

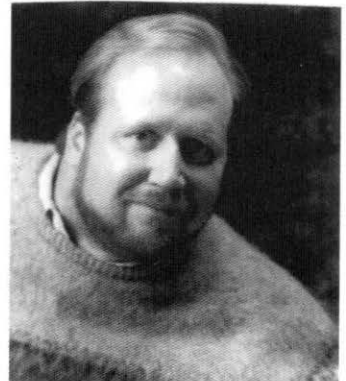
## The Paradox of Solitude: Jack Kerouac and Thomas Merton

By **Robert Ginn**

Although Thomas Merton and “beat” author Jack Kerouac are not often associated with each other, they have much more in common than is generally realized. Members of the same generation, each found his time at Columbia University<sup>1</sup> an experience that profoundly affected the future direction of his life and life’s work. One a convert to Catholicism, the other a cradle Catholic who drifted away from the Church and formal religion, both were engaged in a fundamentally religious quest for meaning and were steeped in a profoundly Catholic sensibility, supplemented by Zen studies which enabled them to distance themselves from certain aspects of American life. Both writers are best known for books in which they recorded their attempts to live apart from “mainstream America,” thus encouraging readers to inform their own independence with insights gained in solitude. While the adult pilgrimages of Merton and Kerouac went in very different directions, they began in the same place, and continue to reveal haunting similarities even when they are farthest apart.

Kerouac is of course best known as the “avatar of the ‘beat’ generation, peripatetic seeker of individual freedom from the confines of conformist society, and forerunner of the counterculture of the 1960s.”<sup>2</sup> But Merton’s life leading up to his 1938 conversion to Catholicism had a “beat” quality to it as well. His Columbia friend Ed Rice wrote, in 1985: “Some people think that Thomas Merton was the prototype of all the beat young men ‘hung up in this sad world.’ Obliquely and in confusion, with many false starts and up countless blind alleys he finally worked his way out of the modern trap and found a measure of peace in the silence and solitude of Gethsemani. Others of course are still looking.”<sup>3</sup>

The cogency of Rice’s point is illustrated by the similarities and differences between Kerouac’s and Merton’s response to the New York City “scene” they both encountered at and around Columbia. Allen Ginsberg, William Burroughs and other progenitors of “beat writing” introduced Kerouac to the mysterious night world of Times Square and its environs. In a 1959 essay, “Beatific: The Origins of the Beat



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Generation,” Kerouac responded to the concerted attack on his own work and the beat phenomenon in general by locating its roots in a spiritual revival he first discovered among the outcasts of Times Square:

One of them, Huncke of Chicago, came up to me and said “Man, I’m beat.” I knew right away what he meant somehow. . . . [T]he hipsters, whose music was bop, they looked like criminals but they kept talking about the same things I liked, long outlines of personal experience and vision, nightlong confessions full of hope that had become illicit and repressed by War, stirrings, rumblings of a new soul (that same old human soul). And so Huncke appeared to us and said “I’m beat” with a radiant light shining out of his despairing eyes.<sup>4</sup>

For Merton this same New York scene,<sup>5</sup> which he also knew well from personal experience, became a potent metaphor for the world he consciously rejected.

Three or four nights a week my fraternity brothers and I would go flying down in the black and roaring subway to 52nd Street, where we would crawl around the tiny, noisy and expensive nightclubs that had flowered on the sites of the old speakeasies in the cellars of those dirty brownstone houses. There we would sit, for hours, packed in those dark rooms, shoulder to shoulder with a lot of surly strangers and their girls, while the whole place rocked and surged with storms of jazz. There was no room to dance. We just huddled there between the blue walls, shoulder to shoulder and elbow to elbow, crouching and deafened and taciturn. If you moved your arm to get your drink you nearly knocked the next man off his stool. And the waiters fought their way back and forth through the sea of unfriendly heads, taking away the money of all the people.

It was not that we got drunk. No, it was this strange business of sitting in a room full of people and drinking without much speech, and letting yourself be deafened by the jazz that throbbed through the whole sea of bodies binding them all together in a kind of fluid medium. It was a strange, animal travesty of mysticism, sitting in those booming rooms, with the noise pouring through you, and, the rhythm jumping and throbbing in the marrow of your bones. You couldn’t call any of that, *per se*, a mortal sin. We just sat there, that was all. If we got hangovers the next day, it was more because of smoking and nervous exhaustion than anything else.<sup>6</sup>

For Merton, the search for meaning led him away from this world; for Kerouac, a similar search plunged him more deeply into it.

Born into a deeply pious French-Canadian family in Lowell, Massachusetts, on March 12, 1922, Kerouac never succeeded in cutting himself off from his Catholic roots.

From early childhood, Kerouac had identified himself with a human, “low Christology.”

Catholic doctrinal formalities paled before his desire to have “God show me his face.” In his first novel, *The Town and the City*, Jack’s character thought of the church as the home of the “Jesus suffering and heroic, dark, dark, Jesus and his cross, dark great sacrificial Jesus the hero and the Lamb. . . . He had wept at the spectacle of that heroic sorrow.” The intensity of the protagonist’s relationship with God increases: “Then the boy looked up at the altar manger and saw that he too must suffer and be crucified like the Child Jesus there, who was crucified for his sake, but who also pointed out what was going to happen to him, for he too was a child with a holy mother, therefore he too would be drawn towards Calvary and the wind would begin to howl and everything would get dark.”<sup>7</sup>

One of Kerouac’s biographers has suggested that the combination of Jack’s early Catholic inculcation and his hypersensitivity to criticism resulted in his pervasive guilt about his own unworthiness.<sup>8</sup> Jack was never as *good* as his saintly brother Gerard, who died when Jack was seven, according to their mother because he was too good for this world.<sup>9</sup> His Catholic background left Kerouac with a strong sense of right and wrong, yet somehow “the will to experience all of life and not judge it only increased Jack’s need to escape it, while adding more guilt and moral confusion.”<sup>10</sup> Jack’s ambivalence became unendurable when he was alone, and he always fled to the busyness of city life. Late in life Jack admitted, “I gave up the church to ease my horrors – too much candlelight, too much wax.”<sup>11</sup>

Yet the intensity of his Catholic upbringing exerted a gravitational pull of such strength that he was incapable of escape. It was easy for him to respond to the “bleeding heart” of Jesus and to expect a rain of roses when he prayed to Saint Thérèse of Lisieux, a devotion shared with Thomas Merton. When, at age thirty four, after much flirtation with the tenets of Buddhism, Jack finally decided to compose his own “Buddhist Sutras,” he wound up writing about the Thérésian Little Way instead: “‘Love is all in all,’ said Saint Thérèse, choosing love for her vocation and pouring out her happiness from her garden by the gate with a gentle smile, pouring roses on the earth.”<sup>12</sup> Kerouac’s notion of redemption also remained distinctively Christian. Suffering becomes joy only through the sacrifice of the “chosen ones.” In Kerouac’s writings, the “chosen ones” are those “beaten down” by the triumph of American capitalism. Jack’s writing was “prophetic and visionary . . . like St. John of the Cross. . . . [What Jack wanted] to do in his writing is to redeem sorrow and pain in a very religious sense.”<sup>13</sup> It is impossible to understand Kerouac and his quest without

With the publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain* and *On the Road*, both of which became American bestsellers, Merton and Kerouac became cultural icons of dissent in America. The photographs which appeared on the first hardcover editions of *Seven Storey Mountain* and *On the Road* are instructive. On the back of the first there are photographs of the abbey at Gethsemani, Trappist monks working in the field, and Trappist monks in line for prayer. *On the Road* sports a photograph portraying Kerouac as ruggedly handsome – a determined traveler on a road which could lead anywhere. One is an image of stability, the other of restlessness. Yet just as Merton’s own restlessness never completely disappeared during his quarter-century at Gethsemani, Kerouac’s fascination with yet aversion to soli-

tude forms the theme of some of his most characteristic writing.

Kerouac's deeply ambivalent experience of solitude is most poignantly revealed in three autobiographical novels. *The Dharma Bums*<sup>14</sup> was written in 1957 about Kerouac's friendship with Gary Snyder, whom he met in 1955. Book One of *Desolation Angels*<sup>15</sup> was written in 1956 about Kerouac's work that same year as fire lookout in Mt. Baker National Forest, Washington. *Big Sur*<sup>16</sup> was written in 1961 about Kerouac's stay at a house at Bixby Canyon (Big Sur) where Kerouac suffers "alcoholic horrors and nervous breakdown." Kerouac's accounts relate repeated, and repeatedly frustrated, attempts to attain inner peace in solitude. In *Dharma Bums*, *Desolation Angels* and *Big Sur*, Kerouac eventually flees from the silence of solitude for the busyness of city life. While Kerouac's three novels are records of the failure to live in solitude, they poignantly and accurately record the human thirst for solitude as well as the difficulties it entails and the discipline it demands. They provide a foil against which to view Merton's own efforts to live the solitary life and to articulate it, while Merton's writings suggest elements missing in Kerouac's quest to find peace in solitude.

In *Dharma Bums*, Kerouac describes a hike he took on Mt. Tamalpais with fellow writer Gary Snyder. Snyder, unlike Kerouac, was an experienced practitioner of Zen, who would soon leave for a three-year stay in Japan to complete his study. The contrast between Kerouac's and Snyder's experience on the hike suggests the reason for his malaise in the wilderness was related to Kerouac's Catholic background. To many of the "beat writers," hiking "freed them from a dependency on non-essential, human things, and ground them in 'rock air fire wood' – the elements of nature" (*DB* 97-98). During their hike together Snyder reveled in the natural world. His spiritual celebration is expressed in the poems he wrote during the hike.<sup>17</sup> "It seems the inhuman world of nature is my clearest vision," Snyder wrote on May 7, 1956. On the most superficial level, Kerouac was too interested in Hershey Bars and cheap port wine to share in Snyder's enthusiasm. But one commentator has suggested Kerouac's disinterest in nature was due principally to "his Christian upbringing,"<sup>18</sup> which kept him preoccupied with human problems even in the midst of "the inhuman world of nature." During the hike, Kerouac seemed obsessed with suffering in the world: "[Gary], do you think God made the world to amuse himself because he was bored? Because if so he would have to be mean" (*DB* 200). Kerouac writes that suffering exists "due to the ignorance of sentient beings. . . . [God] emanated the sentient beings and their ignorance too. It's all too pitiful. I ain't gonna rest till I find out *why* . . ." (*DB* 201). For Kerouac, solitude could not compensate for or bring detachment from human suffering.

In the Judeo-Christian tradition, wilderness represents the location but does not provide the *substance* of revelation. Moses goes up the mountain to receive the self-revelation, the *logos* of God. Epiphanies occur in the wilderness because there is less distraction there. But for Kerouac the wilderness was hell, and he is restless in the quietude. This experience was in harmony with another dimension of Biblical usage where "the wilderness is depicted . . . [as] a place to be feared rather than treasured."<sup>19</sup> Jack's beat was the city, where

“the public” staggered in steps with mechanical, not natural, rhythms (*DB* 201). It is no surprise that when Kerouac returned to Mount Tamalpais after Snyder’s departure to Japan he got lost several times and became so lonely that he stayed only one night.<sup>20</sup>

But it was not only the problems of other people that Kerouac could not avoid in solitude. His own problems followed him into the wilderness as well. In the summer of 1956 Kerouac tried to live the life of solitude he’d often written and talked about. On June 18, Jack headed for the Cascade Range in northwest Washington to report for his summer job as firewatch with the Forestry Service at Mt. Baker National Forest. During the sixty-three days he spent on Desolation Peak, Kerouac kept a journal, “Desolation in Solitude,” that became his book about the “Angels of Desolation” who visited him on the mountain. The “angels” included all the visionary characters who were his only company on the mountain he called “Hozomeen Void.”

The reality of solitude was considerably different from what he expected. “What did I learn on Gwaddawackamblack? I learned that I hate myself because by myself I am only myself and not even that . . .” (*DA* 68). As always, Jack wanted to leave the quiet of the country for the noise of the city. “I want to come down RIGHT AWAY because the smell of onions on my hand as I bring Blueberries to my lips on the mountainside suddenly reminds me of the smell of hamburgers and raw onions and coffee and dishwater in lunch carts of the World to which I want to return at once” (*DA* 68). Kerouac’s eight weeks on Desolation Peak were “monotonous, uneventful and boring.”<sup>21</sup> By the end of it what Kerouac felt most intensely was his own loneliness and self-hatred. “Let there be rain on red brick walls and I got a place to go and poems to write about hearts not just rocks – Desolation Adventure finds me finding at the bottom of myself abysmal nothingness worse than an illusion even – my mind’s in rags –” (*DA* 68). Kerouac’s restlessness with solitude shows in the tedious and mediocre prose of *Desolation Angels*.

Although Kerouac wanted to memorialize his sojourn in solitude, he had nothing meaningful to say about solitude until *Big Sur*, which in fact marks the definitive failure of his search for solitude. From 1957-1960 Jack had uneasily endured the popularity which arose from publication of *On the Road*, and he imagined that a solitary retreat to Big Sur would be a welcome change. Instead of getting a fresh start on the morning he was to go, however, Jack “[woke] up all woebegone and goopy, groaning from another drinking bout . . .” (*BS* 3). “[I]nstead of going thru smooth and easy I [woke] up drunk, sick, disgusted, frightened, in fact terrified” (*BS* 5). When waking up he heard “the lachrymose cries of a Salvation Army meeting” on the corner below his window:

*Satan* is the cause of your alcoholism, *Satan* is the cause of your immorality, *Satan* is *everywhere* workin’ to destroy you unless you repent *now* and worse than that the sound of old drunks throwing up in rooms next to mine, the creak of hall steps, the moans everywhere – I including the moan that had awakened me, my own moan in the lumpy bed, a moan caused by a big

roaring Whoo Whoo in my head that had shot me out of my pillow like a ghost (BS 6).

From the purgation of his hangover he imagines, again, that his salvation lies in solitude. “I look around the dismal cell there’s my hopeful rucksack all neatly packed with everything necessary to live in the woods . . .” (BS 7). He hikes “thru lost alleys of Russian sorrow where bums sit head on knees in foggy doorways in the goopy eerie city night I’ve got to escape or die” (BS 8). But from the beginning of *Big Sur*, Kerouac senses danger when venturing into solitude: “I sense something wrong.” He descends the hill from the highway to the cabin in darkness. The sound of the sea behind him is an “aerial roaring mystery in the dark – . . . a void. . . . The sea roar is like a dog in the fog down there, sometimes it booms the earth but my God where is the earth and how can the sea be underground!” (BS 10). The sea becomes a “roaring high horror of darkness” (BS 10). Kerouac’s sense of foreboding expressed throughout *Big Sur* indicates that the retreat is not what he expected. Jack knows his evasion will result in the ultimate emptiness of his loneliness. He is descending into solitude, but while Dante emerged from his dark wood to begin his sojourn into the Inferno, Kerouac is without a guide. “There are glades down there, ferns of horror and slippery logs, mosses, dangerous splashing humid mists rise coldly like the breath of death. . . . I’m *afraid* to go down there” (BS 12).

Kerouac catalogues the ominous features of the terrain. There is a “sheer drop,” and he climbs down a trail which is nearly impassable because of the fog. His flashlight provides little guidance:

[A]nd to make things heart-thumpingly horrible you come to a little end in what is now just a trail and there’s the booming surf coming at you whitecapped crashing down on sand as tho it was higher than where you stand, like a sudden tidal wave world enough to make you step back or run back to the hills – (BS 14).

Even the sea is sinister, with its “crashing high waves . . . full of huge black rocks rising like old gruesome castles dripping wet slime, a billion years of woe right there . . .” (BS 15). The apex of the scene is a reminder of human death itself:

and you look up at that unbelievably high bridge and feel death and for good reason: because underneath the bridge, in the sand right beside the sea cliff, *hump*, your heart sinks to see it: the automobile that crashed thru the bridge a decade ago and fell one thousand feet straight down and landed upside down, is still there now, . . . and no more people – (BS 15).

The idyllic landscape of *Big Sur* is transformed by Kerouac’s imagination into a Blakean nightmare; the sea itself undergoes a gruesome metaphorical transformation in Kerouac’s rheumy-eyed vision. Jack originally agreed with Lawrence Ferlinghetti that his respite in the cabin from the publicity hounding the “kings of the beats” should last for at least three months. The “stupor of fame” weighed on him as he tried to articulate his torments. After staying only four days Jack fled the solitude. Jack packed his knapsack and returned to the

highway, intending to hitchhike into Monterey and catch a bus to see his buddies and party in San Francisco. “[I]t’s finally only in the woods you get that nostalgia for ‘cities’ . . . where soft evenings’l unfold like Paris” (*BS* 22), Jack writes. As in *Desolation Angels*, Kerouac incessantly expresses his desire to be on the road to something, somewhere.

One critic of *Big Sur* interpreted the book as being a proof text of the failure of the whole “beat movement”:

[I]n *Big Sur*. . . Kerouac believes that his life at its best is dedicated, religious and even beatific. *On the Road* and *The Dharma Bums* are manifestos for the beat way of life, and a mirror of beat mores. But now a surprise. In *Big Sur*, the mirror is hammered at, and it shatters. . . . What does count is that the Kerouac hero “cracks up” in *Big Sur*, and cracks up . . . while doing the things he has always liked best to do. It is a bitter irony, and the force of it produces what is certainly Kerouac’s grittiest novel to date and the one which will be read with the most respect by those skeptical of all the Beat business in the first place.<sup>22</sup>

This judgment is perhaps too broad and over-reaching. Other beats, including Gary Snyder and Allen Ginsberg, were able to maintain healthy doses of solitude as part of their spiritual practice. It would be more accurate to read *Big Sur* as an experience unique to Kerouac, written after years of alcoholism, when Jack was running out of strategies to evade himself. *Big Sur* was written to explain “why after three weeks of perfect happy peace and adjustment in these strange woods my soul went down the drain. . . .” (*BS* 19). But it does provide testimony to the challenges posed by the quest for solitude, challenges of which Thomas Merton was equally aware, but which he was able to surmount in more creative and more permanent fashion.

Merton’s years of spiritual training in the monastery allowed him to conquer many of the “dangers” of solitude within the context of a supportive community while developing a relationship with God that would not only *sustain* him in solitude but allow his time alone to be fruitful and dynamic. Kerouac, on the other hand, never participated in a structured tradition of spiritual training. His spiritual quest was severely impeded by guilt, alcoholism, and a way of life that celebrated instability. His “thoughts in solitude” terrified him.

Merton’s writings provide a basis for evaluating Kerouac’s experience in solitude. Kerouac’s and Merton’s contrasting experiences suggest that people are more likely to derive benefit from solitude if they: (1) have first secured the rigors of personal solitude within a supportive community; (2) have experienced a dialogue with God within this solitude and community; (3) do not develop habits that allow a person to evade a sustained encounter with themselves within the silence that comes with solitude; (4) anticipate and confront many of the “dangers” commonly encountered by solitaries; and (5) maintain contact with an experienced spiritual advisor whose powers of discernment assist them in their solitude to maintain a proper equilibrium and perspective.

In the twenty years following the publication of *The Seven Storey Mountain*, solitude

became a principal theme in Merton's life and writing. For Merton God and solitude became inseparably linked, because it was in solitude that Merton found both himself and God. "My heart," he wrote, "consents to nothing but God and solitude."<sup>23</sup>

"Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude,"<sup>24</sup> perhaps Merton's most often quoted writing about solitude, is particularly pertinent to the issues raised by Kerouac in his own search for solitude. All people, Merton notes, are solitary, but "most are so averse to being alone, or to feeling alone," that they attempt to escape their innate solitude by indulging in cultural distractions (*DQ* 164). Other people, who recognize an unavoidable need for interior solitude, face many challenges, the foremost of which is "the disconcerting task of facing and accepting one's own absurdity. The anguish of realizing that underneath the apparently logical pattern of a more or less 'well-organized' and rational life, there lies an abyss of irrationality, confusion, pointlessness, and indeed apparent chaos" is daunting even to the most committed (*DQ* 165). Having genuine faith in God requires that a person face the "apparent absurdity of life" (*DQ* 166). Every solitary must take responsibility for his or her inner life (*DQ* 166). Death proves that every person is a solitary for when a person dies, "they die alone" (*DQ* 166). It is a "special vocation" to realize directly that "the wrestling with one's solitude is . . . a life-work, a 'life agony'" (*DQ* 167). Thus Kerouac's confrontation with absurdity and his own mortality is evidence not, as he himself may have thought, of his unsuitability for solitude, but that he was engaging in root issues posed by the solitary life.

Likewise his concern for human suffering on Mount Tamalpais did not disqualify him for solitude. The solitary, Merton writes, is called not to withdraw from society, but to transcend it, "to attain to union on a higher and more spiritual level – the mystical level of the Body of Christ" (*DQ* 168). The person committed to interior solitude must be humble and avoid self-assertion and self-absorption. Paradoxically, one cannot be a true solitary on one's own. The following words may serve as Merton's judgment of efforts such as those of Kerouac which lack the discipline of a tradition: "[A]n individualist's non-conformity is nothing but an act of rebellion: the substitution of idols and illusions of his own choosing for those chosen by society. And this, of course, is the greatest of dangers. It is both futility and madness. It leads only to ruin" (*DQ* 170).

Kerouac's goal in solitude was silence, and peace – a quieting of the restless mind trapped in a compulsively restless body. Kerouac's *Dharma*, *Desolation*, and *Big Sur* demonstrate that Kerouac's forays into solitude were filled with "futility and madness" and led to "ruin." The foreshadowing of ultimate failure in *Big Sur* is so prominent that the book ends at the gallows, with all the inevitability of a person sleeping who comes upon his dreams: "[A]s Heraclitus said long ago, 'We must not act and speak like sleepers . . . The waking have one common world, but the sleeping turn aside each into a world of his own'" (*BS* 170).

Yet if Merton's reflections on solitude serve as an implicit critique of Kerouac's frustrated efforts, he would certainly recognize in these efforts the struggles of a kindred spirit,



whose brutal honesty about his own failures is itself at least a preliminary fruit of the quest for self in solitude. It is no accident that one recent cultural historian has linked Merton and Kerouac as “the Last Catholic Romantics,”<sup>25</sup> nor that Merton invited Kerouac to contribute to *Monks Pond*, the “little magazine” Merton edited during the last year of his life. In “A Poem Dedicated to Thomas Merton,” which appeared in the second issue of *Monks Pond*, the gentle spirit of Kerouac’s lines suggest that perhaps his encounters with solitude were not a complete failure after all:

Not oft  
     the snow  
         so soft  
             the holy bow.<sup>26</sup>

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1. Kerouac arrived at Columbia in 1940, at the same time that Merton was leaving to begin his teaching career at St. Bonaventure College. In September 1941, as America grew closer to entering the Second World War, Kerouac quit school and hit the road.
  2. Richard Sorrell, “The Catholicism of Jack Kerouac,” *Sciences Religieuses* 2 (1982) 189.
  3. Edward Rice, “The Merton Enigma: Review of *The Seven Mountains of Thomas Merton*,” *Parabola* 10.1 (1985) 117.
  4. Kerouac, “Beatific: The Origins of the Beat Generation,” in Ann Charters, ed. *The Portable Jack Kerouac* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1995) 568-69.
  5. It is interesting how reminiscent Merton’s prose is of Kerouac’s, especially in the second paragraph.
  6. Thomas Merton, *The Seven Storey Mountain* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1948) 157.
  7. Jack Kerouac, *The Town and the City* (New York: Harcourt, Brace, 1950) 117-18; it is interesting to note that this first book, like *The Seven Storey Mountain*, was accepted for publication by Robert Giroux.
  8. Tom Clark, *Jack Kerouac: A Biography* (New York: Marlowe & Company, 1984) xiv.
  9. Jack Kerouac, *Visions of Gerard* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1958) 131.
  10. Clark, *Jack Kerouac* xiv-xv.
  11. Jack Kerouac, *Dr. Sax* (New York: Grove Press, 1959) 66.
  12. Jack Kerouac, *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity* (New York: Corinth Books, 1960) 34.
  13. Gerald Nicosia, “Jack Kerouac: An American Tragedy?” *Kerouac Connection* 29 (Spring 1994) 17.
  14. Jack Kerouac, *The Dharma Bums* (New York: Viking Penguin, 1959); subsequent references to “DB” will be incorporated parenthetically in the text.
  15. Jack Kerouac, *Desolation Angels* (New York: Riverhead Books, 1995); subsequent references to “DA” will be incorporated parenthetically in the text.
  16. Jack Kerouac, *Big Sur* (New York: McGraw Hill, 1962) subsequent references to “BS” will be incorporated parenthetically in the text.
  17. See, e.g., Snyder’s Journal Entries for May 15, 1956, referenced in David Robertson, “Real Matter, Spiritual Mountain: Gary Snyder and Jack Kerouac on Mt. Tamalpais,” *Western American Literature* 27.3 (Fall 1992) 209-26.
  18. Robertson 221.
  19. Diane Bergant, “The Desert in Biblical Tradition,” *The Bible Today* 31.3 (May 1993) 137.
  20. Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe: A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994) 526.
  21. Ann Charters, *Kerouac: A Biography* (New York: Warner Books, 1974) 262.
  22. Michael Grieg, *New York Times Book Review* (16 September 1962) 4.
  23. Letter of May 6, 1950, quoted in Sr. Thérèse Lentfoehr, “The Spiritual Writer,” in *Thomas Merton, Monk*, ed. Patrick Hart, OCSO (Kansas City: Sheed, Andrews & McMeel, 1974) 105.
  24. Thomas Merton, “Notes for a Philosophy of Solitude,” *Disputed Questions* (New York: Farrar, Straus & Cudahy, 1960); subsequent references to “DQ” will be incorporated parenthetically in the text.
  25. James Terrence Fisher, *The Catholic Counter-Culture in America, 1933-1962* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1989) 205.
  26. Jack Kerouac, “A Poem Dedicated to Thomas Merton,” in Thomas Merton, *Monk’s Pond*, edited with an introduction by Robert E. Daggy (Lexington, KY: University Press of Kentucky, 1989) 70.