An excerpt from the master’s thesis entitled, “The Formation of Identity on a Mobile Landscape in Jack Kerouac’s On the Road”

There are two kinds of things guys like us do. The things we do because we read Jack Kerouac and the things we do because we read Hemingway.

—Michael Herr, journalist

When On the Road was finally published in 1957, Kerouac was not ready for its success. Writing the novel six years before in those legendary twenty-one days, he never could have imagined the future requirements of success and celebrity. Even as he struggled to define himself among a backdrop of “beat” friends, and ultimately what he understood as a beat world, Kerouac’s writing and publication were intertwined with the birth of mass media. He met with interviewers for both print and television journalism; they questioned him about the original composition of the novel—the long sheets of paper taped together (for the mostly practical purpose of avoiding the interruption of writing while changing sheets of paper in his typewriter) were the focus of national attention and legend, while, due to his quirky composition choices, Kerouac’s life became more interesting to the public than his novel. Despite his agonizing ambitions for recognition as a “serious and legitimate artist,” according to Robert Holton, because his novel was known to be largely autobiographical, and because his readers forgot that he never occupied the space of Dean Moriarty, he was expected in his new public sphere to be a kind of “hyperkinetic Neal Cassady,” while he more readily identified with the quiet and reflective Sal Paradise (2-3). The novel was swept up by a new generation that called themselves “beatniks,” of which Kerouac was “King,” and it lost what little scholarly credibility it had gained amid overexposure from the media and was soon stowed away, both literally and figuratively, as the scroll and its ideas were cast aside, cultural artifacts of a beat past that held no relevance in the modern world (4). Interest in Kerouac the man blossomed, and he was elevated “into the pantheon of bohemian heroes,” but critical work on his writing was almost nonexistent because “to work on Kerouac was, at one time, a choice that could put an academic career in jeopardy” (4). According to John Leland, “Kerouac was more fantasy figure than literary one. Most scholarship on Kerouac has been about how he lived or how he wrote, not what he wrote.” (194). That is, until now.

To mark the fifty year anniversary of On the Road, the romanticized original scroll version of the novel was published in 2007. The jacket claims it is “rougther, wilder, and racier than the 1957 edition,” and Howard Cunnell, the version’s editor, attempts to answer the question all readers ask,

Is the scroll the real On the Road? This is a natural question, especially as the novel trades so strongly in questions of authenticity, but it is perhaps the wrong one to ask. The scroll
does not call into question the authenticity of the published novel but is in dialogue with it... The scroll version of *On the Road* is, however, a markedly darker, edgier, and uninhibited text than the published book, with a rough, demo-tape urgency that feels contemporary. (31)

The public status and understanding of this novel clouds it in uncertain terms. Matt Theado summarizes the rumors and myths in “Revisions of Kerouac: the Long, Strange Trip of the *On the Road* Typescripts”:

> The most significant of the long-lasting myths are these: that Kerouac wrote the novel while he was high on Benzedrine; that he wrote the scroll on teletype paper; that the typescript’s prose was unpunctuated; that Kerouac was unwilling to revise; that the reaction of his editor, Robert Giroux, upon seeing the scroll format caused Kerouac to withdraw the novel, refusing to change a word; and that the prose style of the scroll was significantly different from Viking’s 1957 publication. (Theado 11)

Such fabrications are still alive in the academic community, though Theado continues his article with compelling evidence to the contrary. Even Howard Cunnell, editor of the scroll, propagates the story for at least half of his introduction; he writes anecdotally about the novel’s lack of punctuation and Benzedrine on the first pages of the book and does not return to the truth until twenty-four pages later, when most readers have given up on the introduction for the actual text. Kerouac, as a spontaneous composer high on drugs who refused to revise his masterpiece, is much more sexy and appealing for the masses today, as in 1957, than an excellent typist who wrote from extensive notes and journals for eight or so hours a day on cups of coffee made by his wife (Theado 15, 17).

As *On the Road* enjoys a sort of genre duality, with its original, fictional structure and its later, autobiographical form, the novel takes on a complex identity in the world of publishing. The stories struggle to establish an identity against a changing landscape of time, criticism, and classification. The novel, like its characters, enjoy a sense of disconnect from their path. That is, the academic community that received *On the Road* when it was published ultimately affected its reception; the landscape on which it identified altered its identity. Of course, Kerouac *did* revise *On the Road* through several drafts between its original composition in 1951 and publication in 1957. Some alterations, like names and biographical information, were changed for copyright purposes. Differences in language and form occurred most likely for the pleasure of publishers who expected certain recipes for writing would appeal to a larger population of readers:

> Except for some fairly large cuts of adventures that were extraneous to the central narrative, the published version is the same structurally as the scroll version... Kerouac’s negative reaction to his experience with Viking editors stemmed from the fact that Kerouac never saw the book in galley proofs. The text underwent several changes, including house styling, without Kerouac’s knowledge; he saw the final text for the first time when he received a box of advance copies... (Theado 28)
Still, along with editorial and stylistic changes, a comparative reader notices thematic differences between the texts that ultimately alter focus between the scroll and published versions. The scroll version presents the reader a detailed perspective of the legendary manner in which the novel was composed as well as an understanding of the alterations that occurred during the process of publication.

Since knowledge of the scroll as a sort of untainted text has loomed behind study of the Viking-edited version of *On the Road*, readers have viewed the novel as a chopped up reality of Kerouac’s otherwise authentic genius. As Allen Ginsberg anticipated after its publication, the “original mad version is greater than the published version, the manuscript still exists and someday when everybody’s dead be published as it is” (Ginsberg). Until 2007 and the publication of the original scroll version, readers simply believed in this mythic text that Ginsberg and others mentioned in public venues as the real piece of writing; *On the Road* did not need any help becoming an outlaw work of literature that appealed to rebellious and counter-cultural types, but the very existence of the scroll was unprecedented and certainly added to the flavor of Kerouac and his masterpiece. Of course, if these readers expected all of the unanswered questions that remain even after a careful reading of the 1957 version of the novel, the scroll leaves them disappointed, for sure. But the scroll version is “rough, wilder, and racier,” as its jacket proclaims.

The novel’s pace, both in the Viking version of 1957 and the scroll, is fast and exhilarating at times. The scroll, however, and perhaps because it lacks paragraphs and chapter breaks, reads frantically. With this original text, the reader feels compelled to keep reading, and to do so quickly; it is not only difficult to physically mark a place to stop between sittings, Kerouac's words tumble out onto the page so rhythmically that pages practically turn themselves. The rush of reading is likely born from the rush of writing. John Leland recalls, “*On the Road*’s structure, as Warren Tallman has pointed out, is a jazz form. Instead of building toward a resolution, like European novel, Kerouac’s tale circles back on itself, like a jazz musician working successive choruses on the same changes” (135). These musical qualities carry over into the words Kerouac wrote, as well; his novel is a composition of beats that carry both sound and meaning. According to Matt Theado, “Kerouac valued rhythm, a syncopation that could be enacted by a jazz musician or sounded on a typewriter keyboard. This sense of rhythm then carries over into the rhythmic meters of the language, the cadences of the narrative, and the pace and flow of the story itself” (14). Further, in a letter to Alfred Kazin, a respected critic and one-time instructor to the author, Kerouac attempts to explain his style of writing: “The main thing, I feel, is that the urgency of explaining something has its own words and rhythm, and time is of the essence—Modern Prose” (*Letters 1940-1956* 450). The animated nature of Kerouac’s writing is apparent to most critics and to the author himself, but the Viking editors did alter the text in general, and, while the 1957 version maintains energetic qualities, punctuation modifications, paragraph interruptions, and chapter breaks slow the writing down. In this sense, the scroll reads more like the epic poem Ginsberg considered it than the conventional novel the Viking editors fashioned.
Although most changes are minute, their effect encompasses the tone and rhythm of the novel. Consider, for example, the seemingly insignificant alterations in this excerpt when the narrator finally finds “IT” and Neal/Dean returns his enthusiasm with a story from childhood. First, from the scroll, Neal says:

And man now listen to this after two whole weeks of incredible hardship and bouncing around and hustling in the heat to sell these awful makeshift flyswatters they started to argue about the division of the proceeds and had a big fight on the side of the road and then made up and bought wine and began drinking wine and didn’t stop for five days and five nights while I huddle and cry in the background and when they were finished every last cent was spent and we were right back where we started from, Larimer street. And my old man was arrested and I had to plead at court to the judge to let him go ‘cause he was my pa and I had no mother, Jack I made great mature speeches at the age of eight in front of interested lawyers and that’s when Justin Brierly first heard of me because then he was just beginning to take interest in founding a special juvenile court with particular humane emphasis on the problems of beat children in and around Denver and the Rocky Mountain district… (305)

The scene is set with Neal and Kerouac sitting in the back of a car sweating and excited and talking with an energy that seemed to frighten the other passengers (306). In this excerpt, that energy is apparent; the long first sentence cannot be bothered by punctuation, because punctuation is the physical expression of a pause in speech, and, for Kerouac, in that moment in the car, there was no break in the frenzied talk. Consider the same section from the 1957 version:

And man, now listen to this after two whole weeks of incredible hardship and bouncing around and hustling in the heat to sell these awful makeshift flyswatters they started to argue about the division of the proceeds and had a big fight on the side of the road and then made up and bought wine and began drinking wine and didn’t stop for five days and five nights while I huddled and cried in the background, and when they finished every last cent was spent and we were right back where we started from, Larimer street. And my old man was arrested and I had to plead at court to the judge to let him go cause he was my pa and I had no mother. Sal, I made great mature speeches at the age of eight in front of interested lawyers… (208)

The deletion of Brierly at this point is significant and will be discussed later. Although the editorial changes do not seem overly invasive on the surface, the addition of three commas in the first sentence of this excerpt slows the reader down. Moving “huddle” and “cry” in the scroll excerpt to the past tense “huddled” and “cried” makes the latter paragraph less confrontational and immediate; Dean’s story is tangible in the first place and merely a memory in the second. The story in the scroll version is rushed and full of the maniacal energy
described by the author; this momentum is communicated directly through the structure of the sentence. The effectiveness is not completely lost, but it is decreased. The rhythm that Kerouac valued is changed; the beat is adjusted here as it is throughout the novel. With such an emphasis on rhythm in his words, editorial changes in punctuation in effect change the song, as a reader of poetry or a player of music chooses different areas of emphasis, the editors altered the rhythm to one that does not belong to Kerouac. In “Typetalking: Voice and Performance in On the Road,” Tim Hunt suggests that the “Viking editors were trying to make Kerouac’s prose as conventional as possible” (172). That is, in order to fit his unconventional scroll/novel into the space literature was supposed to fulfill, Kerouac’s rhythm had to be changed. The alterations in this excerpt are indicative of a general, overall hesitation in the 1957 edition that make it structurally different from the original text.

These structural changes carry over into characterization in the text. The most obvious and perhaps significant changes from the scroll text to the published novel are characters’ names. Kerouac becomes Salvatore Paradise, a name with unrelenting spiritual connotations: Salvatore, or salvation, and Paradise is, well, paradise. Neal Cassady becomes Dean Moriarty, with perhaps some significance to the similarity between Moriarty and mortuary. No longer can the reader easily recognize real-life legends in the text. In order to avoid law suits, publishers recommended that Kerouac remove any direct illustration of his friends (Mouratidis 77). Despite attempts to mask the origins of the story, these alterations were well-known when the novel was published, and they had little effect on the critical perception of the book. But the names are not mere substitutions; Kerouac omitted details from the published version of On the Road that changed the nature of certain characters, particularly Dean Moriarty. The fabrication of Neal Cassady’s past, along with his name, alter the character’s centrality. Further investigation of the novel’s several drafts indicates that major characters eventually took on autonomous, fictional qualities that distinguished them from their bases. Perhaps the most significant difference to emerge from the fictionalization is an alteration of the authenticity Kerouac sought so voraciously; by changing his friends’ names and stories, they became different characters instead of tangible realities whose experiences of the scroll text are now in dialogue with the events of the 1957 On the Road. The scroll inhabits the autobiographical genre, while the originally published work is fiction; the difference in genre alters reader perception.

The fixation with Dean Moriarty as a leading influence is evident in the “Part One” of the published version of the novel. Sal Paradise narrates the opening: “I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up” (1). Subsequent pages outline Dean’s every move in and out of Sal’s life. The only change in Dean/Neal’s biography at this point is that his reform school is moved from Colorado in the scroll to New Mexico. He is otherwise “...the perfect guy for the road because he actually was born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles” (Scroll 109; published 1). Dean/Neal’s character begins in flux; he is both defined and must define himself amid the ever-changing background of the road. The crux of his characterization, therefore, lies in Kerouac’s ability to define him as such.
In the scroll version of *On the Road*, Neal Cassady is presented as a sort of mythic figure, while Dean Moriarty is more tangible, more real, though no less “mad.” During the early pages of the 1957 publication, for example, Dean is described: “He was simply a youth tremendously excited with life, and though he was a con-man, he was only conning because he wanted so much to live and to get involved with people who would otherwise pay no attention to him” (4) (emphasis added). Here, the narrator is attempting to sum up the character, to describe the ultimate distinction that defined Dean’s difference. The same description in the scroll deletes the word “youth”: “In all, what Neal was, simply, was tremendously excited with life…” (112). The object of the sentence here is Neal, while in the published version, the emphasis is on youth; the implication in the latter is some kind of immaturity that birthed the excitement, rather than the passion as an autonomous attribute that existed as a defining facet of the character. Following this slightly altered description in the 1957 publication is more detail that provides further insight into Dean Moriarty:

And a kind of holy lightning I saw flashing from his excitement and his visions, which he described so torrentially that people in buses looked around to see the “overexcited nut.” In the West he’d spent a third of his time in the poolhall, a third in jail, and a third in the public library. They’d seen him rushing eagerly down the winter streets, bareheaded, carrying books to the poolhall, or climbing trees to get into the attics of buddies where he spent days reading or hiding from the law. (5)

The context for Dean provides the reader with an understanding of him as a complex character, rather than as a mythic figure whose background is a mystery—in the scroll up to this point, he exists simply as a mysterious, excited madman from Denver. Suddenly, the reader of the published version is possessed with a tangible explanation for Dean’s existence; the lenses are, in a sense, wiped clear, while Neal of scroll remains shrouded. It is also significant that the west of the scroll becomes the West in the published edition. The emphasized delineation carries with it innumerable connotations, and Dean, as a child of that West (the wild, wild one) takes on another set of traits in the capitalization of that word alone. Kerouac brings the reality of Dean into the forefront of the earlier publication so that the character is defined as whole immediately.

One of the most revealing features of both Kerouac/Sal’s and Neal/Dean’s histories and resulting characterizations is the absence and subsequent search for their lost fathers, a theme whose centrality is shadowed in the 1957 publication. In fact, Kerouac’s original text opened with his father as a focus: “I first met Neal not long after my father died…I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about except that it really had something to do with my father’s death and my awful feeling that everything was dead” (109). The published *On the Road* begins instead with the spotlight on a broken spousal relationship: “I first met Dean not long after my wife and I split up. I had just gotten over a serious illness that I won’t bother to talk about, except that it had something to do with the miserably weary split-up and my feeling that everything was dead”
Although both texts open with first a new beginning (the meeting) and with a sense of loss and weariness, the impetus for the latter is altered; the feeling of being “beat” and the focus of women as a theme seems more significant in the 1957 than the search for lost fathers. Kerouac chose to largely delete his father from the published text, though Neal/Dean’s father remains central to the character.

Sal Paradise mentions his own father three times during his narration of the 1957 version of *On the Road*. The first instance is half-way into the novel, during the second trip West, while Dean, Ed Dunkel, and Marylou are visiting Bull Lee in Louisiana. Sal and Bull are at a horse race, and as Bull is deciding on his bet, Sal thinks:

> I hadn’t played the horses in years and was bemused with all the new names. There was one horse called Big Pop that sent me into a temporary trance thinking of my father, who used to play the horses with me. I was about to mention it to Old Bull when he said, “Well I think I’ll try this Ebony Corsair here.”

Then I finally said it. “Big Pop reminds me of my father.” (153)

The reader then inadvertently learns that Sal’s father is dead, as Bull loses his bet and, in his remorse, mentions that Sal was momentarily in communication with the dead. With this knowledge, Sal’s connection with Bull Lee takes on a father-son connotation. Looking back on Bull’s characterization, he is a “teacher” (143) who greeted Sal “with a nice warmth” (142) and could see that “we didn’t know anything about ourselves” (145). To his own children, Bull was “a father who would certainly never bore his son when it came to finding things to do and talk about” (152). As if searching the continent for his father as well as Neal/Dean’s, Kerouac’s next mention of his father occurs in San Francisco when, early one morning, he calls upon Ernest Burke’s father (Henry Funderburk’s father in the scroll) for a place to sleep. After arriving in the man’s hotel room, the narrator of both versions recall: “He began telling stories about his railroading days. He reminded me of my father. I stayed up and listened to the stories” (205; scroll 303). Kerouac simply has a moment where he is reminded of his father. He is grateful for this man’s kindness, but, beyond his storytelling, little is offered in terms of characterization. A few pages later, Sal provides the final mention of a father in the 1957 version: “As a child lying back in my father’s car in the back seat I also had a vision of myself on a white horse...” (209). The memory is largely inconsequential, except that the memory is, of course, of being on the road; Sal’s connection with his father seems in no way meaningful, based on these few, brief referrals.

In the scroll version, however, Kerouac provides more information about their relationship and more insight about his feelings over his father’s death: the opening statement, that he “met Neal not long after [his] father’s died,” the illness that followed left him depressed and with the feeling that, with his father, everything had died. As he travels across the United States, in search of “IT,” life, motion, his father’s death highlights the inevitability of his own, and he follows Neal/Dean because he is always in motion, and to be in motion is to be alive. So, when Neal/Dean suggests that Jack/Sal sleep with Louanne/Mary Lou,
he is uncertain but willing to try what his madman proposes without question—"I didn’t ask him why because I knew he wanted to test something in himself and he wanted to see what Louanne was like with another man" (Scroll 231). When they arrive at the apartment where the scheme will play out, Kerouac observes, "I had to prove that I’d go through with it. The bed was the bed my father had died in—I had given it to Allen a week before, Neal and I had driven it in from the Island. My father had been a big man and the bed sagged in the middle" (232). In the 1957 publication, the bed simply "had been the deathbed of a big man and sagged in the middle" (131). Perhaps in order to make the novel less autobiographical, Kerouac chose to keep the key facts about the bed and the man to whom it belonged, but omitted his father’s name. Kerouac and Sal are both unable to successfully perform during the interaction, and as Neal/Dean returns to the bedroom, the narrator muses about the character’s father: “Where was his father—the old bum Neal Cassady… Neal had every right to die the sweet deaths of complete love of his Louanne. I didn’t want to interfere, I just wanted to follow” (233). Kerouac is fully aware that his father’s death is final, but that does not stop him from attempting to fill his own void by searching both physically and mentally for Neal’s father.

Kerouac removed the final mention of his own father from the published version entirely. It is the most emotional and descriptive allusion. On a bus journey back East, he recalls, “I saw an old card dealer who looked exactly like W.C. Fields and made me cry thinking of my father. There he was, fat with a bulbous nose, wiping himself with a backpocket handkerchief, green visor, wheezing asthmatically in the Butte winter night games, till he finally packed off with his old dog to sleep another day” (278). The recollection begins a short mosaic of on characters from the road; at the end, Kerouac is depressed again: “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” (278). Memories of his father and visions of him as a sort of “everyman” on the road forces Kerouac to insist on his own madness, to rationalize his actions as forgivable in light of time. He refers to this revelation later in the scroll and in the 1957 publication, though at a different time in the story:

I felt like a speck on the surface of the sad red earth. I passed the Windsor Hotel, where Dean Moriarty had lived with his father in the depression thirties, and as of yore I looked everywhere for the sad and fabled tinsmith of my mind. Either you find someone who looks like your father in places like Montana or you look for a friend’s father where he is no more. (179)

The narrator has questions about existence and meaning and attempts to examine them as he crosses the country back and forth, but part of the difficulty and of his reality, as is apparent especially in this last statement about the impossibility of finding his or Neal/Dean’s father, is in Kerouac’s inability to define himself against the portable and moving landscape of America. According to John Leland, “The books action—Sal’s search for a voice, his desire to settle down, his nostalgia for archetypes past—all takes place against the backdrop of Kerouac’s relationship
with his late father” (77). Biographically speaking, Leo Kerouac (Jack’s father, a man of the productive era and class) had a problematic relationship with his son, one that led Jack to work at proving the worth of writing as a profession (77). Kerouac’s resulting novel exists in his father’s blue-collar, production oriented America, and the outcome of his search for self is in the relationship with Neal/Dean and the emergent recognition of his paternal self (79).

When the original scroll of On the Road was published in 2007, it answered some questions and debunked some myths, but it accomplished most of the same ends as the 1957 version. While the publication of the scroll problematizes the issue of genre for the novel in general, the public identity of On the Road aligns coincidentally with the thematic search for the self and authenticity. Generally speaking, the scroll version is simply a precursor to the earlier publication; though Kerouac, and even Ginsberg, might have had lofty ideas about perfection at the point of original writing, the On the Road that was finally published is only slightly more conventional and only partially altered in terms of thematic emphasis. Language is undoubtedly different; the published novel reads considerably slower than the scroll. The author’s rush to compose the work in three weeks shines through the writing. Characters bear some resemblance to their autobiographical counterparts, but key changes alter some of their mythical qualities. Dean Moriarty is somehow lassoed down to earth by Kerouac’s revisions. Finally, the question of fathers remains alive in the 1957 publication, even without the details of Kerouac’s own father, though the scroll allows the reader to consider the implications of Leo Kerouac’s death more fully. The focus of each writing is individual to its text; basic plot remains, but emphasis is changed.
Works Cited


Mouratidis, George. “‘Into the Heart of Things’: Neal Cassady and the Search for the Authentic.” Kerouac Scroll 69-82.

For questions 1-8, read the text below and decide which answer (D, D', C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0).

1. For questions 1-8, read the text below and decide which answer (D, D', C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0). Exceptionally talented or just over-confident?

2. Few civilians had so much as set foot in Egypt, let alone travelled along this waterway through history and the remains of a vanished civilisation.

3. CAE Reading and Use of English Part 1. For questions 1-8, read the text below and decide which answer (D, D', C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0).

4. Female pilot Mary Heath was the original Queen of the Skies, one of the best-known women in the world during the golden age of aviation. The legendary 1951 scroll draft of On the Road, published word for word as Kerouac originally composed it.

5. Though Jack Kerouac began thinking about the novel that was to become On the Road as early as 1947, it was not until three weeks in April 1951, in an apartment on West Twentieth Street in Manhattan, that he wrote the first full draft that was satisfactory to him. It represents the first full expression of Kerouac's revolutionary aesthetic, the identifiable point at which his thematic vision and narrative voice came together in a sustained burst of creative energy. It was also part of a wider vital experimentation in the American literary, musical, and visual arts in the post-World War II period.

6. An 'Incite Fear' spell scroll is a Zarosian artefact that can be restored with level 58 Archaeology at an archaeologist's workbench. Once the item is restored it can be read near the dial in the room past the prison in Kharid-et. This will trigger part of the mystery The Vault of Shadows. Attempting to cast the spell causes the player to read "Glaciem metus!", which is Latin for "ice fears".

7. CAE Reading and Use of English Part 1. For questions 1-8, read the text below and decide which answer (D, D', C or D) best fits each gap. There is an example at the beginning (0).

8. Exceptionally talented or just over-confident?