

# UC Berkeley

## UC Berkeley Electronic Theses and Dissertations

### Title

The Topographic Imagination: Kerouac, Regener, Kafka and the Quest for Self-Realization

### Permalink

<https://escholarship.org/uc/item/6nf2c25f>

### Author

Backman, Donald Eugene

### Publication Date

2012

Peer reviewed|Thesis/dissertation

The Topographic Imagination:  
Kerouac, Regener, Kafka and the Quest for Self-Realization

By  
Donald Eugene Backman

A dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction of the

Requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

German

in the

Graduate Division

of the

University of California, Berkeley

Committee in charge:  
Professor Winfried Kudsus, Chair  
Professor Jeroen Dewulf  
Professor Robert Alter

Fall 2012

The Topographic Imagination:  
Kerouac, Regener, Kafka and the Quest for Self-Realization  
© 2012

By  
Donald Eugene Backman

## Abstract

The Topographic Imagination: Kerouac, Regener, Kafka and the Quest for Self-Realization.

by

Donald Eugene Backman  
Doctor of Philosophy in German  
University of California, Berkeley  
Professor Winfried Kudsus, Chair

Few of us think about the ways in which the topography of our environment affects our worldview. But when one takes a closer look at it, he/she finds a certain limiting aspect to where they live, while also discovering a definition of self in reference to this topography. In each of the novels of this study, the main character is defined by his geographic origin. Sal Paradise in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* is from New Jersey, and eventually finds comfort in New York, but ultimately he is an Easterner. Frank Lehmann, in *Herr Lehmann*, is a Berliner, more specifically a Kreuzberger. He comes originally from Bremen, but in his ten years in Berlin he has found himself the location that fits his worldview. Finally, Josef K. is an urbanite. Kafka's *Der Proceß* is never located specifically in a geographic sense. However, as Max Brod points out, this is a "'zeitlose' Roman" (Brod 216). It is simultaneously an *ortslose Roman*. Located entirely within the city limits, the novel explores the topography of the city in the same way that Kerouac explores the United States.

In my analysis of literary representations of single men engaging in the struggle for self-realization, I employ the term "topographic imagination" to denote each individual's conception of the geographic and topographic space within which they live. The limits of the topographic imagination do not possess a physical dimension inasmuch as they are boundaries defined by the psyche.

Using the writings and theories of Leslie Fiedler, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Claire Parnet, this study explores the topographic imagination, that limiting force of identity, and its role in the quest for self-realization in the protagonists. All of them are aware of their limiting self-identity, but also unaware of what it will take to accomplish their goal of knowing themselves completely. Through a mapping of their rhizomes, and through Deleuzian lines of flight, all accomplish the becoming, the metamorphosis that is inherent in becoming a man. There is in each of the works a lack of certainty about what lies ahead, what is to be found around that next corner. Yet, this does not stop them. Unfettered by relationships, each is free to search the boundaries of their topographical imagination in search of "IT": in search of the power to define their lives and live modern life on their own terms.

Fiedler writes of the Frontier as "the margin where the Dream has encountered the resistance of fact, where the Noble Savage has confronted Original sin (the edge of hysteria: of the twitching revivals, ritual drunkenness, 'shooting up the town,' of the rape of nature and the almost compulsive slaughter of beasts) we call simply: the Frontier" (Fiedler, *A*

*New Fiedler Reader* 14). The Frontier is a place located outside of geography. It is more concerned with the margins; those places just outside the realm of our existence. Dreams meeting the resistance of fact, are, in fact, at the heart of the search for self-realization not only in the novels in question, but for the modern experience in general.

We are all always already in the milieu that comprises the rhizomatic existence. Although our lives contain a beginning and an end, we remember neither of them. As far as the human experience is concerned we live and experience in a series of dimensions and/or directions in motion. Our changes of dimension, aging, life experiences, etc. necessitate frequent, if not constant, metamorphoses. In my analysis, self-realization, the most important step in any life metamorphosis, necessitates a direct and intentional engagement with the rhizome.

This engagement eventually leads to a crossing outside of the realm of the protagonist's topographic imagination. This then is the moment of self-realization. Each novel is characterized by a moment in which the protagonist recognizes that by crossing out of the limiting space of his topographic imagination he has taken responsibility for his own actions and owned the possibility of his self-realization.

## **Dedication**

I dedicate this work and give special thanks to my partner, Jeremy, whom I can't thank enough. He has, until now, never known me when I wasn't working on my dissertation and his trust and understanding have been a foundation I have relied heavily on.

I dedicate my dissertation work to my family and many friends. A special feeling of gratitude to my parents, Rosealee and Emery Backman whose words of encouragement and support for all I have ever tried to accomplish ring in my ears.

I also dedicate this dissertation to my many friends who have supported me throughout the process. I will always appreciate all they have done, especially Dayton Henderson, Julie Koser and Jenn Zahrt for their faith in me, and their encouragement along every step of the way.



## Table of Contents

Abstract	1
List of Figures	iv
Introduction	v
<i>On The Road: Mapping Self-Realization onto the Frontier</i>	1
<i>Herr Lehmann: The Berlin Wall, the Topographic Imagination, and Self-Realization</i>	25
<i>Der Proceß</i> or Josef K.'s Becoming	57
Conclusion	81
Works Consulted	87



## List of Figures

Diagram i.1: Progress Toward Self-realization	ix
Diagram 1.1: Route 6: The Longest Transcontinental Highway, 1940	7
Diagram 2.1: Kreuzberg S036	26
Diagram 2.2: Intersection of Eisenbahnstrasse and Wrangelstrasse	29
Diagram 2.3: Lausitzer Platz 1875	30
Diagram 2.4: Berlin Customs and Excise Wall ca. 1700	53
Diagram 3.1: Aerial view of St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic	59

## Introduction

Few of us think about the ways in which the topography of our environment affects our worldview. But when one takes a closer look at it, he/she finds a certain limiting aspect to where they live, while also discovering a definition of self in reference to this topography. I, for example, readily refer to myself as a Midwesterner, and a Wisconsinite. Although, I was born in Illinois, this had little effect on the person I have become. Two of my distinguishing characteristics are geographic. And for a lot of people, these characteristics explain a lot. A Midwesterner has a certain reputation for frugality, friendliness, and dare I say it, a lack of sophistication. A Wisconsinite is to many a farmer, a cheese maker, a drinker. These are the first attributes that come to the minds of many when I share my geographic origins.

Ironically, none of these aspects are those I would use to describe myself, yet I allow my geographic origins to define me in the minds of other people. Yes, I lived on a farm when I was a child, but I was never a farmer. I never let my address define me. Yet, so many do. In each of the novels of this study, the main character is defined by his geographic origin. Sal Paradise is from New Jersey, and eventually finds comfort in New York, but ultimately he is an Easterner. Frank Lehmann, in *Herr Lehmann*, is a Berliner, more specifically a Kreuzberger. He comes originally from Bremen, but in his ten years in Berlin he has found himself the location that fits his worldview. Finally, Josef K. is an urbanite. Kafka's *Der Proceß* is never located specifically in a geographic sense. However, as Max Brod points out, this is a "zeitlose Roman" (Brod 216). It is simultaneously an *ortslose Roman*. Located entirely within the city limits, the novel explores the topography of the city in the same way Kerouac explores the United States.

Leslie Fiedler, in his essay, "The Many Names of S. Levin," contemplates his own relation to the land.

...[C]ontemplating a return to the Northwest—a trip across the Mississippi, the Great Plains, and finally a passage through the mountains, over the Divide and down the Western Slope, a journey into what had once seemed to me an almost unimaginable future and now has become a nostalgically remembered past...  
(*Fiedler on the Roof* 123)

Fiedler succinctly defines for us his previously defining geographic characteristic. He is clearly from the East. He has defined for himself a certain list of topographical boundaries for himself. These boundaries, the Mississippi, the Great Plains, and the Continental Divide are the obstacles that keep him in the East. I refer to this limiting worldview as the topographic imagination.

His process began as a defining of himself according to his geographic origins. Fiedler being from Newark, New Jersey, easily identified himself with the Jews of the East Coast. Their historic presence and influence on the culture of the region, made this identification all the easier. But as he grew he realized that this was not the be all and end all of existence. There's a West to this America. "...*A New Life*: the novel in which Malamud evokes and fictionalizes *his* first journey into a West that had begun for him, as for me, as someone else's fiction (goyish images in our Jewish heads) and had to become a part of his own life (a new life for an Easterner, reborn, as all Easterners are reborn in this world) before it could become part of his fiction" (Fiedler, *Fiedler on the Roof* 123-124). Bernard

Malamud, like Fiedler, had to leave the East in order for him to understand the land to which he did not belong. The American West, in contrast to the East, is a welcoming place. It's the place where cowboys go to be renegades and rebels. Where they go to conquer the land and in turn conquer themselves.

The American West is, "a metaphor for, a mythic name of, the Unexplored wherever it may be: the retreating horizon, the territory that always lies just ahead of where we happen to be, waiting to be penetrated by anyone willing to light out ahead of the rest" (Fiedler, *Fiedler on the Roof* 126). The West in American literature is a location that is infinitely deferred off into the distance. A place just beyond the horizon where all dreams will come true.

In the works selected for this work, all of the characters deal with their own "American West." There is in each of the works a lack of certainty about what lies ahead, what is to be found around that next corner. Yet, this does not stop them. The protagonists are three single men in search of meaning. Unfettered by relationships, each is free search the boundaries of their topographical imagination in search of "IT." In search of the power to define their lives and live modern life on their own terms.

In my analysis, I have relied heavily on the writings of the American theorist Leslie Fiedler and those of Deleuze, Guattari and Parnet. With primary texts from multiple cultures, it seemed only fitting when the theorists most applicable also came from a variety of cultures as well. Fiedler and his career long fascination with the American West and frontiers, proved to be especially important for this exploration. As he writes of the Frontier: "the margin where the Dream has encountered the resistance of fact, where the Noble Savage has confronted Original sin (the edge of hysteria: of the twitching revivals, ritual drunkenness, 'shooting up the town,' of the rape of nature and the almost compulsive slaughter of beasts) we call simply: the Frontier" (Fiedler, *A New Fiedler Reader* 14). The Frontier is a place located outside of geography. It is more concerned with the margins; those places just outside the realm of our existence. Dreams meeting the resistance of fact, is, in fact, at the heart of the search for self-realization not only in the novels in question, but for the modern experience in general. The American dream is considered to be the desire to achieve and/or acquire more than our parents were able to. For many, this creates a void, a chasm, between the fictions of their Dreams and the facts of the reality.

Deleuze, Guattari and Parnet for their part, define a tangible grappling with the landscape. It is through their lines of flight and rhizomatic travels that each person eventually creates their own map of the world. As Deleuze and Guattari define the rhizome in their *A Thousand Plateaus: Capitalism and Schizophrenia*,

Let us summarize the principal characteristics of a rhizome: unlike trees or their roots, the rhizome connects any point to any other point, and its traits are not necessarily linked to traits of the same nature; it brings into play very different regimes of signs, and even nonsign states. ... It is comprised not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (milieu) from which it grows and which it overflows. It constitutes linear multiplicities with n dimensions having neither subject nor object, which can be laid out on a plane of consistency, and from which the one is always subtracted (n-1). When a multiplicity of this kind changes dimension, it necessarily changes in nature as well, undergoes a metamorphosis. (21)

We are all always already in the milieu that comprises the rhizomatic existence. Although our lives contain a beginning and an end, we remember neither of them. As far as the human experience is concerned we live and experience in a series of dimensions and/or directions in motion. Our changes of dimension, aging, life experiences, etc. necessitate frequent, if not constant, metamorphoses. For some these the changes are intentional, and for many it seems as if they are simply pushed along their “directions in motion.” Either way, metamorphosis is inevitable. However, in my analysis, self-realization, the most important step in any life metamorphosis is one that necessitates a direct and intentional engagement with the rhizome.

In my analysis of literary representations of single men engaging in the struggle for self-realization, I employ the term “topographic imagination” to denote each individual’s conception of the geographic and topographic space within which they live. The limits of the topographic imagination, do not possess a physical dimension inasmuch as they are boundaries defined by the psyche and/or were created artificially in the case of geographic boundaries. The topographic imagination is comprised of different boundaries for different people. You have one, I have one, we all engage physically with our environment even if modern inventions would that we were more detached from our physical environs.

These inventions and the topographic imagination more generally, are infinitely rhizomatic.

Unlike a structure, which is defined by a set of points and positions, the rhizome is made only of lines; lines of segmentarity and stratification as its dimensions, and the line of flight or deterritorialization as the maximum dimension after which the multiplicity undergoes metamorphosis, changes in nature. These lines, or ligaments, should not be confused with lineages of the arborescent type, which are merely localizable linkages between points and positions...Unlike the graphic arts, drawing or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entranceways and exits and its own lines of flight. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 21)

The map that results from the exploration of the topographic imagination is not simply a reproduction of the space encountered in two-dimensions. It is, in fact, infinitely alterable. The rhizome creates the possibility, through its lines of flight and multiple entranceways, to create, undo, recreate and alter the map, the topographic imagination. This ability to engage directly and intentionally with the topographic imagination is the foundation of this analysis.

Chapter one deals with, perhaps, the most important of modern novels dealing with the topographic imagination. My analysis of Jack Kerouac’s *On the Road* sets forth a more complete definition of the topographic imagination, while also dealing directly with Kerouac’s definitions of self-realization. The novel’s subtext of religion serves as a foundation for its exploration of the topographic imagination. The novel opens with Dean Moriarty already in motion. “With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road” (Kerouac 1). Dean, as we will learn, is always in motion, always exploring in search of “IT.” As George Dardess explains, it is not only the duo of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty that are always in motion, but the structure of the novel from beginning to end also undergoes its own metamorphosis, “(t)he book begins with the narrator’s construction of distinctions and boundaries; it ends with his discarding them—a

discarding which indicates his desire to suspend opposites in perhaps a continuous state of flux. The book moves from hierarchy to openness, from the limitation of possibilities to their expansion” (Dardess 201). The complexity of these lines of flight is the heart of the struggle for self-realization. While Sal Paradise accompanies Dean Paradise on the road in search of IT, he is also looking for his own possibilities, exploring the landscape in search of himself. Sal tells the story of his “life on the road” knowing that it had been the key to the expansion of his topographic imagination and the accomplishment of his self-realization. While the depiction of Dean Moriarty generally includes references to the messiah and Christianity, Sal Paradise’ high point, literally, will involve an exploration of the other, the unfamiliar, and will be characterized by references to Buddhism and eastern religions. Even his epiphany will be topographic/geographic in nature.

Whereas Kerouac’s *On the Road*, opens with a narrator clearly intent on travel and exploration, chapter two deals with Herr Lehmann, the unintentional nomad and protagonist in Sven Regener’s novel of the same name. Herr Lehmann engages with his environment in a way that is frequently more direct and more intentional than the motivations of Sal Paradise. To begin with, *Herr Lehmann* demonstrates how small the limits of the topographic imagination can be. Although he leaves his neighborhood several times, his attitude toward these departures is evidence that he would much rather live within the confines of his tiny corner of Kreuzberg, West Berlin. In his travels, given the opportunity to avoid stretches of the city, by using mass transit, Herr Lehmann frequently chooses to walk instead of taking the more brief and expeditious route. Just as Herr Lehmann seems intent on mapping the city by foot, he also complains about it the entire time. Like Kerouac’s *On the Road*, the protagonist Herr Lehmann, will begin to see the importance of travel and need to expand the boundaries of his topographic imagination. My analysis will point toward two motivating factors moving Herr Lehmann beyond his stagnant twenty-something life and toward a life more complete and more interesting than his day-to-day environs. Karl Schmidt, his best friend, will serve a similar role to that of Dean Moriarty. Both novels depict friends exploring the limits of their topographic imagination while simultaneously traveling along contradictory lines of flight. The following chart represents a graphic depiction of the not only the progress each character makes toward self-realization, but also their grasp on reality. As represented in the chart, Herr Lehmann and Sal Paradise move from a point of near ignorance of their own selves, while living within a realm of limitations. On the opposite end of the scale, Karl Schmidt and Dean Moriarty are first presented as being powerful beings in complete control of their own destinies. In both cases drugs and the pressures of expectations will be their undoing. Both of the “sidekicks” will end their respective novels in disarray. Dean Moriarty will be homeless and in tatters, left on the curb by Sal Paradise, while Herr Lehmann will leave Karl Schmidt in the psychiatric ward following a nervous breakdown. In both novels, my analysis explores the ways in which these “sidekicks” demonstrate a point-counterpoint to the quest for self-realization.

Chapter three explores these same issues of self-imposed topographic limitations and the need to explore the boundaries of the topographic imagination in an analysis of Franz Kafka’s *Der Proceß*. As has already been discussed in relation to the first two novels, Kafka’s *Der Proceß* also involves a metamorphosis on the part of the protagonist. Josef K. is forced, by virtue of his trial, to engage with the topography of his city.

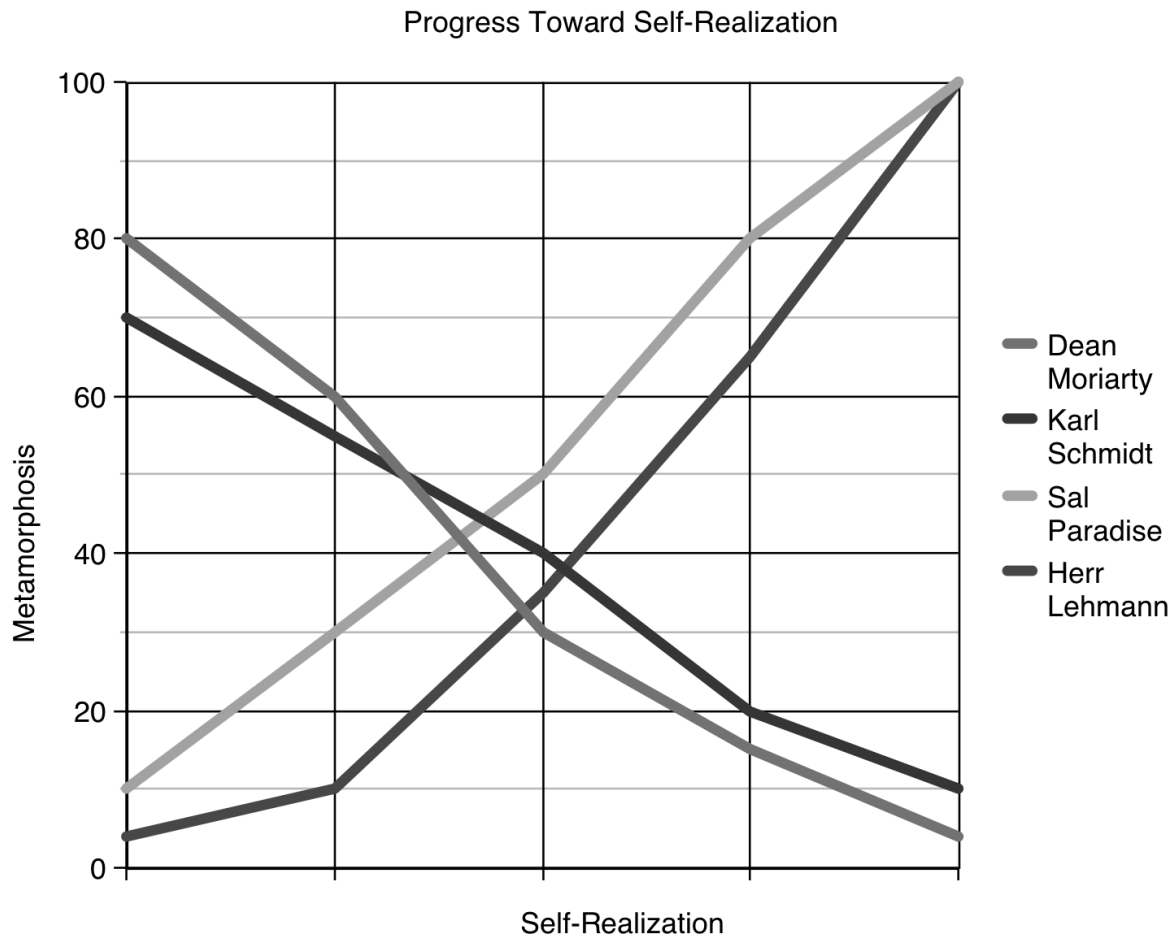


Diagram: i.1

Josef K. and Herr Lehmann are both also engaged in the crossing of another boundary, the boundary of thirty years. The boundary of time adds a third dimension to the topographic imagination. A man's thirtieth birthday, as I will discuss, engenders a time of crisis. How this crisis is handled is central in the formation of a self-actualized human being. Through Josef K.'s exploration of the rhizome of his city, ostensibly Prague, he will be introduced to a parallel society. One that operates simultaneously within the society he knows, while also being completely independent of its laws and societal rules. While he lives within the milieu of a modern, industrialized society, the Law is comprised of a group of men, all of whom are active within a hierarchy, while ignorant of the identity of anyone beyond their direct superior within the organization.

Josef K.'s exploration is not only a negotiation of the physical spaces of the city in which he lives, but also an attempt to probe the limits of the Law and to negotiate his way through his own trial while being ignorant of just what exactly it is that he has been charged with. If one were to place Josef K. within the same structure of the other two novels of this analysis, it would not be too far of a stretch to suggest that his own trial is the foil for his actions. As he progresses as an individual and becomes a stronger more self-realized individual, while his case goes more and more poorly until it reaches its dramatic

conclusion. The final moment of the novel, as I argue, is the highpoint of Josef K.'s existence both past and present. It is a moment of true and complete self-realization. This is the case for all of the men in this analysis.

My analysis of the search for self-realization on the part of these three single men represents only a sampling of material concerning the topographic imagination and the power of travel in the search for self-realization. The representations of the quests of these protagonists in the works of these three authors demonstrate but three possibilities. This analysis was not meant to be one that emphasized and gave primacy to the gender of its protagonists. However, there is no denying that German literature is replete with men who engage in travel in an attempt to find themselves<sup>1</sup>.

---

<sup>1</sup> See *Der Zauberberg* and *Der Tod in Venedig* (Thomas Mann); *Ein weites Feld* (Günter Grass); the works of Karl May; and *Die Reise* (Bernward Vesper) to name a few.

## ***On The Road: Mapping Self-Realization onto the Frontier***

“Writing has nothing to do with signifying.  
It has to do with surveying, mapping,  
even realms that are yet to come.”  
—Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari  
(*A Thousand Plateaus* 5)

Where do we live? The answer plays a large role in the ways in which we engage with the world around us. The street you live on, the houses around you, the layout of the city in which you live, and, additionally, the geopolitical borders that surround you all exert an influence on your own perception of how and where your life can be lived. Some of these influences and limitations are real, because of the political entities that control those boundaries. Most, however are only imagined, self-imposed. These limitations influence and limit the scope of existence of the individual. Because of the physical limits we place on our own existence, we also place limits on our spiritual existence. I refer to this accumulation of topographic influences on the self as the *topographic imagination*.

Think of how you interact with the city or town in which you live. Is there a side of town you haven't visited in a long time, if ever? Why? What keeps you away from there? How large is the space you normally occupy? What is your “territory” within that city? Upon reflection, most of us will find that there are boundaries in the city that we live within. There are neighborhoods that are not visited, and there are areas that we have never even seen. We don't normally think about the limitations we place upon ourselves, limitations that keep us hemmed in and create a certain topography of the city that is uniquely our own.

The topographic imagination is defined according to boundaries, psychological, geological and geographical. An excellent example of our use of the topographic imagination to define the self is the 2004 United States presidential election and, subsequently, the political situation in the United States. With the election of President George W. Bush, all people in the United States found themselves classified as coming from a red state or a blue state. There was no grey area, and this classification also carried with it, in the public sphere, certain assumptions as to what type of person that made you. Interestingly, this simple classification did not/does not allow for change in future elections. It was as if we had completely forgotten that 20 years prior, in the 1984 presidential election, there had been 49 red states (Encyclopaedia Britannica Online). Did we have more in common then? Did geographic boundaries play less of a role then? Doubtful, but as I recall there was little talk then of coming from a red or a blue state. The importance of geopolitical boundaries in the topographic imagination was only brought to the fore when it served a nation-divided in defining for itself the Other, the enemy. The nation-divided needed a simple classification to separate the “good” people from the “bad” people—categories that were defined according to your own perspective—in this particular instance it was geography that most easily filled this role.

These two presidential elections display not only the importance of the modern topographic imagination, but also the fluidity with which these boundaries can be moved and redefined. Historically boundaries have played a strong role in the conception of self.



The topographic imagination conflates both the geographic and the geologic imagination into a defining space in which one feels comfortable, in which one understands one's self. Importantly, the topographic imagination with its boundaries does not preclude a desire to explore the topography of the nation. In fact, the topographic imagination defines a comfort zone. One is always free to break out of this comfort zone and to explore new territories.

America has, from its conception, always been imagined topographically. Leslie Fiedler argued,

that America had been unremittingly dreamed from East to West [and] is a testament to the original goodness of man. ... And the margin where the Dream has encountered the resistance of fact, where the Noble Savage has confronted Original sin (the edge of hysteria: of the twitching revivals, ritual drunkenness, 'shooting up the town,' of the rape of nature and the almost compulsive slaughter of beasts) we call simply: the Frontier." (Fiedler, *A New Fiedler Reader* 14)

In the topographic imagination of America, indeed, there is always a frontier. This frontier was never and can never be mapped. It is a wild and savage realm at the edge of known existence, of hysteria. It is not a place that can be looked for, because the frontier is also a state of mind. It is a point of resistance to the Dream of America. Fiedler imagines that the Dream of America involves the mapping of the continent. Manifest Destiny involved the God given mandate to colonize and map the continent. It was ours to take from East to West. However, in order to map the nation, it was necessary to "tame" the frontier. Generations of Americans toiled in the borderland between civilization and the "edge of hysteria"; between the dreamed of possibility of man and the fact of his past. Engaging with the frontier isn't simply about the conquering of a continent. It has, both literally and literarily, always involved an engagement with the possibilities of man. By conquering the frontier man has proven to himself his own physical, psychological and spiritual strength. He has, in the words of Steinbeck, "...unlike any other thing organic or inorganic in the universe, grow[n] beyond his work, walk[ed] up the stairs of his concepts, emerge[d] ahead of his accomplishments" (Steinbeck 204). As Americans we must constantly invent a new Frontier. When our continent had essentially been mapped, we entered the space race, "the last frontier."<sup>2</sup> But space was not enough, we now, as Americans, find ourselves in the position of seeking out further frontiers<sup>3</sup>. If the Frontier is the margin where the dream encounters the resistance of fact, then the mere presence of the American Dream ensures that somewhere there is always someone engaged in the conquering of a frontier, for the

---

<sup>2</sup> It was, perhaps, a coincidence of timing, but it is worth noting that the race to put a man on the moon began only after all states had joined the Union. Alaska entered the Union on January 3, 1959, and Kennedy's famous "Man on the Moon" Inaugural Address took place on January 20, 1961. We had established the extent of our nation, and had eliminated the presence of any Primary Frontier, and it was at this time that the space race began in earnest.

<sup>3</sup> The November 11, 2008 cover of *Der Spiegel* proclaiming Barack Obama as "Der Weltpräsident" serves to underscore the importance of America's persistent "colonization" of the rest of the world. It also demonstrates the acceptance of this "colonization" by the rest of the world. In our history, once we had resolved our own Civil War, we began to then look outside of our own borders to help others. The assistance we have offered over the years has opened up new lands for the Americans. Easy visa access, strong business relations, and a general worldly openness to "Americanization" have led to an ever-increasing "colonization" on the part of the Americans.

American Dream—not to be confused with Fiedler’s Dream of America—insists on constantly moving forward, becoming wealthier, gaining in spiritual and monetary prosperity. I certainly don’t believe, nor would I argue, that only Americans continue to engage with the Frontier, but through the central ideals of our culture, we are encouraged, perhaps more than most, to seek out that dream, to move beyond our accomplishments and conquer the next frontier.

The topographic imagination implicitly creates the possibility for multiple frontiers. There are Frontiers within one’s own city and Frontiers within and beyond one’s region(s), as well as Frontiers of consciousness. When you add to these the complication that every one of us possesses our own topographic imagination, you start to see the difficulty of defining the realm in which we live and the role it plays in our feelings of limitations and possibilities. At the edge of every person’s topographic imagination lies a frontier. The Primary Frontier, as we have seen in Fiedler, is a primitive frontier, one that has not yet been explored. However, there is also a Secondary Frontier.

The Secondary Frontier moves from naïveté to an elementary consciousness of history and discrepancy; on the one hand, it falsifies history, idealizing even the recent past into the image of the myth, while on the other hand, it is driven to lay bare the failures of its founders. ... The West is reinvented! (Fiedler, *A New Fiedler Reader* 15)

Once the Primary Frontier of a nation has been mapped and the topography is more or less established, the Secondary Frontier is all that is left. With the full mapping of the Primary Frontier, the geographic boundaries are fully defined. There is no longer anywhere else to go. Once this is accomplished, nations have a tendency to fall into the creation of the Secondary Frontier. Fiedler refers here to the propagation of the myth of the West through such instances as the Wild West Show, Germany’s Karl May Festivals, the modern rodeo, and, perhaps the most curious reinvention, the urban cowboy.

Further, Deleuze and Parnet agree with Fiedler’s assessment of American literature, and expand on the idea when they state,

American literature operates according to geographical lines: the flight towards the West, the discovery that the true East is in the West, the sense of the frontiers as something to cross, to push back, to go beyond. The becoming is geographical. (Deleuze and Parnet 36-37)

Let us take just a moment to unpack the classification that Deleuze and Parnet have given to American literature here. First, they claim that much of American literature is expressed according to geographical lines. This is certainly true in our classification of our writers; Faulkner is often referred to as a Southern writer, Steinbeck as Californian, Auster’s urban landscapes are frequently discussed, etc. We classify our writers either according to their place of origin, or their chosen home. There stories too, present America according to geographical lines, Sherwood Anderson’s *Winesburg, Ohio*, John Steinbeck’s *The Grapes of Wrath*, John Dos Passos’ *U.S.A.*, and, of course, Jack Kerouac’s *On The Road*, to name but a few. The lines of flight referred to by Deleuze and Parnet involve movement along the lines that make up the topographic imagination of America. Although much of American literature is situated along geographic lines of flight, Deleuze and Parnet also leave open the possibility for lines of flight that don’t follow paths pre-defined by others. These lines of flight can be seemingly random, like those in a rhizome, or they can be merely flights of

intensity, moments in which one moves beyond his/her present state without the need for physical movement.

Further, Deleuze and Parnet refer here to the “true East” being in the West. What is meant here is that the East is the source of all Western ideas of enlightenment and spiritual fulfillment. Previous to the discovery of North America heading east was the definitive journey toward self-discovery and, most often, spiritual epiphanies. It was necessary to head east, for the eastern religions, Buddhism and Hinduism, had originally conceptualized enlightenment. Previous to the West’s discovery of these religions enlightenment simply did not exist in the West. Our existence was tied simply to our own attempts to be better people, but the goal was to improve the self, not to strive in anyway to reach beyond the self. The true East is a metaphorical Mecca that simultaneously refers to this search for enlightenment, as well as to the initial eastward expansion of Western ideas. The true East is an exotic place where life is different and better, but which remains conquerable.

In the search for the true East there is more at stake than Deleuzean “lines of flight.” As we tell the story of our nation, we must tell the tale of the many flights West, the Oregon Trail, the Gold Rush, the Dust Bowl, the secondary migration to California, which continues today. All of these involved a departure from the East in an attempt to discover the American Dream. The geographical becoming of America involves the pushing back, crossing, and going beyond of previous physical frontiers and an internal movement across similar territories. As the nation expanded so expanded the potential realm for the topographic imagination.

Fiedler’s Secondary Frontier is an attempt on the part of the post-colonial individual to relive the Primary Frontier. By living out re-creations of the original exploration of our land, we hope to relive these same lines of flight, to use them as our own. The problem with this type of thinking is that with the Secondary Frontier, we have nothing but a poor imitation. The Secondary Frontier cannot bring about the becoming we are hoping to accomplish. The Karl May Festival in Germany, as well as the general fascination with Karl May in Germany—*Der Schuh des Manitu*, a musical, celebrated its world premier in Berlin on December 7, 2008<sup>4</sup>—are solid modern indications that even Germany continues this fascination with the Secondary Frontier. Interestingly, Germany hasn’t actually had a Primary Frontier for a very long time. Therefore, instead of retelling tales of the conquering of their frontier, they have, in some ways, adopted the American West as their Secondary Frontier. Americans too, continue to engage with the Secondary Frontier of the West. Recent films including: *3:10 to Yuma* (2007), *Redemption: A Mile From Hell* (2009), and *Meek’s Cutoff* (2011) attest to this. However, it will always be an incomplete process. In order to accomplish the becoming we must seek out our own Primary Frontier. The

---

<sup>4</sup> The musical is a curious extension of the Secondary Frontier, for the musical is a stage production based on the 2001 movie of the same title. While reinventing the stories originally told by Karl May, the film inserts current humor into the film. For example, there is a rather effeminate—although never divulged as gay—Indian, and a cowboy that plays soccer with a stone (Herbig). A musical based on the film, which is a satire of the books of Karl May, which were based on the imaginings of the author who didn’t visit the United States until well after his books had become very successful, creates a Secondary Frontier to the fourth power. By the time we reach the musical we are so far removed from the actual Frontier that it is completely unrecognizable as such.

topographic imagination requires that we each imagine our Frontier for ourselves.

In my research for this manuscript, I was surprised to find that, despite Kerouac's seemingly obvious emphasis on geography, borders, and border transgression, there has been little written on the subject. Ann Charters, Tim Hunt, and John Leland all hint at my interpretation of *On the Road*, but secondary literature is largely silent on the themes discussed in this analysis. As a result, my analysis of all three works will rely heavily on the writings of Leslie Fiedler, Gilles Deleuze, Félix Guattari, and Claire Parnet.

In this chapter I will discuss Jack Kerouac's engagement with the Frontier in *On The Road*, which serves as a reflection of Sal Paradise's topographic imagination. Sal engages directly with his own topographic imagination through the entire novel as he purposefully encounters his own Frontier. His rhizomatic travels through the United States and his role as an intentional nomad make up the part of the novel that is Sal's "Dream of America." I will further demonstrate the promises of salvation represented in both Dean Moriarty and Sal Paradise; their roles as savior figures, and the constellation Kerouac lays out for the final moment of truth. Finally, I will demonstrate that Sal's hope of reaching self-realization through the mapping of America was unfulfilled. In order to achieve his ultimate goal, self-realization, he must engage with the Other and cross the boundary of his topographic imagination and seek out a different frontier.

### **The Topographic Imagination and the Personal Frontier**

As the novel opens, Sal lives in New Jersey and has never traveled west. He is yet to engage with the country. It is all uncharted territory. Sal will encounter the West in a more modern way than Fiedler allowed for. His West will consist of the Primary/Secondary Frontier. His travels will take him to the border where his dreams encounter reality, while at the same time he is always already exploring a Secondary Frontier, an idealization and recreation of the American West. The movement with which the novel opens is the impetus for the movement that it will take to accomplish this mapping of the frontier. "With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road. Before that I'd often dreamed of going West to see the country, always vaguely planning and never taking off" (Kerouac 1). Dean is already in motion at the outset. He is traveling the American highway and his arrival will mean the beginning of the adventure. Sal is in stasis. He is, up to the point of the novel's opening, simply a dreamer. Instead of acting on his desire he stays in New Jersey and only "vaguely plan[s]" to go west. Even his choice of destination is completely non-descript, for he has nowhere to go but west.

"With the coming of Dean Moriarty ..." is a sentence that encapsulates his present and future situation. It is a hint that his life will not be spent on the road, but he will go through a phase of discovery and later move on. Whereas at the beginning of this sentence motion is invoked, by the time Kerouac reaches the end of the sentence the motion is over. In referring to the "part of my life" he makes clear that his need for the road was temporary. It was a phase. By the time of the writing of the novel, his travels are all in the past and whatever desire they sought to fulfill has been accomplished.

Kerouac himself, while engaging with the concept of the Frontier, takes part in the propagation of the Secondary Frontier: "It was like a Western movie; the time had come for me to assert myself" (65-66). This is one of many moments where characters take on roles

that are not their own, Sal Paradise, the main character, here envisions himself in the middle of a Western. Imaginatively placing himself within the scope of Fiedler's Secondary Frontier, Sal gains strength from the cowboys of modern film in order to handle the situation. At this point in the novel Sal has not yet had the opportunity to explore the West himself, therefore he *must* rely on someone else's interpretation of the Frontier. It is important to note that geographically the Secondary Frontier is not a stretch of land that exists beyond the Primary Frontier, but is a constellation of ideas that are super-imposed onto a realm that previously had occupied the Primary Frontier and is now the Primary Nation.

Once the Primary Frontier has been explored and its topography provisionally mapped by someone else, it is impossible to encounter this space as anything less than a Primary/Secondary Frontier. On the one hand it is a Primary Frontier, i.e. unexplored territory for the individual while it is already populated by creatures of the Secondary Frontier. As Sal Paradise observes in *On The Road*, "Then Omaha, and, by God, the first cowboy I saw, walking along the bleak walls of the whole-sale meat warehouses in a ten-gallon hat and Texas boots, looked like any beat character of the brickwall dawns of the East except for the getup" (17). Notable here is Sal's expectation that he would encounter the Secondary Frontier. "The first cowboy I saw" relays a sense of anticipation, and almost disappointment that he hadn't seen a cowboy before Omaha. He also sees through the cowboy and sees the reinvention of the West. It is a cowboy, yes, but he "looked like any other beat character ... of the East." A true cowboy would, one presumes, look like a westerner not an easterner. This is clearly the Secondary Frontier.

Sal's interest lies, however, not in the reinvented West, but in discovering his own American Frontier. Aside from traveling, there is no specified goal to the narrative. The purpose of *On the Road* is just that, to be on the road. It is a process of reinvention that is not intended to redefine the nation for everyone, but simply to conquer it, to own it, and to somehow in the process better understand the self of Sal Paradise. Through his understanding of self, he will work to conquer his own Primary Frontier, and he will do this by engaging with his own topographic imagination. He must expand his own horizons in order to find the border between his present self and the self he desires.

To understand Sal's travels across America, it is helpful to understand, and look at the text through the lens of Deleuze and Guattari's rhizomes,

The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. ... What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real. The map does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious. ... It is itself a part of the rhizome. The map is open and connectable in all of its dimensions; it is detachable, reversible, susceptible to constant modification. It can be torn, reversed, adapted to any kind of mounting, reworked by an individual, group, or social formation. It can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation. Perhaps one of the most important characteristics of the rhizome is that it always has multiple entryways; in the sense, the burrow is an animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata (cf. the muskrat). A map has multiple entryways, as opposed to the tracing, which always comes back "to the same." (12-13)

The rhizome and the map involve a physical process, and this process is the physical experimentation of the mapping, of the rhizome. Taken literally, one must explore the nation in order to map it. Until it has been completely surveyed, which is done by many individuals, surveyors, tracing distinct routes across the landscape, the nation cannot be mapped. Like the rhizome this is not necessarily done methodically from east to west or from north to south, but can also involve the mapping of the many individual tracts of the nation, and later piecing these smaller maps together into a definitive map. When the lines of flight are of an individual and not a civic nature, this process is even more chaotic, yet more important. Through this map and the process of its creation the unconscious is constructed, the individual is clarified and defined.

The lines of flight in *On The Road*, aside from following a general direction from east to west and west to east, is otherwise rather chaotic, and generally lacking focus, like that of the rhizome. During four trips across country, Sal lands each time in Denver, New York, and San Francisco, but outside of this he manages to cover much of the contiguous United States. There are numerous fits, starts, and dead ends. Including Sal's beginning trip across the country.

I'd been poring over maps of the United States in Paterson for months, even reading books about the pioneers and savoring names like Platte and Cimarron and so on, and on the roadmap was one long red line called Route 6 that led from the tip of Cape Cod clear to Ely, Nevada, and there dipped down to Los Angeles. (Kerouac 10)

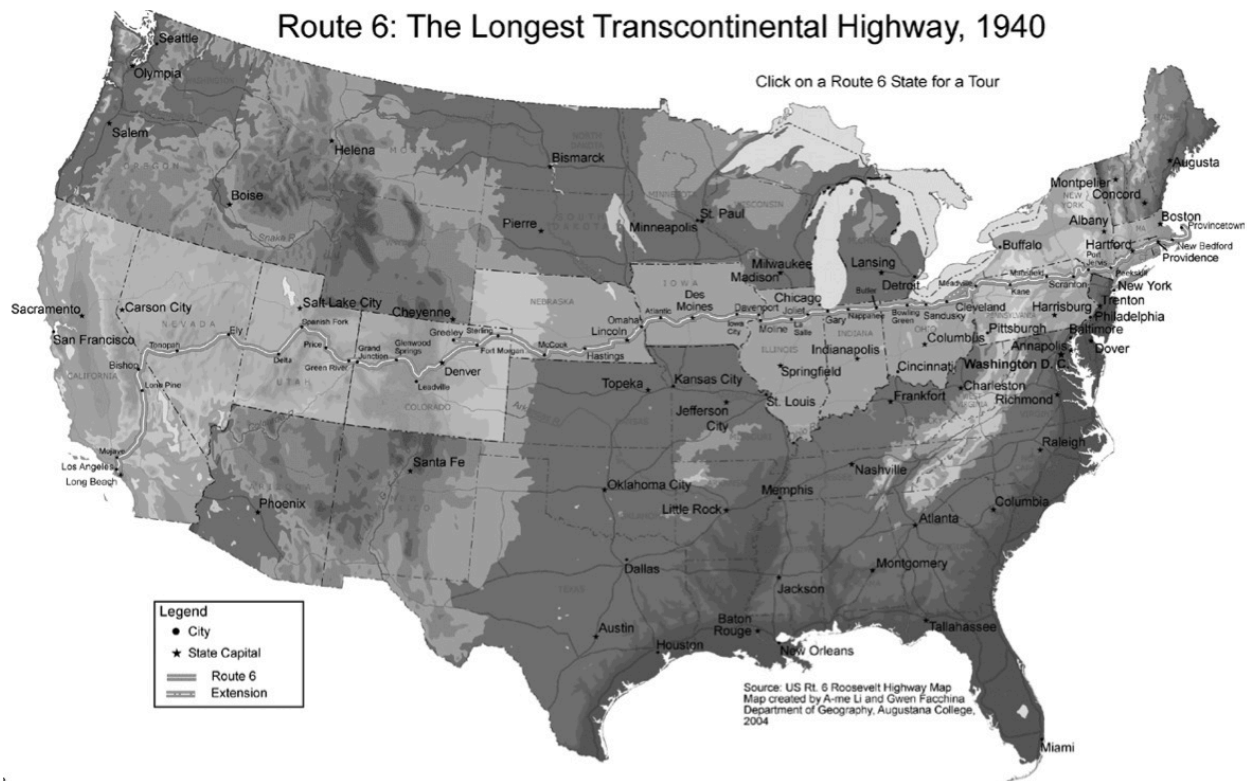


Diagram 1.1: Route 6: The Longest Transcontinental Highway, 1940.

Sal imagined that he was about to engage with the Frontier, and that the US could be

crossed in one easy line from East to West. This red line was his vein for conquering the frontier. In line with the expansion of the American highway system and development of the Interstate system in America, his vision was not of crossing the US and stopping in small towns and getting to know the culture and the terrain, but to cross the continent in one grand gesture following a nearly straight line<sup>5</sup>. To put it in terms of the Deleuzian metaphor, he imagined the nation as a tree. In New Jersey is his life up to this point, the roots. Route 6 is the single, strong trunk that will lead him from his past to his future, the crown of the tree, which is his final destination in Los Angeles. He saw the continent as something to be crossed as quickly and as directly as possible. Route 6 was to consist of a single line of flight. The journey was, at this point, unimportant. What was important was the destination. After spending his first day getting essentially nowhere, heading only north instead of the hoped for West, he quickly learns how misguided he was. "It was my dream that screwed up, the stupid hearthside idea that it would be wonderful to follow one great red line across America instead of trying various roads and routes" (11). This one straight line would have gotten him to his two destinations, Denver and Los Angeles, relatively directly, but in the process he would have missed most of America, which Sal already understands is to be the purpose of his life on the road. His life on the road will have to be rhizomatic. There is no other way to get to know America.

Sal's journey would now involve trying "various roads and routes." By doing this, Sal will get to know the topography of America. He'll begin mapping a new America. As I have discussed, American literature does push back and go beyond frontiers. It also operates along relatively strong topographic lines; Route 6, Route 66, Times Square, the Rocky Mountains, the Deep South. These are the topography of America, and as such represent aspects of the topographic imagination: routes, places and destinations that must be explored. When Sal first departs, his plan is to follow the clearly outlined topographic line that is Route 6. He's unsure what he seeks, but he is confident that it is to be found in the west, in the frontier. As such, it is his hope to get to the West as quickly as possible. What he doesn't fully realize yet is that his dream is not a dream of travel, but a dream of becoming. "... [S]omewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to me" (Kerouac 8). By traveling across the country he hopes to find something new, a different land, a different Sal. The pearl is the becoming, the constructing of the unconscious and mapping of Sal's Primary Frontier. Through these processes he will eventually get the pearl, but he will have to work for it. It will require a lot of motion. In short, it won't just be handed to him.

In fact, as Sal's first journey across the country progresses, he begins to understand for himself the importance of motion and his need to see more than just the beginning and the end of his route. At one point he is offered a ride by a couple of young guys who are speeding across the country with very few stops even for food and rest.

I mulled this over; the thought of zooming all night across Nebraska, Wyoming, and the Utah desert in the morning, and then most likely the Nevada desert in the afternoon, and actually arriving in Los Angeles within a foreseeable space of time almost made me change my plans. But I had to go to Denver. (Kerouac 24)

---

<sup>5</sup> U.S. Route 6 was, at the time of Kerouac's writing the longest transcontinental highway in the United States. Route 66, more famous and more direct, could only be picked up in the Midwest (Roseman, Roseman and Patrick).

Given the opportunity to follow his originally conceived of straight line across the continent, Sal now passes up the opportunity in favor of an indirect route that will take him off his path and toward a new adventure.

As we have seen, this motion will not be direct. It will involve a lot of energy expended in what seems the wrong direction, but this direction is only perceived by Sal as wrong. In the end it is all part of the narrative and forms an important aspect of the development of his character. Sal's America, after all is rhizomatic. "[The rhizome] is composed not of units but of dimensions, or rather directions in motion. It has neither beginning nor end, but always a middle (*milieu*) from which it grows and which it overflows" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 21). His journey too will have neither beginning nor end, but always an "on the road." The milieu of Sal's America is motion itself. Further, the structure of the rhizome requires he explore as much as possible of the nation. A tree, after all occupies a single location sending its roots out to collect nutrients for the main structure, which does not move, but stands in one place. The rhizome, however, sends out not roots, but more rhizomes. Whereas a tree can occupy only one spot, the rhizome spreads out and eventually covers everything it can gain access too.

During his travels Sal will cover America. In the process he will map/re-map America. In order to become the Sal he seeks, he will need to cover a lot of territory. What territory he is unable to cover himself, he gains access to through the various characters he meets on the road. During the course of the novel forty-three different states are mentioned. Sal visits twenty-seven of these states personally. The other sixteen are mentioned in passing, or as a reference to someone else's origin. States are an important element of orientation in the novel. Rarely does a character appear without reference to their place of origin, "I made the acquaintance of another hitch-hiker, a typical New Yorker"; "and here came this rawhide oldtimer Nebraska farmer"; "He came from Vermont" (Kerouac 16, 18, 260). Their origin plays a strong role in Sal's topographic imagination. The interplay of Sal's own travels and the additions to the map made by these minor characters creates a new and unexpected map of the America frontier. The map no longer follows the cartographic representation we all know from childhood, but creates an America that defies its own borders. As Sal describes Dean Moriarty, "My first impression of Dean was of a young Gene Autry—trim, thin-hipped, blue-eyed, with a real Oklahoma accent—a sideburned hero of the snowy West" (2). Dean was born in Utah and spent most of his childhood in Denver, yet he is described here as having a real Oklahoma accent. Later "Dean was wearing washed-out tight levis and a T-shirt and looked suddenly like a real Denver character again" (218). Dean is a person with multiple origins, and this multiplicity places emphasis on Kerouac's use of the topographic imagination to define identity. Dean could have easily been described as having a Western accent, or more probably a Colorado accent. Instead Dean is tied to the West at many different points, and the West is invoked in full force with the reference to Gene Autry, himself a representative of the reinvented Secondary Frontier. By equating Dean Moriarty with Gene Autry (born in Texas and raised in Oklahoma), Kerouac has placed Dean's character firmly in the West, and, as such, counterpart to that of the eastern Sal Paradise.

Through Dean and the many other characters Sal encounters, he gains access to parts of the nation he doesn't himself come in contact with. These contacts are then assembled in the mind of the reader into a completely new map of America. It is also



through these people that Sal feels he has gotten to know the nation itself. Unlike a Hemingway or Steinbeck novel, when all is said and done there is very little description of the landscape in the novel. Most of the assessments of the land come through descriptions of its people. "It was the spirit of the West sitting right next to me. I wished I knew his whole raw life and what the hell he'd been doing all these years besides laughing and yelling like that" (Kerouac 19). By getting to know the characters on the road, he hopes to get to know America, and to some extent he is successful.

With their help Sal is able to create a new map of America:

Unlike the graphic arts, drawing, or photography, unlike tracings, the rhizome pertains to a map that must be produced, constructed, a map that is always detachable, connectable, reversible, modifiable, and has multiple entryways and exits and its own lines of flight. It is tracings that must be put on the map, not the opposite. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 21)

The rhizome allows for a new map, his map. For Sal this means a map where Utah can be synonymous with Colorado and Oklahoma, and where contiguity is of no concern. It is all relative and everything and everyone is related. "Well, damn me, I'm amazed you know him. This is a big country. Yet I knew you must have known him" (Kerouac 27). Talking to a vagrant, Sal finds someone that knows a friend of his. It's a small world and through the connections he makes on the road, one gets the feeling that we are all related. We are all part of the greater conglomeration that is the nation. A claim that is true in its simplicity, but most often ignored within the realm of our topographic imagination.

### **Sal Paradise Engages with the Borders of America**

For Sal, becoming a full-fledged member of the nation will first require these travels as an outsider to the nation. His life on the road is a nomadic journey through the Frontier where he lives outside of the societal norms he has been raised with in New Jersey.

Il est vrai qu'au centre les communautés rurales sont prises et fixées dans la machine bureaucratique du despote, avec ses scribes, ses prêtres, ses fonctionnaires; mais à la périphérie, les communautés entrent dans une autre sorte d'aventure, dans une autre sorte d'unité cette fois nomadique, dans une machine de guerre nomade, et se décodent au lieu de se laisser surcoder. Des groupes entiers qui partent, qui nomadisent: les archéologues nous ont habitués à penser ce nomadisme non pas comme un état premier, mais comme une aventure qui survient à des groupes sédentaires, l'appel du dehors, le mouvement. (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 172)

The nomad, according to Deleuze, did not pre-date the despot, but was driven out of the city by his policies. Given the knowledge that nomads existed long before the conception of society, as we understand it today, had been developed, it would be best to refer to these nomads as "intentional nomads." The intentional nomad decodes himself from the society in order to create his own code. Having decoded him/herself from the dominant paradigm the intentional nomad thereby decodes the overcoded/appropriated lands across which he/she will travel. Because the nomad does not live by the accepted code, he must invent his own code for living, and, in this process, he must overcode the landscape with his own code. That is to say, the intentional nomad does not simply travel from place to place, but is

defined by his remaining in motion. "The nomad goes from point to point only as a consequence and as a factual necessity; in principle, points for him are relays along a trajectory" (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 380). During his travels, the nomad is engaged in a process of overcoding the nation. This overcoding is not a re-coding. It is not the concern of the nomad to redefine the nation, for he has already been excluded from it. However, the nomad maps and reinvents the nation in his travels from point to point.

Sal is in these terms a nomad, an outsider, and a writer who lives with his aunt. He engages in his adventures as a way of avoiding being "overcoded" by the bureaucratic machine. He and Dean's travels are a part of the nomadic war machine. By traveling and shirking societal responsibilities they work to decode themselves, while they overcode America. We find here again a doubling of the Frontier. While they are constantly exploring a land that is simultaneously Primary and Secondary Frontier, the very nature of their journey portrays them as nomads in a process of overcoding a land that has already been overcoded/mapped. Dean makes this clear, "We know America, we're at home; I can go anywhere in America and get what I want because it's the same in every corner, I know the people, I know what they do" (Kerouac 121). He knows the code. The intentional nomad has the benefit of being part of the society he is overcoding at the same time he lives outside of its norms.

Sal's travels are a becoming, a becoming-nomad, a becoming-America. Being on the road will bring about change. In order to map the west he will have to give up many of his previous ideas. Like the moment when he realized Route 6 was not the golden highway he had hoped for, Sal will encounter several moments that cause him to think differently about his past, and his future. As we see in this scene:

I didn't know who I was--I was far away from home, haunted and tired with travel, in a cheap hotel room I'd never seen, hearing the hiss of steam outside, and the creak of the old wood of the hotel, and footsteps upstairs, and all the sad sounds, and I looked at the cracked high ceiling and really didn't know who I was for about fifteen strange seconds....I was halfway across America, at the dividing line between the East of my youth and the West of my future, and maybe that's why it happened right there and then, that strange red afternoon. (Kerouac 15)

For fifteen seconds, Sal has lost himself. He was no one. In every becoming there are dividing lines. Mostly these lines, as we experience in our own lives, are very small and hardly noticeable. Like the passing of days into months into years, we simply cross these lines and move inexorably into the future. Here Sal has had an opportunity to recognize and truly feel the crossing of one of those boundaries (it will not be his last). In this moment, Sal is neither his past nor his future. He isn't even Sal. He is a nomad lost in the American Frontier. He is weary from travel, staying in a hotel in a town, and a place he has never seen before.

Sal's becoming requires that he engage in movement. In the hotel room he is not becoming. In fact, he is merely occupying a placeholder that is "between the East of [his] youth and the West of [his] future." In his lines of flight lies the answer to his becoming. Flight is the answer for moving beyond this curious in-between. However, Deleuze and Guattari argue, and as we shall later see, flight is not always necessary.

Flight is challenged when it is useless movement in space, a movement of false liberty; but in contrast, flight is affirmed when it is stationary flight, a flight of

intensity. ... The act of becoming is a capturing, a possession, a plus-value, but never a reproduction or an imitation. (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 13)

In the middle of his “flight” to Denver, Sal has in this moment experienced a flight of intensity. With all of his memories and, seemingly, faculties void of information, he loses himself “in the American night” and takes the step from past to future; this time with the knowledge that he is consciously taking possession of his own future.

Importantly, Sal only achieves here fifteen seconds of otherworldliness. He remains at this point inside the boundaries of America. He will, during his travels, create a new map of America, but he will not reach his full realization as long as he remains within the realm of his topographic imagination. For Sal Paradise, spiritual enlightenment/self-realization will only be possible with the transgression of the border to Mexico.

### **Dean Moriarty: the Angel, the Prophet, the Ne'er Do Well**

Dean Moriarty is an important part of Sal's development. In Denver he hopes to see Dean, a person he has described as being “the perfect guy for the road because he was actually born on the road, when his parents were passing through Salt Lake City in 1926, in a jalopy, on their way to Los Angeles” (Kerouac 1). Dean has been in motion since the day of his birth, crossing and re-crossing the country, first as a hobo with his father, and now on his own. Dean is the perfect foil for Sal. He is a lifelong nomad that will teach Sal the rules of the road. With all of his kinetic energy, Sal can't help but be caught up in and be inspired by his motion and intensity. Dean, however, is disadvantaged, because his life involves nothing but lines of flight. His constant motion is too erratic to allow for a mapping of the nation. His energy lacks focus as his multi-faceted description exhibits. Dean cannot explore the Frontier, neither Primary nor Secondary, because he has never known a land that was unexplored. He has never known a life that was not lived in someone else's frontier. Dean's reality *is* the Frontier. It cannot, as Fiedler suggests, “encounter the resistance of fact.”

Dean always is, and has always been, moving:

I'm going to divorce Marylou [in New York] and marry Camille and go live with her in San Francisco. But this is only after you and I, dear Carlo, go to Texas, dig Old Bull Lee, that gone cat I've never met and both of you've told me so much about, and then I'll go to San Fran. (47-48)

With wives on both coasts, Dean spends the novel bouncing back and forth from coast to coast, and impetuous romance to impetuous romance, all the while carrying with him a beat up trunk that is never far from arm's reach. He is constantly prepared to flee and to head back out on the road, avoiding being tied down to anyone spot. Dean is the antithesis of Sal Paradise, for he is more comfortable in motion than he is in any given location.

It would be easy, given Dean's importance to the novel, to describe Dean and Sal as travel partners on the road. In many ways they are partners, however, I will refrain from referring to them as travel partners since they traveled quite seldom together. In Sal's eight cross-country trips, four from and four back to New Jersey, Dean only accompanies Sal three times. It is Sal's job to map the frontier. With Dean's occasional accompaniment he will engage in the real task at hand, self-realization.

Dean will provide the inspiration and the opportunity for Sal's enlightenment. Without Dean Sal is little more than a nomad. He works to map the nation, to overcode it,

but only Dean, with his talk of Nietzsche, can push Sal beyond his current state, move him beyond the west of his past.

As Sal travels alone, he experiences many moments of beauty. He truly engages with the American landscape and lays the groundwork for his move beyond. His joys and experiences are rooted in the earth, in the here and now. From enjoying a nap under a tree in the hot summer sun to days spent picking cotton with migrant workers, Sal gets to know his America at its most basic level.

Dean, on the other hand, despite being of the road, moves beyond the here and now, to a state of being that can best be described as that of a spiritual leader. Although Kerouac's descriptions of Dean use a vocabulary rooted in Western theology, "prophesied", "Angel", and "Seraphically" (Kerouac 8, 259, 263), the deliverance he promises is an Eastern deliverance. He doesn't promise eternal life or an escape from this world. His promise is that of something more fleeting, a promise of enlightenment.

Kerouac complicates any simple assignation of "character x = messiah", by often describing Dean as possessing messianic characteristics, but also casting him in a negative light. Dean may have been a common criminal, but he's also something that Kerouac's America has been waiting for. "... [H]is 'criminality' was not something that sulked and sneered; it was a wild yea-saying overburst of American joy; it was Western, the west wind, an ode from the Plains, something new, long prophesied, long a-coming" (Kerouac 7-8). Dean, again situated in the West, is what America has been waiting for. He is the coming of a long prophesied state of existence. His criminality was not "evil" but an expression of the American myth. It is a by-product of his life of intensity. It's as if by giving into these impulses, he can't help but be a criminal.

George Dardess argued that Dean's character should be interpreted as apocalyptic, however, this idea misses the point of the character of Dean. Yes, there is a moment when Dean is described in apocalyptic terms:

Suddenly I had a vision of Dean, a burning shuddering frightful Angel, palpitating toward me across the road, approaching like a cloud, with enormous speed, pursuing me like the Shrouded Traveler on the plain, bearing down on me. I saw his huge face over the plains with the mad, bony purpose and the gleaming eyes; I saw his wings; I saw his old jalopy chariot with thousands of sparking flames shooting out from it; I saw the path it burned over the road it even made its own road and went over the corn, through cities, destroying bridges, drying rivers. It came like wrath to the West. ... Behind him charred ruins smoked. (259)

Dean, as a matter of course, has always left destruction in his path, however his destruction is not intentional. Dean is not a dark angel that seeks to destroy the nation. Rather, it is his intensity, his flights of intensity that cause such destruction. In contrast to Sal, Dean must always be moving, and the direction of this movement is inconsequential. When Dean is at the wheel of a car, speed is his most important objective. The destruction we see in this particular description of Dean is no more than the collateral damage left behind by a life of complete and total intensity. The charred ruins that he leaves in his wake are caused by the sparking flames of his "old jalopy" chariot, they are not ruins created out of malice or unholy desire. The destruction that Dean leaves in his wake throughout the novel is not a malicious, apocalyptic destruction, but is merely the side effect of his desire to truly live in the moment.

In this description he must get to Denver, to Sal, as quickly as possible, for their moment of spiritual boundary transgression is nigh. Dean is, in fact, keenly interested in philosophy. He expresses an early desire to learn about Nietzsche, and spends many hours in philosophical discussions during the course of the novel. Sal is never more than an observer of these conversations. Given Dean's interest in philosophy it is not difficult to see the Nietzschean aspects of his character. In *Also Sprach Zarathustra* Nietzsche states, "Ich liebe Den, welcher die Zukünftigen rechtfertigt und die Vergangenen erlöst: denn er will an den Gegenwärtigen zu Grunde gehen" (13). The Nietzschean ideal is, thus, to live every moment as if it were one's last, to seek complete fulfillment in every moment. Admittedly, this is but one aspect of Nietzschean philosophy and his *Übermensch*.

Dean follows Nietzsche's advice and takes it one step further. In his frantic movements and activities he strives constantly to become the *Übermensch*. Whereas Nietzsche refutes the existence of God, Dean affirms his existence. He is convinced that there is a God, and that together with Sal they can find the answers they have been looking for. "And of course now no one can tell us that there is no God. We've passed through all forms. You remember, Sal, when I first came to New York and I wanted Chad King to teach me about Nietzsche. You see how long ago? Everything is fine, God exists, we know time" (Kerouac 120). The importance for Dean is not to find God. He is searching to prove the existence of God and in the process to experience a moment of bliss. Dean's God, and Sal's as well, is not an abstract omnipotent power that controls life. Their God is time. To know time is Dean's goal. By knowing time he experiences life. "And then we'll all go off to sweet life, 'cause now is the time and *we all know time!*" (114)<sup>6</sup>.

While Dean's God is time, Sal consistently describes him using biblical vocabulary, equating him with a follower of Jesus or even as God himself. "In myriad pricklings of heavenly radiation I had to struggle to see Dean's figure, and he looked like God" (Kerouac 284). In a moment of euphoria, fueled by some really good Mexican marijuana, Sal looks across a field and sees Dean as God. he is to be revered, respected, and is in this moment the Savior.

Importantly, it is not only Sal that views Dean as a messianic figure, others, too, engage in Dean worship. Everyone in the group looked up to him, because he embodied the reckless living and the human ideal they were all hoping for. To live in the moment is, for them, the ultimate existence.

People were now beginning to look at Dean with maternal and paternal affection glowing in their faces. He was finally an Angel, as I always knew he would become; but like any Angel he still had rages and furies, and that night when we all left the party and repaired to the Windsor bar in one vast brawling gang, Dean became frantically and demoniacally and seraphically drunk. (Kerouac 263)

They all tolerate Dean's flights of intensity, because somehow he promised the answer to it all. In Mexico, as well, he is seen as a Prophet, "They stroked Dean and thanked him. He stood among them with his ragged face to the sky, looking for the next and highest and final pass, and seemed like the Prophet that had come to them" (298). In both of these scenes we

---

<sup>6</sup> The concepts of time and knowing time in the novel are far too complicated for a full explication here. The discovery of time is as important as the search for and discovery of the pearl of enlightenment. See Mortenson, Erik for a full discussion of the configuration of time in the novel.

see the two sides of Dean Moriarty. He is at once Savior and Fallen Angel. When he goes on a bender in Denver he becomes simultaneously “frantically and demoniacally and seraphically drunk.” We see in this moment his frenetic energy, his dark side and his angelic side. In the scene in Mexico he “seemed like the Prophet,” but he is not there to deliver news, as a prophet should. He is already looking past the situation that he is in. He is always looking to the next step, the next high, and to his final destination. He is not, as Zarathustra, a Prophet of the people. Indeed, there are multiple interpretations of Zarathustra. I interpret his prophetic nature in his coming down from the mountain to share his thoughts. As much as Sal Paradise is an intentional nomad, Dean Moriarty is an incidental prophet/Savior/God. His messianic states only come in brief moments. They are never sustained. This is, in part, due to his obsession with time and his drug use.

Time is incredibly important for Dean. In frenzies that are most probably fuelled by drugs—a favorite in the novel being Benzedrine (Kerouac 41), an early form of methamphetamine, at the time available without a prescription—Dean remains in constant motion and plans his days to the minute. “So now in this exact minute I must dress, put on my pants, go back to life, that is to outside life, streets and what not, as we agreed, it is now one-*fifteen* and time's running, running ...” (43). Dean uses Benzedrine as a way of carrying on flights of intensity that otherwise would not have been possible. In every driving scene Dean is always “go, go, go” (243) until he passes out and sleeps while someone else drives.

Even in scenes where Dean is not described as having taken drugs it is not difficult to recognize a man under the influence, “This was the new and complete Dean, grown to maturity. I said to myself, My God, he's changed. Fury spat out of his eyes when he told of things he hated; great glows of joy replaced this when he suddenly got happy; every muscle twitched to live and go” (Kerouac 113). We see here that he is frenetic. He undergoes great and swift mood swings from fury to joy and back again, meanwhile he is constantly tense and ready to go, go, go. If one looks closely it is clear that as the novel progresses Dean's drug addiction takes over more and more of his life, until he reaches the point of utter self destruction.

Flights of intensity have their limits, but Dean is looking to find them. A conversation between Dean and Sal describes this exact belief of his,

[Dean:] “He's never hung-up, he goes every direction, he lets it all out, he knows time, he has nothing to do but rock back 'nd forth. Man, he's the end! you see, if you go like him all the time you'll finally get it.”

[Sal:] “Get what?”

[Dean:] “IT! IT! I'll tell you--now no time, we have no time now.” (Kerouac 127)

Dean is looking to go, to let it all out and not hold back. This is precisely where some find the destructive nature of Dean to be apocalyptic. The difference, however, is that Dean is not seeking to destroy anything. He is seeking to discover, and his self-discovery is fueled by marijuana and Benzedrine. In fact, there is a correlation in the novel between Dean discussing IT and symptoms of Benzedrine use. His extolling the virtues of IT, his own word for enlightenment, are accompanied by descriptions of his sweating, frenetic energy, and nervous twitching, all of which are effects of methamphetamines. Furthermore, it is commonly understood that the draw of methamphetamines is a euphoric feeling, which

could be interpreted as akin to enlightenment<sup>7</sup>. It is unclear whether the jazz artists that Dean respects and wants to be like are also under the influence, but given the time and milieu it is a definite probability.

As Deleuze and Guattari argue:

All drugs fundamentally concern speeds, and modifications of speed. What allows us to describe an overall Drug assemblage in spite of the differences between drugs is a line of perceptive causality that makes it so that (1) the imperceptible is perceived; (2) perception is molecular; (3) desire directly invests the perception and the perceived. The Americans of the beat generation had already embarked on this path, and spoke of a molecular revolution specific to drugs. ... [T]he problem is well formulated if we say that drugs eliminate forms and persons, if we bring into play the mad speeds of drugs and the extraordinary posthigh slownesses, ... if we confer upon perception the molecular power to grasp microperceptions, microoperations, and upon the perceived the force to emit accelerated or decelerated particles in a floating time that is no longer our time, and to emit haecceities that are no longer of this world: deterritorialization, "I was disoriented ..." (a perception of things, thoughts, desires in which desire, thought, and the thing have invaded all of perception: the imperceptible finally perceived). (282-283)

Dean knows and understands precisely what Deleuze and Guattari put forth here. His focus, through the speed of drugs, is to find the microperceptions and to move beyond what he is capable of knowing in a world without drugs. Sal is unable to perceive the imperceptible because he does not have the aid of Benzedrine that Dean has. He can't find "IT" and has to have it explained to him—which Dean does a terrible job of. Numerous articles have been written concerning the meaning of "IT" and the vagueness with which Dean expresses his feelings leave the question fundamentally unanswerable. Dean is looking for "IT" and his "desire directly invests the perception and the perceived" of his quest. Sal cannot understand "IT" because his desire is not parallel to Deans, and even if it were, without the aid of drugs he would be unable to perceive exactly what it is that Dean sees in his drug-induced states.

Dean needs drugs in his search for enlightenment, however, he does not know when to quit, and they will eventually be his undoing. By the end of the novel Sal must let Dean go and move on with his life.

Old Dean's gone, I thought, and out loud I said, "He'll be all right." And off we went to the sad and disinclined concert for which I had no stomach whatever and all the time I was thinking of Dean and how he got back on the train and rode over three thousand miles over that awful land and never knew why he had come anyway, except to see me. (Kerouac 207)

In this, one of the final moments, Sal leaves Dean standing on a street corner dressed in rags and abandons him. Dean had traveled to New York to pick up Sal for a move to San Francisco, however, because Dean arrived six weeks early Sal was unprepared for the move and had to send Dean back. It wasn't just the move. Dean's frenetic energy had become too much and too unfocused. He is described as having lost the ability to speak, and his

---

<sup>7</sup> For an excellent portrayal of the psychological and physical effects of methamphetamine see the Todd Ahlberg's documentary *Meth* (Ahlberg).

dialogue is reduced to unintelligible blather. Drugs render him incapable of knowing whether he's found "IT."

### **Sal Takes Up the Mantle of Spiritual Leader During His Quest**

I have previously referred to the "pearl," which Sal expected would be handed to him, as representing his enlightenment. Sal is in search of America, and he's hoping to find something more than he is. Shortly after seeing himself in the center of his continent and his life—at this moment experiencing the deterritorialization that Deleuze and Guattari discuss in relation to drugs but without the aid of drugs—, Sal tells us, "... I could see Denver looming ahead of me like the Promised Land, way out there beneath the stars, across the prairie of Iowa and the plains of Nebraska and I could see the greater vision of San Francisco beyond, like jewels in the night" (Kerouac 14). Here Kerouac deftly places Sal in the role of the nomad while showing us that there is more to come. Referring to the Promised Land he equates himself with members of the Diaspora. The West is his to claim. In order to reach the Promised Land, Sal will have to first cross Iowa and Nebraska, not exactly a North African desert, but it will do. For the Diaspora the Promised Land is an end point, a final destination, a coming home. For Sal, however, the Promised Land is only a stopping point on his spiritual journey. He can already "see the *greater vision* of San Francisco." It is fine if he visits the Promised Land, but he must move on. The nomad may travel from point to point, but the points are incidental; his journey is a line of flight. He can stop in Denver, but he is on a trajectory. Where is he going? What could be greater than the Promised Land? What is he looking for? As Dean asks Sal, "What's your road, man? – holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It's an anywhere road for anybody anyhow. Where body how" (251)? The road is multi-dimensional space occupied by holyboys and madmen. As Dean indicates here, it's open to interpretation. Make of the road what you will, and use the road to your own end. Sal seeks his "pearl," but what is that pearl? I argue that the "pearl" is personal enlightenment.

Kerouac gives us many indications that this is precisely what Sal seeks. Even his name, Salvatore Paradise, indicates a search for enlightenment. Salvatore, a traditionally Italian name, means savior<sup>8</sup> (Stefano, et. al. 531), while the meaning of his last name is entirely clear. Salvatore Paradise heads out on the road to fulfill his destiny, to find his salvation in paradise.

He must travel the country and map America in an attempt to find *that* paradise. He's not sure where he'll find it, but he knows what he is looking for. "The one thing that we yearn for in our living days, that makes us sigh and groan and undergo sweet nauseas of all kinds, is the remembrance of some lost bliss that was probably experienced in the womb

---

<sup>8</sup> As a Savior, one delivers salvation. Salvation is a deliverance from the power and penalty of sin. In the Western religious tradition, salvation is metaphorically described as a crossing of a border. The moments before and after being "saved" are ceremoniously divided. During a baptism, in which the believer is submerged in water, the believer experiences something not unlike Sal's moment of disorientation in Iowa. It is the moment between the past as a sinner, and the future of the saved soul. While submerged the believer is nowhere. During this moment his soul is being cleansed, and after it he is handed the "pearl" of salvation. In this case, Sal delivers his own salvation. He is the facilitator of his own destiny.



and can only be reproduced (though we hate to admit it) in death” (Kerouac 124). This lost bliss is the pearl that he is looking for. We also see here that Sal is not alone. This yearning is the yearning of all of mankind. The difference is that Sal will go out in search of it. He also maps out a topography of life here. In essence, we spend our entire lives trapped between two boundaries, those of birth and death, trapped between two great moments of bliss. In between we must continue the search for bliss and map our Frontier. Viewed topographically, life is every bit as much of a Frontier as the geological/geographical nation. We spend our lives chasing our dreams every day traveling new territory. Tomorrow is a place we will never be able to visit, yet, at the same time, today is different every day. It’s always an age we have not yet seen.

Sal doesn’t yet know where to find his bliss, but he senses that he will find it, and along the way will be able to show others how to get there. He envisions himself at times as a Prophet traveling the land. “I pictured myself in a Denver bar that night, with all the gang, and in their eyes I would be strange and ragged and like the Prophet who has walked across the land to bring the dark Word, and the only Word I had was ‘Wow’” (Kerouac 35)! He is bringing the Word. He compares himself here even to Jesus, a risky venture, but an appropriate claim. He is crisscrossing America in his huarache sandals, looking for America. He’s got his followers, Dean, Marylou, and various others. Sal is the one that holds the entire gang together as they go through fights, divorces, drugs, and sordid tales. Through it all, Sal is the center of it. Is it possible then that Salvatore Paradise is himself the salvation that the others in the group seek? I would hazard against such a simplistic interpretation. Although Kerouac describes him here, and casts him globally as a savior figure, we must remember that Jesus did not truly become the salvation for his followers until his death, until he had reached that moment of bliss that Sal has been looking for.

Although Dean has his moments as the messiah, Sal is the true spiritual leader in the text. He is the one most capable of reaching enlightenment. Aware that there is a moment of bliss to be searched for and that perhaps it is available in this life, he waits for the moment when it will happen. “It made me think that everything was about to arrive--the moment when you know all and everything is decided forever” (Kerouac 128). He muses that when this moment happens it will be a singular event and life will be forever altered after its occurrence. What he finds, though, is that the enlightenment he seeks, which is an eastern transcendence, is only a momentary thing. What one must do is find these moments, learn from them, and take something away from them that can be applied to normal everyday life.

One of these moments opens up a world of possibilities for Sal,  
And for just a moment I had reached the point of ecstasy that I always wanted to reach, which was the complete step across chronological time into timeless shadows, and wonderment in the bleakness of the mortal realm, and the sensation of death kicking at my heels to move on, with a phantom dogging its own heels, and myself hurrying to a plank where all the angels dove off and flew into the holy void of uncreated emptiness, the potent and inconceivable radiancies shining in bright Mind Essence, innumerable lotus-lands falling open in the magic mothswarm of heaven. (Kerouac 173)

It is just a moment, but Sal has found the road map to enlightenment. In order to reach it, he must step across “chronological time” with death kicking at his heels. The point of

ecstasy is a point outside of time, outside of life. Like his previously described bliss, to leave chronological time is to leave life. In this Kerouac affirms the claim of Bataille that “When an object appears in the beyond of nothingness—in a certain sense, as a given fact of nothingness—that object transcends us” (Bataille 177). From the moment of birth our death is always kicking at our heels. We age daily and work our way toward that final bliss, which he supposes can only be found in that moment of death. However, he has just learned that it can be found at other moments as well. If one alters the mind in such a way, through travels in time, space and the spirit, one can reach this point outside of time. Through a Deleuzean “flight of intensity” Sal has achieved for a brief moment what it was that he was looking for.

What he is looking for, however, is a more permanent change in his perspective, self-realization. It is clear to Sal, and to the reader, that if Sal is to achieve this enlightenment he is seeking, he will have to undergo some major changes. He ponders whether the obstruction to his quest is simply his race,

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 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. (Kerouac 180)

Is that the answer? Is his quest, the American Dream—universally understood as being dominated by “white ambitions”—something that can only be achieved by crossing some sort of racial boundary? There is much evidence in the text that the self-realization that Sal seeks can’t be achieved within the realm of the dominant white American culture.

### **Self-Realization: The Other and the Border**

Kerouac alludes many times to the fascination of the Other, always equating them with more enlightened/self-realized souls. In his equating of the Other with self-realization he often describes White men as possessing the spirits of the Other, “Although Gene was white there was something of the wise and tired old Negro in him” (26); “Chad is a slim blond boy with a strange witch-doctor face that goes with his interest in anthropology and prehistory Indians” (36). Here Chad is not only described as having the face of a “witch-doctor”—rarely the occupation of the white man—but he is also an anthropologist that studies the prehistory of Indians. Further, “he has the beauty and grace of a Western hotshot who’s danced in roadhouses and played a little football” (36). Chad embodies the quest of Sal Paradise. He is all-American, a “Western hotshot,” and a football player who is also familiar with the road and the subculture of the roadhouse. Chad’s chosen field of study engages him daily with the other. He seeks to know America by learning its prehistory—by definition a realm of existence outside of time.

Sal, perhaps unwittingly begins to engage in this fascination with the Other as his travels progress. Although he has had several opportunities to engage in meaningless sexual relations with women on the road, Sal is saving himself for the perfect woman. He finds this woman in the form of a Latina, Terry: “For the next fifteen days we were together for better or for worse” (Kerouac 86). The use of the oft-heard line from standard wedding

vows demonstrates the depth of his commitment to her. It may have lasted only fifteen days, but they were the happiest of his time on the road.

In *The Return of the Vanishing American* Leslie Fiedler discusses the myth of Pocahontas and its appropriation in American literature of the nineteenth century. “To Smith it made no difference, dusky or quite dark, so long as the girl who crossed ethnic lines for his sake was something other than White” (Fiedler *Vanishing American* 69). Kerouac continues the appropriation of the Pocahontas myth. Sal is happy with Terry, and a large degree of his fascination with her derives from her position as the Other, as existing outside the realm of the white man. “For the next week that was all I heard—*mañana*, a lovely word and one that probably means heaven” (Kerouac 94). Sal does not understand her language, but he projects on to it, as he projects his wants and desires on to her, his hope for a better life. With Terry he is living the life he thinks he has always desired. He picks cotton for pennies a day and provides for her and her son. Interestingly, although he seems to want to live outside the realm of the white man—as an intentional nomad, as a lover of the Other, as a man fascinated with the counterculture of America—his definition of happiness still follows the dogma of the dominant culture. By providing for his “wife” and child he has fulfilled his hopes of a better life. “‘Damn!’ I yelled. ‘Hooee! It is the promised land’” (Kerouac 91), but it wouldn’t satisfy him for long. Eventually he will leave Terry and head back to his real life in the East. But a brief “marriage” in the “promised land” has whet his appetite and he begins to fully realize that the Other holds the promise of what he is seeking.

Although Sal desires to be the Other, we know and he knows that he can never fully become the Other, “I was only myself, Sal Paradise ... wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America” (Kerouac 180), but perhaps the answer to his desires lies in communion with the Other. If he can’t be the Other he seems intent upon finding himself in their presence.

During their last trip East, Sal and Dean stop over in Detroit. Kerouac does not mention why they would need to visit Detroit, which lies off the natural trajectory from West to East. Situated north of Lake Erie, Detroit borders on Canada. However, the Detroit River, much like the Atlantic and the Pacific during their earlier travels, forms a watery border that keeps them from crossing into other lands. Water being, for some reason or another, an impassable border for the men. With the trip to Detroit, Kerouac has ensured that Sal and Dean have seen all of the cardinal borders of America, East, West, South and now North. They have been in San Francisco, New York, New Orleans and now Detroit. Pushing against these borders, they have always been rejected and forced to continue their journey in another direction. All of these encounters seem to be what I would refer to as “border probes.” In order to fully map his topographical imagination, Sal must find the borders and push against them to see if they yield. He sums this all up by saying, “I looked down Market Street. I didn’t know whether it was that or Canal Street in New Orleans: it led to water, ambiguous, universal water, just as 42nd Street, New York, leads to water, and you never know where you are” (Kerouac 172). Travel has gotten into their souls and with the addition of Detroit, Kerouac affirms that as long as Sal searches for self-realization within the boundaries of the lower forty-eight states, he will always be trapped and never know where he is.

While in Detroit they sleep in an all night movie theater, where, halfway between

West and East—the Midwest, Sal finds the two coalescing with each other in his subconscious.

The picture was Singing Cowboy Eddie Dean and his gallant white horse Bloop, that was number one; the number two double-feature film was George Raft, Sidney Greenstreet, and Peter Lorre in a picture about Istanbul. We saw both of these things six times each during the night. We saw them waking, we heard them sleeping, we sensed them dreaming, we were permeated completely with the strange Gray Myth of the West and the weird dark Myth of the East when morning came. All my actions since then have been dictated automatically to my subconscious by this horrible osmotic experience. (Kerouac 245-46)

Here the Secondary Western Frontier mixes together with the Myth of the East and seeds itself into his subconscious. Both Singing Cowboy Eddie Dean and the characters in the film about Istanbul<sup>9</sup> represent characters on the Secondary Frontier. Both films depict Westerners (they are both American productions, with Americans as their main characters) engaging in the production of a fictional world that is beyond the ken of most of its viewers. This experience gets into Sal's subconscious and he acts upon this when he seeks his encounter with the Other in Mexico.

If Sal can be more involved with the Other and lessen the distance between his whiteness and their blackness, yellowness, brownness, perhaps then he can find what it is that he is looking for. As Rachel Adams argues, the counterculture of the Beat generation sought “self-realization through travel, the search for exotic Others, experimentation with language and subjectivity” (Kerouac 60), and this was increasingly accomplished through trips to Mexico—the most authentic engagement with the Other easily available to Americans. And it is in Mexico that Sal experiences his final self-realization. Heading south to Mexico with Dean is a great adventure. The destination changed from the nebulous “on the road” to something more specific. They were headed “through all Mexico to the great city near the cracked Isthmus and Oaxacan heights. ... It was no longer east-west, but magic *south*” (265).

They are headed “magic *south*” looking for adventure, what they find is adventure and much, much more. When first crossing the border into Mexico the reader finds that, strangely, East has blended with West in this strange land beyond the border. Sal is outside of his element here. He enters Mexico, already described as being “magic south,” and the only vocabulary he has to describe what he encounters is that of East and West. It is clear that this is not only an adventure it is a holy experience. They cross the border and Sal remarks, “It was only Nuevo Laredo but it looked like Holy Lhasa to us” (Kerouac 274). Holy Lhasa, the seat of Buddhism in Tibet, has combined here with Nuevo Laredo, a beat and dirty border town across the Rio Grande from Mexico. Finally, a watery border that is

---

<sup>9</sup> The film Kerouac refers to here is “Background to Danger” (1943). A synopsis of which reads, “Ankara in neutral Turkey: World War Two. ... The Germans are planning to leak maps apparently proving that the Russians are about to invade the country.” As Kerouac is known for not paying too close attention to details, it is not surprising that the movie takes place in Ankara instead of Istanbul. Istanbul, the only capital city to span two continents, serves Kerouac's purpose of combining East with West much better than Ankara would have. Additionally, the intrigue, Russia invading Turkey, of World War II further underscores the melding of East and West.

passable. By equating this Mexican town with Holy Lhasa, Kerouac hints to the reader that a moment of transcendental enlightenment is soon to come, and it may come with the help of one of the locals, for “[o]ld men sat on chairs in the night and looked like Oriental junkies and oracles” (275). Dean exclaims, “We’ve finally got to heaven. It couldn’t be cooler, it couldn’t be grander, it couldn’t be *anything*” (277). Dean, as we have seen, is more prone to hyperbole than Sal. Crossing the border he already believes he is in heaven. Sal, on the other hand, is only aware that this land holds great promise, that somewhere in this land of the Other he will find the self-realization he has been looking for all along.

During a leg of their journey toward Mexico City Sal is presented with a moment of self-reflection as he drives while the others are sleeping. This road, he describes, is

[n]ot like driving across Carolina, or Texas, or Arizona, or Illinois; but like driving across the world and into the places where we would finally learn ourselves among the Fellahin Indians of the world, the essential strain of the basic primitive, wailing humanity that stretches in a belt around the equatorial belly of the world from Malaya (the long fingernail of China) to India the great subcontinent to Arabia to Morocco to the selfsame deserts and jungles of Mexico and over the waves to Polynesia to mystic Siam of the Yellow Robe and on around, on around, so that you hear the same mournful wail by the rotted walls of Cádiz, Spain, that you hear 12,000 miles around in the depths of Benares the Capital of the World. (Kerouac 280)

Thus we learn the purpose of this trip. Sal is seeking to learn himself, and he knows that he will be able to do so among these primordial Indians. At the Equator East meets West in one continuous band of natives to the earth. He, as a White European-American, is fully detached from the land. The Fellahin, however, live the land. In the “mournful wail” there is something of the murky depths from which the Homo Sapiens first ascended, and it is back to this depth that he must return. In this passage Sal has also touched on the rhizomatic nature of the map. From Mexico he has rhizomatic contact with Polynesia, Siam, Spain, India, China, Morocco and Arabia. Here, among the natives of Mexico he is at the root of humanity, and it is here among the natives that he will find himself.

There are adventures in Mexico to be sure, but Sal’s greatest moments of self-realization are achieved when he is alone. Dean’s drug consumption continues, and his faculty for speech is ever decreasing. With his inability to speak comes a distance between Dean and Sal that parallels the gap that will grow between them as Sal reaches for the “pearl.” During a stop in a town outside Gregoria they befriend a local, Victor, who gives them some pot. Sal became so high that he “lost consciousness in [his] lower mind of what [they] were doing and only came around sometime later when [he] looked up from fire and silence like waking from sleep to the world, or waking from void to a dream” (Kerouac 285-86). In this heaven that is Mexico he is starting to lose the distinction between the real and the beyond. With the help of the drugs, Sal is experiencing, finally, his own transcendental moments. He can no longer really tell if he is sleeping or awake, in a void or in a dream. This dream state will be very important for Sal’s self-realization, as it already has been. All of the moments where he moves from level of consciousness to another occur when he is in a dream-like state.

After leaving Gregoria, the three, Dean, Sal, and their traveling companion Sal, enter a jungle that takes them even closer to the primordial land of the Fellahin. The jungle is

described as “down-going, getting hotter, the insects screaming louder, the vegetation growing higher, the smell ranker and hotter” (Kerouac 293). This is not just the Frontier of unexplored territory; the three are entering the frontier between the present and prehistory. It is no longer the wail of the Fellahin, but the scream of the insects that fill their ears. The jungle is filled with vegetation that is thicker and gets harder and harder to push through and there is the increasingly rank smell of rotting vegetation. They are surrounded with the sights and smells of birth, death and rebirth.

When they finally come to a stop, presumably at least still mildly high from the afternoon’s intense marijuana, Sal, Dean, and their traveling companion Stan, all settle down to sleep in the car until sunrise. In a steamy, oppressive, jungle heat Sal “...realized the jungle takes you over and you become it. ... For the first time in my life the weather was not something that touched me, that caressed me, froze or sweated me, but became me. The atmosphere and I became the same.” (Kerouac 294). This is Sal’s moment of enlightenment. He has become one with the jungle and the atmosphere—a process that includes the breaking down of all boundaries, those physical, mental and even biological. The jungle is the epitome of the Frontier. It is a landscape so dark and impenetrable that it cannot be mapped. Here, where borders and boundaries are geological and not geopolitical, Sal explores the frontier and finds what he has been searching for.

Throughout the trip to Mexico City there are continued references to Dean as a holy creature. Upon their arrival they head out on a tour of the city and Dean is very much showing the signs of his heavy drug use. “Dean walked...with his arms hanging zombie-like at his sides, his mouth open, his eyes gleaming, and conducted a ragged and holy tour that lasted till dawn” (Kerouac 301). He is still holy, still to be revered, but his moment of self-destruction is imminent. During Dean’s downfall, we have been watching the ascendance of Sal into his full self-realization, and this is aided in Mexico City by a bout of dysentery.

Then I got fever and became delirious and unconscious....I looked up out of the dark swirl of my mind and I knew I was on a bed eight thousand feet above sea level, on a roof of the world, and I knew that I had lived a whole life and many others in the poor atomistic husk of my flesh, and I had all the dreams. (301)

His spiritual dissolution is continuing. He no longer occupies a body but lives his lives and dreams within the “atomistic husk of my flesh.” He is ready to reach the beyond and be scattered to the four winds, as Buddha had previously done. Although the vocabulary used by Kerouac is that of enlightenment and transcendentalism, these moments are simply stops along the road to self-realization. In order to fully know himself Sal must stretch beyond his topographical imagination, both physically and spiritually. Once he has reached beyond his limits, he can return to his own self with a greater understanding of who he is and what his purpose is.

He now knows himself, and, with this self-realization, he can head back to New York and move beyond his life on the road. He meets Laura, and they “agree to love each other madly” (Kerouac 304). Presumably, having found himself while in the company of the Other, Sal is now free to live in a world where origin does not matter. Although he is madly in love with her, Laura is described only as having “pure and innocent dear eyes” (304). Most everyone else in the novel is described according to their birthplace or home state, and with a vocabulary that places them in East, West, North or South. Laura, however, just is.

Dean, who abandoned Sal in Mexico makes one more appearance in New York where Sal and Laura are living. "He couldn't talk any more. He hopped and laughed, he stuttered and fluttered his hands ..." (Kerouac 304). His descent into oblivion has reached the bottom. He's no longer even able to string together full sentences. He may have achieved full enlightenment, but it is now useless for he is unable to express the great and powerful thoughts in his head.

The novel closes with:

So in America when the sun goes down ... and sense all that raw land that rolls in one unbelievable huge bulge over to the West Coast, and all that road going, all the people dreaming in the immensity of it, and in Iowa I know by now the children must be crying ... the evening star must be drooping and shedding her sparkler dims on the prairie, which is just before the coming of complete night that blesses the earth, darkens all rivers, cups the peaks and folds the final shore in, ...I think of Dean Moriarty, I even think of Old Dean Moriarty the father we never found, I think of Dean Moriarty. (307)

From his home in New Jersey, Sal contemplates the whole of America in all its beauty. The prairie, the road, Iowa, the West Coast, they all blend together in his final and whole topographic imagination of his homeland. Through his many travels he has reached his self-realization. He is confident in himself and only wishes the best for his friend Dean who has reached his downfall. As the night blesses the earth he thinks of Dean Moriarty, both of them. These two ideas in such close proximity to each other suggest that Sal also hopes that Dean is blessed. He may be lost in the American frontier, but Sal wishes him no ill will. How could he when Dean was so instrumental in leading him to his own self-realization?

The importance of boundaries and topography, as present in this last quote, is central to the final self-realization of Sal Paradise. He begins as a young college student with no real purpose in life, and with no conception of his nation or his self. Through the course of the novel Kerouac engages with the boundaries of his nation, and maps a new America for the reader. It is an America that is rhizomatic and jumbled. This map "does not reproduce an unconscious closed in upon itself; it constructs the unconscious" (Deleuze and Guattari *A Thousand Plateaus* 12). By mapping America he comes in closer contact with his true self.

Along the way, Dean serves as a spiritual leader of sorts, but eventually his use of drugs to fuel his own search for enlightenment will lead to self-destruction. Through fits of sweating and incoherent speech, Dean will eventually sink to a point where he can no longer string together enough words to make his assumedly deep thoughts on life and "IT" understandable to anyone listening. His slow downfall will serve as yet another lesson for Sal on the road.

In the end it is imperative that Sal crosses out of America, which previously constituted the realm of his topographic imagination. The lesson being that if you are to reach new heights of spiritual enlightenment and self-realization, then you have to look beyond your previously narrow realm of existence, included in this realm of existence for Sal was engaging with the physical as well as geographical Other. Admittedly, America is by no means small, but the limits of the topographic imagination are different for everybody. Whereas Sal found that covering the entire nation was not enough to find what he was looking for, I will later demonstrate how, for Herr Lehmann, it was only necessary to leave

his own neighborhood, or better yet, for the boundaries of his neighborhood to be suddenly removed.



## ***Herr Lehmann: The Berlin Wall, the Topographic Imagination, and Self-Realization***

Before I built a wall I'd ask to know  
What I was walling in or walling out....  
Robert Frost, "Mending Wall"

The topographic imagination, as we have already seen, plays a pivotal role in the realization of the self. The personal conception of one's own topography as being a limiting force influences many of our decisions. For Sal Paradise it was the belief that what he sought could be found within the contiguous forty-eight states. He thought that, with Dean's help, he could reach his self-realization simply by getting to know his nation, by mapping the frontier. In the end it was only by crossing out of what he had previously thought to be the frontier that he realized the opportunity for self-discovery; across the border of Mexico his purpose and his life became clear.

Frank Lehmann, in Sven Regener's *Herr Lehmann* (2001) and Leander Hausmann's 2003 film of the same name, sees the world in a very similar light. Sven Regener, most noted for his work as lyricist and front man for the bands Zapotek, Neue Liebe, and Element of Crime, published his first novel, *Herr Lehmann*, in 2001. Since then he has completed the *Herr Lehmann* trilogy which includes the two prequels *Neue Vahr Süd* and *Der kleine Bruder*. *Herr Lehmann* was his first novel and became an overnight success selling over 8,000,000 copies in its first three years. Although Sven Regener and Herr Lehmann share several biographical facts, hometown, age and cities of residence, he rightfully contends that the novel is not autobiographical (Brand). Leander Hausmann's film, *Herr Lehmann*, will be significant to this discussion, because its screenplay was written by Sven Regener himself, for which he earned the 2004 Deutscher Filmpreis in Gold for Best Screenplay (Deutsche Filmakademie, e.V.). At the heart of the novel is an engagement with a similar search for self-realization; however, Herr Lehmann doesn't seek his goal on the roads of Germany but within the very limited space of Kreuzberg, West Berlin. Among the differences between the two is that of scale. While Sal ranged the entire United States in his search, Herr Lehmann is resistant to the idea of leaving his very small neighborhood of Kreuzberg. His topographic imagination is comprised of an area of approximately 4 square miles, but is actually focused on the even smaller sector of Berlin SO 36 (shown below). Initially, Herr Lehmann doesn't see his chosen realm as a limiting sphere, but as the novel progresses this becomes more and more clear to him.

We might even call Herr Lehmann the nomad of Kreuzberg. For "[t]he nomad has a territory; he follows customary paths; he goes from one point to another; he is not ignorant of points (water points, dwelling points, assembly points, etc.). But the question is what in nomad life is a principle and what is only a consequence." (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 380). He wanders to and fro through Kreuzberg, all the while searching for that line between principle and consequence. Is there a consequence to this existence? If so, what is it, and can I have an effect upon it? This is the purpose of his numerous wanderings. As Sven Regener himself explained in an interview, "Ich erzähle von den Wendepunkten im Leben des Herrn Lehmann, die ja auch keine gewollten Wendepunkte sind. Er will ja gar nicht, dass sich was verändert. Letztlich geht es um die Frage: Was ist eigentlich die richtige Art zu leben" (Brand).



Diagram 2.1: Kreuzberg S036

The action in the novel takes place between early September and November 9, 1989. A time of great political turmoil in Germany, of which Herr Lehmann appears to be quite blissfully unaware. He is a rather misanthropic bartender who is about to turn thirty, which has earned him the title of Herr, although several of his friends are actually older than he. On the surface, Regener portrays Frank Lehmann as being much more concerned with his impending birthday and its accompanying existential crisis than he is of the political unrest on the other side of what has become, for all Germans, a very solid wall. His friend, Karl Schmidt, is a bartender and artist trying to establish himself as a sculptor in the hip West Berlin art scene. Neither has time for much of what happens outside of their circle of friends, which consists, for the most part, of employees of Erwin's various Kreuzberg restaurants and bars. Their lives are dominated by the happenings at the bars; discussions of triviality while drinking; and meager attempts at establishing relationships. In other words, they are typical twentysomethings during untypical times.

Their apparent self-centeredness and lack of attention to the events of the day lead Carter Dougherty to refer to the novel as “pointedly ignor[ing] a historic moment in Europe” (E3). While praising the book as interesting, Barbara Baker claims that *Herr Lehmann* “... joins the twentieth century genre of deliberate detachment from a broader reality” (Baker). Tilman Sprekelsen mentions that

diese Leerstelle des Romans im Bewußtsein des Lesers...eine ausgesprochene Dynamik entfaltet - und gleichzeitig die Frage aufwirft ob dieses Desinteresse an den Ereignissen, die der Maueröffnung vorausgingen, nicht eine in Westdeutschland und vor allem in Westberlin durchaus verbreitete Haltung war. (Sprekelsen 5)

These three examples exemplify the bulk of the criticism of the novel. Many reviewers suggested the “Leerstelle” was distracting enough as to be a flaw. Sprekelsen, however, accurately describes this “Leerstelle” as bringing the lack of interaction with the wall to the consciousness of the reader. Specifically, by mentioning the wall infrequently Regener creates the wall as an ominous presence that influences the lives of those that live within it. The wall becomes an absent yet influential signifier. Sprekelsen is right to raise the question of whether or not the West Berliners were interested or even aware of the events happening in relation the Wall. Although he is right to point out the possibility, my own experience shows that he’s most likely being a tad dramatic. During the winter of 2008-2009 I spoke with many Berliners from both the former East and the former West. All spoke of being very interested in the protests, demonstrations, and unfolding world events that were taking place in their own city. Certainly my interviews were not a complete cross-section of the Berlin population, but it points to the probability that Regener very deliberately left out references to the Wall as a way of making it clear that *Herr Lehmann* is not historical fiction. However, the coincidence of Herr Lehmann’s birthday and the fall of the Wall does emphasize the point that we are all inextricably tied up in the passage of time and the histories in which we live. As I will argue, the Berlin Wall plays a significant part in the events of the novel and its overall meaning. Jörg Döring notes, “Der Reiz des Romans besteht gerade darin, das die Zeichen der „Wende“ – jener welthistorischen Zäsur, die sich im Rücken des Kreuzberger Dorfgeschehens anzubahnen beginnt – vom Personal des Romans die längste Zeit und auf geradezu aufreizende Weise ignoriert werden. Auf der Arbeit in der Kneipe seinen Mann stehen, der beste Freund Karl, die neue Liebe zu Katrin, der schönen Köchin, der drohende 30. Geburtstag sind allemal wichtiger” (Regener 613). It is through the function of The Wall as an absent yet influential signifier that the novel gains some of its suspense. The Wall may not be mentioned, but dates are frequently mentioned, and as the novel progresses toward November 1989, the suspense grows. In any event, Herr Lehmann is well aware of the Wall’s existence, and it aids in his conception of his own topographic imagination.

In this chapter I will discuss Herr Lehmann and his search for self-realization. Like Sal Paradise, he begins his search through minor forays that expand his own horizons. However, his proximity to the Wall adds to his perception that he is hemmed in, and his perception that he might be better served by life outside of Kreuzberg. Further, I will demonstrate the process of self-destruction, similar to that of Dean Moriarty, that Karl Schmidt undergoes; a process of self-destruction that mirrors the fall of the Wall itself. Finally, I will argue that with the fall of the Berlin Wall, comes the moment and the possibility for self-realization for which Herr Lehmann has been searching.

### **Herr Lehmann and the Topographic Imagination**

As the novel opens the reader is immediately given a sense of the location, although not a specific time, for the action:

Der Nachthimmel, der ganz frei von Wolken war, wies in der Ferne, über Ostberlin, schon einen hellen Schimmer auf, als Frank Lehmann, den sie neuerdings nur noch Herr Lehmann nannten, weil sich herumgesprachen hatte, daß er bald dreißig Jahre alt werden würde, quer über den Lausitzer Platz nach Hause ging. (Regener 5)

In this moment, Herr Lehmann is on his way home from his job as a bartender at the Einfall. It is early morning and he is heading East toward the Berlin Wall; however, Herr Lehmann observes East Berlin only from afar. It exists, but it is off in the distance occupying a nebulous space on the outer edges of his existence.

The name of the bar, Einfall, reflects the two central crises in the novel, that of Herr Lehmann's age and the coming fall of the Wall. An Einfall is a sudden idea, a crazy idea, "das plötzliche Einsetzen, ... feindliches, überfallartiges Eindringen" (Einfall, *Duden*). Wrapped up in this one word are all of the events of November 9th and the life of Herr Lehmann. His 30<sup>th</sup> birthday promises to be the moment he is forced to become an adult, to take on adult responsibilities and to end his life as a drifting twenty-something. Further, the fall of the Wall was nothing if not an "unpredictable collapse" that engendered an "invasion" of West Berlin.

The opening of the Wall on November 9 was not planned. Günter Schabowski, East German Minister of Propaganda gave a press conference announcing that East Germans would soon be able to travel to and from the West. When asked when this would happen, he replied, "Das tritt...nach meiner Kenntnis ist das sofort unverzüglich" (*Wall Came Tumbling Down*). The symbolism of Regener's choice of "Einfall" for the name of the bar is all too clear. Paralleling the experience of the German nation, Herr Lehmann will also come to his own self-realization rather suddenly. In fact, with the fall of the Wall it will seem as if the idea is a brand new one, but I argue that it is the conclusion of a process that Herr Lehmann is undergoing. He spends the greater part of the novel wandering Kreuzberg in search of the enlightenment and self-realization that is so common in people of his age.

In contrast to all of the references to godliness in *On the Road*, Regener in the above quote fails to mention that Lausitzer Platz is occupied by a church, and, in fact, it is the church that gives the plaza its reason for being. By ignoring the existence of the church, Regener points to the decidedly Humanist search of Herr Lehmann. He is in search of the self, not as Dean referred to it, "IT." In fact, given the sheer number of churches in Berlin, it is quite remarkable that not one is mentioned throughout the novel. One might infer that Herr Lehmann's "church" is the bars he hangs out in with his friends. These bars are certainly where he most fervently engages in philosophical discussions. Bars and restaurants seem to be where Herr Lehmann expects to find his enlightenment; if not there, then at the bottom of a bottle of Beck's.

Hausmann's film version is also devoid of churches. Admittedly, creating a film version of a novel that takes place in 1989 Berlin becomes an increasingly more difficult proposition every day. The city has gone through massive changes architecturally and structurally in both East and West since the fall of the wall. Hausmann's choice of an opening street scene, where camera angles could be focused in such a way as to avoid capturing anachronistic architecture, instead of filming on Lausitzer Platz, was a wise filmic decision. The setting for the scene is grungy, narrow, and bohemian, all of which are aspects still prized in the Kreuzberg neighborhood. It is a tricky endeavor to speculate on a director's choice of setting for particular scenes, but it is apparent that Hausmann has,

when possible, attempted to use settings that were authentic to the novel. The few streets in the film that are identifiable are located in Kreuzberg; evidence that Hausmann has attempted to set the film within the same milieu that Herr Lehmann was comfortable. By filming the opening scene in this grungy street scene and by avoiding a church, Hausmann has emphasized Herr Lehmann's position within the maze of streets that is Kreuzberg; Regener's eschewing of religion; and the closed in feeling one may have had in Kreuzberg 1989.



Diagram 2.2: Intersection of Eisenbahnstrasse and Wrangelstrasse. The X marks Herr Lehmann's location in the opening scene.

The maze of Kreuzberg streets is given greater strength through Hausmann's choice of settings and camera angles in the film. For example, the street used for night scenes in front of the Einfall, is a rather narrow street lined with pre-war four and five story walk-ups. In the near distance, the street curves which has the effect of closing off the horizon and filling it entirely with buildings, but leaves the viewer with the feeling that one can traverse Kreuzberg if one is willing to follow the meandering streets that squeeze in between the imposing buildings. Throughout the course of the film there are only a few easily identifiable locations. The first one is an intersection on Herr Lehmann's way home (See Diagram 2.1).

In actuality Herr Lehmann's apartment is situated on Eisenbahnstrasse between Muskauer Strasse and Wrangelstrasse, the block beginning at the bottom of Diagram 2.1. Sven Regener's choice of Eisenbahnstrasse is significant for a multitude of reasons. First, it

is named Eisenbahnstrasse. The reference here to motion and travel in the street's name was, at the time a bit ironic. Only three blocks long, Eisenbahnstrasse ran from Lausitzer Platz to the Spree River, yet another mode of transportation; on the opposite shore, Herr Lehmann would have seen the Berlin Wall daily.

This particular corner of Kreuzberg was once replete with transportation possibilities. Diagram 2.2 shows Lausitzer Platz and Eisenbahnstrasse in 1875. The train tracks that ran down Eisenbahnstrasse lead to another train line on Köpenicker Strasse to the East and past Görlitzer Bahnhof to the south.



Diagram 2.3: Lausitzer Platz 1875. Herr Lehmann's apartment is between Muskauer Strasse and Wrangel Strasse on Eisenbahn Strasse.

By the time Herr Lehmann arrived in Berlin the neighborhood had changed quite a bit. The U-Bahn had taken over the earlier train system and now ran the length of Skalitzer Strasse to the Oberbaumbrücke into East Berlin. Görlitzer Bahnhof had been closed to business, but station buildings still stood near the tracks, which had been removed, but were still visible in the yet to be converted Görlitzer Park (Berlin.de). Further, the Einfall, located on Wienerstrasse likely looked out onto the abandoned Görlitzer Bahnhof. Thus, Regener placed his non-adventurous main character in the center of historic and present travel. With hundreds of travelers passing through his neighborhood every day and access

to East Berlin just blocks away, Herr Lehmann despises leaving his little corner tucked away in the Berlin Wall.

Residing on Eisenbahnstrasse, he lives very much in the corner of the Wall, which ran along the far shore of the Spree to his East and along Engeldamm to the North, both within three blocks of his apartment. In this corner of Kreuzberg Herr Lehmann quite literally stands with his back against the wall, and his only options, like Sal Paradise, are to live his life in a westerly direction. He lives in constant engagement with the Wall. He can't avoid it.

Although the wall is rarely mentioned, streets become increasingly important markers and barriers in his topographic imagination. Even in the scene mentioned above, Herr Lehmann encounters a dog that will not let him pass. He contemplates the route he must take in order to get out of the situation, "Und er sah im Geiste schon die Stationen des Umwegs, den er nehmen mußte, um die tollwütige Bestie des Lausitzer Platzes weiträumig zu umgehen, Waldemarstraße, Pücklerstraße, Wrangelstraße hinein, das ist ein Kinderspiel, dachte Herr Lehmann, ein taktisch kluger Rückzug kann strategisch zum Sieg führen" (Regener 9). This detour would take Herr Lehmann on a three-block walk instead of his usual one, which, for him, is not an option. In fact, in a rather childish way, he sees this dog blocking his way as something that must be conquered. This encounter with the dog, there will be more, is a moment in which Herr Lehmann, in his curious way, stands up for himself and chooses to deal with the situation.

He has just gotten off work and is stumbling home drunk after he let Erwin talk him into doing some shots while he was tending bar. He'll be the first one to tell you that he doesn't drink hard alcohol—a reminder he gives several times during this scene—even while he is doing shots of scotch with the dog. Instead of taking the detour, he does his best to come to terms with the dog and to befriend him, which includes feeding the dog scotch, because the dog seems to like it. In the end, after getting the dog drunk, he is not forced to take the detour and is allowed to avoid walking the three blocks it would have required in order to get away from it. Instead, he can take his usual route home and avoid any unnecessary exploration of his neighborhood.

The scene in the film with the dog, mentioned above, seems to take place in an area Herr Lehmann would have no reason to go to. The intersection of Wrangelstrasse and Eisenbahnstrasse, which is where Herr Lehmann turns into Eisenbahnstrasse on his way home, is actually past his apartment. If he were actually heading home, he would have needed to turn right instead of left at this intersection. By turning left, he runs into the dog and the scene plays out in a street that is boarded off at one end—the first of many walls keeping him from going where he needs to go. This wall made of plywood blocks Herr Lehmann's view of the actual Berlin Wall while simultaneously reminding us of its existence. If we compare the physical environs of Herr Lehmann in the film to the actual environs denoted in the book, we find that he has actually lost his way in his own neighborhood. Instead of crossing Lausitzer Platz—textually noted for its soccer pitch and not for its church—he has walked past his apartment and headed the wrong way in search of home. The filmic portrayal of Herr Lehmann has already placed him in a state of confusion where he is not completely aware of his surroundings. He is drunk, he is lost, and he has run into a dog that will not let him pass. Herr Lehmann is out of his element and symbolically lost his way in this world.

Exploration is not something that Herr Lehmann does lightly. He is, to borrow a term from Deleuze and Guattari, an un-intentional nomad. The following day Herr Lehmann meets Katrin, the new chef at the Markthalle—located just two blocks from his front door—and they hit it off pretty well. Herr Lehmann rather impetuously decides that if he is going to get the chance to get to know her better he should join her in the Prinzenbad, where she is headed after her shift. Herr Lehmann has only been to the Prinzenbad one time before, and that was with a previous girlfriend. Boundaries, it seems, can always be expanded in pursuit of a woman. He is hesitant to do so, but he not afraid to purposefully engage with the boundaries of his topographical imagination. His friends know this as well, “Neun Jahre. Ich kenne dich, Alter. Wenn du schwimmen gehst, dann kann das doch nur wegen der Frau sein, das ist ja auch nichts Schlimmes” (Regener 108).

While he is changing at the pool, he contemplates his swimsuit and delineates clearly a boundary within his topographic imagination: “...es war ein scheußliches Ding mit einem grellbunten, schwindelig machenden Muster, das er nur deshalb genommen hatte, weil die anderen Modelle, die sie damals bei Karstadt am Hermannplatz gehabt hatten, noch schlimmer gewesen waren, so war damals die Mode in Neukölln gewesen...” (Regener 68). Hermannplatz is located on the border of Neukölln, and in fact, most Berliners would argue that Karstadt, although on Hermannplatz, is located in Kreuzberg. But for Herr Lehmann this is Neukölln and the people there are so different from those in Kreuzberg that the fashions they sell are completely different. Located just one mile from Herr Lehmann’s front door, Karstadt might as well be another world. Importantly, he did go there with his girlfriend—women open boundaries—to pick out the swimsuit.

Although the Prinzenbad is located in Kreuzberg, it is still outside of his comfort zone of SO 36. Herr Lehmann is not a swimmer. He is uncomfortable in the water, and he is uncomfortable in this entire environment.

Der Männerbereich war dort mit einem großen Piktogramm und der Signalfarbe Blau ausgewiesen, und das war auch gut so, denn Herr Lehmann hatte vor allem davor Angst, aus Versehen in den Frauen-Umkleidebereich zu gehen und dort des Spanner- und Lustmochtums bezichtigt zu werden, gerade jetzt zog dieses Bild in einer Art Wach-Alptraum durch sein Bewußtsein und ließ ihn erschauern. (Regener 68)

Entering the pool area, Herr Lehmann seems to have lost his sense of orientation and the customs of even his own society. Certainly one is careful not to enter the wrong locker room, but a twenty-nine year old man certainly knows the difference between the two especially when given a picture of a man to lead the way, without being overcome by a fear that causes one to shudder.

His disorientation continues while ordering a cup of coffee, which he does following a very brief swim,

...während er zwischen hippeligen Kindern stand, die sich dauernd vordrängelten und hin- und herhüpfend ihren Kram bestellten, Süßigkeiten zumeist, wobei es ihnen schwerfiel, sich zu entscheiden, sie zeigten mal auf dieses und mal auf jenes, kramten in dem Kleingeld, das sie fest in feuchten Fäusten hielten und rechneten unaufhörlich nach, es sind viele, dachte Herr Lehmann, und es werden immer mehr, das sind alles gute Freunde, und sie lassen sich gegenseitig vor... (Regener 78-79)



The indecisiveness, the chaos, and the lack of awareness or concern for those around them are emphasized in the description of the children's actions. Even the language of this passage emphasizes a childish mode of speaking. Clause is piled on top of clause with no pauses and with frequent changes of focus. The children are unaware that Herr Lehmann is behind them, and that it might be inconsiderate to let their friends to the front of the line. Herr Lehmann's thoughts are critical of the children and their immaturity, yet his frustration at their cutting in line is also somewhat childish in itself. He finally gets to the front of the line and orders his coffee; the counterperson brings it to him and asks:

"Alles?"

"Nein, äh, ich nehme noch, ich nehme noch ..." Herr Lehmann überflog hektisch die Vitrine rechts von ihm,...und das dauerte ihm zu lange. "... ich nehme, äh, ja, ne"

"Da drüben haben wir noch Kranzkuchen, sonst ist nichts mehr da, die Brötchen sind alle", sagte die Frau geduldig und Herr Lehmann schämte sich ein bißchen, weil er jetzt selber alles aufhielt.

"Ja gut, nehm ich..." (Regener 80)

Immediately after becoming impatient with the children and their behavior, Herr Lehmann behaves exactly as they do. He places his order, but then has difficulty deciding what else he would like to have. After he places the order for the pastry an acquaintance comes up and asks him to add four beers to his order, which he does. His behavior is just like that of the children. At least they were letting only their friends to the front of the line. In this scene Herr Lehmann is stuck between the past and the present. His criticism of the children's behavior demonstrates his belief that he has grown. Yet his own childish behavior demonstrates the confusion he is experiencing in this foray outside the norm, while simultaneously depicting a man on the boundary between two ages. He is transitioning from child to adult yet he seems quite unaware of this fact. Here he fumbles and bumbles like a child, while only the reader is fully privy to his childlike behavior.

In the novel this scene at the pool emphasizes the misanthropic nature of Herr Lehmann. He has headed to the pool in order to impress Katrin, but he is frustrated at every turn that there are so many people there. By the time Herr Lehmann has ordered his cup of coffee, he has already changed into his swimsuit, gone swimming, and changed back out of his swimsuit. His swim lasted about one minute. After searching for the right pool—there are three—he climbs in and almost immediately climbs out, because the pool is too crowded. He never even managed to get his hair wet. It seems Herr Lehmann would rather everyone vacate the pool so that he could exercise without interruption or hassle.

The film depicts this scene in a completely different, yet in many ways more poignant manner. Instead of packing the pool with people and creating the sense of people enjoying the last gasps of summer before the pool closes, Hausmann chose to show the pool completely devoid of people. Herr Lehmann awkwardly changes into his swimsuit and leaves the locker room without seeing another person. He goes over to the empty swimming pool, steps onto one of the starting blocks and, instead of diving in, gets onto his stomach, reaches down and tests the water with his hand. He does everything he can to avoid getting into the pool. Stretching for the water from the starting block, he can barely reach the water, just barely managing to wet his fingertips. He immediately decides the water is too cold and heads back to the locker room. In Hausmann's version, the pool depicts autumn. This is not summer. The scene is devoid of screaming children and

sunbathing mothers, and instead is full of cold light and fallen leaves. The emptiness of the scene simultaneously demonstrates Herr Lehmann's misanthropy. He doesn't seem uncomfortable that there is no one around, merely uninterested in braving the bracing water in order to impress a girl.

### **Disorienting Space: or The World Outside of Kreuzberg**

Leaving Kreuzberg, which happens only three times in the novel, is always accompanied with the same kind of disorientation Herr Lehmann felt at the pool. Like Sal Paradise, Herr Lehmann engages with the boundaries of his topographic imagination. However, his is never an intentional engagement. The motivation to cross these boundaries is always external. As I observed above, Herr Lehmann is an unintentional nomad. He travels through the points of Kreuzberg only because of motivation provided someone/something else. In the case of Herr Lehmann, it seems it is the universe that is conspiring to force him outside the realm of his topographic imagination. When he travels to Kurfürstendamm to visit his parents in their hotel, he finds himself unable to negotiate the mass transit system in Berlin. He takes the U-bahn toward the Kurfürstendamm and decides to take the bus instead of traveling via the underground to a stop that would get him close to the hotel; however, this proves to be a very bad decision. The first bus driver wouldn't let him ride, because he tried to pay with a twenty Mark bill, and the bus driver didn't have change for that. The second driver lets him onto a very packed bus where he can't find a place to sit. He eventually finds a place to stand at the rear exit. At the next stop he steps off the bus to let people out, and when he steps back on the bus the bus driver insists that he pay the fare because he boarded the bus from the rear. Any attempt he makes to explain to this bus driver that he had already paid the fare—he even shows him the time stamped ticket—is unsuccessful and Herr Lehmann ends up ejected from the bus. It seems, in contrast to Sal Paradise, that even transportation is a complicated issue for Herr Lehmann.

Herr Lehmann's decision to take the bus to Kurfürstendamm becomes more significant when the U-Bahn system he deals with is looked at more closely. In Herr Lehmann's corner of Kreuzberg the U-Bahn travels mostly above ground. To get, for instance, from his apartment to the Prinzenbad there is no need to go underground. When he travels to Kurfürstendamm to visit his parents he is admittedly very early. His trip would, for most people, involve ten subway stops and a travel time of less than twenty minutes. He boarded the train a little before 10:00 a.m. and he was to be at the hotel by 11:00. He's got plenty of time. Still, Herr Lehmann lives inside a rigid world that is full of rules.

Trotzdem hatte er die U-Bahn sofort nehmen müssen, denn es war wichtig, daß er nicht zu spät kam, nicht, weil das seinen Eltern etwas ausgemacht hätte, und natürlich hätte es ihnen etwas ausgemacht, sondern weil er nie zu spät kam. Er haßte es zu spät zu kommen, er haßte es mehr als schwarzfahren.... (Regener 148)

He's got plenty of time to get to the hotel, yet he "must" dodge the fare to Wittenbergplatz, simply because the train was there. He doesn't explain why he disembarks at Wittenbergplatz, except for his conception that this is where the Kurfürstendamm begins, however, he would have been better served by staying on the U-Bahn for two more stops

and getting off at Uhlandstrasse, a station that would have put him only four blocks from his parents' hotel. Instead Herr Lehmann goes back above ground where he can see and experience Berlin, and is forced into dealing with the cantankerous bus drivers that comprise the fleet of the BVG (Berliner Verkehrsbetriebe).

In Herr Lehmann's efforts to deal less with the world outside of Kreuzberg SO36, he ends up engaging more directly with the city. His propensity for walking routes has put him on the Kurfürstendamm, a frustrating and crowded route for even those without his predilections. Herr Lehmann needs to be engaged with the topography of West Berlin. By going above ground he experiences the city; he pushes beyond his boundaries and familiarizes himself with another corner of the city. Most of the time Herr Lehmann walks from one location to another, even when taking the mass-transit system might have been more convenient. He's a walker. This simultaneously forces his engagement with the city while limiting his range of exploration. Herr Lehmann only takes the subway three times throughout the entire novel. In these times he is only below ground for a total thirteen stations, assuming each roundtrip follows the same route home. Thirteen underground stations in three months is nothing for a Berliner. This underscores a central aspect of Herr Lehmann's character. He may be misanthropic, but he thrives on the conflicts he has with others. Riding the subway is an anonymous experience. Although there are many people there, including "Psychopathen und Schizos, die ihm, gerade heute, ausgerechnet auf dem Weg an den Kudamm und ausgerechnet, wenn er einen Kater hatte, unangenehm auf die Pelle krochen," (Regener 148) it is possible to more or less avoid them. With the exception of psychopaths and schizophrenics, the subway system is a world where one avoids contact with others. You don't engage in conversations with strangers on the subway. In this realm, Herr Lehmann doesn't even have to speak to the conductor. Psychopaths and schizophrenics, unable to exchange wits with Herr Lehmann, are the wrong audience for him, and he must go above ground to find his worthy adversaries.

His use of the subway system reinforces his personality as well as the rhizomatic nature of metropolitan existence. Through his nomadic wanderings, he is taking part in the mapping of the city. The subway system is akin to Deleuze and Guattari's "burrow" which is an "animal rhizome, and sometimes maintains a clear distinction between the line of flight as passageway and storage or living strata" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Plateaus* 12-13). For most citizens of Berlin, the city is experienced in a rhizomatic manner. One goes underground at U-Bahn stop X and reemerges into the metropolitan landscape at U-Bahn stop Y. These subterranean lines of flight belie a lack of engagement with the city that Herr Lehmann avoids at all cost. In reference to *On the Road*, Marco Abel writes, "it is precisely the physical following and aesthetic mapping of the various roads and routes—or Deleuzean lines of flight—that characterize the entire narrative" (230), however, this could have just as easily been said about *Herr Lehmann*. His subterranean lines of flight are intentionally interrupted. He embodies the rhizomatic nature of the city, while also ensuring that he engages directly with its topography.

Herr Lehmann's encounter with a BVG bus driver is a humorous one. He had been forced to evade paying the fare in the subway, because he did not have time to buy a ticket. Now, above ground and wanting to take a bus, he is unable to pay his fare, because he only has a twenty Mark bill. The bus driver refuses to accept it, and Herr Lehmann begins to argue, "Die Beförderungsbedingungen der BVG sagen aber auch, daß Sie mir, wenn Sie

nicht rausgeben können, eine Quittung über den Restbetrag geben müssen, die ich am Kleistpark einlösen kann" (Regener 150). One gets the impression that Herr Lehmann knows everything, but also that conflict follows him wherever he goes. However, his wealth of knowledge does not always grant him the upper hand. In this instance, he remembers that he is still under "Hausverbot" with the BVG, and thus loses the upper hand in this argument. Even if he were to convince the driver to provide him with the receipt he knows is due him, he is unable to redeem it. In this exchange we also see the childishness Herr Lehmann continues to display. Out of his element, i.e. Kreuzberg, Herr Lehmann reverts back to the childish arguing he has so often engaged in the novel. In his quest for self-realization, he finds himself switching from acceptable adult behavior to childlike arguing numerous times. Stepping back and forth across boundary of maturity that is holding him back and limiting his life experience.

Once he has given up on being able to take the bus to the hotel, Herr Lehmann is on foot when he again encounters the dog. Like his first encounter, where he had been drinking shots at work—something he doesn't normally do—Herr Lehmann is again out of his element when the dog appears. The dog appears then to symbolize boundary transgression. In moments when Herr Lehmann has ventured beyond his topographic imagination the dog often appears. In the first scene he is an adversary that will not let him pass. In this scene he is less of a threat.

Dann sah er den Hund. Es war zwischen Knesebeck- und Bleibtreustraße, die Tür eines Juweliergeschäftes öffnete sich und der Hund purzelte jaulend auf den Bürgersteig.... Kaum hatte der Hund sich berappelt, sah er auch schon Herrn Lehmann in die Augen.... Der Hund, der ganz gewiß derselbe war wie der vom Lausitzer Platz, bewegte seinen fetten, wurstförmigen Körper in Herrn Lehmanns Richtung.... Herr Lehmann machte sich bereit, um Hilfe zu rufen, vielleicht sind hier irgendwo die Bullen, dachte er, ... aber dann war der Hund schon bei ihm, setzte sich hin und schaute ihn an.... Der Hund knurrte aber nicht. Er schaute Herrn Lehmann nur an, legte den Kopf auf die Seite, was bei jedem anderen Hund einen niedlichen, zutraulichen Eindruck gemacht hätte, und schaute ihn freundlich an. (Regener 156)

During this, their third direct encounter, the dog looks at Herr Lehmann with curiosity and friendliness. He is no longer intent on keeping Herr Lehmann from his planned route. It's clear that the dog recognizes him, but there is something in Herr Lehmann that makes him less aggressive than the first time. For his part, Herr Lehmann is also less aggressive, explaining to the dog as he leaves that he doesn't have time for their usual game. He even goes as far as to apologize to the dog. Herr Lehmann has gotten used to seeing the dog, and is beginning to make friends with him, this time looking at him with a friendly gaze. This encounter is not at all like the first, in which he refers to the dog as a "verdammter Scheißhund."

This trip, however, is about more than just going to the Kurfürstendamm and encountering the dog. Herr Lehmann is visiting his parents who are in town for a short tour of Berlin, and while they are in town they decide they would like to see their son. His parents, not unlike Herr Lehmann, don't often leave home, and they have never been to Berlin before. As he enters the hotel lobby he finds them sitting, "und [die] wirkten so verloren wie zwei Flüchtlinge, die nicht wissen, ob noch ein Zug nach Westen geht" (Regener 158). Everyone is out of his/her element. His parents don't appear to him as if

they are waiting for him to arrive, but as two people who are desperate to leave and head west. They are even less comfortable here on Kurfürstendamm than he is. His mother is repeatedly critical of where Herr Lehmann has chosen to live. She remarks, "Und dann diese DDR-Polizisten, das ist ja alles total schrecklich, was das gedauert hat. Daß die einen kontrollieren dürfen..." (Regener 159). Although she has come to see her son, she's not enjoying the experience of leaving the territory that comprises her own topographic imagination. Further, seemingly as a citizen of the Federal Republic of Germany, she does not understand how the GDR officers have the right to inspect them or their vehicle as they enter the country. Given her reaction to these GDR officers, it seems entirely possible that she has never crossed an international boundary before; emphasizing the diminutive size of her topographic realm. After all, she lives closer to the Netherlands than she does to Berlin.

Herr Lehmann's father on the other hand, seems to be quite comfortable here, and is clearly aware of the limited topographic imagination that his son has. They are scheduled to go on a three-hour bus tour through the city. They invite Herr Lehmann, but he declines the invitation. "Du wirst sehen...hinterher wissen wir mehr über Berlin als Frank und sein Bruder" (Regener 167). In three hours he expects to learn more about Berlin than Herr Lehmann has learned in nine years or that his brother had learned in the few years he had lived in Berlin before Herr Lehmann moved there. Given Herr Lehmann's reluctance to even leave Kreuzberg, it's questionable whether he has even seen most of the rest of the city, and he has most definitely never taken an official full city tour—is it fair to refer to West Berlin as a full city? As his parents depart with the bus,

Herr Lehmann winkte zurück und war plötzlich traurig, daß er nicht mitgekommen war. Nicht, daß ihm am Checkpoint Charlie und am Brandenburger Tor mit Mauer und was da noch geboten wurde, etwas lag. Aber trotzdem. Irgendwie traurig. Ich werde weich, dachte er.... (Regener 168)

He's sad, not because he would like to see the city, but because he could have spent the three hours with his parents. The city has nothing to offer him, especially when the two landmarks, Checkpoint Charlie and the Brandenburg Gate with the Wall, only serve to demonstrate to him the fact that he lives inside a walled in city. A direct confrontation with this limiting element, might have been too much for Herr Lehmann. The Berlin Wall serves as a boundary outside the realm of his topographic imagination that is impassable not because of his own lack of interest, but because it is guarded by the GDR military. He is theoretically allowed out of West Berlin at any time, but to actually enter East Berlin is a more difficult task.

Herr Lehmann's grandmother finally, 28 years after the construction of the Wall, has decided that she will send five hundred Deutsche Marks to her niece in East Berlin and has asked Herr Lehmann, through communication with his parents, to take it to her. He attempts the trip on November 5, 1989 and is completely unsuccessful. Again, it is an official that frustrates his attempt to move beyond his own realm. He has traveled via subway to Friedrichstraße where he has presumably planned to meet a cousin. However, during the border control he is searched and an East German official finds the five hundred Marks and takes him into custody. He is supposed to meet Katrin in East Berlin so that each of them can see it for the first time.

Hoffentlich, dachte er, fragt sie nicht oben nach, wo ich bleibe, falls sie überhaupt oben ist und ich unten, vielleicht bin ich auch eher oben und sie unten, dachte er, es kam ihm zwar vor, als säße er in einem Keller, aber eigentlich kann man das nicht wissen, dachte er, denn das viele Auf und Ab im Bahnhof Friedrichstraße hatte seine Orientierung durcheinandergebracht. (Regener 207)

He has again stepped out of Kreuzberg and lost his orientation. At the pool he was afraid he would accidentally enter the wrong locker room, and now he has literally lost himself in three-dimensional space. Unable to determine whether he is above or below ground, he is left to assume that he is in a basement room. This labyrinthine description of the Friedrichstrasse train station also mirrors common fantasies about Stasi secrecy, secret tunnels and interrogation techniques. Perhaps he has been intentionally disoriented. From my own experiences the Friedrichstrasse station is one of the most confusing in Berlin. I don't know whether its labyrinthine nature is a result of its two lives during the wall, that of arrival station from the west and departure station into the east, or if it is just a jumble of many stages of construction. However, the end result is a train station that is difficult to navigate for even some of the most experienced Berliners.

Given the Stasi's reputation, and that of all GDR officials, it is an indication of Herr Lehmann's childlike position in life, that he is not able to take this situation of his custody seriously. The officer asks,

"Also Helga Bergner heißt das ja wohl, die ist also Bürgerin der DDR?"

"Ja sicher, ich denke schon."

"Was soll das heißen, Sie denken schon?"

"Na ja, sie wohnt bei Ihnen in der DDR, da wird sie wohl Bürgerin der DDR sein."

"Werden Sie nicht pampig." (Regener 208-9)

The officer pays attention to every word that Herr Lehmann uses and repeatedly encourages him to be more specific and to take the situation seriously. His personality, unfortunately, is much stronger than to allow him to be fully intimidated by this situation. Here the officer warns him not to be belligerent, indicating that he senses Herr Lehmann's argumentative nature. He further asks Herr Lehmann, "Denken Sie, hier ist Kaffee- und Kuchenzeit und wir plaudern nur ein bißchen" (Regener 209)? This officer understands that Herr Lehmann doesn't quite take his life too seriously, and is encouraging him, for his own good, to do so.

Herr Lehmann in self-reflection is always able to grasp the gravity of such situations, however, he is normally incapable of altering his behavior in a way that is appropriate. In this basement interrogation room he notes, "Die haben hier dünne Nerven, dachte er, denen geht das alles ein bißchen an die Nieren, was bei ihnen so läuft" (Regener 210). It's unclear whether by "Die haben hier" he means the men that are interrogating him, or if he means the East Berliners/East Germans in general. In any event, they are the Other, different from him and possessing a way of thinking that is not his own.

In the end, "Die Hauptstadt der DDR verzichtet für heute auf [seinen] Besuch" (Regener 215). He isn't just barred from entry into East Berlin by a single officer, it is the entire capital city that has refused his entry. How can one argue with a power of such magnitude? Herr Lehmann heads back to West Berlin, never having actually left the no man's land between the two countries. He leaves Katrin waiting for his arrival at the Weltzeituhr. A popular meeting point for East Berliners and tourists alike, the Weltzeituhr

is symbolic of space and an expanded topographic imagination. Consisting of a twenty-four sided ring set atop a post, the clock simultaneously tells time in all twenty-four time zones. Each time zone is marked with significant cities within that zone. Perched atop the clock is a sculpture of our solar system, which does a full rotation around the sun every minute. The Weltzeituhr reminds the viewer of the vastness not only of our planet but also of our solar system, while reinforcing the passage time. It is significant that Herr Lehmann has never seen the Weltzeituhr. Had he, he might have been encouraged to engage in a world beyond that of his own creating.

### **Herr Lehmann and the Other**

The Frontier and encounters with the Other are, for Herr Lehmann, essentially the same. As we have already seen, when Herr Lehmann leaves his comfort zone and enters the Frontier of his topographic imagination there is always conflict and confusion. Although this is the case, Herr Lehmann does actively seek out these encounters. In fact, he enjoys conflict. So much so that, as he did in Friedrichstrasse subway station, he consistently argues with people although his self-reflection demonstrates that he knows this argument is not good for his interests. In an argument with Katrin about whether he should be allowed to order roast pork at 11:00 a.m. the narrator reports, "Herr Lehmann war begeistert. So hatte er noch nie eine Frau reden hören. Eigentlich wollte er überhaupt keinen Schweinebraten mehr, aber wenn sie so mit ihm sprach, hatte er natürlich keine Lust, die Sache fallenzulassen" (Regener 46). Katrin has won the argument, but what matters to him is the argument. He will continue to argue the point simply for the fun of doing battle. By the time he has made this decision, Herr Lehmann has already decided that he is in love with Katrin. Her role as a formidable adversary in the art of argument only endears her to him more, but he is uncertain whether she will have the same feelings. It appears, however that she loves to argue as well.

In the case of Katrin the Other is adversary and ally in one. Because she meets him toe to toe in the art of argumentation she becomes all the more desirable as a partner. The relationship continues for several months, but Herr Lehmann is never certain of her position in the relationship. He would very much like to settle down with her, or at least define their status as dating instead of the vagaries he deals with now. With his love of argument, his desire for a challenge, it is no wonder that he falls in love with Katrin. She poses a challenge to him. She must be conquered and convinced to love him in return. After the first time they make love, they are lying in bed talking and Herr Lehmann says to her, "Ich liebe dich, weißt du, das ist der Punkt" (Regener 141). Her reply, however, is anything but affirmative: "Ich weiß nicht, ob ich dich liebe.... Ich meine, ich glaube, ich liebe dich, aber ich bin nicht in dich verliebt, wenn du weißt, was ich meine" (Regener 142). The semantic difference is important, and, for Herr Lehmann, this presents the challenge. The fact that she does not share his feelings, and her previously demonstrated role as his argumentative adversary, places Katrin in the role of the Other for Herr Lehmann.

In *On The Road* the Other was a person that could bring about self-realization, whereas Herr Lehmann seeks self-realization not through the Other, or in spite of the Other, but at the expense of the Other. By convincing her that she is in love with him, he hopes to fulfill his own fantasies of what life together with her will be like,

Immer wenn er sich ein gemeinsames Leben mit ihr vorzustellen versuchte, sah er bei ihr ein Leben, das einen Sinn und ein Ziel hatte oder wenigstens haben wollte, ein geordnetes Leben mit vielen wichtigen Dingen darin, aber bei sich selbst sah er ein Leben, in dem nichts von diesen Dingen eine Rolle spielte, und wo da Sinn und Ziel lagen, hätte er schon gar nicht sagen können. (Regener 143)

Without her his life has no goal and no meaning, but if he can convince her to be with him, then he sees for them a life that will provide these things.

Her position as adversary, and his desire to “conquer” her—not unlike the initial scene with the dog—is underscored by the parameters of their first date. Not being used to romancing anyone, Herr Lehmann leaves the planning of their first date to his friend Karl. It is Katrin’s idea to see the entire *Star Wars* series in one evening. *Star Wars* is a classic example of modern mythology. As John Lyden argues,

the hero (Luke) is called to the adventure; he initially refuses the call; supernatural aid is supplied (Ben Kenobi), which enables the adventure to proceed; he passes the threshold (Mos Eisley) and enters the belly of the whale (The Deathstar). He meets the goddess (Leia) whom he must rescue, and loses the father-figure (sic) (Ben) who becomes a spiritual presence to him. After escaping the Death Star, he must return to it, this time to destroy the monster. (Lyden)

Given Herr Lehmann’s need to conquer, it is not difficult to see him in the role of a Luke Skywalker wannabe. At the time of the date, it is unclear to Herr Lehmann and to the reader, what it is that he is in need of conquering aside from Katrin herself. What is clear is that Herr Lehmann is being called on a similar epic adventure of mythological proportions. Before the novel is over he will attempt to pass the threshold (the Berlin Wall), he will meet the goddess (Katrin), he will lose his best friend (Karl) and he will return to the threshold (The Berlin Wall and his 30<sup>th</sup> Birthday) where he will contemplate conquering the monster (the childish behavior that is slowing his spiritual growth). This epic mythological battle serves as the perfect backdrop for their first date. As Leslie Fiedler argues,

If there still exists for us a Wilderness and Place-out-of-Time appropriate for renewal rather than nostalgia, re-birth rather than recreation, that place must be in the Future, not the Past; that Future toward which we have been pointed ever since the Super-Guy comic books and the novels of science fiction shifted the orientation of Pop Art by one hundred and eighty degrees. (*Vanishing American*, 175)

*Star Wars* represents the future in which Herr Lehmann will find his “Place-out-of-Time appropriate for renewal.” This “place” is not in the present. In fact, Fiedler argues here that renewal is not possible in the present. Because we can only occupy the present, he is suggesting that renewal is only a dreamed of possibility. The simple and heroic ending of such films as the *Star Wars* franchise are only possible in the movies. For Herr Lehmann renewal will be much more difficult to accomplish.

Despite his inability to find renewal in Fiedler’s future, Regener provides a hint here to his plan for Herr Lehmann. As Herr Lehmann watches the film, a tad bored, the narrator shares with us,

Und da waren sie nun, und Luke Skywalker bekam gerade vom eigentlich toten und dennoch nicht aus der Handlung verschwindenwollenden Obi Wan eingeflüstert, dass es an der Zeit war, der Macht zu vertrauen. Luke Skywalker schob daraufhin das Zielgerät weg und machte es auf die altmodische Art, und Herr Lehmann wußte,



und er haßte sich dafür, daß er das wußte, daß das die Art war, die zum Erfolg führen würde. Hauptsache Kultur, hatte Karl gesagt, der Rest geht von alleine. Auch Karl, dachte Herr Lehmann, vertraut der Macht<sup>10</sup> (Regener 122).

“Der Macht” (The Force) needs to be trusted. Katrin as an avowed fan of science fiction, trusts the force. Karl, his best friend, trusts the force. Like Dean Moriarty’s “IT”, the Force is the great undefined that must be believed in, searched for and perhaps conquered in order to find life beyond the current realm.

This is further evidenced a few moments later. Herr Lehmann, who hates science fiction, has again gone outside of his comfort zone in order to please a woman. As we have already seen, good things do not happen when Herr Lehmann leaves his comfort zone. So far during this foray, the worst that has happened is that he fell asleep in the movie, but an omen appears,

Sogar Hunde waren im Saal. Jetzt gerade sah Herr Lehmann einen, der ihn an den erinnerte, den er vor einigen Wochen auf dem Lausitzer Platz getroffen hatte. Genaueres konnte Herr Lehmann nicht erkennen, es war zu dunkel, und der Hund lief nur kurz einmal von links nach rechts an der Leinwand vorbei, aber er hatte die gleiche Figur wie der Hund vom Lausitzer Platz, einen wurstförmigen Körper mit dünnen Beinen dran, und er bewegte sich auf eine Herrn Lehmann irgendwie vertraute Art. (Regener 123)

The dog is not an omen of bad happenings, but functions as a Leitmotif reminding the reader that in this scene Herr Lehmann is not in his element. This is the second appearance of the dog, and curiously the two do not interact. Instead, the dog has actually placed himself inside the film. By running in front of the screen, the dog has temporarily become part of the action on the screen. He is inserted into the battle for good and evil, right and wrong, conqueror and conquered that is taking place on the screen. Further, the dog has inserted himself into a space that is the future—Fiedler’s “Place-out-of-Time.” As discussed earlier, the dog is an omen of challenges to follow, but here also serves as foreshadowing to a time when Herr Lehmann will deal with his own renewal.

Hausmann deals with this scene in a different and more comical way than Regener. With the reference to film and to Star Wars, Hausmann can’t resist placing Herr Lehmann into the film himself. Near the end of Star Wars, Karl and Herr Lehmann head out to the concession stand to get a beer. While there they suddenly appear as Jedi knights. By doing this, Hausmann has placed Herr Lehmann himself into a “Place-out-of-Time” and has alluded to his own battle for self-realization. Further, by depicting him in the costume of a Jedi knight, Hausmann has confirmed that Herr Lehmann’s “battle” will be one for good. The outcome can only be positive. This scene also alludes to the confused and doomed relationship between Luke and Princess Leia, who learn, almost before it is too late, that they are siblings. When Katrin arrives at the concession stand she is dressed in the outfit and braids of Princess Leia. This visual reference confirms that the budding relationship is

---

<sup>10</sup> “Der Macht” is the German translation for the Star Wars franchise’s concept of the “The Force.” An energy that flows through the universe providing all those who listen and respond with the guidance they need to lead their lives for good. The Force does have a dark side, however, when referring simply to “The Force” the positive energy for good is inferred.

doomed to fail. Herr Lehmann will engage with the Other, but she will not be conquered, i.e. married.

During their conversation the three decide to leave the film and head to a bar. Interestingly, Karl is still in charge of the evening. He decides they should all head to Die Blase, a gay bar nearby<sup>11</sup>. Did Karl take them to Die Blase because it would be a cultural experience, as he expressed earlier? It's difficult to say. With the understanding that attending a Star Wars marathon isn't necessarily an ideal first date, there was likely little thought put into the choice of the bar, with the exception that Sylvio, an employee at the Einfall and a member of their circle of friends/acquaintances, works there. Throughout the course of the novel, Karl never enters a bar where he does not know one of the bartenders. Whether Die Blase was selected for culture or convenience, it is clear that it did accomplish another encounter with the Other. Katrin, Karl and Herr Lehmann are all straight, a fact that they establish before they even head to the bar.

[Herr Lehmann:] "Warum sollen wir in Herrgottsnamen in eine Schwulenkneipe gehen, wenn wir nicht schwul sind?"....

[Katrin:] "Also hör mal!"

[Frank:] "Jetzt reg dich ab, Frank, reg dich einfach mal ab. In der Blase ist das okay. Außerdem arbeitet Sylvio da gerade."

Er hatte kein gutes Gefühl bei der Sache, aber gegen dieses Argument kam er nicht an. (Regener 126-27)

Herr Lehmann almost always goes against his own feelings. As we saw before, he continues to argue with the GDR officer, he drank shots even though he explained that he never did such things, and now he is headed to a gay bar in spite of his own reservations. It appears he is going there, because Katrin raised an objection to his not wanting to go to a gay bar. Again, we see him going outside of his own boundaries and entering the realm of the Other in order to please a woman. He's been pressured into an encounter with the Other out of fear of being labeled homophobic, i.e. afraid of the Other. The night is young and it will happen again.

Shortly after they all arrive at Die Blase they are asked to leave. Not because they are causing a scene, but because the owner, Detlef, does not want straight people in his establishment. Initially, Herr Lehmann is ready to leave and it is Karl that decides they need to stand up for their rights. Herr Lehmann persists in his desire to leave until the owner calls Katrin a "fette Schnappe", something akin to "fat broad." Shortly thereafter a bar brawl breaks out in which Herr Lehmann bites deeply into Detlef's finger. Although there is nothing to indicate that Herr Lehmann has a violent nature, this is the second brawl that he has been involved in. In each instance the person with whom he is fighting has insulted a friend, first Erwin and now Katrin.

---

<sup>11</sup> The name for this bar, while fictitious, cleverly alludes to its purpose, as do most of the bars in the book. Die Blase literally means "The Bubble," but German slang describes oral sex performed on a man as "blasen," making the name for this bar something akin to "The Blowjob." With this clever name, Regener sets up Die Blase as a place where straight people might not be welcome. This semi-explicit reference to sex is typical of the more seedy gay bars in Berlin, i.e. Ficken 3000, Triebwerk, Greifbar, etc. Regener would have been aware of these establishments and the fact that a straight person wouldn't necessarily enter them.

The fight requires another change of venue. The final bar for the evening is the Savoy in Kreuzberg 61. Now joined by Sylvio and Kristall Rainer, this is anything but a typical first date. Herr Lehmann would rather not go here, but he goes along with the flow. Again the streets and the route to the bar are detailed:

...die Adalbertstraße hinunter unter dem Neuen Kreuzberger Zentrum hindurch, dann über die Skalitzer Straße und weiter geradeaus die Admiralstraße hinunter, über den nächtlich schwarzglitzernden Landwehrkanal hinweg und die Grimmstraße entlang, wo sie auf Karls Befehl hin links ins Savoy einkehrten.... (Regener 135)

This route allows them to move from Kreuzberg 35 to Kreuzberg 61 without actually having to go through Neukölln, thus avoiding an unnecessary excursion outside of Herr Lehmann's topographic imagination. However, just going to the other half of Kreuzberg is detestable to Herr Lehmann; the sentence continues, "eine nach Herrn Lehmanns Meinung dämliche, ganz und gar absurde und darin typische Kreuzberg-61-Kneipe, in der er seit Jahren nicht mehr gewesen war...." (Regener 135). It's ironic that Herr Lehmann's longed for date with Katrin, the night he hoped to woo her, is spent entirely with the Other. Normally, one would plan a first date to take place in realms that one was comfortable in. However, Herr Lehmann has spent the entire evening pushing the boundaries of his topographic imagination. Even the name "Savoy" refers to a region that borders France, Switzerland and Italy, now a part of France but once belonging to Italy. The Savoy itself is, thus, a frontier of sorts. It's ironic but fitting that the evening should possess so many extremes, so much activity on the frontier, for Katrin is also the Other. She is the ally/adversary with whom he hopes to spend the rest of his life.

Kreuzberg 61 has certainly changed since 1989, but today there is a clear sociological division between the two sectors of Kreuzberg. Kreuzberg 35 is vibrant, full of bars and young people that enjoy nightlife. Kreuzberg 61 is the quieter, older sector. Herr Lehmann's description of the Savoy is that of a pretty typical bar in the sector, even today. As one heads down Grimmstrasse away from the Landwehrkanal there are only two bars on the left hand side. Of these two, the most likely candidate for being the Savoy is a location now called Powwow, a bar where, I have been told, Sven Regener was once a regular.

Following a brief time at the Savoy the group, which has grown from three to five, breaks up. Katrin and Herr Lehmann leave the others behind and eventually make their way to her apartment where they consummate their relationship. As in *On The Road* this seems to affirm that self-realization, or at least the realization of dreams, can be found in the presence of the Other. Somehow the epic battle between good and evil, the bar fight in which Herr Lehmann tastes the blood of another, and finally transgressing the boundaries of his topographic imagination, are the keys to the realization of his dream to make Katrin his girlfriend.

The bar fight especially seemed to be somewhat of a tipping point in the evening, albeit with a confusing outcome. "Er blickte auf und sah sie alle im Lichtschein eines Döner-Imbisses [the Turkish Other] versammelt: Karl, Sylvio, Katrin, die etwas weinte, und Kristall-Rainer, der sie tröstete, was ihm überhaupt nicht gefiel" (Regener 134). Initially Katrin is upset about the fight, and quite possibly agitated at the sight of Herr Lehmann's

violence in the situation. Although later, she seems to understand that his anger was in defense of her being called a fat broad, for, in the Savoy, she has a change of heart,

Was immer ein romantischer Abend war, er sollte...nicht damit enden, daß er sich im Finger eines schwulen Kneipiers verbiß....[Er] schaute zu Katrin herüber, die seinen Blick aufnahm und ihn anlächelte. Er spürte wieder ihre Hand auf seinem Oberschenkel. Sie ist seltsam, dachte er. Sehr seltsam. (Regener 137)

He's curious that she seems to have had this change of heart, because he understands how bad of an impression it made, and how completely anachronistically romantic it was, to bite the bar owner in defense of her honor. This anachronism, however, could be the key to her heart. Her fascination with science fiction and Star Wars specifically, point to a penchant for heroism and chivalry.

John Lyden, describes Lucas' mimicking of Joseph Campbell's "monomyth" which in turn is based on the Romance tradition:

It is well-known...that George Lucas self-consciously constructed the screenplay for the first film under the influence of popular mythologist Joseph Campbell. In an address to the National Arts Club in 1985, Lucas noted that he was entirely without direction until he stumbled upon Campbell's *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*.<sup>1</sup> And the stages of Campbell's monomyth, outlined in that book, do indeed suggest the structure of Lucas' screenplay: the hero (Luke) is called to the adventure; he initially refuses the call; supernatural aid is supplied (Ben Kenobi), which enables the adventure to proceed; he passes the threshold (Mos Eisley) and enters the belly of the whale (The Deathstar). He meets the goddess (Leia) whom he must rescue, and loses the father-figure (Ben) who becomes a spiritual presence to him. After escaping the Death Star, he must return to it, this time to destroy the monster. (Lyden)

Star Wars, thus seems to have been inserted into the middle of the novel as a reference to the life of Herr Lehmann. The novel is his adventure. Karl is the father figure he will eventually lose to a nervous breakdown, Katrin is the goddess, and points outside Kreuzberg 61 are the Death Star. He must cross that boundary in order to destroy the monster and achieve his self-realization.

### **Herr Lehmann and the Boundary of Thirty Years**

Throughout the novel, the reader is repeatedly reminded of Herr Lehmann's impending birthday and the accompanying crisis of age. The importance of his age is emphasized when two police officers come upon him, in the first scene, while he tries to befriend the dog, or at least render him defenseless, by feeding him scotch.

"Der ist total besoffen", sagte der eine Polizist, der etwa herrn Lehmanns Alter hatte.

"Nun stehen Sie mal auf", sagte der andere, der um einiges alter war. (Regener 18)

In his drunken state Herr Lehmann discerns one policeman from another according to their ages, relative to his own of course, and throughout the interaction with the policemen the two men are referred to as "der jüngere" and "der ältere" thus stressing the importance of their age. Herr Lehmann protests that his impending thirtieth birthday is unimportant, "seinen bald stattfindenden dreißigsten Geburtstag nicht gerade als rauschendes Fest zu feiern gedachte, gerade weil er davon überzeugt war, daß das bloß ein Geburtstag war wie

jeder andere auch, und er hatte seine Geburtstage noch nie gerne gefeiert" (Regener 22). However, his classification of the two policemen as the older and the younger; the younger being roughly the same age as Herr Lehmann, which parallels his status as a younger man. Placing himself in the position of the younger in the group, echoes the common desire to hold on to our youth, which in turn encourages women to remain forever "29" and for the passing of decade birthdays after twenty to be celebrated with black balloons and "over the hill" paraphernalia. Herr Lehmann's "nicht gerade als rauschendes Fest zu feiern" 30<sup>th</sup> birthday, belies a certain angst; an uneasiness at its passing.

Simone Merk explains that the crisis of the thirtieth birthday "als das ‚Mißtönende‘ könnte man auch umschreiben als das Unharmonische, das Unvollkommene, das in eine Einheit Nicht-Integrierbare, das Außenstehende, das Fremde" (150). The time is one in which the person recognizes that life is changing. It is time to move beyond childhood and to move squarely into adulthood. Herr Lehmann, much later, views the future with a similar uncertainty as he thinks to himself: "Es ist Scheiße, 30 Jahre alt zu werden...man beginnt, eine Vergangenheit zu haben, eine gute alte Zeit und den ganzen Scheiß" (Regener 212). He has entered a time of conflict. In the weeks before November 9, 1989 there was also conflict and uncertainty in the air. Obviously something was happening in East Germany, and it was clear that it was very big, whatever it was, but no one knew how it was going to end. What seemed certain, however, was that, no matter the result, the future would not be the same as life was today.

This uncertainty is paralleled in Herr Lehmann's engagement with the city of Berlin itself. He is only comfortable within the realm of Kreuzberg, and the list of streets and locations that Sven Regener provides gives us a map of Kreuzberg that is also the map of Herr Lehmann's topographic imagination. The greatest moments of conflict in the novel occur when he has for some reason or another been forced to leave this comfort zone. His comfort zone is physical, but also mental. He is very set in his ways and finds it upsetting when his routine is upset in anyway. He is willing to upset that routine on occasion, but only for a very good reason, and always at the request of someone else. Were it left up to Herr Lehmann, he would never leave Kreuzberg. Just as, were it left to choice, most people would choose to not get any older. He is pushed out of his comfort zone by others, just as time will push him out of his twenties whether he wants to go or not.

While he doubts his own worth, everyone else seems to have no doubts about his greatness and his ability to persevere if not succeed. Karl describes him by explaining that they call him Herr Lehmann, "[w]eil er so etwas...Herrschaftliches hat. Er ist nicht wie die anderen. Ihn umgibt ein Geheimnis" (Regener 126), and later, "Um Herrn Lehmanns Zukunft muß man sich keine Sorgen machen" (136). Everyone at the table agrees to the latter statement, which makes Herr Lehmann uneasy. No one is aware of his lack of confidence, of his desire for a better life.

In fact, in his first argument with Katrin, he discusses the term "Lebensinhalt" extensively, and, in addition to arguing that the word is meaningless and that it is simply a metaphor that people use without thinking,

Wenn man von Lebensinhalt spricht, dann sieht man das Leben nur als Gefäß, als Mittel zum Zweck, in das es etwas hineinzufüllen gilt, statt da man sich vielleicht man darüber klar wird, daß das Leben einen Wert an sich hat, und daß man, wenn

man sich damit dauernd beschäftigt, es mit Inhalt zu füllen, das vielleicht überhaupt nicht kapiert. (Regener 55)

It's in the early part of the novel that we see such confidence in Herr Lehmann's personal philosophy. He's happy where he is. He's got his circle of friends, which today has been expanded by the introduction of Katrin. He's got his apartment in a safe little corner of Kreuzberg. He's got his job as a bartender. He's 29 and life seems good. "Man lebt und erfreut sich dran, das reicht doch völlig" (56). This sums up his position on life's purpose.

A later discussion with Erwin alludes to the fact that Herr Lehmann is not the only one in Kreuzberg that feels this way. Referencing a pub he's recently opened in Schöneberg, Erwin tells Herr Lehmann that, "da läuft das anders. ... da ist das nicht so einfach, da muß man irgendwas bieten" (Regener 86). Imagine a clientele with expectations. A clientele that expects something more than a room where they can drink their beer genuinely confounds him. Herr Lehmann is emblematic of the environment in Kreuzberg before the fall of the Wall.

### **Karl Schmidt's Disintegration**

Parallel to Herr Lehmann's crisis of age and self-realization, Regener offers the counterpoint of Karl Schmidt, who suffers a much larger crisis of his own. In many ways, the two are parts of a binary system. They are the Laurel and Hardy of Kreuzberg. Karl being quite a large man to Herr Lehmann's average size. Herr Lehmann moves toward self-realization, while we watch the disintegration of Karl.

This relationship progresses along similar lines to that of Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. With the backdrop of the Berlin Wall, however, this modern relationship takes on an allegorical aspect. Karl is the East to Herr Lehmann's West. As Gay Clifford explains: "Modern allegories differ from their predecessors in that there is no firmly established hierarchy of value to define or give meaning to the progress of the characters..." (16). Karl will not, as one might expect, progress to the self-realization that Herr Lehmann seems on the verge of, but will slowly decline. One can already begin to see Karl as representing East Germany from the first description of him, "Außerdem war Karl, als der Riesenschrank von einem Mann, der er war, groß, breit und stark, nirgendwo zu übersehen..." (Regener 40). He has an outward appearance of strength, solidity and power. For Dean and Sal Paradise, the relationship was the same. At the beginning of the novel, Sal revered Dean and his energy. Indications are that Dean's energy is nearly entirely artificial. His Benzedrine addiction is what simultaneously makes him exciting and leads to his disintegration. Similarly, the strength and energy displayed by Karl in this first scene is anything but representative of his actual situation.

Like East Germany, Karl is physically strong, but he is starting to show signs of weakness. When we see him for the first time he is working at the Markthalle where Herr Lehmann has come for breakfast. Karl normally works at the Einfall, but he has picked up an extra shift. He has come to work without having gone to sleep from the night before. Herr Lehmann, curious that anyone could do such a thing, "musterte neugierig das Gesicht seines besten Freundes, was nicht so einfach war, weil dieser jetzt mit Feuereifer Gläser spülte" (Regener 43). From the very beginning there are indications that all is not right with Karl. He's big and he's strong, but perhaps just a little too strong. No one cleans

glassware with “Feuereifer.” Zeal should be reserved for moments of great passion, yet, he can’t help but put his whole being into cleaning those glasses. From days without sleep, to disappearances during his shifts, after which Karl quickly returns full of energy, all indications are that Karl is high most of the time, although the possibility that Karl could be using drugs is only acknowledged when Karl has his breakdown. Typically, just as Herr Lehmann seems quite uninterested in the events of the east, he does nothing to inquire into Karl’s situation. Erwin tries to offer some insight to Herr Lehmann, “Hast du eine Ahnung. ... Du würdest doch nicht merken, daß einer kokst, wenn’s ihm aus der Nase staubt” (87). It seems everyone is aware of Herr Lehmann’s inobservant nature. So, it’s no surprise that despite all indications, Herr Lehmann doesn’t foresee the plight of his best friend.

A sculptor, as well as a bartender, Karl has been offered an exhibit in Charlottenburg. Karl tells all of the drinking buddies/co-workers one night out at the bar. Upon hearing the news, his friends virtually ignore it. Herr Lehmann shows interest, but the rest react by saying: “Dann müssen wir ja da alle hin.... Nach Charlottenburg, ach du Scheiße...” (Regener 124). If we understand that Karl represents East Germany, then it is not surprising that he is often ignored by his “friends,” even when he makes such an announcement as his gallery opening. A gallery opening is a huge deal, especially one in an upscale neighborhood like Charlottenburg. This the kind of exhibit that could begin to Karl on the map as an artist. It’s validation that his art has worth. Unfortunately, in this scene, Karl plays second fiddle to everyone’s attention to Herr Lehmann. They toast to him twice while Karl is trying to share his exciting news about the gallery opening.

They toast Herr Lehmann, because he has won a street fight with one of Erwin’s customers. The only recognition Karl receives from the others is that the gallery is quite far away (roughly 3 miles). Neither his good news, nor the protests in the East are able to pull them away from their barroom talk. The focus among the group is falsely placed on Herr Lehmann’s “success” and not on the success of Karl.

As the November 11<sup>th</sup> gallery opening approaches, Karl starts to fall apart. He hasn’t slept or bathed in days and isn’t doing his job very well at work. The word used by several people to describe his situation is “abbauen.” Karl is disintegrating. Erwin comes to Herr Lehmann with his concerns for Karl:

“Es ist wegen Karl. Ich mache mir da Sorgen....Weißt du vielleicht, was mit ihm los ist?”

“Was soll schon mit ihm los sein? Mit Karl ist alles in Ordnung.”

“Ich weiß nicht, irgendwie baut er ab. Das geht so nicht mehr.” (Regener 187)

As was mentioned earlier, Herr Lehmann seems oblivious at this point to Karl’s crisis. It is Erwin that brings Karl’s situation to his attention. Regener’s paradigmatic choice of the verb “abbauen” is a telling one. East Germany isn’t simply in a crisis, it is disintegrating, and when all is said and done it will be completely dismantled.

Karl’s identity crisis concerns his art, not his age. There comes a point in the life of anyone who would like to be an artist when he/she must consider whether what he/she is doing is worth the effort, and if in fact he/she is an artist and not just a bartender. For Karl this time is now. In preparations for his exhibit Karl discredits his own art, telling Herr Lehmann that it is nothing but shit. When not tending bar, he has been working night and day on the sculptures for the exhibit in his studio which occupies an empty storefront—

symbolic of the economic crisis in East Germany. Showing one of his pieces to Herr Lehmann, he says,

“Daran habe ich jetzt zwei Tage gearbeitet. Ist aber nichts wert.”

“Warum nicht?”

“Weil es Scheiße ist. Und das da auch.” Sein bester Freund ging zu einem Objekt, das auf dem Boden stand und trat es um.... “ich sag dir mal was. Wenn dein Bruder zwei Heizungsrohre zusammenschweißt, oder was immer er da macht, dann ist das schon mehr wert als der ganze scheiß hier.” (Regener 199)

Karl has so little respect for his own work, and by extension for himself, that he kicks one of his sculptures over. He destroys several pieces in this scene, smashing the sculptures to pieces. In a parallel move to his self-destruction these sculptures become “abgebaut.” Herr Lehmann’s brother, mentioned here by Karl, was also an artist, but is now working in heating and cooling. Interestingly, while Karl is denigrating his own work, he elevates the quality of work done by Herr Lehmann’s brother. Karl here praises the work of the ordinary laborer raising it to the level of art. He praises it not just as artful, but being of such artistry that tasks one completes during a routine repair job are better and worth more than the creations he spends days creating as an artist. While artists create nothing productive for society, the skilled worker is making a beautiful and functional “work of art,” thus contributing to a society in ways that Karl’s work can never do. Karl’s insistence that his work is shit while he continues to create is testament to the need of the human being to create, to the need to create something that is not in service of someone else, but of oneself. Regener shows through Karl, the persistence of the human urge to create despite the intense capitalistic drives to bend that urge toward state and societal benefits. Simultaneously, Karl points to his lack of faith in himself, questioning the merits of his life’s work. He contemplates, like Herr Lehmann, the worth of his chosen profession.

Late in the novel it is revealed that Karl, like Dean Moriarty, leads a double life that is paralleled by his life as an artist and a bartender. When Herr Lehmann meets Karl’s girlfriend she tells him, “Für Karl gibt es die eine Welt und die andere Welt...Du bist in der einen Welt, ich bin in der anderen Welt. Und er achtet säuberlich darauf, daß sich diese beiden Welten nicht berühren. Die Frage ist bloß: Welche von beiden Welten ist für ihn die richtige” (Regener 238)? The repeated duality of Karl’s existence mirrors the duality of the German situation. There are two Germany’s with an elaborate fence between them so that one does not touch the other, and two Berlin’s with a wall between them, again, ensuring that one does not touch the other. Karl works hard to keep his two worlds separate, but eventually this type of life takes its toll on anyone. The whole of literature and film are full of examples of people who have tried to lead two lives simultaneously. Dean had a wife on each coast, always heading from one to the other planning on divorcing one wife and moving forward with the next. In the end they are doomed to fail. Thus it is no surprise that Karl’s double life eventually aids in his break down.

This double life of Karl’s also mirrors the dual existence of many East Germans. Members of the Stasi could not divulge their allegiance to anyone. Spouses and children lived entire lifetimes without knowing that a family member was with the Stasi. This complete and total separation of public life from private life encouraged a distrust of the



secrecy, and often, for those in the Stasi, an identity crisis where it became difficult to integrate the two sides into a single life.<sup>12</sup>

Herr Lehmann, once he is aware of the severity of Karl's crisis, begins to contemplate what is actually happening. He's noticed the dramatic events of his own life, and now with Karl's situation he is encouraged to look at the situation more comprehensively.

Vielleicht ist es umgekehrt, dachte er, vielleicht ist es nicht so, daß Karl nicht mehr funktioniert, weil alles andere nicht mehr funktioniert, sondern daß alles andere nicht mehr funktioniert, weil Karl nicht mehr funktioniert, aber diesen Gedanken verwarf er als billig, so einfach ist das nicht, dachte er, so läuft das nicht. (Regener 236)

Although he discredits his own thought process, he is certainly astute in his observation. Karl's life is no longer working for him, because Karl is no longer working for his life. It's not one's fault but Karl's that his world is falling apart. He has spent years living a double-life, and now, when given the opportunity to advance his career as an artist, he is suffering a crisis of self-worth. This crisis comes as no surprise, since a double-life like Karl's already speaks to issues of self-worth. He is not a man with a wife in one place and a girlfriend elsewhere. He simply has a girlfriend that he's never told his friends about. Given that no reason is given for this double life, and her clear understanding that their relationship plays second fiddle to his life in Kreuzberg 36, his double life speaks to a feeling of embarrassment concerning their relationship, or a pre-existing need to escape from his own life amongst the gang. "Er kommt auch nur hierher, wenn er bei euch nicht mehr weiterweiß" (228). She is a secret that has been kept well hidden. Even Herr Lehmann didn't know she existed, and he's Karl's self-proclaimed best friend.

The analogy is given further weight when viewed in light of the political situation of the day. With Karl's role as a symbol for the GDR, Herr Lehmann's statement becomes even more profound. Perhaps it is not that the GDR, or better put, the divide between the two Germanys, doesn't function because everything else is going wrong, but that the divide is no longer able to function, because the underlying principles of it have ceased to work. The SUP is becoming fractured, and the citizens of East Germany have grown tired of living in a regime that does not allow them to travel beyond the Iron Curtain. The citizens have ceased to "function", read cooperate, within the rules of the regime, which will quickly lead to its demise.

On November 9th Herr Lehmann receives a phone call from Erwin that Karl has been acting strangely and asks if Herr Lehmann can come help him. Herr Lehmann comes to the bar and escorts Karl back to his apartment where he hopes to get Karl to sleep.

Sie waren ein seltsames Paar, Herr Lehmann und sein riesiger Freund wie sie da händchenhaltend über die durchgepflügte, aufgeweichte Erde stapften, Karl dabei unaufhörlich redend, er murmelte jetzt nur noch so in sich hinein, und Herr Lehmann verstand gerade mal einzelne Fetzen, "Schweine ... immerhin ... muß man auch mal .... Wird endlich mal renoviert, das wurde auch Zeit, DAS WURDE AUCH ZEIT." (Regener 257)

---

<sup>12</sup> See Thomas Brussig's *Helden wie wir* for an insightful, if exaggerated depiction of the negative consequences of these double lives.

Herr Lehmann supports his huge friend who is falling apart. He is there to guide him through and get him to the end. Karl is suffering a nervous breakdown, but he seems to be speaking some sense in his delirium. It's about time something be renovated. Something has got to change. Herr Lehmann has felt it, and now Karl longs for change.

They return to Karl's apartment and art studio where Herr Lehmann tries to get him to sleep, but to no avail. When they arrive, the studio is in complete disarray.

Was er sah, war ein Schlachtfeld. Die vielen Kunstwerke, die hier vor kurzem noch gestanden hatten, waren zertrümmert, und die Metallteile, aus denen sie zusammengeschweißt gewesen waren, lagen verstreut umher.

'was war denn hier los?'

'Dekonstruktion', sagte Karl. 'Dekonstruktioin.' Er lachte fröhlich. (Regener 250-251)

The apartment is symbolic of Karl's life, at least as we see it through the eyes of Herr Lehmann. He is living in an abandoned storefront. The metal doors roll down closing him off from the rest of the world. Closed off from the outside, Karl is falling apart. His is an internal struggle. His work is not moving forward. Instead he is defeating himself by breaking it apart.

In Hausmann's version of this scene, we first see Karl's sculpture through a grid of I beams that form the ceiling of Karl's work area next to his apartment. Looking down at the centerpiece of the exhibit, and at Karl, from above, it is clear to the viewer that deconstruction is the only possibility. Even with the right equipment to lift it out of the basement it is in, the I beam structure that forms the ceiling makes such a task impossible. As Karl destroys the sculpture, one has the sense that it had to happen.

It's late afternoon, November 9, 1989 and Karl is speaking of Deconstruction. It's roughly 5 p.m. and neither of them knows that the Berlin Wall will officially fall in a matter of hours. "Wir müssen uns mehr mit dem Osten beschäftigen" (Regener 254), says Karl before Herr Lehmann takes him to the Urbankrankenhaus. Foreshadowing that the Wall and the fall of the East is immanent. Again, Karl seems to be speaking gibberish, yet, there is always some sense to be found in his excited utterances.

Herr Lehmann eventually escorts Karl to the Urbankrankenhaus in Kreuzberg 61, where they speak with a psychiatrist. Karl continues with his erratic behavior and nonsensical utterances. He tells the doctor, "Man sollte mal wieder verreisen" (Regener 265), but he might as well be speaking to Herr Lehmann. His utterances in the hospital are very much focused on Herr Lehmann. He says he needs to feed the dog, Herr Lehmann smokes too much, and that one should travel. He's suffering a nervous breakdown, but also speaking more sense than he has in quite some time.

After committing Karl to the psychiatric ward for the night, Herr Lehmann asks if he will be okay when he has slept a little bit, the doctor replies:

Das ist schwer zu sagen. Ich denke mal nicht. Ihr Freund hat wahrscheinlich eine Art Depression. Eine Mischung aus Depression und Nervenzusammenbruch.... Oft hängt das mit dem Zerbrecen des Selbstbildes zusammen. So erkläre ich mir das. Vielleicht hat Ihr Freund herausgefunden, daß er nicht der ist, der er die ganze Zeit zu sein glaubte. (Regener 281)

His double lives have forced him into a breaking point. He can no longer survive as Karl the single man and the man with the girlfriend, or as Karl the artist and Karl the bartender.

This night in the hospital is a watershed for Karl. He'll either come out the other side unscathed, or he'll be permanently damaged. The uncertainty of his situation parallels the political situation, which is unfolding as they are in the hospital.

Through the nervous breakdown Karl completes his allegorizing of East Germany. As Clifford argues, allegory is concerned with a process, "with the way in which various elements of an imaginative or intellectual system interact, and with the effects of this system or structure on and within individuals" (Regener 11). Through the influence of the system and the pressure to maintain the expectations others and he himself had, Karl is eventually destroyed.

So, on November 9, 1989 in the West Berlin neighborhood of Kreuzberg best friends each face a crisis of their own. Herr Lehmann is not sure what to do as he gets older, and Karl has fallen apart and suffered a nervous breakdown. As best friends, Herr Lehmann and Karl "waren mal ein perfektes Team...so wie Bonnie und Clyde, wie Dick und Doof, wie Simon und Garfunkel, wie Sacco und Vanzetti oder, dachte [Herr Lehmann], und mußte sich eingestehen, daß dies der Wahrheit am nächsten kam, wie Bud Spencer und Terence Hill" (Regener 212). Interestingly, of all the pairings mentioned here only Bud Spencer and Terence Hill were still together in 1989, and none of them were a "functioning" duo at the time of *Herr Lehmann's* publication, emphasizing the inability of the East to survive, and the negative outcome for East Germany, as well as their own crises. Like East and West, or Ossi and Wessi Herr Lehmann and Karl, although cooperative, can only exist in opposition to each other.

### **The Fall of the Berlin Wall and Self-Realization**

On the evening of November 9 Herr Lehmann leaves Karl in the Urbankrankenhaus and decides it is a good night to get drunk. He won't be going to the Einfall tonight, because he "wollte [...] niemanden von der ganzen Bagage, die dort heute nachmittag herumgehungen und ratlos seinen besten Freund angeglotzt hatte" (Regener 272). The use of "Bagage" in this description of his co-workers is certainly multi-dimensional. First, the crowd consisted mostly of his friends from the Einfall, and to refer to them as rabble is insulting. These were, prior to today, his friends. They weren't disorderly, but were certainly without a clue as to how Karl should be handled. To refer to them as disorderly or worse as belonging to a lower class, is indicative of his state of mind and need for change. They are however "baggage" in the emotional sense. They are holding him back; keeping him from moving forward with his life. "Bagage" also provides foreshadowing for final moments of the novel, when Herr Lehmann contemplates a journey.

He's still depressed about his break up with Katrin and having committed Karl. As he walks along, "Er erinnerte sich daran, wie sie immer versucht hatte, ihn dazu zu bringen, sein Leben zu ändern. Vielleicht habe ich es nicht genug versucht, dachte er, aber wozu eigentlich dachte er dann." Although he professed to love her and to see a life with her that would have him more fulfilled, this was not enough motivation for him to change his life, to move beyond his drifting twenty-something ways. But with his best friend in the hospital, because "Das Leben hier in der Gegend ist leicht, wenn man jung ist: ein bißchen arbeiten, billige Wohnungen, viel Spaß. Aber die meisten brauchen auf Dauer irgend etwas, wodurch das legitimiert wird. Wenn das wegbriecht ... buff!" (Regener 269), he's been given pause to

contemplate his own situation. He knows it is time to change, but is still unclear what the goal is. In which direction should he head? Maybe he should visit his brother or take a trip:

Vielleicht sollte ich [meinen Bruder] mal besuchen, dachte Herr Lehmann, schließlich habe ich ein bißchen Geld gespart, obwohl, dachte er, es ist mehr als ein bißchen, es dürfte ziemlich viel sein. Oder nach Bali, dachte er ... das könnte lustig werden mit all den Vogelspinnen und Tropenkrankheiten. (274)

This is the third time Herr Lehmann has contemplated a trip out of West Berlin. The first was his unsuccessful trip to East Berlin. The second was in conversation with a girl from Poland in the Einfall. He never seriously contemplated visiting Poland, in fact he mentions, "Ich bin nicht der Typ für Ferien" (200). Now, just a few days later the thought of going on vacation is his own thought, his own suggestion.

He continues, however, to point to his internal conflict, and his dedication to his topographic imagination, which focuses his life in SO36.

Sollte er in 61 weitermachen oder doch *lieber* nach 36 hinübergehen? In 36 bestand die Gefahr, einen von Erwins Deppen, wie er sie jetzt in Gedanken nannte, zu treffen und über Karl retten müssen. In 61 bestand die Gefahr, daß er beim Saufen vor Langeweile einschlief. Dann schon lieber 36, dachte er und überquerte den Landwehrkanal am Kottbusser Damm. Dahinter nahm er die Mariannenstraße bis hinauf zum Heinrichplatz, wo es ein paar Kneipen gab, in denen er schon lange nicht mehr gewesen war. (Regener 274)

The Landwehrkanal has existed since the seventeenth century, its origination date is not specifically known. Lying just outside the city's Customs and Excise Wall from the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the canal marked an outer reach of influence for the city of Berlin. Lying outside the city wall, it was a boundary outside of boundary. The Landwehrkanal today functions as the southwest border of SO36 (Diagram 2.4). Herr Lehmann is only comfortable inside the reaches of a very old Berlin. Leaving this historic boundary creates conflict, confusion and even threatens boredom. His soul is comforted inside the old boundaries. It comes as no surprise that Herr Lehmann's apartment was not only inside this boundary of the Landwehrkanal, but also inside of the Customs and Excise Wall. Living within this multiplicity of walls, it's no wonder the man is conflicted regarding travel, changing, and moving his life forward. The surroundings of his apartment have him historically trapped between conflicting possibilities. Living on Eisenbahnstrasse suggests the possibility of travel, although the train tracks were removed nearly a century earlier. Further, he lives just inside the old city walls; walls that would have provided safety and comfort during times of turmoil in Europe, while he looks daily at the Berlin Wall; a wall that is a constant symbol of decreasing civil liberties and the Cold War with its potential to destroy the world at any moment.

So Herr Lehmann heads back to SO36 to finish boozing it up on his birthday. He eventually ends up in Zum Elefanten, where he is joined by Sylvio, a co-worker. Their conversation ranges from Herr Lehmann's birthday to a Michael York film. In this conversation Herr Lehmann's crisis of age comes to a head. He says to Sylvio, "Aber irgendwie habe ich immer das Gefühl, ich müßte mal in die Erneuerung" (Regener 291). To which Sylvio replies, "Vielleicht kommt die Erneuerung von ganz allein. Kommt Zeit, kommt Rat, kommt Attentat" (292). But we have seen throughout the novel that Herr Lehmann's life is not moving forward. He's come to realize that if there is going to be an

“Erneuerung” he is going to have to take an active role in making it happen. He’s not just going to wake up one day to find the world a completely different place, or is he?

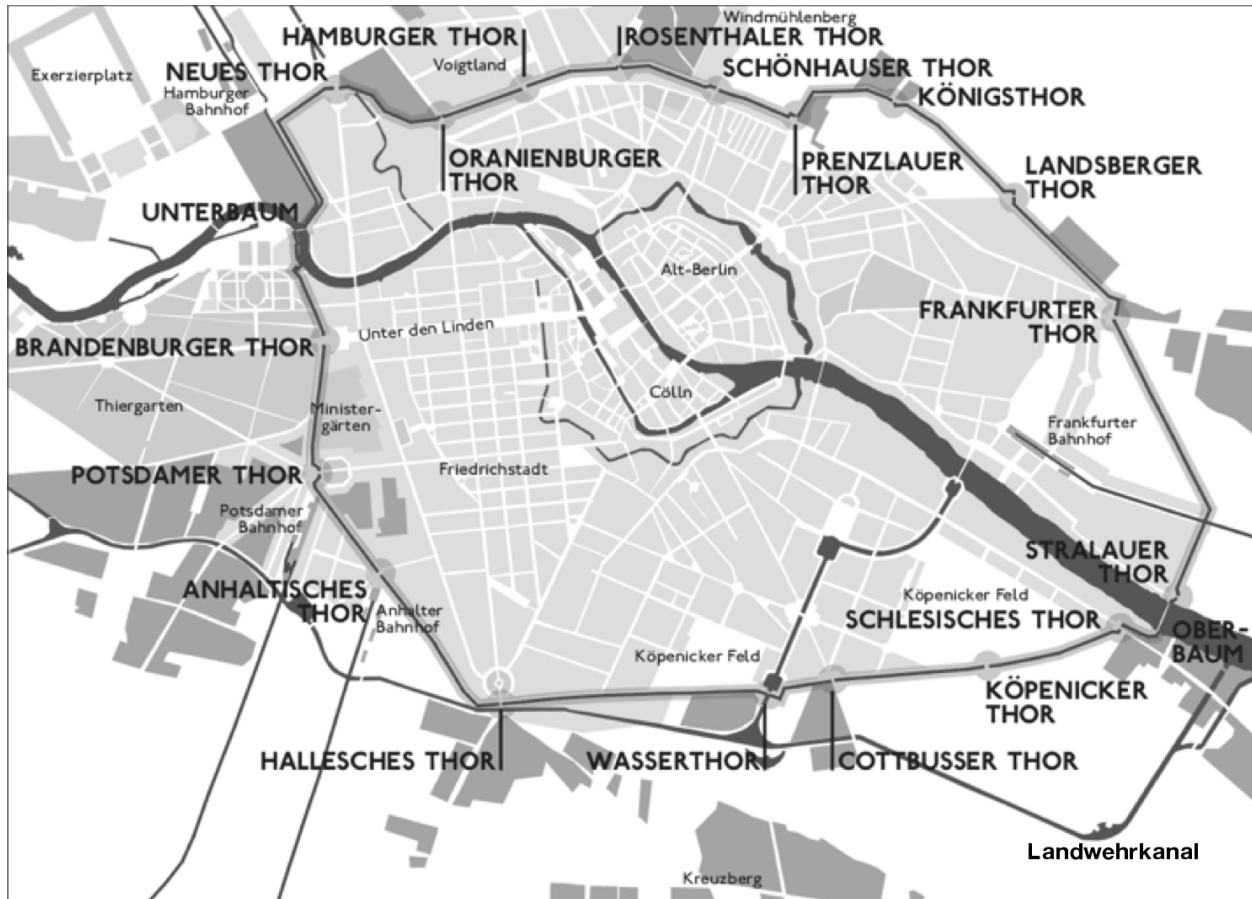


Diagram 2.4: Berlin Customs and Excise Wall ca. 1700. Herr Lehmann’s apartment would be just north of Köpenicker Thor in the Köpenicker Feld.

Regardless of what the West German government may have wanted, the demise of the Berlin Wall would be thrust upon them in the next few hours, just as Herr Lehmann had no choice but to turn thirty. In fact, as the two sit in the bar drinking their beers, the Berlin Wall has already fallen. East Germans are flooding into Kreuzberg over the Oberbaumbrücke and into other parts of the city through the open gates to West Berlin. Getting older, and the responsibilities that come with it, happen to us whether or not we choose to take them on. Perhaps a time of political change will provide the opportunity for his personal change.

As they sit drinking Sylvio is about to fall asleep on the bar when at 1 a.m. a man comes in for a beer and tells Herr Lehmann that the Wall has fallen. Herr Lehmann relays this information to Sylvio, who comes from East Germany. He responds: “Das geht mir schon seit Wochen auf die Nerven. Immer, wenn ich den Fernseher anmache: Osten, Osten, Osten....Die Mauer ist offen, was soll das überhaupt heißen, die Mauer ist offen. Der Arsch ist offen” (Regener 294). Sylvio responds with incredulity. He has never known a life without the Wall. He grew up in East Germany and then moved to Kreuzberg where the

Wall, as the opening sentence of the novel reminds us, is always on the horizon. Thus it is not surprising that he doesn't immediately believe the Wall has fallen. In an extended show of apathy, the two discuss whether or not they should go to the Oberbaumbrücke to see the opening of the Wall. After a brief discussion they decide they should at least go look, "aber erst austrinken" (295). The fall of the Berlin Wall is nothing more than a spectacle for them to go see, but more important than this spectacle is finishing the beer in front of them.

Indeed, we know from video footage that many West Berliners went to greet their neighbors as they crossed into West Berlin for the first time, but the numbers were not as massive as many would like to believe. The scene of David Hasselhoff singing in a lighted suit on the wall while fireworks go off behind the Brandenburg Gate would take place a few days later. In the meantime, many slept through the opening of the Berlin Wall, just as they had slept through its creation. Given Herr Lehmann's apathy concerning East Berlin up to this point, Herr Lehmann's response is exactly what we might expect. He's interested just enough to take a moment out of his self-pitying and introspective birthday celebration to check out the spectacle.

Herr Lehmann still shows signs of being his old self, but his discussion of renewal relay to the reader that the future is perhaps more bright than he has heretofore thought. Finally, as the novel comes to a close, Herr Lehmann searches for answers. He looks forward to the change that he has dreaded from the beginning, but that will be forced upon him by the falling of the Wall. As Gay Clifford explains:

There is...one recurrent element in allegorical writing that prevents the action from becoming a seemingly endless process with the overall effect of stasis: a belief in the possibility of transformation.... [O]ne of the most effective ways...to demonstrate this is to show [the] heroes transformed by their experience of the action, upon which the meaning depends. (29)

The coincidence of Herr Lehmann's birthday and the fall of the Wall ties him to this moment in history. With the fall of the Wall comes, the reader may hope, the "Erneuerung" that Herr Lehmann has been seeking.

In a paper concerning humor in the novel, Sven Rindfleisch, questions: "...wo bleibt der direkte Bezug zur Wende? Der Bezug ist durchaus da, denn die Feststellung, dass der Mauerfall zumindest in Kreuzberg niemand so richtig interessiert hat, ist doch Statement genug." Through the few references to the falling of the Wall, Regener creates an absent but loaded signifier. Precisely because the characters do not discuss it in depth, the situation is kept in the minds of the reader. A simple question about demonstrations lets the reader know that all are aware of what's happening, even if they don't talk about it. Through his calculated structuring of Karl and Herr Lehmann's crises, Regener's novel does an expert job of reminding the reader that at the time, absolutely no one knew that the wall was going to fall. Regener has displayed how allegory is a pattern, and "that it is valid to talk about human experience in terms of repetition and generalization, and...assumes that...readers will understand [the] narrative, not just as the record of a unique human experience...but as an expression of larger kinds of truth" (Clifford 14). Regener has allegorized the situation of the Germanies through the characters of Karl and Herr Lehmann while only superficially ignoring the import of the political situation of the day.

In the end, it is this political situation and Karl's crisis that have allowed for Herr Lehmann's self-realization. The time is 2:00 a.m. November 10, 1989, and he has seen the

“Autolawine” coming in from East Berlin. “Es gab nur eine unendliche Autolawine, die sich aus dem Osten kommend in den Kreisverkehr ergoß und dann in alle Richtungen verteilte” (Regener 283). The West is being overrun with cars coming in from East Germany, they enter the traffic circle and are then scattered to the four winds, effortlessly assimilating into their new environment. Watching this scene he contemplates, “Vielleicht sollte ich mir doch mal wieder einen Fernseher anschaffen, dachte er. Oder mal Urlaub machen. Mit Heidi nach Bali. Oder nach Polen. Oder was ganz anderes anfangen. ... Ich gehe erst einmal los, dachte er. Der Rest wird sich schon irgendwie ergeben” (285). Just leave. That’s the key. Get out of here, wherever that is. The destination is not important, getting away is.

After nearly a decade spent inside the confines of Kreuzberg SO36, Herr Lehmann is contemplating a trip somewhere, either to Herford with Karl (Regener 279) or Bali with Heidi (285) or Poland (285). The key to “Erneuerung” is simply to get moving. In the final moment of the novel, Herr Lehmann realizes that self-realization cannot be found behind all of these walls. He must break out. Then and only then will he find himself and the change for which he has been looking.

## ***Der Proceß* or Josef K.'s Becoming**

Civilization is the process of  
setting man free from men.  
Ayn Rand (Rand 84)

The topographic imagination is a dynamic concept defined by the individual. In the case of Sal Paradise in *On The Road* his boundaries were a perceived limitation. He was more or less certain of what it was that he was looking for. It was something akin to Dean's "It" but less specific. It was an enlightenment that he went searching for on the road. He found this enlightenment in the "magic south" of Mexico when he had finally transgressed the artificial/geographic boundary of the contiguous United States. Herr Lehmann found himself trapped inside a space whose topography was again geographic in nature. He is comfortable inside of the realm of SO 36, and lives in a corner of the city, which is bordered to the east by the Spree River and the Berlin Wall, to the south and west by the former excise wall of the city of Berlin. With all of these historic boundaries in his vicinity, it is no wonder that Herr Lehmann encounters conflict when leaving his tiny neighborhood. In the end he comes to the realization, with the falling of the Berlin Wall, that it is time for him to enter "die Erneuerung" and that this will be accomplished through travel. In my exploration here, Herr Lehmann is the singular character that doesn't actually achieve the full self-realization that is hinted at and that presumably occurs in the near future. He's turned 30 and it's time to figure out who he is and what the purpose of his life is.

Franz Kafka's *Der Proceß* presents yet another example of a man in search of meaning. Josef K. is awoken on the morning of his thirtieth birthday to find he is under arrest for an unexplained crime, and that he has become the subject of a trial. The dual meaning of the German "Process" as a court trial and as the English cognate "process" will be important to this exploration. The trial/process will take Josef K. to unfamiliar and disorienting spaces, which will force him outside the realm of his topographic imagination. Although presented at the end of the novel, the topography of the parable "Vor dem Gesetz" will begin my discussion of the novel, through which the structure of the novel will be revealed. After a thorough discussion of "Vor dem Gesetz" and its implications for Josef K.'s topographic imagination, my discussion will then demonstrate the "process" of Josef K.'s self-realization. Mapping the topography of Josef K.'s Prague I will demonstrate his search for self-realization via his quest to prove his innocence.

### **Josef K. *Vor dem Gesetz***

K.'s *Proceß* is a search for meaning within religion and within modern society. His trial is an extension of the search for self-realization. The parable of *Vor dem Gesetz* found near the end of the novel is not only a parable for all of man, but a succinct retelling of the trials of Josef K. The circumstances in which Josef K. is told the parable are just as important, for this exploration, as the parable itself. K. has gone, on the bidding of his boss,



to provide a tour of the cathedral<sup>13</sup> to a man visiting from Italy. K. waited around for a while for the Italian to show, but to no avail.

K. fühlte sich ein wenig verlassen, als er dort vom Geistlichen vielleicht beobachtet zwischen den leeren Bänken allein hindurchging, auch schien ihm die Größe des Doms gerade an der Grenze des für Menschen noch Erträglichen zu liegen. ... Fast hatte er schon das Gebiet der Bänke verlassen und näherte sich dem freien Raum, der zwischen ihnen und dem Ausgang lag, als er zum ersten Mal die Stimme des Geistlichen hörte. Eine mächtige geübte Stimme. Wie durchdrang sie den zu ihrer Aufnahme bereiten Dom! Es war aber nicht die Gemeinde, die der Geistliche anrief, es war ganz eindeutig und es gab keine Ausflüchte, er rief: „Josef K.!“ (Kafka 221)

K. is very uncomfortable in this space. Within it, we see him moving between confinement (between the pews) and freedom (the open space near the doors), moving outward toward the edge seeking his freedom. The specific location of the cathedral is not mentioned in the novel, however the only *Dom* in Prague is the St. Vitus Cathedral situated within Prague Castle. The Cathedral itself stands entirely inside the complex of buildings known as Prague Castle. With only one road in or out of the castle the cathedral itself is walled in away from the rest of the world. Inside the cathedral K. is separated from the outside world not just by the oppressive walls of the cathedral, but also by the walls/buildings of Prague Castle.

Here, within the confines of a Catholic church, is where the preacher shares the parable of *Vor dem Gesetz* with K. “In dem Gericht täuschst Du Dich”, sagte der Geistliche, “in den einleitenden Schriften zum Gesetz heißt es von dieser Täuschung: Vor dem Gesetz steht ein Türhüter” (Kafka 225-226). Self-deception before law is common, and the preacher shares with him an example of someone else who has deceived himself in the court. First, though, he provides a hint as to how such self-deception is possible.

He asserts that the following parable is written in the introductory writings to the law. However, the writings of the law have repeatedly been shown to be confusing and inaccessible. After his first appointment with the courts, K. visits the courtroom on a day when the court is not in session. Seeing some books on the podium he asks,

“Kann ich mir die Bücher anschauen” .... “Nein”, sagte die Frau ... “das ist nicht erlaubt. Die Bücher gehören dem Untersuchungsrichter.” “Ach so”, sagte K. ... “die Bücher sind wohl Gesetzbücher und es gehört zu der Art dieses Gerichtswesens, daß man nicht nur unschuldig, sondern auch unwissend verurteilt wird.” (Kafka 60)

The woman neither confirms nor denies that these are law books. Initially denying him access to the “law” books, she merely delays his access to them.

---

<sup>13</sup> In previous chapters the author of the text had provided specific landmarks in specific places, which then be used to map the locations of the various events. To the contrary, Kafka has provided little to identify any of the locations in the text. Most agree that if the text has a location, it is Prague, Kafka’s residence and birthplace. It is this assumption I will use when discussing locations in the city.



Diagram 3.1: Aerial view of St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic.

K. schlug das oberste Buch auf, es erschien ein unanständiges Bild. Ein Mann und eine Frau saßen nackt auf einem Kanapee, die gemeine Absicht des Zeichners war deutlich zu erkennen, aber seine Ungeschicklichkeit war so groß gewesen, daß schließlich doch nur ein Mann und eine Frau zu sehen waren, die allzu körperlich aus dem Bilde hervorrugten, übermäßig aufrecht dasaßen .... K. blätterte nicht weiter sondern schlug nur noch das Titelblatt des zweiten Buches auf, es war ein Roman mit dem Title: "Die Plagen, welche Grete von ihrem Manne Hans zu erleiden hatte." "Das sind die Gesetzbücher, die hier studiert werden. ... Von solchen Menschen soll ich gerichtet werden." (Kafka 62-63)

K. finds the law books to be pornographic drawings and schlocky romantic writings, in other words the basest of society. The drawing is clearly not highbrow, neither in execution nor intent, and the novel possesses a title something akin to a drug store romance. Given yet another opportunity to refute his assertions, the woman neither confirms nor denies that these are indeed law books and are, assumedly, the reference point for the judge and jury in K.'s case sitting as they are on the table in front of the judge's seat. Deleuze and Guattari in *Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature* explain that, "the judge's book contains only obscene pictures. The law is written in a porno book. Here, it is no longer a question of

suggesting an eventual falsity of justice but of suggesting its desiring quality: the accused are in principle the most handsome figures and are recognized for their strange beauty” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 49). They suggest here that K. stands accused mostly because of his strange beauty. The law is primal desire. It enmeshes even the seemingly innocent in its web. Justice too has a desiring quality to it. Be it Josef K.’s search for justice, or its self-sufficient quality. “Das Gericht .... nimmt Dich auf wenn Du kommst und es entlässt Dich wenn du gehst” (Kafka 234-235). Without someone being on trial, the law has no reason for being. It must bring people into its fold in order to survive. This is the perversity and the desiring quality of the law. Without guilt, or at the least a need to prove innocence, the courts do not survive for they would have no purpose. The courts are bigger than all of us and under no one’s control. They survive by acting on their desires.

In this first encounter with the written law, K. has found the “text” of the law to be not only inaccessible but also distasteful and inappropriate. In this moment, it seems as if he has refuted the power of this court to judge him, “Von solchen Menschen soll ich gerichtet werden.” To the contrary, however, he continues to allow them to exercise power over him and to visit them in their various offices throughout the city.

In a later scene, it is not K. who reads the text, but the merchant, Block, who is locked in the maid’s quarters for the day. “Durch die Luke konnte ich von Zeit zu Zeit nachsehn, was er machte. Er kniete immer auf dem Bett, hatte die Schriften, die Du ihm geliehen hast, auf dem Fensterbrett aufgeschlagen und las in ihnen” (Kafka 205). *Knien auf dem Bett* with the writings on the window sill brings to mind an image of one praying or at the very least kneeling at the altar while reading in the holy scripture. The merchant spends his entire day in the pose of prayer reading the writings loaned to him by the lawyer. Again, it’s not specifically stated, but the reader is left to assume that these writings are indeed the law. The lawyer asks, however,

“Hat er aber auch mit Verständnis gelesen?” ... “Darauf kann ich natürlich”, sagte Leni, “nicht mit Bestimmtheit antworten. Jedenfalls habe ich gesehen, daß er gründlich las. Er hat den ganzen Tag über die gleiche Seite gelesen und beim Lesen den Finger die Zeilen entlanggeführt. Immer wenn ich zu ihm hineinsah, hat er geseufzt, als mache ihm das Lesen viel Mühe. Die Schriften, die Du ihm geliehen hast, sind wahrscheinlich schwer verständlich.” “Ja”, sagte der Advokat, “das sind sie allerdings. Ich glaube auch nicht, daß er etwas von ihnen versteht. Sie sollen ihm nur eine Ahnung davon geben, wie schwer der Kampf ist, den ich zu seiner Verteidigung führe. Und für wen führe ich diesen Schweren Kampf? Für – es ist fast lächerlich es auszusprechen – für Block. Auch was das bedeutet soll er begreifen lernen.” (Kafka 205-206)

Block is described here as being childish, and perhaps too immature to understand the writings. Without Block actually speaking, we learn from Leni that the texts are very difficult to understand. Given that his name is Block, or “obstruction,” it’s not surprising to the Lawyer that he hasn’t grasped the meaning of the writings. In fact, the lawyer expects him not to have understood the text at all. With this the law is defined as something not accessible to the common man. At best, when reading the writings of the law, one is expected to have understood nothing more than the difficulty of its interpretation; the impossibility of its comprehensibility. The lawyer’s job, and the job of all members of the

courts, is to be the representative of the law, to serve as intermediary between the law and those who are currently part of the legal system.

Further, Block is not allowed to speak during this exchange between Leni and the lawyer. He is sitting in the room, yet his opinion is not asked. He is, in essence, mute before the law. The courts speak, but are not to be spoken to.

It is with this knowledge that *Vor dem Gesetz* is relayed to Josef K. with its cited source of being “in den einleitenden Schriften zum Gesetz” (Kafka 226). *Vor dem Gesetz*, is thus part of the introductory writings of a series of texts that have been shown to be pornographic, nonsensical, and downright incomprehensible to most people, a series of texts only understood, presumably, by an elite few. This is a reality that is reinforced by the text itself. “Vor dem Gesetz steht ein Türhüter. Zu diesem Türhüter kommt ein Mann vom Lande und bittet um Eintritt in das Gesetz. Aber der Türhüter sagt, daß er ihm jetzt den Eintritt nicht gewähren könne” (226). The man from the country has come here seeking access to the law. He’s gone beyond the realm of his topographic imagination in order to be here. He’s left his previous existence behind and is here in search of access to the law, to his enlightenment, to his self-realization. He finds, however, that the law is guarded and that access to it can only occur with the permission of its representative, the Gatekeeper.

Through the course of the parable Josef K. learns that the law is infinite in size and that access to it is impossible.

Der Mann überlegt und fragt dann, ob er also später werde eintreten dürfen. ‘Es ist möglich’, sagt der Türhüter, ‘jetzt aber nicht.’ Da das Tor zum Gesetz offensteht wie immer und der Türhüter beiseite tritt, bückt sich der Mann, um durch das Tor in das Innere zu sehn. Als der Türhüter das merkt, lacht er und sagt: ‘Wenn es Dich so lockt, versuche es doch trotz meines Verbotes hineinzugehn. Merke aber: Ich bin mächtig. Und ich bin nur der unterste Türhüter. Von Saal zu Saal stehn aber Türhüter einer mächtiger als der andere. Schon den Anblick des dritten kann nicht einmal ich mehr ertragen.’ (Kafka 226)

Importantly, the man from the country is not a tall man, yet, in order to see through the door into the law, he must stoop down. It’s certainly not encouraging that his entrance to the law is such that he would likely need to get down on his hands and knees in order to enter, adding to the difficulties of accessing the law. The gatekeeper before him, who is much taller than he, is the smallest of them all, even with his strength, he can’t bear to look at the third one in the series. The series never ends and access to the law is infinitely deferred to a point beyond the next gatekeeper. Similarly the gatekeeper defers entrance into this particular gate, he promises access, “jetzt aber nicht.”

Jacques Derrida discussed *Vor dem Gesetz* in his lecture cum article “Devant la Loi,” in which he states:

To be invested with its categorical authority, the law should be without history, genesis, or any possible derivation. That would be the law of law. Pure morality has not history, as Kant appears to remind us. It has no intrinsic history. And when one tells stories on this subject, they can only concern circumstances, events external to the law and, at best, the modes of its revelation. Like the man from the country in Kafka’s account, narrative relations would try to approach the law and make it present, to enter into a relation with it, to enter it and become *intrinsic* to it, but none of these things can be accomplished. (134)

Being without derivation, the law has “no intrinsic history” and thus no future. It, like time itself, always has been and always will be progressing infinitely into the future while only ever possessing a present. To engage directly with the law is impossible. Access to the law is always mediated, through a lawyer, through a gatekeeper. The lawyer and gatekeeper being themselves only intermediaries in an infinite line of intermediaries through who access must first be granted before proceeding.

To extend the metaphor of the law into the terms of this discussion, as the man stands at the gate before the law, he stands before a wall. It is a wall that has neither beginning nor end. It is of such magnitude that, try as he might, the man from the country will neither find another entrance nor a way over or around it. No matter what he might do, the man will forever remain outside or, at best, before the law. This wall represents the limits of his topographic imagination. He knows that his enlightenment and self-realization lie on the other side of this wall, but unlike Sal Paradise and Herr Lehmann, however, the man from the country accepts no for an answer.

Solche Schwierigkeiten hat der Mann vom Lande nicht erwartet, das Gesetz soll doch jedem und immer zugänglich sein denkt er, aber als er jetzt den Türhüter in seinem Pelzmantel genauer ansieht, seine große Spitznase, den langen dünnen schwarzen tartarischen Bart, entschließt er sich doch lieber zu warten bis er die Erlaubnis zum Eintritt bekommt. (Kafka 206)

Encountering difficulties, he “decides he’d rather wait for permission to be given to him.” The man from the country does not engage in conflict. Despite the gatekeeper’s offering him the chance to attempt to enter, “Wenn es Dich so lockt, versuche es doch trotz meines Verbotes hineinzugehn” (206), he’d rather sit down and wait passively, than to engage with the gatekeeper or the wall.

The description of the gatekeeper points to foreign characteristics: “...als er jetzt den Türhüter in seinem Pelzmantel genauer ansieht, seine große Spitznase, den langen dünnen schwarzen tartarischen Bart...” Drawing attention to his big pointy nose and his tatarian beard points to his status as the “Other.” As we have seen previously, engaging with the frontier is often an engagement with the Other. For Sal Paradise an engagement with the Other was necessary in order to achieve his full self-realization. In the case of the man from the country the Other is a limiting person. He is the person that has denied him access to the law, albeit seemingly arbitrary. The man from the country, after all, has always thought that everyone had access to the law. For the man from the country, the Other is a limiting person, while for Josef K., Herr Lehmann and Sal Paradise the encounter with the Other is an opportunity to push and prod at the limits of the topographic imagination.

As Reiner Stach and Howard Caygill have pointed out, the publication history of “Vor dem Gesetz” leads us to another explanation for the man being denied access to the law. Written in the autumn of 1914, “Vor dem Gesetz” was composed during the early stages of World War I, while the Russians occupied the Austrian province of Galicia prompting many Jews to leave the area and seek refuge in Prague.

In late 1914 *Selbstwehr* carried a statement by the Relief Action Committee of the Jewish that said, ‘we implore everyone with human compassion to help.’ But by the time just half of the needed donations had been collected, the number of newcomers had doubled again, and the community had no choice but to report to the Bohemian governor

that their funds were depleted. On January 18, 1915, a decree from the ministry of the interior closed the city to refugees.' (Stach)

The Jewish community of Prague had every intention of opening their doors to any and all refugees but in the end were forced to close the "gates" and send the refugees away because of financial concerns. Kafka, being very interested in the fledgling Zionist movement viewed this as a "failure of the first real test to the notion of Jewish national unity" (Caygill 56). As Caygill further points out, given the time of its composition and the location of its first publication (*Selbstwehr* being a Zionist Jewish newspaper), it is perhaps a better interpretation to see the gatekeeper as guarding not so much of the law, but the "economic situation and the established privileges of the Prague Jewish community" (56). This parallels the inaccessibility of the law in the rest of the novel. Its impenetrability of interpretation and understanding is repeatedly reinforced. The lawyer allows access to the writings of the law only to demonstrate that they are not to be comprehended by Block. As a wealthy lawyer, he is a member of the privileged class and lords his power over Block. Denying him access to the law, even making him wait for days in order to be seen, that is to come before the law (Kafka 191).

Considering the context in which the parable was written and first published, Caygill notes Kafka's, "sardonic irony: The man from the country as a refugee encountering inhospitality and interpreting the guard and the obstacle to his entry in terms of a forbidden law rather than a forbidden territory. Finding himself before a guarded door was an accident, this was the singularity of the door; the man from the country found himself in the predicament of not being able to exit nor enter, the retelling of this predicament in terms of an individual barrier to a universal law would come later. The law was a story told to make sense of the accident of being the wrong person at the wrong place at the wrong time" (Caygill 56). The man from the country is most definitely a refugee. "Der Mann, der sich für seine Reise mit vielem ausgerüstet hat, verwendet alles und sei es noch so wertvoll um den Türhüter zu bestechen" (Kafka 226). Additionally, he arrives at the gate to find his access to the law is being denied. Were he simply a man from the country and not a refugee, he surely would have returned from whence he came after a short time. Yet, this man has no other purpose, but to gain access to the law. As time goes by it becomes more evident that being before the law is always being at the wrong place and the wrong time.

He waits and stares. "Er vergißt die andern Türhüter und dieser erste scheint ihm das einzige Hindernis für den Eintritt in das Gesetz. ... Er wird kindisch und da er in dem jahrelangen Studium des Türhüters auch die Flöhe in seinem Pelzkragen erkannt hat, bittet er auch die Flöhe ihm zu helfen und den Türhüter umzustimmen" (Kafka 227). He becomes so focused on his goal of entering the law at this gate, that he has lost sight, quite literally, of the big picture. His world becomes so centered on the gatekeeper, the representative of the law, that he enters a childlike state. Having given up on the chance that the gatekeeper will eventually allow him access to the law, he eventually makes his plea to the fleas. One would be hard pressed to find a less influential representative of the law. And yet, in his presence, instead of transcending anything the man from the country regresses into childish behavior.

"Given his situation, the man from the country does not know the law which is always the city's law, the law of cities and edifices protected by gates and boundaries, of spaces shut by doors" (Derrida 136). The law does not belong to the man from the country.

He is denied access, because it is not his to access. The law is a protected thing, reserved for an elite that denies access to the law through the writing of nonsensical texts, through the building of walls around it, and through denying access to those who seek it. This does not, however, stop all of humanity from seeking access, “Alle streben doch nach dem Gesetz, sagt der Mann, ‘wie so kommt es, daß in den vielen Jahren niemand außer mir Einlaß verlangt hat’” (Kafka 227). The door is a singularity created only for this man. No one else has tried to gain entry here, because it is the responsibility of each person to find his/her own point of entry.

As he stands here before the law, the man from the country is stuck between two worlds. Unable to return to the old world and unable to move forward, the title “Vor dem Gesetz” creates a division and an opposition. “[T]heir position “before the law” is an opposition.... [T]he doorkeeper, turns his back on the law and yet stands before it.... [T]he man from the country, is also before the law but in a contrary position, insofar as one can suppose that, being prepared to enter, he also faces her” (Derrida 139). In light of the “law” texts themselves, which further enforce this opposition, the man’s position before the law becomes an obstacle, something that must be overcome in order to move forward.

### **The Topography of the Law**

The liminal space of being before the law is akin to a Prague courtroom, which can be assumed the layout of the law court’s hearing rooms are based upon. It is rife with oppositions. The judges sit on the bench while the prosecution and the defense face each other across the void directly in front of the judge. When witnesses are called, they stand in this void directly in opposition to the judge. So, while the judges sit with their backs to the law in opposition to the witness, the lawyers, plaintiffs and defendants also sit with their back to the wall. Rounding out the square, is the audience sitting in opposition to the judges; the audience being the only citizens who consistently occupy the void between the two sides of the case. The same can be said for all those who seek access to the law. With Derrida’s interpretation of the scene, Kafka’s description of the man from the country who stares exclusively at the gatekeeper, and the physical layout of the courtroom, it is clear that the situation isn’t directly concerned with access to the law, but that the characters involved do nothing more than stare across the void “before the law.” This creates the permanent void and the impossibility of breaching it, “[t]hus one never accedes directly either to the law or persons, one is never *immediately* before any of these authorities; as for the detour, it may be infinite: the universality itself of the law exceeds all finite boundaries and this carries this risk” (Derrida 137). The detour Derrida refers to here is the infinite number of gatekeepers lying beyond this first gate. Access to the law is infinitely deferred. One may feel that being in the courtroom, or involved in a court proceeding, like Josef K., that one has actually gained access to the law. However, as is demonstrated by the many court officials K. meets with, the law is always something in the possession of the Other. As lawyers, judges and court officials, they possess more intimate knowledge of the law, than we, however, none of them actually possesses the law. Even the Supreme Court of a nation is charged solely with the interpretation of the laws that have been given them by the government, i.e. written collectively over time by the very people who are subject to these laws. Thus access to the law is a cyclical quest, a never-ending convolution always deferred

to the next level. Max Brod tells us that Kafka had intended for the Trial never to reach the highest court (Kafka 334). *Der Proceß* was to be infinitely deferred. Like the man from the country peering into the door that led only to more doors, access to the law is a *mise en abîme*. Even as wrapped up in the law machine as Josef K. may become, it's clear he will never be allowed complete access. His own situation is kept secret from him,

Infolgedessen sind auch die Schriften des Gerichtes, vor allem die Anklageschrift dem Angeklagten und seiner Verteidigung unzugänglich, man weiß daher im allgemeinen nicht oder wenigstens nicht genau, wogegen sich die erste Eingabe zu richten hat, sie kann daher eigentlich nur zufälliger Weise etwas enthalten, was für die Sache von Bedeutung ist. (Kafka 120)

These writings, which we presume are intelligible, will be kept out of his reach. He will never truly understand the charges against him. Even the act of defending oneself against the accusations is a futile task. No one knows at which level of the system the accusation was made. Even if they did, the papers are not designated for general access, so Josef K. finds himself in the position of defending himself against an accusation that no one knows with intermediaries that don't have access to the people of the next rank. He is, in essence, the man from the country standing before the law simply hoping that with time access to his own case will be granted.

### **Josef K.'s Thirtieth Birthday**

Jemand mußte Josef K. verleumdet haben, denn ohne daß er etwas Böses getan hätte, wurde er eines Morgens verhaftet. Die Köchin der Frau Grubach, seiner Zimmervermieterin, die ihm jeden Tag gegen acht Uhr früh das Frühstück brachte, kam diesmal nicht. (Kafka 9)

Thus begins *Der Proceß* and the morning of Josef K.'s thirtieth birthday. In the comfort of his bed inside the rented room he occupies is where we join Josef K. It's significant that the first thing we learn of is his innocence. It is a clear and unequivocal innocence, such that Josef K. would not endure the following events had his name not been libeled, or so the narrator would have you believe. His primal innocence is never in question. Despite this fact, he has been arrested.

These opening sentences lie simultaneously inside and outside of the narrative of the novel. They are physically inside the text of the novel, but they are proof that the narrator already possesses knowledge to which we do not have access. It is only a few sentences later that the "Verhaftung" gets underway:

K. wartete noch ein Weilchen, sah von seinem Kopfkissen aus die alte Frau die ihm gegenüber wohnte und die ihn mit einer an ihr ganz ungewöhnlichen Neugierde beobachtete, dann aber gleichzeitig befremdet und hungrig, läutete er. Sofort klopfte es und ein Mann, den er in dieser Wohnung noch niemals gesehen hatte trat ein. (Kafka 9)

What the reader is actually faced with is a situation that Josef K. has stumbled into upon awakening. The narrator, the woman across the way, and it would seem everyone else is already aware of his situation, whereas K. finds himself ignorant and confused. Like the original sin, it's as if K. has been tricked.



On the morning of his thirtieth birthday K. is a prisoner in his own home, or at the very least charged with a crime. The German “verhaften” having both meanings, to arrest or to charge with a crime, leaves the nature of this situation somewhat ambiguous. It seems at first that he is under arrest, yet he is later allowed to go to work escorted by two of his co-workers. Like Herr Lehmann, Josef K. encounters his boundary first at the age of 30, previously he has lived a relatively carefree life working at the bank, enjoying a date now and again, and simply being a bachelor in the big city. Today, however, is quite literally the first day of the rest of his life. He has awoken to find himself in a prison of someone else’s making. In short, he has awoken to find himself “before the law.” In order to escape this prison, Josef K. will search the limits of his city, his knowledge and his understanding, in an attempt to verify his innocence, through the course of which his innocence will be lost.

The foreman tells him during his initial arrest, “...Sie sind verhaftet, gewiß, aber das soll Sie nicht hindern Ihren Beruf zu erfüllen. Sie solle auch in Ihrer gewöhnlichen Lebensweise nicht gehindert sein” (Kafka 23). Like many other statements in the novel, this will prove to be both true and untrue. He will be allowed to live his life, but his freedom and, more importantly, his ability to carry on life as usual will become severely constrained. Initially, however, it seems as if his life will not be too greatly affected by this.

Frau Grubach explains to him that his arrest, “handelt sich ... um Ihr Glück .... Es kommt mir wie etwas Gelehrtes vor, ... das ich zwar nicht verstehe, das man aber auch nicht verstehen muß” (Kafka 28). Most important here is that she knows this is about his happiness. Is it the arrest or the outcome of his proceedings that center on his happiness? Has he been arrested in relation to a matter concerning his happiness? The reader never learns the answer to these questions, but, for the moment, Josef K. is happy and motivated to defend himself in these proceedings.

Josef K. is sent to his first inquiry on a Sunday morning, and with this he embarks on “an exploratory journey through the ‘phantasmagoria’ of the modern city, a space defined by surfaces, theatrical scenarios and unreadable representations” (Goebel 42). The inquiry takes place in “einer entlegenen Vorstadtstraße, in der K. noch niemals gewesen war” (Kafka 41). Calling Josef K. to the suburbs for the inquiry has forced him out of his element. The court creates a mystifying landscape, and from the outset exerts its power through instability. As Lucian Ghita notes, “By redrawing the boundaries between inside and outside, the familiar and the unfamiliar, the novel locates the infernal court machinery within the physical geography of the city” (Ghita 4). The court is not limited to the city. With at least one courtroom in the suburbs, K. will spend his days and weekends traveling the city’s streets visiting backrooms and attics. It’s a rhizomatic city in which one never knows where the next door might lead.

### **The Three Forms of Acquittal**

In the chapter entitled “Advokat / Fabrikant / Maler,” Josef K. visits the *Gerichtsmaler* Titorelli in hopes he will be of some assistance to his cause. Titorelli’s job title seems here a play on words. As the “court painter” it is his job to paint the members of the court in a good light. He is, to put it another way, the *Hofmaler* of a large and inaccessible group of men. Being privy to the inner workings of the court, though, he is able

to shed some light on K.'s case, if not specifically, then by comparing his situation to that of others. He points to the hopelessness of K.'s case,

Darin stimmten aber alle überein, daß leichtsinnige Anklagen nicht erhoben werden und daß das Gericht, wenn es einmal anklagt, fest von der Schuld des Angeklagten überzeugt ist und von dieser Überzeugung nur schwer abgebracht werden kann .... Niemals ist das Gericht davon abzubringen. Wenn ich hier alle Richter neben einander auf eine Leinwand male und Sie werden sich vor dieser Leinwand verteidigen, so werden Sie mehr Erfolg haben als vor dem wirklichen Gericht. (Kafka 157)

Describing the court as being as mute as a painting, Titorelli points to the impossibility of being absolved of guilt. Guilt, like the original sin symbolized by the apple K. eats the morning of his arrest, is presumed. He is just another man who possesses original sin. Guilt is part of the human condition. Like the law, it exists before him, in spite of him, and always around him. Original sin is inescapable, and to fight against it is futile. The best K. can hope for is a postponement of judgment. His trial, then is the struggle between guilt, innocence and original sin. Simply by existing, it was likely that Josef K. would eventually find himself in this situation. Like a sinner, he is encouraged to go before the court, offer proof of his innocence and beg for forgiveness from them.

Titorelli explains to K. that there are only three possible outcomes of his case. First, there is full acquittal. It's not a very realistic possibility, since he's never actually seen it happen, but it's at least in the law that it is a possibility. At least he thinks it is, "Im Gesetz, ich habe es allerdings nicht gelesen, steht natürlich einerseits daß der Unschuldige freigesprochen wird..." (Kafka 161). With Titorelli K. has encountered yet another person that points to the impenetrability of the law. On the surface Titorelli appears to have the most experience with the law, but in an interesting parallel, his experience is only with the representatives of the law and their experiences, not the law itself.

A second potential outcome for K. is superficial acquittal. "Wenn Sie diese wünschen sollten, schreibe ich auf einem Bogen Papier eine Bestätigung Ihrer Unschuld auf. Der Text für eine solche Bestätigung ist mir von meinem Vater überliefert und ganz unangreifbar" (Kafka 165). Even as the transcriptionist of this text handed down from his father, it's unclear whether he himself comprehends the text that he will use in defense of K. Should this letter achieve a superficial acquittal it, like the man from the country sitting before the law, is only the first of many potential acquittals. Titorelli by, admission, only knows the lowest level of the court, and therefore can only accomplish an acquittal at this level. Should the case be deferred up the hierarchy, K. could again find himself defending his innocence. On the surface, however, his case would have been adjudicated.

The third and final potential outcome is postponement. The process of postponement is arduous. Essentially, he must work continuously meeting with members of the court, attending meetings, hearings, etc. all in the hopes of maintaining his case in a sort of purgatory. The state of postponement is an infinite deferral of judgment. As Deleuze and Guattari explain,

Since real acquittal is out of the question, the question of innocence "or" guilt falls entirely within the realm of the superficial acquittal that determines the two discontinuous periods and the reversal of one into the other. ... In contrast, the postponement is finite, unlimited, and continuous. It is finite because there is no

longer any transcendence and because it works by means of segments; the accused no longer has to undergo “strain and agitation” or fear an abrupt reversal.... (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 52)

The need for the “strain and agitation” involved in procuring a superficial acquittal is avoided, but in exchange K. must prepare himself to dedicate the rest of his life to a postponement of judgment. Were K. to choose the infinite postponement of his case, he would then be one and the same with the man from the country. He would stand before the law and wait. Should he be allowed to the next level of the law, he would continue to wait for the next level and so on.

The ability to transcend is among the questions raised by the novel. K. spends the year following his arrest attempting to move beyond the charges against him. In his conversation with Titorelli, K. points out what is slowly becoming his understood truth of the situation, “Keinen einzigen Freispruch also.... Das bestätigt aber die Meinung die ich von dem Gericht schon habe. Es ist also auch von dieser Seite zwecklos. Ein einziger Henker könnte das ganze Gericht ersetzen” (Kafka 162). The possibility of removing oneself from the courts; of transcending the charges leveled against them, is impossible. The singular end to life inside the courts, inside a life with original sin, is the deliverance provided by death.

Deleuze and Guattari discussing their concept of the Kafka-machine, point to K.’s situation within the courts:

To enter or leave the machine, to be in the machine, to walk around it, to approach it—these are all still components of the machine itself: these are states of desire, free of all interpretation. The lie of escape is part of the machine. ... The problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in... (*Toward a Minor Literature* 7-8)

Once K. arrives within the machine, he becomes consumed with the lie of escape. From the very first moment he learns he is being arrested/charged with guilt, he becomes consumed with his struggle to escape the machine/the law. Through Titorelli, though, he learns that escaping the law is not possible. The only escape is death.

## **Josef K. and the Topography of Transcendence**

“Metamorphosis is the contrary of metaphor. There is no longer any proper sense or figurative sense, but only a distribution of states that is part of the range of the word” (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 22). Josef K.’s experiences in *Der Proceß* are a metamorphosis. The structure of the novel itself demonstrates Kafka’s focus on the metamorphosis of Josef K. Beginning with the morning of his thirtieth birthday and ending late at night on his thirty-first birthday, the events of the novel span one year. By the end of the novel, Josef K. has found himself completely wrapped up in the courts and they have taken over his life. Although he is not in prison, his life is dominated by his desire to prove his own innocence.

Jede Stunde, die er dem Bureau entzogen wurde machte ihm Kummer; er konnte zwar die Bureauzeit beiweitem nicht mehr so ausnützen wie früher, er brachte manche Stunden nur unter dem notdürftigsten Anschein wirklicher Arbeit hin, aber desto größer waren seine Sorgen, wenn er nicht im Bureau war. (Kafka 209)

He is so consumed by his trial/process that he has become completely ineffective at work. The progression, however, is slow. In the beginning Josef K. is indignant and insistent that this will progress under his control. The courts, however, will take him and send him to places he would have never visited, locations on the edges of his topographic imagination. From the beginning, it is also clear that this is a search for identity. The search for self-realization and the search for transcendence are, in this instance, one and the same. On the morning of his arrest, K. first thinks it might be a practical joke being played by his friends in the bank, because it is his 30<sup>th</sup> birthday. Thinking he might be in the middle of a joke, he first seeks to prove his identity. "Hier sind meine Legitimationspapiere, zeigen Sie mir jetzt die Ihrigen und vor allem den Verhaftbefehl" (Kafka 14). Emphasizing his need to identify himself, the only document he can find is his birth certificate. On the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of its issuance, he uses his birth certificate to prove his identity, as if simply by being born he would possess an identity, legitimation, and a level of self-realization.

Deleuze and Guattari mention that, "[t]he problem is not that of being free but of finding a way out, or even a way in, another side, a hallway an adjacency" (Deleuze and Guattari, *Toward a Minor Literature* 7-8). In this opening scene, Josef K. has already been called to his first adjacency. His arrest, occurring in the neighboring room of Fräulein Bürstner, has already pulled him outside of his comfort zone and into a realm that is unfamiliar. This is simply the first of the challenges to his topographic imagination.

K.'s first court appearance is on a Sunday morning in "eine[m] Haus in einer entlegenen Vorstadtstraße, in der K. noch niemals gewesen war" (Kafka 41). As he arrives in the neighborhood, Kafka's language emphasizes K's being out of his element. "Aber die Juliustraße, in der es sein sollte und an deren Beginn K. einen Augenblick lang stehen blieb, enthielt auf beiden Seiten fast ganz einförmige Häuser, hohe graue von armen Leuten bewohnte Miethäuser" (44). This is a world outside of his normal circles, and the extremities of it all will comprise the first real test to his topographic imagination. As he proceeds down the street it is emphasized that he is testing some sort of limit. To begin with, he enters the street at its base, not in the center. He pauses at the beginning of the street before he "gieng tiefer in die Gasse hinein" (44). Narrow and filled with tall, gray apartment buildings, nothing in this street is easily accessible. Even the storefronts lay a few steps below street level. It seems the only one on his level in the Juliusstraße is Josef K. himself. The difference of levels will continue to be an important part of Josef K.'s search. At the limits of his topographic imagination he is always pushed one step higher. Arriving at the building, K. realizes that he was not told where in the building to find the courtroom, however,

[s]chließlich stieg er doch die erste Treppe hinauf und spielte in Gedanken mit einer Erinnerung an den Ausspruch des Wächters Willem, daß das Gericht von der Schuld angezogen werde, woraus eigentlich folgte, daß das Untersuchungszimmer an der Treppe liegen mußte, die K. zufällig wählte. (45)

In an admission of sin and guilt, K., while professing innocence, trusts his guilt to show him the way to the courtroom. The courtroom is located on the top floor of the building, so that not only is K. pushed to the edges of his topographic imagination by being called to a street in the suburbs he has never been to, but also by forcing him to the highest point within this realm.

Ein Gedränge der verschiedensten Leute ... füllte ein mittelgroßes zweifenstriges Zimmer, das knapp an der Decke von einer Galerie umgeben war, die gleichfalls vollständig besetzt war und wo die Leute nur gebückt stehen konnten und mit Kopf und Rücken an die Decke stießen. (Kafka 47)

This discomfort is a motif that will occur repeatedly throughout the novel. When a boundary is crossed on behalf of the courts, K. finds himself physically uncomfortable. This room, in addition to the cramped quarters, is described as “zu dumpf” (47). The air, or lack thereof, is also a motif that is repeated. It’s as if, reaching the edge of his topographic imagination K. finds himself in a rarified atmosphere. Perhaps it is the rarified ideas here at the extremities that create this atmosphere. After all, it is clear that the law is inaccessible and not intended to be understood by the common man. “Lesen Sie darin ruhig weiter Herr Untersuchungsrichter, vor diesem Schuldbuch fürchte ich mich wahrhaftig nicht, trotzdem es mir unzugänglich ist...” (52). In his speech at this first meeting, K. admits himself that the law and the text therein are inaccessible to him. The rarified atmosphere that he will repeatedly encounter is thus understandable as the result of the high ideas he will be forced to reconcile during his progression.

During a second visit to this same courtroom, K. is escorted into the offices of the court by a servant of the court. He offers to show K. the offices simply because he might be interested. In this case, he has no official business to conduct. Not only does he have no need to visit the offices, but he has also shown up to the court on a day when he was not told that he needed to be there. We see him here actively probing the boundaries of his topographic imagination. Further, this is the beginning of the process of the courts’ taking over his life and robbing him of his strength. He possesses here characteristics of both Sal Paradise and Herr Lehmann. Sal Paradise would have sought out this location on his own, whereas Herr Lehmann would have reluctantly visited the courts a second time and then only at the request of another.

K. accepts the invitation into the court offices and steps into the next room. “Beim Eintritt wäre er fast hingefallen, denn hinter der Tür war noch eine Stufe” (Kafka 74). If his court appearance was unsuccessful, perhaps he can find a way in through this adjacency. The walls of these offices are mostly made of only lattice, allowing K. a partially obstructed view directly into the offices of the courts, although he is never allowed direct access. The lattice also creates a dual-Panopticon, for through them “man auch einzelne Beamte sehen konnte, wie sie an Tischen schrieben oder geradezu am Gitter standen und durch die Lücken die Leute auf dem Gang beobachteten” (Kafka 74). The lattice creates a barrier that is equally as difficult to see through on both sides. K. is just as able to observe the officials of the court as they are able to observe him. It is no surprise then that when he looks through the walls, he sees them writing at tables and also sees them looking out at the people in the hallway. Everyone, knowing that they are being observed, behaves appropriately. As Foucault explains, the hope of the panopticon was that it would

transform into a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space and time. The panoptic arrangement ... programmes, at the level of an elementary and easily transferrable mechanism, the basic functioning of a society penetrated through and through with disciplinary mechanisms. (Foucault 209)

The physical surroundings in this hallway emphasize the law machine. Once one enters the law machine, there is no exit. One is constantly observing or being observed. The law machine, in essence, is Foucault's Panopticon. As was demonstrated on his first trip to the courts, when K. "Eigentümlicher Weise traf ... die drei an seiner Angelegenheit beteiligten Beamten, Rabensteiner, Kullich und Kaminer" (Kafka 43). There was surely nothing coincidental about his seeing the three men on his way to his first court appearance. The law is always watching.

The panoptic nature of the law machine brings into question the guilt/innocence of Josef K. Although it's never discussed or divulged, it's clear at the point of his arrest that the law is always and has always been watching. From the three people in the neighbor's window to Frau Grubach knocking on the door and interrupting to the fact that he is escorted to work by two court officials that he works with it is clear from the first morning of his arrest that someone somewhere is always watching. The presence of the Panopticon increases the likelihood as well that K. is actually guilty of something that he simply can't recall. In a system where someone is always being observed, it's nearly impossible to find someone who is guilty of nothing. Add to this the notion of original sin, and Josef K. finds himself trapped inside a machine that, try as he might, he will never escape.

After a few minutes in the hallway of the offices K. becomes very tired and disoriented. He asks directions out of the offices, but then seems to be confused by the very simple directions. "Kommen Sie mit. ... Zeigen Sie mir den Weg, ich werde ihn Verfehlen, es sind hier so viele Wege" (Kafka 78). The truth is, there is only one way out of the offices, but K. is being overcome by the lack of air in this attic. He nearly passes out before a very helpful young woman and the court servant escort him out of the offices. She explains, "Sie haben ein wenig Schwindel, nicht? ... Machen Sie sich darüber keine Gedanken ... das ist hier nichts Außergewöhnliches, fast jeder bekommt einen solchen Anfall, wenn er zum ersten Mal herkommt" (79). This attic room is a borderland where people encounter the limits of their topographic imagination. As the narrator describes,

...sein stummes Dastehn mußte auffallend sein und wirklich sahen ihn das Mädchen und der Gerichtsdienner derartig an, als ob in der nächsten Minute irgendeine große Verwandlung mit ihm geschehen müsse, die sie zu beobachten nicht versäumen wollten. (79)

They are witnessing the process of his metamorphosis. As officers of the court they understand better than most that the entire proceedings of an individual is a process of transformation. Josef K. will not remain unchanged by this experience. He must change. Becoming accustomed to the oppressive heat and lack of air is just one step in the process.

K. will experience the same airless atmosphere in the atelier of Titorelli. In his attempt to navigate the rhizomatic map that is his court proceedings, he will try anything to accomplish his goal of clearing himself and having his innocence declared. A client at the bank sends him to Titorelli, "der in einer Vorstadt wohnte, die jener in welcher sich die Gerichtskanzleien befanden vollständig entgegengesetzt war" (Kafka 147). Titorelli is just a court painter, but as such has access to far more people than anyone K. has come in contact with.

As he enters the building and heads to the top floor, K. is already uncomfortable. Im dritten Stockwerk mußte er seinen Schritt mäßigen, er war ganz außer Atem, die Treppen ebenso wie die Stockwerke waren übermäßig hoch und der Maler sollte

ganz oben in einer Dachkammer wohnen. Auch war die Luft sehr drückend, es gab keinen Treppenhof, die enge Treppe war auf beiden Seiten von Mauern eingeschlossen, in denen nur hie und da fast ganz oben kleine Fenster angebracht waren. (148)

Everything here seems out of scale. In contrast to the first courtroom, the elements of this building are overly large, or tall, whereas the spectators in the gallery of the first courtroom had to duck in order to sit and watch the proceedings. Here the walls, windows and steps in this stairwell are reminiscent of the parable *Vor dem Gesetz*. These windows are so small and so high that he couldn't possibly see out of them just like that first gate before the law that the man from the country had to lean down in order to see through. The walls themselves are described with the word *Mauer* instead of the more appropriate *Wand*. A *Mauer* is typically reserved for an external wall. A *Mauer* is either something meant to keep someone out, i.e. *die Berliner Mauer*, or a wall intended to enclose a structure, the external walls of a building or house. Here Josef K. winds between two walls, again heading to the top floor of the building.

Despite the overly high walls Titorelli's atelier is constantly invaded by the little girls that live in the building. Like K. he is constantly being watched and interrupted by the girls who have even had a key to his room made for themselves. The room is further reminiscent of the offices of the court in that K. is again overly warm and suffering from an oppressive atmosphere. "Die Luft im Zimmer war ihm allmählich drückend geworden, öfters hatte er schon verwundert auf einen kleinen zweifellos nicht geheizten Eisenofen in der Ecke hingesehen, die Schwüle im Zimmer war unerklärlich" (Kafka 155). Again, K. has gone somewhere he's never been before, described in terms of its opposition to the courtroom on Juliusstrasse. Back in the top floor of the building, K. finds his constitution unable to handle the rarified atmosphere. The limits to K.'s topographic imagination are not only geographic but also altitudinal. Every time he is asked to go to the top floor of a building, he finds himself suffering the ill effects of a stuffy atmosphere. He even found the high ceilings of the cathedral oppressive. The physical effects of this oppression have previously been described as being symptomatic of a metamorphosis.

Titorelli too finds himself trapped inside the machine of the law. In visiting Titorelli at his home/Atelier, we find him in the adjacency of the courts.

Das Bett vor der Tür steht natürlich an einem sehr schlechten Platz. Der Richter z. B. den ich jetzt male, kommt immer durch die Tür beim Bett und ich habe ihm auch einen Schlüssel von dieser Tür gegeben, damit er auch wenn ich nicht zuhause bin, hier im Atelier auf mich warten kann. (Kafka 163-164)

Between the girls with their key and the Judge also having a key, Titorelli no longer has any privacy. He never knows when someone might walk in, or who might be in his room when he arrives. In fact, Titorelli is more than just wrapped up inside the courts. Titorelli lives, sleeps and breathes *Vor dem Gesetz*. As K. leaves through the back door of the atelier, he finds more court offices, "Gerichtskanzleien sind doch fast auf jedem Dachboden," (173) explains Titorelli. The existence of court offices on the top of nearly every building further emphasizes the panoptic presence that the court possesses. How can they fail from observing most of the population when they are directly in contact with them as they head to and from their offices all over the city and its suburbs?

The scene in the cathedral where he is told the parable of *Vor dem Gesetz* is a further example of Josef K. exploring his topographic imagination. He has been sent there by the bank to meet an important Italian client who has never seen Prague before. Coming from a foreign land, the Italian is again the Other. This fact is exacerbated by the fact that Josef K. can barely understand a word he says (Kafka 212). Able to understand only occasional words in his utterances, K. goes to the cathedral to begin their tour, with him he has taken a picture book of some of the most important artistic monuments in the city. He carries with him two books actually, the first being the picture book, the second being an Italian dictionary. Unlike the books he has encountered in connection with the courts, these two books are meant to foster understanding. The picture book was created as a gift for the Italian, with the intention that he would have a collection of landmarks they weren't able to cover in one day. However, in light of K.'s inability to understand his Italian, the book has the potential to serve as a form of communication with the Italian. The dictionary, with its obvious function of promoting linguistic understanding, is an obvious book to bring with him, and just may have allowed him to communicate with the Italian, had he actually shown up to the meeting.

When K. was about to leave his office to meet the Italian, he receives a phone call from Leni, the servant of one of the attorneys he's met with. He explains that he can't chat long, because he must head to the cathedral. "In den Dom?" fragte Leni. 'Nun ja, in den Dom.' 'Warum denn in den Dom?' fragte Leni. K. suchte es ihr in Kürze zu erklären, aber kaum hatte er damit angefangen, sagte Leni plötzlich: 'Sie hetzen Dich'" (Kafka 215). K. has been told that this is a business meeting, yet with little information, Leni infers that this has something to do with the courts. His employers have little cause to agitate him. In fact, this sort of assignment is something only a trusted employee is given. She knows better than he, for he does not find the Italian at the cathedral but the prison chaplain. Even here in the cathedral, the court has its eyes and ears. Leni's understanding that this was not a business meeting he was being sent to further points to the fact that everyone else knew what was being done with K. before he knew. They all understand that he will not be declared innocent.

The architecture of the cathedral, as previously mentioned, is an enclosing force. The walls of Prague castle surrounding the cathedral, place Josef K. inside of a second set of walls, emphasizing the limiting forces of the city's topography. On a spiritual level, however, the cathedral poses some other questions. Leni was clearly surprised that Josef K. was being sent there. Further, although religion is not directly discussed in the novel, the cathedral becomes a nod to the Judeo-Christian tradition. Josef K. being sent to the cathedral serves then a twofold purpose. First, the trip is one out of his comfort zone. Second, the cathedral is not intended here as a place of worship by Josef K. The weather outside is terrible and has kept away even the tourists, so that Josef K. is alone in the cathedral. There are no worshipers and no tourists. The cathedral then is reduced to a piece of art in the center of the city, its only inhabitants being Josef K., the prison chaplain, and a church servant who never speaks.

In this important meeting, Josef K. is certainly not at the limits of his topographic imagination, however, he is definitely out of his comfort zone. As a German speaking Jew, Kafka's choice of the cathedral is symbolic in its size, location and oppressive architecture. The cathedral itself sitting at the highest point in the city has again pushed Josef K. to an



altitudinal challenge to his topographic imagination. As Josef K. has noted, its airy ceilings seem to press down upon him. Josef K.'s picture album then functions as a rhizomatic escape route. Carrying the picture book with him, he has brought with him representational points on the map of Prague. According to Deleuze and Guattari the rhizomatic map "can be drawn on a wall, conceived of as a work of art, constructed as a political action or as a meditation" (Deleuze, Guattari, *Plateaus* 12). The lines of flight represented by the picture book bring the entire city into the interiority of the cathedral, symbolically bringing the whole city inside these walls. Josef K. here is simultaneously detached from the topography of the city and possessing its entire rhizomatic nature.

### **The Confluence of the Courts and Religion**

As Josef K. travels to the suburbs and to dizzying heights in defense of his case, a deeper look presents a greater struggle. As the prison chaplain explains to him, "Das Gericht will nichts von Dir. Es nimmt Dich auf wenn Du kommst und es entlässt Dich wenn du gehst" (Kafka 234-235). The court is omnipresent and part of our daily lives. To borrow a phrase, the court is part of our lives from "womb to tomb." *Der Proceß* is a metamorphosis. It's no coincidence that this metamorphosis takes place in Josef K.'s thirtieth year. Astrology holds that at the age of about thirty Saturn has completed a full orbit of the sun and has returned to the same location it was at the time of your birth. As a result Saturn holds a strong influence over one's life in the year around one's thirtieth birthday (Stellas 77).

The return of Saturn is known as a time of questioning and of self-reflection. We find this not only in the character of Josef K. but also in that of Herr Lehmann. Both men face the age of thirty and use this moment as a chance to reflect on where they have been, what they have done and where they are headed. For Josef K. it has taken the intervention of the court to force this to happen. On the surface *Der Proceß* is a struggle to prove himself innocent and to free himself from the influence of the courts, but below the surface, from the moment Josef K. takes a bite of the fateful apple, the text becomes a challenging of the notion of religion and a struggle to find one's place within it. The return of Saturn adds to this an extra metaphysical element in the quest of Josef K.

Josef K. is not a religious man. He views the cathedral as an architectural beauty, but has no desire to take part in its religious services. He headed for the door when he thought the chaplain was about to start a service. Further, the law and references to it, have strong, religious shadings to them. From Block in his semi-reverent posture studying the law text as if it were the Torah, to references to the metaphysical nature of the law, Josef K. is more in the midst of a quest for meaning within a framework of religion than defending his own innocence.

"Unsere Behörde, soweit ich sie kenne, und ich kenne nur die niedrigsten Grade, sucht doch nicht etwa die Schuld in der Bevölkerung, sondern wird wie es im Gesetz heißt von der Schuld angezogen und muß uns Wächter ausschicken. Das ist Gesetz."  
(Kafka 14)

The description of the law demonstrates the law's godlike qualities. All knowing and empathic the law is everywhere and knows all that we do. The government agency, thus, lacks agency and simply sends people to where guilt has been sensed. They take no

responsibility for who gets brought into a proceeding. All those that are charged are guilty until proven innocent. Innocence, as has been explained by Titorelli, has never been fully proven to the satisfaction of the courts.

Similarly the Judeo-Christian tradition describes an all-knowing, all-seeing God who knows the most intimate details of our lives. It creates a society in which every citizen feels as if they are being watched at all times. Kafka uses these elements to create his courts and the system of law. The panoptic elements of Josef K.'s situation point toward the beginnings of Deleuze and Guattari's "law machine." As Foucault notes in his discussion of the rules of observation in villages during the plague:

This enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded, in which an uninterrupted work of writing links the center and periphery, in which power is exercised without division, according to a continuous hierarchical figure, in which each individual is constantly located, examined and distributed among the living beings, the sick and the dead --- all this constitutes a compact model of the disciplinary mechanism. (Foucault 177)

We see in Foucault's "disciplinary mechanism" similar elements to Deleuze and Guattari's "law machine" which in turn describes Kafka's courts and Josef K.'s trial. The disciplinary mechanism described by Foucault is exercised upon a small area, say a town, however, this is in turn the structure of the courts in *Der Proceß*. No one knows anything except the people directly above them and below them in the courts' hierarchical chain of communication. This also succinctly describes the hierarchy of the modern church. A Judeo-Christian follower is held accountable for his actions first by himself/herself, then by members of his or her family, then his/her priest or rabbi, etc. Finally, at the top of it all and omnipresent is God himself. The Judeo-Christian tradition presents us with a god that is all-powerful, all knowing and in turns benevolent or angry. The fact that Josef K. is guilty until proven innocent, is equivalent to the Christian belief of original sin. The eating of the apple by Adam and Eve has created a paradigm in which we must all make up for a sin we did not commit. That sin is the inherent guilt of all men. A Christian spends his/her life praying and asking for forgiveness from a god that knows all that they do. "Sie haben mich mißverstanden, Sie sind verhaftet, gewiß, aber das soll sie nicht hindern Ihren Beruf zu erfüllen. Sie sollen auch in Ihrer gewöhnlichen Lebensweise nicht gehindert sein" (Kafka 23). There is no need for Josef K. to be taken to a prison, because he is always already being observed.

He even wakes up that morning under observation: "K. wartete noch ein Weilchen, sah von seinem Kopfkissen aus die alte Frau die ihm gegenüber wohnte und die ihn mit einer an ihr ganz ungewöhnlichen Neugierde beobachtete..." (Kafka 9). In a literal sense, the courts act out the panoptic nature that an all-seeing god enacts upon every citizen. This is an important aspect of the courts, for, among other aspects, this constant observation is what helps Josef K. during his metamorphosis and what leads to the climactic ending to the novel.

*Der Proceß* is less of a trial and more of a metamorphosis. Josef K. wakes up guilty of something, he knows not what, just as he was born with the guilt of a sin he did not commit. Simply by being human he must atone for the sins of Adam and Eve. According to Kafka's own diaries, the question of God's existence and, by extension, original sin had intrigued

him since he was young. Indeed, he had been engaging in his own metamorphosis for a very long time.

So habe ich allerdings in der Erinnerung, daß ich in den Gymnasialzeiten öfters, wenn auch nicht sehr ausführlich ... mit Bergmann in einer entweder innerlich vorgefunden oder ihm nachgeahmten talmudischen Weise über Gott und seine Möglichkeit disputierte. Ich knüpfte damals gern an das in einer christlichen Zeitschrift ... gefundene Thema an, in welchem eine Uhr und die Welt, und der Uhrmacher und Gott einander gegenüberstellt waren und die Existenz des Uhrmachers jene Gottes beweisen sollte. (Brod 15-16)

Discussing the existence of God, even in a Talmudic way, inherently includes the possibility of the non-existence of God. Josef K. too questions, not the existence of the courts, but their authority over him. Who are they to judge him with their pornographic, impenetrable law books?

As Josef K. negotiates his way through his trial, losing strength and focus along the way, he is given in the cathedral his first chance to interact with an actual official of the court, the prison chaplain. The prison chaplain becomes then the embodiment of the topographic nature of K.'s quest for a place within religion.

Josef K. has seen punishment of court officials carried out in broom closets, he himself was arrested in bed, and the courtrooms themselves are on the top of nearly every building in the city. The topography of the courts is not the topography one would normally expect. It is, in fact, inverted. Instead of finding the courtrooms in the center of the city in a huge monolithic granite structure, we find them on the outskirts of the city. The prison chaplain is found in full costume in the cathedral. Not only is he in costume, but Josef K. assumes he is about to begin a sermon, which prompted his first attempt to leave the cathedral. He's carrying himself in a way that demonstrates a certain ownership of this space to K. Like others, the chaplain seems to have a day job and also serves as the chaplain. However, in this instance, his place of work and place of service are one and the same. By performing duties as chaplain in the cathedral, the chaplain takes ownership of the cathedral on behalf of the courts. It becomes part of the law machine.

The chaplain emphasizes the enormity of the courts and the potential for all spaces to belong to the courts, "Ich gehöre also zum Gericht", sagte der Geistliche. „Warum sollte ich also etwas von Dir wollen. Das Gericht will nichts von Dir. Es nimmt Dich auf wenn Du kommst und es entläßt Dich wenn du gehst“ (Kafka 235). Everyone belongs to the courts. Everyone belongs to God.

He further explains to Josef K. that there is little he can do to help or hurt his case with the courts. „Das Urteil kommt nicht mit einmal, das Verfahren geht allmählich ins Urteil über“ (Kafka 223). Affirming the process that Josef K. is involved in, the chaplain clarifies that we are all simply waiting for the next step. "Das Urteil" is, according to Max Brod, a final step into the good life that has been promised us by God,

So wird die Gerechtigkeit des obersten Gerichtes (im Roman „Prozess“), die Möglichkeit eines dem göttlichen Auftrag, eben dem „Gesetz“ entsprechenden guten Lebens nicht geleugnet, -- aber diese Möglichkeit ist keine Gewißheit. Alles bleibt in Schwebe. Nacht und Licht halten einander die Waage. – Zu welcher Zeit spielt dieser „zeitlose“ Roman? Eine Minute vor der Weltschöpfung. Wird sie gelingen oder nicht? Ungeheure Bangnis des Zweifels, der Unsicherheit erfüllt die Brust. (Brod 216)

“Der Proceß” is the process of working toward this good life, of working toward a space, a time, a self-realization that allows for one to see the power inherent in oneself. This is Josef K.’s quest. To find free will and strength within the topography of the law/religion. As Brod further explains, “So sieht auch Kafka zwischen Gott und Mensch nicht Heteronomie, sondern nur Undeutlichkeit, eine allerdings fast trostlose Komplikation durch bürokratisch sich einschiebende, immer wieder das Gute verhindernde Zwischeninstanzen voll Tücke und Gift” (225). It is through this “Undeutlichkeit” that Josef K. has been struggling. As an existential struggle, the struggle of Josef K. is the struggle to sift through all of the bureaucracy and inarticulateness to find the self.

### **Josef K. Embraces His Fate**

Am Vorabend seines einunddreißigsten Geburtstages – es war gegen neun Uhr abends, die Zeit der Stille auf den Straßen – kamen zwei Herren in K.’s Wohnung.... Ohne daß ihm der Besuch angekündigt gewesen wäre, saß K. gleichfalls schwarz angezogen in einem Sessel in der Nähe der Türe und zog langsam neue scharf sich über die Finger spannende Handschuhe an, in der Haltung wie man Gäste erwartet. (Kafka 236)

At this point, one year into his trial, Josef K., it seems, anticipates the actions of the court. Although K. had been expecting someone else, he goes to the window one last time and looks at his neighborhood from above – a reference to all of the other windows, observers and watchers in the novel. He needs no explanation and goes with them simply and without a fight. He understands his fate, and asks only for some dignity as they leave. “Schon auf der Treppe wollten sich die Herren in K. einhängen, aber K. Sagte: “Erst auf der Gasse, ich bin nicht krank” (Kafka 237). This scene is the first indication of K.’s having achieved his self-realization. In the opening scene of the novel, K. argues with his arrestors. He seeks to prove his innocence and his identity. Today, on his last day, he simply hands himself over to his destiny, but with one key distinction, he will do so with dignity. He is dressed well, insists on being treated with respect, and will not take part in the dirty work. In this distinction is his self-realization. He has gained strength in recognizing the omnipotence of the courts and the existence of an all-seeing, all knowing God. There is power in his accepting his fate, in understanding that he is powerless in the face of the courts.

As they are heading toward the edge of town, “sie bildeten jetzt alle drei eine solche Einheit, daß wenn man einen von ihnen zerschlagen hätte, alle zerschlagen gewesen wären. Es war eine Einheit, wie sie fast nur Lebloses bilden kann” (Kafka 237). The three of them have become a sort of walking holy trinity. His transition to the world beyond has begun. No longer is he an individual acting upon his own free will. When they move, he moves. Further, when they encounter a police officer, who seems about to intervene, it is Josef K. that pulls the group forward. They not only move as one entity, but all have the power to affect movement and direction. “So kamen sie rasch aus der Stadt hinaus, die sich in dieser Richtung fast ohne Übergang an die Felder anschloß. Ein kleiner Steinbruch, verlassen und öde, lag in der Nähe eines noch ganz städtischen Hauses” (Kafka 240). Josef K. is the one that led them to the edge of the city. Given that he seems to understand what is about to happen to him, his agency in choosing the site of his death is telling. He’s led the trinity to

the outskirts of the city. His judgment, by his choosing, will take place on the outskirts of the city, in a small quarry, still in view of city architecture.

This is his moment of self-realization. Max Brod tells us that Kafka, "ist der Meinung, man müsse nur einmal zum Guten übergehen und sei schon gerettet, ohne Rücksicht auf die Vergangenheit und sogar ohne Rücksicht auf die Zukunft" (225). He's taken control of his destiny and pushed outside of the limits of his topographic imagination and forced the two men to carry out their orders on his terms.

As they methodically work out the final details of his assassination, K. lays on a rock in the quarry.

K. wußte jetzt genau, daß es seine Pflicht gewesen wäre, das Messer, als es von Hand zu Hand über ihm schwebte, selbst zu fassen und sich einzubohren. Aber er tat es nicht. ... Vollständig konnte er sich nicht bewähren, alle Arbeit den Behörden nicht abnehmen, die Verantwortung für diesen letzten Fehler trug der, der ihm den Rest der dazu nötigen versagt hatte. (Kafka 241)

He exerts power in this situation, by forcing the two underlings of the court to do the deed they have been called to do. He's being encouraged to take his own life, but they must take the responsibility. The guilt/sin must be theirs.

K. looks around and from the top floor of the neighboring apartment building "ein Mensch schwach und dünn in der Ferne und Höhe beugte sich mit einem Ruck weit vor und streckte die Arme noch weiter aus. Wer war es? Ein Freund? Ein guter Mensch? Einer der teilnahm? Einer der helfen wollte? War es ein einzelner? Waren es alle?" (Kafka 241). Somewhere in his list of possibilities is the truth. This person, unidentifiable in the distance, could be K.'s end or his salvation, although it's clear from the situation that they would not arrive in time to save him. The importance of this stranger in the window is, again, their observing function. He will go to his death, but it will be witnessed. The law machine/panopticon is always functioning. It will witness his strength, and it will affirm his salvation.

In his last breath, K. professes his fate, "'Wie ein Hund!' sagte er, es war, als sollte die Scham ihn überleben" (Kafka 241). He proclaims the shame of their deeds to them, as they watch him dying. His strength in this final moment, is the self-realization that has been the result of his year long metamorphosis.

Frank decides in the last moments of *Herr Lehmann*, that it is time to find himself and to move outside of the walls that have so neatly kept him safe for the previous ten years. Sal Paradise, in the final moments of *On the Road*, thinks back across the great expanse of America and about the friend he necessarily left behind in his quest for enlightenment and self-realization. Finally, Josef K., quietly acts out Walt Whitman's, "I too am not a bit tamed ... I too am untranslatable, / I sound my barbaric yawp over the roofs of the world" (Whitman 69). Unlike our two other protagonists, K. has had his quest for self-realization thrust upon him. It was not his decision to begin it, but it was his decision to continue it. In the windings of the bureaucracy throughout the novel, all those involved make it clear that he would suffer the same fate whether he defended himself or not. His best option was for an infinitely deferred acquittal, which in some senses he received. His last question was, "Wo war das hohe Gericht bis zu dem er nie gekommen war?" (Kafka 241). He never made it to the high court, instead he was killed like a dog in a quarry. His dignity and grace in these final moments prove the achievement of his self-realization. In

an ironic way, by lying down and forcing the two underlings to do the dirty work, to take the guilt and shame upon themselves, he was acknowledged the free-will inherent in the Bible. By refusing to be the agent in his own final moment, he has taken his life into his own hands, owned it and affirmed it.



## Conclusion

This dissertation set out to investigate representations of encounters with the topographic imagination within both American and German literature, and to demonstrate how the authors used travel and movement as keys to self-realization. In this final chapter, we will review the research contributions of this dissertation, as well as discuss directions for future research.

In my analysis of *On the Road*, *Herr Lehmann*, and *Der Proceß* I have demonstrated the importance of the topographic imagination. The writings of Leslie Fiedler form the foundation for this theory. His assertion is that America has consistently been theorized, from its conception, topographically. He argues, “that America had been unremittingly dreamed from East to West [and] is a testament to the original goodness of man” (Fiedler, *A New Fiedler Reader* 14). The topographic imagination always necessitates the existence of a frontier. This frontier has never been nor can it ever be mapped. However, it is the attempt at mapping that forms the center of my argument. The men in these novels were not passive in their roles as cartographers of their own topographic imagination. Manifest Destiny involved the God given mandate to colonize and map the continent. Through these novels I have demonstrated a sort of individual Manifest Destiny; the right of every man to conquer the realm in which he lives. Engaging with the frontier isn’t simply about the conquering of a continent. It has, both literally and literarily, always involved an engagement with the possibilities of man. By conquering the frontier man has proven to himself his own physical, psychological and spiritual strength.

As Americans we are accustomed to continually inventing a new Frontier. When our continent had essentially been mapped, we entered the space race, “the last frontier.” But space was not enough, we now find ourselves in the position of seeking out further frontiers. If, as Fiedler claims, the Frontier is the margin where the dream encounters the resistance of fact, then the mere presence of hopes and dreams ensures that somewhere there is always someone engaged in the conquering of a frontier. I certainly don’t believe, nor would I argue, that only Americans continue to engage with the Frontier, but through the central ideals of our culture, we are encouraged, perhaps more than most, to seek out that dream, to move beyond our accomplishments and conquer the next frontier.

When viewed in the German perspective, this concept becomes more complicated and more intriguing at once. The exploration of the topographic imagination is engagement with the frontier and confronting Fiedler’s Dream of America. In order to engage with the topographic imagination, it is necessary to travel the limits of this finite realm. The foundation for the topographic imagination can be found in the geographical lines of American literature, in the words of Deleuze and Parnet,

American literature operates according to geographical lines: the flight towards the West, the discovery that the true East is in the West, the sense of the frontiers as something to cross, to push back, to go beyond. The becoming is geographical. (Deleuze and Parnet, *Dialogues* 36-37)

Although geography has frequently been an important aspect of American literature, I demonstrate that it is not a characteristic exclusive to American literature. Geography and topography play significant roles in the lives of people everywhere. However, as I have demonstrated, achieving self-realization is often accomplished through a mapping of the



topographic imagination. This mapping is of a rhizomatic nature, “The rhizome is altogether different, a *map and not a tracing*. ... What distinguishes the map from the tracing is that it is entirely oriented toward an experimentation in contact with the real” (Deleuze and Guattari, *A Thousand Plateaus* 12-13). The importance of the rhizome to the topographic imagination is one of extension. The rhizome is a mapping of the topographic imagination. The mapping of the topographic imagination is necessary for the achievement of self-realization.

Sal Paradise sets out in *On the Road* knowing that he is looking for something; that out there “... somewhere along the line the pearl would be handed to” (8) him. Early in the novel he’s not sure what exactly it is that he is looking for, but it slowly becomes more and more clear to him. He travels the United States having a grand time, but never quite finding the happiness he had expected. The “pearl” eludes him. Eventually he and Dean Moriarty head “Magic South” and upon crossing the border into Mexico, i.e. crossing outside of Sal Paradise’s topographic imagination, the imagery is immediately reminiscent of Eastern religions with their accompanying concept of enlightenment. “It was only Nuevo Laredo but it looked like Holy Lhasa to us” (Kerouac 274). Holy Lhasa, the seat of Buddhism in Tibet, has combined here with Nuevo Laredo, a beat and dirty border town across the Rio Grande from Mexico. By equating this Mexican town with Holy Lhasa, Kerouac hints to the reader that a moment of transcendental enlightenment is soon to come, and it may come with the help of one of the locals, for “[o]ld men sat on chairs in the night and looked like Oriental junkies and oracles” (Kerouac 275). Dean exclaims, “We’ve finally got to heaven. It couldn’t be cooler, it couldn’t be grander, it couldn’t be *anything*” (Kerouac 277). Heaven being the closest thing western religions have to enlightenment, it’s important that Dean’s character is described using western religious imagery at this moment. Sal Paradise is wrapped up in eastern imagery, while Dean is consistently described using western religious terms. In this scene Kerouac creates a rhizomatic conflation of the four compass directions. Leaving the American West, they head Magic South where the imagery they encounter is that of Eastern religions. But, even at this, they seem to take sides. Sal Paradise, as the narrator, is the one that shares with us the Eastern imagery. However, when he describes Dean he uses words like “prophesied”, “Angel”, and “Seraphically” (Kerouac 8, 259, 263).

In all ways, Dean functions as the counterpoint to Sal’s paradise. He is a drug addict that is in a downward spiral, one that will eventually lead him to leave Sal sick and alone in Mexico City. There at the top of the world is where Sal’s self-realization reaches its apex. Dean cannot lead him to his destiny. He knows that he must not trust in Dean, but in himself. He learns that he can survive this road alone and that if he is to do so happily, he will need to do it without Dean.

Similarly, Herr Lehmann spends his days mapping his small neighborhood of SO 36 in Kreuzberg, Berlin, Germany. He has lived here for ten years and has whittled the realm of his topographic imagination down to an area encompassing about two square miles. Herr Lehmann’s upcoming thirtieth birthday is mentioned on the first page of the novel, leaving the reader with the suspense of knowing that his birthday is coming, but without actually knowing the date. While he lives his cantankerous life, he is frequently forced out of the boundaries of his topographic imagination into other areas of Kreuzberg, and, on two occasions, actually leaving Kreuzberg. Anyone who has ever lived in a large city knows how difficult it is to live your life in such a way that you don’t even leave your own

neighborhood for two months. Herr Lehmann's leaving only twice in this span of time is quite remarkable and speaks to the miniscule size of his topographic imagination. Each time he leaves comfortable surroundings he encounters difficulties. His attempt to leave the country and visit East Berlin is completely sidetracked, in fact, "Die Hauptstadt der DDR verzichtet für heute auf [seinen] Besuch" (Regener 215). The entire city of Berlin denies him entrance. This closing of the boundary that is at the fringe of his topographic imagination, is a symbolically important one.

In every other instance in the novel, Herr Lehmann is able to leave his comfort zone and, although he frequently has difficulties when this happens, he is able to transgress these boundaries and return home safely. However, when he is asked to go to the GDR, he fails. At this point, he is not ready for self-realization, instead he must return to West Berlin. Upon returning he learns that Karl Schmidt, his best friend, has had a nervous breakdown. Like Dean Moriarty, Karl is suspected of having used drugs over the past several weeks, and has finally reached his breaking point. His breaking point, involves an inability to handle the stress of an upcoming art exhibit.

His crisis is one of maturity. The art exhibit is the watershed moment when he must admit that he is no longer a Kreuzberg bohemian, but instead is ready to enter the art world as a serious contender and as a professional. His crisis mirrors that of Herr Lehmann, who, upon his thirtieth birthday must reconcile the fact that he is no longer an adolescent and eventually will need to find meaning in his life. The Berlin Wall falls on Herr Lehmann's birthday, providing the opportunity he needs to finally break out of the multiplicity of walls that have allowed him to remain within the realm of his topographic imagination for the last ten years. Herr Lehmann's crisis of age comes to a head. He says to Sylvio, a friend and fellow bartender, "Aber irgendwie habe ich immer das Gefühl, ich müßte mal in die Erneuerung" (Regener 291). To which Sylvio replies, "Vielleicht kommt die Erneuerung von ganz allein" (Regener 292). Herr Lehmann knows that it is time to change and that he must do something about it. It will not simply come of its own. With the fall of the wall, both happen. The possibility for "Erneuerung" will come with the fall of the Wall and the opening of the boundaries that have so conveniently comprised Herr Lehmann's topographic imagination.

Along the lines of Fiedler's mapping of America, the physical change in the topography of Berlin on November 9, 1989 is very important. The Wall itself was still officially standing. The entire crossing to and fro from East to West was accomplished via checkpoints, and, in fact, the first people to cross the checkpoints were unaware that the border guards had voided their passports, thus stranding them in West Berlin (*When the Wall Came Tumbling Down*). However, in the hearts of the citizens of both nations, the boundary had been lifted. They were still separate political entities but with a porous border. The collapsing of borders and geographies on this night were significant in a Fiedlerian sense. If the American continent had been dreamed from East to West, the German situation was now quite the opposite. In one moment, Berlin was moved from West to East. Having been an island of liberality among the sea of conformity that was East Germany, Berlin had lost its island status and had been thrust into the center of East Germany. East became West and West became East. It is in this situation that Herr Lehmann begins to make plans for his "Erneuerung."

Whereas *Herr Lehmann* ends on Herr Lehmann's thirtieth birthday, Franz Kafka's

*Der Proceß* begins on the morning of Josef K.'s thirtieth birthday. He awakes to find himself accused of a crime, but ignorant of even how, when or where this "crime" might have been committed. He's convinced of his innocence, but will still be forced to traverse the city and map the rhizome of his topographic imagination before it is all over. From traveling to the suburbs to attend court hearings, to his encounter in the cathedral where he hears the parable *Vor dem Gesetz*, the trial takes him far and wide and up and down. His rhizomatic existence takes on a more pronounced three-dimensional aspect than we have seen in the previous two novels. Everywhere he goes is an encounter with his topographic imagination.

As I have demonstrated, the rhizome is a multi-faceted movement. It can be above ground, obviously below ground, and ultimately it has no limitations within the three dimensions. Sal Paradise has gone East, West, North, and South but finds his self-realization at the top of the world in Mexico City. Josef K. spends his thirtieth year, going from site to site, from courtroom to courtroom in his city. He is frequently asked to go to the upper floors of buildings where the air becomes rarefied. He is always paying attention. He knows when he is being followed and when he is being watched. From the moment he wakes up on that birthday, he is under observation. The panoptic elements of Josef K.'s situation point toward the beginnings of Deleuze and Guattari's "law machine." Within the framework of the Foucauldian disciplinary mechanism there is no escape. It is pervasive and becomes yet another element in our daily lives. The disciplinary mechanism described by Foucault is exercised upon a small area, say a town, however, this is in turn the structure of the courts in *Der Proceß*. No one knows anything except the people directly above them and below them in the courts' hierarchical chain of communication. The courts, thus, take on a dimensionality. To negotiate his way through his court proceedings, Josef K. is forced to trace different elements of the court's topography.

As it is explained to him, "Sie haben mich mißverstanden, Sie sind verhaftet, gewiß, aber das soll sie nicht hindern Ihren Beruf zu erfüllen. Sie sollen auch in Ihrer gewöhnlichen Lebensweise nicht gehindert sein" (Kafka 23). There is no need for Josef K. to be taken to a prison, because he is always already being observed. He is a part of the disciplinary mechanism and he is subject to Foucault's panoptic society.

Although Josef K. spends his thirtieth year at the beck and call of the courts, he will eventually take control of the process and, with his own self-realization, finally know the power he has been seeking. When he is escorted to the outskirts of town, he more than once chooses the general direction the three of them are going in. They are assassins that allow themselves to be led by their victim. He has taken control of his destiny and pushed outside of the limits of his topographic imagination and forced the two men to carry out their orders on his terms.

As they methodically work out the final details of his assassination, K. lays on a rock in the quarry. He exerts a subtle power in this situation. The assassins pass a knife back and forth over his head, seemingly hinting that he might take the knife from them and take care of the killing himself. However, the guilt/sin must be theirs. Significantly, this assassination takes place on the fringe of the city. Through the course of the novel he is forced to any number of extreme locations, and here in the quarry, he is literally lying at the frontier of his topographic imagination. His greatest feat lies in his not acting, in his forcing the men to kill him instead of doing it himself. If he is to die like a dog, it will not be at his own hands.

With this epiphany comes the realization that there is power in taking control of your own destiny.

My dissertation has looked in-depth at the use of the topographic imagination in only three novels that are part of a long list of works that use travel, space and topography as background themes for the eventual enlightenment of the protagonist. Limited by the scope and space of this work, I was unable to touch on many other works that would have fit into this study just as well. Thomas Mann's *Der Zauberberg* and his *Der Tod in Venedig* both put travel and three-dimensional space in the thematic foreground. Hermann Hesse's *Siddharta* too places travel and enlightenment in a symbiotic realm. There has also been a strong thread of topography and geography in the realm of Wendeliteratur including Günter Grass' *Ein weites Feld*. Works like Thomas Brussig's *Helden Wie Wir* as well as his *Wie es leuchtet* place boundaries and topography at the foreground as they explore the complicated history of the Germanies. The analysis I have engaged in here is but the beginning of what could be a long and in-depth analysis of the topographic imagination in modern German literature.



## Works Consulted

- Abel, M. 2002. "Speeding Across the Rhizome: Deleuze Meets Kerouac *On The Road*." Modern Fiction Studies 48(2): 227-256. Print.
- Adams, Rachel. "Hipsters and jipitecas: Literary Countercultures on Both Sides of the Border." American Literary History 16(1): 58-84. Digital.
- Ahlberg, Todd, and Mark S. King. *Meth*. United States: Cinema Libre Distribution, 2008. Digital.
- Alter, Robert. *Imagined Cities: Urban Experience and the Language of the Novel*. New Haven & London: Yale UP, 2005. Print.
- Anderson, Douglas. *Philosophy Americana: Making Philosophy at Home in American Culture*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2006. Print.
- Augustana College Department of Geography. Route 6: The Longest US Transcontinental Highway. Augustana College. Web. 18 Feb. 2009.  
<<http://www.augustana.edu/academics/geography/department/route6/story.html>>.
- "Background to Danger." *IMDb*. Web. 8 December 2012.  
<<http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0035659/plotsummary>>, access date 2/18/2009
- Baker, Barbara. "Sven Regener: Berlin Blues." *Goethe Institut Bookmarks*. Goethe Institut Australien. 16 July 2007. Web. 5 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://www.goethe.de/ins/au/lp/prj/bkm/rev/aut/reg/enindex.htm>>.
- Bataille, Georges. *On Nietzsche*. London: Continuum, 2010. EBook Library. Web. 27 Sep. 2011.
- Benjamin, Walter. *Ursprung des deutschen Trauerspiels*. Frankfurt: Suhrkamp. 1963. Print.
- "Berlin Customs and Excise Wall, circa 1700." Map. *Wikimedia Commons*. Ed. Donald E. Backman. Wikimedia Commons, 10 October 2012. Web. 10 October 2012.  
<[http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karte\\_berlin\\_akzisemauer.png?uselang=de](http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Karte_berlin_akzisemauer.png?uselang=de)>.
- Berlin.de. *Former Course of the Wall in 1989*. Berliner Mauer 1961-1989. n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2012. <<http://www.berlin.de/mauer/luftbilder/1989/index.en.php>>.
- Bloom, Harold ed. *Franz Kafka's The Trial*. New York: Chelsea House, 1987. Print.
- Brand, Jobst-Ulrich. "Der Typ ist mir so zugelaufen." *FOCUS Online*. 9 June 2004. Web. 11 October 2012. <[http://www.focus.de/kultur/medien/kultur-der-typ-ist-mir-so-zugelaufen\\_aid\\_201800.html](http://www.focus.de/kultur/medien/kultur-der-typ-ist-mir-so-zugelaufen_aid_201800.html)>.
- Brod, Max. *Franz Kafka: eine Biographie*. Berlin: S. Fischer Verlag, 1954. Print.
- Caygill, Howard. "Kafka and Derrida "Before the Laws"." Studies in European Culture and History 2011: 49-59. Print.
- Charters, Ann. *Kerouac : a Biography*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994. Print.
- Clifford, Gay. *The Transformations of Allegory*. London & Boston: Routledge & Kegan Paul. 1974. Print
- Dardess, George. 1974. "The Delicate Dynamics of Friendship: A Reconsideration of Kerouac's *On The Road*." American Literature 46(2): 200-206. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Félix. Kafka: Toward a Minor Literature. Ed. Jochen and Godzich, Wlad Schulte-Sasse. Trans. Dana Polan. Vol. 30. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1986. Print.

- Deleuze, Gilles and Guattari, Felix. 1988. *A thousand plateaus: capitalism and schizophrenia*. London: Athlone Press. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles and Parnet, Claire. *Dialogues*. New York: Columbia UP, 1987. Print.
- Deleuze, Gilles. "Pensée Nomade." *Nietzsche aujourd'hui?* Centre Culturel International de Cerisy-La-Salle. Vol. 1. Paris: Union Générale D'Éditions, 1973. 159-174. Print.
- Derrida, Jacques. "Devant la Loi." *Kafka and the Contemporary Critical Performance: Centenary Readings*. Ed. Alan Udoff. Trans. Avital Ronell. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1987. 128-149. Print.
- Deutsche Filmakademie, e.V. "Deutsche Filmpreise von 1951 bis heute." *Deutscher Filmpreis*. n.d. Web. 5 Nov. 2012.  
<<http://www.deutsche-filmakademie.de/fpsuche.html>>.
- Döring, Jörg. "Distant Reading. Zur Geographie der Toponyme in Berlin-Prosa seit 1989." *Zeitschrift für Germanistik* 18.3 (2008): 598-620. Print.
- Dougherty, Carter. "The New German Novel: Less Weighty, More Exportable." *New York Times*, 20 Aug. 2005, E3. 5 November 2012. <<http://www.nytimes.com/2005/12/20/books/20book.html>>. Print.
- "Einfall." *Duden: Das große Wörterbuch der deutschen Sprache*. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. 1993. Print.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. 1991. *Fiedler on the Roof: Essays on Literature and Jewish Identity*. Boston: David R. Godine. Print
- Fiedler, Leslie A. 1999. *A New Fiedler Reader*. Amherst, N.Y.: Prometheus Books. Print.
- Fiedler, Leslie A. 1968. *The Return of the Vanishing American*. New York: Stein and Day. Print.
- Foucault, Michel. *Discipline & Punish: The Birth of the Prison*. Trans. Alan Sheridan. New York: Vintage Books, 1995. Print.
- Ghita, Lucian. "Spatializing the Body and the Law Machine in Kafka's Der Prozess." *Journal of the Kafka Society of America, New International Series* 13.1-2 (2006): 3-19. Print.
- Giamo, Benedict. *Kerouac, the Word and the Way: Prose Artist as Spiritual Quester*. Carbondale, IL: Southern Illinois UP, 2000. Print.
- Goebel, Rolf J. "The Exploration of the Modern City in The Trial." *The Cambridge Companion to Kafka*. Ed. Julian Preece. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002. 42-60. Print.
- Grass, Günter. *Ein weites Feld*. München: DTV, 1997. Print.
- Haußmann, Leander. "Simplicissimus in Berlin." *Der Spiegel*. 13 Aug. 2001, 173. Print.
- Holton, Robert. *On the Road: Kerouac's Ragged American Journey*. New York : Twayne Publishers, 1999. Print.
- Hunt, Tim. *Kerouac's Crooked Road : Development of a Fiction*. Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1981. Print.
- Hunt, Tim. "The Misreading of Kerouac." *Review of Contemporary Fiction* 3:2 (1983:Summer), 29-33. Print.
- "Intersection of Eisenbahnstrasse and Wrangelstrasse, Berlin." Satellite Image/Map. *Google Maps*. Ed. Donald Backman. 10 February 2009. Web. 10 February 2009.
- Kafka, Franz. *Der Process*. Frankfurt: Fischer Taschenbuch Verlag, 1999. Print.
- Kerouac, Jack. 1991. *On the Road*. New York: Penguin Books. Print.
- "Kreuzberg SO 36." Map. *Google Maps*. Ed. Donald Backman. Google, 15 July 2012. Web. 15 July 2012.

- "Lausitzer Platz 1875." Map. Pierer's Conversations Lexikon 6. Auflage: Berlin. 1875. *Berliner Stadtplanarchiv*. Web. 10 October 2012.  
<[http://www.alt-berlin.info/cgi/stp/lana.pl?nr=8&gr=5&klick\\_navigator=?178,106](http://www.alt-berlin.info/cgi/stp/lana.pl?nr=8&gr=5&klick_navigator=?178,106)>.
- Leland, John. *Why Kerouac Matters : the Lessons of On the Road (they're Not What You Think)*. New York: Viking, 2007. Print.
- Lyden, John. "The Apocalyptic Cosmology of *Star Wars*." *The Journal of Religion & Film*. 4.1 (2000). n. pag. Web. 6 January 2012.
- Madsen, Deborah L. *Rereading Allegory: A Narrative Approach to Genre*. New York: St. Martin's Press. 1994. Print.
- Merk, Simone. "'Vom Nutzen und Nachtheil der Historie für das Leben': Zeit, Geschichte, und Zeitgeschichte in Sven Regeners 'Post-Pop-Roman' *Herr Lehmann*." Ed. Andreas Bartl. *Verbalträume: Beiträge zur deutschsprachigen Gegenwartsliteratur*. Germanistik und Gegenwartsliteratur 1. Augsburg: Wißner 2005, 127-161. Print.
- "*Meth*," DVD, directed by Todd Ahlberg (2006; Oakland, CA: Babalu Pictures, 2006). Film.
- Mortenson, Erik R. 2001. "Beating Time: Configurations of Temporality in Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*." *College Literature*: (28)3. Print.
- Nietzsche, Friedrich W. 1994. *Also sprach Zarathustra: ein Buch für Alle und Keinen*. Stuttgart: Philipp Reclam. Print.
- Obama, Barack. 2008. Cover photo, *Der Spiegel*. 10 Nov. 2008. Print.
- Rand, Ayn. *For the New Intellectual: The Philosophy of Ayn Rand*. New York: Signet Classics, 2011. Print.
- Regener, Sven. *Herr Lehmann*. Munich: Wilhelm Goldmann Verlag, 2003. Print.
- Rindfleisch, Sven. "Gebrauch und Bedeutung von Komik in Sven Regeners *Herr Lehmann*." Unpublished essay, 2002. Web. 24 July 2007.  
<<http://www.littlechef.de/aboutme/uni/pdfs/germanistik/lehmann.pdf>>.
- "Route 6." Map. *Heritage Documentaries*. Web. 11 October 2012.  
<<http://www.heritagedocumentaries.org/Route6/usmap.html>>.
- "Der Schuh des Manitu," DVD, directed by Michael Herbig (2001; Munich: Constantin Film, 2002). Film.
- Sprekelsen, Tilman. "Verwirrt, träge und verliebt." *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*. Rezension: Belletristik. 11 Aug. 2001. Web. 10 Oct. 2012.  
<<http://www.faz.net/s/Rub79A33397BE834406A5D2BFA87FD13913/Doc~ECA002BD97DC44570B6F5F8B50E2EF531~ATpl~Ecommon~Scontent.html>>.
- Stach, Reiner. *The Decisive Years*. Trans. Shelley Frisch. Orlando: Harcourt, Inc., 2005. Print.
- Stefano, Albertini et. al. 2002. "Salvatore." *Langenscheidt Maxi-Wörterbuch Italienisch*. Berlin, München, Wien, Zürich, New York: Langenscheidt-Redaktion. 531. Print.
- Steinbeck, John. 1938. *The Grapes of Wrath*. New York: The Viking Press. Print.
- Stellas, Constance. *Advanced Astrology for Life*. Avon: Adams Media, 1997. Print.
- "St. Vitus Cathedral, Prague, Czech Republic." Satellite Image. *Google*. 10 October 2012. Web. 10 Oct. 2012.
- Sussman, Henry. *The Trial: Kafka's Unholy Trinity*. New York : Twayne Publishers, 1993.
- Swartz, Omar. *The View from On the Road: The Rhetorical Vision of Jack Kerouac*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 1999.



"United States presidential election of 1984". *Encyclopædia Britannica. Encyclopædia Britannica Online*. Encyclopædia Britannica Inc., 2012. Web. 13 Sept. 2012. <<http://www.britannica.com/EBchecked/topic/1575886/United-States-presidential-election-of-1984>>.

Weiner, Eric. *The Geography of Bliss*. New York: Twelve, 2008. Print.

*When the Wall Came Tumbling Down: 50 Hours that Changed the World*. Dir. Hans-Hermann Hertl and Gunther Scholz. Videocassette. Icestorm International, 1999. Film.