

February 4th, 2015.

- Gatsby chapter 2 corrections recap'

corresponds to A. Dream = car / road / West Egg not far from New York / billboard > consumerist society

doesn't correspond = ashes / dark / ghosts / nightmare / unsuccessful occultist business / destroyed billboard

real > place exists

unreal > men are compared to insects and the road is alive

- Gatsby chap 3

American Dream > rich people / happy few having a party / corresponds to RnB video clips 'bling' for us it's just a dream / unattainable / impossible

extravagant food, Rolls Royce as a taxi for the guests, orange juice machine, Gin and liquor under Prohibition, full jazz band > opulence / greed / expensive / Gargantua?

Style =

- European words used to sound posh / chic but extravagant style to show off culture. The language doesn't sound American but European.

It's refined and sophisticated. > to describe a posh party Fitzgerald and his avatar / the narrator / Nick Carraway use posh words.

Metaphors = air / laughter : smell / sound > synaesthesia. (Baudelaire)

Caricature of the extravagant American Dream but also a pleasure in describing it with sophisticated style.

- The point of view and the writing style are ambivalent / ambiguous. They both show admiration and criticism of the American dream.

accumulation / ternary rhythm

animalisation = men and women as moths or bugs > insects which live at night and are attracted to light / money

- **Running metaphor of money**

VOA English The Roaring Twenties audio doc

After WW1 > young Americans / soldiers opposed old traditions, wanted to feel free and independent, discussed new subjects.

Women got the right to vote in 1920s, listened to jazz, danced and drank alcohol in public places with men. They worked during the war and carried on working after but it was easier thanks to machines so they spent less time doing the house chores.

Summary of events ...

Sal and Dean blaze across the country together in camaraderous fashion. After a wild night with fights and stolen cars, they flee Denver and take a taxi to a travel bureau. There, a man wants someone to drive his Cadillac to Chicago; Dean leaps at the chance. They leave with their passengers – two boys going to religious school – and immediately Dean breaks the speedometer, going over 110 miles an hour. Though Sal cautions him when it starts raining, Dean hits a turn too fast and flips the car into a ditch. A farmer hauls them out of the ditch with his tractor. Then they stop at one of Dean's friends, where they are given a good meal before they go on.

KEY Comments :

experimental punctuation

dots > beats /// no capital letters / no hierarchy between words > radical vision of writing / language rules are broken to express inner self > stream of consciousness.

This sentence could relate to the American Dream / illustrate / correspond to ...

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Chapter 9

PART 1

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In no time at all we were back on the main highway and that night I saw the entire state of Nebraska unroll before my eyes. A hundred and ten miles an hour straight through, an arrow road, sleeping towns, no traffic, and the Union Pacific streamliner falling behind us in the moonlight.

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I wasn't frightened at all that night; it was perfectly legitimate to go 110 M.P.H. and talk and have all the Nebraska towns – Ogalla, Gothenburg, Kearney, Grand Island, Columbus – unreel with dreamlike rapidity as we roared ahead and talked. It was a magnificent car; it could hold the road like a boat holds on water. Gradual curves were its singing ease. "Ah, man, what a dreamboat," sighed Dean. "Think if you and I had a car like this what we could do. Do you

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know there's a road that goes down to Mexico and all the way to Panama? – and maybe all the way to the bottom of South America where the Indians are seven feet tall and eat cocaine on the mountainside? Yes! You and I, Sal, we'd dig the whole world with a car like this because, man, the road, must eventually lead to the whole world. Ain't nowhere else it can go – right? Oh, and are we going to cut around old Chi with this thing! Think of it, Sal, I've never been to Chicago in all my life, never stopped."

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"We'll come in there like gangsters in this Cadillac!"

"Yes! And girls! We can pick up girls, in fact, Sal, I've decided to make extra-special fast time so we can have an entire evening to cut around in this thing. Now you just relax and I'll ball the jack all the way."

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"Well, how fast are you going now?"

"A steady one-ten I figure – you wouldn't notice it. We've still got Iowa in the daytime and then I'll make that old Illinois in nothing flat." The boys fell asleep and we talked and talked all night.

It was remarkable how Dean could go mad and then suddenly continue with his soul – which I think is wrapped up in a fast car, a coast to reach, and a woman at the end of the road – calmly and sanely as though nothing had happened. (...)

1- Who, what, where, how?

2- Why is Sal not frightened when Dean drives at a high speed through Nebraska?

3- What is 'falling behind' l. 4 ? What is the literary technique used?

4- line 7 what does "M.P.H" refer to?

5- Can you spot a metaphor / comparison in this extract? Explain.

4- What is their destination? What is their dream destination? What does it reveal about the characters?

5- What do this car and travelling by car in general symbolise for Dean?

6 - Why does Dean want to drive extra fast?

5- "It was remarkable how Dean could go mad and then suddenly continue with his soul – which I think is wrapped up in a fast car, a coast to reach, and a woman at the end of the road – calmly and sanely as though nothing had happened." To what extent can this description correspond to the American Dream?

(Dean then goes on to talk about one of his stays in prison and one of his many love affairs, when all of a sudden he slows down seeing a 'bunch of old bums by a fire by the rail', reminding him that his alcoholic father might be among them.) I took Dean's arm. "Ah, man, we're sure going home now." New York was going to be his permanent home for the first time. He jiggled all over; he couldn't wait. "And think, Sal, when we get to Pennsy we'll start hearing that gone Eastern bop on the disk jockeys. Geeyah, roll, old boat, roll!" The magnificent car made the wind roar; it made the plains unfold like a roll of paper; it cast hot tar from itself with deference – an imperial boat.

A mad guy in a brandnew Buick saw all this on the road and decided to race us. When Dean was just about to pass a passel the guy shot by us without warning and howled and tooted his horn and flashed the tail lights for challenge. We took off after him like a big bird. "Now wait," laughed Dean, "I'm going to tease that sonofabitch for a dozen miles or so. Watch." He let the Buick go way ahead and then accelerated and caught up with it most impolitely. Mad Buick

went out of his mind; he gunned up to a hundred. We had a chance to see who he was. He seemed to be some kind of Chicago hipster travelling with a woman old enough to be – and probably actually was – his mother. God knows if she was complaining, but he raced. His hair was dark and wild, an Italian from old Chi; he wore a sports shirt. Maybe there was an idea in his mind that we were a gang from LA invading Chicago, maybe some of Mickey Cohen's men, because the limousine looked every bit the part and the license plates were California. Mainly it was just road kicks. He took terrible chances to stay ahead of us; he passed cars on curves and barely got back in line as a truck wobbled into view and loomed up huge. Eighty miles of Iowa we unreeled in this fashion, and the race was so interesting that I had no opportunity to be frightened. Then the mad guy gave up, pulled up at a gas station, probably on orders from the old lady, and as we roared by he waved gleefully. On we sped, Dean bare-chested, I with my feet on the dashboard, and the college boys sleeping in the back. (...) "Dean, don't drive so fast in the daytime."

"Don't worry, man, I know what I'm doing." I began to flinch. Dean came up on lines of cars like the Angel of Terror. He almost rammed them along as he looked for an opening. He teased their bumpers, he eased and pushed and craned around to see the curve, then the huge car leaped to his touch and passed, and always by a hair we made it back to our side as other lines filed by in the opposite direction and I shuddered. I couldn't take it any more. It is only seldom that you find a long Nebraskan straightaway in Iowa, and when we finally hit one Dean made his usual 110 and I saw flashing by outside several scenes that I remembered from 1947 – a long stretch where Eddie and I had been stranded two hours. All that old road of the past unreeling dizzily as if the cup of life had been overturned and everything gone mad. My eyes ached in nightmare day.

"Ah hell, Dean, I'm going in the back seat, I can't stand it any more, I can't look."

"Hee-hee-hee!" tittered Dean and he passed a car on a narrow bridge and swerved in dust and roared on. I jumped in the back seat and curled up to sleep. One of the boys jumped in front for the fun. Great horrors that we were going to crash this very morning took hold of me and I got down on the floor and closed my eyes and tried to go to sleep. As a seaman I used to think of the waves rushing beneath the shell of the ship and the bottomless deeps thereunder – now I could feel the road some twenty inches beneath me, unfurling and flying and hissing at incredible speeds across the groaning continent with that mad Ahab at the wheel. When I closed my eyes all I could see was the road unwinding into me. When I opened them I saw flashing shadows of trees vibrating on the floor of the car. There was no escaping it. I resigned myself to all. And still Dean drove, he had no thought of sleeping till we got to Chicago.

(...) "Well," they said, "we never knew we'd get to Chicago so fast." As we passed drowsy Illinois towns where the people are so conscious of Chicago

gangs that pass like this in limousines every day, we were a strange sight: all of us unshaven, the driver bare-chested, two bums, myself in the back seat, holding on to a strap and my head leaned back on the cushion looking at the countryside with an imperious eye – just like a new California gang come to contest the spoils of Chicago, a band of desperados escaped from the prisons of the Utah moon. (...) Pretty soon the redness turned purple, the last of the enchanted rivers flashed by, and we saw distant smokes of Chicago beyond the drive. We had come from Denver to Chicago via Ed Wall's ranch, 1180 miles, in exactly seventeen hours, not counting the two hours in the ditch and three at the ranch and two with the police in Newton, Iowa, for a mean average of seventy miles per hour across the land, with one driver. Which is a kind of crazy record.

Chapter 10

(Dean and Sal drop off the hobos and the students, clean up a bit, and then hit the jazz clubs of Chicago. Sal describes the recent history of bop and jazz and they watch blind jazz pianist George Shearing – referred to as 'God' by Dean – give an amazing performance, leaving the audience and the other musicians stunned...)

And the boys said, "There ain't nothing left after that."

But the slender leader frowned. "Let's blow anyway."

Something would come of it yet. There's always more, a little further – it never ends. They sought to find new phrases after Shearing's explorations; they tried hard. They writhed and twisted and blew. Every now and then a clear harmonic cry gave new suggestions of a tune that would someday be the only tune in the world and would raise men's souls to joy. They found it, the lost, they wrestled for it, they found it again, they laughed, they moaned – and Dean sweated at the table and told them to go, go, go. At nine o'clock in the morning everybody – musicians, girls in slacks, bartenders, and the one little skinny, unhappy trombonist – staggered out of the club into the great roar of Chicago day to sleep until the wild bop night again.

Chapter 9

(Nebraska's straight roads seem perfectly legitimate for high speed; their Cadillac car is magnificent and holds the road)

(to a boat)

(a sense of limitless possibilities: 'we'd dig the whole world with a car like this... the road must eventually lead to the whole world. Ain't nowhere else it can go.')

(he wants to be in Chicago the evening before he has to deliver the car so they can pick up girls in it)

(as someone who can change moods very easily and quickly; his entire being can be summarised by travelling the US from coast to coast by car looking for love: 'his soul – which I think is wrapped up in a fast car, a coast to reach, and a woman at the end of the road')

Chapter 10

(Dean and Sal watch a jazz band playing after blind jazz pianist George Shearing – referred to as 'God' by Dean – gave an amazing performance)

And the boys said, "There ain't nothing left after that."

But the slender leader frowned. "Let's blow anyway."

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Chapter 10

- 1- Give a short description of this scene in your own words.
- 2- Describe Dean's reaction to this scene.
- 3- The musicians' and Dean's reaction could be called symbolic of the entire 'Beat Generation' (cf. Background information); in what way?
- 4- Are we just talking about music and literature here?

(after the amazing performance of the jazz pianist it seems impossible for the band to play on, but they do and 'something comes of it' anyhow)

(he's sweating at the table and encourages the musicians to keep on going)

(both bop music and the Beat Generation share the conviction that you always have to try to keep on trying to renew things)

(no we aren't: 'that would someday would be the only tune in the world and would raise men's souls to joy'; cf. the optimistic influence of Walt Whitman on the Beat Generation)

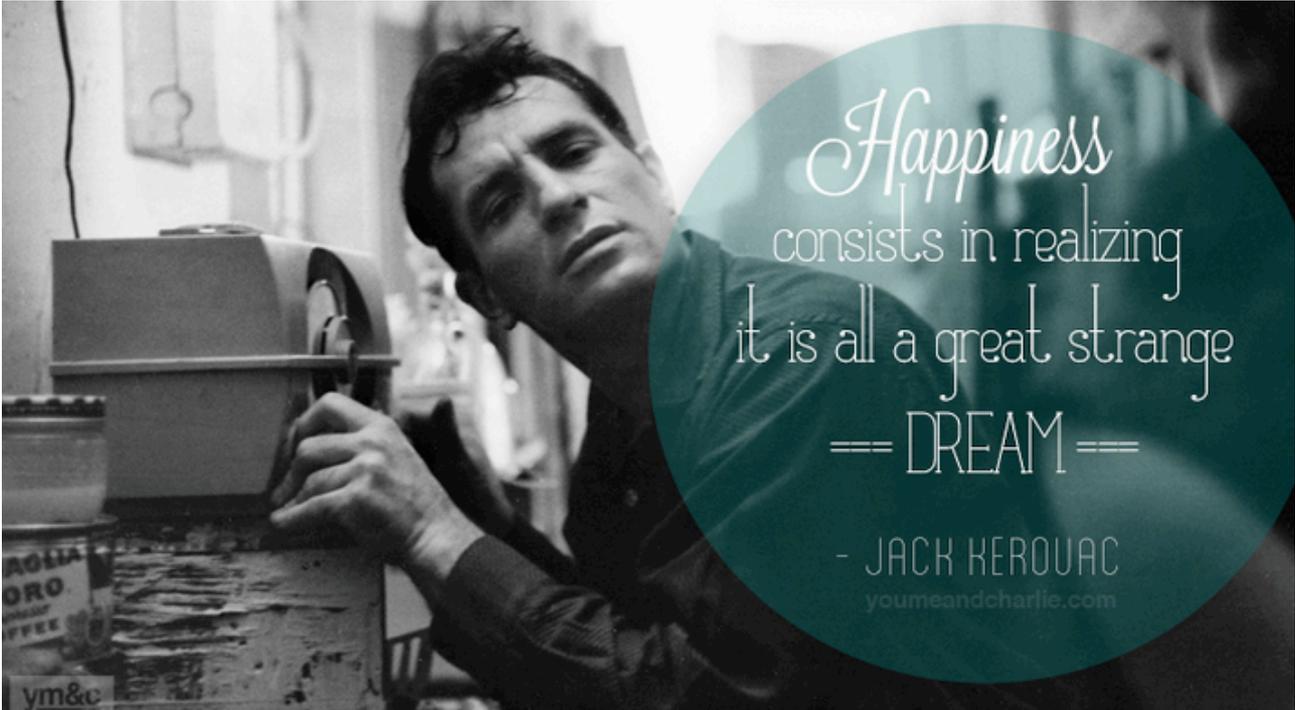
LELE Travel, Exile, Initiation narratives

LELE The character and its avatars

LVA Myths and Heroes

LVA Spaces and Exchanges.

On the Road, Kerouac



Background information

- **Jack Kerouac** was born in Lowell, Massachusetts, in **1922**. He had a private and Catholic early education, and got a football scholarship to Columbia University, where he met **Allen Ginsberg (HOWL)**, Neal Cassady and **William Burroughs (NAKED LUNCH)**. Kerouac quit school his sophomore year and joined the Merchant Marine, starting the **travels** of his **youth** which would become the basis of *On the Road*, his second and most acclaimed novel, published in **1957**. Other works by Jack Kerouac include his first novel *The Town and the City* (1950, in the visionary and autobiographical style so typical of Thomas Wolfe), *The Subterraneans* (1958, sex & drugs & jazz in San Francisco), *The Dharma Bums* (1958, based on Kerouac's explorations of Buddhism with friend and poet Gary Snyder), *Doctor Sax* (1959, evocation of boyhood experiences), *Big Sur* (1962, return to the earlier complex style to describe breakdowns of the self on the Californian coast), *Desolation Angels* (1965, fine re-working of Beat Generation experiences in an apparently definitive if mournful and nostalgic tone) and *Satori in Paris* (1966, search for ancestral identity in Brittany). Kerouac died in **1969**.

- The **Beat Generation** writers were a **group of writers** active in the **1950s**, centred **around William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac** and later Lawrence Ferlinghetti. The term 'beat' was first used by Kerouac and, roughly speaking, refers to the 'Beats' criticising American complacency under the Eisenhower-Nixon regime. They wanted to express **new forms of prose and poetry and explore consciousness**. In this way they joined the dissent of existing Bohemians in Greenwich Village (New York), North Beach (San Francisco) and Venice West (Los Angeles) to **produce a distinctive style of literature and living, based on disaffiliation, poverty, anarchic individualism and communal living**. A relaxation of 'square' (meaning puritan, middle-class and respectable) attitudes towards sex, drugs, religion and art became the

opposing uniformity of 'beat' (later fused into 'hip').

The word 'beat' has a range of meanings including depressed (to the point of wild escape from conventional living); exhausted; holy in poverty and beatific in joy and mystic illumination (with literary references to Whitman, Blake and Rimbaud, and jazz associations with Lester Young and Charlie Parker); catching the note of spontaneous living (with references to Zen Buddhism, Indian peyote cults and visionary experience). In literature, the key works were Ginsberg's poem *Howl* (1955), Kerouac's novel *On the Road* (1957), Ferlinghetti's *Pictures from the Gone World* (1955) and Burrough's *Junkie* (1953) and *The Naked Lunch* (1959). But there were a number of other significant figures, both in New York and in San Francisco, publishing in a number of beat magazines. Hangers-on developed into 'beatniks', a generally denigratory term for a form of living and writing partly created by a frightened bourgeoisie and its sensation-seeking press.

(A poem by Allen Ginsberg – *A Supermarket in California* – is dealt with in *Drive/Speakeasy*, issue 2, November-December 1998.)

The 'Beat Generation' and Jack Kerouac still have kind of a cult influence on many people. The song *Hey Jack Kerouac* by 10,000 Maniacs (on the album *In my Tribe*, Elektra/Asylum Records, '87) gives a beautiful description of these writers' lives, language, themes and disappointments. You could use it either as an introduction or a conclusion.

- Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* became the most famous work of the Beat Generation of writers. It is known to be an account of Kerouac's (Sal Paradise, the book's narrator) travels with Neal Cassady (Dean Moriarty). The main characters are based on Kerouac's friends, many of them prominent Beat Generation writers like Allen Ginsberg (Carlo Marx) and William Burroughs (Bull Lee). With his long, stream-of-consciousness sentences and page-long paragraphs, Kerouac sought to do no less than revolutionize the form of American prose. According to Allen Ginsberg, Kerouac typed the first draft of *On the Road* on a fifty-foot long roll of paper.

On the Road gave voice to a rising, dissatisfied fringe of the young generation of the later forties and early fifties. It was after the Great Depression and World War II and more than a decade before the Civil Rights Movement and the turmoil of the 60s. Yet, though it has been fifty years since the events in *On the Road* (reason why it lost a bit of its cult status), the feelings, ideas and experiences in the novel are still remarkably fresh as expressions of restless, idealistic youth who yearn for something more than the bland conformities of a generally prosperous society.

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