



Kerouac's Crooked Road: The Development of a Fiction

Tim Hunt

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Now a classic, *Kerouac's Crooked Road* was one of the first critical works on the legendary Beat writer to analyze his work as serious literary art, placing it in the broader American literary tradition with canonical writers like Herman Melville and Mark Twain. Author Tim Hunt explores Kerouac's creative process and puts his work in conversation with classic American literature and with critical theory.

This edition includes a new preface by the author, which takes a discerning look at the implications of the 2007 publication of the original typewriter scroll version of *On the Road* for the understanding of Kerouac and his novel. Although some critics see the scroll version of the novel as embodying Kerouac's true artistic vision and the 1957 Viking edition as a commercialized compromise of that vision, Hunt argues that the two versions should not be viewed as antithetical but rather as discrete perspectives of a writer deeply immersed in writing as both performance and evolving process.

Hunt moves beyond the mythos surrounding the "spontaneous creation" of *On the Road*, which upholds Kerouac's reputation as a cultural icon, to look more closely at an innovative writer who wanted to bridge the gap between the luscious, talk-filled world of real life and the sterilized version of that world circumscribed by overly intellectualized, literary texts, through the use of written language driven by effusive passion rather than sober reflection. With close, erudite readings of Kerouac's major and minor works, from *On the Road* to *Visions of Cody*, Hunt draws on Kerouac's letters, novels, poetry, and experimental drafts to position Kerouac in both historical and literary contexts, emphasizing the influence of writers such as Emerson, Melville, Wolfe, and Hemingway on his provocative work.

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