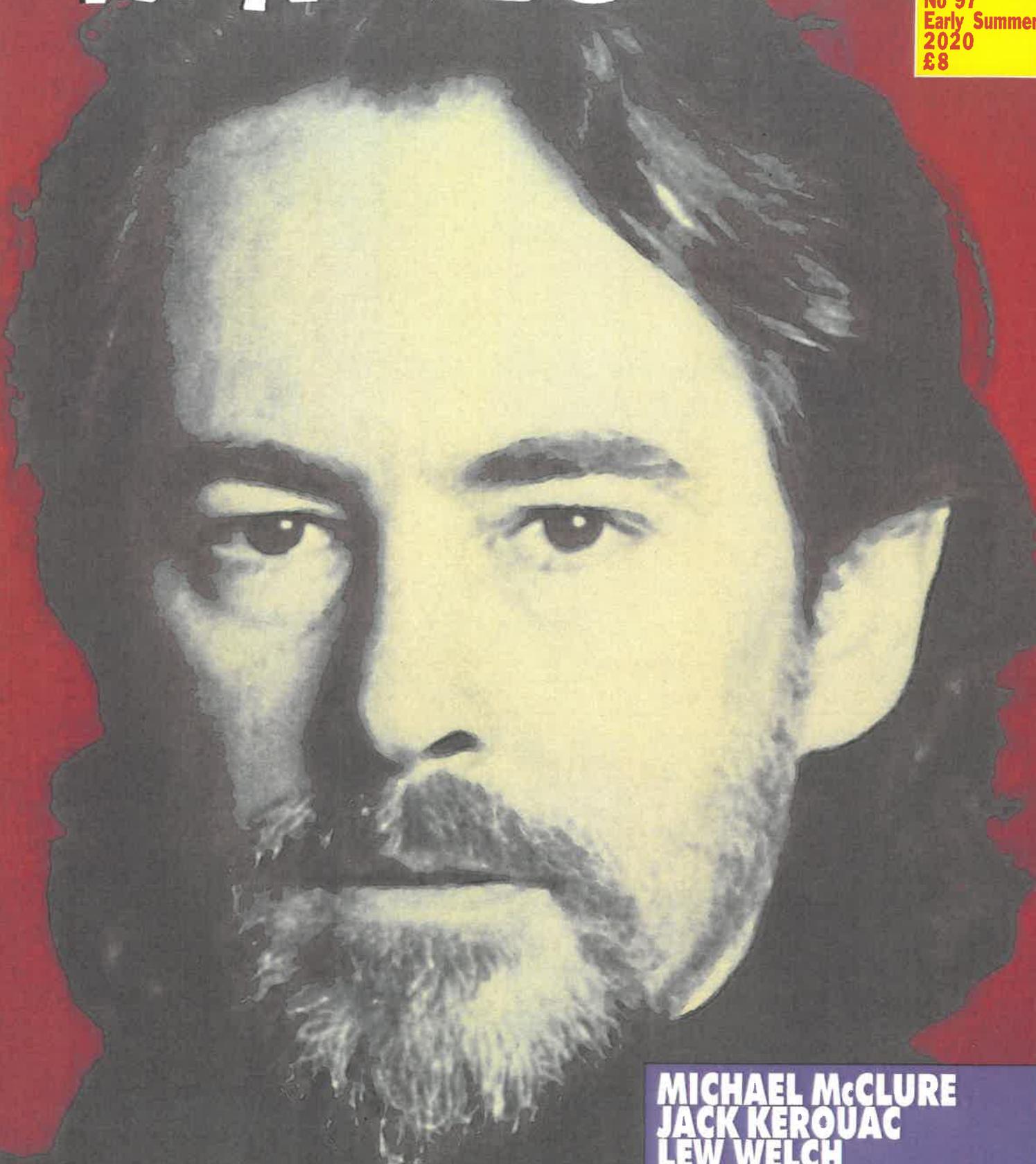


# BEAT SCENE

No 97  
Early Summer  
2020  
£8



THIS IS THE BEAT GENERATION

MICHAEL McCLURE  
JACK KEROUAC  
LEW WELCH  
WILLIAM BURROUGHS  
DIANE di PRIMA  
KIRBY DOYLE  
LEE KONITZ

# “What’s Your Road?”

## Best Seller v. Scroll

(A Study of Differences)

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by Charles Shuttleworth

It’s been 13 years since the publication of the 1951 scroll version of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road*, and ever since its release, especially when teaching the 1957 edition to high-school seniors, I’ve been fascinated by the differences between the two. With every lyrical passage, I find myself cross-referencing one with the other. Are they identical? Did Kerouac really write that in first draft? The answer has been consistently mixed. More often than not it’s a resounding yes, and I’m staggered that such beautiful prose – the impressive sweep and richness of its imagery – could have flowed right out of him from mind to type. But it’s also true that many other passages, including some of the novel’s most famous lines, were added or amended over the six-and-a-half-year period between the writing of the scroll draft and the novel’s publication.

In 1958, a year after *On the Road* was finally published, Allen Ginsberg championed the scroll draft in print, writing that “the original mad version is greater,” telling the story “in its most exciting form,” and that it had been “mutilated ... hacked and punctuated and broken – therhythms and swing of it broken – by presumptuous literary critics in publishing houses.”<sup>(1)</sup> That judgment, I’d argue, is overstated. While there is ample evidence of editorial intrusion on the original manuscript, the damage to the prose’s rhythms are, to me, minimal. Many, many needless commas were added; commas were changed to semicolons, ellipses replaced by dashes, dashes replaced by periods, and Kerouacian compounds

needlessly normalized: “barechested” to “bare chested,” “brokendown” to “broken-down,” “dirtroad” to “dirt road,” “summernight” to “summer night,” etc. And there were a number of nerdy grammatical corrections that it’s unlikely Kerouac would have bothered with himself: “like” changed to “as” when used as a conjunction (ex.: “He was finally and Angel, like [as] I always knew he would become”); misplaced modifiers: “I can only ascertain” changed to “I can ascertain only,” and so on. Unsurprisingly for the 1950s, before the “Howl” obscenity trial (the verdict of which came after *On the Road*’s publication), words considered vulgar or obscene were replaced or deleted, (2) and thus the scroll version is much more sexually explicit: in the revised version the homosexual relationship between Ginsberg and Cassady is only hinted at, and the graphic sex scene between Cassady and the driver of the Plymouth early in book 3 was eliminated. More substantial deletions were made ostensibly because of concerns about libel, particularly all direct references to Jack’s girlfriend Clementine in Denver and ex-wife Edie in Detroit, and episodes involving Justin Brierly and Alan Harrington were drastically cut.

Later in this essay I’ll detail editorial cuts that arguably harmed the final product, but overall I believe many of the deletions were prudent, speeding the narrative and, given that it is ultimately a work of fiction, making Sal Paradise a more sympathetic character. Eliminating Edie, for instance, clearly served both purposes, reducing the novel by 2,400

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1 Ginsberg review of *The Dharma Bums*. *Village Voice* November 12, 1958, Vol. IV, No. 3.

2 I.e., the words “fuck,” “cock,” “cunt,” “screw,” and “balls” were all changed or deleted. “Ass” and “shit” were permitted, although interestingly in the scroll, Kerouac once censored himself, typing “s - - t” when referring to bad (i.e., green, uncured) marijuana (S 284). In the revised version, “bad s - - t” is replaced with “bad green” (OTR 173).

words and cutting scenes where Jack (3) is particularly unlikeable. On the bus to Detroit, for instance, he flirts with an 18-year-old girl and declares (in a deleted sentence), "I was on my way to see my wild former wife, I wanted to test other girls and see what they had to offer me" (S 340). (4) Then, once he meets with Edie, he pronounces, "The moment I saw her I knew I'd never go back to her: she was fat ..." (S 342). During the time he spends with her, Jack somewhat relents, saying at one point, "that old spark was still there," but then the next afternoon, when she stands him up at a bar, Neal declares, "It's just like Louanne, man, they're all whores" (S 345) and Jack begrudgingly agrees.

The Brierly deletions are also an improvement, trimming another 2,800 words. Kerouac's satiric portrait of him as Denver D. Doll adds to the flavor of the Central City episode in book 1, but the background information on Brierly earlier in book 1 and his gossipy appearances in books 3 and 4 slow the action. The only substantial loss in these sections is when Jack defends Neal from Brierly's criticisms. Jack is asked "why I bothered with him," and he responds by stating, "My interest in Neal is the interest I might have had in my brother that died when I was five years old to be utterly straight about it. We have a lot of fun together and our lives are fucked up and so there it stands." (S 317-18). This direct correlation between Neal and Jack's brother Gerard is made nowhere else quite as directly.

What stands out to me, more than what was lost, is what was gained over the six years before its final acceptance. A comparison of the 1957 edition's part 1, chapter 1, for instance, shows how much, post-scroll, the text was enriched. The novel's most-quoted passage, included on its hardcover jacket, beginning "the only people for me are the mad ones," was significantly enhanced. Here is the continuation of the passage in the scroll version with the additions and minor (i.e., punctuation and capitalization) alterations made to the 1957 edition in brackets: "the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, [mad to be saved,] desirous of everything at the same time; the ones that [who] never yawn or say a commonplace thing[,] but burn, burn, burn like [fabulous yellow] roman candles [exploding like spiders] across the night [stars and in themiddle you see the blue

centerlight pop and everybody goes "Awww! What did they call such young people in Goethe's Germany]" (S 113, OTR 5).

There is also an important 14-line addition to the 1957 edition's page 4. It begins as Sal is finished a chapter of the book he is writing (i.e., *The Town and the City*). After Dean declares, "Go ahead, everything you do is great," Kerouac expands on Dean's enthusiasms: "He watched over my shoulder as I wrote stories, yelling 'Yes! That's right! Wow! Man!' and 'Phew!' ... And a kind of holy lightning I saw flashing from his excitement and his visions" (OTR 4). In both of these additions, Kerouac inserts a spiritual element ("holy lightning" and "mad to be saved"), and in the latter he also credits Neal as the inspiration for his new style of prose, its speed and colloquial, confessional tone, as Dean says, "Man, wow, there's so many things to do, so many things to write! How to even begin to get it all down and without modified restraints and all hung-up on like literary inhibitions and grammatical fears . . ." (OTR 4).

There is a question as to when these revisions were made, but no one could confuse them with editorial changes. The moment that Robert Giroux rejected the scroll, insisting it could never be published as-is (i.e., one continuous paragraph), Kerouac started re-typing and amending it. Writing to Neal on May 22, 1951, he mentioned that, having finished the scroll a month earlier, on April 22, he'd spent the past 30 days "typing and revising"; and he was apparently not done as he also stated, "(Giroux waiting to see it)." (5) But there's no question about when Kerouac wrote the sterling addition to the end of chapter 1: on or about October 26, 1956 while in Mexico City. It appears in his notebook entitled "More Mexico City Blues" – seven handwritten pages with the heading "ON THE ROAD insert," beginning, "Yes, and it wasn't only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know Neal more ...." (6)

It's even possible that one motive for making this addition was that he knew the quote in the Brierly section equating Neal with Gerard was being excised, since it includes a similar statement: "... but because somehow (in spite of our differences) he reminded me of some longlost brother ..." (7) The

3 For purposes of this essay, I use the names Jack, Neal, etc. whenever referring exclusively to the scroll text; Sal, Dean, etc. when referring exclusively to the 1957 edition; and in cases where the texts are identical, I use the hybrid form, "Jack/Sal," "Neal/Dean," etc. 4 Regarding textual citations, "S" refers to pages in *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (Penguin classics Deluxe edition 2007), and "OTR" to *On the Road* (Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century edition, 1999).

4. Regarding textual citations, "S" refers to pages in *On the Road: The Original Scroll* (Penguin classics Deluxe edition 2007) and "OR" to *On the Road* (Penguin Great Books of the 20th Century edition, 1999).

5 Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1940-1956* (317, 315). 6 Berg Collection 35.4 Holograph journal "More Mexico Blues."

6. Kerouac, *Selected Letters 1940-1956* (317, 315).

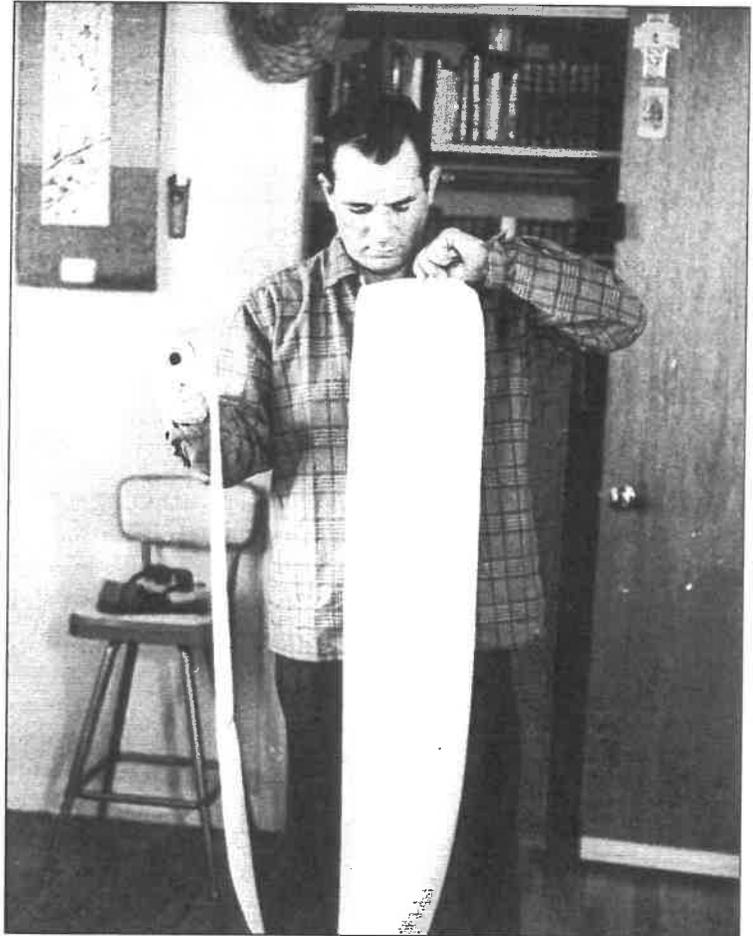
7 Ibid.

## **“What’s Your Road?” Best Seller v. Scroll**

text of the handwritten insert varies from the final, published version, as Kerouac made substantial changes to it at an even later date. He alternates between the names “Neal” and “Dean,” but he sets his home as in Paterson, NJ, having already settled on fictionalizing that aspect. And the portrait of Dean in this long paragraph is essential to the novel, elevating him before he disappears over the next four chapters, until Sal arrives in Denver and calls him “a new kind of American saint” (OTR 34). (8) Here, in the insert, Sal extols Dean’s intelligence, defends his “criminality” as “a wild yea-sayin overburst of American Joy,” and declares that Dean represented something “Western, the west wind, and ode from the Plain; something new, long prophesied, long a-coming ....” He calls him, iconically, “A western kinsman of the sun.” And the insert ends with Sal’s great concluding statement, “Somewhere along the line I know there’d be girls, visions – somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me.” (9) The handwritten insert contains minimal cross-outs, further demonstrating the fluidity of Kerouac’s prose. (10) But there are two cross-outs of note, the first of which I think would have been worth keeping: “Neal was a new angel and the one I had been waiting for—a new cycle, a new season was to begin for me.” The second was tacked on to the final sentence: after “the pearl would be handed to me,” Kerouac wrote but deleted, “the pearl of intelligence and light.”<sup>11</sup> Many of my high-school students would have appreciated that clarification (I’m asked almost every year what the pearl represents), but I think it’s better left unstated, especially when matched with Jack/Sal’s declaration while driving west with Neal/Dean in part 2: “He and I suddenly saw the whole country like an oyster for us to open; and the pearl was there, the pearl was there” (S 239, OTR 129).

Another addition that can be clearly dated can be found in Kerouac’s *Some of the Dharma*. Written as a journal entry at the end of February 1956, he

noted, “For ON THE ROAD . . . insert in m.s. “beat, the root and soul of beatitude.” (12) This perception connecting the word “beat” with beatitude does not appear in the scroll. It’s inserted in part 3, when Neal is being berated by Helen Hinkle for abandoning his pregnant wife Carolyn and their young daughter Cathy Ann and Jack declares Neal “the HOLY GOOF” (S 292). One page later in the revised version, Sal declares of Dean, “He was BEAT—the root, the soul of Beatific” (OTR 184).



\* \* \*

A major factor in Kerouac’s later editing of the novel, i.e., from late-1954 through 1956, was his change of perception due to his study of Buddhism, which deeply affected all his writing during this period. To some extent it even alienated him from the novel, as he referred to it both in a letter and his

8 - This phrase is not in the scroll version, but its essence appears in the deleted Brierly section in part 1, where Brierly “saw in Neal the great energy that would someday make him not a lawyer or a politician, but an American saint” (S 141). (9) Berg Collection 35.4 Holograph journal “More Mexico Blues.”

9 - Berg Collection 35.4 Holograph Journal “More Mexico Blues.”

10 That said, despite its fluidity, Kerouac did subsequently edit his “ON THE ROAD insert,” the text of which, with the later changes indicated, is included as an addendum to this essay.

11 Ibid.

12 *Some of the Dharma* 410.

13 *Selected Letters 1940-1956* 467. See also *Some of the Dharma* 221.

journal as a “Pre-enlightenment’ work.”<sup>13</sup> In journal entries of November 1954 he “questions ... the worthiness of my 2nd book,” feeling “tortured & twisted with doubt about typing BEAT GENERATION [his revised title for *On the Road*] for the publisher who wants to see it, Knopf” given his desire to renounce the pursuit of wealth and fame: “My duty to become a Bodhisattva Teacher & teach the Path from my desert hut—no other duty. (14) When Knopf rejected the novel, he consoled himself in a journal entry dated January 11, 1955, writing, “Anyway, the BEAT GENERATION has a heretical view at its base, celebrating the ‘night,’ which is only the long night of life. The Karma is working itself out.” (15) Ultimately, though, he continued to pursue publication “to repay my mother materially for her long sacrifices on my behalf” and also because “People will more respect the Dharma Teaching I present.” (16)

In his revisions, Kerouac didn’t change Sal’s unenlightened state, but he added numerous Buddhist references, making Sal more spiritually aware and intimating some hope for him – a movement toward enlightenment since nearly all such references occur in the second half of the novel. Sal is, by original design, an unenlightened character; Kerouac’s concept, dating back to 1948, was for a road novel about “two guys ... in search of something they don’t really find.” (17) For Neal/Dean it’s a desire to transcend hassles, hang-ups, and responsibilities; to be free to live completely in the moment, pursuing pleasure “without a qualm” (S 214, OTR 103). Dean represents this as “IT,” a state of being that only Rollo Greb is said to fully achieve and which otherwise seems to come only in flashes. Jack/Sal also seeks to escape responsibility – to achieve self-acceptance and live as he pleases. By contrast, though, he first must first search for his identity, as is made clear when he wakes in the Des Moines hotel room on his first trip west not knowing who he is. And where Neal/Dean’s language is more simplistic, using words like “IT” and making declarations like “We know time,” and “God exists” (S 221, OTR 111), Jack/Sal’s suggests a greater depth and more active seeking. Nearing Denver he imagines a Prophet ... bring[ing] the dark Word” (S 138, OTR 32); in Central City is he “wondered what the Spirit of the Mountain was thinking” (S 157, OTR 49); and then, at the climax of his trip to California in part 2, starving and delirious

on the streets of San Francisco, he has a guilt-ridden hallucination in which a woman working in “a fish ’n’ chip joint” speaks to him as his “mother of a hundred and fifty years ago in England.” (18) Transcending time, then, Jack/Sal stands “frozen with ecstasy” as his mother scolds him for being “no good, inclined to drunkenness and routs and final disgraceful robbery,” and she tells him to “pray for deliverance for all your sins and scoundrel’s acts” (S 273, OTR 161). Jack/Sal is facing a deep truth both about himself and the nature of existence; and it is here where Kerouac, in revising this passage with a 168-word replacement to a single word (“infinity”), first employs the Buddhist imagery that had become so important to him. Again to illustrate this I quote the scroll text with the additions and minor alterations in brackets:

And for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach[,] and which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the [a]ngels dove off and flew into infinity [the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotus-lands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. I could hear an indescribable seething roar which wasn’t in my ear but everywhere and had nothing to do with sounds. I realized that I had died and been reborn numberless times but just didn’t remember especially because the transitions from life to death and back to life are so ghostly easy, a magical action for naught, like falling asleep and waking up again a million times, the utter casualness and deep ignorance of it. I realized it was only because of the stability of the intrinsic Mind that these ripples of birth and death took place, like the action of wind on a sheet of pure, serene, mirrorlike water. I felt sweet, swinging bliss, like a big shot of heroin in the mainline vein; like a gulp of wine late in the afternoon and it makes you shudder; my feet tingled.] This was the state of my mind. I thought I was going to die the very next moment. But I didn’t [die], and walked four miles and picked up ten long butts and took them back to my [Marylou’s] hotel room and poured their tobacco in my old pipe and lit

14 - Some of the Dharma 161, 162, 160.

15 - Ibid 220. [Note: “The Long Night of Life” is the title of another manuscript written in 1954, the expression referring to Kerouac’s view of life as illusory, trapped in samsara.]

16 - Ibid 162, 164.

17 - Windblown World 123.

18 - These quotes are from the scroll version (S 273). In the 1957 edition the first quote reads “fish-’n-chips joint” and the second “mother of about two hundred years ago in England” (OTR 161).

up. [I was too young to know what had happened.] (S 274, OTR 162)

In this moment, then, Sal reaches an awareness of the illusory nature of existence and is suddenly in touch with his own Buddha-nature, recognizing that all of existence resides within. He also frees himself from guilt over sin as well as his fear of death as he reaches an ecstatic transcendence and sees his existence as part of a continuum. The terminology he uses comes largely from Dwight Goddard's *A Buddhist Bible*, which was Kerouac's primary Buddhist text, echoing in particular the "Sutra Spoken by the sixth Patriarch" in statements such as "Mindessence is intrinsically pure"; "Essence of Mind (Tathata) is the real Buddha"; "All Buddhalands are as void as space"; and.....

The illimitable void of the Universe is capable of holding myriads of things of various shapes and form, such as the sun and the moon, and the stars, worlds, mountains, rivers, rivulets ... good men, bad men, laws pertaining to goodness and badness, heavenly planes and hells ... Space takes in all these, and so does the voidness of our nature. When we see the goodness or the badness of other people, and are not attracted by it, nor repulsed by it, then the attitude of our mind is as void as space. In that we see the greatness of our minds, therefore we call Mindessence, Maha. (19)

After this experience Sal continues to use language echoing Buddhist thought, all of which Kerouac added in revision. In part 3, at the end of a late night of partying in San Francisco before Jack/Sal and Neal/Dean head east, Sal makes the following comment (not in the scroll): "Holy flowers floating in the air were all these tired faces in the dawn of Jazz America" (193).

Two chapters later, Sal's perception of the "mothswarm" in his hallucination in San Francisco is echoed when he is in Denver staying his woman-friend Johnny/Frankie and her four young children. Amid a yelling argument between Johnny/Frankie and Neal/Dean about a car, Kerouac inserted these two sentences: "Yang, yang, the kids started to cry. Dense, mothlike eternity brooded in the crazy brown parlor ..." (208). The image suggests a flickering, illusory sense of reality, as is clearer in verse 55 of *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity*: "There's the world

in the daylight. If it was completely dark you wouldn't see it but it would still be there. If you close your eyes you really see what it's like: mysterious particle-swarming emptiness." (20) Similarly, word "void" doesn't appear in the scroll at all but is used four more times in the 1957 edition. Early in part 4, with Neal/Dean enmeshed in domestic "troubles" (Diane/Inez is pregnant in New York, Carolyn/Camille is alone with his two daughters in San Francisco, and Louanne/Marylou is also pregnant, having married a used-car dealer), Jack/Sal responds, "'Yes[, w]e're all getting in there now'" (S354, OTR 241). Kerouac then added a two-sentence comment: "Ripples in the upside down lake of the void, is what I should have said. The bottom of the world is gold and the world is upside down" (OTR 241). (21) A moment later, as Jack/Sal contemplates "the raggedy madness and riot[,] of our actual lives ...," Kerouac replaced the comment, "Juices inform the world. Children never know" (S 355) with a more Buddhist insight: "All of it inside endless and beginningless emptiness. Pitiful forms of ignorance" (OTR 241). The result of these edits is a widening contrast between the two men, as while Dean is stagnating, Sal is spiritually progressing. And another hint that Sal is at least on the path to deeper knowledge is the emendation at the beginning of part 3: when heading west to reunite with Neal/Dean, Jack/Sal sees "God in the sky in the form of huge gold sunburning clouds." Where in the scroll God's voice then says, "The day of wrath will come," Kerouac changed it to "Pass here and go on, you're on the road to heaven" (S 282, OTR 171). Later in part 3, after a madcap night in Denver where a crazed Neal/Dean steals a series of cars and barely dodges arrest ("the bitterness and madness of his entire Denver life ... blasting out of his system like daggers" (S 320, OTR 210), Kerouac changed Sal's perceptions while trying to fall asleep, adding a Buddhist element that seemingly makes him less fatalistic and a little more at peace. In the scroll the passage begins, "At night in this part of the West the stars, as I had seen them in Wyoming, are as big as Roman Candles and as lonely as the Prince who's lost his ancestral home and journeys across the spaces trying to find it again, and knows he never will" (S 321). In revising, Kerouac changed "Prince" to "Prince of the Dharma" (i.e., the Buddha), "ancestral home" to "ancestral grove," and deleted the words "and knows he never will." Also, after describing the birds' singing with the coming of the dawn, he deleted Sal's last thought – "Where were

19 - Goddard, ed., *A Buddhist Bible* 503, 512, 514.

20 - *Scripture of the Golden Eternity* 54.

21 - Kerouac's sense that the world is upside down figures prominently in both *The Dharma Bums* and *Desolation Angels*, a perspective suggesting the absurdity of existence, e.g., "Here I sit upside-down on the surface of the planet earth, held by gravity, scribbling a story and I know there's no need to tell a story and yet I know there's not even need for silence -" (see *Desolation Angels* ch.48)

the old Denver birds, the ones I understood?” – instead, presumably, just having Sal fall asleep (S 321-22, OTR 211).

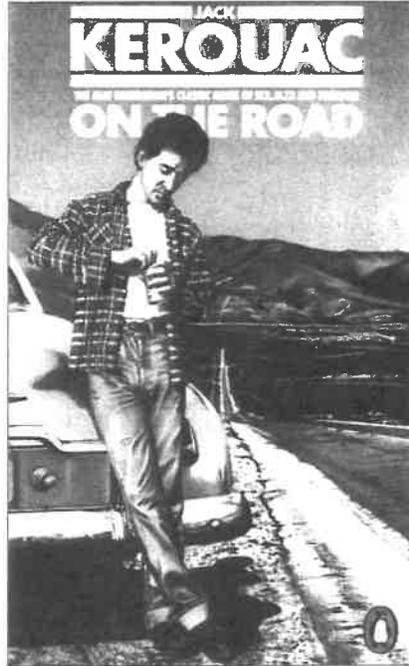
And Sal's Buddhist thinking continues during his and Dean's trip to Mexico. When they cross the border into Nuevo Laredo, where in the scroll Sal says that it looks like "Barcelona," Kerouac amended it to "Holy Llasa" (S 376, OTR 262). And in another epiphanous hallucination, he again expanded Sal's perceptions to reflect a deeper spirituality. Simultaneously, Jack/Sal is clearly misperceiving: high on marijuana in the intense desert heat, he listens Gregor/Victor talking in Spanish and thinks "[f]or a mad moment" that Neal/Dean "was understanding everything he said by sheer wild insight and sudden revelatory genius ..." (S 384, OTR 271). The two texts diverge so substantively that they're best compared together. Where the scroll reads –

In that moment, too, he looked so exactly like Franklin Delano Roosevelt—some delusion in my flaming eyes and floating soul—that I drew up in my seat and gasped with amazement. I saw streams of gold pouring through the sky, and sensed God in the light just outside the car in the hot sunny streets. I looked out the window and saw a woman in a doorway and I thought she was listening to every word we said and nodding to herself—routine paranoid visions of tea. But the stream of gold continued. For a long time I lost consciousness of what we were doing and only came around sometime later when we were parked outside Gregor's house ... (S 384-85)

— this is what appears in the edited version:

In that moment, too, he looked so exactly like Franklin Delano Roosevelt—some delusion in my flaming eyes and floating brain—that I drew up in my seat and gasped with amazement. In myriad pricklings of heavenly radiation I had to struggle to see Dean's figure, and he looked like God. I was so high I had to lean my head back on the seat; the bouncing of the car sent shivers of ecstasy through me. The mere thought of looking out the window at Mexico—which was now something else in my mind—was like recoiling from some gloriously riddled glittering

treasure-box that you're afraid to look at because of your eyes, they bend inward, the riches and the treasures are too much to take all at once. I gulped. I saw streams of gold pouring through the sky and right across the tattered roof of the poor old car, right across my eyeballs and indeed right inside them; it was everywhere. I looked out the window at the hot, sunny streets and saw a woman in a doorway and I thought she was listening to every word we said and nodding to herself—routine paranoid visions due to tea. But the stream of gold continued. For a long time I lost consciousness in my lower mind of what we were doing and only came around sometime later when I looked up from fire and silence like waking from sleep to the world, or waking from void to a dream, and they told me we were parked outside Victor's house ... (OTR 271-72)



In the amended passage, Sal differentiates the perceptions of his "lower mind" as opposed to his higher Mind-essence, where he senses amid the "pricklings of heavenly radiation" something glorious in a void just beyond his perceptions; but in this moment, high and paranoid, real insight eludes him.

\* \* \*

Kerouac made meaningful changes throughout the novel. In chapter one of the 1957 edition, switching Jack/Sal's home from Ozone Park, Queens, to Paterson, New Jersey, he and Neal/Dean travel to Times Square on a bus rather than the subway, so rather than riding "in the El over the rooftops of Brooklyn" (S 112), they pass through "the weird phosphorescent void of the Lincoln Tunnel" (OTR 4). And where in the scroll Neal and Allen "rushed down the street together digging everything in the early way they had which has now become so much sadder and perceptive" (S 113), Sal in the revised version sees it differently, looking back farther, as there's a change in verb tense: instead of "has now become," he says "later became"; and instead of their behavior's becoming "so much sadder and perceptive," he now sees it as "so much sadder and perceptive and blank," strongly suggesting their unenlightened state (OTR 5). At the end of part 1, when Jack/Sal returns from his first cross-country trip and arrives back in Times Square, he describes "the absolute madness and

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fantastic hoorair of New York with its millions and millions hustling forever for a buck among themselves” (S 211, OTR 98), Kerouac then adds the words “the mad dream,” again giving Sal a deepened perspective (OTR 98). And in part 2, when Jack/Sal discusses his dream of a “Shrouded Stranger” (22) and interprets it as death pursuing him, Neal/Dean “instantly recognized it as the mere simple longing for pure death; and because we’re all of us never in life again, he, rightly, would have nothing to do with it.” Where in the scroll, however, Jack concludes with the statement, “and I agree with him now,” Sal in the revision says, “and I agreed with him them,” hinting that he no longer does (S 225-26, OTR 115). The more spiritually evolved Sal may even welcome death as the end of his striving and entrapment in samsara.

Among other rich additions, there is in part 2 Allen/Carlo’s questioning Neal/Dean on the purpose of his journey east with Marylou/Louanne while Carolyn/Camille is home with their infant daughter. Where in the scroll he asks, “What is the meaning of this voyage to New York? What kind of sordid business are you on now? I mean, man, whither goest thou?” (S 221, OTR 110), Kerouac then gives him an extra line of dialogue, giving the speech more symbolic weight:

“Whither goes thou, America, in thy shiny car in the night” (OTR 110). Also, on this second journey west when Sal reaches the Mississippi, Kerouac adds a lyrical passage not in the scroll: “From bushy shores where infinitesimal men fished with sticks, and from delta sleeps that stretched up along the reddening land, the big humpbacked river with its mainstream leaping came coiling around Algiers like a snake, with a nameless rumble. Drowsy, peninsular Algiers with all her bees and shanties was like to be washed away someday. The sun slanted, bugs flipfopped, the awful waters groaned” (OTR 132). The reference to the “humpbacked river” perhaps alludes to Melville’s *Moby Dick*, with the river standing in as the white whale. If so, this adds to the later allusion in part 2 as they approach San Francisco and Neal/Dean yells, “There she blows!” And in part 3, Kerouac added another, calling Dean, while he’s driving 110 mph to Chicago, a “mad Ahab at the wheel” (OTR 222). Kerouac’s focus both on the Mississippi River, which Sal romanticizes nearly every time he crosses it, thus alluding to *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn*, and his even clearer allusions to *Moby Dick* demonstrate his intention for *On the Road* to be part of American literary tradition, an update on the Great American

Novel. What’s surprising, then, is his deletion in part 1 where Sal says in the scroll that he “took off for the Pacific Ocean like a veritable Ishmael” (S 115). My guess is that, in revising, Kerouac no longer saw Sal as an Ishmael – i.e., a narrator who serves as a passive observer – but as one who’s more active, striving for growth.

There are significant changes, small and large, to the beginnings of parts 1, 2, and 4. In part 1 of the scroll, Jack connects his first meeting with Neal and start of his “life on the road” with his father’s death, yet Kerouac elected to change that instead to Sal’s “miserably weary split-up” with his wife. Like the deletion of the Ishmael reference, it may seem an odd choice. On the one hand the scroll version is biographically more accurate; for people who have read Kerouac extensively, there’s no question that the death of his father, Leo, had a more profound effect, creating the “awful feeling that everything was dead” (S 71; in the revision, he deleted the word “awful” (OTR 1)). Novelistically, however, the change makes sense, creating more of an arc for Jack/Sal’s character. While death pursues him throughout the story in the form of the Shrouded Stranger/Traveler and can be seen as a prime motivator of his restless journeying, Jack/Sal is also clearly searching for love. Standing on a mountain precipice before leaving Marin City in part 1, he asks himself, “Oh where is the girl I love? ... and looked everywhere, as I had looked everywhere in the little world below” (S 181, OTR 71-72). This is after his flirtation with Ruth/Rita in Denver and his lusting after Henri/Remi’s girlfriend, Diane/Lee Ann. Soon he’ll meet Bea/Terry yet leave her (“for love is a duel”) to return to New York and his halffinished book. In part 2 he lusts after Louanne/Marylou, and Kerouac makes a significant change when in revision he removes that their relationship is consummated. Where in the scroll he writes, “I wanted to have an affair with Louanne, and I did” (S 230), in revising he removed the last three words. And when the two are alone in a San Francisco hotel room and he tells her the story of Dr. Sax battling “the big snake of the world that ... was Satan,” Marylou “held me tight” while squealing “‘What’s going to happen?’” whereas in the scroll “she held me tight by the cock” (S 272, OTR 160). The latter change would undoubtedly have been editorially insisted on, but it also serves to make Sal more lovelorn. And while the scroll’s ending can’t be definitively known, (23) the revised novel ends with Sal’s becoming involved with Laura, so his wandering ends with his reaching his goal.

22 - In revision Kerouac changed the “Shrouded Stranger” to the “Shrouded Traveler” perhaps to differentiate it from Ginsberg’s poem of that name. It was a concept that they shared.

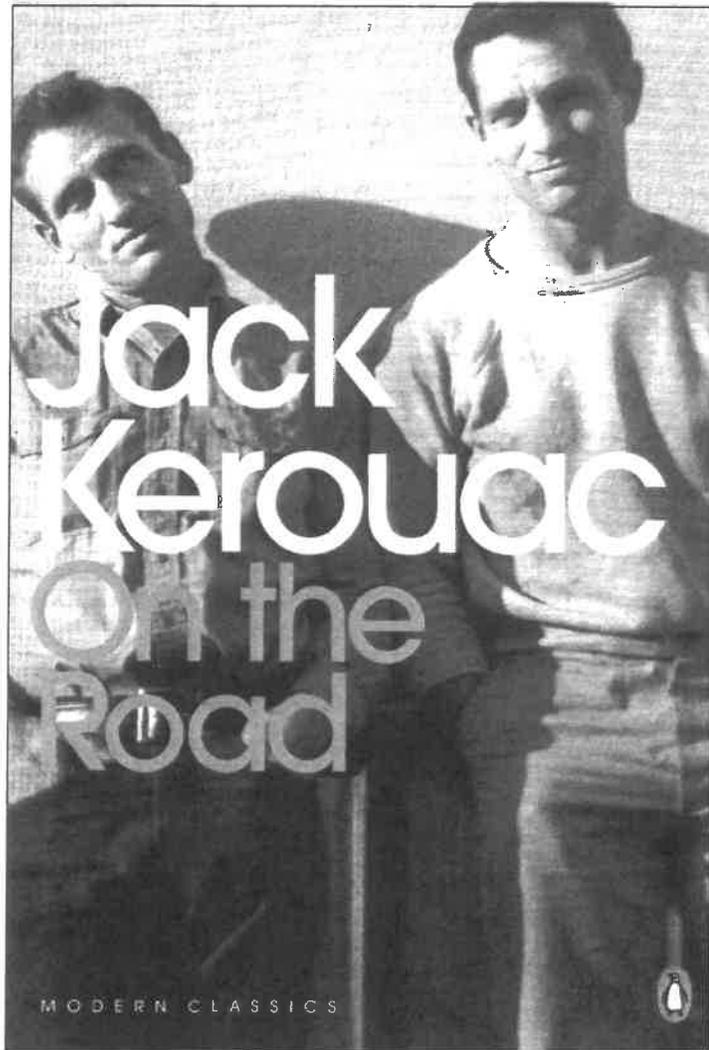
23 - This is of course due to Potchky-gate, the reported destruction of the scroll’s last few feet by Lucien Carr’s dog Potchky, who mangled and/or ate it.

\* \* \*

The revised beginning of part 3 includes the most extensive addition to the novel, a twopage overhaul that changes most of the details of Jack/Sal's second time in Denver. Kerouac removed mention of the \$1000 check (in the scroll he wrote that it came from "a New York company for the work I did" (S 280) rather than admitting it was an advance for publication of *The Town and the City*) as well as the true story of his using the money to try to relocate his family – paying for his mother, sister, and brother-in-law to move to Colorado only to have them hate it there and move back east within weeks of their arrival. Alone again and with the money squandered, he decided to go to California to see Neal. In the scroll he says, "I stood poised on the great western plain and didn't know what to do. I said to myself 'Well I might as well go mad again' ... I wanted to get to San Francisco and what for? ... For joy, for kicks, for something burning in the night" (S 281). In place of this, Sal merely mentions that he traveled to Denver having "a few dollars saved from my GI education checks" (OTR 169). He retains mention of a job he took in a wholesale fruit market, but where in the scroll he is fired after one day, in the revision he says he worked there "awhile," that it was "the hardest job of my life," and complains, "In God's name and under the stars, what for?" (OTR 169).

Sal then launches into the well-known and oft-criticized passage about "wishing I were a Negro" or "a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a 'white man' disillusioned" with his "white ambitions" (OTR 170). He uses the language about wanting "joy" and "kicks" now in a different context, feeling emotionally disconnected as he wanders alone through a poor neighborhood – "the Denver colored section" – imagining that the people are happy and content" and "that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night" (OTR 169-70). What's missing in this version, as opposed to the scroll, is the stronger reason for his despondency, as his family has abandoned him, and thus explaining more clearly the statement soon after the end of the revised passage, retained from the scroll, that he was going to San Francisco because

"there was nothing behind me any more, all my bridges were gone and I didn't give a damn about anything at all" (S282, OTR 171).



Certainly Kerouac can be (and has been) accused of racial insensitivity with this long passage in ignoring the hardships of minorities, especially African-Americans – a defect that, along with the novel's sexism, has only been amplified over the years. But I find it effectively emotional, revealing, and consistent with Jack/Sal's character. Jack/Sal is a romantic, constantly searching for happiness, which always seems just out of reach, his excitement anticipating what lies ahead. In part 1, when traveling west for the first time, he sets off "[f]illed with dreams of what I'd do in ... the so-longed for west" (S 115, 116, OTR 9), his dreams based on all that he'd seen in Western movies and read in novels, history books, and pulp magazines. Thus when he first

reaches the Mississippi River he calls it “my beloved” (S 118, OTR 12); reaching Council Bluffs, Iowa, he states that “[a]ll winter I’d been reading of the great wagon parties that held council there before hitting the Oregon and Santa Fe trails” (S 122, OTR 15); and reaching Colorado, “I kept thinking gleefully. Damn! damn! damn! ... Wow! What’ll Denver be like!” (S 138, OTR 31, 32). He gushes with enthusiasm and is drawn to others who are equally optimistic and energized, but every time he arrives somewhere, he’s disillusioned. When later in the novel he hopes to “sit on the muddy bank and dig the Mississippi” (S 249, OTR 138), he’s separated from it by a barbed-wire fence. Council Bluffs turns out to be filled with “cute suburban cottages of one damn kind or another” (S 122, OTR 15). And soon after he arrives in Denver, “Everything seemed to be collapsing” (S 158, OTR 50), as it continues to do time after time, wherever he goes. To me, then, it’s really no different in this case. Just as in part 1 he enters Los Angeles for the first time, declaring it the “one and only golden town when all is said and done,” only to call it soon afterward “the loneliest and most brutal of American cities” (S 184, 187, OTR 75, 79); and just as he consistently romanticizes hoboes as being happy and free from care, he projects the same onto minorities in this scene and then, when in Mexico, onto those he calls the fellaheen (24) — indigenous peasant laborers who he imagines living simple, humble, and earthy existences, their lives filled with camaraderie and love. It’s part of Jack/Sal’s essential nature that he never does grow beyond. By this point — the beginning of part 3 — he has already lived for a few weeks with Bea/Terry and her Mexican-American kin trying to pick cotton. He stayed just long enough to declare, “I was a man of the earth, precisely as I dreamed I would be” (S 198, OTR 90), but he quickly grew tired of the job and the lifestyle and traveled home to return to work on his novel. Now back in Denver, Sal once again fantasizes becoming part of a community, alienated from his own: “I passed the dark porches of Mexican and Negro homes; soft voices were there, occasionally the dusky knee of some mysterious sensual gal ... There was excitement and the air was filled with the vibration of really joyous life that knows nothing of disappointment and ‘white sorrows’ and all that” (OTR 170-71). A young black woman comes rushing up to him, mistaking him for someone named Joe,

and, embarrassed, rejoins the group of women she’s walking with. Sal then laments, “I wished I were Joe. I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted ecstatic Negroes of America” (OTR 170). Of course he can’t, though, so after this bleak night, full of despair, he heads for “the fabled city of San Francisco” (S 282, OTR 171, italics mine) even though he’d been miserable there on his two previous visits.

\* \* \*

At the beginning of part 4, Kerouac’s revision makes Sal more positive in his outlook and less of a gigolo. It’s a year after the end of his cross-country trip in part 3, and in the scroll the following words are deleted: [N]othing to do, nowhere to go. I would never have gone off again except for two things. One: a woman who fed me lobsters, mushroom-on-toast and Spring asparagus in the middle of the night in her apartment in NY but gave me a bad time otherwise ...” (S 350). The second reason is left intact: “[W]henver Spring comes to NY [New York] I can’t stand the suggestions of the land that come blowing over the river from New Jersey and I’ve got to go. So I went” (S 350, OTR 237). The deletion, then, keeps the focus on Sal’s wanderlust and his unresolved search for the perfect mate.

Later in part 4, as Jack/Sal and Neal/Dean drive through Mexico, Kerouac revised an important passage where Sal speaks about the fellaheen, enriching the passage especially with the statement, “The earth is an Indian thing.” In his lectures on the Beats published in 2017 and entitled *The Best Minds of My Generation*, Allen Ginsberg singled out that line as “a really beautiful phrase” (25) and may not have realized it was an addition. (26) Here is the scroll version with the revised version’s changes, and the substantive additions in brackets:

... I was alone in my eternity at the wheel[,] and the road ran straight as an arrow. Not like driving across Carolina, or Texas, or Arizona, or Illinois; but like driving across the world and into the places where we would finally learn ourselves among the worldwide fellaheen people [Fellahin Indians] of the world, the Indians [essential strain of the basic primitive, wailing humanity] that stretch[es] in a belt around the [equatorial belly of the] world from Malaya [(the long

24 - Kerouac adopted the term, spelled “fellaheen” in the scroll and “Fellahin” in the 1957 edition, from Oswald Spengler’s *The Decline of the West*.

25 - Ginsberg, *The Best Minds of My Generation* 231.

26 Another phrase that in his lecture that he particularly admired was also added in revision. When in part 3 Sal and Dean are driving east and about to reach Chicago with two other young men as passengers, Sal describes the foursome as “a band of desperadoes escaped from the prisons of the Utah moon” (OTR 224; see Ginsberg 251).

fingernail of China)] to India [the great subcontinent] to Arabia to Morocco to [the selfsame deserts and jungles of] Mexico and over [the waves] to Polynesia [to mystic Siam and the yellow robe and on around, on around, so that you hear the same mournful wail by the rotted walls of Cadiz, Spain, that you hear 12,000 miles around in the depths of Benares the Capital of the World. For t]hese people were unmistakably Indians and were not at all like the Pedros and Panchos of silly [civilized] American lore—they had high cheekbones, and slanted eyes, and soft ways[;] they were not fools, they were not clowns—they were great[,] grave Indians and they were the source of mankind and the fathers of it. [The waves are Chinese, but the earth is an Indian thing. As essential as rocks in the desert are they in the desert of “history.”] And they knew this when we passed, ostensibly self-important moneybag Americans on a lark in their land[;] they knew who was the father and who was the son of antique life on earth, and made no comment. For when destruction comes to the world [of “history” and the Apocalypse of the Fellahin returns once more as so many times before,] people will still stare with the same eyes from the caves of Mexico as well as from the caves of Bali, where it all began and where Adam was suckled and taught to know. (S 381, OTR 26768)

\* \* \*

If the overall focus of this essay is on the enhancements I feel Kerouac made in revising, I should balance that perception with more praise for the scroll. The first time I read it, I was astounded by both its energy and artistry, and it is arguably the greatest first draft in American literature. The spontaneity of its creation aligned with Kerouac’s philosophy: inspired by the style of Neal Cassady’s letter writing, he wanted his new style to be equally uninhibited and confessional; and when he first showed it to his editor, Robert Giroux, he at first refused to change a word, saying it had “been dictated by the Holy Ghost.” (27) The uncensored language feels freer and more honest, and there’s more of a sense of Jack Kerouac the man than of Sal Paradise, his stand-in character. If the changes serve to make *On the Road* more novelistic, the scroll is more honest, closer to truth, as well as a more daring, postmodern work.

Further examination of the novel’s beginning, for example, gives a sense of what was gained and lost in revision. In addition to what I’ve already detailed,

there is significant editorial censorship toning down readers’ initial impressions. It’s worth mentioning an example of self censorship in the scroll, where Jack/Sal describes first meeting Neal/Dean when he “went to the cold-water flat with the boys and Neal came to the door in his shorts” (S 110, OTR 2), whereas it’s been well-documented in biographies that Neal was naked. (28) But then where the scroll reads, “Louanne was jumping off quickly from the bed; apparently he was fucking her. He was was always doing so” (S 110), the revision simply states, “Marylou was jumping off the couch” (OTR 2). The revision also deletes reference to Neal and Allen’s sexual relationship. Right after the famous quote that “the only people for me are the mad ones,” the scroll reads, “Allen was queer in those days, experimenting with himself to the hilt, and Neal saw that, and a former boyhood hustler himself in the Denver night” (S 113). The revised version then retains most of the next lines: “[, and W]anting dearly to learn how to write poetry like Allen [Carlo], the first thing you know[,] he [Dean] was attacking Allen [him] with a great amorous soul such as only a conman could have” (S 113, OTR 5). But then compare what follows. Where the scroll version reads, “I was in the same room, I heard them across the darkness and I mused and said to myself n ‘Hmm, now something’s started, but I don’t want anything to do with it.’ So I didn’t see them for about two weeks during which time they cemented their relationship to mad proportions” (S 113), the revision replaces that first sentence with a piece of dialogue: “Now, Carlo, let me speak—here’s what I’m saying . . .” and then replaces “mad proportions” to “fiendish alldayallnight talk proportions” (OTR 5). Also deleted are two references to Jack’s getting drunk, thus making Sal slightly less of an alcoholic. The first is during the night of Jack’s first meeting Neal: instead of “That night we all drank beer and I got drunk and blah-blahed somewhat, slept on the other couch” (S 110), the revision reads, “That night we all drank beer and pulled wrists and talked till dawn” (OTR 2), again emphasizing talk over more decadent activity. The second is a page later in the revised version: where Jack in the scroll states about Neal, “Nevertheless I loved him for his madness and we got drunk together in the Linden bar behind my house . . .” (S 111), the revision reads, “Nonetheless we understood each other on other levels of madness . . .” (OTR 3). The revision also contains some nice additions I haven’t previously mentioned, calling Dean “a sideburned

27 - Cunnell, Howard, “Fast This Time: Jack Kerouac and the Writing of *On the Road*” in *On the Road: The Original Scroll* 32. 28 See, e.g., Dennis McNally’s *Desolate Angel* 89 and Gerald Nicosia’s *Memory Babe* 175. [Note: This was actually the second time that Jack met Neal. The first isn’t mentioned in either the scroll or the 1957 edition.]

## **“What’s Your Road?” Best Seller v. Scroll**

hero of the snowy West” (OTR 2); changing a description of Neal and Allen from “the holy con-man and the great sorrowful poetic con-man” to “the holy con-man with the shining mind, and the sorrowful poetic con-man with the dark mind” (S 112, OTR 5).

There also are some significant losses in what was edited out of the scroll version. The ending of part 1 contains several major cuts, speeding Jack/Sal home after he leaves Bea/Terry, shortening the text by more than five pages. The biggest deletion is a four-page digression on what was happening at William Burroughs’ home in Texas with Allen, Neal, and Herbert Hunke all visiting. The cut makes sense since Jack isn’t there and is merely reporting what he heard; and part of it – i.e., the description of Burroughs’ orgone accumulator – was preserved by moving it to part 2 when Jack/Sal actually visits Bill/Old Bull Lee. Also cut were details about the ride he gets to Los Angeles – “the fastest whoopingest ride of my life” (S205, OTR 93) – where the driver “got drunk” and also asks Jack how to obtain benzedrine (Jack tells him “to buy an inhalor in any drugstore”) (S 205). And once on the bus heading east, there’s a 10-line deletion where Jack is propositioned by a gay man in a Wichita bathroom. If both of these cuts were due to censorship, the one that seems the least justified is Jack’s trenchant observations of Los Angeles while waiting for his bus. Deleted from the end of part 1, chapter 13, was the following:

My sandwiches under one arm and canvas bag in the other I strolled around Hollywood a few hours. Whole families that had driven from the country in old jaloppies went put-put-put across Sunset and Vine with their eager faces searching everywhere for movie stars. All they saw was other families in other jaloppies doing the same thing. They came from Okie flats outside Bakersfield, San Diego, Fresno and San Berdoo; they read movie magazines; the little boys wanted to see Hopalong Cassidy conducting his great white horse across the traffic; the little girls wanted to see Lana Turner in a deep embrace with Robt. Taylor in front of Whelan’s; the mothers wanted to see Walter Pidgeon in tophat and tails bowing at them from the curb; the fathers—gaunt crazy jaloppy Americans—scented money in the air. They were ready to sell their daughters to the highest bidder. On the sidewalk characters swarmed. Everybody was looking at everybody else. It was the end of the continent, no more land. Somebody had tipped the American continent like a pinball machine and all the goofballs had come rolling to LA in the southwest corner. I cried for all of us. There was no end to the American sadness and the American madness.

Someday we’ll all start laughing and roll on the ground when we realize how funny it’s been. Until then there is a lugubrious seriousness I love in all this. (S 206)

In part 2, before Jack/Sal and Neal/Dean head west with Louanne/Marylou and Al Hinkle/Ed Dunkle, there’s a deleted passage relating to men’s mistreatment of women. Following Jack/Sal’s statement that “My aunt [mother] once said the world would never find peace until men fell at their women’s feet and asked for forgiveness,” the scroll text continues, “This is true. All over the world, in the jungles of Mexico, in backstreets of Shanghai, in New York cocktail bars, husbands are getting drunk while the women stay home with the babies of the everdarkening future. If these men stop the machine and come home—and get on their knees—and ask for forgiveness—and the women bless them—peace will suddenly descend on the earth with a great silence like the inherent silence of the Apocalypse” (S 223-24). There are also two sentences cut when they’re arrested for speeding in Virginia. Amid the retained criticism of the police as a “Victorian police force ... involved in psychological warfare against those Americans who don’t frighten them with imposing papers and threats,” in the scroll Jack adds, “There’s no defense. Poor people have to expect to have their lives interfered with ad infinitum by these neurotic busybodies” (S 238, OTR 127). Two substantial cuts occur in chapter 8, both of them seeming unnecessary and detrimental. As they cross the Mississippi, a poetic passage about the river is trimmed. In the revision, after the chapter’s second paragraph ends, the following was cut:

So the stars shine warm in the Gulf of Mexico at night. From the soft and thunderous Carib comes electricity, and from the Continental Divide where rain and rivers are decided come swirls, and the little raindrop that in Dakota fell and gathered mud and roses rises resurrected from the sea and flies on back to go and bloom again in waving mells of the Mississippi’s bed, and lives again. So we Americans together tend as rain to the All-River of Togetherness to the sea, and out, and we don’t know where. (S 256)

Later in the chapter, as they ride through West Texas, a really humorous set piece is deleted as the foursome imagine themselves as “Old West characters.” While it is an aside that doesn’t further the journey, it’s thematically meaningful as so much of Jack’s vision of the West comes from movies and the pulp fiction he read as a child:

“Neal, you’d be an outlaw for sure” I said “but one of those crazy-kick-outlaws galloping across the plains and shooting up saloons.” “Louanne would be the dancing hall beauty. Bill Burroughs would live at the end of town, a retired Confederate colonel, in a big house with all the shutters drawn and come out only once a year with his shotgun to meet his connection in a Chinese Alley. Al Hinkle would play cards all day and tell stories in a chair. Hunkey would live with the Chinamen; you’d see him cut under a streetlamp with an opium pipe and a queue.” “What about me?” I said. “You’d be the son of the local newspaper publisher. Every now and then you’d go mad and ride with the wildbuck gang for kicks. Allen Ginsberg—he’d be a scissors sharpener coming down from the mountain once a year with his wagon and he’d be would make him dance with hotfoot bullets. Joan Adams...she’d live in the shuttered house, she’d be the only real lady in town but nobody’d ever see her.” We went on and on, scouring our rogues’ gallery. In later years Allen would come down from the mountain bearded and wouldn’t have scissors any more, just songs of catastrophe; and Burroughs would no longer come out of his house once a year; and Louanne would shoot old Neal as he staggered drunk from his shack; and Al Hinkle would outlive us all telling stories to youngsters in front of the Silver Dollar. Hunkey would be found dead one cold winter morning in an alley. Louanne would inherit the dance hall and become a madame and a power in the town. I would disappear to Montana never to be heard from again. At the last minute we threw in Lucien Carr—he would disappear from Pecos City and come back years later darkened by African suns with an African Queen for a wife and ten black children and a fortune in gold. Bill Burroughs would go mad one day and start shooting at the whole town from his window; they’d set the torch to his old house and everything would burn and Pecos City would be a charred ruins and ghost town in the orange rocks. We looked around for a likely site. The sun was going down. I fell asleep dreaming the legend. (S 261-62)

Like the ending of part 1, the return journey from the West Coast in part 2 is largely pared,

keeping the focus on forward rather than backward movement. In part 2 Sal again returns mostly by bus, and the whole trip (a section of 1,100 words) is cut. What’s lost is Jack’s loneliness and despair. He spends a night in a saloon in Butte, MT, where “I saw an old card dealer who looked exactly like W.C. Fields and made me cry thinking of my father” (S 278). He also stops in Detroit hoping to see Edie, who isn’t home, and when her relatives refuse him money, he’s totally broke, spending “my last dime on a cheap meal in Detroit skid row.”

My whole wretched life swam before my weary eyes, and I realized no matter what you do it’s bound to be a waste of time in the end so you might as well go mad. All I wanted was to drown my soul in my wife’s soul and reach her through the tangle of shrouds which is flesh in bed. At the end of the American road is a man and a woman making love in a hotel room. That’s all I wanted. ... I was lost. All I wanted and all Neal wanted and all anybody wanted was some kind of



penetration into the heart of things where, like in a womb, we could curl up and sleep the ecstatic sleep that Burroughs was experiencing with a good big mainline shot of M. and advertising executives were experiencing with twelve Scotch & Sodas in Stouffers before they made the drunkard’s train to Westchester—but without hangovers. And I had many a romantic fancy then, and sighed at my star. The truth of the matter is, you die, all you do is die, and yet you live, yes you live, and that’s no Harvard lie. (S 278-79)

The journey east with Neal in part 3 has major cuts due largely to libel concerns involving Clementine, Justin Brierly, and Edie. I’ve already mentioned that amid the Brierly deletions there’s the lost dialogue where Jack equates Neal with Gerard. Another statement revealing Jack’s close tie to Neal was cut in the Edie section while the two are in Detroit; Jack says, “Neal was like myself, for I’d had a dream of Neal the night before in the hotel, and Neal was me. In any case he was my brother and we stuck together” (S 345). Soon after they have an argument in which Neal says to Jack, “You’ve got

brown in your ears, that’s a bad sign. ... [D]o you know you’re going to have trouble with your ears in a few years?” Jack reacts bitterly:

“‘What do you want me to do about it?’ I yelled. ‘Did I make the world? Did I perpetrate or even hint it?’” (S 347). But this exchange basically reiterates their argument over Jack’s kidneys earlier in part 3. What remains of the Detroit episode is the wonderfully told “horrible osmotic experience” (S 346, OTR 232) in the Skid Row theater where Sal, trying to sleep, watches a B movie double feature over and over, 1943’s *Background to Danger* and a Western starring singing cowboy Eddie Dean. Overall what’s lost is mostly further evidence that Neal and Jack are overtly beat characters. Police stop and question them because they look like hoodlums, and this is reiterated when later they’re arrested after Edie runs a red light with them in the car and blames their appearance, saying, “I never get in cop trouble when I’m alone” (S 348). Another deletion in part 3 that’s particularly revealing of Jack’s character is when he’s staying with Johnny and her children in Denver, perhaps because, in the interest of keeping the narrative movie forward, Jack here is looking back. I like it because, like a number of deletions, it seems true of Jack’s nature; but the statement ends harshly, is a little concerning regarding Johnny’s 14 year-old daughter, and basically repeats Jack’s description of his earlier breakup with Pauline/Lucille, stating, “I had nothing to offer anybody except my own confusion” (S 227, OTR 117). Here Jack states,

Previous months of that summer I had spent a lot of time with [Johnny] talking about books and little things she was interested in and to be utterly truthful the mother was harboring our marriage in her mind in a few future years. I would have liked the idea, too, the only thing wrong with it being I felt responsibility towards the whole family and of course I didn’t have the money to undertake any such mad scheme—the end would have been driving around the country in a trailer and working and my having a more mature relationship with the mother and a lovey-dovey one with the daughter. I wasn’t quite ready for the strain of real abysmal drowning in the pit of night which it would have been. (S 316)

Besides revisions I’ve already detailed in part 4, the only deletion that strikes me as significant occurs as Jack/Sal, Neal/Dean, and Frank/Stam near Mexico City. Still in the rural “backmountains,” Kerouac employs a lot of Biblical imagery in describing the landscape and its “fellaheen” inhabitants, some of which was eliminated maybe to avoid overkill. Added were the lines, “Life was dense, dark, ancient. They

watched Dean, serious and insane at his raving wheel, with eyes of hawks” (OTR 285). Amid revision, the phrase “strange Judean earth” was cut, and then after Jack yells to Neal, “‘Man, man ... wake up and see the shepherds, wake up and see the golden world that Jesus came from, with your own eyes you can tell!” (S 399, OTR 285), the following passage was also deleted, maybe because it’s deflating that Neal doesn’t in fact wake up immediately, and maybe because “broken bozos” is too self-deprecating (though I like it):

But he was unconscious. I went out of my mind when we passed suddenly through a ruined dusty dobe town in which hundreds of shepherds were gathered by the shade of a battered wall, their long robes trailing in the dust, their dogs leaping, their children running, their women with head lowered gazing sorrowfully, the men with high staves watching us pass with noble and chieflike miens, as though they had been interrupted in their communal meditations in the living sun by the sudden clanking folly from America with its three broken bozos inside. (S 399)

\* \* \*

So which is the better version? That really depends on taste, and to me both are spectacular in their own ways. For the purposes of my high school class, I teach the revision both because the sex and the language are toned-down and because most high schoolers aren’t ready to read an unbroken, 300-hundred-page paragraph. That said, I often tell them about elements that they’re missing, reading select passages or just noting what was changed. In her lecture at 2018’s Lowell Celebrates Kerouac festival, Ann Charters particularly condemned the “wishing I were a Negro” passage, and for those who are similarly offended, my advice is choose the scroll. For everyone else: scroll vs. revision? Chose for yourselves. I love them both.

#### **Addendum:**

The following is Kerouac’s complete handwritten “ON THE ROAD insert, writing in October 1956 with the subsequent changes marked to demonstrate the further editing of the passage – i.e., the text that appears in the 1957 edition. Substantive changes seem clearly made by Kerouac. Punctuation (semicolons replacing commas, periods replacing dashes) and capitalization changes were more likely editorial decisions.

“Yes, and it wasn’t only because I was a writer and needed new experiences that I wanted to know

Neal [Dean] more, or [and] because my life hanging around the campus had reached the completion of its cycle and was stultified, but because, somehow (in spite of our differences) [in character,] he reminded me of some long-lost brother[;] the sight of his eager [suffering] bony face [with the long sideburns and his straining muscular sweating neck] made me remember my boyhood in the fields [those dye dumps] and riverbanks of the Passaic around Paterson—the way [swim-holes and riversides of Paterson and the Passaic. H]is dirty workclothes clung to him so gracefully, as though you couldn't buy a better fit from a custom tailor but only earn it from the Natural Tailor of Natural Joy, as Dean had, in his stresses. And in his excited way of speaking I heard again the voices of old companions and brothers under the bridge, among the motorcycles, along the junkyard fence [washed-lined neighborhood and drowsy doorsteps of afternoon where boys played guitars while their older brothers worked in the mills]. All my other current friends were ["intellectuals[""]—Chad the Nietzschean anthropologist, Carlo Marx and his nutty Rimbaud [surrealist low-voiced serious staring] talk, Old Bull Lee and his critical sardonic AntiEverythingism [anti-everything drawl]—or else they were sulky slinking criminals like [Elmer] Hassel, with that hip sneer[; Jane Lee the same, sprawled on the Oriental cover of her couch, sniffing at the New Yorker. B]ut Dean's intelligence was every bit as bright, every bit as formal [and shining] and complete, without the tedious

intellectualness[A.]nd his "criminality" was not something that sulked and slinked and sneered[;] it was a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy[;] it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming (he only stole cars for joy rides). Besides, all my New York friends were in the negative[, nightmare] position of putting down society and giving their tired bookish or political or Freudian [psychoanalytical] reasons[,] but Neal [Dean] just raced in society, eager for bread and love[;] he didn't care one way or the other[.] "[s]o long's I can get that lil ole gal with that lil sumpin down there tween her legs, boy," and "so long's we can EAT [eat], son, hear [y'ear] me? EAT! I'm HUNGRY [hungry], I'm STARVING [starving], let's eat RIGHT NOW [right now!]"—and off we'd rush to EAT [eat], whereof, as sayeth [saith] Ecclesiastes, "[I]t is your portion under the sun." [A western kinsman of the sun, Dean.] Although my aunt warned me that he would get me in trouble, I could hear a new call and see a new horizon[,] (and believe it at 25) [my young age;] and a little bit of trouble or even Neal's [Dean's] eventual rejection of me as a buddy[, putting me down, as he would later, on starving sidewalks and sickbeds]—what did it matter? I was a young writer and I wanted to take off. Somewhere along the line I knew there'd be girls, visions[, everything;] somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me. "(29)

29 - Kerouac, Berg Collection 35.4 Holograph journal "More Mexico Blues," and OTR 6-7.

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