

Rejoining the Merchant Marine, he undertook further hazardous duty before returning to New York, reconnecting with Parker, and widening his circle of friends with off-beat young men and women living near (and sometimes attending) Columbia. These included such eventually prominent figures as William S. Burroughs and Allen Ginsberg, who themselves became noteworthy writers.

In 1944, when one of Kerouac's friends (Lucien Carr) fatally knifed another male friend for allegedly making a pass at him, Kerouac helped the stabber dispose of evidence, leading to brief imprisonment as a material witness.



Fig. 3. From left to right: Lucien Carr, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, and William S. Burroughs.

Unknown author, via Wikimedia. [CC 4.0.]

Having quickly married Parker, whose family paid his bail, Kerouac moved with her briefly to Michigan before eventually serving on another ship and then returning to New York. By this time he claimed to have written half a million words and nine unfinished novels. In 1945, he and Burroughs worked together on a novel, and then Kerouac, suffering from severe leg pains, helped care for his cancer-stricken father, who died in 1946. Shortly

made revisions—especially name changes—as he typed his second version. This second typescript was his official submission to the publishing industry (22–23).

Next discussed is the overall movement of Kerouac’s typescripts through New York publishing houses (24–27). At the request of Knopf, Kerouac prepared a new typescript, making further revisions, only to have it rejected. After making another round of publishers, “by circuitous happenstance” Kerouac’s third typescript came to Viking for the second time. Viking’s literary advisor Malcolm Cowley admired the book but had been unable on its first submission to persuade its previous editors to accept it (27). However, *On the Road* was finally published by Viking in 1957.

Comparing the published version and the original scroll, Theado writes: “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.” Noting Kerouac’s allegation that Cowley “cut the heart out of *On the Road*” and ruined his sentence rhythms, Theado adds: “Cowley emphasized that these [structural] cuts were made by Kerouac’s hand.” According to Cowley, the reason Kerouac would never admit to revising was “his feeling that the stuff ought to come out like toothpaste from a tube and not be changed, and that every word that passed from his typewriter was holy.” Cowley claimed that, in fact, Kerouac had “revised, and revised well” (28).

But Kerouac “never saw the book in galley proofs,” and Theado thinks this was behind Kerouac’s negative view of his experience with Viking’s editors. This lapse was caused by Kerouac’s “peripatetic nature,” for he was always on the move. Thus “the biggest obstacle in working with him was often just locating him” (28–29). After tracing Kerouac’s movements during the two years when the book was under consideration and in production at Viking, Theado concludes: “Overall, the novel is not significantly shorter than the scroll typescript, follows the original structure, and is not stylistically different from the way that Kerouac first put it on paper” (29–31).

commonly associated with drug addiction” (7). Furthermore, available data indicated:

1. [e]stablished patterns of delinquency prior to and following addiction to the drugs;
2. [t]he fact that a large majority of addicts, identified as such through other than law enforcement activities, were found to have become known to the police; [and]
3. [a] high degree of similarity between the settings and circumstances in which both addiction and delinquency were prevalent. (7)

The committee found that “addicts of whatever description shared a characteristic and abnormal concern over the need for relief from pain, discomfort or anxiety, and that they were prone to look for aid in dulling their perceptions. In each case,” the report continued, “the addict seemed to feel the need for relief from some oppressive circumstance, whether this related to physical pain, recognition of personal or social inadequacy, or more complex considerations. The effect of the drugs,” the committee suggested, resembled “the function of a crutch, which enabled an addict to get along in his given situation. Many addicts described the effects of drugs in positive terms of euphoria, but this apparently did not commonly continue beyond the early stages of addiction except for those who had become habituated to intravenous injections. For most,” said the report, “the drugs seemed to offer an escape which was a line of retreat, not an advance” (7). The committee found “that in many instances the first use of drugs resulted from examples set by addicts enjoying local prestige, as in juvenile gangs; from a desire on the part of the individual to gain acceptance by his peers; or occasional thrill seekers who used drugs only as a phase in their pattern of delinquency, without developing into confirmed addicts” (7–8). Many of these claims seem relevant to conditions described in *On the Road*, such as the desire “for relief from pain, discomfort or anxiety”; the desire to be accepted as part of a “gang”; and especially the search for “euphoria” (7–8).

importance and general applicability, and cannot deliver any such conclusion because Dean is more convincing as an eccentric than as a representative of any segment of humanity.”

In another significant review for another major magazine—*Harper's*—Paul Pickrel called *On the Road* “a novel (or quite possibly a piece of fictionalized autobiography)” whose “characters were in revolt against conventional middle-class life and accepted ways of doing things,” although he added that Kerouac never “shows any direct interest in politics or in general ideas of any kind.” In fact, he thought that the “revolt of these young men is away from ideas and causes, away from the general and abstract, and toward whatever is direct, immediate, and personal in experience: love, friendship, jazz,” adding that “[t]hey have not the faintest trace of what used to be called social consciousness.” Instead, he thought they “accept confusion, create it, and revel in it, as long as their feelings are getting through” (89). “There is,” he wrote, “nothing passive about them; they are out to live it up, and they do. By any conventional moral standard they are a bad lot—a bunch of overage juvenile delinquents who steal, take drugs, sleep around, and use language that they never learned reading valentines. Their adventures,” he thought, “are too hectic, distraught, or, to use their own favorite word ‘crazy,’ to make a story.”

Calling them “religious mystics” of “an odd sort,” he described them as hard and soft “at the same time.” According to Pickrel, “[h]ome-made mysticism has produced a lot of bad writing, and Kerouac’s book has most of the characteristic faults. In places it is pretentious and sentimental, and it has its share of crackpottery and wooziness,” with writing that was often “long-winded and terribly earnest” and a “feeble” sense of humor. Nonetheless, Pickrel valued some of the novel’s unconventionality, concluding that “[t]here is vigor in the book and a wide-openness to experience that keeps it alive. It is not,” he warned, “recommended to the squeamish, except those who are given to deploring conformity in American life; they deserve what they will get” (90).

Phil Gunby, writing in Ohio’s *Columbus Dispatch*, called Sal “perhaps the least impulsive [character] of his immediate circle” but

pressures was added that well-known mix of inhibitions, taboos, and authoritarian attitudes that marked the bourgeois family around 1900. The result was a “sense of loneliness and not being understood,” which found expression in a heightened emotionality and an attraction to romanticized models of feeling and behavior. These psychic strains, Nipperdey observed, also produced an intense devotion to friends within one’s peer group. (Bures 28)

World War I, on the one hand, “appeased” this desire for ideal romantic comradeship by offering *ad abundantiam* to millions of young males the experience of a real comradeship that could lead to solidarity during the tragic circumstances of war and create true and important friendships. However, on the other hand, it left the “younger brothers,” i.e., the males too young to be enlisted, in the same circumstances of “emotional isolation” during the postwar period, leaving them to feel the added regret of having been “cut off” from that great and heroic experience of knowledge and moral values the war made possible. The resulting behaviors were varied, and I would like to classify four types:

1. Courageous young men dedicated to study and truth overcame the crisis mentioned in their struggle against both fascism and communism. For example, such figures as Piero Gobetti, George Orwell, and Karl Popper.
2. Others, young men like J. R. R. Tolkien and C. S. Lewis, tried to fit in as much as possible with the traditional paths of regular work and family affection, placing their desire for diversity, rebellion, epic warfare, and ideal friendship in the fantasy world of their fiction and in sharing that world with their select circle of friends (such as the Inklings).
3. Many other young people instead became militants and even fighters in youth organizations, including always extremist and often violent communist and fascist groups.
4. Other young people took yet another path: they are those young people such as Brian Howard, Harold Acton, Evelyn Waugh, Randolph Churchill, W. H. Auden, Christopher Isherwood, and Cecil Beaton, who are so well analyzed by Martin B. Green in his book *The Children of the Sun*. These were a group of dandies who

in La Honda, California, all the way to “Madhattan” for the release party at Viking Press’s headquarters of *Sometimes a Great Notion*. Their adventures would inspire following generations to adopt an off-the-grid, freewheeling lifestyle—seen in cultural markers like the Beatles’ bus journey in *Magical Mystery Tour* (1967) and the fleets of buses that showed up at Woodstock in 1969, and even today in the hashtag #VanLife on social media. At the time, they saw themselves as pioneers setting out to travel back across the continent, writing over and revising the paths, ways, and customs Manifest Destiny had destructively taken west. As Ken Babbs, Kesey’s righthand crony, put it at the time: “’Tis I, the Intrepid Traveler, come to lead his Merry Band of Pranksters across America, backwards, in the reverse direction of the settlers, our goal the obliteration of the entire nation, not in the physical sense of course, but spiritually. Blow their minds, not their buildings” (*Cronies* 46). And who should be driving *Further* a great portion of the way? Neal Cassady.

Babbs and Kesey, who met and became best friends as graduate students in Wallace Stegner’s 1958 writing class at Stanford University, revered *On the Road*. For them, it was a foundational text, one that altered the ways they saw the world and their potentialities in it. “A literary bombshell,” Babbs calls it all these decades later, “a fusion of jazz and free-form writing which combined real-life experiences with made-up embellishments that blew the lid off staid, ordinary prose” (*Cronies* 1). When Cassady showed up at a croquet tournament Kesey hosted, rapping his distinctive stream-of-consciousness narration while working under his car, all gathered were mystified by the encounter. It was like Dean Moriarty had crossed from the plane of print and paper into flesh-and-blood reality. When he reappeared in June 1964 in La Honda, he agreed on the spot to join their bus trip to New York instead of painting his house. That spontaneity legitimized their endeavor at its outset, connecting the Pranksters to the artistic movement that had so inspired them. Babbs recalls that Cassady’s presence linked their desire to live their art to that of their literary heroes:

love, transgression, consciousness and America itself in one greedy gulp,” whereas to watch the film “is to see people do things against backdrops that can look only puny in comparison to the expanse of one’s own imagination.”

Despite these complaints, however, Hornaday did praise Salles’s emphasis on the women who, in Kerouac’s narrative, “were subject to untold cruelty and misogyny that went largely unnoticed in subsequent mythologizing of the Beat Generation.” She called this change of emphasis the film’s “best part,” concluding that even though “this version of ‘On the Road’ may not sing or soar, . . . it makes some crucial adjustments to a worldview that was simultaneously liberated and fatally blinkered.”

### Positive Reviews

Mick LaSalle, of the *San Francisco Chronicle*, began by calling the film “something of a sprawling mess,” but then added “so is the novel.” He wrote that the film, “like the book, is episodic and has dips in energy” but also displayed “more than its share of glory and illumination.” In fact, he continued, one great thing “the film does is capture the sense of actually being on the road,” adding that despite multiple scenes of roads and parties and sexual encounters that all seem to bleed together and make the Beat life “[begin] to look exhausting and ugly, it’s hard not to see the conventional world through [the characters’] eyes, as populated by zombies.” Indeed, he continued, “it’s part of the movie’s honesty that what looks so fresh at the beginning of ‘On the Road’ starts to look so tired and old by the end,” asserting, in fact, that “that’s not a fault of the movie. That’s the point of it. As Carlo Marx—that is Allen Ginsberg—actor Tom Sturridge raves about embracing life,” viewers “soon come to realize that everything coming out of his mouth is pretension and pompous idiocy, some new and amazing form of nonsense”—something, LaSalle claimed, that was “as empty as the void.”

David Haglund, of *Slate* magazine, felt that while the film was “not a great movie,” it was “a pretty interesting work of literary criticism” because “throughout—whether on purpose or, as sometimes seems to be the case, accidentally—the movie