

WOU ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

Jack Kerouac “Big Sur” Parallel Text

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Academic Excellence Showcase

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whole big on-the-road of his own—It's too much, in fact right this minute he's started telling us about circus work—On top of all that old Cody is up ahead with HIS thousand stories—We all agree it's too big to keep up with, that we're surrounded by life, that we'll never understand it, so we center it all in by swigging Scotch from the bottle and when it's empty I run out of the car and buy another one, period.

love of drugs & alcohol

But on the way to Cody's my madness already began to manifest itself in a stranger way, another one of those signposts of something wrong I mentioned a ways back; I thought I saw a flying saucer in the sky over Los Gatos—From five miles away—I look and I see this thing flying along and mention it to Dave who takes one brief look and says "Ah it's only the top of a radio tower"—It reminds me of the time I took a mescaline pill⁸ and thought an airplane was a flying saucer (a strange story this, a man has to be crazy to write it anyway).

110 words
1 period

But there's old Cody in the livingroom of his fine ranchito⁹ home sittin' over his chess set pondering a problem and right by the fresh woodfire in the fireplace his wife's set out because she knows I love fireplaces—She a good friend of mine too—The kids are sleeping in the back, it's about eleven, and good old Cody shakes my hand again—Havent seen him for several years because mainly he's just spent two years in San Quentin¹ on a stupid charge of possession of marijuana—He was on his way to work on the railroad one night and was short on time and his driving license had been already revoked for speeding so he saw two bearded bluejeaned beatniks parked, asked them to trade a quick ride to work at the railroad station for two sticks of tea,² they complied and arrested him—They were disguised policemen—For this great crime he spent two years in San Quentin in the same cell with a murderous gunman—His job was sweeping out the cotton mill room—I expect him to be all bitter and out of his head because of this but strangely and magnificently he's become quieter, more radiant, more patient, manly, more friendly even—And tho the wild frenzies of his old road days with me have banked down he still has the same taut eager face and supple muscles and looks like he's ready to go anytime—But actually loves his home (paid for by railroad insurance when he broke his leg trying to stop a boxcar from crashing), loves his wife in a way tho they fight some, loves his kids and especially his little son Timmy John partly named after me—Poor old, good old Cody sittin there with his chess set, wants immediately to challenge somebody to a chess game but only has an hour to talk to us before he goes to work supporting the family by rushing out and pushing his Nash Rambler³ down the quiet Los Gatos suburb street, jumping in, starting the motor, in fact his only complaint is that the Nash wont start without a push—No bitter complaints about society whatever from this grand and ideal man who really loves me moreover as if I deserved it,

110 words
1 period
100% repetition of Spanish
love of S.W

trust of beatnik appearance

with
by
with
road-trips

love of cars

8. Psychedelic drug obtained from buttonlike tops of the mescal cactus, used in some Native American ceremonies and popular with the beatnik subculture.
9. Small ranch (Mexican Spanish).
1. California State prison for serious offenders

located on Point Quentin, Marin County, north of San Francisco Bay.
2. Slang for marijuana; two sticks would be two marijuana cigarettes.
3. Popular American automobile, a family sedan.

But the first stop that we made on our way to Mexico to meet Miles who always greets us with his van full of weed and tequila was in Bonsall near the desert's edge off of the old Escondido Freeway where we bought a sack full of avocados from a little fruit stand to slug at the cacti as we sped on through the dusty road to the border – we've been driving in Brady's 1955 brown and blue Buick with the key scratches down the left side of the door handle and the cigarette burns in the car seats and the stains of slopped drinks on the floors – Brady drives like he was a part of the machine – his skin molding into the tan leather that sticks to our sweaty thighs and rips apart when we try to shift towards the air in the seats – we shifted a lot, fighting to grab the seat with the best view of the Mexican señoritas filling out their sun dresses with all of that oiled skin we each had a fond memory of. Up north the drive was beautiful as we came over the mountains and down the winding roads lined with precariously balanced red rocks until we saw the oil drills and the pumps churning like they were trying to keep an old man who had been alive too long breathing yet they were sucking everything dry and leaving a barren scar across the desert – hundreds of them pumping and pumping and pumping and pumping and towering higher than the surrounding trees that did not exist anymore after being taken over by these pumps and the poor suckers who lived there didn't have American flags hanging from their garages but their run down shacks with broken windows and signs of life but no life itself still managed to have a white picket fence across every tightly spaced property – Brady, Thrasher, Duke and I looked at each other and then sank into Peggy Lee's "Is That All There Is?" and took a fat hit when we sang "Let's break out the booze and have a ball if that's all there is" when we were done singing we were left in silence still amongst the eternal chain of pumps that hugged the highway and Duke broke the silence "You know this is why the intelligent life in the universe doesn't talk to us, man, we all create these worms holes in our world that we can't see – each person is an

energy vortex, a vortex that spirals and eats you alive from the inside and that makes marks even bigger than these pumps because the whole universe is made out of energy and lies flat like a pancake on top of God's stomach and each decision we make takes a big chunk out of the universe until the Buddhists get so enlightened that they take so much energy out of the universe that they sink down into God's belly button, just think how much damage the people in Los Angeles are making just by existing, not by their fancy cars and smog but just by creating psychological noise that blinds the whole universe of the celestial song, the rest of the universe is watching and I just can't handle this I just can't handle this and we need to get the hell out of here" so Brady stepped on the gas and we flew out of the shadows of the pumps and when we made it to Big Bear and down to Hesperia where we parked the car out among the coyotes and rattlesnakes and felt the vibrations of life and the highway shudder through our blanket-less bodies.

But it turned out we didn't need blankets the night was so warm and the ground felt and smelt like a warm oven radiating energy that miles away the pumps were extracting as I thought of the drifter that came by in the night – he was absolutely naked and we called him Forest and he had a friend named Cricket who brought along all sorts of different kinds of drugs but we decided on mescaline as a group and Cricket ended up breaking all of the bourbon bottles we had and baptizing us each in turn with the stinging alcohol declared that Jesus Christ, our lord and savior was on his way down to smite all those who thought Sinatra was a better singer than Johnny Cash but we were all too high to say that we liked Dizzy Gillespie and Thelonious Monk better so we just sat there under the stars and Thrasher started screaming that he had seen an alien peeking around the nearest cactus at us and that the sky was so big that he was going to fall off of the face of the earth and plunge into the sea of millions of dead suns – we all didn't believe

Thrasher not even Cricket and Forest so when we woke up the following day we saw Thrasher still gazing up at the stars with the same look of hope a kid has when he goes to see Santa at the department store – we all knew he was probably right to look up

But we put it off of our minds and hopped in the Buick and found a nice carniceria where we stocked up on tacos that didn't cost us a thing because Duke can speak Spanish and chatted up the chubby girl with the pretty face working behind the counter that reminded us of this little senorita in one of John Wayne's movies that was a sharp shooter and wrestled a bull to the ground – Duke wanted to bring her with us and in the few fragments of Spanish that I know I understood that he was calling her to a grand adventure and he could not live without her Spanish fair face of the west – Duke had always been good with the ladies...
