



Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form

Michael Hrebeniak

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Action Writing: Jack Kerouac's Wild Form connects the personal and creative development of the Beat generation's famous icon with societal changes in postwar America. Michael Hrebeniak asserts that Jack Kerouac's "wild form"—writing that is free of literary, grammatical, and syntactical conventions—moves within an experimental continuum across the arts to generate a Dionysian sense of writing as raw process. *Action Writing* highlights how Kerouac made concrete his 1952 intimation of "something beyond the novel" by assembling ideas from Beat America, modernist poetics, action painting, bebop, and subterranean oral traditions. Hrebeniak further explores how the Cold War provided political potency for Kerouac's assertion of the Blake-Whitman lineage of poet as seer and chronicler, by which language itself becomes the instrument of revelation.

Action Writing identifies the artistic resources, American bohemianism, and protest traditions at the foreground of Kerouac's creative emergence, culturally framed as an ongoing existential regeneration within a deteriorating environment. Hrebeniak surveys Kerouac's early shifts in narrative organization and performative writing, examines the limitless multiplicity of Neal Cassady in *Visions of Cody* to forge what Charles Olson would call a "projective" model of the novel, and addresses the question of interpretative methodologies for the convergence of fictive techniques.

This study also traces Kerouac's personal trajectory from confident radicalism to conservative entrenchment, assesses his spontaneous prose within the intersection of orality and notation, and locates Kerouac's phenomenological approach to consciousness and memory in relation to open forms of literary modernism and the New York School.

Geared to scholars and students of American literature, Beat studies, and creative writing, the volume places Kerouac's writing within the context of the American art scene at mid-century. Effectively reframing the work of Kerouac and the Beat generation within the experimental modernist/postmodernist literary tradition, this probing inquiry offers a direct engagement with the social and cultural history at the foreground of Kerouac's career from the 1940s to the late 1960s.

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