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African American Culture in Novels by Jack Kerouac
Bachelor's Thesis

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Prohlášení

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci na téma African American Culture in Novels by Jack Kerouac vypracovala samostatně pod odborným dohledem vedoucí práce a uvedla jsem všechny použité podklady a literaturu.

V..... dne..... Podpis.....

Poděkování

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1. Introduction

This bachelor's thesis has its aim in describing African American culture in America in the period of the 1950s and the 1960s throughout books written by Jack Kerouac. Jack Kerouac was a writer of the Beat Generation, who has his own attitude to relationships with African American people and this approach is described in his novels. His novels could be considered as his own biography and that is why they are the most appropriate for describing the true history. Jack by himself experienced a relationship with a black woman and he reflected that in one of his novels, *The Subterraneans*. Those racially segregated people played a significant part in the life of Kerouac and many characters in his books are based on those people of African American origin. That is why I wanted to start the thesis with introducing a little bit about the history of African Americans and then I would also like to introduce a chapter about jazz music, which I considered to be one of the most significant assets from African American culture. Their music contributed to the Beat Generation writing style and the reader can learn a lot about jazz and blues music in Jack Kerouac's work. Music is a part of the history and that is the reason why music should be included when talking about historical events and people in certain periods. jazz music reflects on the history of America in the 1950s and the 1960s. African American Culture is tightly connected to jazz music, which represents social and cultural background of those working-class heroes and their constant battle against racial segregation and battle for the Civil Rights. "Jack said it was all based on jazz and bop."¹ The authenticity of the African American music is captured in its ability to not only describe the historical context but also to describe the emotions and suffering of everyday life of the minority.

For this thesis I mainly picked these two books: *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*. First, I will start with the novel *On the Road* which was written in the early 1950s. The African American culture is well described by Kerouac during his journeys across the United States when he spends a lot of time with its people and became a friend with many of them. Also, this novel is very suitable for getting acquainted with jazz music and the wild parties, which Kerouac was attending back then. Kerouac and many other white people developed a relationship with black people mainly through jazz music. Jazz music played by black people was an inspiration

¹ Ann Charters, *Kerouac: a biography* (New York: St. Martin's Press. 1994), 188.

for white musicians and writers. Poets draw from jazz to get the greatest tempo in their poems, inspired by the musicians. Still, it was a constant battle with the upper society where those two different cultures found their connection.² One of the commentaries that interested me was by Charles E. Farger who in 1967 noted:

The American Negro is different from American whites. He has his own history, centering around the experience of slavery and its effects, and more recently including the rediscovery of his African heritage. The Negro has distinct cultural patterns of speech, patterns of music and dance, patterns of self-expression and relationship which may have been produced by this history, but which have outlived it and are now surviving on their own creative energy and integrity. These like white ethnic characteristics will not and should not disappear in the future. It is indeed insidious subterfuge for white supremacy to expect blacks to abandon this heritage as the price explicit or implicit for integration via assimilation into America's mainstream.³

As a second book from Jack Kerouac I have chosen a novella called *The Subterraneans*⁴, which captured a love relationship of Kerouac with African American woman. This novella is said to be based on true story. Jack really had a romance with an African American woman called Alene Lee whose name in the book is Mardou Fox. I will analyze his approach to this relationship. Kerouac was struggling with his worries about what will say his family about her skin color, also he was worried about the perception of the moralizing society.

At the end of this thesis I will summarize the whole point of connecting Jack Kerouac with African American culture and jazz music and I will summarize the contribution of the African American culture to the white culture.

² Jack Kerouac, *On the Road* (New York: Viking, 1957), e-book.

³ Charles E. Farger, quoted in Hugh J. Scott, "The African American Culture," *View Point. Commentaries on the Quest to Improve the Live Chances and the Educational Lot of the African Americans* (White Plains, NY: Pace University, 2005), 4.

⁴ Jack Keroauc, *The Subterraneans*. (New York: Ballantine Books, 1973).

2. Historical background of African American culture in America

Claude McKay - White House

Your door is shut against my tightened face,
And I am sharp as steel with discontent;
But I possess the courage and the grace
To bear my anger proudly and unbent.
The pavement slabs burn loose beneath my feet,
A chafing savage, down the decent street,
And passion rends my vitals as I pass,
Where boldly shines your shuttered doors of glass.
Oh I must search for wisdom every hour,
Deep in my wrathful bosom sore and raw,
And find in it the superhuman power
To hold me to the letter of your law!
Oh I must keep my heart inviolate
Against the potent poison of your hate.⁵

The aim of this chapter is to introduce the historical background of African Americans in context of American history in 1920-1960. The so-called great migration of African Americans from the south of the States to the north-east cities began approximately in 1916. The north-east states meant a freedom for the southern African Americans. New York was the most attractive place for the southern migrants. The aim of their journey was to get better working conditions, higher level of life and the opportunity of education. The influx of African American population to the States led to formation of black neighborhoods. The most famous ones were for example Harlem in New York. The development of the African American culture called the

⁵ "Harlem: Mecca of the New Negro," *Survey Graphic* volume VI, no. 6 (March 1925), 662.

Harlem Renaissance is perceived as a key point for the given time. New York's Harlem became a capital city of black America. Harlem attracted many black writers, artists and musicians and it is said to be a crib of African American culture. Harlem offered more opportunities for accommodation, more attractive place for living and less racism and violence than in other parts of the city. It also offered a rich cultural life, that is why the African American culture developed quickly there. Harlem was called "Mecca of the new negro".⁶

The Harlem Renaissance drew attention to quite a wide circle of white Americans. What drew the attention the most was the black music, jazz and blues. Harlem also became attractive and inspirational for many writers. African American literature was not about idealizing black people within the literature but to give a more realistic and more honest confession about black peoples' lives. Black writers of the Harlem Renaissance did not want to use literature as a means for getting better opinion and appreciation from white Americans as they wanted before, rather they were searching their own identity so that they could create their own culture.⁷

The situation in 1950s and 1960s is based on the movement called *Civil Rights*. It was an American social movement focused against racial segregation and discrimination of African Americans in the United States. Its main purpose was to change the legal status of African Americans and to abolish laws of racial segregation. One of the main historical decisions for African Americans was on the 17th of March 1954, when the Supreme Court decided that segregation in the public schools in the United States is against the law. One of the main leaders of Civil Rights movement was the black activist Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. He became a leading figure of the black opposition in 1955, when a black woman was arrested because she refused to give up her seat to a white citizen in the public transport. M. L. King was the most significant "fighter" for human rights of African Americans. He won the Nobel Peace Prize in

⁶ Gerald D. Jaynes, *Encyclopedia of African American Society*, Volume 1 (New York: Sage Publications, 2005), p. 395.

⁷ Gerard Nicosia, *Memory Babe. A Critical Biography of Jack Kerouac* (New York: Grove Press, 1983), p. 15-17.

1964, but he paid its price when he was assassinated four years later in Memphis, Tennessee. On the 2nd of July in 1964, based on President Lyndon Johnson's "welfare state" was signed the Civil Rights Act of 1964, which abolished the segregation and discrimination based on race, color or religion. A year after president Johnson signed another law called the Voting Rights Act of 1965, which abolished the voting census.⁸

⁸ <https://www.docsoffreedom.org/student/readings/the-civil-rights-movement>. Retrieved 19 April 2018.

3. African American music as a source of inspiration

3.1. Jazz

What are the connections between music and literature? Writers are not only music listeners, they are music describers. With a usage of their very own words they try not only reach what the music sounds like but they also try to get closer to the thoughts and feelings which the music represents. All of that they try to put on the paper using their own words.

Musicians are part of the history and it is necessary to perceive them as describers of history. Their testimonies of historical events are reflected in their simple songs. The postwar writers known as the Beat Generation found in jazz, or more specifically in early modern jazz called bop, a huge source of inspiration. Their admiration for jazz musicians contributed to structural composition of their works.

This chapter is dedicated to the influence of jazz music on history. The phenomenon of Black music represents a sociocultural African American milieu of the late 1940s and 1950s, which is tightly connected to the social movement fighting for human rights and racial segregation called Civil Rights. The historical situation in the sixties was based on the escalating pursuit of equality before the law, not only for African Americans. The authenticity of African American history in American continent showed up, particularly the authenticity of their music showed up. African Americans have an ability to react critically on historical situation and using music as a guide. They can capture not only the historical context but also the emotions and aspects of everyday life of the minority.

3.2. Bebop

The bebop style of jazz is a pivotal invention in twentieth-century American popular music - an outgrowth of the rhythmic and harmonic experiments of young African-American jazz musicians. At first a source of controversy because of its unorthodox approach, bebop eventually gained widespread acceptance as the foundation of "modern" jazz, and it continues to influence jazz musicians. The process of its creation was solidly grounded in New York City. Bebop emerged during the 1940s

as a reaction “Swing” and as an expression of artistic innovation within a community of younger African-American jazz musicians. Certain jazz clubs in Harlem provided a setting for experimentation that culminated in the bebop style. The style's subsequent popularization occurred in jazz clubs in midtown Manhattan, at first along 52nd Street and later on nearby sections of Broadway.⁹

The simple name bop, known also as rebop or bebop is derived from the sound of the new style and from Spanish expression arriba or riba which means ‘up’.¹⁰ Those expressions were used when scatting which was a vocal improvisation where the singer tries to imitate music instruments using his own voice. From the etymological point of view the meaning is rather onomatopoeic. Bop groups were formed from African American musicians, offspring of swing orchestra, who did not want to be a part of the ruling popular music. Those creative players were bored of corny methods in swing and they were screaming for more freedom in creating new and more experimental jazz. Swing was typical for allowing almost no space for improvisation or personal expression. Musicians started to leave the big bands and they created smaller groups where they could make their new practices limitless. Bebop was not created in one place in one time by one genius. The most common groups were quintets made of saxophone, trumpet, piano, contrabass, and drums. Sometimes was used also electrical guitar or trombone as a solo. Bebop was mostly spread in New York in the forties. The biggest effort is assigned to a saxophonist Charlie Parker and trumpeter John “Dizzy” Gillespie. Other important musicians were for example the pianists Thelonious Monk and Bud Powell or drummers Kenny Clarke and Max Roach. The evolution of bebop meant a radical change in jazz evolution. It led to deflection from almost every basic element of swing to division of jazz music into several directions.¹¹

⁹ Roger W. Stump, “The Bebop Revolution in Jazz,” *Journal of Cultural Geography* 18:1 (1998), p. 11.

¹⁰ Bohumil Geist, *Co nevíte o jazzu* (Prague: Panton, 1966), p. 119.

¹¹ Marc Myers, *Why Jazz Happened* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2012), pp. 23-28.

Another factor that contributed to the form bop was the fact that position of African American citizens started to be better in the 1940s. In those years a migration from the south to bigger industrial cities in the north took place. A growth of armament and procurement was due to entrance of American army into the Second World War which allowed African Americans to get more qualified jobs in armament factories or docks. The salary for the same amount of work was lower for African Americans but it was more than they get before. The same deal was applied to African American musicians too. Because of economic reasons was the racial segregation set aside and the deficit of white musicians was solved by involving in black musicians who were coming from the south. They were playing usually on Broadway or Harlem on the 52nd street. Bop music was played in basement clubs, for example the legendary Minton's Playhouse in Harlem or Cotton Club. The audience was mixture of black and white people.

The African Americans got more familiar with the life in the city and they were leaving their old plantation life style by migrating to the north. With better life conditions their self-consciousness was growing too. Due to discrimination practices riots began in 1943 in Harlem, Detroit or Philadelphia ghettos. Better future expectations did not last long. Getting closer to white culture was seen skeptical again. Under those circumstances bop was born in the melting pot of the city. The aim to entertain the listeners was replaced by the artist's very own confession, wanting to get closer to the purpose of life by using musical instruments and specific expressive means. Thanks to bop being mostly the matter of African Americans musicians, it was not only a revolution in music structure but it was a protest about the capitalistic hegemony of white people. Those protests created an African American identity and showed first impulses which led to the African American Civil Rights movement.¹²

¹² George Brown Tindall and David E. Shi, *Dějiny Spojených států amerických*. 5th ed. (Prague: Nakladatelství Lidové Noviny, 2008), p. 40.

4. Influence of African American music on the Beat Generation

“These poems just breathe and flow, and when Jack plays the Blues, which he often does, his blues are truly sad — they are sadness without humor, without the joking and backslapping that come from good times.”¹³

In twentieth century the connection between music and literature played an important role in creating a whole new subculture of young people. Those young people felt strange in a post-war world where capitalism ruled and therefore it made them seek something new and more authentic. Post-war writers needed to create something new and fresh, they were not afraid to experiment. Authors of the Beat Generation drew the inspiration from African American jazz music, which attracted them by its energy and naughtiness. Jazz music contributed to the aesthetic and authenticity of their work. The usage of jazz reached far beyond the literary experimentation. It led to a convergence of white people and African Americans in times when the Civil Rights Movement did not even get to its climax. The rhythm of the poetry was emulating jazz music, which was a combination of white and African American music.

The avantgarde of Beat Generation was a huge experiment, where jazz music with its roots in true African American culture served as an inspiration. It was essential that those two different cultures needed to get closer to each other, so that they could combine jazz with the literature. Jazz music expressed both the pain and the joy of African American culture, that is why those true feelings served to white writers as an inspiration for creating a heart-tearing poetry. The combination of poetry and Jazz firstly appeared in works by Langston Hughes, who wrote poetry according to the African American jazz rhythm and improvisation. He was the first one who recited his poems accompanied by jazz music and the first one who called his poetry ‘blues’. He predicted that the Beat Generation will connect literature with jazz music into one literary unit. The younger style of jazz called bop was music of the Beat Generation. The main reason was that bop meant for the Beats the same disagreement with the conformity of the middle class in post-war era. Bop musicians were seen as rebels and pioneers of an

¹³ George Condo, “Introduction.” Jack Kerouac, *Book of Sketches* (New York: Penguin Books, 2006), p. 6.

artistic innovations.¹⁴ Connecting the African American music with literature meant also creating a new slang. It is natural that when two different groups join with each other, they will mix their languages and expressions. “Not only was the music giving the people of America a soundtrack to their lives, but it was also giving them a lifestyle to aspire to.”¹⁵

¹⁴ Cory McKay, “The Origins of Jazz,”

<http://www.music.mcgill.ca/~cmckay/papers/musicology/JazzOrigins.pdf>. Retrieved 14 March 2018.

¹⁵ Henry Weekes, “Bebop: Charlie Parker, Jack Kerouac, and the ‘Beat Generation’.”

<https://wallofsoundmagazine.com/2015/03/10/bebop-charlie-parker-jack-kerouac-and-the-beat-generation/>

5. *The Beat Generation*

The term Beat Generation was firstly used by Jack Kerouac in the early fifties, he used the term in a conversation with his friend John Clellon Holmes. Holmes then made it popular in his essay called “This is the Beat Generation” about unconventional American writers, which was published in 1952 in the *New York Times*.¹⁶

5.1. The term “beat”

The origins of the word “beat” are obscure, but the meaning is only too clear to most Americans. More than 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.¹⁷

The term beat has several different meanings. The first meaning was explained by Herbert Huncke, who was a drug addict and a friend of Jack Kerouac. For him beat meant ‘tired’, ‘bad’ or ‘ruined’ during his drug abuse. Secondly Jack Kerouac, who named the group as “Beat Generation” understood the term ‘beat’ as ‘blessed’. He also perceived the group as a religious one. Levi Asher summarized it one of his articles: “But the term 'beat' has a second meaning: 'beatific' or sacred and holy. Kerouac, a devout Catholic, explained many times that by describing his generation as beat he was trying to capture the secret holiness of the downtrodden. In fact, this is probably the most central theme in Kerouac's work (think of the

¹⁶ John Clellon Holmes, “This is the Beat Generation,” *New York Times Magazine* (November 16, 1952).
<http://www.litkicks.com/ThisIsTheBeatGeneration>. Retrieved 13 March 2018.

¹⁷ Ibid.

saintly hobos and lonely truck drivers of *On The Road* and *The Dharma Bums*).”¹⁸ The word ‘beatnik’ showed up for the first time in an article by Herb Caen in 1958, who added a suffix -nik, which he borrowed from the name of Russian satellite Sputnik.¹⁹ Finally, the third meaning refers to tight connection to jazz and for jazz it meant a pulse, beating or drumming. The term is connected to the life and work of the whole generation and that is why it cannot be translated only with one meaning. The term beat was a key point for the whole generation. It perfectly expressed the gist of their writing.²⁰

5.2. Characteristics of the Beat Generation

At the beginning it all started as an unconventional group when three friends: Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs, met at Columbia University in New York. Their connection was based on alcohol and drug abuse but also on their same perception of literature. Few years later in the fifties and early sixties it was formed into a literary movement although they lacked united platform. The group was characterized as a revolt or criticism of modern society in postwar America and mockery of typical American values which were wealth and career. Beatniks protested about stereotypes of consumer life. They were determined to oppose the hypocrisy and materialism of American society. Everything they were oppose to they called “square”, meaning all the average Americans, all the descent people, who used the rational thinking, science and technology and brought the world into two world wars and into a threat of a third one.

One of the most significant writer of Beat Generation was Allen Ginsberg, whose most famous poem is called *Howl*. *Howl* became an unofficial manifesto of the whole generation. The poem includes everything which was significant for the generation – revolt, critics, visions, dreams, drug abuse, naturalism and open sexuality. Ginsberg was a homosexual by himself and

¹⁸ Asher Levi, “Beat Etymology: Lost, Beat and Hip,” (blog) November 12, 1994.

<http://www.litkicks.com/BeatEtymology>. Retrieved 15 March 2018.

¹⁹ Richard Rex, “The Origin of Beatnik,” *American Speech* 50:3-4 (1975), p. 329-31. doi:10.2307/3088021.

²⁰ Ann Charters, “Introduction,” *The Portable Beat Reader* (New York: Penguin Books, 1992), p. xv-xxxvi.

when he spoke about it, he spoke about it without restraints or shame. It would be hard to list all the members of the generation, because there were no official manifesto or program as for example Dadaists had but the most famous were: Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso and William Burroughs or Gary Snyder, Lew Welch, Anne Waldman, Philip Lamantia or Lawrence Ferlinghetti.

The Beat Generation did not get unnoticed even by the government of the USA. The life style which they created was not incompatible with the social status-quo and that is why they often met with disapproval which arose from conservative and puritan bases. The Beat Generation shared their life experiences but also their deep feelings through their writing which brought an entirely new point of view.²¹

5.3. Religion

They diverted themselves from the western thinking and rather inclined themselves to eastern religions, for example Buddhism. Buddhism with its compassion motives meant for them a counterbalance to the hideous materialism and to the consumer society which did not provide enough freedom for self-expression. The Beat Generation was a group of writers which differed from the others in their poems and prose but mostly in their unrestrained lifestyle. It was a try to get out of the comfort zone and live spontaneously day by day. That was a dream which almost every young man wanted to live. The point was not to fight the society but to get out of the society, run away and find peace and freedom. Unfortunately, they used methods which the society despised and did not even bother to find an understanding for them. Those methods included drugs and sexual experiments, meditations, asceticism and Buddhism. They chose life of wanderers travelling across the America by hitchhiking. When they needed money, they worked wherever they could. They were famous for throwing wild parties with a lot of drugs, alcohol and love making. On the other hand, they were searching for solitude in the wild nature as Buddhists did. Sexual orientation did not make a big difference, because a lot of them were

²¹ John Tytell, *Nazi andělé* (Olomouc: Votobia, 1996), p. 5.

homosexuals or bisexuals. Whatever they did was far away from what the society want them to do.²²

5.4. The features of Beat literature

The forties and fifties in American literature were well known for its dictatorship. It was required to write only traditional mainstream fun poetry. Those conditions made the beatniks look for solutions to get rid of the chains of conformism and conservatism.²³ They wanted to find a way to get free from academic formalism and extend the literature to wider spectrum of readers. The purpose was to reflect what was going on around them and that is why they were something like a barometer of social and cultural changes. They were not involved into the mainstream at all, their attitude was more personal and more honest. They find their interest in English romanticism, for example William Blake or politically involved Percy Bysshe Shelley. Beat Generation poets were also inspired by American transcendentalists namely Walt Whitman who wrote in free verse. Allen Ginsberg was inspired by Whitman's free verse which he used in his poetry:

Howl

For Carl Solomon

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in
the machinery of night,
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the supernatural
darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities contemplating jazz,

²² Ibid., p. 5.

²³ Jiří Flajšar, *Dějiny americké poezie* (Ústí nad Orlicí: Oftis, 2006), p. 69.

who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels staggering
on tenement roofs illuminated,
who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and Blake-
light tragedy among the scholars of war,
who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the
windows of the skull,
who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and
listening to the Terror through the wall,
who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of marijuana
for New York,
who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or purgatoried
their torsos night after night²⁴

At the beginning, the Beat Generation was connected to the New York avantgarde but later their focus was oriented to San Francisco. In San Francisco they did not have to deal with publishing problems as they had to in New York where they had to face those problems a lot. Another important point which helped to create the post-war literature freer, was the mutual influence of the Beat Generation and authors of San Francisco Renaissance. An irreplaceable poet and translator was Kenneth Rexroth who played the most significant part in creating a literary scene there. He endeavored to create more democratic approach to writing poetry, as well as Walt Whitman did before him. He gave public readings which helped the young authors to express themselves.²⁵

The Beat Generation created free composition composed of their thoughts and feelings without previous planning or revision to make the rigid literature more alive.

²⁴ Allen Ginsberg, *Howl*. <https://www.poetryfoundation.org/poems/49303/howl>. Retrieved 10 March 2018.

²⁵ Jiří Flajšar, *Dějiny americké poezie*, p. 69.

6. *Jack Kerouac*

...because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes ‘Awww!’²⁶

Jack Kerouac was a spiritual father of the Beat Generation, even though he never identified himself as one. He was also the first one who named it and characterized it. Kerouac together with Allen Ginsberg created the core of the Beat Generation in New York in late forties.

6.1. Youth

Jack Kerouac was born on March 12, 1922 in the city called Lowell, Massachusetts. Jack's parents were French Canadian immigrants who came to the States in their young age. When he was four years old his older brother died, which emphasized his dependence on his mother and later he reflected it in his work. Even though Jack was raised as a Catholic he found himself in eastern philosophy in Zen Buddhism. Thanks to his sport skills he got a football scholarship at Columbia College and that is when at seventeen years-old Jack came to New York. The city did not make Jack happy but at least it gave him some experience. Unfortunately, due to the Second World War he dropped out the school to enlist in the navy. Jack, who was refusing any authority got into troubles with the hard discipline and he got kicked out from the navy. He returned to his mother to Queens and started to write his first novel *The Town and the City* which was published in 1951. In 1944 Jack decided to return to Columbia College, which brought him a friendship with Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs, with whom he created the core of the Beat Generation.

²⁶ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 6.

In 1946 Jack met Neal Cassady from Denver, who became his best friend and a true brother. They hit the road together to explore America. Neal Cassady became a great inspiration for Jack's novel *On the Road*, where Neal's character is called Dean Moriarty and Jack's character is called Sal Paradise. Jack felt betrayed by his country and he found a consolation on the road. For the first time he characterized his generation as beaten. Jack's main theme was America and its aspects of conformity and materialism. Jack Kerouac confesses in his books his very close relationship to native people of America. He refers to them as holy individuals who were abused and beaten by other countries. Jack is bond to those people by his respect to them.²⁷

Although many people believed that Jack perceived the beat philosophy as a demonstration against the church values, contrariwise he characterized it as deep religious and spiritual reborn. Jack reached the top of his fame in his forties but he also reached the bottom in personal life. In the 1960s the already known Beat Generation brought about to Jack an unwanted popularity. Jack started to use drugs and alcohol as a getaway. Due to his drug and alcohol abuse he became an addict, which brought him lifetime illnesses. Jack died because of an internal hemorrhage which is bleeding esophageal varices caused by cirrhosis in October 1969 in Lowell hospital.²⁸

²⁷ Ann Charters, *The Portable Beat Reader*, p 1-9.

²⁸ Gerald Nicosia, *Memory Babe*, pp. 21-131.

7. *The African American Jazz (bop) in the literature of Jack Kerouac*

What did elevate his prose above that of his peers' was a narrative style that Allen Ginsberg later termed "spontaneous bop prosody." This style was heavily influenced by his Canuck heritage that blended French with English, his second language, but was most evidently the product of converting jazz cadences into phonetic words and complex sentence structures.²⁹

The appearance of jazz music, precisely bop, is very common in Kerouac's work. Kerouac often visited different kinds of jazz clubs which contributed to the idea of spontaneous writing and it helped him to get rid of the strict writing forms. His writing style and jazz music shared the inspiration in spontaneous improvisation and spontaneous expressions of personal confession. Jack called his writing style as a spontaneous prose, which is sometimes called bop prosody.

Jack's style was so innovative that his friends Ginsberg and Burroughs asked him to write the methods down and so he did. He wrote the essays called *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose* (1958) and *Belief & Technique for Modern Prose* (1959).³⁰ One of the following chapters will be focused on the novel *On the Road*, which is the best example of Kerouac's book full of jazz, beat and outbursts of thoughts: "What he liked was the surprise of a new simple variation of a chorus. He'd go from "ta-tup-tader-rara . . . ta-tuptader-rara," repeating and hopping to it and kissing and smiling into his horn, to "ta-tup-EE-da-dedera-RUP! ta-tup-EE-da-de-dera-RUP!" and it was all great moments of laughter and understanding for him and everyone else who heard.³¹

²⁹ <https://nostosalgos.org/2014/06/17/jazz-and-journals-of-miles-davis-and-jack-kerouac/> Retrieved 30 May 2018.

³⁰ Ann Charters, *The Portable Beat Reader*, p. 57-61.

³¹ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 117.

He also wrote a poem about his favourite African American jazz musician Charlie Parker, who was mentioned in previous chapter as an inspiration for writing of Jack Kerouac.

The poem is called *Charlie Parker*:

Charlie Parker looked like Buddha
Charlie Parker, who recently died
Laughing at a juggler on the TV
After weeks of strain and sickness,
Was called the Perfect Musician.
And his expression on his face
Was as calm, beautiful, and profound
As the image of the Buddha
Represented in the East, the lidded eyes
The expression that says “All Is Well”
This was what Charlie Parker
Said when he played, All is Well.
You had the feeling of early-in-the-morning
Like a hermit’s joy, or
Like the perfect cry of some wild gang
At a jam session,
“Wail, Wop”
Charlie burst his lungs to reach the speed
Of what the speedsters wanted
And what they wanted
Was his eternal Slowdown.³²

³² <http://hillsideblues.tumblr.com/post/64086029717/charlie-parker-looked-like-buddha-charlie-parker>

7.1. Spontaneous prose

Spontaneous prose is characterized as a continuous stream of consciousness. Spontaneous writers write their outbursts of words down spontaneously without correcting it. The sentences are constructed long and complex without interpunction.

For describing spontaneous writing, I found the most suitable example the nine points that Kerouac constructed in *Essentials of Spontaneous Prose*, which introduces spontaneous sentence structure and is called procedure: “Time being of the essence in the purity of speech, sketching language is undisturbed flow from the mind of personal secret idea-words, blowing (as per jazz musician) on subject of image. Or another point called method: 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)—‘measured pauses which are the essentials of our speech’ – ‘divisions of the sounds we hear’ — ‘time and how to note it down’.”³³

Jack Kerouac created a platform for spontaneous writing, which shared common features with spontaneous composition of jazz music. Those points that Kerouac constructed served as a recipe for many other writers in Kerouac’s circle. He was considered as a pioneer of a new aesthetics.

³³ Ann Charters. *The Portable Beat Reader*, p. 57.

8. *On the Road*

In this chapter I will analyze *On the Road*, the famous novel by Jack Kerouac. I will describe the plot of the book and then I will describe that parts of the book which deals with African American culture.

8.1. Overview

On the Road is Jack Kerouac's second novel, published in 1957. It is a novel which made him famous and it is a novel which became a bible for so many people. Kerouac wrote *On the Road* within only three weeks typing it on a roll of paper, which helped him to not interrupt the stream of his thoughts. Obviously, what kept him in a state of nonstop writing was the drugs he used. The outcome was a 75 meters long paragraph without interpunction or margins representing a manuscript of spontaneous prose, which was typical for the Beat Generation. It took the editors six years to create a final version which could be published. Kerouac wrote *On the Road* in reaction to forty pages long letter which he received from Neal Cassady alias Dean Moriarty. The letter was de facto only one long sentence which inspired Kerouac to write the book as one paragraph. The novel is based on Kerouac's very own memories and experiences written by the already mentioned spontaneous prose. The plot of the book was created from his personal notes from his notebooks and the characters are based on real figures of Beat Generation including William S. Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg or Neal Cassady. Jack Kerouac, represented by a character called Sal Paradise, and Neal Cassady as Dean Moriarty created a unique testimony of their generation in years 1946 till 1950. *On the Road* is a real story filled with excitement which guides the reader from the beginning till the end of the book. A relationship between the author and the reader gets evolved immediately.

The most impressive and exciting parts are for example those when Kerouac describes the delight of the fast ride in the car or listening to the music during jaunty jazz parties. It is a constant hunt for experiences involving wild parties, alcohol, sex, drugs and minor criminal offences. Kerouac can make us see, taste, smell and feel the things he describes so lively. This novel also shows us Kerouac's well known disrespect for authorities which smashes the rigid norms of religious beliefs, races and opinions about ways of life, sex, speech, family or values.

8.2. Plot

The novel takes place in the United States in a post-war era. The plot of the story is secondary and the book consists of long passages of descriptions of surroundings combined with personal thoughts that Jack experienced during his journey across America. One could say that the lack of the plot makes the reading demanding but it is the style of writing that makes Kerouac so unique.

Young Sal Paradise is staying at his aunt's place in New York. He is a student and a writer. He is considered as a calm and peaceful man fitting in the society back then, but it seems to not be enough for him. Sal therefore search for people on the edge of the society, crazy and weird people. One of them is a young criminal from Denver called Dean Moriarty, who comes to New York because he wants Sal to teach him write. After spending some time together, Sal is inspired by Dean's spirit and way of life enough to release his own spirit and hit the road across America. Sal's purpose is to gather his own experiences and get to know all the different places and new interesting people. That's how his new stage of life begins.

Even though Sal hit the road together with Dean and his wild-spirit girlfriend Marylou, they split many times during the book. One part of the book Sal describes San Francisco and its benevolent attitude for African Americans: "It was, so they say, the only community in America where whites and Negroes lived together voluntarily; and that was so, and so wild and joyous a place I've never seen since."³⁴ After travelling and attending different kinds of parties with a lot of drugs and alcohol, their last goal is Mexico, where Sal comes down with dysentery and he spends many days in a bed in unconsciousness. Despite his illness Dean leaves him for another woman. After Sal recovers he returns to New York where it all begun.

³⁴ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 38.

8.3. Parts of the book dealing with African Americans

In *On the Road* Kerouac describes different kinds of black people he met but with all of them he felt alive and he saw the history of African Americans written in their faces. Kerouac's descriptions were detailed and well captured as if it were individual little stories inside of one big story:

The strange thing was that next door to Remi lived a Negro called Mr. Snow whose laugh, I swear on the Bible, was positively and finally the one greatest laugh in all this world. This Mr. Snow began his laugh from the supper table when his old wife said something casual; he got up, apparently choking, leaned on the wall, looked up to heaven, and started; he staggered through the door, leaning on neighbors' walls; he was drunk with it, he reeled throughout Mill City in the shadows, raising his whooping triumphant call to the demon god that must have prodded him to do it. I don't know if he ever finished supper. There's a possibility that Remi, without knowing it, was picking up from this amazing man, Mr. Snow. And though Remi was having worklife problems and bad lovelife with a sharp-tongued woman, he at least had learned to laugh almost better than anyone in the world, and I saw all the fun we were going to have in Frisco.³⁵

Another example where Kerouac showed his closeness to black people were when he describes Sal's work as a cotton picker. He learned himself how tough the work was but he described it as much more satisfying job than cleaning the dishes in the restaurant:

We bent down and began picking cotton. It was beautiful. Across the field were the tents, and beyond them the brown cottonfields that stretched out of sight to the brown arroyo foothills and then the snow-capped Sierras in the morning air. This was so much better than washing dishes South Main Street. But I knew nothing about picking cotton. I spent too much time disengaging the white ball from crackly

³⁵ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 39.

bed; the others did it in one flick. Moreover, fingertips began to bleed; I needed gloves, or more experience. There was an old Negro couple in the field with They picked cotton with the same God-blessed patience the grandfathers had practiced in ante-bellum Alabama; the moved right along their rows, bent and blue, and their bag increased. My back began to ache. But it was beautiful kneeling and hiding in that earth. If I felt like resting I did, my face on the pillow of brown moist earth. Birds an accompaniment. I thought I had found my life's work.³⁶

Many of the black people he met was thanks to the jazz music, which was the very first thing that make the whites and the blacks close. Kerouac's fondness of jazz is reflected in his long descriptive passages, which describes jazz concerts, performances of black musicians but also listening to jazz all alone: "At this time, 1947, bop was going like mad all over America. The fellows at the Loop blew, but with a tired air, because bop was somewhere between its Charlie Parker Ornithology period and another period that began with Miles Davis. And as I sat there listening to that sound of the light which bop has come to represent for all of us"³⁷ Kerouac was inspired by jazz music and his aim was to make his writing melodic, spontaneous and emotional:

Slim Gaillard is a tall, thin Negro with big sad eyes who's always saying, "Right-orooni" and "How about a little bourbon-orooni." In Frisco great eager crowds of young semi-intellectuals sat at his feet and listened to him on the piano, guitar, and bongo drums. When he gets up warmed up he gets off his shirt and undershirt and really goes. He does and says anything that comes into his head. He'll sing "Cement Mixer, Put-ti, Put-ti," and suddenly slows down the beat and broods over his bongos with fingertips barely tapping the skin as everybody leans forward breathlessly to hear; you think he'll do this for a minute or so, but he goes right on, for as long as an hour, making an imperceptible little noise with the tips of his fingernails, smaller

³⁶ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 57.

³⁷ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 11.

and smaller all the time till you can't hear it any more and sounds of traffic come in the open door. Then he slowly gets up and takes the mike and says, very slowly, "Great-oroooni... fine-ovauti... hello-orooni... bourbon-orooni... allorooni... how are the boys in the front row making out with their grils-orooni... vauti... oroonirooni..." He keeps this up for fifteen minutes, his voice getting softer and softer till you can't hear. His great sad eyes scan the audience.³⁸

8.4. The white blacks in *On the Road*

The African American communities which lived in the cities had a huge influence on the Beat Generation. Despite many differences those two racially different groups had a lot of in common, for example the already mentioned jazz music. The Beat Generation was influenced by African American working-class heroes specifically by their way of expressing their notions of sexuality, drug abuse and their relationship with jazz. Even though they were white middle-class citizens they took over the behavior from the African Americans rather than from where they came from. In certain way the African American culture were a new source of fashion and inspiration. Jack Kerouac shows those tendencies in *On the Road*:

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. I stopped at a little shack where a man sold hot red chili in paper containers; I bought some and ate it, strolling in the dark mysterious streets. I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a "white man" disillusioned. All my life I'd had white ambitions; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley. I passed the dark porches of Mexican and Negro homes; soft voices were there, occasionally the dusky knee of some mysterious sensual gal;

³⁸ Jack Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 102.

and dark faces of the men behind rose arbors. Little children sat like sages in ancient rocking chairs. A gang of colored women came by, and one of the young ones detached herself from motherlike elders and came to me fast – “Hello Joe!” – and suddenly saw it wasn’t Joe, and ran back, blushing. I wished I were Joe. I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America. The raggedy neighborhoods reminded me of Dean and Marylou, who knew these streets so well from childhood. How I wished I could find them.³⁹

Jack admired how black people dealt with the difficulties of life in an unfriendly environment, how they managed to live in poverty but still being heroes. The bonds connecting white youngsters with the working class black people were created earlier than the Beat Generation was even alive. Those bonds were created thanks to Jazz music. White musicians jammed with the black ones and as jazz music became more and more popular in the 1920s and 1930s it caused its censorship. The censorship was trying to get rid of any signs of black ire or any kind of erotica till it became a pure white swing attracting wide range of listeners. Those repressions were stopped when avantgarde bebop appeared. Bebop musicians were trying to return to their roots and express their own identity. Beatniks and white hipsters were getting closer to black people who were surrounded around the bebop scene, that obviously created hysteria and outrageous reactions from the conservative America. But, Norman Mailer suggested in his short essay called *The White Negro*, that America needed such kind of new heroes in order to not succumb to political and cultural totalitarianism:

Indeed if one is to be a man, almost any kind of unconventional action often takes disproportionate courage. So it is no accident that the source of Hip is the Negro for he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries. But the presence of Hip as a working philosophy in the sub-worlds of American life is probably due to jazz, and its

³⁹ Jack, Kerouac, *On the Road*, p. 105.

knife-like entrance into culture, its subtle but so penetrating influence on an avant-garde generation—that post-war generation of adventurers who ... had absorbed the lessons of disillusionment and disgust of the Twenties, the Depression, and the War.⁴⁰

Jack Kerouac deep connection with African American culture can be summarized into short but meaningful sentence from *On the Road*, where he again wished to be a Negro: I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Norman Mailer, “The White Negro,” in Ann Charters, Ed., *The Portable Beat Reader*, p. 585.

⁴¹ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 105.

9. *The Subterraneans*

The Subterraneans is Jack Kerouac's autobiographical novella capturing his relationship with a black woman Alene Lee whose name in the novel is Mardou. The background of the story captures the wild subculture of the Beat Generation. It was published in 1958 after the novel *On the Road*. As well as *On the Road*, *The Subterraneans* were written continuously under the influence of drugs as spontaneous prose. It took Kerouac only three days to finish this novella. The story is not only a love story, it is a story which deals with African American people and the perception of white society.

The main character Leo fights with prejudice by himself: "I had my 'doubts' my male self-contained doubts about her, so reasoned, 'I'll just as some time cut out and get me another girl, white, white thigh, etc.'"⁴² On one hand he is scared to introduce his black girlfriend to his family: "Doubts, therefore, of, well, Mardou's Negro, naturally not only my mother but my sister whom I may have to live with some day and her husband a Southerner and everybody concerned, would be mortified to hell and have nothing to do with us, it would cut my life in half, and all such sundry awful American as if to say white ambition thoughts or white daydreams."⁴³, but on the other hand his strong feelings for her cannot stop him to leave her. In the novella Jack Kerouac's alter-ego is represented by Leo Percepied and his Alene Lee is called Mardou Fox. The plot captures their relationship from the beginning. Leo meets a local black woman called Mardou Fox, who is practically an orphan because her mother died during the childbirth and her father is not around: "Negro mother dead for birth of her-unknown Cherokee-halfbreed father a hobo..."⁴⁴

As it has been mentioned in previous chapters, the influence of African American jazz music is captured in almost every piece of Kerouac's work. When the main character Leo meets

⁴² Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 60.

⁴³ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 62.

⁴⁴ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 22.

Mardou at a bar called Red Drum, there is again mentioned Kerouac's favorite black Jazz musician Charlie Parker: "We went to the Red Drum to hear the jazz which that night was Charlie Parker with Honduras Jones on drums and others interesting, probably Roger Beloit too, whom I wanted to see now, and that excitement of softnight San Francisco bop in the air..."⁴⁵, "She is the only girl I've ever known who could really understand bop and sing it"⁴⁶

The background of the story is composed of wild parties, cheap pubs, bop and jazz clubs and of course, drugs and alcohol abuse. When Leo met Mardou he was just desiring a black woman to sleep with, but then his feelings evolved in somethings more. Even though the word 'negro' appears in the book a lot it does not seem to have an offensive undertone.: "Honey what I see in your eyes is a lifetime of affection not only from the Indian in you but because as part Negro somehow you are the first, the essential woman, and therefore the most, most originally most fully affectionate and maternal."⁴⁷ After spending some time together, Leo is considering breaking up with her, he notices that people look down on her because she is black, but he started to notice that he not okay with that too. He does not want to show her to his family, he knows exactly that they would not accept it and he thinks about being with a white woman would be more comfortable. Leo wishes to work it out with Mardou but the stronger part of him wishes to be alone again so that he could write and take care of his mother. Leo lives with his mother and he is very dependent on her so the dilemma weather be with Mardou or stay with his mother bothers him a lot. At the end Mardou speeds up his decision when Leo comes home very drunk as usual, so she sleeps with their friend Yuri. Leo is left with two decisions: to forget her or to leave. He chooses the second option: "I want to be independent like I say. And I go home having lost her love. And write this book."⁴⁸

⁴⁵ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans* p. 17.

⁴⁶ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 92.

⁴⁷ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans*, p. 129.

⁴⁸ Jack Kerouac, *The Subterraneans* p. 152.

The Subterraneans is a book of two points of view. One point of view is Kerouac's affection for African American woman called Mardou, but the second point of view shows that even Kerouac himself cared about perception of the white society and had doubts about being with a black woman.

10. Conclusion

The aim of this thesis was to prove that the African American culture with its tough history was indeed significantly influential on the Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac. Firstly, the thesis provided information about the African American history in the 1950s and 1960s connected to jazz music and consequently to introduce the Beat Generation movement. The point was to show the influence of jazz music on the Beatniks' literature, Kerouac's in particular. Jazz music provided a connection between the racial segregated black people with the white Americans.

Many of the Beat Generation writers used jazz music as a source of rhythm in their poems, others drew inspiration from jazz parties in order to provide a true picture of black people in America in 1950s and 1960s. Jack Kerouac provides information about the African American culture and its history through his novels and gives the reader a true experience of that era. The analyses of Jack Kerouac's novels show a mutual influence with African American culture.

The two selected novels *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans* are both significant for describing the African American culture. Kerouac's friendships with African Americans resulted in a great inspiration for his writings. In the first novel *On the Road* Kerouac drew from his journey across America when he met people from different social classes, different races and religions, which provided evidence for this thesis that African American culture is one of the main source of inspiration for this novel.

The second novel analyses, *The Subterraneans*, is Kerouac's confession about his relationship with a black woman, Mardou. Kerouac dealt not only with the perception (his character is named Percepied) of the society but also with his own issues of being with a black woman. The analyses showed Kerouac's involvement in a real, personal relationship with black people and his struggling with his own opinions and those of society's.

The aim of this thesis was to prove that the African American culture and black Jazz music had a great influence on the Beat Generation writer Jack Kerouac. In my opinion this was something important to Kerouac both personally (in terms of connecting with African Americans, an ethnic group outside his own) and in terms of his writing, because he learned how to incorporate their rhythms and their idea of "blowing" spontaneously into his prose.

Without African American society and culture, Kerouac would not have found his “own” voice. His debt to African Americans is vast.

11. Resumé

Cílem mé bakalářské práce je prokázat vliv afroamerické kultury ve vybraných románech Jacka Kerouaca, jimiž jsou: *Na Cestě* a *Podzemníci*. Nejprve ale tato práce popisuje samotnou afroamerickou kulturu a její stručnou historii zejména v letech 1950 až 1960. Nedílnou součástí této kultury byla hudba, zvláště pak Jazz a Bebop, kterou se práce zabývá v následující kapitole. Jazz se dá považovat za pojítka mezi kulturou černoškou s kulturou bílých Američanů v dobách, kdy se téma rasové segregace řešilo na denním pořádku. Afroamerický Jazz poskytoval mladým autorům inspiraci pro jejich tvorbu a udával jim určitý rytmus.

V dalších kapitole se práce soustředí na hnutí Beatnické generace, jež bylo hnutí mladých autorů, kteří se stavěli proti rasové segregaci, a proto toto téma bylo nedílnou součástí jejich tvorby. V této kapitole je popsán vznik tohoto hnutí a jeho charakteristika. Beatnická generace, do níž patřil již zmiňovaný autor Jack Kerouac, reflektovala ve své tvorbě utrpení Afroameričanů, kteří i přes temná období dokázali najít útěchu v jejich jazzové hudbě.

Dále se pak práce soustředí na život samotného Jacka Kerouaca. Jsou zde zahrnuty podkapitoly, které popisují jeho život a dále pak i jeho spontánní bopovou prózu. Na konci této práce se zabývám podrobnou analýzou dvou již zmíněných románů: *Na Cestě* a *Podzemníci*, kde pomocí četných ukázek dokazují, že Afroamerická kultura je nedílnou součástí Kerouacova života i tvorby. V románu *On the Road*, který popisuje dobrodružství samotného Jacka Kerouaca, lze na mnoho ukázkách poukázat na jeho kladný vztah k Afroameričanům a na častý výskyt postav afroamerického původu. Druhý a zároveň poslední román této práce nese název *Podzemníci*, který je Kerouacovým vlastním zážitkem vzplanutí lásky k mladé černošské dívce.

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13. Annotation

Name: Magdaléna Králová

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Title of the thesis: The African American Culture in Novels by Jack Kerouac

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13.1. Abstract

The aim of this essay is to analyse two selected novels written by Jack Kerouac and provide evidence that Jack Kerouac had been influenced by African American culture. The thesis firstly provides brief overview of history of African American culture and consequently analyses the culture's influence on both the Beat Generation movement and the writer Jack Kerouac himself. Moreover, this thesis discusses the influence of African American music, specifically Jazz and its subgenre Bop, on the abovementioned Beat Generation movement and Jack Kerouac. Lastly, the thesis analyses African American culture illustrated in the two selected novels: *On the Road* and *The Subterraneans*.

Key words: Jack Kerouac, Beat Generation, American literature, African American culture, Jazz in fiction, racial segregation

14. Anotace

Jméno: Magdaléna Králová

Katedra: Katedra anglistiky a amerikanistiky

Název Práce: Afroamerická kultura v románech Jacka Kerouaca

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14.1. Abstrakt

Cílem této bakalářské práce bylo provést analýzu dvou vybraných románů Jacka Kerouaca a poukázat na ovlivnění Jacka Kerouaca afroamerickou kulturou. Tato práce zprvu poskytuje stručný přehled historie této kultury a analyzuje vliv této kultury na hnutí beatnické generace i na samotného spisovatele Jacka Kerouaca. V této práci je nadále zmíněn vliv americké hudby, konkrétně jazzu a jeho odnože bopu, na již zmíněné hnutí beatnické generace. Na závěr si tato práce dává za cíl analyzovat dva vybrané romány: *Na Cestě* a *Podzemníci* z nichž se snaží poskytnout důkaz o vlivu afroamerické kultury na Jacka Kerouaca.

Klíčová slova: Jack Kerouac, Beatnická generace, americká literatura, Afroamerická kultura, Jazz v beletrii, rasové rozdíly