

Have patience with my verbosity.

H Y J c] W c Z H Y 6 Y U h ; Y b Y f U h] c b '] b '

B Y U ' 7 U g g U X m f i g ' Ñ > c U b ' 5 b X Y f g c b ' @ Y H Y f Ä (1 9 5 0)

Þ æ [| æ Á Ô [| ã Á Þ [* ^ ã æ

Máster en Ò • č å ā • Š ã ^ | æ ā • Á Á Ô ~ | č | æ ^ • Á Ó i ã } æ [• Á

^ Á a ^ Á [• Á Ú æ ð ^ • Á a ^ Á P æ à | æ Ó * | ^ • æ



MÁSTERES
DE LA UAM
2019 – 2020

Facultad de Filosofía y Letras



*“Have patience with my verbosity: The
Voice of the Beat Generation in Neal
Cassady’s ‘Joan Anderson Letter’ (1950)”*
(Master’s Thesis)

Author: Nicolas Coria Nogueira

Supervisor: Dr. Luisa Antón-Pacheco

Contents

I. Introduction	3–6
II. Theoretical Framework and Methodology	7–8
III. American Postwar Context and the Beat Generation	9–15
IV. Neal Cassady’s <i>autofictional project</i>	16–19
V. 1. “The Beats’ Holy Grail”: A history	20–22
V. 2. The Document: Materiality and Overview	
A. The Materiality of the Document	23–24
B. Context and Overview of the Content of the Letter	24–26
VI. In Search of Lost Style	27
A. Raw Emotion, Naked Confession: Beat Themes and Topics	27–34
B. <i>Be Bop</i> : Beat Spontaneous Style	35–39
VII. “Keroassady”: Neal Cassady’s Influence on Jack Kerouac	40–46
VIII. Conclusions	47–48
IX. Appendix	49
X. Bibliography	50–55

“*Have patience with my verbosity: The Voice of the Beat Generation in Neal Cassady’s ‘Joan Anderson Letter’ (1950)*”

“... by God! just write Jack, write! forget everything else. Hear me?”
(Neal Cassady. Letter to Jack Kerouac, 27th March, 1947)

“... Neal shall be justified.”
(Jack Kerouac. *The Paris Review* n° 41, 1968)

I. Introduction

Traditionally, the Beat Generation is considered to be composed by a core of writers –consisting, basically, of Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs– who developed most of their works between the 1950’s and the 1960’s, to which several other poets, novelists and artists in general can be related.¹ Neal Cassady, though of course closely linked to and part of this generation, is usually included in another category, the one of *muse* of these other main or “major” writers (Russell, 2002; Plummer, 1981). In this regard, although he was indeed a prolific writer, Neal Cassady never considered himself a proper one. This belief, shared by most of his contemporaries and the general literary criticism but not by Kerouac and Ginsberg themselves (Robinson Cassady, 2004: xvii), may have been supported by the fact that what we could consider his literary oeuvre is indeed both marginal and fragmentary in

¹ Depending on the approach to the movement, authors such as John Clellon Holmes, Gregory Corso, Carl Salomon, the poets of the San Francisco Renaissance –Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Kenneth Rexroth, Philip Lamantia, Michael McClure, Gary Snyder, Kirby Doyle, Philip Whalen–, Carolyn Cassady, Lucien Carr, Hettie Jones, and several others may be included in these lists.

traditional terms. Thus, his written production essentially consists of three different types of texts. In the first place, we should mention his unfinished autobiography, *The First Third* (which was published as a book in 1971), the only “organised” text in which Neal Cassady worked “in erratic spurts of intensity over a six-year period between 1948 and 1954” (Robinson Cassady, 2006: 140). Secondly, there are some other writings such as unfinished short stories and written reflections² –included as “Fragments” in the expanded edition of *The First Third* (1972)–, as well as his contribution to the poem “Pull My Daisy” (from 1949, in collaboration with Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg, and included in these authors’ books of collected poems). Finally, his most important textual production consists of numerous letters written to several people during twenty-three years (which represents more than the half of his life), which are collected in *As Ever. The Collected Correspondence of Allen Ginsberg & Neal Cassady* (edited by Barry Gifford and published in 1977), in *Grace Beats Karma. Letters from Prison 1958–1960*, (edited by Carolyn Robinson Cassady and published in 1993) and in *Collected Letters, 1944–1967* (edited by Dave Moore and published in 2004). All these “writings of the self (...) have traditionally been located in the «periphery» of literature and have been understood as a kind of addendum to a «main oeuvre» of the writers, a minor discursive practise, or an ephemeral prose” (Gallego Cuiñas, 2016: 575). Therefore, Neal Cassady’s marginal position as an author can be explained if we take into account that he does not have something like a “main oeuvre”.

As a fictional character, though, Neal Cassady’s life and personality are represented in more than fifteen different works by authors such as John Clellon Holmes,³ Jack Kerouac,⁴ Allen Ginsberg,⁵ Tom Wolfe,⁶ and several others who even took him as a

² This list would include texts such as “Adventures in Auto-Eroticism” and “Neal Talking Telling Story Fall ‘63”, which was written down by Allen Ginsberg.

³ Neal Cassady first appeared as a fictional character, Hart Kennedy, in *Go* (1952). He also appears as the driver in *The Horn* (1958).

⁴ Jack Kerouac undoubtedly structured most of his oeuvre taking Neal Cassady’s figure as inspiration. The most notable fictionalisations of him can be read in *On the Road* (1957) –as Dean Moriarty– and in the posthumous *Visions of Cody* (1972) –as Cody Pomeray. But Cassady appears in almost every prose book by Jack Kerouac: in *The Subterraneans* (1958) as Leroy, and in *The Dharma Bums* (1958), *Book of Dreams* (1960), *Big Sur* (1962) and *Desolation Angels* (1965) also as Cody/Cody Pomeray.

⁵ In the poetic domain, Neal Cassady is referred to in Ginsberg’s “The Green Automobile” (from 1953, which was later included in *Reality Sandwiches*, a collection of poems published in 1963), in “Howl” –one of his major poems– (as “N.C., secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis from Denver”) and, most notably, in “Elegy for Neal Cassady” (1968), his homage poem following Cassady’s death.

⁶ He also appears in Wolfe’s non-fiction classic *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test* (1968), which recollects the experiences of Ken Kesey and his Merry Pranksters and their journeys in a school bus, of which Neal Cassady served as the driver.

post-mortem muse.⁷ These representations established his place as an undoubted iconic figure in American literature, particularly in the Beat Generation and the subsequent hippie movement, and he may be even understood as a necessary link between them (Sandison and Vickers, 2006). From these depictions, the main contribution to the creation of his mythic character was definitely his immortalization as Dean Moriarty in Jack Kerouac's celebrated *On the Road* (1957). This character, (anti)hero of this road novel that was to be "a hymn to the American dream of self-reliance, individualism and freedom that [epitomised] the Beat Generation" (Russell, 2002: 17), became the symbol of this group's identity. It included "a psychological and spiritual reorientation, a new pattern of conduct, and a new system of values, including spontaneity, sensuality, energy, intuition, and instinct" (Stephenson, 2009: 156), and were soon represented in their cultural productions.

However, apart from serving as a muse to him, Neal Cassady actually provided Jack Kerouac of "the right tone" to write this novel, which consisted of what would then define the Beat aesthetic: "raw emotion, naked confession, and personal vision embodied in organic, intrinsic, and improvisatory forms" (Stephenson, 2009: 10). In this regard, after reading and praising the letters sent to him, Kerouac would change his writing style, rewrite and complete a new draft of his most acclaimed novel (what is now known as "the original scroll" from *On the Road*, a 1951 "raw" version of the text that would be later edited and finally published in September, 1957). In his own words in an interview for the issue #41 of *The Paris Review*, Kerouac disclosed a private exchange that would be immediately transformed into a myth and eventually result in the quest for "the holy grail of Beat literature" (Cimino, 2014):

I got the idea for the spontaneous style of *On the Road* from seeing how good old Neal Cassady wrote his letters to me, all first person, mad, confessional, completely serious, all detailed, with real names in his case, however (being letters). (...) I got the flash from his style. (...) All his letters to me were about his younger days before I met him, a child with his father, et cetera, and about his later teenage experiences. (...) The letter, the main letter I mean, was forty thousand words long, mind you, a whole short novel. It was the greatest piece of writing I ever saw, better'n anybody in America, or at least enough to make Melville, Twain, Dreiser, Wolfe, I dunno who, spin in their graves. Allen Ginsberg asked me to lend him this vast letter so he could read it. He read it, then loaned it to a guy called Gerd Stern who lived on a houseboat in Sausalito, California, in 1955, and this fellow lost the letter: overboard I presume. (...) If we can unearth this entire forty-thousand-word letter Neal shall be justified. (1968)

⁷ As in several music songs such as The Grateful Dead's "That's it for the other one" and Morrissey's "Neal Cassady Drops Dead".

The history behind the writing of *On the Road* evidently enlarged Neal Cassady's myth and, consequently, made him responsible of the *pre-text* of this important novel. However, Kerouac's words on this interview had a twofold effect on criticism: despite the fact that he mentions and praises Neal Cassady's letters in general, he highlights what is known as the "Joan Anderson Letter",⁸ an apparently lost treasure, as main source for influence or inspiration. In this regard, some literature historians and critics such as Oliver Harris (2000), Nancy Grace (2007), Ellis Amburn (1998), Matt Theado (2008) and Regina Weinreich (2004) point out that Neal Cassady's contribution to the writing style of *On the Road* was fundamental. Ann Charters, in particular, mentions that, inspired by its powerful style, "[T]he day after receiving Cassady's 'Joan Anderson and Cherry Mary' letter, Kerouac sat down 'to write a full confession' of his life to Neal" (1995: 246) which would be decisive for his subsequent style. However, these researchers mainly focus on Kerouac's texts and have not analysed Neal Cassady's writing style thoroughly. Thus far, apart from Carolyn Robinson Cassady and Dave Moore, there are only few researchers, such as Mary Paniccia Carden (2006) and Sydney Ingram (2016), who have studied Neal Cassady's writings in more detail. William Plummer (1981), Tom Christopher (2002), and David Sandison and Graham Vickers (2006), for their part, also gather, clarify and demystify some information about his life in their biographical studies on Neal Cassady.

Consequently, since it has not been yet studied extensively or completely, my aim is to analyse and to value Neal Cassady's own writing style. In this regard, taking into account that "[L]etter writing (...) [is] a surprisingly powerful channel for self expression" (Maybin, 2000: 151) I propose to study Neal Cassady's own *voice* in the recently found "Joan Anderson Letter" (1950). I will argue that, due to its themes, its confessional tone, its spontaneous form and its representations of the American postwar society, it could be considered one of the first Beat texts. For that purpose, I am going to take into account different studies regarding letter writing and autofiction, as well as various researches and articles that have studied the Beat Generation and the American postwar culture. Analysing the letter in detail would demonstrate with textual examples how relevant Neal Cassady was for the Beat aesthetic and, consequently, for its literature.

⁸ This text has received different "nicknames" by different researchers that relate to the content of the letter and, mainly, to Kerouac's, Ginsberg's and Cassady's own ways of referring to it in their edited correspondences: *Selected Letters. 1940–1956* (Kerouac, 1995), *The Letters of Allen Ginsberg* (Ginsberg, 2008), and *Collected Letters, 1944–1967* (Cassady, 2004), respectively.

II. Theoretical Framework and Methodology

Focusing on their prime communicative function, David Barton and Nigel Hall argue that “the importance of letter writing can be seen in that the phenomenon has been widespread historically, being one of earliest forms of writing” and that it “can be used to mediate a huge range of human interactions; through letters one can narrate experiences, dispute points, describe situations, offer explanations, give instructions and so on” (2000: 1). When they connect bigger communities and create more extended networks, they also give account a “need for communication, for exchange, for confessing with others that participate, equally impotent, of the same feelings, to find support, solidarity and the confirmation of one’s own identity” (Petrucci, 2018: 189). Moreover, as Janet Altman states, “the letter straddles the gulf between presence and absence; the two persons who ‘meet’ through the letter are neither totally separated nor totally united” (1982: 43). As a result, they can also constitute “a prime instrument of revelation and discovery” (92), can “assume literary characteristics and be read and valued as literature” (Guillén, 1991a: 35), and can help the addresser shape a determined self-image to his or her addressee. As we can assume from the quantity of edited and published correspondence of Beat authors (Wills, 2017), this outcast young culture was in constant communication and forged their relationships mainly through letter writing. For them, the letter itself actually “represented a technology of self-expression and intimate communication opposed to the impersonal relations of commodity exchange and the controlled uniformity of modern mass media” (Harris, 2000: 175). Thus, their epistolary exchange was also helpful to them for strictly literary reasons, including the experimentation with writing techniques, sharing their own writing projects and the opportunity of commenting them. Taking into account these considerations, the object of the following research is to study the “Joan Anderson Letter”, an important letter sent by Neal Cassady to his friend Jack Kerouac, in December 1950, in the context of the emergence of the Beat Generation.

In the first place, I will contextualise the Beat Generation taking into account two different periods of the history of the United States: the Great Depression and the postwar era economic recovery. I will then consider the importance of this literary movement and mention some its major themes, concerns and literary devices.

Then, I will reflect on Neal Cassady's *autofictional project*, and to argue that, throughout his whole life, he explored different writings of the self that allowed him to experiment with and develop a personal writing style while shaping a certain image of himself. For this purpose, I will mainly refer to some epistolary exchanges where he reveals his intentions of using his life as subject matter for his textual production.

Thirdly, as it was just recently found, I will briefly speak about the history of the letter itself, mention some of its material characteristics and clarify some important information regarding the document. I will then provide an overview of its content and of the personal context in which Neal Cassady wrote it, which I consider essential for its subsequent analysis.

With this basis, I will then proceed to analyse the topics and the style of the "Joan Anderson Letter". I will try to demonstrate that, due to its themes and the literary techniques employed in it, it anticipates other major Beat texts. For that purpose, after analysing the letter thoroughly, I will also study its influence in Jack Kerouac's own letters of the period in which he, like Cassady, experimented with both a "confessional tone" and a spontaneous style that he would later exploit in his subsequent novels, which were fundamental for the Beat Generation.

Lastly, I will draw conclusions of my research, and include an appendix with images of some important documents.

III. American Postwar Context and the Beat Generation

The context of production of the letter and of the emergence of what would be later known as the Beat Generation should be studied taking into account two different but complementary moments in the history of the United States of America. On the one hand, the context in which most of the future members of this generation were born and raised: the decade of the 1920's and, particularly, from the 1930's onward in the period of years known as the "Great Depression". This ultimately worldwide phenomenon had its beginning in the United States with the major fall of stock prices between September and October, 1929, and "[S]ince the USA concentrated its operations in Europe and the western hemisphere (...) their impact on Europe was decisive" (Hobsbawm, 1995: 97). As a result, "[I]nvestments declined, businesses failed, stores and factories closed, banks collapsed, unemployment soared—from 5 million in 1930 to 13 million in 1932" (Reeves, 1999: 101), leading to the worst economic recession in modern times for the Western world. Apart from losing their jobs, many Americans lost their savings and any possibility of credit while the industry also fell in big scale (Hobsbawm, 1995: 91–93). In this regard, for instance, Neal Cassady's mentioned autobiography –*The First Third*– gives account of his childhood during these tough years. In it, he expresses that the Depression implied not only the need to move from one city to another in pursuit of a better economic situation but eventually living in a shared room with his alcoholic father and someone else for a dollar a week. Furthermore, his memories as a kid include the narration of his visits to charity organisations that fed people without means: "I learned eventually that almost all of them were alcoholics, and many of them suffered a great deal from the disease, but there were also several old-age pensioners and other indifferently bunched younger men who were down on their luck because of the Depression" (Cassady, 2006: 56).

On the other hand, we should mention the context of economic recovery and reorganisation of the social order after the American victorious outcome in the Second World War, which resulted in a high degree of political and social self-esteem, and an individual self-confidence (Bell, 2004). Unlike Europe, as during the military conflict the United States "had suffered no damage, [it] increased its G.N.P. by two thirds and ended the war with almost two thirds of the world's industrial production" (Hobsbawm, 1995: 258). Moreover, the postwar period, which implied a consolidation and growth of

the economical achievements of the working-class during the war (Lipset and Raab, 1981: 239), also “endorsed a mythology of national unity” (Vlagopoulos, 2007: 51). As a result, the effects of the economical prosperity strengthened a conformist attitude towards the established order in a big part of the society. This industrial outburst should also be read along with the Cold War phenomenon, a non-declared and indirect conflict between the two most important representatives of antagonistic economic systems: United States’ capitalism and the communist regime of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics. Despite the dormant menace of a major war with nuclear technology, and taking into account the outcome of the First World War and its following years, “the postwar plans of the US government were far more concretely concerned with preventing another Great Slump than with preventing another war” (Hobsbawm, 1995: 230). Regarding armed conflicts, though, military action would not cease during the following years as both the American and the Soviet powers would intervene in social and political conflicts in several countries, fostering or avoiding both uprisings and political emancipations. In relation to inner politics, the rejection to any communist ideology became clear with the rise of the figure of the Republican senator Joseph McCarthy in 1947, who reflected the incipient conservative turn of the American society that aimed to preserve the thriving state of things, especially concerning individual economies but also regarding aesthetic values and ideas, diversities and rights.

The recovery of jobs, of a household economy and of a new possibility of projecting an “American dream” were values that imposed as imperative in those families and homes that found their rearrangement after the comeback of the ex-service men. As figures show, this praise of the recovery of the “household traditional order” was expressed in the raise in number of marriages and birth-rates at lower ages in comparison to previous years (Reeves, 1999). For its part, while this big percentage of the heads of household had been experiencing the horrors of the war and while the women had begun to do jobs traditionally done by men, an important part of the youth that had remained in American ground had begun experiencing a cultural exchange with no previous precedents. In the years that followed the war a young culture emerged whose experiences were “opposed to the boring adult world of work, money and responsibility” (Russell, 2002: 7). The relaxed parental control experienced during the previous years had fostered the development of “a history of subcultures. From junkies to bikers, gays to juvenile delinquents, and African-Americans to immigrants,

America's population was split between the normal majority and the deviant minority" (Russell, 2002: 9). The members of what was to be called "Beat Generation" participated, to a greater or a lesser degree, in this important exchange among outcasts of the social order. Moreover, with the increasing advertising and television industry, this "new America" of the postwar years reflected the acceptance of the given order and "demanded not thrift but profligacy, an ethic of consumption, not production" (Hrebeniak, 2006: 3). As a result, this young generation expressed a rejection of the behaviour models depicted in the television advertisements and, in this regard, their aim "was to avoid being or becoming consumers [and] to rebel (...) against the culture of advertising and consumption that threatened to destroy the feeling self" (Karl, 2004: 49). Having experienced a tough childhood due to the unexpected and uncalculated effects of the Depression, most of these postwar young people were reluctant to trust in the prospects of a prosperous life, which was to be achieved adjusting the behaviour to the mentioned values of patriarchal family –and gender and sexuality–, responsibility, money, work and consumerism.

Oposing to this conformist attitude,⁹ this "alienated youth was attempting to validate himself (or herself) in a society which, in his or her perception, emphasized the counterfeit" (Karl, 2004: 32). Consequently, they found their own spaces of joy meeting in common environments –such as "coffeehouses, bars, restaurants, jazz clubs, and parks in urban bohemian enclaves" (Starr, 2004: 45)–, or even through personal practises: "[L]istening to or playing music, dancing, taking drugs, meditating, chanting, or praying, some participants experienced an alternative place without physically travelling at all, a space free of alienation" (Hale, 2011: 6). These encounters and activities led to cultural productions that depicted the collision, at least symbolically, of very diverse styles, topics and even characters that came from different roots: "junkies, mystics, hoboes (...) and sexual deviants: underground habitués whose refusal of bourgeois standards traditionally undertook a less visible course" (Hrebeniak, 2006: 10). Their common denominator was the expression of a rebel attitude towards the mainstream and social order that was to be found in a very varied range of genres and arts and, in fact, they "developed a sensibility that regarded marginal status not as a failing but as an asset" (Belgrad, 1998: 197). With the emergence of new musical subgenres such as bebop jazz, the painting movement of the abstract expressionism, and

⁹ In this regard, a clear example of mid-century conformism may be found in towns where governments and companies built thousands of identical houses (Lawlor, 2005).

in films such as *The Wild One* (László Benedek, 1953), *Rebel Without a Cause* (Nicholas Ray, 1955) and *Shadows* (John Cassavetes, 1959), “[T]his brand of ’50’s culture represented a counter-hegemonic rebellion, a rejection of a society dominated by racial segregation and suburban isolation” (Quinn, 2004: 152).

Due to their opposition to “normality”, most of the artistic expressions of this generation were even pejoratively labelled as “mad”. In this regard, the mindset of this generation purposely included the pursuit of a madness aesthetic,¹⁰ because “[M]adness is good, bad, or pushing the edge, intense and rebellious, a symptom of existential despair, speeding confusion, or ecstatic and mystical joy. Above all, madness stands in opposition to parental and social expectations, the establishment of a career, a suburban home, and a family—adult responsibilities” (Hale, 2011: 76). Having witnessed both the effects of the Depression and bombs exploding entire cities while new wars appeared to be ready to take place (what the Korean War immediately confirmed), this generation’s attitude profaned the expected behaviour in different spaces of order. Regarding urban, public and institutional centres, then, “[C]riminality, obscenity, and madness were, for the Beats, a necessary phase of personal, artistic, and spiritual development; and ultimately, these represented a mode of opposing the organized and collective criminality, the obscenity and madness of war, and the other social forms of human destructiveness” (Stephenson, 2009: 9).

In the literary field, the Beat Generation was definitely the most prominent movement in the American postwar years. Although there is a certain extent of controversy regarding the definite origin of their denomination (Skerl and Starr, 2004; Weinreich, 2004), the first published text that refers directly to this literary movement is John Clellon Holmes’ “This is the Beat Generation”, which appeared in *The New York Times Magazine* on 16th November, 1952. In it, Clellon Holmes distinguishes this generation from another important American literary movement of the 20th century, the “Lost Generation”, which also emerged following an important war. In this regard, he argues the Beat Generation is not “lost” but, on the contrary, in a deep and constant

¹⁰ The celebrated first verse of Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl* refers the centrality that the term occupied in the everyday discourse: “I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets looking for an angry fix...” (Ginsberg, 2007: 152). Interestingly, as Eric Hobsbawm points out, “M.A.D.” was the acronym for the “mutually assured destruction” regarding the United States and the USSR, the only warning that prevented “one side or the other from giving the ever-ready signal for the planned suicide of civilization” (1995: 226). The narrator of *On the Road*, for its part, states “the only people that interest me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones that never yawn or say a commonplace thing.. but burn, burn, burn like roman candles across the night” (Kerouac, 2007a: 96).

quest: “[T]heir excursions into drugs or promiscuity come out of curiosity, not disillusionment. (...) unlike the Lost Generation, which was occupied with the loss of faith, the Beat Generation is becoming more and more occupied with the need of it” (Clellon Holmes, 1952). Moreover, he states that the term “beat” was coined by Jack Kerouac, and explores its different connotations:

More than a mere weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of oneself. A man is beat whenever he goes for broke and wagers the sum of his resources on a single number; and the young generation has done that continually from early youth. (Clellon Holmes, “*This is the Beat Generation*”)

Their very name symbolised, then, the common identity and feelings of these young people towards the given order, as “beat came to signify (...) a combination of both exhaustion and empowerment” (Russell, 2002: 11). The term, in this regard, gathers different meanings associated to the poetics of the movement: “beaten” (as they were affected by history and norms of behaviour), “beatific” (due to their spiritual interests and quest for liberation), and in association to the rhythm pattern.¹¹ Consequently, their aesthetic included specific themes and topics communicated with a very defined style both in prose as in poetry (and often fusing one with the other). Regarding their themes, as Gregory Stephenson suggests,

The Beats wrote directly out of personal perception and imagination on everyday themes and objects, on the forbidden and the taboo, and on the sublime and the sacred; (...) they exploited the rhythms and imagery and emotive power of the colloquial and the vernacular; they tapped the visions of the unconscious mind; they explored open form and organic form; they experimented with the relation of the written word to speech, to music, and to sound; and they inquired into the magical properties of language as incantation and mantra. The Beats enlarged the conceptions and extended the boundaries of literary expression. (2009: 15)

Go (Clellon Holmes, 1952), *Howl and Other Poems* (Ginsberg, 1956), *On the Road* (Kerouac, 1957), *Junkie* and *Naked Lunch* (Burroughs, 1953 and 1959) and *The New American Poetry* (edited by Donald Allen in 1960), which were responsible for

¹¹ Remarkably, the use of the word appears soon in Neal Cassady’s epistolary production. In a letter to Allen Ginsberg from the 20th March, 1947, he declares: “Allen, forgive me, but I must break off now. I have been really busy these last few days and haven’t had any rest; (...) I am completely beat, causing my fluctuations in thought I think” (Cassady, 2004: 26). Furthermore, in a letter from prison to Father Harley Schmidt, in 1958, he reflects on these different values that the term can coin: “‘Beat’ is not being in despair, down & out or some other such starkly negative state of mind &/or body as various authors of articles (...) would have us believe, but is rather the corruption of the word ‘Beatific’ which, despite, or because of, it signifying the highest type vision of infused contemplation, Kerouac (...) had appropriated for use as applying to certain contemporary freaks who, with him, firmly believed that it, the VISION, could be approached” (Cassady, 1993: 36).

providing the Beat Generation with public recognition (Skerl, 2004), explore most of these topics and give account of experiences related to them. Furthermore, “Howl” and *Naked Lunch* were also famous due to the controversy they provoked, which led to respective trials for “obscenity” (Raskin, 2004). Some of the common denominators of the Beat texts are, then, the search of liberating experiences from the regular expectations of society and the quest for the “true self”, exploring its limits via philosophical and religious activity, through the experimentation with drugs, and both in American and overseas geographies (Martínez, 2003). Taking into account that “[M]ovement, both outward and inward, physical and metaphysical, was the guiding principle of the Beats” (Stephenson, 2009: 12), an account of this can be immediately recognised, for instance, in Clellon Holmes’ novel’s title,¹² in the trips depicted in Kerouac’s “road novels”, and even considering the different spaces and geographies in which Burroughs composed the fragments of his 1959 novel.¹³ The personality of these young people was so defined and appealing that, according to Grace Hale, even white middle-class identified with these outsiders, because they “enabled [them] to cut themselves free of their own social origins and their own stories and in identifying with these others to imaginatively regain what they understood as previously lost values and feelings” (2011: 3).

Regarding their literary devices, as it can be read in most of their texts, the Beats “cultivated extreme forms of artistic expression, employed radically experimental techniques, and broke the fetters of established taste, literary decorum, and legal censorship” (Stephenson, 2009: 7). Taking into account different literary traditions such as the avant-garde and the modernist movements from the 1920’s and the 1930’s, they intended to produce forms that could express both the speed with which they experienced life and their liberated self from the expected patterns. In this way, because it “removes the process of meaning-making from the isolated individual and hands it to an interactive collectivity” (Quinn, 2004: 156) to “[critique] hegemonic postwar passivity while simultaneously fighting its effects” (154), like Surrealism, the Beats explored improvisatory forms because they aimed to convey the “unprocessed” emotions and thoughts that came from their deepest self. In this regard, the spoken-like tone of both the Beat prose and poetry aimed to convey these essential truths in an

¹² “Go”, an imperative for displacement, was the word that, according, Kerouac, Neal Cassady shouted when listening to jazz (Charters and Charters, 2010).

¹³ The fragments included in *Naked Lunch* were produced in United States, Mexico and Tangier.

immediate, plain, and therefore honest way that opposed to the “phony” conventional structures. Closely related to this improvisational feature, one of their most distinctive literary devices in prose works was the “spontaneous” style, a writing technique that aimed to express the flow of the mind without the disturbances of “selectivity”, integrating conscious and unconscious experience (Belgrad, 1998).

As we will later see in detail, Neal Cassady’s letter gathers many of these postwar themes, gives account of life in urban and suburban spaces, and expresses them with a spoken-like spontaneous flow that would be distinctive of the texts of the Beat Generation.

IV. Neal Cassady's *autofictional project*

Neal Cassady's texts are very revealing of the existential struggles he had throughout his whole life. If we take into account that they are narratives "which [have] a strictly autobiographical subject matter (certified by the nominal shared identity between author, narrator and main character), but whose manner, that is the narrative organization and stylistic craft, is novel-like" (Doubrovsky, qtd. in Ferreira-Meyers, 2018: 28), all of Neal Cassady's mentioned writings could be considered "autofictions". Moreover, Hywel Dix adds that this type of fiction constitute "a project of self-exploration and self-experimentation on the part of the author" that takes place after some traumatic experience (2018: 4). Having directly experienced the effects of the Depression, living an almost orphan existence since he was ten years old and serving time in reformatories and jails, his childhood, youth and adulthood were undoubtedly traumatic, and he soon realised that the subject of his writing project could (or should) be his own life. In this regard, we can argue that Neal Cassady's writings are part of an *autofictional project* that he developed during his whole life. I will now consider the composition of this project, and reflect on the three main functions of its texts: as a liberating and cathartic practise, as a medium to experiment, improve and develop a personal style, and as a channel to create a determined character for himself.

Neal Cassady's interest regarding writing his own life is early mentioned in a letter to Kerouac from March, 1947. In it, Cassady comments his will of writing an autobiography in the next two months and its aim, he declares, would be "to help me evaluate all I have done and what to do with it. This task, I hope, will also free me of my background lack of freedom from Denver and all the confused trash I've accumulated here" (Cassady, 2004: 29). We can immediately sense the spirit of liberation that writing, and particularly writing an autobiography, means to him. At the same time, by sharing his idea with his friend he registers and *signs* his intention to himself, compromising to do it (which he effectively did, although in an incomplete way). In another letter to Kerouac from the 25th December of the same year, he states he is devoted to writing not only these "early recollections of [his] life" (Cassady, 2004: 66) but also a daily journal. Though there are no registers of it, he includes some "entries" in another letter to Kerouac from June, 1948, after a period of six months in which, extremely occupied with his work duties, he did not write to him (Moore, 2004).

In any case, all these writings concerning his own life are related to letter writing itself, his most personal, profuse and constant type of written production. In this regard, if writing implied a cathartic way of expressing and processing his memories, his emotions and his existential struggles, the letter was his preferred medium to do it. We can sense his affection to them in some of his earliest productions. For instance, in a letter to Justin Brierly¹⁴ from the reformatory in November, 1944, he states: “Early this month I received your gift of a delicious box of candy, then came your subtle letter, and lastly, *The Spotlight*; of the 3 I believe I enjoyed the letter most. Thanks & Thanks” (Cassady, 2004: 6).

Apart from communicating with others, expressing his emotions and exploring his past memories, Neal wrote letters to improve and experiment with his writing in order to develop a personal style. In another letter to Brierly he comments on the opinion he has of his own writing, showing a certain degree of worry on it: “I feel gratified to know you have noticed my improvement in letter writing, but it’s evidently not a permanent improvement, as is attested to by my last one” (Cassady, 2004: 7). In this regard, in the years that follow, Jack Kerouac will be extremely important for his writing project, as he will reveal as the perfect “pen pal”. Taking into account Kerouac’s concrete projects of fiction and the later publishing of *The Town and the City* in 1950, he will eventually become a standard for comparison of Neal’s style, of which he gives account in several missives.

Regarding the character built in his own letters, Claudio Guillén states that “each one shapes in letters an image of his or her personality” (1991a: 36) and that “epistolary writing is a process that may always trigger fictionalising impulses in the author” (38). As Neal Cassady had “to endure a skid row childhood that taught him to use his natural quickness of mind and body to survive, adapt, and exploit every opportunity that came his way” (Sandison and Vickers, 2006: 10), several letters depict his childhood and teenage years, give account of his outcast character and express his life experiences and street knowledge. In this regard, the most frequent themes included in the missives that deal with an autobiographical matter are his sexual experiences,¹⁵ his petty or otherwise

¹⁴ Justin Brierly was a prominent educator from Denver.

¹⁵ One of his most celebrated letters is the “Great Sex Letter” (written in March, 1947), a missive praised by Kerouac in which Neal narrates the seduction of two women and describes sexual episodes in a park.

crimes,¹⁶ his love for music, literature and driving cars,¹⁷ his use of recreational drugs,¹⁸ his persuasive character and his sensibility. Moreover, the energetic literary techniques employed in his letters –a spontaneous style, a spoken-like expression full of colloquialisms– supported this “amoral, feisty, funny and frantic” (Sandison and Vickers, 2006: xi) character. As a result, and strictly related to the Beat aesthetic, “[H]is hyperactivity, his driving, his quick reactions, his fleeting enthusiasms all point to the same ideal conception of experience: the world is moving and so is the self. Each thing, person, idea, situation appears within the consciousness only to be rapidly displaced by the next one” (Lindberg, 2010: 142).

The image Neal Cassady built in his correspondence and performed in his real life would be depicted mainly throughout the literature of the 1950’s and the 1960’s. Jack Kerouac, his most important confidant and probably his favourite addressee, would be the author to exploit his character the most. In this regard, the very beginning of *On the Road*, for instance, gives account of not only Neal/Dean’s messianic condition (Ingram, 2016), but also associates him to letter writing in terms of myth or legend:

With the coming of Neal there really began for me that part of my life that you could call my life on the road. (...) Neal is 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. First reports of Neal came to me through Hal Chase, who’d shown me a few letters from him written in a Colorado reform school. I was tremendously interested in these letters because they so naively and sweetly asked for Hal to teach him all about Nietzsche and all the wonderful intellectual things that Hal was so justly famous for. At one point Allen Ginsberg and I talked about these letters and wondered if we would ever meet the strange Neal Cassady. (Kerouac, 2007a: 93)

Apart from presenting “a faint echo of the Christ story, that of a great spiritual soul born in the humblest of conditions in a place apart from any conventional home” (Grace, 2007: 81),¹⁹ this beginning is relevant because it connects the main characters of the novel –Jack Kerouac/Sal Paradise and Neal Cassady/Dean Moriarty– through letter writing. In this respect, it is important to mention that the most frequent epistolary

¹⁶ In a very important letter to Kerouac started the 3rd July, 1949, he gives account of “a brief history of arrests” and even states: “I stole over five hundred cars in the period from 1940 to 1944. I was caught but three times for cars. Good average you see, no cause for obsession” (Cassady, 2004: 123).

¹⁷ In the missive that follows the “Joan Anderson Letter”, Neal Cassady declares Kerouac his “three chief desires: writing, music and driving. Most of my mind is taken up with these activities, and except for 24 hours of sex a day I don’t give a damn for anything else” (Cassady, 2004: 259–260).

¹⁸ In many letters written throughout his life, Neal describes the use of drugs, mainly Benzadrine and marijuana. In some of them, he even demands his addressees that they get or send him some.

¹⁹ As Sandison and Vickers point out, this is just part of the myth surrounding his biography. According to their research, Neal was born in Salt Lake County General, a regular ward of a hospital, in relatively normal conditions.

exchange between Neal and Jack took place between 1947 –the year following their first meeting– and 1951 –the year in which Kerouac rewrote the draft of his most acclaimed novel. Moreover, the quote also shows the degree up to which Kerouac drew from Neal’s personality and popularised it, providing a mythical character for it. Initially being a referred *voice* for him, this “nebulous, fast-talking, car-jacking, streetwise womanizer, newly married and fresh out of the reformatory (...) was thus immediately established in Kerouac’s mind as the consummate ‘outsider,’ an embodiment of uncompromising individuality, someone who appealed to Kerouac’s own sense of sociocultural displacement” (Mouratidis, 2007: 64).

Therefore, we should read the “Joan Anderson Letter” in the context of Neal Cassady’s creation of this *autofictional project*, with all these different functions. Taking it as an example due to its literary relevance within his epistolary production, we will be able to see how, apart from his character, his own texts depicted most of the themes and concerns of the Beat Generation while expressing them with a style that would then become one of its distinctive features. By taking into account the events narrated and the way in which they are presented, we will also be able to assess the impact it had on Jack Kerouac, the major figure of this movement in prose. Before doing so, we will first detail some features regarding its story and, being an unknown text, summarise its content.

V. 1. “The Beats’ Holy Grail”: A history

As different people manipulated it throughout several years, the history of the “Joan Anderson Letter” is complex in numerous aspects. In the first place, we should mention that there are two different texts associated with it: on the one hand, an *edited and published excerpt* of it from 1964 and, on the other hand, the recently found *original manuscript*, which is the one I will analyse.

Until 2017, there was only available a 5100-word published excerpt of the letter which, unluckily, does not match accurately the same fragment in the complete text. As Dave Moore states, “[I]t would appear that [this] portion of the letter had been copied, probably by Kerouac, before it was lost” (2004: 244). Curiously, though Neal Cassady himself helped the editor do it (Moore, 2004: 430), this “only surviving fragment” of the letter was first published under the name “The First Third” in the first number of John Bryan’s literary magazine *Notes From Underground*, in 1964.²⁰ It was then included as an addendum in the second edition of *The First Third* (City Lights, 1972) and in Ann Charter’s *The Portable Beat Reader* (1992) and, since then, it has been referred to as the mythical “Joan Anderson Letter”. Its fragmentary condition, for its part, only added mystery and mythic splendour to the story. The footnote of the fragment published in *Notes From Underground* explains that

Here is all that remains of Neal Cassady’s fabulous 13,000-word letter to Jack Kerouac, a letter which inspired much of ‘On the Road’ in which Neal was portrayed as Dean Moriarty. The letter was written in the late 1940’s and contains portions of a novel which Neal was to call ‘The First Third.’ Kerouac’s reply follows. (1964)

Apart from some erroneous information,²¹ there are a few problems with the fragment published so far, the main one being the incomplete reading of Neal Cassady’s most important writing. In his study “The Need for Neal: The Importance of Neal Cassady in the work of Jack Kerouac” (2016), Sydney Ingram has deeply analysed this published fragment of the letter, and David Sandison and Graham Vickers also dedicate some pages to it in their biography about Neal Cassady (2006). Regarding the general structure of this fragment, these biographers argue that “[there] is personal adventure

²⁰ The name of the magazine evidently paid homage to Fiodor Dostoievsky’s homonymous book, which was published a hundred years before, in 1864. The Russian writer was a strong influence for the Beat Generation and, particularly, for Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes, who referred to him in their letters.

²¹ The letter was written on December, 1950. Besides, if we take into account its style and the life period it covers, it is difficult to believe it was to be part of his autobiography.

recounted in vital, associative prose that creates the written equivalent of Neal telling the story in person. At the same time it has a literary quality –a shape and a tone– that while not perhaps that of traditional narrative, nonetheless conveys a sense of having been structured for artistic effect” (197–198).

Unfortunately, because it was the only published and available excerpt of the text, these researchers have been reading and referring to this edited copy of the actual letter. The fragment published thus far begins with the sentence: “To have seen a specter isn’t everything, and there are deathmasks piled, one atop the other, clear to heaven...” (Cassady, 2006: 146). Although it shares some original content, it has two faults: on the one hand, the beginning, the general contextualisation and the ending of the main narrative are missing (which compose roughly the half of the total document). On the other hand, having been edited, the remaining text of this published excerpt lacks the verbose digressions typical of Neal, in which he experimented with words, sounds and rhythm patterns in a spontaneous way.²² In this regard, it would seem that the epistolary elements from the original text were removed and that it was consequently adapted to resemble a short-story-like narrative.

Fortunately, the *original manuscript* has been found and, although it has not been officially published yet, it may be actually read requesting a copy to the university library that holds it. Written in December 1950, the history of the subsequent *route* of the letter, the fact that it was lost and has recently been found, is itself complicated. Summarising, delighted with its frantic and confessional style, between 1951 and 1952 both Jack Kerouac and Allen Ginsberg intended to publish it, which was agreed by Neal Cassady himself and even suggested that he could “polish it if necessary” (Cassady, 2004: 323). Therefore, Allen Ginsberg sent a package containing the letter and some other manuscripts to Gerd Stern, a poet and friend from San Francisco, assessing he would be able to get it published due to his contacts in Ace Books (*Golden Goose*, 7). According to Ginsberg and Kerouac, Stern lost the letter. However, throughout the 1990’s on, Stern publicly claimed that after receiving and unsuccessfully trying to get it published, he returned the whole package to Ginsberg. It is possible that, after receiving it back, Ginsberg himself sent it to Richard Wirtz Emerson, who owned a publishing company in Sausalito, California –Golden Goose Press– in 1952.

²² In general terms, it could be argued that all the long parentheses and digressions from the original document have been removed.

Probably losing interest in it, Emerson closed his publishing company sometime between 1954 and 1955, and was then employed in a radio network, located at 40 Gold Street, San Francisco, where he took his old Golden Goose Press belongings. Eventually, Emerson and his partner were forced to close their business, leave the place and vacate the office (*Golden Goose*, 7). Jack Spinosa, his tenant and friend, who had shared an office with Emerson's radio business, demanded if, instead of throwing all the unpublished manuscripts that were in the storage boxes, he could rather keep them, to which Emerson accepted. When in 2011 Spinosa passed away, his daughter called an antiques-seller to assess if the items his father had in his house were worth something. Among the objects were the Golden Goose boxes and inside them, surprisingly, the so long-lost mythical letter. After identifying some suggestive names –an envelope containing both the names “A. Ginsberg” and “Mr. Neal Cassady”– and gathering some textual evidence –the salutation of the letter referring to a “Dear Jack”, and a drawing of a window referred by Kerouac in the famous *The Paris Review* interview–, they could confirm they were in front of one of the most important documents in the history of the 20th century literature.

What happened after finding these papers is an entirely different story, which had plenty of mixed interests for the publishing rights by different parties. On the one hand, Jean Spinosa claimed the letter was hers as it was among her father's items; on the other hand, Neal Cassady's estate claimed that being a manuscript they owned the rights of the words; finally, Jack Kerouac's estate claimed that being the letter addressed to him, they owned the rights of publishing it. After the impossibility of reaching an agreement, the missive was acquired by the Emory University's Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives and Rare Book Library in the third organised auction²³ in March, 2017. Since then, it is available to researchers and can be consulted by requesting a payable copy to the library.²⁴

²³ The first one was cancelled due to the disagreement both on Neal Cassady's and Jack Kerouac's estates. The second one, organised by Christie's in 2016, was not able to find a buyer as its bid had a minimum of \$400,000. The Emory University finally acquired it for \$206,250 in a third auction. More than half of its price was divided among the rights holders (Ulin, 2018).

²⁴ As of July, 2020, for a ten-dollar fee, the Library sends the requester a scanned copy of the whole letter by email, including an extra sheet with Neal's account of his teenage sexual experiences in Denver that are not related to the narrative concerning Joan Anderson. The letter is expected to be edited sometime.

V. 2. The Document: Materiality and Overview

V. 2. A. The Materiality of the Document

The recently discovered letter consists of eighteen yellowy typewritten pages (nine sheets of paper), with its corresponding number between brackets on the upper side of each one. It has some handwritten annotations and the celebrated drawing of the window referred to by Kerouac (in page “13”). Some parts of the text (especially its misspellings) are edited, crossed out (normally using the letter “x”), and amended when necessary. Curiously, there is a handwritten arrow on page “9” which points to a paragraph that begins with the words: “To have seen a spectre isn’t everything, one does it semi-annually, and there are deathmasks piled, one atop the other, clear to heaven...”²⁵ (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”).²⁶ This suggests that, for some reason, that paragraph was relevant in the later transcription and edition of the letter, before its first fragmentary publishing in *Notes From Underground*.

In addition to this typewritten document, there is a “double-sided handwritten addendum of December 22 [that is] preserved in the Ginsberg Archives at Columbia University” (Moore, 2004: 244), which is included in the edition of Neal Cassady’s *Collected Letters, 1947–1967* (255). The whole text, then, consists of the eighteen-page typewritten pages of the unpublished document plus this addendum from the 22nd December. Regarding its date of writing, its first page indicates that the letter was started on “Dec, 17, 50”, although it was mailed on 23rd December, right after adding the additional handwritten sheet.

The document acquired by the Library of the Emory University also includes, apart from the eighteen typewritten pages, an extra sheet that narrates Neal Cassady’s teenage experiences in Denver,²⁷ particularly related to sex, but that does not relate to any of the events depicted in the “Joan Anderson Letter” and is not even numbered. This page was probably intended to be sent to John Clellon Holmes, to whom Neal was writing in those weeks mainly recalling his teenage years –as it can be seen in his letters from 20th

²⁵ Although it is not the purpose of this Master’s thesis to study in detail the register of variations between the two texts, a simple glance to both quotes prove the inexactitude of them, as the words “one does it semi-annually” are missing in the edited and published excerpt of the letter.

²⁶ From now on, whenever I quote the original manuscript I will respect the way in which Neal Cassady wrote the text (including misspellings and ungrammatical sentences), but I will separate some words that, due to the typing, were kept together, unless it is the desired effect of Cassady’s writing.

²⁷ This text begins with the sentence “Curtis st. from 16th to 26th was my route”.

November and 7th December (Cassady, 2004)– or probably meant to be included in his autobiography. The other side of this extra sheet corresponds to a handwritten letter sent by one “Michael”²⁸ to an anonymous addressee, dated “Sat Oct 6/45, Korea”, which was probably used as Neal ran out of paper to write in. When I analyse the “Joan Anderson Letter”, I will purposely not take into account this extra sheet, as it does not correspond to the narrations included in the main missive.

V. 2. B. Context and Overview of the Content of the Letter

It is useful now to advance a general outlook of the context of production of the letter as well as an overview of its content –which will be analysed in detail in another section of this research. Given its length and that it has several digressions which may be confusing for the further analysis, this general summary may contribute to keep the track of the narration.

As we have pointed out, the letter was written between the 17th and the 22nd December, 1950. Apart from Carolyn Robinson Cassady,²⁹ with whom he had two daughters –Cathy and Jamie–, by that time Neal had already begun an affair and married Diana Hansen Cassady,³⁰ even though his divorce from Carolyn had proven invalid. In November, 1950, Diana had given birth to a son with Neal, Curtis, and was expecting him in New York to begin a new family life. In this period of family reorganisation, Neal was travelling to any place that could offer him a job opportunity and, hopefully, make his economy stable. Having trouble to get a steady job, Neal eventually moved in back to Carolyn’s, with whom he was secretly projecting a new future together. In this regard, the letter begins with a full page (“1”) of salutation and general contextualisation of what Neal has been doing since he has been “cut off” work. As he was committed to sending money to Diana as well as supporting his current home at Carolyn’s, he expresses his consequent money problems, especially in relation to his travel plans with Kerouac. He also mentions having stayed twice at Al and Helen Hinkle’s home, where he reread Melville’s *Moby Dick*. After commenting some

²⁸ Jerry Cimino has argued he may have been Neal and Carolyn’s landlord.

²⁹ Carolyn Robinson was a postgraduate candidate at the University of Denver that Neal had met through a friend. They soon moved in together and later married, in April, 1948 (Moore, 2004: 46).

³⁰ Neal met fashion model and writer Diana Hansen at a party in late 1949, and married her in July, 1950 (Moore, 2004: 129). After LuAnne Henderson, whom he met and married with in 1946, and Carolyn Robinson, Diana was Neal’s third wife.

reflections he has towards this novel and writing a whole paragraph with a wordplay consisting of nicknaming different writers, page “2” begins the story that gives name to the letter, which runs up to page “18” and includes sub-narratives that depend on it. The main story of the letter, which takes place in Denver in December, 1945 (six months after his release from Colorado State Reformatory), begins with Neal telling his meeting a girl –Mary Lou Berle– and setting up a visit to her hotel, to which he attends the next day with a soldier named Kenneth Collins, a friend of a friend. When he arrives, he meets Mary Lou and the celebrated Joan Anderson, a nineteen-year-old pregnant girl who, according to Neal, resembles the actress Jennifer Jones.³¹ The four of them rush to a bar, where Joan and Neal begin to get closer. When they return to Kenneth’s hotel, after spending his money, the young soldier kicks the girls out and Neal leaves with them. As a result, Joan gets money from a taxi-driver that has a fatherly attitude towards her, and the three of them hire a room in an apartment. There, while Mary Lou goes out looking for men, Neal and Joan organise a future together.

After some days in his usual routine, Neal realises his plans with Joan are not plausible. For that reason, he goes back to the room to speak with her and cancel further plans together, which deeply upsets the girl. When Neal is taking a bath, Mary Lou enters the bathroom telling him Joan is distressed due to his cancelling, and intends to fistfight with him. Neal then goes to speak to Joan again, and she tells him she understands the situation. But when he returns to the bathroom, Mary Lou begins a scandal as they find that, in an attempt to commit suicide, Joan had drunk a chemical and was trying to jump off the window. A sailor Mary Lou had taken to the room prevents her from jumping, and she is taken to a hospital. After a couple of days, he visits Joan at the hospital, but stops visiting her again.

Some days later, while he is at a pool hall he frequents, Neal receives the visit of a woman who takes him to her home. There, Neal finds the taxi-driver –the woman’s husband– and Joan herself, fully recovered despite having lost her baby. The four of them make plans to find a job for Neal and to make Joan study nursery. When he realises he does not have clean clothes for the interview settled for the next morning, Neal leaves to find some in a friend’s house. In page “12”, Neal refers that after getting the clothes, he meets his brother by chance drinking alone in a bar, and joins him. His

³¹ Jennifer Jones was a famous award-winner actress that starred in notable films such as *The Song of Bernadette* (Henry King, 1943), *Love Letters* (William Dieterle, 1945), *Stazioni Termini* (Vittorio de Sica, 1953) and *Love is a Many-Splendored Thing* (Henry King, 1955).

brother calls a girl Neal knew and dated, "Cherry Mary", which leads him to the narration of his story with her.

In this first digression, Neal tells the story of knowing this sixteen-year-old girl, with whom he starts a five-month relationship in June, 1945, immediately after leaving Colorado State Reformatory. Page "13" describes in detail how sexual their relationship was, and includes a very specific episode in which Neal was trapped in a bathroom (for which purpose he draws a window with detailed measure references, to explain Kerouac how difficult was for him to escape). Neal tells that, feeling concerned due to the conduct her daughter presented since dating him, this girl's mother organises a dinner and gets a priest lecture him. When the religious man arrives to the dinner, he finds out he is Neal's godfather and shows extremely happy by finding him. In a private conversation, however, Neal tells him that, being so different, there is no use in trying to build a relationship, and leaves. His second digression involves narrating a temporary state of blindness this girl presented occasionally.

Resuming his story with his brother, Neal gives account of how two police officers arrive at the bar and question him regarding some crime accusations he has. Neal finds out that, because they knew he was at the bar with his brother, "Cherry Mary" and her mother called the police to get him arrested. The police officers take him to jail. There, a sergeant explains him he is accused of three different crimes, and he remains in jail until the 2nd January, 1946. Page "17" includes a short description of his stay in prison, detailing the state of some prisoners and describing an experience of a Protestant Church service trying to deliver their message to the convicts. In the last page of the document, number "18", Neal promises not to be in jail again, and narrates his last encounter with Joan Anderson, who began dating several men. After rushing through this last story, Neal says goodbye to him, sending him and his mother his regards for Christmas.

In the published handwritten addendum (Cassady, 2004: 255), Neal includes a clipping from the San Francisco News of the 18th December, 1950, reporting "a miscarriage by Jennifer Jones", the actress to whom he compares Joan Anderson. It is interesting to point out that right after mentioning the coincidence of the event the clipping conveyed, he reflects on the style of the letter and the effect it may provoke to its readers if ever published. Promising to join him in January, Neal finishes this note hoping Jack Kerouac is able to decipher his calligraphy and, once again, wishing him a merry Christmas.

VI. In Search of Lost Style

In the “Joan Anderson Letter”, Neal Cassady gives account of his young adult life experiences in a way that opposed and defied social, moral and artistic conventions. Anticipating some methods that would be characteristic of the Beat Generation, in a letter to Allen Ginsberg, Neal admitted he wrote it *fuelled* by the use of stimulant drugs: “the damn thing took up the better part of three straight Benzedrine afternoons and evenings” (Cassady, 2004: 286). As a result, apart from its length being a letter,³² the characteristics of this text are its oral and informal tone, its rawness and, stylistically, its rhythm, sonority and its spontaneous form, which is reflected in its numerous digressions and in some frantic passages, frequently using some misspellings or even his typing mistakes.

Focusing on some revealing passages, I will now proceed to analyse the content and the style of the letter in order to illustrate that many of the distinctive elements that would define the Beat aesthetic are already present in it. I will first give account of the thematic elements that reflect this generation’s concerns, and then I will focus on the literary devices that Neal Cassady adopted to depict them. As I have already stated in a footnote, I will quote the text the way it was written, leaving its misspellings and every original element (its vocabulary, its grammar constructions and its interjections), as they reflect its context of production.

VI. A. Raw Emotion, Naked Confession: Beat Themes and Topics

As Jamie Russell states, “[R]ejecting normal society, the Beats searched for ways of seeing the world differently from the rest of the herd. Madness, drugs, sex and crime all offered ways of finding a new vision of life and a new way of living” (2002: 14). The letters, the poetry and the narratives of the Beat Generation writers give account of their everyday explorations in these fields, which opposed them to the rest of the society. The episodes and descriptions included in the “Joan Anderson Letter” also depict these social taboos from Neal’s perspective. His movements through the city and his interactions with different characters allow him refer different situations that speak

³² Even though the “Joan Anderson Letter” is eighteen pages long altogether, other letters are almost as long as this one.

of this generation's views towards life but also of his personal marginal position in society.

In the first place, after a salutation in which he gives an overview of his "state of mind", Neal gives an account of his current situation: unemployed, crashing at some friends' house, with economic difficulties to support his two wives and children³³ and consequently prevented from organising the desired trip with his friend. In this regard, he describes his limitations and reveals the importance of the spirit of community with Kerouac, which he relates to his family background in the Depression times: "Dark facts I put to you; I've been cut off. I had to go to San Luis O. for the last 10 days. I earned but 180 bucks in last 5 weeks. (...) I must tomorrow find job here in SF to get money for trip. Carolyn is about to starve, as is Diana. Poverty looms big (...). If I can't have car in NY for our winter tour of sad Galloway I shall surely shed tears for first time since mother's death in 1936" (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 1). The importance Neal gives to the trip with his friend, which obviously relates to his depiction in *On the Road*, gives account of the imperative of movement of this generation. Being his present so unstable and his future so uncertain, Neal immediately rushes to his past to reflect and channel his distress on some young-adult memories while experimenting with his writing and shaping a determined character for himself. Interestingly, the facts narrated take place mostly in the second half of 1945, the exact moment when the Second World War, one of the most important historical events of the 20th century, was reaching its end.

In many of his letters from the period that goes from 1945 to 1950, Neal Cassady depicts his urban teenage experiences in Denver. The characters involved in the events he usually speaks of are mostly teenagers or young adults with a great sense of autonomy and hardly involved with parental control, who opposed to the given order and the social expectations. According to these narrations, Neal does not seem to be attached to any place, anyone and, actually, *anything*: he moves from one place to another as the –seemingly– best opportunity presents. In the "Joan Anderson Letter", for instance, his movements depend exclusively on a very concrete issue: his necessity of finding a place to spend the night and avoid the Denver winter weather which, as he states, "forced mornings in the library, afternoons in the poolroom, evenings at the bar" (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 2). As the letter unfolds, he passes from sleeping "in

³³ I am referring only to the recognised children he had with Carolyn and Diana as, apart from them, he had at least another son with a woman he dated during his teenage years.

the begrudged sanctuary of a former student's automobile" (2) and sharing a hotel with people he had just met, to showing up at the house of the sister of a friend asking for a place to sleep, and even spending nights in jail. His social and economical conditions were those of an outsider, and in the letter he represents the kind of juvenile delinquent that had emerged in the cities during the war: "poor, predominantly working-class children [who] ran riot through the streets, unafraid of their parents or the police" (Russell, 2002: 9). The contextualisation he provides shows his strategies to survive, which resemble the behaviour of the characters of picaresque novels: "I subsisted on thieved candy bars and an occasional free pop. Come evetide I attached myself to the first available group touring the taverns--preferably in a car" (2). Reflecting on his current condition, Neal introduces what seems to be a religious premonition: "On the morning of The Day I awoke in a particularly frigid state cramped upon the backseat of an unheated car. This, and the stress of the previous months of such existence almost made me decide to take off my hair shirt for awhile (...). Then this image on my mind's surface led me to recall that the day held a major event" (2). This statement announces the definite beginning of the main narrative of the letter. Following his "usual habits" – "poolhall; occasional chiseled meal, drink, car ride, show, snooker game" (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 4)– Neal meets Mary Lou Berle and, eventually, Joan Anderson.

The character that provides the name for the letter and articulates its whole content is presented as an idyllic and transcendental being, and Neal depicts seeing her with an immediate fascination. Gregory Stephenson points out that, apart from depicting everyday situations and objects, the Beats "drew upon the materials of popular culture (radio, film, pulp magazines, comics) as a contemporary mythology" (2009: 15). Thus, while she is referred to as a "vision"³⁴ (meaning either a very beautiful or even a superior being), she is immediately compared to a contemporary popular actress. Moreover, the vocabulary also employs colloquial and informal use: "I walked into the room and saw a vision. A perfect beauty of such loveliness that I forgot everything else and immediately swore to forgo all my ordinary pursuits until I made her. (...) Then I knew who she was, Jennifer Jones, only much more voluptuous with full tits and

³⁴ In relation with the visionary faculty, the Beats were interested in reaching "the truest state of things". Therefore, visions, revelations and the "liberating" effects of drugs were main interests to them, as they could help them achieve a transcendental state and convey purer images of reality in their texts. In this respect, Allen Ginsberg's Blakean vision from 1948 is an important example of this, and he gave account of it during his successive literary production (Raskin, 2004).

rounded ass. Amazing! a perfect real reproduction of Jennifer Jones on the edge of the bed” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 3).

Her undesired pregnancy, for its part, expresses both some young women’s position in the 1940’s society and their oppressed condition. Giving account of her pregnancy, Cassady refers to it almost as a commonplace: “usual stuff, hi-school boy she’d known for years, first time, left home because it started to show, etc.” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 3). Its consequences, for its part, include a great sense of guilt and a sinful shame that opposes to Neal’s interests: “One could clearly see the effects of her pregnancy had made her again a frightened lonely little girl who fairly melted with shame. (...) I knew she was lost. All had come about when a sallow kid’s cock dribbled 2 seconds of sperm, which she hadn’t enjoyed, into her spicy nest--the fragrance of which I was smelling at that moment” (6). However, not being able to project a future with a young mother-to-be, when Neal definitely breaks up their forthcoming plans, one of the most dramatic scenes of the whole letter takes place, as Joan consequently attempts to commit suicide.

As they aimed to convey a deeper sense of truth, the Beat Generation’s descriptions were very distinctive: “[R]aw and unrefined, occasionally naive, even crude: there is a liberating, elemental vitality at the core of Beat writing in contrast to which much of the mainstream literature of the period seems affected, insipid, and insufficient” (Stephenson, 2009: 11). In this regard, Neal’s later visit to Joan allows him to describe her corpse-like body with very detailed raw images that also have a certain degree of poetic language, which in any case aim to convey a “true” and honest picture of the scene. Moreover, this description is also relevant because it enables him to reflect on life and death, its borders and limits, and as a possibility of “escaping” from problems. This scene in particular makes Neal reflect on suicide, which he himself had attempted several times before:

Her pale face was whiter; like chalk. It was extremely apparent how utterly weak she was, there seemed absolutely no blood left in her body. I stared and stared, she didn’t breathe, didn’t move; I would never have recognized her, she was a waxen mummy. White is the absence of all color, she was white; all white, unless beneath the covers, whose top caressed her breasts, was hidden a speck of pink. The thin ivory arms tapered inward until they reached the slight outward bulge of narrow palms, and the hands in turn bent inward with a more sharp taper only to quickly end in long fingers curled to a point. (...) Quite normal, I know, but I just couldn’t get over how awfully dead she looked. (...) It was as though the gesture of self-destruction had, in her mind, equalized all the guilt. The courage of committing the act seemed to have justified her to herself. This action on her conviction, no matter how neurotic, had called for all her strength and she was now released. Free from the urge, since the will-for-death needs

strong concentrate of pressure to fulfill itself, and once accomplished via attempt, is defeated until another period of buildup is gone thru; unless, of course, one succeeds in reaching death the first shot, or is really mad. Gazing down on her, with a grin of artificial buoyancy, I sensed this and felt an instant flood of envy. She had escaped, at least for some time, and I knew I had yet to make my move. Being a coward I had postponed too long and I realized I was further away from committance than ever. Would hesitancy never end? (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 9-10)

Suicide is therefore depicted as a liberating experience –a “release”–, as it involves escaping from the difficulties or the constraints of life and its expectations. In addition, on the one hand, the reflection also speaks about the “survivor” condition of this postwar generation. As we have suggested, most of these young people had already experienced a close contact with difficult living conditions, and, taking into account their present, they knew they could be involved in a new war at anytime. On the other hand, their spiritual beliefs, their philosophical views, the use of drugs and, mainly, their extended incursion in unconventional religions for the western world, such as Buddhism, were also related to the development of new ideas and experimentations regarding life, death, body and soul.³⁵

Later, an interesting narrative change in the tone of the missive takes place, which divides –or, rather, joins– the two main stories involving women in it (Joan Anderson and “Cherry Mary”). When Neal is taken to the house where Joan is staying at, the hosts “arrange” the future of the young couple with the purpose of “settling them down” (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 11). They propose to adapt their situation to the expected social behaviour for a family-to-be –Neal would get a job while Joan would study to become a nurse–, and they even offer them to stay in their residence. Interestingly, Neal’s “fate” opposes the safety of a home to his daily refuge: when he abandons the house to get clean clothes for his job interview, he runs into his brother in a bar and joins him. He then gives account of his story with “Cherry Mary” which, again, takes the reader to a previous past, a couple of months before the events he was relating. The narrative involving this girl allows him to change the tone of his previous reflections on life, death and suicide, and to move straightforward to the account of sexual experiences, another major Beat theme, in a detailed and even exaggerated way. Traditionally associated to physicality and sex (and, in particular, non-marital, casual sex), as Ann Charters points out, in his epistolary production Neal established a whole

³⁵ In this regard, it makes sense to mention the fate of another famous “Joan”: Joan Vollmer, William S. Burrough’s second wife, who was shot-killed by her husband, as he first claimed, when trying to hit an apple over her head.

“style of combining loose, rambling sentences with meticulously detailed observations regarding his sexual exploits with various girlfriends in Denver” (Charters, 1995: xvi). The sub-narration involving “Cherry Mary”, with whom Neal had had a five-month love relationship, serves as an example of the account of his sexual conduct. Once again, the introduction of the character summarises the sexual topic he will later explain with more detail: “Cherry Mary (Mary Ann Freeland) was her name because she lived on Cherry St. and was a cherry when I met her. That condition didn’t last long I ripped into her like a maniac and she loved it” (Neal Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 12). Immediately after this introduction, Neal lists his sexual memories regarding their relationship. Adopting a hyperbolic and even boastful tone that William Plummer pertinently denominated “virile prose” (1981: 87) the fragment depicts a “profanation” of the public space of the city of Denver, which takes place with a semi-ritualistic practise associated to their sexual climax:

(...) mad nights and early AM’s at Goodyear factory I worked alone in from 4 PM to anytime I wanted to go home, doing it on golf courses, roofs, parks, cemeteryes (misspelled; you know, dead people’s home) snowbanks, schools and schoolyards, hotel bathrooms, her mother’s vacant houses (she was a realtor), doing it every-way we could think of any-old-place we happened to be, in fact, we did it in so many places that Denver was covered with our peckertracks; so many different ones that I can’t possibly remember, often we’d trek clear from one side of town to another just to find a spot to drop to it. (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 13)

This passage gives account of the sexual liberation experienced by the postwar youth, which entailed not only rejecting traditional family values but also expressed sexual openness against their contemporary social taboos, exploring non-heterosexual, non-exclusive and interracial forms of experiencing the encounter of the bodies.³⁶ In a letter from the 16th June, 1948, for instance, Neal describes Kerouac an orgy in which he participated: “March 22–Meet a girl, who, I’d swear, is truly a virgin–or at least, unexperienced–take her to nigger’s house (...) –3 hrs later she’s a little drunk & then, started the greatest show (...) nigger gal grabs me–4 way orgy–goes on for hours...” (Cassady, 2004: 77).³⁷ Depictions of non-exclusive sexual relationships are frequent in several Beat texts (particularly, in Jack Kerouac’s novels) and, as it may be expected, this open sexual behaviour also speaks of Neal Cassady’s own idiosyncrasy. For instance, it may be mentioned that Diana Hansen Cassady signed a testimonial in which

³⁶ In this regard, both Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs experienced bisexual sex in an open way.

³⁷ If the story is true, it happened only eight days before he married Carolyn Robinson.

she declared that her husband could “Meet all women possible & without restraint, conscious or emotional, attempt to seduce them without delay, personal involvement or inhibition (...)” (Cassady, 2004: 143). As she testified, Neal was “a veritable Mecca of sexual satisfaction & pleasure” (144). Furthermore, Neal also tacitly consented to a love affair between Carolyn Robinson Cassady and Jack Kerouac when he moved in to their house (Charters, 1995: 334), in 1952.

Finally, as we have advanced in the overview of the letter, Neal’s digression concerning “Cherry Mary” leads to his narrative of being taken to jail by this girl’s mother’s influence and position. On the one hand, this episode allows him express his experience and even familiarity regarding prison: “Before being led to the tank, I knew the way by heart from previous trips” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 16). Knowing the law and procedures first-hand, he shows himself worried due to having spent time in the pubs: “When a prisoner is released from COLO. S. Reformatory he is placed on a years probation, and if, among other reasons, he is found in a bar his parole is revoked and he’s sent back to do time and a half. (...) Lying on the inner-steel matteress, I figured my moves in mental shudderings” (16). On the other hand, his stay in jail also allows him criticise the absurdity of the prison institutional religious services by describing a Protestant orator’s speech. Trying to persuade the prisoners he had “sinned worse than any of them”, his sermon reveals useless:

he wanted to tell us that nothing could harm him now that Jesus was by his side; he fairly evaporated the steel bars with his hot breath of faith. (...) he blew to exhaustion and when he gave up he knew he’d failed to stir us, the cage was still there, unmolested; each had his own. Stepping back into his group’s lineup, sadness at this fact touched only his lips, the rest of his visible self regained the composure of a bank clerk. (17)

Remarkably, Neal associates the general look of this religious figure to a bank clerk (a public servant), and the comparison opposes the religious party and their moral message with the outcast life within prison. Therefore, he refers that the religious sermon takes place near “the very bars thru which a sick mexican had puked his musqutel” and “beside the cell where, a few hours before, a poor white man had given up his ghost to acute alcoholism” (17). Interestingly, when on the day before New Year’s, 1946, he is communicated he will be free from prison, he receives a final scolding from Sergeant Garrard: “He said I was free!, not now tho, to teach me a little ‘respect’, as he put it, I was to stay until Jan. 2nd and miss any NY celebration. (...) (I remember now a big lecture--and this is highly unusual for Garrard--he gave me on ruining a fine girl from a good family like Cherry Mary was)” (18). The depiction of his

short stay in prison, then, reflects his and the prisoners' opposition to several instances of institutional order: religious services, banking, police forces and "good families".

In relation with this generation's will of expressing everyday themes in a honest and authentic way, we may now move to the analysis of one of the Beat Generation's most distinctive literary devices: the spontaneous flow of words and sentences, whose aim was to communicate non-filtered and impetuous truths, and also provide their statements of a rhythmic and resonant pattern.

VI. B. *Be Bop*: Beat Spontaneous Style

According to Richard Quinn, spontaneity emerged “as both an ethos and artistic technique (...) in a number of creative processes of the postwar era, and acted in part as political opposition to suburbanization and other trends” (2004: 153). In bebop jazz, he argues, it entailed a complete revision of the tradition –as a possibility of joining past and present– but also as a device of establishing a dialogue with their live heterogeneous audiences. Strictly linked with this musical genre, spontaneity is one of the most distinctive features of Beat writing. It is mainly associated to Jack Kerouac’s writing style, and he even reflected on it in “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose” (1958), a series of “rules” for writing prose in a spontaneous way. As we have suggested, this technique conveys not only the lack of process of the emotional or intellectual message –providing it of authenticity and transparency– but also the speed and determination with which this generation experienced life (Belgrad, 1998). Predating Kerouac’s exploration of it, the spontaneous prose was one of Neal Cassady’s earliest writing aims and projects. In a letter sent to Kerouac on 13th March, 1947, he expresses his desire of developing such style: “Honestly, Jack, please excuse me this time & perhaps I can fall into a *spontaneous groove* in not only our correspondence, but, letter writing in general” (Cassady, 2004: 22, my emphasis). A month later, in a missive from the 15th April, 1947, he tells Kerouac he wishes to be able to “write to [him] spontaneously” (Cassady, 2004: 42) soon. These examples show the degree up to which Neal was as conscious of his writing style as concerned with its shaping and its improving. Moreover, apart from the spontaneity which characterises his prose, Neal Cassady also experimented with and incorporated a poetic tone to it that can be seen in the inclusion of a highly expressive vocabulary, in his lyric descriptions and, most notably, in his alliterations.

Despite his lack of major academic studies, Neal Cassady was “certainly a ‘man of letters’” (Robinson Cassady, 2004: xvii) who read and analysed complex literature, philosophy and a varied range of essays.³⁸ There are numerous references and comments to writers, readings and writing styles in his whole correspondence. The “Joan Anderson Letter” is no exception and in it, for instance, he states that while at Al Hinkle’s: “In one sitting, poor ass, of 30 hours I took between my ears *Moby Dick* from

³⁸ These included Oswald Spengler’s *Decline of the West*, Friedrich Nietzsche’s philosophy, Sigmund Freud’s psychology theories, and theology books.

end to end”, and asserts that “he is simple, writes so simple and is very simple to understand. Its wonderful that he is so, would that I was as clear, would too that I had his strength as I have his philosophy and death knowledge” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 1). Interestingly, he boasts himself about his knowledge of life and death, an issue that, as we have already seen, he would explore when referring to Joan’s suicide attempt.

Apart from contributing to his personal image, the mention of his readings allows him to build part of his own literary temple, which he shared with Kerouac: Thomas Wolfe, Louis Ferdinand Céline and Herman Melville (among many others). In this respect, reading triggers the exploration of his own voice and of his own literary devices, which combine spontaneity and poetry. As “the Beats appreciated bebop solos as musical expressions of subjectivity” (Belgrad, 1998: 212), like in the jazz subgenre, Cassady aims to produce multiple reverberating sounds in the reader’s mind:

Naturally, there is nothing I can tell you about this trio (long tom, big tom, lunging plunging gaping gulping grasping gone gurgleboy tom, but best; Tasty Tommy. Dirty Ferdy, filthy ferdy, lousy louie, looney louie, lecherous louie, lazy louie, lucky louie, blue Lou, limpin’ lou, ad infinitum or ad nauseum or et al or etc or on and on and so forth about C. Huge herman, humpback herman, hardy herman, hasty herman, hamstrung herman, healthy herman, hallalulah herman, Spermy Hermie, Hammy Herman, holy herman, --dammit, I saved the best nickname for Melville until last, and in fact got the idea for this whole parentheses from it, now what? I just forgot it completely thats all, . --thats a period, whazza matter, you can’t see or sumpin? (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 1)

This rush of improvised alliterative sounds could be even read as a prose poem. There is also a speech trace –“now what?”– that denotes the transcription of Neal’s conversational voice, definitely linked to the spoken-like Beat aesthetic, which adds “purity” and gives account of the unprocessed nature of the rush of words. In this regard, in Neal Cassady’s letters we find an immediate transmission of the thoughts as they appear in his mind, as if actually *speaking* with his addressees, or even playing with words and sounds for his own joy. Alliterations were typical from his letter writing, especially forming long paragraphs, and they appear in several other missives throughout his whole life. In any case, they reveal a highly creative and playful approach to writing that also implied the invention of neologisms. In this regard, another interesting and clear example may be found in a letter sent to Jack and Joan Kerouac two weeks after the “Joan Anderson Letter”, on the 8th January, 1951:

Unfold the blasted blanket, unhinge the bloody gates, disperse the billowed drifts, make bellows blow piled coals, pour laden ladles, launch leviathans, roaring ranges rake the

pale paste of pallid pals, dispelled is Eastern gloom, nullified is accursed weather, belittled is frost-bitten feet, frozen fingers, frigid face, chilblained children of chance, cripples caste, chosen chum commutes, travelers of twisted trails, tasters of tempting trips, tantalized tipplers trooping to triumphant trash, truck tour thru tanktowns, torn tits toddlers to tough thugs they tumble toward their torturous trials, totaling the take, the trying tribulations, the tepid tops, the terrible tomfoolery, the tendency to torrid trembling, twitches, tricks, troubles, troubles, troubles, troubles, troubles, troubles, troubles, troubles, dollarless drips dropping dimpled dingleberries deep down dipping dolleyseats madden monologues made, modern madcaps mocking money, milady makes me messy. (Cassady, 2004: 261)

Furthermore, like in conversations, the spontaneous, spoken-like stream of sentences implies the possibility of producing digressions, which by its own nature take that improvisational impulse to convey new information and keep the speech flow going and alive. Therefore, Neal Cassady's digressive storytelling reveals him "as a person more fascinated by the flowing through of situations than by each one in itself" (Lindberg, 2010: 142), and each new piece of information to which he jumped into enabled him to keep the attention of his reader or listener. Like many of his letters, the "Joan Anderson Letter" has several passages in which he deviates from his *road* to speak of something he just remembered, describe profusely a particular object or simply reflect on his own writing scene.

Thus, the passage in which Mary Lou is in the bathroom fighting with Neal, angry at him because he upset Joan by cancelling their future plans, for instance, includes a relatively long digression that conveys both Neal's general knowledge, his passion for writing and, particularly, for "storytelling". In this regard, the scene implies a comment that includes different levels of spontaneous writing while also addressing Kerouac:

Finally she tired and I said I'd let her go if she promised to be quiet and sit down and talk sensibly. The little spitfire agreed and sank to the stool (not the toilet, you silly ass Mr. Kerouac, but a simple small wooden three legged stool, 13 inches high; milkmaids made them famous in the 18th century and many cheap hotels place them in their bathrooms to have the guests put all their clothes and bath paraphenalia in a proper heap; accomodations!) with exhausted murder burning from her distainful eyes. (Cassady, "Joan Anderson Letter", 5)

The passage reveals Cassady's consciousness regarding his spoken-like writing, as he concludes this digression stating: "Well, you can wager your ass I *talked* fast" (Cassady, "Joan Anderson Letter", 5, my emphasis). Regarding the extension of paragraphs such as this one, the spirit of writing extensively and without "stopping" also links to Neal and Jack's praise for French writer Marcel Proust. When referring to the smell of the ammonia –the substance Joan drank in her suicide attempt–, Neal even

includes a reference this author's style, which also gives account of his own writing interests: "when I entered Joan's follyroom I found it honest torture to endure its potent aroma. Don't think I'm one to give out with a lot of bullshit about a smell, altho I wish, of course, that I could blow about one for 20 pages like Proust did" (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 8). As his letters show, he was indeed capable of describing profusely "unimportant" objects or situations.

Another feature that characterises Neal's writing is the use he makes of his own misspellings and typing mistakes.³⁹ One of the most interesting passages of the letter includes different stages of spontaneous writing, as it involves the reflection of the use of an old-fashioned term for "jail", a new alliterative sequence of writers' nicknames, and the production of sounds by joining words or onomatopoeias. Apart from possibly relating to the effects of the Benzedrine, the event that triggers these long frantic parentheses is the sole mention of the woman that takes Neal to her house:

Anyhow, two more weeks went by in this fashion, my inability to stir from my poolhall prison became a joke, even to me. It was the night before christmas, about 5 PM, when a handsome woman near 40 came inside the gaol's (so it might be misspelled, so its old english and this is modern Denver, so its straight out from Wilde's "Ballard of Reading, Reding, Readding, Redding, gaol", or right from Dickens (Charlie my boy, chipper Charlie, cheerie Charles, Christian Charley, chuckles Chuck, Christmasie Dickensie, etc, etc, etc.) or a hundred others who used the word, so its pronounced "jail", so why not put jail?, what a question, what a question, what a question, you illiterate immigrant, you blarsted bum--rum bum, that is, Bayrumbum--you marvelously married man, any bloody fool can see jail doesn't start with a "g" and gaol does and besides showing off my learning is absolutlypositivlyunquestionably necessary for the next word that follows it in this gripping thriller, then too, I gotta save "jail" for use in its proper place on the next page, and I'll have to watchout overdoing it, I've already put down stir, prison and gaol, so leave it in; gaol, that is.) gates and asked for me.

I went up front to meet her, as I came closer I saw she was better than handsome, a real goodlooker despite her age. She introduced herself, said she was a friend of Jaon (now see, that goddam gaol, which I first wrote as goal [...]) JoanJoanJoanJoan Anderson and invited me to dinner. (Cassady, "*Joan Anderson Letter*", 10-11)

Once again, his writing experimentation comes with a reflection on other writers' works. To repeat the same wordplay as with the other authors gives account, for its part, of a certain degree of consciousness on creating his own defined style. As we have mentioned, this fragment includes other experiments with words and sounds, such as the fused adverb "absolutlypositivlyunquestionably", which constitutes a "radical [attempt] to articulate the language of the body and of the unconscious mind and to utter new and urgent truths" (Stephenson, 2009: 19). Furthermore, the onomatopoeias provide sound

³⁹ Neal procured a typewriter in March, 1947.

to the prose and, apart from relating to jazz, they even resemble the noises produced by a car. In this way, the “bum--rum bum” from the passage links to other similar inclusions in the same missive –“bunk! baaaa, grrrrr” (10)– and even to other letters: “Ugh, bah, fap, grr, ick, ump, pah, awk, urg, eek, wok, fud, poo, etc.” (Cassady, 2004: 261).

Finally, one of the most extreme examples of Neal’s digressive storytelling may be found towards the introduction of the “Cherry Mary” narrative:

Whoa, old buddy, read slowly for a bit and have patience with my verbosity. (if you haven’t slowed to a stop already by my stilted style, and too, I mean more patience beyond that which you’ve needed for my unfunny parenthese) There are two things I’ve got to say here, one is a sidepoint and it’ll come second, the first is essential to the understanding of this unending trash; so, I gotta bore you with one of my hollywood flashbacks--duller, in fact. I’ll leave out the most of it and be as brief as possible to make it tight, altho, by the nature of it, this’ll be hard (...). (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 12)

This passage reflects not only the spontaneous style of Neal, but also confirms his passion for linking stories and displaying his experiences in his writings. In the passage, he warns the reader he will produce not one but *two* digressions. Conscious of how difficult to follow were his stories, Neal addresses the reader and eventually reflects on his own text: “Etc, etc, I could go on and on about Cherry Mary, but, enough, and back to the exciting story of the loss and downfall of my one (ahem) pure love. If the gentle (or otherwise) reader will kindly bear with me and think back he might remember that we left our hero snug in his smug little mind and about to leave a cozy spot on E. Colfax just before 11PM on Xmas eve.” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 15). This statement also implies two things: on the one hand, it gives account of his playful relationship to writing and, on the other hand, it conveys his difficulties of taking himself as a “serious” writer. Moreover, in his handwritten addendum, he even states: “Just finished this *insufferably egotistical letter*. (...) if my novel is ever put up for sale the editor’s preface will be: ‘Seldom has there been a story of a man so balled up. No doubt many readers will not believe the veracity of the author, but (...) every incident, as such is true’” (Cassady, 2004: 255, my emphasis).

Fortunately, as Carolyn Robinson stated and as we will immediately see, Jack Kerouac was one of the few people who praised his writing to such a degree that he even began using elements from his style in his texts. Analysing his influence on one of the most notable authors of the Beat Generation, we will be able to reconsider Neal Cassady’s relevance for the aesthetic of the entire literary movement.

VII. “Keroassady”:⁴⁰ Neal Cassady’s Influence on Jack Kerouac

Ann Charters points out that “[L]ike many of his contemporaries, when Kerouac began to write his first published novel he consciously imitated the literary style of Thomas Wolfe. But in Kerouac’s attempt to find his own voice, he was most impressed by the letters sent to him by his Denver friend Neal Cassady” (1995: xxii). In this regard, the impact of Neal Cassady’s “Joan Anderson Letter” on Kerouac was such that prompted the experimentation and development of a *new voice* in his own epistolary production of the period. In these missives that run from the 27th December, 1950 to the 10th January, 1951, Kerouac explores his most personal memories while developing a style that resemble Cassady’s will of communicating their feelings and thoughts spontaneously. Apart from resulting in the rewriting of *On the Road* in the first days of April, 1951, this exchange would also lead to Kerouac’s second attempt of rewriting this novel –which finally derived in the experimental *Visions of Cody*⁴¹ (published on its entirety posthumously in 1972)–, and of several other works. In this regard, Kerouac’s praise for Neal’s style can be read in the extensive compliments he gives to him along these missives: “You gather together all the best styles... of Joyce, Céline, Dosty & Proust... and utilize them in the muscular rush of your own narrative style & excitement. (...) It is the exact stuff upon which American Lit is still to be founded” (Kerouac, 1995: 242). Interestingly, he even claims him and Cassady “will be the two most important writers in America in 20 years at the least” (243).

Regarding the literary devices in his exchange with Cassady, after receiving the “Joan Anderson Letter”, Kerouac clearly began experimenting with the elements that were typical of his friend’s epistolary writing: a confessional and spoken-like tone, the depiction of episodes involving real life events with raw and detailed descriptions and, stylistically, the free-flow of sentences. There are some very illustrative examples of Neal’s influence on Kerouac’s new style, and even some clear “correspondences” between their letters. In this respect, for instance, the wordplay involving different writers that appears in the “Joan Anderson Letter” prompted Kerouac to experiment

⁴⁰ In a letter to Kerouac from the 22nd October, 1950, Neal writes “Stop the presses, hold that headline; insert this: Keroassady to fuse in east within 10 weeks” (Cassady, 2004: 173).

⁴¹ The title of this book refers to the character of Cody Pomeray (one of the fiction names Kerouac used for Neal Cassady after *On the Road*), and is both a reference to how he was seen by Jack Dulooz (Kerouac’s own fictionalisation), and his own “mystical visions” of life. Kerouac would finish this text while staying at Neal and Carolyn’s. There, he recorded and transcribed some conversations with Neal and Carolyn while they were drunk or high on marijuana.

with spontaneity and musical “bop-like” sounds in his own wordplay. In a letter from the 28th December, 1950, where he “confesses his life” to Cassady, Kerouac includes his own alliterative homage to their literary pantheon –adding Dostoievsky and Henry Miller– in a sort of “postscript”:

Fitful Ferdie, flaptit Ferdie, fossil ferdie, fucking ferdie, flip ferdie, folderol ferdie, fleckedfoam ferdie, fishtail ferdie, farty ferdie; tender tom, tamurlane tom, timorous tom, tishtish tome, tom-tom; ham herman, heart herman, hit herman, hell herman, harsh herman, hoorair herman, hoik herman, hooray herman; I say, dig doestoevsky, die-for-doestoevsky, dip-in-doestoevsky, deal-for-dusty, love-dusty, holy-dusty, dusty-what’s-his-name, dusty-doodly, dusty-rusty, dust of my dust and dust of your dust and dust of all dust. Henry-miller-killer, henry-killer-diller-miller, hery-filler, henry-swiller, henry-luller, henry-buller, henryfucker, henrysokay. ARGH! arghand! arrant nonsense. (Kerouac, 1995: 262–263)

However, this is not the only feature typical from Cassady’s missives that Kerouac explores in this letter. Moreover, he includes stylistic devices such as the continuum of words by eliminating the spaces in between, or even joining them using dashes, a feature he will use in his novels and refer to in “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose”: “No periods separating sentence-structures already arbitrarily riddled by false colons and timid usually needless commas—but the vigorous space dash separating rhetorical breathing (as jazz musician drawing breath between outblown phrases)” (1992: 57). Apart from the sound it implies, this rush of unities that articulate and mix to one another produce a visual effect that demands the *de-familiarisation* of reading. In this regard, while in Neal’s letters we read sentences such as “Of all the extraordinary bastards this earth supports, I am undoubtedly the most extreme of the no-goodnessgraciousmelandsakealivever to lie in his teeth, thastrighttahtsright, you guessed it, go ahead beat me...” (Cassady, 2004: 257), or “Goddammybloodysoul, Jack” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 9), in Kerouac’s we find similar word experimentations with the same playful spirit within it: “Got letter from Billburroughswhosaysheisabouttoleavemexicotogotocentralamericabecausehehasspentat housanddollarstryingtogetcitizenship don’t try to decipher I’m just killing time while Joan gets ready. Enuf is enuf andsogoodnightsweetprince” (Kerouac, 1995: 263).

In addition, because letters “frequently serve as transitions to flashbacks [and] the medium through which [an author] resurrects and reconstructs his past” (Altman, 1982: 42), we should also mention the *autofictional turn* that the “Joan Anderson Letter” provoked in Jack Kerouac towards the end of 1950. Like Cassady, in this series of “confessional letters”, Kerouac puts into written words his deepest memories related to

his childhood and his young adult years. The biographical condition of this new writing phase becomes clear already in his first letter to Cassady: “Then shall I say, Neal, *I hereby renounce all fiction*; and say further, dear Neal, this confession is for YOU, and through you to God, and through God back to my life, and wife, whatever and what-all” (Kerouac, 1995: 246, my emphasis). Adopting a religious discourse that will be fundamental for his successive oeuvre, in these letters he reflects on his deepest childhood memories, particularly in the facts surrounding his older brother’s death.⁴² His constant religious comments make him refer the episode in jail included towards the end of the “Joan Anderson Letter”: “Do I remind you of the similar pipsqueaks who made speeches to you in jails? (O mysterious reader, bend no closer)” (Kerouac, 1995: 251). This reference, despite being only a mention to Neal’s letter, proves that it was highly present for Kerouac when writing these letters.⁴³ More importantly, the missives regarding his memories of his brother, his childhood fears and his relation to church would later result in larger treatments of the same topics in *Visions of Gerard* (1963) – whose name pairs with the mentioned *Visions of Cody*– and *Doctor Sax* (1959), the first two volumes that compose the “Duluoz Legend”, Kerouac’s own declared *autofictional project*.⁴⁴

Furthermore, Kerouac’s letters also seem to take Neal’s spirit of addressing the reader and reflecting on its own writing. In this regard, in a letter from the 3rd January, 1951, Kerouac gives account of a similar spontaneous reflection and immediate amending of mistakes, instead of erasing and rewriting. Therefore, when referring to his mother’s remembrance of her dead son, he writes: “My brother b–yegads, I keep saying brother for mother–my mother broke into tears (it was an ordinary slip, the ‘br’ of broke intruding on the ‘m’ of mother)–my mother broke into tears at the sight of his usual sitting places...” (Kerouac, 1995: 270). References such as these also give account of Neal and Jack’s constant assessment on the other’s writing, and their mutual confidence to experiment and improve their writing.

⁴² Interestingly, his brother Gerard died in 1926, the year in which Neal Cassady was born.

⁴³ In a letter from the 8th January, 1951, he will even refer to the “gaol” passage: “I was caught and sent to the GAOL (my dear Neal, GAOL)” (Kerouac, 1995: 279).

⁴⁴ In the “Foreword” included in the posthumous *Visions of Cody* (1972), Kerouac states: “My work comprises one vast book like Proust’s *Remembrance of Things Past* except that my remembrances are written on the run instead of afterwards in a sick bed. (...) *On the Road*, *The Subterraneans*, *The Dharma Bums*, *Doctor Sax*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *Tristessa*, *Desolation Angels* and the other are just chapters in the whole work which I call *The Duluoz Legend*. In my old age I intend to collect all my work and reinsert my pantheon of uniform names, leave the long shelf of books there, and die happy” (1993: 7).

However, Kerouac's clearest emulation of Neal's *voice* appears in a letter from the 10th January, 1951, in which he abandons his childhood memories and decidedly moves on to the depiction of his own teenage experiences. On the one hand, after a description of his hometown and some stories he heard there, Kerouac closes a paragraph in a way that resembles Neal's momentary frenzy in some of his letters: "O motorgraphs! O telltale riverlake! O tome! O palapoot of boy! Menames are many, more than mary, prayall sacrosnake! Roofelyroof, rueboy, cementary, awes of allsand—Hallo-o-o-o-o vieux père! Ululu, ululu, bloody light beneath the shroud takes us westward to the shore by tail and coign and vasty air. Snakrecoeur! Mon peur! We jam on frere gyre are. Yes I love my brother Gerard. Oui j'aime mon frère Gerard" (Kerouac, 1995: 295). Excepting the use of French—natural to Kerouac due to his French-Canadian background—, we can sense the "high" and "low" tones in his use of English while he includes puns with sounds and writing. On the other hand, as this same letter unfolds, he even incorporates a highly sexual tone that takes distance of his feelings of guilt and sin—typical moral Catholic elements— of his previous letters and approaches to the "Cherry Mary" narrative included in the "Joan Anderson Letter". In this regard, Kerouac includes an episode involving two girls, two male friends and a car that, once again, resembles Neal's everyday accounts. Emulating his "expected" behaviour, Kerouac writes about *acting* as Cassady would have done: "Quick as a flash, after consultatory giggles, they jumped right in the car, the blonde in the back and the fat brunette in front; and one of the other boys from the station (...) joined the party. I instructed him to get in the front seat. I was really intent and meant business, *just like you in the Denver hotel with Marylou, soldier and Joan*" (Kerouac, 1995: 298, my emphasis). Consequently, if he first "acts" like Cassady, he then describes a full episode involving sex in a similar hyperbolic fashion:

Now, this is the positive truth: in exactly two and one half minutes as I sat saying nothing and the others chattered, I turned to Agnes, she turned to me, I grabbed her by the shoulders, kissed her, and right quick from some instinctive sense shoved my hand right up her dress and came up with her box shining golden in the golden sun. I'm even inclined to believe this all happened before the car was in high gear; I'm positive I was conservative saying 2½ minutes, tremendously so. I remember I had the feeling the car only just starting to roll when I came up with her lovely vaginal heart in my hand. (298)

As we can see, these "confessional letters" that follow the reception of the "Joan Anderson Letter" triggered in Kerouac the exploration and discovery of a new, confessional, first-person, spoken-like, spontaneous, raw and "truer" voice that was "the

foundation for all of Kerouac's subsequent books, beginning with the successful completion of *On the Road* three months later" (Charters, 1995: 246). Therefore, we can see that "the original scroll" of this novel –produced in April, 1951– incorporates some elements of these letters and employs new "techniques of fiction writing, including double-perspective narration, (...) Headlong, intimate, discursive, wild, and 'true', with improvised notations –dots and dashes– to break sentences so that they pile upon themselves like waves" (Cunnell: 2007, 28). Regarding his recently acquired spontaneous style, the novel takes the conversational tone and the speed of these epistolary productions: "Life is one irony after another, because the ride I then proceeded to get was the ride of a skinny haggard man who believed in controlled starvation for the sake of health. (...) He was a ghost---a bag of bones---a floppy doll---a broken stick---a maniac" (Kerouac, 2007a: 168). Moreover, and because the novel unfolds as an autobiographical monologue, some passages are, like in Cassady's letters, transcriptions of unprocessed –and therefore often ungrammatical– thoughts and reflections: "It was dusk. Where was Hunkey? I dug the Square for Hunkey; he wasn't there, he was in Riker's Island behind bars. Where Neal?- -where Bill? where everybody? Where life?" (Kerouac, 2007a: 168). Regarding the Beat aesthetic, some dialogues between Neal and Jack's characters give account of their experiences and views towards their generation and their context:

"That Allen Anson is the greatest most wonderful of all. That's what I was trying to tell you...that's what I want to be...I want to be like him. He's never hung up, he goes every direction, he lets it all out, he knows time, he has nothing to do but rock back and forth, Man he's the end! You see, if you go like him all the time you'll finally get it." "Get what?" "IT! IT! I'll tell you---now no time, we have no time now." Neal rushed back to watch Allen Anson some more. (Cassady, 2007a: 181)

However, Cassady's influence in Kerouac does not limit to this 1951 draft only. On the contrary, in the published version of *On the Road* (from 1957) he even patched together some transcriptions of Cassady's epistolary production to represent his *voice* in the dialogues of the novel. Some notable references reproduce his texts verbatim. Apart from his descriptions of his damaged hand in Part Three, Chapter 2, a clear example may be found towards the Chapter 9 of the same part, in which Kerouac gives account of some events included in a letter Cassady wrote between the 3rd and the 26th of July,

1949.⁴⁵ This letter is important because it details Cassady's criminal record and the times he has been in prison. Giving account of his first time in prison, he writes to Kerouac:

I bought the Buick from [a friend] for \$20. My first car; it couldn't pass the brake and light inspection, so I decided I needed an out of state license to operate car without arrest. I went to Wichita, Kansas to get the plates. As I was hitchhiking home with the plates concealed under my coat I passed thru Russell, Kansas. Walking down the main drag I was accosted by a nosey sheriff who must have thought I was pretty young to be hiking. He found the plates and threw me in the two cell jail with a county delinquent who should have been in the home for the old since he couldn't feed himself (The sheriff's wife fed him) and sat thru the day drooling and slobbering. (Cassady, 2004: 123)

As I have argued, Kerouac's passage in *On the Road* is almost an exact transcription of his friend's letter, and his aim was definitely to convey Cassady's spoken-like tone in them through Dean Moriarty's speech:

Also I had a twenty-dollar Buick back in LA, my first car, it couldn't pass the brake and light inspection so I decided I needed an out-of-state license to operate the car without arrest so went through here to get the license. As I was hitchhiking through one of these very towns, with the plates concealed under my coat, a nosy sheriff who thought I was pretty young to be hitchhiking accosted me on the main drag. He found the plates and threw me in the two-cell jail with a county delinquent who should have in the home for the old since he couldn't feed himself (the sheriff's wife fed him) and sat through the day drooling and slobbering. (Kerouac, 2007b: 208)

Furthermore, despite it gives account of Kerouac's personal quest, "more than anything else, the story of *On the Road* returns again and again to Neal Cassady [:] (...) Kerouac's lost brother returned; the longed-for adventuring Western hero made young again; and the living expression of the Dionysian side of Kerouac's own dual nature" (Cunnell, 2007: 14). Consequently, the detailed characterisation of Neal Cassady, symbol of that "beaten/beatific" generation, appears throughout the whole novel. In this regard, although they are subtle, some references from his "Joan Anderson Letter" contribute to it. On the one hand, these include his own account of his days in Denver, which appears in the first two pages of the missive, when the narrator from *On the Road* describes Dean's character: "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 (...), or climbing trees to get into the attics of buddies where he spent days reading or hiding from the law" (Kerouac, 2007b: 6). On the other hand, towards the end of the novel, there are two other references to the

⁴⁵ This difference between the characters symbolise their different approaches towards writing: while in three weeks Cassady produced a letter, Kerouac produced the draft that would derive in the novel that "catapulted him to literary fame" (Charters, 1995: xxiii).

“Joan Anderson Letter” in Part Five, which is set in 1951. In the first place, there is a direct mention of it: “[Dean] wrote back a huge letter eighteen thousand words long, all about his young years in Denver” (275). Additionally, Dean’s mention of reading Proust with “[his] own little bangtail mind” (275) may probably refer to Cassady’s letter salutation: “To hell with the dirty lousy shit, I’ve had enough horseshit. I got my own pure bangtail mind and the confine of its binding please me yet” (Cassady, “*Joan Anderson Letter*”, 1). As we have argued, much of this Cassady’s image was a self-creation, and Kerouac drew it to build the character for his own novel. Therefore, if “this figure represents the manifestation of the basic life force” (Grace, 2007: 81), his voice eventually becomes a kind of mantra Sal Paradise repeats towards the end of the novel: “I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty” (Kerouac, 2007b: 278).

In this regard, we can sense that Cassady’s influence on Kerouac’s writing was decisive, not only taking into account his style and providing him of whole passages he would use, but also regarding the depiction of the character he built in his textual productions, beginning with one of the first drafts of *On the Road*.

VIII. Conclusions

As we have seen, Neal Cassady's textual production constituted an *autofictional project* (composed by marginal texts such as a fragmentary autobiography and letters) in which he explored his emotions and his writing style but also built a self-image. In his letters, his most numerous writings, he depicts his memories from the Depression and reflects on everyday concerns while building a determined character associated to energy, movement, sexuality, unscrupulousness and hedonism. Thus, because he represented "an existence that was totally subjective and impulsive, outside the boundaries of the conservative social institutions and cultural norms—dominant at the time—above all, an existence that transcended the constrictions of objective immutable Time and its regimentation of experience and expression" (Mouratidis, 2007: 64–65), he would be eventually depicted in other authors' texts.

In this regard, apart from being a legendary text, his "Joan Anderson Letter" anticipates some of the Beat Generation's literary productions. These works, "characterized by spontaneity, an unwillingness to revise, an anarchist spirit, and the influence of jazz music, (...) were outrageous compared to the staid formalism of mainstream American literature" (Weinreich, 2004: 72) and would represent a whole generation that opposed to the mainstream and conformist postwar society. We could attest that, using a spontaneous style, Neal Cassady explored most of the themes and topics of his generation –undoubtedly *beat* due to their Depression past and their warring and conservative present–, experimenting "with everything that 1940s and 1950s America classified as illegal: drugs, crime, gay sex, racial integration" (Russell, 2002: 11). Reflecting on life, death, existence, sex, the use of drugs, and the transcendental truths of the mind and the spirit, this generation opposed to a progressively consumerist and conservative America. As we read in his letter, Neal Cassady's movements towards the city give account of his opposition to norms and institutions while proposing a quest for hedonist experiences, but also depict his personal condition of outsider.

We could also attest that, because it "convinced [him] that the best way to write his own novel was to tell the story of his trips cross-country as if he were writing a letter to a friend, using first-person narration" (Charters, 1992: 189), Neal Cassady's "Joan Anderson Letter" was crucial to Jack Kerouac's literary career. Regarding literary

devices, while “stimulating creativity by playing with words, imitating Proustian non-stop sentences [and] devising games of alliteration” (Robinson Cassady, 1993: ix), he provided Jack Kerouac of a new style that he would exploit in his subsequent novels. Regarding the image of outcast and hedonist he built in his letters, Cassady also provided Kerouac the character for the new American “(anti)hero” for his novels, a figure that represented sensual energy through different types of actions that expressed a high degree of youth liberation. The immediate success of *On the Road* in 1957 would eventually define the aesthetic and the attitude of the Beat Generation, and foster, in the subsequent years, Kerouac’s own *autofictional project*.

In this regard, because of the relevance it had for many of its authors, their texts and its defined and rebellious aesthetic, we can conclude that one of the first examples of the *voice* of the Beat Generation may be found through Neal Cassady’s own voice in the “Joan Anderson Letter”.

IX. Appendix



Figure 1 - "The original scroll" version of *On the Road* (1951).

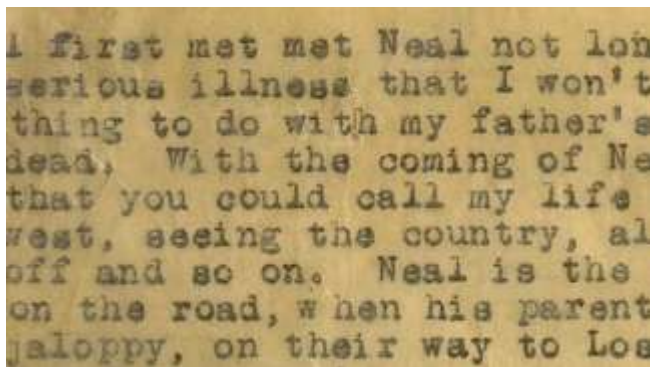


Figure 2 - "The original scroll", detail.

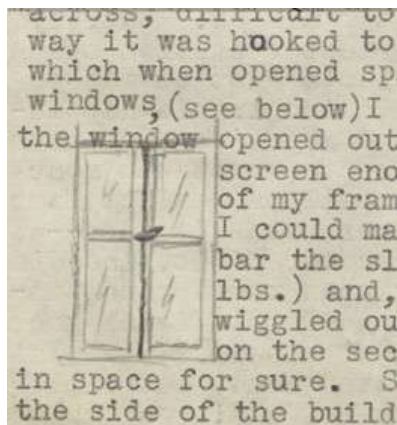


Figure 4 - Drawing of the window - "Joan Anderson Letter".

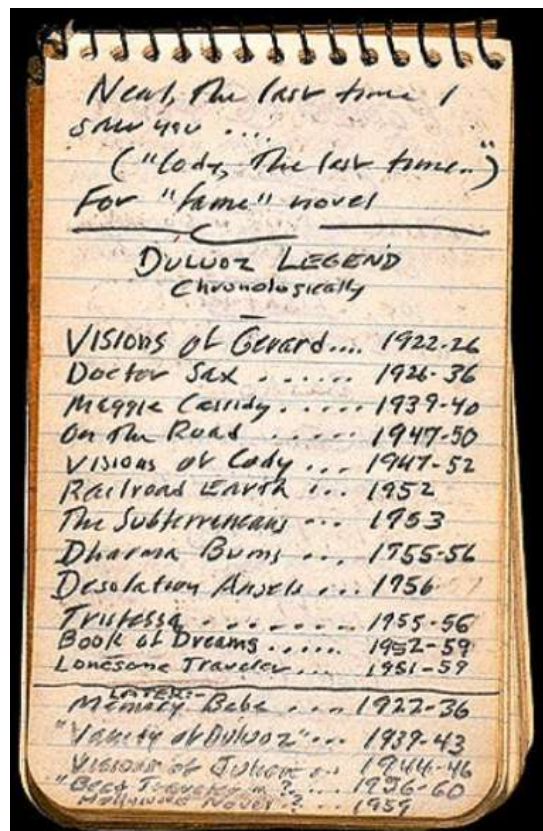


Figure 3 - Jack Kerouac's notebook with "the Duluo2 Legend" scheme.

X. Bibliography:

- Altman, Janet Gurkin (1982). *Epistolarity. Approaches to a Form*. Columbus: Ohio State University Press.
- Amburn, Ellis (1998). *Subterranean Kerouac: The Hidden Life of Jack Kerouac*. New York: St. Martin's.
- Barton, David and Nigel Hall (eds.) (2000). "Introduction", in *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Studies in Written Language and Literacy, V. 9. pp: 1–14.
- Belgrad, Daniel (1998). *The Culture of Spontaneity: Improvisation and the Arts in Postwar America*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press.
- Bell, John (2004). "American Drama in the Postwar Period", in Hendin, Josephine G. (ed.). *A Concise Companion to Postwar American Literature and Culture*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp: 110–148.
- Carden, Mary Panicia (2008). "'Adventures in Auto-Eroticism': Economies of Traveling Masculinity in *On the Road* and *The First Third*", in Holladay, Hilary and Robert Holton (eds.) *What's Your Road, Man? Critical Essays on Jack Kerouac's On the Road*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. pp: 77–98.
- Cassady, Neal (1950). "*The Joan Anderson Letter*". N/P.
- ----- (1993). *Grace Beats Karma. Letters From Prison, 1958–1960*. New York: Blast Books.
- ----- (2004). *Neal Cassady. Collected Letters, 1944–1967*. New York: Penguin Books.
- ----- (2006). *The First Third*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers.
- Charters, Ann (ed.) (1992). *The Portable Beat Reader*. New York, Viking.
- ----- (1995). "Introduction and Notes", in Kerouac, Jack. *Selected Letters: 1940–1956*. New York: Viking.
- Charters, Ann and Samuel Charters (2010). *Brother–Souls. John Clellon Holmes, Jack Kerouac, and the Beat Generation*. Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi.

- Cimino, Jerry (2014). “The Lost Letter: The Joan Anderson Letter Revealed”, in Beat Museum Online. Available at: <https://www.kerouac.com/lostletter/>
- Clellon Holmes, John (1952). “This is the Beat Generation”, in *The New York Times Magazine* (Nov. 16). Available at: <https://www.nytimes.com/1952/11/16/archives/this-is-the-beat-generation-despite-its-excesses-a-contemporary.html>
- Cunnell, Howard (2007). “Fast This Time. Jack Kerouac and the Writing of *On the Road*”, in Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road. The Original Scroll*. New York: Viking. pp: 8–49.
- Dix, Hywel (ed.) (2018). *Autofiction in English*. Poole: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Ferreira-Meyers, Karen (2018). “Does Autofiction Belong to French or Francophone Authors and Readers Only?”, in Dix, Hywel (ed.). *Autofiction in English*. Poole: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 27–48.
- Gallego Cuiñas, Ana (2016). “Hacia una teoría de la escritura epistolar”, en *Bulletin Hispanique Tome 118, n° 2*. Bordeaux: Presses universitaires de Bordeaux. pp: 573–590.
- Gifford, Barry (ed.) (1977). *As Ever. The Collected Correspondence of Allen Ginsberg & Neal Cassady*. Berkeley, California: Creative Arts Book Company.
- Ginsberg, Allen (2007). *Collected Poems 1947-1997*. New York: Harper Perennial Modern Classics.
- Ginsberg, Allen and Bill Morgan (ed.) (2008). *The Letters of Allen Ginsberg*. Philadelphia: Da Capo Press.
- Grace, Nancy M. (2007). *Jack Kerouac and the Literary Imagination*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.
- Grell, Isabelle (2018). “Foreword”, in Dix, Hywel (ed.). *Autofiction in English*. Poole: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: v–vii.
- Guillén, Claudio (1991a). “Correspondencia epistolar y literatura”. *Guillén, Claudio*. “Correspondencia epistolar y literatura.” *Cursos universitarios* (1991). pp: 35–9.
- Guillén, Claudio (1991b) “Al borde de la literariedad: literatura y epistolaridad”. *Tropelías. Revista de Teoría de la Literatura y Literatura Comparada 2* (1991). pp: 71–92.

- Hale, Grace Elizabeth (2011). *A Nation of Outsiders. How the White Middle Class Fell in Love with Rebellion in Postwar America*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Harris, Oliver (2000). “Cold War Correspondents: Ginsberg, Kerouac, Cassady and the Political Economy of Beat Letters”, in *Twentieth Century Literature Vol. 46*, No. 2 (Summer). North Carolina: Duke University Press.
- Hendin, Josephine G. (ed.) (2004). “Introduction”, in *A Concise Companion to Postwar American Literature and Culture*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp: 1–19.
- Hobsbawm, Eric (1995). *Age of Extremes: The Short Twentieth Century. 1914–1991*. London: Abacus.
- Holton, Robert (2004). “The Sordid Hipsters of America: Beat Culture and the Folds of Heterogeneity”, in Skerl, Jennie (ed.). *Reconstructing the Beats*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 11–26.
- Hrebaniak, Michael (2006). *Action Writing. Jack Kerouac’s Wild Form*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Hunt, Celia (2018). “Autofiction as a Reflective Mode of Thought: Implications for Personal Development”, in Dix, Hywel (ed.). *Autofiction in English*. Poole: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 179–196.
- Ingram, Sydney (2016). *The Need for Neal: The Importance of Neal Cassady in the work of Jack Kerouac* (Master’s Thesis). Missouri State University BearWorks – Institutional Repository.
- Karl, Frederik R. (2004). “The Fifties and After: An Ambiguous Culture”, in Hendin, Josephine G. (ed.). *A Concise Companion to Postwar American Literature and Culture*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp: 20–71.
- Kerouac, Jack (1968). “Interview”, in *The Art of Fiction, No. 41 – The Paris Review*. Available at: <https://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/4260/the-art-of-fiction-no-41-jack-kerouac>
- ----- (1987). *Doctor Sax: Faust Part Three*. New York: Groove Press.
- ----- (1991). *Visions of Gerard*. New York: Penguin Books.

- ----- (1992). “Essentials of Spontaneous Prose” [1958], in Charters, Ann (ed.). *The Portable Beat Reader*. New York, Viking. p: 57.
- ----- (1993). *Visions of Cody*. New York: Penguin Books.
- ----- (1995). *Selected Letters: 1940–1956*. New York: Viking.
- ----- (2007a). *On the Road. The Original Scroll*. London: Viking.
- ----- (2007b). *Road Novels, 1957–1960: On the Road, The Dharma Bums, The Subterraneans, Tristessa, Lonesome Traveler, From the Journals, 1949–1954*. New York: Library of America.
- Lawlor, William Thomas (ed.) (2005). *Beat Culture. Lifestyles, Icons, and Impact*. Santa Barbara, California: ABC-CLIO.
- Lindberg, Gary (2010) “Faith on the Run” [orig. publ. in 1982], in Harold Bloom (ed.) *The Trickster*. New York: Infobase Publishing. pp: 137–150.
- Lipset, Seymour Martin and Earl Raab (1981). “VI. Los Cincuentas: El Macartismo”, in *La Política de la Sinrazón. El exterminio de derecha en los Estados Unidos, 1790–1997* [Translated by: Juan José Utrilla]. Mexico: Fondo de Cultura Económica. pp: 239–281.
- Martínez, Manuel Luis. *Countering the Counterculture. Rereading Postwar American Dissent from Jack Kerouac to Tomás Rivera*. Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press.
- Maybin, Janet (2000). “Death Row Penfriends. Some Effects of Letter Writing on Identity and Relationships”, in Barton, David and Nigel Hall (eds.) (2000). *Letter Writing as a Social Practice*. Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company. Studies in Written Language and Literacy, V. 9. pp: 151–178.
- Moore, Dave (ed.) (2004). *Neal Cassady. Collected Letters, 1944–1967*. New York: Penguin Books.
- Mouratidis, George (2007). “‘Into the Heart of Things’. Neal Cassady and the Search for the Authentic”, in Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road. The Original Scroll*. New York: Viking. pp: 62–71.
- Petrucci, Armando (2018). *Escribir cartas, una historia milenaria*. Buenos Aires: Ampersand.

- Plummer, William (1981). *The Holy Goof: A Biography of Neal Cassady*. New York: Paragon.
- Quinn, Richard (2004). “Jack Kerouac, Charlie Parker, and the Poetics of Improvisation”, in Skerl, Jennie (ed.). *Reconstructing the Beats*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 151–168.
- Raskin, Jonah (2004). *American Scream: Allen Ginsberg’s Howl and the Making of the Beat Generation*. Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press.
- Reeves, Thomas C. (1999). *Twentieth-Century America. A Brief History*. New York: Oxford University Press.
- Robinson Cassady, Carolyn (1993). “Foreword”, in Cassady, Neal. *Grace Beats Karma. Letters From Prison, 1958–1960*. New York: Blast Books. pp: vii–xiii.
- ----- (2004). “Introduction”, in Moore, Dave (ed.). *Neal Cassady. Collected Letters, 1944–1967*. New York: Penguin Books. pp: xv–xvii.
- ----- (2006). “After-Word”, in Cassady, Neal. *The First Third*. San Francisco: City Lights Publishers. pp: 139–141.
- Russell, Jamie (2002). *The Beat Generation*. Herts: Pocket Essentials.
- Sandison, David and Graham Vickers (2006). *Neal Cassady. The Fast Life of a Beat Hero*. Chicago: Chicago Review Press.
- Skerl, Jennie (ed.) (2004). “Introduction”, in *Reconstructing the Beats*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 1–10.
- Starr, Clinton (2004). “‘I Want to Be with My Own Kind’: Individual Resistance and Collective Action in the Beat Counterculture”, in Skerl, Jennie (ed.). *Reconstructing the Beats*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan. pp: 41–56.
- Stephenson, Gregory (2009). *The Daybreak Boys. Essays on the Literature of the Beat Generation*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press.
- Theado, Matt (2008). “Revisions of Kerouac: The Long, Strange Trip of On the Road Typescripts”, in Holladay, Hilary and Robert Holton (eds.) *What’s Your Road, Man? Critical Essays on Jack Kerouac’s On the Road*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press. pp: 8–34.

- Ulin, David L. (2018). “The Beats’ Holy Grail”, in *The Journal of Alta California - Online* (October 3). Available at: <https://altaonline.com/beats-holy-grail/>
- Vlagopoulos, Penny (2007). “Rewriting America: Kerouac’s Nation of ‘Underground Monsters’”, in Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road. The Original Scroll*. New York: Viking. pp: 50–61.
- Weinreich, Regina (2004) “The Beat Generation is Now About Everything”, in Hendin, Josephine G. (ed.). *A Concise Companion to Postwar American Literature and Culture*. Malden, Massachusetts: Blackwell Publishing Ltd. pp: 72–94.
- Wills, David S. (2017). “The Best Beat Generation Letter Collections”, in *Beatdom*. Available at: <https://www.beatdom.com/beat-generation-letters/>
- Womble, Todd (2018). “Roth is Roth as Roth: Autofiction and the Implied Author”, in Dix, Hywel (ed.). *Autofiction in English*. Poole: Palgrave Macmillan.