Jake does not resort to a leap of faith.

To cope with his depression, Jake affects a facade of nonchalance. Self-deprecation and sarcasm become his shield and armor. Under the circumstances, the “fiesta concept of life” might seem like a preferable alternative to his cynicism and lack of faith, but we eventually learn that it isn’t. Two days before the fiesta, Jake and his friends appear to be having a good

time: “It was like certain dinners I remember from the war. There was much wine, an ignored tension, and a feeling of things coming that you could not prevent happening. Under the wine I lost the disgusted feeling and was happy. It seemed they were all such nice people” (135). Although his friends “seem” like nice people, we learn that they are perfectly capable of behaving horribly towards each other. There are a couple of interesting things about this passage. First of all, there is the notion of futility. Secondly, it is interesting to see how Jake associates the dinner with his experiences during the war. Similar associations are also made during the course of the fiesta.

On the first day of the fiesta, Jake notices that the regular furniture in the cafes has been replaced with “cast-iron tables and severe folding chairs” (140 -141). He tells us that the cafes look rather like “battleship[s] stripped for action” (141). Furthermore, he also describes the fireworks of the fiesta as “shrapnel” (141) hanging in the sky. The way these scenes are focalized seems to suggest that Jake might be suffering from a post-traumatic stress disorder, but we don’t really know whether this is true or not. Curiously enough, “the war” doesn’t seem to be a topic that interests him very much. While having dinner with Georgette, Jake reflects: “We would probably have gone on and discussed the war and agreed that it was in reality a calamity for civilization, and perhaps would have been better avoided. I was bored enough” (22). In any case, the fact that Jake associates the fiesta with the war is highly suggestive.

Jake remarks: “Everything became quite unreal finally and it seemed as though nothing could have any consequences during the fiesta. It seemed out of place to think of consequences during the fiesta” (142). As the narrative unfolds, we learn that the fiesta (or the *fiesta concept of life*) does have actual “consequences.” The events that took place during the fiesta are summarized quite ironically by an exchange between Bill and Jake:

After a little while Bill said: “Well, it was a swell fiesta.”
 “Yes,” I said; “something doing all the time.”
 “You wouldn’t believe it. It’s like a wonderful nightmare.” (200)

The consequences that come to fruition during the fiesta can be seen in how the characters gradually fall apart. For example, Jake ends up betraying Montoya’s trust. The owner of the hotel is initially quite fond of Jake, because they share a mutual passion for bullfighting. The “aficion” they share is somewhat like a spiritual bond. Jake tells us:

When [the Spaniards] saw that I had *aficion*, and there was no password, no set questions that could bring it out, rather it was a sort of oral spiritual examination with the questions always a little on the defensive and never apparent, there was this same embarrassed putting the hand on the shoulder, or a “*Buen hombre*.” (123)

Once a man is recognized as an *aficionado*, he’s automatically accepted as a member of a brotherhood. Due to the fact that Montoya sees Jake as an *aficionado*, he holds him in considerable regard. When Montoya is asked to deliver an invitation to Romero on behalf of the American ambassador, he goes to Jake to seek his advice. Jake tells Montoya not to deliver the message. It is implied that if Romero were to befriend the ambassador, it would be detrimental to his career as a bullfighter. Montoya is relieved when he learns that Jake shares his opinion. Furthermore, Jake also points out the presence of an American woman in his hotel who “collects bull-fighters” (157). Montoya replies that he is aware of her. Needless to say, Montoya is very protective of the young matador. Ironically, Jake ends up introducing Brett to Romero. Although Jake tells Brett repeatedly not to become involved with the matador, he eventually gives in to her wishes (i.e. he introduces her to Romero), and thus ends up betraying Montoya’s trust. When Montoya learns of this, he becomes disgusted with Jake.

The confrontation between Jake and Cohn is another example of the consequences caused by the *fiesta* concept of life. Although Jake acts as if he couldn’t care less about Brett’s affairs, he does become jealous over her. Jake tells us: “I was blind, unforgivingly jealous of what had happened to [Cohn]. The fact that I took it as a matter of course did not alter that any. I certainly did hate him” (95). When Cohn becomes angry at him for introducing Brett to Romero, Jake gets agitated and takes a swing at him. Cohn, being an adept boxer, ends up knocking Jake down. Afterwards, feeling utterly distressed, Cohn tries to apologize, but Jake reacts apathetically to his apology.

Perhaps the consequences of the *fiesta* are best illustrated by the episode involving the death of the Spaniard. Waking up with a terrific hangover, Jake gets dressed to go out and watch the running of the bulls. The police manage to pull away a few drunkards wandering about in the streets before the bulls arrive. Unfortunately, one of the men running from the bulls gets horribly wounded. Later on we are told that the man dies from his injuries. The following day his body is carried away in a coffin by a procession of drunkards. The coffin is then loaded onto the “baggage-car” (179) of a train to be taken away while the wife and children of the dead man ride in a “third-class railway-carriage” (179). The way the event is described underpins the absurdity of the whole affair. After the running of the bulls, Jake heads to one of the cafes in town. The waiter at the cafe asks Jake about the *encierro*. Jake

tells him about the man who got gored. The waiter remarks: “A big horn wound. All for fun. Just for fun. What do you think of that?” To which Jake replies, “I don’t know” (178). Afterwards, a passerby announces that the man has died. The waiter turns to Jake and says: “You hear? Muerto. Dead. He’s dead. With a horn through him. All for morning fun” (178). Not knowing what to say, Jake simply admits that “[i]t’s bad” (179). As we can see, the absurdity of the man’s death is expressed quite clearly by the exchange between the waiter and Jake. Later on at the bullfight, the bull that killed the man is defeated by Romero. The matador cuts an ear off the bull and gives it to Brett as a token of honour. She accepts the ear but wraps it up in a handkerchief containing cigarette butts. Afterwards, the ear is shoved into the back of a drawer in her hotel-room. From the death of the man to the ear in the drawer, we are presented with a very clear picture of the absurd consequences resulting from the fiesta.

In “Alcoholism in Ernest Hemingway’s *The Sun Also Rises*,” Matts Djos argues that *TSAR* is a “remarkable portrait of the pathology of the disease of alcoholism” (139). The following is an exchange between Jake and Mike:

“I’m drunk,” I said. “I’m going in and lie down.”
 “Are you blind? I was blind myself.”
 “Yes,” I said, “I’m blind.” (201)

The purpose of self-indulgence, according to the Beats, is to acquire a deeper understanding of reality through the alteration of perception. The characters in *TSAR* make no such claim. For them, drunkenness does not lead to awareness or “ecstasy”; it leads to “blindness.” Although the protagonists of *TSAR* and *OTR* both exemplify hedonistic behaviours, they are portrayed quite differently by their respective authors. Sal Paradise is presented to us as a Romantic figure, whereas Jake Barnes is portrayed a somewhat “pathological” character.

On the last night of the festivities, Jake tells us: “Outside in the square the fiesta was going on. It did not mean anything” (201). The fiesta is ultimately seen as meaningless. The fiesta concept of life has made them “blind.” The narrative of *TSAR* is heavily informed with a sense of futility; more so than *OTR*, given the lack of *OTR*’s mystical rhetoric and Romantic pretense. Earlier in the novel, Jake goes out with Brett and her friend the Count. After a pleasant meal and a few drinks, they’re all feeling pretty good, but later on at the dance, Brett becomes depressed, and Jake tells us: “I had the feeling as in a nightmare of it all being something repeated, something I had been through and that now I must go through again” (64). It is evident that Jake is somewhat aware of the nihilistic aspects inherent within the fiesta concept of life.

During their fishing trip in Burguete, Bill tells Jake: “You’re an expatriate. You’ve lost touch with the soil. You get precious. Fake European standards have ruined you. You drink yourself to death. You become obsessed by sex. You spend all your time talking, not working. You are an expatriate, see? You hang around cafés” (109). This passage reflects Hemingway’s sentiments towards members of the expatriate community loitering about in the Latin Quarter during the 1920’s. After having been in Paris for three months, Hemingway sent off the following report to the *Toronto Star*:

The scum of Greenwich village, New York, has been skimmed off and deposited in large ladles on that section of Paris adjacent to the Café Rotonde. . . . It is a strange-acting and strange-looking breed that crowd the tables of the Café Rotonde. They have all striven so hard for a careless individuality of clothing that they have achieved a sort of uniformity of eccentricity. A first look into the smoky, high-ceilinged, table-crammed interior of the Rotonde gives you the same feelings that hits you as you step into the bird-house at the zoo. (qtd. in Kennedy 85)

In addition to the expatriate dilettanti who were always “on exhibition” (*AMF* 82), Hemingway also harbored an intense dislike for drunkards in general. According to him, the Café des Amateurs was one of the places in which the derelicts of Paris congregated: “It was a sad, evilly run café where the drunkards of the quarter crowded together and I kept away from it because of the smell of dirty bodies and the sour smell of drunkenness . . . The Café des Amateurs was the cesspool of the rue Mouffetard” (*AMF* 3). Given his distaste for drunkards, it is no wonder that the characters in *TSAR* are portrayed as pathological rather than Romantic. Ironically, Hemingway was himself quite fond of drinking. The difference that Hemingway saw between himself and the expatriate dilettante was that he thought of himself as (and mostly behaved like) a disciplined writer. In *AMF*, Hemingway tells the reader that he made it a rule only to drink after the day’s work was completed (12).

During a meeting with a group of professors from the University of Hawaii, Hemingway advised the professors to remove *A Farewell to Arms* from their syllabi and let their students read *TSAR* instead, because *TSAR* is essentially a “very moral” novel (qtd. in Donaldson 152). The novel can be understood as “moral” in the sense that it is a condemnation of the “fiesta concept of life”; the kind of life that the characters in the novel and the expatriates in Paris took part in.

The Code & Existentialism Revisited

In the second chapter of the novel, Jake talks about Cohn's obsession with *The Purple Land* (a novel by William Henry Hudson), and this is how he characterizes the book:

[*The Purple Land*] is a very sinister book if read too late in life. It recounts splendid imaginary amorous adventures of a perfect English gentleman in an intensely romantic land . . . For a man to take it at thirty-four as a guide-book to what life holds is about as safe as it would be for a man of the same age to enter Wall Street direct from a French convent, equipped with a complete set of the more practical Alger books. (16)

Jake's opinion of *The Purple Land* tells us a lot about his values. By sarcastically describing the novel as a "splendid imaginary amorous adventure," he expresses his disdain for "romantic" naivety. It seems likely that this contempt for the romantic and for the naive is related to his condition. To quite an extent, his wound has made him a cynical man, and understandably so, because it would be impractical and unwise of him to entertain too much of a romantic sentiment towards Brett. After the fallout with Cohn, Jake reflects: "He should have hit somebody the first time he was insulted, and then gone away. He was so sure that Brett loved him. He was going to stay, and true love would conquer all" (180). Jake's cynicism speaks for itself. When we compare Hemingway's protagonist with Sal Paradise, Jake Barnes comes out as the less naive and less idealistic of the two. However, Jake is by no means a nihilistic character. When Cohn tells him: "I can't stand it to think my life is going so fast and I'm not really living it." Jake replies: "Nobody ever lives their life all the way up except bull-fighters" (17). His admiration for matadors and the *corrida de toros* indicates a belief in certain ideals.

Romero's performance in the ring exemplifies what Hemingway calls "grace under pressure." Jake observes that "Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line . . . [His] bull-fighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time" (153). When facing an exceedingly dangerous bull, the matador remains undaunted and graceful. Jake remarks that "it was not brilliant bull-fighting. It was only perfect bull-fighting" (195). With regard to the concept of "grace under pressure," Philip Young explains that:

This is the Hemingway "code" . . . It is made of the controls of honor and courage which in a life of tension and pain make a man a man and distinguish him from the

people who follow random impulses, let down their hair, and are generally messy, perhaps cowardly, and without inviolable rules for how to live holding tight. (63)

Even after having received a serious beating, Romero stills shows up the next day for the bullfight. Although his face is badly swollen and discoloured, he is still able to perform elegantly within the ring. The narrator tells us: “The fight with Cohn had not touched [Romero’s] spirit but his face had been smashed and his body hurt. He was wiping all that out now. Each thing that he did with this bull wiped that out a little cleaner” (197). In spite of life’s absurdities, there is still dignity to be had in the ring, namely in how the matador handles himself; in how he works the bull. The bullring is consecrated ground upon which a matador may purify himself. This is how Jake perceives the corrida. The way he describes and reflects upon Romero’s performances encapsulates a set of values that are in direct opposition to the nihilistic mayhem manifested by the fiesta.

Although the corrida can be seen as a romantic sport, it is also a sport of violence. Even if we were to neglect the bulls that are mutilated and killed, there are still the steers and the horses that are often *accidentally* injured:

I sat beside Brett and explained to Brett what it was all about. I told her about watching the bull, not the horse, when the bulls charged the picadors, and got her to watching the picador place the point of his pic so that she saw what it was all about, so that it became more something that was going on with a definite end, and less of a spectacle with unexplained horrors. (153)

If the reader were to take the bullfight as a metaphor for life, Jake’s message would seem to be this: *perspective* is of the utmost importance. The message, if it can be construed as such, is very similar to Existentialist thought. Marjorie Grene explains that:

. . . it is, for the existentialist, only within the confines of that reality [i.e. “the felt reality of the individual consciousness”], unwillingly flung into its world, yet freely making a world of it, that good and evil, importance and unimportance, can originate. Values are created, in other words, only by the free act of a human agent who *takes* this or that to be good or bad, beautiful or ugly, in the light of his endeavor to give significance and order to an otherwise meaningless world. (11)

In other words, the origin of meaning is not external to the subjective consciousness. It begins with the consciousness. Man ascribes meaning to his existence in “his endeavor to give significance and order to an otherwise meaningless world.” Therefore, the meaning of life is not to be discovered; it is to be *constructed*. Existentialism is first and foremost “the

philosophy which declares as its first principle that existence is prior to essence” (Grene 2). In a similar vein, Jake Barnes is first and foremost interested in finding out “how to live,” which is to give order and significance to his existence rather than discovering the meaning of life, which is supposed to reside in a realm of illusory “essences.” Grene explains that:

The self that existentialism seeks is each person’s individual self, which he must forge for himself out of such senseless circumstances, such meaningless limitations, as are given him. This self-creation -- the making of one’s essence from mere existence -- is demanded of each of us because, according to existentialism, there is no single essence of humanity . . . (41)

Because there is no single essence, and hence no absolute or prior meaning, the question of “how to live” is much more important than “what it [is] all about” (*TSAR* 137). This Existentialist principle seems to be something Jake instinctively knows. Depending on one’s perspective, bullfighting can either be seen as a ritual of great significance or as a “spectacle [of] unexplained horrors”; the implication here is that the same principle may be applied to life in general. Scott Donaldson tells us that Hemingway saw bullfighting as a tragic performance (87). A person’s life, according to Hemingway, is also a tragic performance: “I’ve known some very wonderful people who even though they were going directly toward the grave (which is what makes any story a tragedy if carried out until the end) managed to put up a very fine performance enroute” (*Selected Letters* 238). As we can see, there is a great deal of similarity between Hemingway’s bullring and his understanding of life.

Existentialism articulates the possible triumph of the individual against Absurdist circumstances; Hemingway’s *code* also conveys a similar message. Donaldson tells us that “[i]n exalting the value of the struggle itself, and in celebrating the endurance and bravery a man might summon in the face of suffering, Hemingway affirmed the grandeur of which the individual human being was capable” (240). Far from being a nihilistic character who has given up on life, Jake tries to cope with his circumstances. Carlos Baker contends that for Hemingway “people who are able under abnormal circumstances to behave like normal human beings, ordinarily strike him with the impact of the beautiful” (68).

Representation

Given that Jake was originally based on the biographical “Hem,” it is not entirely a coincidence that Jake’s admiration for Romero’s style of bullfighting coincides with

Hemingway's sense of aesthetics. As a matter of fact, Scott Donaldson argues: "Nothing better illustrated Hemingway's conviction of the contiguity between sport and art than bullfighting . . ." (86). The following is Jake's description of the bullfight:

Romero never made any contortions, always it was straight and pure and natural in line. The others twisted themselves like corkscrews, their elbows raised, and leaned against the flanks of the bull after his horns had passed, to give a fake look of danger. Afterward, all that was faked turned bad and gave an unpleasant feeling. Romero's bullfighting gave real emotion, because he kept the absolute purity of line in his movements and always quietly and calmly let the horns pass him close each time. (153)

When reading this passage, it is not difficult to see the similarity between Romero's style as a matador and Hemingway's style as writer. In *Hemingway: Expressionist Artist*, Raymond S. Nelson discusses the affinity between Hemingway's writing and the Expressionist paintings of Cezanne (whose work Hemingway admired and often studied in Paris). He points out that "Hemingway spent a lifetime trying to write prose that would not go bad, and he tried with all his energy to write 'truly' about life, as Cézanne -- in Hemingway's judgement -- had painted truly" (7). This preoccupation with writing "truly" is described several times in *AMF*. Hemingway writes: "I was trying to do this [i.e. write 'true sentences'] all the time I was writing, and it was good and severe discipline" (12). Nelson also points out that Hemingway "sought not to relate an incident, but to present it stripped of all interpretive words and phrases. He sought to present only what he saw, and to select those details which would themselves convey emotion" (11). Jake tells us that "Romero's bullfighting gave real emotion"; similarly, Hemingway also sought to render his writing "straight and pure and natural in line" so as to convey "real emotion."

In an interview published in 1958, Hemingway stated:

From things that have happened and from things as they exist and from all things that you know and all those you cannot know, you make something through your invention that is not a representation but a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive, and you make it alive, and if you make it well enough, you give it immortality. (Plimpton 32)

Carlos Baker contends that "[n]o other writer of our time had so fiercely asserted, so pugnaciously defended, or so consistently exemplified the writer's obligation to speak truly" (48). Curiously enough, in spite of this preoccupation with writing "truly," Hemingway tells us in the preface to *AMF* that "[i]f the reader prefers, this book may be regarded as fiction.

But there is always the chance that such a book of fiction may throw some light on what has been written as fact.” As I see it, this statement is not altogether dissimilar to Kerouac’s admission in *SIP* that autobiographical writing can often be “stylized.” In my opinion, Hemingway’s statement can also be construed as a metafictional gesture. As Helen Cixous once put it: “All biographies like all autobiographies like all narratives tell one story in place of another” (qtd. in Anderson 1).

According to Hemingway’s statement (see beginning of previous paragraph), the author is somewhat of a god-like figure; given his capacity to bestow “immortality” upon his creations. In spite of Hemingway’s rhetoric regarding “truth” and “immortality,” we know for a fact that there is an unbridgeable gap between a sign and the thing (or concept) to which it refers. Rene Magritte demonstrated this fact quite famously with *The Treachery of Images*, which is a painting of a pipe above a caption that reads: “Ceci n’est pas une pipe.” A representation is, at the end of the day, only a representation.

If we were to disregard the mystical overtones of Hemingway’s argument, it becomes obvious then that the subject matter of the extract (from the interview) could be better understood as verisimilitude rather than “truth” or “immortality.” In order to make something life-like, it was necessary, as far as Hemingway was concerned, to abstain from “interpretive words and phrases . . . to present only what he saw” (Nelson 11). To present what one sees introduces the idea of perception, and the idea of perception implies subjectivity. As I see it, Hemingway’s preoccupation with writing “truly” does not actually concern the objective world as it is, but rather how he, the subject, perceives it to be. In relation to this idea of “seeing” truly and writing truly, Baker contends that for Hemingway “[t]he hope was that the genuinely serious and determined writer-observer might be able in time to penetrate behind the illusions which all our preconceptions play upon the act of clear seeing” (55). The problem with this “hope” is that however hard the artist may try, his or her writing is at the end of the day inescapably ideological. If this were not true, it would not be possible to speak of a “Hemingway code.” To present (or prescribe) a certain “code” of living is also to advance some form of ideology. A “code” is always imbedded within a larger context (or ideology). If writers (and people in general) *are* ideological subjects, the notion that we are capable of “clear seeing” without “preconceptions” is highly problematic.

Nelson maintains that Hemingway should be seen as an Expressionist rather than as a Realist. He explains that “[t]he Expressionist artist frequently violates camera truth, but he does so in order to express a deeper truth” (4). Nelson asserts that Hemingway’s methods are not that different from the methods of the Expressionist. By consciously representing the

partial, i.e. by “[selecting] those details which would themselves convey emotion” (Nelson 11), the writer is effectively disregarding what we might think of as “camera truth”; this disregard for camera truth is evident in how Hemingway portrays natural scenery; his colours are almost always primary colours. Moreover, whatever import the partial contains (i.e. “those details which would themselves convey emotion”), it is ultimately a significance that belongs to the perceiving subject. Things, or partial things, do not “[give] emotions” in or by themselves.

In support of Hemingway’s idea about writing “truly,” Carlos Baker argues that “[a]ny form of truth, however, if it is put into an art form, will help the writing to survive the erosions of time. For the truth is a sturdy core, impervious to the winds of faddist doctrine and the temporary weather of an age” (65). However, meaning, as we know, does not exist in a vacuum. We must be careful when we speak of “truth.” Even things that can be properly spoken of as truth, e.g. scientific facts, are open to re-examination (in light of new evidence). Historically speaking, it has been proven time and again that what is upheld as “truth” is not necessarily deduced from rigorous and impartial methods of investigation. Both Hemingway and Baker have a tendency of appealing to common sense, but their arguments seem somewhat mysterious. Although both of them speak of “truth,” they do not specify the actual “truths” referred to. Baker writes: “From truth it is only a step to beauty and aisthetes -- “one who perceives” -- is ordinarily associated with the perception of the beautiful” (65). His argument recalls the famous lines of the Romantic poet John Keats who wrote, “Beauty is truth, truth beauty”; a poetic statement, but hardly a verifiable fact; except, perhaps, through some sort of mystical revelation. In any case, this idea of truth as immortal (Hemingway) or as a short step from beauty (Baker) belongs very much to the assumptions of a bygone era (the “Romantic” period perhaps). Far from being an objective fact, theirs is an idea that originates from an ideological context and not from any objective observation. In any case, “truth,” whatever it may be, transcribed as “art” (or into narrative form) can no longer be absolutely true by virtue of the fact that representation implicates fictionality.

Baker explains that Hemingway used a technique called “double perception,” which is essentially a discipline that “requires an ability to penetrate both to the essential qualities of a natural scene and to the essential qualities of a subjective reaction to the scene” (68). The purpose of this technique is:

To make something so humanly true that it will outlast the vagaries of time and change, yet will still speak directly to one’s own changing time, he must somehow reach a state

of objective awareness between poles, one inward-outward and the other outward-inward. The first need (though not always first in order of time) is the ability to look within and to describe that complex of mixed emotions which a given set of circumstances has produced in the observer's mind. The other necessity is to locate and to state factually and exactly that outer complex of motion and fact which produced the emotional reaction. (56)

As we can see, the argument inadvertently exposes its own paradoxes. The phrase "humanly true" implies that truth varies according to perspective; otherwise, the modifier within the phrase is redundant. For example, things that are "humanly" true do not necessarily coincide with those that are *divinely* true. Baker's phrase, I believe, reveals a humanist perspective, which is, after all, one perspective amongst many. "To look within and to describe that complex of mixed emotions . . . in the observer's mind" is to express what is necessarily a subjective impression. While individuals may have similar responses to a given set of circumstances, it would be, needless to say, naive to think that responses (or impressions) between individuals do not vary. Returning to Baker's definition of "double perception" (68), we are reminded that this mode of observation involves the examination of a "subjective reaction" (68) to a given scene or circumstance. Needless to say, no two *subjects* are alike. This is what I mean to say when observing that Hemingway's mode of description/representation does not (although it is conceived as an attempt to) capture the objective world as it is, but how he, the subject, perceives it. This is evident in the idea of an "outward-inward" portrayal of a "subjective reaction." In the context of Baker's argument, "humanly true" is a valid term, but perhaps "individually true" (or subjectively true) would be a more accurate description.

Hemingway writes in a consciously selective (or subjective) manner, but he insists that by doing so, he imbues his writing with a dimension of truthfulness otherwise unattainable. In relation to this matter of "truth," we are presented with a paradox between subjectivity and objectivity; however, the dialectic between subjectivity and objectivity (regarding truth) doesn't have to be paradoxical. Sean Burke explains that "[w]ithin a poetic cosmogony wherein mind becomes the cause in part of what it represents, the older categories of imitation and inspiration do not disappear but rather find themselves redistributed within the new economy of subjectivity" (xx). The dynamics between subjectivity and objectivity was thoroughly explored by the poets of the Romantic era who, similar to Hemingway, also conceived of the author as a god-like figure. In speaking about Wordsworth's poetics, Burke remarks that "[t]he imagination is . . . needed to supplement nature, to reveal the truth of a nature which cannot precede its imaginative representation" (xxi). "To reveal the truth" of an

object, Hemingway did not describe the object just as it was; in order to “convey emotion” that would “outlast the vagaries of time,” he selected specific details of the object to describe. Hemingway maintained that by writing in this manner, the result was less of a representation than “a whole new thing truer than anything true and alive.” As far as authorship is concerned, Hemingway shares a degree of similarity with those associated with the Romantic tradition; that is to say, in a way, Hemingway’s conception of the artist/writer is somewhat Romantic. For example, he describes the artist as a wolf “hunted by everyone. Everyone is against him and he is on his own as an artist is” (*Ernest Hemingway on Writing* 113). Needless to say, not all writers conceived of themselves as lone figures marginalized or “hunted” by society. As a matter of fact, Maurice Beebe notes that “Hemingway [is] closer in spirit to Byron and the early Romantics than to writers like Flaubert and James, who set the critical temper of their age” (66).

In *AMF*, Hemingway writes: “Maybe away from Paris I could write about Paris as in Paris I could write about Michigan” (7). This hypothesis poses interesting implications in relation to the distance between the subject that writes (Hemingway) and the subject written about (Paris). In geographical terms, Hemingway implies that the distance is preferable for purposes of writing; however, in *theoretical* terms, it is also inevitable. There is always a divide between the subject and that which the subject is writing about; autobiographies are no exception. As was mentioned earlier, Patricia Waugh explains that “[t]o write about oneself is implicitly to posit oneself as an ‘other,’ to narrate or historicize oneself as a character in one’s own discourse” (135). Autobiographical writing always implies the transformation of subject into object. In order to write autobiography, one inevitably ends up positing oneself as object, thereby textually creating a divide between a self that exists in the present and a self that is lost in time (Burke 304). It is safe to assume that Hemingway did not intend the aforementioned postulation (see beginning of paragraph) to be an exposition on the Postmodern concept of “the fractured self.” The point that he was trying to make seems to be this: it is best to distance oneself from the subject matter so as to better reflect upon it. In *Imagining Paris*, J. Gerald Kennedy explains:

Hemingway speculated in *A Moveable Feast* that “transplanting” might be as necessary for the writer as for other growing things, insofar as relocation produced a new perspective from which a previous haunt might be written about. His theory is revealing: like many a modernist, Hemingway regarded displacement as an elective strategy of replenishment, a way of shifting one’s angle of vision. (26)

As readers living in a Postmodern (or post-Postmodern) era, we are able to see how Hemingway's hypothesis ties in with Postmodernist concerns. If the author of *AMF* was at all concerned with writing "truly," it was the kind of truthfulness aimed at presenting what he, the subject, perceived; in light of the fact that the subject matter is the subject himself, the narrative is ultimately an exercise in self-perception undertaken over a temporal gap. "Displacement" is not only an "elective strategy," it is also an inevitable fact in terms of autobiographical writing. *AMF* could very well "be regarded as fiction" (to use the words of the author) from a Postmodern perspective.

In *Autobiography*, Linda Anderson discusses related concerns laid out in *Sexing the Self* by Elspeth Probyn. She tells us that "[f]or Probyn, the answer lies in recognizing the 'very mediated' nature of the speaking subject, the fact that self-representation is always developed in terms of the available conventions and discourses: for Probyn there is never 'a transparent self who speaks from the heart'" (111). If a "transparent self who speaks from the heart" is never present within the text, what we are looking at, when regarding the author, is a narratological construct of "conventions" and "discourses." Therefore, it is necessary to disentangle the "discursive" and "conventional" threads of this construct.

In the preface to *AMF*, Hemingway writes: "For reasons sufficient to the writer, many places, people, observations and impressions have been left out of this book," which brings me back to Foucault's point about "silence" (see "Genre-Definition" in Chapter I). Generally speaking, autobiographies often end up as an enhancement of the authorial self (Grace 8). What was left out of *AMF*? And what does it tell us about self-representation? We do know the existence of a sketch that Hemingway had originally written to include in *AMF*. However, the sketch was discarded in the end. It contained the story of Hemingway and his wife discussing the possibilities of sharing the same hairstyle. Kennedy tells us:

manuscript evidence indicates that at some point in the composition of the memoir, the author began a sketch which would have connected young Hem to David Bourne [protagonist of *The Garden of Eden*] and even to Nick Sheldon [protagonist of "The Sea Change"] by tracing an experiment in androgyny undertaken by the Hemingways in Paris in 1924. (134)

The discarded sketch hinted at themes of transgenderism; a theme that contradicts the author's legendary masculinity. Not unlike Kerouac, Hemingway also displayed a degree of homophobia, albeit in a more direct way:

I must admit that I had certain prejudices against homosexuality since I knew its more primitive side. I knew it was why you carried a knife and would use it when you were in the company of tramps when you were a boy in the days when wolves was not a slang term for men obsessed by the pursuit of women. (*AMF* 18)

It is interesting to see how both he and Kerouac thought it important to assert their masculinity in such a way, i.e. by remaining silent about certain aspects of their lives, and also by displaying hostility towards homoeroticism. These instances seem to reaffirm the notion that “[i]nsofar as autobiography has been seen as promoting a view of the subject as universal, it has also underpinned the centrality of masculine . . . modes of subjectivity” (Anderson 3). If Hemingway hadn’t discarded the sketch, he would have subverted the masculine persona constructed within the memoir by his own hand. Self-representation is essentially two-fold: by the things one says, and by the things one declines to say.

Myth & Mythopoeia

In *Hemingway: The Writer as Artist*, Carlos Baker writes: “Hemingway’s first novel provides an important insight into the special ‘mythological’ methods which he was to employ with increasing assurance and success in the rest of his major writing” (87). In support of his argument, Baker goes on to identify Brett Ashley with the mythological goddess Circe (based on a remark attributed to Robert Cohn). While I don’t necessarily agree with Baker’s argument regarding Brett as Circe, I do think that “myth” (in the wider sense of the word) is an important topic to consider in relation to *TSAR*.

The first and most important place to start, in my opinion, would be the idea of a “Lost Generation.” In relation to the epigraph that reads, “You are all a lost generation,” Philip Young argues: “The novel provides an explanation for this observation, in addition to illustrating it in action” (84). To see the novel as an illustration (or a refutation) of what Carlos Baker termed “lost-generationism” is also to acknowledge the centrality of “lost-generationism” as a subject matter in the text. As far as I can tell, the novel can be read either way, i.e. as an illustration *or* a refutation of lost-generationism. It would be, I think, very hard for the reader to ignore completely the hypothesis of a “lost generation” put forth in the epigraph. It is therefore very important, I believe, to understand what the term “lost generation” means (and implies) in order to understand Hemingway’s novel with greater depth.

As I see it, the concept of “lost-generationism” can be understood as a myth in the historiographical sense. Carlos Baker writes:

. . . there can be no doubt that, with his brilliant dramatization of the moral predicament of a small group of Jazz Age D. P.’s, Hemingway offered a “myth” whose extension in social space far outreached the novel’s national boundaries of France and Spain. What he had done could be regarded as dramatized social history. But it was not intended to be the social history of a lost generation. (79 - 80)

Let us put aside authorial intention (i.e. Hemingway’s) for a moment, and consider the fact that this particular “social history of a lost generation” *is*, as Baker points out, a “myth.” As I have also pointed out earlier in the introduction to this thesis, the First World War was undoubtedly a horrendous and catastrophic event; however, it would be problematic to claim that the war brought about an “end of ideals,” which is what the term “Lost Generation” can be taken to imply. In *Exile’s Return*, Malcolm Cowley writes: “We [i.e. the American expatriate writers of the 1920’s] were new men, without inherited traditions, and we were entering a new world of art that did not impress us as being a spiritual desert” (115).

If we are prepared to agree with Philip Young who argued that Hemingway’s novel functions as an explanation of lost-generationism, in my opinion, we should also allow for the fact that the novel deals with a mythic subject. As Cowley points out, the “Lost Generation” was also (in a sense) a “myth” that was “invented” by the expatriate writers themselves (95). Scott Donaldson, however, took the matter of mythography in relation to *TSAR* quite literally:

Actually Hemingway’s first novel is rather carefully organized around a contrast between paganism and Christianity. The initial scenes in Paris establish that cosmopolitan city as the home of paganism. Sexual aberrations proliferate there. Notre-Dame squats “again the night sky,” but the characters frequent the Dingo Bar instead . . . But as soon as Jake enters Spain, a far more devout Christian country, the references to churches multiply, and Jake goes to pray in them as he had not done in Paris. These two strains commingle during the fiesta of San Fermin (“also a religious festival”) at Pamplona, where Brett is elevated to the status of a pagan idol by the drunken crowd. The *riau-riau* dancers form a circle around her and will not let her join the dance, since they want her “as an image to dance around.” (235)

It is easy to see how the theme of “paganism” relates to myth, but it ought to be pointed out that Christianity can also be understood in terms of myth. For example, Laurence Coupe maintains that the narrative in the Book of Exodus can be read as a deliverance myth. Joseph Campbell, the American mythologist, derived his thesis of the monomyth from the story of Christ (amongst other narratives). Jessie L. Weston, scholar and folklorist, studied the

relationship between Christianity and the Arthurian legends of Britain. In any case, to read Christianity in terms of mythology is a well established practice.

According to Donaldson's thesis, *TSAR* is structured around certain motifs derived from two myths: one pagan and the other Judeo-Christian. While we may or may not agree with his argument, it is safe to say, I think, that some of the major themes within the novel are derived from the Judeo-Christian heritage. For those who require evidence, we need not look further than the very title of the novel. The problem with Donaldson's argument is that he does not really specify what he means by "paganism," which is a blanket term that covers just about any non-Abrahamic religious practice; even ones that (presumably) don't approve of "sexual aberrations," or even ones (again, presumably) that don't incorporate ritualistic dances. However, I will agree that the author's portrayal of the crowd dancing around Brett is highly suggestive of some sort of "pagan" ritual; if only a stereo-typical one conjured up by a Christian imagination.

Before Donaldson, Carlos Baker had also argued that the novel incorporates themes of paganism and Christianity. He maintains that the proceedings of the San Fermin festival develop into a "dialectical struggle between paganism and Christian orthodoxy" (88). We must bear in mind that Hemingway was a writer obsessed with economizing language. Furthermore, he usually favoured implication over explication. The author could have simply written that the crowd in Pamplona danced around Brett, but he specifies that the crowd wanted her as "as an image to dance around"; this coming from an author who frequently relied on what T. S. Eliot called the "objective correlative," which is essentially "a set of objects, a situation, a chain of events" that functions as a "formula of [a] particular emotion" (qtd. in Young 183). Although the objective correlative is usually incorporated, as I understand it, for emotive rather than connotative purposes, it is clear that Hemingway took special care in portraying "situation[s]" and "chain[s] of events," e.g. a crowd dancing around a woman; wanting her as an "image." Therefore, I believe it is highly possible that he may have foreseen what the phrase would connote (if the connotation was not deliberate in the first place).

Although Baker maintains that Hemingway employed "mythological methods" in writing *TSAR*, he also specifies that it is not the kind used by T. S. Eliot or James Joyce (in *The Waste Land* and in *Ulysses* respectively) which he calls "myth-adaptation" (88). The "mythological method" that Baker refers to is rooted in the "deeper area of psychological symbol-building" (88). He argues that although Hemingway did not necessarily appropriate myths by intention, the author had tapped into a "residuum of 'natural knowledge'" (88) when

writing the novel. Regarding Baker's argument concerning the "residuum of 'natural knowledge,'" I believe he means to say that as creatures of heritage, we inadvertently draw on myths (at times) to articulate ourselves. Myths are constitutive of culture. They are not simply dead legends in which we no longer believe. They are part of the foundational building-blocks in how we interpret things such as history, e.g. *the myth of progress*. It is "natural" in the sense that peoples across the globe seem to share the same tendency towards mythography and mythopoeia. How are we to make sense of this in relation to *TSAR*?

If we are prepared to agree that Christianity is essentially a mythic heritage (one that can be associated with older mystery/fertility cults), it is possible to say then that the author uses "myth" to articulate the themes of the novel. We must remember that the Book of Ecclesiastes is situated within a larger mythic context. While such a claim might be hard for a theist to accept, it is clear, I think, that Scriptural narrative can only be one of two things: either history or myth (depending on one's perspective). It is true that the Book of Ecclesiastes describes natural phenomena that are visible to the human eye, but the description is structurally enclosed within a mythic framework. The myth of Demeter and Persephone also describes natural phenomena, but we do not accept the story as a scientific account. With regard to Ecclesiastes, those who have a rudimentary knowledge of astronomy know that the "earth" *will not* "abide for ever" (contrary to the Preacher's proclamation), as the sun gradually becomes a red giant in the very distant future. If Hemingway had simply wanted to suggest that life on earth will continue to exist for what seems like an indefinite period of time, he could have quoted from a high school textbook. In a somewhat simplistic sense, this is what I mean to say when observing that we have a natural tendency towards using myth to articulate ourselves. Somehow myths seem to be much more profound than hard scientific facts. The proper noun "Ecclesiastes" carries a certain weight and authority (or "aura") that other texts such as "Science 101" (which is arguably a more credible source for factual purposes) don't necessarily have. It could be argued that the force of the novel's epigraph is made all the more potent by its source in Scripture.

Baker contends that Hemingway draws on myth without consciously doing so. Perhaps it would be more accurate (and less contentious) to say that Hemingway draws on religion rather than myth; however, *that*, I believe, would be a less accurate description than we think it is. To illustrate what I mean, let us consider an example: Marxism is atheistic. However, the Marxist conception of dialectical materialism follows an eschatological trajectory in which communism is seen as the ultimate end, i.e. as a paradisaical state of affairs which Man is destined to progress towards. If we think about it carefully, Marxism is essentially a

secularized version of a mythic narrative that has been alive for at least two millennia. Marxism, although atheistic, does feature mythic themes. Although it is possible to read *TSAR* as a religious work (see *By Force of Will* by Donaldson), it is less problematic, I believe, to claim that the novel works with a mythic motif rather than a religious doctrine. Just to be clear, I am of course referring to the the specific theme suggested by the epigraph quoted from Ecclesiastes.

As I see it, *TSAR* functions better as an illustration of the account put forth in the Book of Ecclesiastes rather than Gertrude Stein's proclamation of lost-generationism. Carlos Baker maintains that "*The Sun Also Rises* was the means Hemingway chose to declare himself out of the alleged 'lostness' of a generation whose vagaries he chronicled" (77). Evidence for this argument can be found in Hemingway's letters (*Selected Letters* 229) and most importantly in his memoir (*AMF* 29 - 30). While authorial intention has always been a problematic thing for critics to deal with, it has become inevitable in the case of *TSAR*. As to the question "why," here's an analogy: Is it possible to say "no, *L'Étranger* (1942) is not the story of an Absurdist hero" when Albert Camus, the author of the novel, explains explicitly in *Le Mythe de Sisyphe* (1942) that it is? In Hemingway's case, we have a chapter entitled "Une Generation Perdue" in *AMF* which provides an authorial explanation behind the choice of epigraphs in *TSAR*; in other words, an explanation of some of the major themes within the novel. Taking authorial intention into account, Baker maintains that the "reason for adding the quotation from Ecclesiastes was to indicate [the author's] belief that 'there was no such thing as a lost generation'" (80).

It could be argued that Hemingway sought to dispel a historiographical myth (cf. Baker 79) on the strength of a theological myth. We must remember that the theme of "the sun also arises" is potent not because of its scientific accuracy, but because of its source in Scripture; it carries the weight and authority of an institution that has been around for millennia. Although it would be absurd to claim that the sun doth not arise each day, it is not exactly accurate to say that life (or reality) is a set of endless repetitions, which is essentially the hypothesis that Ecclesiastes begins with. Although it may seem like a matter of fact, the argument is just one perspective amongst others, e.g. "you cannot step twice in the same river," because, according to Heraclitus, "nothing is permanent except change." If nothing is permanent except change, reality cannot possibly be a set of endless repetitions. Therefore, in my opinion, we must understand the phrase "the sun also rises" as something imbedded within a tradition.

With regard to *TSAR*, Carlos Baker points out that "[t]he title comes from the first chapter of Ecclesiastes. It is useful to recognize the strong probability that the moral of the

novel is derived from the same book” (82). According to Hemingway, the point of the novel was that the “earth abideth forever” (*Selected Letters* 229). Needless to say, the quote from Ecclesiastes does play a pivotal role in the text. As was mentioned before, Christianity has sometimes been understood as a variant of certain myths, namely fertility myths. The structural foundation of fertility myths is that of circularity:

One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever... The sun also ariseth, and the sun goeth down, and hasteth to the place where he arose... The wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to its circuits... All the rivers run into the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come thither they return again.

If the central theme of the novel is derived from the quote above, it is only natural that the plot of the novel should also suggest some type of circularity. Philip Young writes:

At Pamplona the tension which all try to ignore builds up, slowly, and breaks finally as the events come to their climax simultaneously with the fiesta's. Then, in an intensely muted coda, a solitary Jake, rehabilitating himself, washes away his hangovers in the ocean. Soon it is all gone, he is returned to Brett as before, and we discover that we have come full circle, like all the rivers, the winds, and the sun, to the place where we began. (86)

Here we return to Baker's point. Although Hemingway may not have adopted/adapted myths (or mythic paradigms) by intention, it is possible to see how his novel relates to a notion of myths. In my opinion, this is made plausible because the central theme of the novel (according to Baker's argument) is drawn from what is essentially a body of myths (i.e. Ecclesiastes within the context of Christianity). The choice of the epigraph, needless to say, *is* intentional. For those who may take issues with the idea of *Christianity as mythology*, I would like to point out that Christian writers, such as C. S. Lewis, have also seen their religion in terms of “myth.” Christianity, according to them, contains myths that also happen to be true. Writers such as these understand the term “myth” in the original sense of the word, i.e. “story.”

If the epigraphs are indicative of the themes of the novel, how are these themes expressed in the narrative? As an example, consider the following passage from *TSAR*:

The Boulevard Montparnasse was deserted. Lavigne's was closed tight, and they were stacking tables outside the Closerie des Lilas. I passed Ney's statue standing among the

new-leaved chestnut-trees in the arc-light. There was a faded purple wreath leaning against the base. I stopped and read the inscription: from the Bonapartist Groups, some date; I forget. He looked very fine, Marshal Ney in his top-boots, gesturing with his sword among the green new horse-chestnut leaves. (34)

At a passing glance, this passage does not seem to have much significance, and yet Hemingway famously claimed that he wrote “on the principle of the iceberg. There is seven eighths of it under water for every part that shows. Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg” (qtd. in Donaldson 245). In one of his earliest notebooks on *TSAR*, Hemingway writes:

In life people are not conscious of these special moments that novelists build their whole structures on. That is most people are not. That surely has nothing to do with the story but you can not tell until you finish it because none of the significant things are going to have literary signs marking them. You have to figure them out by yourself. (qtd. in Svoboda 12)

Why does the protagonist stop to admire the statue? Does the scene have a “submerged” significance? If the passage was meant to be nothing more than a page filler, it does seem rather odd that Hemingway, the man obsessed with eliminating unnecessary details, would mention the statue *again* in his memoir:

Then as I was getting up to the Closerie des Lilas with the light on my old friend, the statue of Marshal Ney with his sword out and the shadows of the trees on the bronze, and he alone there and nobody behind him and what a fiasco he’d made of Waterloo, I thought that all generations were lost by something and always had been and always would be and I stopped at the Lilas to keep the statue company and drank a cold beer before going home to the flat over the sawmill. (30)

“Anything you know you can eliminate and it only strengthens your iceberg.” What does the author “know” about this particular statue that he eliminates in the novel? When we compare the two passages, we notice that the first lacks commentary; commentary “eliminated,” if you will. Before I am accused of confusing two unrelated texts, there are a few things I would like to clear up. First of all, the excerpt from *AMF* is taken from a sketch entitled “Une Generation Perdue.” Secondly, *TSAR* begins with the famous epigraph that reads: “You are all a lost generation.” The connection between these two texts should be self-evident. Before I am accused of confusing a fictional character with a real author, I would like to point out that there is a difference between confusing the two and allowing for the fact that “the author and his surrogate character Jake” (Wagner-Martin 10) have a lot in common, e.g. similar opinions.

Those who are familiar with the genesis of *TSAR* will know that this similarity is not entirely coincidental. If the scene of Jake stopping to admire the statue of Michel Ney has a “submerged” significance (to use the iceberg metaphor), the clue to this significance may perhaps be found in *AMF*. In terms of fiction-writing, Hemingway “tried to write without ‘pointing’ or intruding as authorial voice to deliver emotional or moral lessons” (Donaldson 244). The fact that the first passage lacks the “commentary” present within the non-fictional passage is illustrative of this point.

Before explaining what the statue can be taken to signify (and making my previous argument seem more justifiable), I would like to address the problem of authorial intention first. At the beginning of this chapter, I spoke of returning to the author as a site of meaning. I argued that it was legitimate to do so. There are many ways of reading a text; this being one of them. According to Wimsatt and Monroe, the “intentional fallacy” is related to the evaluation rather than the interpretation of a literary work. They wrote: “The design or intention of the author is neither available nor desirable as a standard for judging the success of a work of literary art” (91). The function of “judging the success of a work of literary art” is not to interpret but to *evaluate* art. Sean Burke also maintains that “‘The Intentional Fallacy’ is more concerned with forbidding intention as a standard in the evaluation rather than the interpretation of the work” (67). As far as the fallacy is concerned, we are not forbidden to return to the author as a site of meaning. To think otherwise, I believe, is to misconceive what Wimsatt and Monroe actually meant in their essay.

Critics who tried to fish for symbols in his texts often irritated Hemingway. He wrote: “Do you suppose [the reader] can con himself into thinking I would put a symbol into anything on purpose[?] It’s hard enough just to make a paragraph” (*Ernest Hemingway on Writing* 136). However, Hemingway also said (somewhat grudgingly): “I suppose there are symbols [in the texts] since critics keep finding them” (Plimpton 24). Although Hemingway clearly took issue with the academic practice of hermeneutics, it is obviously wrong to assume that his work comprises nothing but what is present on the surface. It is also clear that Hemingway took a general disliking to intellectuals as well as any form of pretentious intellectualism. However, Hemingway’s favoured “iceberg” method *is* in fact a type of symbol-writing; for those of us involved in literary studies, it is simply known as a form of “synecdoche.”

What did the statue of Michel Ney stand for? The statue reminded Hemingway that “all generations were lost by something and always had been and always would be.” If we think about it, this particular sentiment is clearly an echo of the excerpt from Ecclesiastes. If the

statue of Ney did not hold any particular significance, the description of it in the novel doesn't seem to serve much purpose. However, if it didn't, why would Hemingway mention it again several decades later in a sketch that provides background information to the composition of *TSAR*? Hemingway writes: “[W]hen I wrote my first novel I tried to balance Miss Stein’s quotation from the garage keeper with one from Ecclesiastes” (*AMF* 29 - 30). The point of *TSAR*, according to Hemingway, was to state that the “earth abideth forever.” The description of the statue in *TSAR* reads: “Marshal Ney in his top-boots, gesturing with his sword among the green new horse-chestnut leaves” (34). First of all, we know that the statue reminded the author that “all generations were lost.” Secondly, the statue in the novel stands “among the green new horse-chestnut leaves.” If we think about it carefully, this scene is essentially an echo of Ecclesiastes 1:4 which reads: “One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever” (*King James Version*). By depicting the statue against the green leaves, the writer implies that although generations come and go, the earth, nonetheless, “abideth forever.” The passage in the novel is by no means a central one, but it is a plausible example, I believe, of how the author expresses his theme on the principle of the iceberg. Hemingway once wrote: “You invent fiction, but what you invent it out of is what counts. True fiction must come from everything you’ve ever known, ever felt, ever learned” (qtd. in Donaldson 249). As I see it, the scene with the statue in the novel is not entirely incidental. In *AMF*, the author tells us what he “[knew],” “felt” and “learned” with regard to that particular statue (the very same statue featured in *TSAR*).

Returning to Baker’s point about Hemingway’s “mythological method” (87), I believe it is also possible to see certain motifs of conventional myths at work within the text, namely those that belong to fertility myths. In speaking about fertility myths, I am referring to narratives such as the myth of Osiris, the myth of Demeter and Persephone as well as the legend of the Fisher King. The theme central to all of these narratives is that of “death and revival.” Coincidentally, the Fisher King is also portrayed as having received a wound to the groin. There isn’t any evidence, to my knowledge, that suggests that Jake Barnes was modelled after the Fisher King, but we do know that *The Waste Land* by T. S. Eliot, which was published four years before *TSAR*, owes a great deal to that Arthurian legend. We also know that Hemingway was familiar with Eliot’s work; as a matter of fact, *The Waste Land* is mentioned twice in *AMF* (see page 112). The similarity between Jake Barnes and the Fisher King is more likely to be coincidental than intentional, but I would not be the first one to point out this coincidental similarity. Philip Young writes that “[d]espite quite a lot of fun *The Sun Also Rises* is still Hemingway’s Waste Land, and Jake is Hemingway’s Fisher King. This

may be just a coincidence, though the novelist had read the poem, but once again here is the protagonist gone impotent, and his land gone sterile” (87 - 88). Whether or not Hemingway intentionally based his work on one particular myth or another is perhaps beside the point. Carlos Baker contends that he worked within a mythological framework that was at once unintentional but also inevitable (88). As a matter of fact, Baker writes: “For Brett in her own way is . . . the reigning queen of a paganized *wasteland* with a wounded *fisherman* [i.e. Jake Barnes] as her half cynical squire” (90; emphasis my own). The “wasteland” mentioned by both Young and Baker is a common motif of fertility myths. In any case, we do know that Hemingway drew upon Christianity, namely the Book of Ecclesiastes, as a thematic source; Christianity itself being a narrative heavily informed by the dialectics of death and revival.

As was mentioned before, virtually all fertility myths involve a concept of circularity (via death and revival), which underlies the all-important theme of regeneration, and yet, at the same time, this notion of circularity can also denote a sense of futility. Not surprisingly, the Preacher of Ecclesiastes begins by proclaiming that “all is vanity.” In his search for enlightenment, he tells us that he had “[given himself] unto wine . . . to lay hold on folly” in order to find out “what was that good for the sons of men, which they should do under the heaven all the days of their life” (*KJV*, Ecclesiastes 2:3); this passage describes a lifestyle not unlike Hemingway’s “fiesta concept of life.” However, when the preacher “looked on all the works that [his] hands had wrought, and on the labour that [he] had laboured to do,” he discovered that “all was vanity and vexation of spirit, and there was no profit under the sun” (*KJV*, Ecclesiastes 2:11). As was shown earlier, the fiesta concept of life, depicted in *TSAR*, proves to be lifestyle of vanity; somewhat “like a wonderful nightmare” (200) in which the absurdities of life only become more pronounced.

If we agree with Baker’s contention that Hemingway worked within a mythological framework, we may also find similar motifs within his memoir: “When the cold rains kept on and killed the spring, it was as though a young person had died for no reason . . . In those days, though, the spring always came finally but it was frightening that it had nearly failed” (45). In my opinion, this passage can be seen in relation to the fertility myths of old. The metaphorical “young person” must die in order to be revived. It may seem like he had died “for no reason,” but order, meaning, and hope is restored when the youth is reborn.

The New International Version of the Bible translates the last sentence of Ecclesiastes 1:2 as “everything is meaningless.” Bearing the “dialectics of the sacred and the profane” in mind, we are reminded that in order to speak of meaninglessness, it is necessary to posit an opposite state of meaningfulness. I think it is in this way that Hemingway’s work and

Kerouac's work share the greatest thematic similarity. Although life may seem meaningless and absurd, there *are* certain ideals that we may aspire to in order to make this brief stint on earth less nihilistic. Kerouac chose to articulate this theme more explicitly, whereas Hemingway chose to convey it in a much more subdued and economical language. Furthermore, I believe it is also possible to see how all of this ties in with Existentialist concerns. For example, Martin Heidegger writes: "As soon as man *gives* thought to his homelessness, it is a misery no longer. Rightly considered and kept well in mind, it is the sole summons that *calls* mortals into their dwelling" (qtd. in Kennedy 28).

In the previous chapter, I brought up the topic of mythopoeia. I argued that the construction of a persona should be seen as a type of myth-making. In Kerouac's case, myth-making was a deliberate project; however, it is also clear that the media and the public contributed to the process of elevating Kerouac to a semi-mythical status. With regard to Hemingway, Philip Young also points out that "[t]he Heroic Hemingway and the Public Hemingway somehow conspired to produce a Mythical or Legendary Hemingway" (147). Young explains that:

This was an imaginary person who departed from the actual person at some point that is very difficult to determine. He was partly the product of a branch of myth known as hero worship, which tries to make a man familiar to us by elaborating actual details of his life and career while at the same time exaggerating unusual or colorful traits in order to make the man seem very special, and a little more than human. This figure was also the product of Hemingway himself, who seemed at times to be both creating and imitating his hero. When this romanticized and rather Byronic legend began to catch on, there were plenty of other people who were willing to contribute to it. (147 - 148)

As I see it, *AMF* is a good example of how mythopoeia works in terms of persona-construction. When writing an autobiography, it is only natural for the author to make an attempt at portraying himself or herself favourably. Donaldson argues:

the artist in Hemingway insistently nudged him back to his desk, the only place where he could labor toward immortality. In *A Moveable Feast*, he combined the two images in presenting himself as he wished to be remembered -- as a poor, hungry, and rugged young man who had been to war and liked to fish and ski and hike, but who was totally dedicated to the goal of whittling one true sentence at a time. (260)

However, it is also clear that not all autobiographies present their subjects in a favourable light. An example would be Rousseau's *Confessions* in which the author displays remarkable candour in portraying some of the less than flattering events of his life. In spite of this, I

would argue that autobiographies are inherently mythopoeic because narratives are always partial and never comprehensive. *AMF* is a good example of this because Hemingway's account of his formative years as a writer is not only highly selective but also distorted in certain respects. As a matter of fact, Kennedy argues that "in shaping this myth of his literary beginnings, Hemingway constructs a fantastic place and a selective, even distorted version of his literary apprenticeship" (130); a fact which Hemingway seemed to have acknowledged in private: "Although he had assured Perkins in 1933 that his memory was good, he had said just as flatly the year before that 'memory,' of course, was 'never true'" (Baker 374). If memory is never true, the recounting of the past should be understood as a reconstruction instead, and the act of reconstruction can be seen as a type of myth-making. I would like to make a tip of the hat to Erik Kielland-Lund whose essay entitled "The Mythology of Memory: Hemingway's *A Moveable Feast*" I have found to be particularly insightful.

In commenting on *AMF*, Donaldson writes: "It is, then, a success story, and like most such stories, it emphasizes the accomplishment of its hero by exaggerating the depths from which he came" (56). An example of this would be Hemingway's account of his financial circumstances. With Hadley's trust fund and Hemingway's own earnings (though meagre), combined with a favourable exchange rate as well as the relatively low costs of living in Paris, the Hemingways were not exactly destitute. As Carlos Baker points out: "looking back, he was inclined to overstate the degree of their poverty" (19). In constructing his persona, Hemingway had a tendency of portraying himself as the hungry and poverty-stricken artist. Donaldson writes: "he invested poverty with an almost holy aura, and he consistently attacked "the rich" as a class in his writing, while as the years wore on he spent more and more time in their company" (13).

In addition to exaggerating some of his own circumstances, Hemingway was also given to denigrating a number of his friends and former associates; a peculiar tendency given the fact that a lot of these people had been his benefactors at one time or another. Carlos Baker writes:

By the time he set to work on the Paris sketchbook [which was later to become *AMF*], Hemingway's tendency to remember himself as an intrepid, humorous, poverty-stricken, and lone-going fighter against the stupidities of many of his former associates had congealed into a stereotype. (358)

By portraying his friends and associates in a less than flattering manner, Hemingway provides a contrast to his persona, i.e. the hungry, poverty-stricken, and self-disciplined writer.

However, the strategy was hardly necessary. As a matter of fact, readers, especially those who are familiar with Hemingway's biography, tend to end up sympathizing more with the victims than with the narrator. By denigrating these people (e.g. Ford, Stein, and Fitzgerald) as foul, deviant, or effeminate, Hemingway, as I mentioned before, provides a contrast to his mythic persona. The strategy behind the persona-construction is essentially two-fold: positive description of self, and negative portrayal of others. By bearing the semiotic concept of binary opposition in mind, we get a clearer picture of how the author constructs the self in his text.

In spite of the negativity within the book, there is also a touch of poignancy as Hemingway reminisces about his life in Paris. This sense of nostalgia reaches out not only towards Paris in the 1920's but also towards his first marriage. Scott Donaldson writes: "The passage of time, in this case, only heightened the nostalgic glow surrounding his marriage to Hadley, so that the theme of paradise lost emerges most powerfully in the last books Ernest wrote" (149). The longing for the past and the re-invoking of it tends to become an act of mythopoeia, because that is what the past becomes: a mythical paradise forever lost in time. In Hemingway's case, it is a bit more complex, because the book also works as an exorcism of personal demons. Scott Donaldson notes that:

When Ernest broke faith with Hadley, he committed, in his own eyes, a sin which he was never able to expiate, though he tried to the end of his life. Ernest's first reaction was to excoriate himself. The divorce, he wrote Fitzgerald, was entirely his fault; he was a son of a bitch. (148)

It is clear from extra-textual sources that Hemingway felt tremendous guilt over his affair with Pauline Pfeiffer (who was to become his second wife) and his subsequent divorce from Hadley. The affair and divorce are alluded to in the book, but characteristically enough, Hemingway transfers the blame to others. Donaldson writes:

The burden of Hemingway's argument in *A Moveable Feast* is that he cannot be held accountable for leaving Hadley. The blame lay with Pauline, or rather that vague group called "the rich" who sent her around and who taught him to value leisure more than work. In its attempt to acquit himself of charges brought by himself, the book testifies to the author's abiding sense of guilt for a mistake he had made more than thirty years before. (58)

To cope with his guilt, Hemingway constructs a narrative in which he is no longer responsible for the "mistake" he made several decades ago. The rich (Gerald and Sara Murphy), the pilot fish (John Dos Passos), and Hadley's friend (Pauline Pfeiffer) become the author's

pharmakoi. The account given in *AMF* can be seen as an act of self-purification. The author tries to exorcize his guilt by reconstructing the past as myth.

Agape

Both Young and Baker maintain that Hemingway's novel features a "wasteland" motif. What exactly is the "wasteland" in *TSAR*? As far as I can tell, it is not a geographical location but a state of affairs. It is embodied by those who partake in the *fiesta concept of life*. Baker calls them "wastelanders" (75). The wasteland is the nihilistic mayhem in which some of the characters in the novel are trapped. The *code* that is implicitly indicated within the novel is offered up as an alternative to the *fiesta concept of life*. It is a code that keeps the wasteland at bay. There is, however, also another alternative; that is to say, there is a second way (among hundreds) of reading *TSAR*. As was mentioned earlier, the "wasteland" motif is an important component of fertility myths. Strictly speaking, *TSAR* is not an adaptation of any fertility myth (at least not an intentional one), but, according to Young and Baker, it works with an important theme featured in those myths.

What is the second way out of the wasteland? Before returning shortly to *TSAR*, Let us diverge for a moment and take a look at an extra-textual example: In discussing the paradigm of fertility myths, Laurence Coupe compares T. S. Eliot's *The Waste Land* with "A Happy New Year" by Edgell Rickword (both were inspired by *The Golden Bough*). The message of Rickword's poem is seen as being contrastive to that of Eliot's. Coupe writes that "Rickword demonstrates that there is a way out of the Waste Land, but it need not be Eliot's. Here it is the mood of sympathy, a sympathy that is yet 'exhaustively disillusioned' about the ways of the world, that conveys the sense of promise" (42). One of the key words in the passage above is "disillusioned." We have already established that the thematic basis of *TSAR* is similar to Existentialist thought. For Camus, disillusionment causes the individual to become aware of his tragic circumstances, but it is also a necessary stage to go through before s/he can triumph over the Absurd. Jake's final remark in *TSAR* signifies disillusionment, but does it convey a "sense of promise," or is it signal of defeat? The second and most important key word in the passage above is "sympathy," which will be discussed shortly.

Once the *fiesta* is over, Jake parts ways with his companions. He ends up going to the northern port of San Sebastian to spend the remainder of his vacation alone before heading back to Paris. Scott Donaldson maintains that "he plunges deep into the waters off San Sebastian in an attempt to cleanse himself" (24) of the *fiesta*. After spending a day quite

comfortably by himself, he receives an urgent telegram from Brett, asking him to come to Madrid. In “Hemingway’s Morality of Compensation,” Donaldson argues that Jake’s morality resides in his meticulousness with the “cost of things.” George Cheatham, on the other hand, insists that Jake is initially a miserly rather than level-minded character. He maintains that Jake is only able to redeem himself, in the end, by deviating from the “just exchange of values”; in other words, he is moral precisely because he doesn’t want “compensation.” In “Sign the Wire with Love,” Cheatham writes:

But only in such a wretched, pitiful, and foolish imbalance as that of his relationship with Brett does Jake’s humanity, his morality, reside. His simple forgiveness of Brett exceeds exact equivalence. It is a gratuitous excess of the strict requirements of justice, a kind of nothing, a refusal to calculate debt, out of which something may come. (106)

In other words, it is by practicing selfless love, by disregarding reciprocity that Jake becomes a moral character. It is by exemplifying “sympathy that is yet ‘exhaustively disillusioned’ about the ways of the world” that Jake is able to free himself from the “dread” of his existence. If *TSAR* is indeed a “very moral” book, as Hemingway once insisted, then it is Jake’s acceptance of his circumstances and his self-less love for Brett (according to Cheatham) that signals his strength and humanity; this, Cheatham argues, is one of the underlying morals of the novel.

Laurence Coupe writes: “order and chaos, life and death, self and other, eternity and time. It is the task of myth to articulate such contradictions, and so resolve them” (139). As was mentioned earlier, the focus of *TSAR* is also on the mediation between contradictory elements, e.g. Jake’s condition and his desire for Brett. The narrative of *TSAR* is cyclical (Young 86) in the sense that the exposition and denouement are presented in similar scenes, i.e. both take place in a taxi ride.

A lot has been said about the ambiguous nature of the ending. As I see it, even if we were to read the ending from a negative perspective, the denouement would still signify an Absurdist triumph. Camus writes:

It is essential to die unreconciled and not of one’s free will. Suicide is a repudiation. The absurd man can only drain everything to the bitter end, and deplete himself. The absurd is his extreme tension which he maintains constantly by solitary effort, for he knows that in that consciousness and in that day-to-day revolt he gives proof of his only truth which is defiance. (177)

The fact that Jake did not commit or even contemplate suicide is in itself remarkable. The Absurd is unreconcilable, but to be alive, to be unreconciled is a defiance against (and not a surrender to) the Absurd. In the end, to be alive and unreconciled is the ultimate measure of dignity and strength (as implied by the Hemingway code).

If we were to accept Cheatham's thesis, *agape* would be the fundamental "moral" of the novel. If we read it this way, we begin to see how the central theme of *TSAR* is similar to Kerouac's work. Having been abandoned by Dean in a time of helplessness and need, Sal is ultimately forgiving of his friend, just as Jake is forgiving of Brett. We are also reminded of the Jean-Louis Lebris de K rouac who tells us that all is "worthless" without "sympathy," "kindness," and "caritas"; just as sympathy, kindness, and *agape* are the unspoken merits that Jake exemplifies in the end. In this sense, the message of all these texts are the same; that is, they all speak about the significance of "love."

CONCLUSION

Thematically speaking, *On the Road* is based on an Existentialist premise, but it also works as a reaffirmation of Romantic ideals. From a mythographical perspective, the narrative can be seen to rely on the structure of deliverance myths to articulate these themes. As was mentioned before, the Beats have sometimes been called American Existentialists; this, I think, is a justifiable argument. It has also been argued that Kerouac's work shares a similarity with Romantic literature; in my estimation, this is also a reasonable argument. In the case of *The Sun Also Rises*, we find that the themes of Hemingway's novel are also quite similar to Existentialist thought. However, there is not much, if anything at all, which can be characterized as "Romantic" in *The Sun Also Rises*. As far as themes are concerned, this, I have found, is one of the biggest differences between Kerouac and Hemingway. What *The Sun Also Rises* suggests, I think, is that having a *code* of living is necessary in the face of Existentialist dread. There *is*, I believe, a certain set of ideals that the narrative offers up for consideration. The difference is that Kerouac's ideals are framed by mystical rhetoric. With regard to the topic of myth, it is clear that Hemingway did not intend to base his novel on any mythic paradigm, but it is possible, I believe, to read the novel from a mythographical perspective. Those who argue that *The Sun Also Rises* incorporates a "wasteland" motif, e.g. Young and Baker, are basically reading the novel from the perspective of fertility myths, because that is where the "wasteland" motif comes from. This, I think, proves one of two points (or perhaps both): (1) The significance of a given text is ultimately dependent on readerly perception, and/or (2) myths are far more foundational to culture than they are generally thought to be. Without consciously invoking myths, authors and people in general have a tendency, at times, of using myths to articulate themselves. An example of this would be the Marxist conception of dialectical materialism.

The "roman a clef" as a term inherently signifies the problematic relationship between fact and fiction; for what is the novel, which is a fictional narrative, when *unlocked*? Although it has often, if not always, been called a novel, *On the Road* has in fact been treated by many readers, e.g. Allen Ginsberg, Ann Charters, and John Clellon Holmes, as autobiographical writing. This, I think, *is not* a mistake on the reader's part, because Kerouac clearly intended his work to be read as autobiography. Authorial intention, according to critics like Lejeune, is the key to differentiating autobiography from fiction. In terms of genre-definition, *Satori in Paris* is a good example of the problematic relationship between fact and fiction, because, on the one hand, the author insists that the account is true, and, on the other hand, he admits that

facts can often be “stylized.” By enclosing the word “novel” in quotation marks, Kerouac is in effect illustrating, quite explicitly, the problematic nature of genre-definition. As far as this thesis is concerned, the purpose of reading Kerouac’s work as autobiography is to examine the mechanics of self-representation; in other words, to learn how mythopoeia, in terms of autobiographical writing, works. Some critics have insisted that *The Sun Also Rises* is a roman à clef; this, I think, is highly problematic. To my understanding, romans à clef are veiled narratives of fact. Some critics, e.g. Donaldson, equate Jake Barnes with Ernest Hemingway; this I disagree with. It is clear that Jake was loosely based on the author himself, but the author did not intend *The Sun Also Rises* to be read as an autobiographical account. As was mentioned earlier, in the case of autobiographical writing, authorial intention makes all the difference. We cannot discuss the question of self-representation, at least not properly, in a text that is meant to be non-autobiographical. In the case of *A Moveable Feast*, self-representation, needless to say, is an important subject to look into. In relation to the subject of mythopoeia, *A Moveable Feast* is a good example to look at, because it provides a highly selective (and in certain respects, distorted) account of the author’s life as a young writer in Paris. There is a lot to be gained by comparing what is presented to the reader in the text and what is written in other sources. For example, we gain further insights into Hemingway’s strategies of persona-construction.

In *Exile’s Return*, Malcolm Cowley describes the Lost Generation as a generation of literary exiles “uprooted, schooled away, almost wrenched away . . . from their attachment to any locality or local tradition” (206). One of the original intentions that I had in writing this thesis was to compare the Beat Generation and the Lost Generation as two distinctive literary movements; during the course of my readings, however, it became quite clear to me that such an endeavor would be highly problematic, because the Lost Generation never really existed as a coherent literary movement defined by any aesthetic and/or philosophical principle. At best, the Lost Generation may be characterized by a general “attitude” (as Cowley puts it) that the expatriate writers shared; an attitude shaped by the socio-political environment that those writers found themselves in. To complicate matters even more, these writers never spoke of themselves as being part of a Lost Generation (Cowley 3). Hemingway, as we have also seen, rejected the term quite vehemently on several occasions. Despite all of this, I have come to the conclusion that it is entirely possible to see the WWI cohort in terms of a generation shaped by a common socio-political environment.

Although *The Sun Also Rises* brought the term “Lost Generation” to public awareness, Cowley’s *Exile Return* was the first sustained effort to define and describe this group of

writers. The first edition of *Exile's Return* was published in 1934. In 1951, the second edition of *Exile's Return* (the one that I have been using as a reference) was released with a new prologue and a new epilogue. Reflecting back on what he had written a couple of decades earlier, Cowley writes:

As I read over these chapters written almost twenty years ago, the story they tell seems to follow the old pattern of alienation and reintegration, or departure and return, that is repeated in scores of European myths and continually re-embodied in life. (289)

As constructs, both the Lost Generation and the Beat Generation seem to share a mythic quality. With regard to the Lost Generation, Cowley explains:

A generation of American writers went out into the world like the children in Grimm's fairy tales who ran away from a cruel stepmother. They wandered for years in search of treasure and then came back like the grown children to dig for it at home. But the story in life was not so simple and lacked the happy ending of fairy tales. (289)

Historical reality is of course much more complex than any narrative that attempts to describe it, but for those of us who never had a chance to witness Paris during the 1920's or New York (or San Francisco) during the 40's and 50's, we can only get a glimpse of those literary metropolises forever lost in time by relying on such narratives. What I find interesting is the degree of similarity between the mythos of the Lost Generation and the mythos of the Beat Generation. To point out the obvious, both share a similar poetics of exile.

In Cowley's description of the Lost Generation, one sees a great deal of similarity with the Beat Generation:

There is danger in using the word "escape." It carries with it an overtone of moral disapproval; it suggests evasion and cowardice and flight from something that ought to be faced. Yet there is no real shame in retreating from an impossible situation or in fleeing from an enemy that seems too powerful to attack. Many writers of the 1920s regarded our commercial society as an enemy of that sort and believed that their only hope lay in finding a refuge from it. Escape was the central theme of poems, essays, novels by the hundred; it was the motive underlying many types of action that seemed impulsive and contradictory. (236)

As I see it, the common denominator between the Beat Generation and the Lost Generation is "the idea of salvation by exile" (Cowley 74), i.e. an exile from the conventional, normative values of American society. In Kerouac's work, exile is presented as a personal strategy to achieve salvation from a dehumanizing existence. As to whether it is presented as an *effective*

strategy, we will return to this topic later. In *Exile's Return*, "exile" is also described as a process of "deracination." Although Hemingway went to considerable lengths to distance himself away from his fellow expatriates (thereby disassociating himself with the Lost Generation), the concept of "deracination" is something that he discusses (and seems to accept) in *A Moveable Feast* (albeit in terms of *transplantation*) as an artistic strategy to gain a better perspective on one's subject.

As I mentioned before, *The Sun Also Rises* can be read either as an illustration of lost-generationism or as a refutation of lost-generationism. The tension between these two interpretations is presented to us by the juxtaposition of the two epigraphs. While Hemingway had often argued that the novel is essentially about "the earth abideth forever," what is generally not known is that he had once thought about using Stein's "splendid bombast" brought about by her "assumption of prophetic roles" (*Selected Letters* 229) as the novel's title:

What Hemingway did not reveal in *A Moveable Feast* was that he had once seriously considered using Miss Stein's "dirty, easy label" as the title of his first novel. He was down in Chartres on September 27, 1925, when he wrote a boyish foreword headed, "The Lost Generation: A Novel." (Baker 365)

While "the earth abideth forever" is certainly an important theme in the novel, the novel is also a portrait of the expatriate milieu of the 1920's; that is to say, it also serves as a portrait of the Lost Generation.

On the Road is a story that involves the aforementioned concept of "escape," but the reader may or may not realize that the problems of the protagonist are not actually solved by being *on the road*; as a matter of fact, Sal Paradise ultimately seems to want nothing more than to settle down. Similarly, Kennedy tells us that "[*The Sun Also Rises*] also confirms the impossibility of escaping personal predicaments through travel . . . [Jake] shares the Emersonian view that 'traveling is a fool's paradise' because it creates the false hope of transformation" (117). Although the two protagonists are dissimilar characters in many respects, theirs is a familiar story about coming to terms with reality.

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