

## **The Real America: Representation of American Society in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* Based on Michel Foucault's Notions of Institutions, Normalization, and Surveillance**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This study aimed to scrutinize and analyze the novel *On the Road* by Jack Kerouac in the light of the political theory of Michel Foucault. The focus, however, would be specifically on the concepts of normalization, institutions and surveillance put forward in his book *Discipline and Punish* (1995), coupled with some other works that wrestle with the close links of power, society, and institutions. This research sought to describe the real America in the 1950s, a decade that witnessed both conformism and radicality, represented in the novel. The study pointed out that the novel was a depiction of the American society in the 1950s in which distinct, overlapping institutions did a great deal in restricting the freedom of individuals who sought liberation and authenticity. The American government draws on the power of the law, police, prison, academia, family, and different other overlapping and satellite institutions, working hand in hand to create a matrix. The concept of matrix, therefore, highlights the nexus through which the normalization and conformity of the individuals are guaranteed, leading to the creation of perfect institutionalized men who

are reduced to the level of simpletons. The whole novel becomes the story of some men who advocate abnormality as their credo to live a free life. Quite the contrary, they are transitioned into meek and docile bodies whose identity hinges on being like others in fitting in and following the norms through different dominant fragmenting institutions.

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## INTRODUCTION

Applying a Foucauldian approach, this study provided investigation and analysis of the state of individuals and society in Jack Kerouac's masterpiece, *On the Road*. The novel depicts the lives of two protagonists, as well as those of many other people from all walks of life who take on journeys as the essence of their individuality, hinging on their resisting the government. The present study employed Foucauldian concepts such as institutions, surveillance, and normalization in surveying *On the Road*, a novel which manifested the zeitgeist of the period immediately after the Second World War.

The question of representation has always been a problematic subject. From ancient times, literature has represented the reciprocal relationship between individuals, their status, and their situation in distinct societies. However, with the end of the Second World War, representation became a controversial conception as critics discussed modern man and society and the way they were caught in a nexus of institutional practices that overlap and connect with satellite institutions even in most so-called democratic countries, without their citizens identifying such mechanisms. As a result, the theory of representation has shifted towards offering thick descriptions of distinct social forces that are operating within and surrounding literary works, using them as sites to grapple with social issues of institutional power, agency, and normalization.

Despite claims of democracy and freedom of individuals, the United States after the Second World War created a structure through which people became stripped of their individuality. In contrast, the real America that is depicted in *On the Road* portrays individuals who challenge many traditional beliefs and ideas, question the true nature of the state, stop acting normally, and are not dominated by the forces that the government has used. While the author sees the characters as real heroes who challenge the status quo, the focus must be beyond this in referring to all forces and strategies that the government employs so as to make the characters believe that they are free while imprisoning them in ways that they can hardly see and recognize.

In picturing the battle between resistance and authority versus conformity and ordinariness, this study sought to reread the way the American government confronted people and the way its citizens experienced life, identity, authority, and freedom. Moreover, this study analyzed the strategies that the United States had employed and critically assessed how successful they had been in their enterprise of turning individuals into subjects. This set of objectives elucidated the issue of real representation, the question of governmentality, the interconnections between power, knowledge, subjects, and society, as well as the spirit of the age immediately after the Second World War.

After the end of the Second World War in 1945, the United States emerged as one of the most powerful countries in the world as

it was the only country that could bring the war to an end; praising the United States as the new superpower, the columnist Walter Lippman argued that “What Rome was to the ancient world, what Great Britain has been to the modern world, America is to be the world of tomorrow” (as cited in Simmons, 2008, p. 13). In *Antihero in American Novel: From Joseph Heller to Kurt Vonnegut*, Simmons (2008) argued that the power that was attributed to the United States made it look far beyond its borders and seek for disseminating its capitalist ideology and values all around the world that finds its true form in the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union. United States’ strategy in homogenizing the world did not stop at the level of foreign policy as there was its counterpart in the domestic arena. It is in such a context that Dickstein (2015) argued that the dominance of a kind of ideology that sought to constrict the freedom of individuals forged a conformist society that left no space for individuals to be free and themselves.

In such a critical decade, therefore, that most critics believe to be a time when people were under a lot of pressure in following the established norms set for them, Kerouac’s claim to howl for freedom necessitates a reading through which the researcher follows all that the American government has at its disposal, which are institutions and surveillance, to normalize and suppress people.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

Jack Kerouac’s works have unavoidably

been the subject of various scholarly studies from the 1950s onward; one reason for this attraction is the fact that it has engaged both readers and critics. On the one hand, it has been a reader-friendly work that undertakes moving the hearts and minds of its readers; on the other hand, critics find the work as history with a critical edge, leading to new chapters in the history of the United States that survey literature’s interaction with specific political, social, and cultural forces. Significantly, Kerouac’s depiction of part of his life recounted in *On the Road*, based on his travels with his friends across the United States that took place from 1947 to 1950, gets the reader to see history from below in which he provides descriptions of the forces circulating in the wider society.

Countercultural movements such as the Beat Generation, the psychedelics, and the hippies were ubiquitous in the cultural and literary arena in the 1950s and 60s as their works had become popular and numerous critics had started analyzing their literary pieces from various critical approaches. In essence, the literary works of these writers tended to deal with the lives of minorities who did not fit in the normalized society and sought, collectively, to represent the power of the individuals, groups, and movements in challenging the authority of the state to conform all individuals to its procrustean rules. Most critics, thus, have focused their efforts on this aspect of the novel *On the Road* in contending that the novel depicts two free protagonists whose resisting the dominant culture and achieving freedom forms the sum and substance of the novel.

Sobral (2012) wrestled with development of what he called 'the countercultural ethos in cult fiction'. Sobral's focus is on the notion of delinquency manifested in the novel by the two main characters of the novel; excitement and pleasure are the reasons for most of the actions done by them. The two protagonists rebut the idea of being like other members of the society as they seek 'individual satisfaction' and 'transcendence' as the main impetus for their being abnormal. Sobral's approach, however, rather focuses on an inner motive for abnormality while a Foucauldian reading would help the researcher see abnormality as a phenomenon that can exist only when the individual is able to stand outside various circulating discourses.

Kupetz (2015) embarked on the analysis of the novels *The Town and the City* (1950) and *On the Road* in terms of their representing disability. For him, in both novels, disability is a sign of extreme social nonconformity; the disability that is depicted in the novel points to the late capitalist antagonism against the abnormal individuals in that it was utterly a dehumanizing hegemony: "Dean Moriarty's disability provides him with an alternative subject position that frees him from postwar hypermasculinity, and Kerouac uses phalangeal amputation as a textual motif that signifies social non-conformist affiliation, not social stigmatization" (p. 135).

Bill (2010) tackled the real nature of *On the Road* in regarding the novel as

either a traveller in search of originality and authenticity or a tourist in search of joy and new experiences. He maintained that although Kerouac had called himself as a 'religious wanderer', the fact was that his travels could also be considered as tourism. Finally, Bill contended that the case of travel in *On the Road* represented antitourism "or the search for real as opposed to tourist experiences" (Bill, 2010, p. 416). In the same vein, Cresswell (1993) approached the novel by examining the theme of mobility in *On the Road*. He argued that the theme of mobility was present in "both the content and structure of the novel and relate it to expectations of family, progress and attached sexuality" (Cresswell, 1993, p. 249). He related the root of the counterculture movements of the 1950s and 1960s to the concept of American Dream and reconsidered the novel from the perspective of cultural geography and cultural studies. Dealing only with the purpose of Kerouac's quest, these two researchers did not touch upon the way characters in the novel could end up either achieving resistance or being imprisoned. The researchers would have capitalized on the results of such quests in forms of journeys if they had taken on the concepts of surveillance and panopticon along taking on the issue of mobility and travel in searching for freedom.

As demonstrated, there are numerous scholarly and critical pieces that seek to depict the way Jack Kerouac has been able to portray the ways individuals can resist power, introduce himself as a leader

of resisting the state, and inviting others to engage in activities that undermine the grip of the state on them, on the one hand, and others that aimed at drawing on the concepts put forth by Foucault to represent the state of their societies, on the other hand. However, a Foucauldian reading with a shift in focus and scope provides the reader with a more critical understanding of the novel. What justifies employing the theories and concepts of Foucault is manifold; that is, a closer look at *On the Road* in this regard will result in seeing the way Foucault helps readers differentiate the apparently oppositional such as the actions of the young travellers in the novel from the truly oppositional, emphasizing the results of the liberating actions committed by the individuals rather than taking them at face value, analyzing all the institutions, their mechanisms, and functions as to show the way all individuals are administered by the state, investigating the way institutions are perennially watching individuals in order to mold their behaviors according to established norms, subordinating them to the demands of these institutions, and making them governable.

In its close reading, this research focuses on institutions, normalization, and surveillance which stand in opposition to the concept of agency. Targeting humanism as a postmedieval understanding of who and what individuals are, Foucault dismisses the notion of agency for the modern subject, Foucault's preferred term for self or individual. The emergence of the modern institutions which culminated in

the twentieth century and manifested in the 1950s, immediately after the Second World War, led to normalizing individuals as they operated through administering and creating the desired behavior in order to better control; as the states need to examine, watch over, punish deviants, normalize, and render the subjects docile, their panoptic power needs to keep the individuals under constant surveillance, ending up in the elimination of freedom of agents who seek liberation through resistance.

## MATERIALS AND METHOD

The approach adopted in this study was textual analysis in which the researcher analyzed the text in order to find the representation of the real America, both in terms of the society as well as the lives of the individuals, pictured in the novel. It was through applying this framework that the researcher aimed at rereading the novel to go below the surface of the text so as to reveal how it worked and what it really meant. Most importantly, the textual analysis adopted in this study allowed for finding out what the text did not say; as the novel romanticized the main characters' search for freedom and so tended to neglect the real workings of the society, what was said and what was left unsaid was analyzed with illustrations from the text as well as the appropriate context as evidence.

The analytical lens of this textual analysis was Foucauldian; for Foucault, the regime of the disciplinary power that the governments create is run by numerous institutions through which power is

operating. These institutions, however, need to intervene in the lives of all individuals to better control, a process that is facilitated by surveillance of all individuals at all times. Through this process, individuals become normalized subjects as they are subjugated and subordinate to the demands of the institution and the government. The researcher, thus, dealt with the places where individuals were targets of intervention by institutions that were semiautonomous and working alone as well as overlapping as they were intricately interwoven and tighten their grip on individuals from every corner. All individuals, including those who are agents in the institutions, the main characters of the novel and their close friends that they describe in the novel, the workers and those who do not work, and old men and young men are legitimate targets for institutions and normalizing operations.

In *Madness and Civilization* (1960) and *The Birth of Clinic* (1963), Foucault puts great emphasis on the way individuals are administered by the numerous institutions circulating in the society and illuminates the constriction of all individuals in the modern world. Modern power interferes in the lives of all individuals from the first day as it seeks to categorize, normalize, and govern them, drawing on the assistance of all different intuitions in the society: "In the modern age, power is everywhere, seamless, networked, and involves everyone, operating through surveillance and connected to life instead of death" (Saltman, 2014, p. 47). Consequently, the researcher was at pains to identify those institutions and examine

the way they worked towards their end of institutionalizing individuals.

Moreover, in *Power/Knowledge* (1980), Foucault maintains that, in disciplinary societies, the "power-knowledge circuits and matrices produce 'normalized' individuals through the combination of legal and moral norms with very detailed, highly structured, and tightly supervised training techniques and assignments" (Kreps, 2016, p. 41). In addition, surveillance and monitoring are exercised through reinforcing standards and systems of power/knowledge. In other words, power produces social structures and knowledge as in the case of law, religious, and academic institutions which become the expansion of power. These bodies of knowledge located in institutions combine with power in ways that they promote social control, continual classification, intervention, and institutionalizing subjects to be more effectively administered. The study would, therefore, grapple with subjects as they internalized such power/knowledge and operated like links in the power chain without actually knowing it.

Power, for Foucault, is spread out throughout institutions such as military, industrial, educational, and the like to administer the entire population. In consequence, it is not merely through institutions that specifically aim at correcting behavior, but through all institutions in the modern society that behaviors are normalized and being ordinary becomes the norm. In order for institutions to forge normalized subjects, they need to operate through constant surveillance



through which “[A] real subjection is born mechanically from a fictitious relation” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 202). In *Discipline and Punish* (1995), Foucault depicts an utterly bleak picture of modern world which has transitioned into a prison by all the prison-like institutions that seek “the accumulation and useful administration of men” (p. 303). Thus, the disciplinary power that operates through institutions by constant intervening and controlling leads to normalizing subjects that become docile and simpletons, subjects who are constituted inside institutions, outside of which they do not have any existence. This picture closely corresponds to the fates of the individuals in *On the Road* which makes it lend itself to a Foucauldian analysis.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

### **Institutions and Surveillance: Representation of American Society**

Foucault highlights schools, academic sites, hospitals, factories, army, and the family as institutions which have emerged as new forms of disciplinary power—similar to the paradigm adopted by that of prisons—that contribute substantially to “normalization, rationalization, institutionalization, control, subjectivation and embodiment connected to the social life of concrete individuals and communities” (Kakuk, 2017, p. 6). It is no coincidence, however, that Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, the two main characters, as the novel opens, have been attending a reform school and a college respectively before meeting for the first time in New York.

The case is not limited to the lives of some distinct people; rather than having certain individuals under surveillance as it was practiced in premodern power, modern power’s trace is visible in all parts of the lives of individuals. Therefore, that is not the case only for the protagonists, as other members of the society have been trapped in the same conformity inducing institutions in the society. During their travelling West, Sal and Dean encounter many people and the stories of their lives underwrite the idea that the circuits of institutions are highly at work in the wider society; from the boys they see escaping from institutions and the ones who enjoy the offers of others to the ones who are conditioned to the status quo maintained through various overlapping institutions, they all represent a society whose members are imprisoned.

The role of law which is a semiautonomous institution, aiming at reproducing the same norms and standards of the interested society with its overlapping institutions is validating and corroborating the judicial system of imprisoning and disciplinary establishments. In the same vein, the laws that the state passes become so all-pervasive that there will exist no slot from which individuals can be excluded. Along with other prisonlike institutions that dominate the wider society, the institution of law leaves individuals with no outside: “But this must also be a political relationship in that the decrees and laws must be implanted in the territory [in such a way] that no tiny corner of the realm escapes this general network of the sovereign’s orders and laws” (Foucault, 1984/2009, p. 28).

During the 'greatest ride' which is on the back of a truck with a couple of other hitchhikers, Sal sees, for the first time, the real face of America. He talks about the clothes of some of them, the way and the place they have been working, and where they have been sleeping. Finally, he envisages the real cause of escape of some of them to be law. Working in railroads in some cases and the escape of some of them due to laws bring the workings of the various institutions, specifically that of law, on display, "The blond kid was also quiet and he seemed to be running away from something, and it figured to be the law the way he looked straight ahead and wet his lips in worried thought" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 23).

Foucault's interest in law had originated in its role as a disciplinary institution that is closely interwoven with all other social practices in the society; in fact, law, as an institution, becomes a main power technology in all norm-inducing societies. For Foucault, law becomes influential in dictating norms as he contends that there is "[A] fundamental relationship between the law and the norm, and that every system of law is related to a system of norms" (Foucault, 1984/2009, p. 84).

Along the same road and during the same trip west, he meets many hitchhikers whom he guesses what they may be doing and going. When he arrives at Iowa, he meets and befriends another hitchhiker who is also from New York; Sal says that the man used to drive a truck as his job in the post

office for all the years has had worked, but now he has changed the course of his life and is looking for a girl in Denver. However, Sal contends that there was something wrong with the man as "I think he was running away from something in New York, the law most likely" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 23).

In one of the most important statements that he has made, Foucault points out to the judges of normality and argues that "The judges of normality are present everywhere. We are in the society of the teacher-judge, the doctor-judge, the educator judge, and 'social worker' judge; it is on them that the universal reign of the normative is based" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 304). The police force takes the position of judges of normality through which they specify and dictate actions that individuals must do to normalize the acts that are deemed abnormal. In part two of the novel, as Sal, Dean, Marylou, and Ed Dunkel are driving towards New Orleans, they are stopped by the police as Ed Dunkel speeds and moves in the wrong direction on the highway.

After being taken to the police station, the police officer in charge examines all of them personally to see what is wrong with them: driving at more than 80, driving in the wrong direction, three men and a young woman together in a car, driving at night, and having fifty dollars in one's wallet for these people who do not look rich are not normal and, finally, when Dean tells the police officer they have no charge to send him to prison, he answers that "Never mind what charge" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 136) as their abnormality is a great charge. The



police fines Dean twenty-five dollars and although they have only fifty dollars for the whole remaining distance, they have to pay it; later, when Ed says that he goes to jail instead of paying the fine, the same police officer insists that he will not allow them to pass and send them back to Pennsylvania if they do not pay the fine. Breaking the driving rules starts the examination of their normality by a force that goes beyond its job in judging individuals according to their arbitrary rules.

The function of the police as an institution is also highlighted by Foucault where he goes back to the sinister idea of surveillance drawn from Bentham's (1748-1832) panopticon. Bentham proposed a new way to design prisons in which all the cells are facing inward; this allows the guards who inhabit a circular tower at the center to see prisoners perpetually in all directions and all the cells perennially without their being watched by the prisoners which is interpreted as the eye in the sky in the modern world where surveillance is all around individuals. In modern American society, the state seeks to supervise every action by the individuals in which "Society is a type of prison, with the police playing the role of the guard, concerning themselves with those things of every moment" (Koritansky, 2011, p. 212).

On a similar note, along all the roads they travel, Sal and Dean are watched and most of the time stopped by the police. However, it is not that the police want all drivers to observe the rules but, on the contrary, they want them to be as normal as possible:

The American police are involved in psychological warfare against those Americans who don't frighten them with imposing papers and threats. It's a Victorian police force; it peers out of musty windows and wants to inquire about everything, and can make crimes if the crimes don't exist to its satisfaction. (Kerouac, 2003, p. 137).

Consequently, the police are not a force that can help drivers drive safely but they act as a restrictive power that are allowed to look into the internal secret and private spaces. As the police officers look into their car, they find something abnormal with the travellers which heightens their willingness to interfere to prove that they are abnormal, leading to their efforts at making them normal by taking care of them which is fulfilled through fining them.

Another aspect of the life of people in America becomes evident in Old Bull Lee's -- Dean and Sal's mentor and a writer--arguments about the way American government kills thousands of people every year only to preserve the status quo and keep workers in factories. He argues that they have made some car tires that never blow up, clothes that never get old, houses that never collapse, and many others, but they need to keep workers in their job only to be there:

These bastards have invented plastics by which they could make houses that last forever. And tires. ... Same with clothes. They can make clothes that last forever. They prefer making cheap goods so's everybody'll have to go on working and punching timeclocks and organizing themselves in sullen unions and floundering

around while the big grab goes on in Washington and Moscow. (Kerouac, 2003, pp. 149-150).

Here Old Bull Lee admits that factories, as institutions, have been established by the state to make goods as their secondary aim as they can make products that will last almost forever; their primary aim is, however, forging environments that people have to go to 'work', 'punch timeclocks', 'organize themselves in unions', all of which aims at normalizing: "It was a question of distributing individuals in a space in which one might isolate them and map them" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 144). Working in factories for the American government has a lot of advantages; on the one hand, factories are places that have actualized a new type of surveillance which was, unlike before-modern surveillance forms, intense and perennial which did not account for merely the production process but also "it took into account the activity of men, their skill, the way they set about their tasks, their promptness, their zeal, their behavior" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 175.). The surveillance carried on in factories leads to development in the production and, along the same line, becomes a technology of power in disciplining individuals.

According to Foucault, power, in the modern world, is wielded both through the public and the private spheres in any society (Ransom, 1997). For Foucault, the disciplinary forms of many institutions are highly influential in coercive technologies employed to affect behavior. Listed along institutions such as the army, the workshops

or factories, the school, and the judicial system, Foucault contends, family is a major force in eliminating behaviors that are not normal and ordinary (Foucault, 1975/1995). Along the same line, on more than one occasion, Dean and Sal become parts of a family. During their time in Denver, they live with the Okie family which they remember as their 'sweet little family'. One of the main functions of the institutions becomes coercing, shaping, and training; the roles that parents and members of families take are manifold as they become judges of normality, teachers, officers, and, thus, they end up following the roles that governments have set for them. When Foucault likens the institutions of prison, school, army, and family, parents become the same prisoners that take charge of prisons. It is no coincidence that the last institution that renders almost all the characters feckless and without any determination to pursue their freedom, at the end of the novel, is family.

As the fourth part of the book opens, Sal is seen starting to travel alone without Dean as he is living with a family with his wife, Inez, and a small child and working at a parking garage in New York. Before setting off, Dean and Sal talk about their lives and there Dean says that he is happy with his life now. He believes that Inez has made a difference in his life and now it is the time he wants to get old like this with a family. While saying goodbye, Sal tells Dean that he wishes that one day they could have their families live on the same street: "All I hope, Dean, is someday we'll be able to live on the

same street with our families and get to be a couple of oldtimers together.” (Kerouac, 2003, p. 169)

Family becomes a prisonlike structure which reproduces the productive norms of discipline set by the government to disseminate conformity in the society. Family is, thus, a fatal, closed institutional circuit “for the effects of a normative matrix” (Raffnsøe et al., 2015, p. 144). The head of the family acts similar to all other institutional agents in disseminating governmentality—making individuals governable.

#### **Normalization: Representation of American Lives**

The matrix was a term used by Foucault to characterize a structure of various distinct materials aimed at controlling and seducing, resulting in asserting control over individuals and rendering them unconscious so as keep them under the control of all pervasive powers from institutions. The power of these interwoven institutions is actualized through the matrix that explains “the elaboration of a whole range of techniques and practices for the discipline, surveillance, administration and formation of populations of human individuals (Foucault, 1977/1980, p. 329). Although most individuals want to escape from the imprisoning power of an institution to gain freedom, they simply exchange one institution for another; there is no outside the matrix, as Foucault would say.

Dean, for instance, who has recently been released from a reform school, thinks that he is now totally free in his life. On the

surface, however, he is true; he embarks on different journeys throughout the United States. However, the first institution that emerges immensely powerful is the institution of law as, with the beginning of the novel, it becomes obvious that Dean has spent long stints of time in reform schools due to breaking and violating laws and, consequently, he needs to follow laws as he will be punished again and again in case of disobeying it. Reform school is another dominant site which overlaps with the institution of law in creating obedient subjects. However, the matrix that has started with the institution of law and reform school gives way to the institution of family which imprisons him from another aspect; having affairs with two different women and married to both of them on different time spans makes him even more entangled in a web from which there is no escape. The police force, as an institution, has also made him completely mad as he is constantly watched and intervened through his trips by officers who try to make others conform to their arbitrary rules and regulations. The matrix has also incorporated the institution of prison which “with its systems of insertion, distribution, surveillance, observation, has been the greatest support, in modern society, of the normalizing power” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 304). Dean has spent five years in prison which has had a profound effect in making him conform to the norms; however, the right to live for Dean has transitioned to the right to conform.

In the second part of the novel which starts almost a year after the beginning of the friendship between Dean and Sal, Sal starts by saying that he had stayed the whole time at home, finishing his book, and that he had started going to school on the GI Bill of rights. Arriving in San Francisco after his time in Los Angeles, Sal stays with Remi Boncoeur, an old friend from college, and his girl Lee Ann. After a short time, he decides that he wants to work there and Remi finds him a job as a guard, a part of the police force, in the shipyard barracks. This is probably the only and best place Sal can find a job; however, the guards there have formerly been mostly police officers who have devoted their entire lives to enforcing the law and maintaining order and status quo; in their free time, they go on telling each other stories of the way they have arrested people on different occasions. One of the tasks that Sal needs to undertake is to establish order in barracks which are too noisy; instead of remaining an abnormal individual in the society, he becomes part of the guardians of the society who try to keep everything normal. When Sal starts his work as a guard in California, not only is he under the surveillance of other guards who used to be cops themselves, but he has also become one of them who have the responsibility of maintaining order. Sal's life has been limited by the matrix of institutions that started with that of academia, was under perennial surveillance of the institutions of police and law throughout his life, maintained by that of serving as a guard which was a branch of police working alongside many

other ex-police officers, and ended with that of family; along with Dean and Henry, Sal becomes an institutional man by the institutional matrices of academia, police, and family.

On his way from New York to Denver, Sal makes friends with a boy called Henry Glass. He starts talking about his days in prison and argues that he was in solitary confinement much of the time and, during all that time, he was given a Bible to read. He goes even before that to the time when he was thirteen; as he was watching a movie, someone said a four lettered word about his mother and he used a jacket to kill him although people did not let him do it. From then on, he argues, he had been in reform schools and prisons almost the whole time. When Sal starts talking, he first tells him that he should be more careful and stop doing such perilous activities to which Henry agrees and says that he is going back to his family as his brother has found him a job: "He was on his way to live with his brother and sister-in-law; they had a job for him in Colorado. His ticket was bought by the feds, his destination the parole" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 257).

Henry's life illuminates all the normative strategies and forms of institutional dominance brought about by chockfull matrices through which "we are promised normalization and happiness" (Dreyfus & Rainbow, 1983, p. 196). Under the rules of the institution of law, he has lived most of his life in reform schools and prisons, and in such institutions he has been made to read, learn, and memorize Bible. As the institution

of family is ready to welcome him, he is sent home to be under the surveillance of another institution where he will start working in a system that makes him all the more normal. The trajectory of transitioning abnormal into governable subjects becomes finished when he is bound by a spectrum of institutions that have been at issue for other members of the society in the same way. In a predictable ending to an otherwise shocking advice, Sal acts as a government agent when he tells him he must stop being abnormal so as to lead a *happy* life: "You better take it easy from now" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 257). After they arrive in Denver, Henry tries to sell his suit but the pawnbroker does not accept the deal as he knows he has been a prisoner and will never come back for his suit; not surprisingly, "All of Larimer Street was overrun with ex-cons trying to sell their prison-spun suits" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 257).

Foucault opines that the purposes of institutions are "to produce bodies that were both docile and capable" (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 294). These institutions turn out people who are educated, reformed, cured in some way, and then they will be docile and manageable but also capable and strong to do what society needs them to do (Foucault, 1975/1995). Foucault's sinister view on the way that institutional control extends throughout modern society comes completely true in the novel as he refers to modern society as a carceral one which is an institutional prison in a way that individuals willingly submit to this kind of control of body and soul.

While the novel starts with telling the lives of two people who are on the

verge of exiting two institutions of reform schools and universities, it ends with the two protagonists transitioning from one institution to the other which is that of the family at the fifth part of the novel. Sal talks about Dean's life and how he left Inez for Camilla to live with her and his two daughters forever, something that Sal is happy about as Dean starts to settle down finally with his family: "So Dean's life was settled with his most constant, most embittered, and best-knowing wife Camille, and I thanked God for him" (Kerouac, 2003, p. 306).

Finally, Sal follows the same path in finding the family as the last haven; Remi Bonceor has invited Sal and Laura, the girl Sal had always wanted to be with, and it is the time that Dean must leave. Dean asks Sal to take him but Remi disagrees and says that he does not want Sal's idiot friends. The two needs to part as Sal sat in the back of the Cadillac and waved at him:

Dean, ragged in a moth-eaten overcoat he brought specially for the freezing temperatures of the East, walked off alone, and the last I saw of him he rounded the corner of Seventh Avenue, eyes on the street ahead, and bent to it again. (Kerouac, 2003, pp. 306-307).

The protagonists along with many other Beats have now normal lives with their families and some of them, including Sal, go back to either school or college and drive Cadilacs, all of which characterize a bleak reunion with the normal and the ordinary people and way of life at the end of the novel.

## CONCLUSION

Political philosophers and writers have allotted much of their writing to the question of people being affected by the governments in making them follow the established footsteps set for them. The 1950s was one of the critical decades when both dissenting voices along with conformists came into prominence. An overwhelming urge by the state and its corroborators at normalizing individuals is a dominant theme in Foucault's political theory which stands out in most of his major works. In the same vein, *On the Road* depicts the same characteristics that Foucault had attributed to all modern states where different institutions, along with other satellite institutions, work in tandem in transitioning all abnormal individuals into institutionalized men who fit in their conformist society.

The findings of this study demonstrate that Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty's lives are strictly limited by the matrices that American government has forged by the chockfull institutions that have undertaken the task of shattering the identity of the abnormal. Sal's life is strictly administered by a wide spectrum of institutions that starts with a college, the supervision of the police force and the law, working for the police force, and that of family. Along the same line, Dean starts with a reform school and prison, is controlled by the police, and the family, which he finds the only way to lead a normal life and be as normal as other people. Other people that Sal and Dean encounter such as Henry, coupled with almost all others, follow the same logic in their lives

where they end as simpletons, meek, and docile individuals whose lives characterize the fall of individuality in America.

*On the Road* provides but one example of a literary work that seeks to represent political, social, and cultural climate of the immediate years after the Second World War; the novel has been singled out to demonstrate that climate despite the fact that many other works of the Beat Generation and other works of that decade could have served equally well. The relationship between the government and the people continues to be a major occupation in literature and literary studies; despite the fact that this study has been limited in its analysis of only one novel of the decade, it will, however, open horizons for all researchers who think critically to have an opportunity to engage other political theories of reading as well as other literary works of the time in surveying, analyzing, and investigating the political, social, and cultural climate of the era.

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