

Jack Kerouac's Sal in "On the Road" Transcends the Barriers
Kawther Sirelkhatim Awadelareem Ali
Assistant professor at Omdurman Ahlia University- Faculty of Arts-
English Language Department
kawtharalsir@gmail.com

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Abstract :

Sal, the main character in Jack Kerouac's "On the Road", drove across the United States. He transcended geographical and cultural barriers. This study examines the Narrative and argues that the road is an open world for the individual to recognize the fact of his/her integrity with the whole world. Sal had opportunities to engage with people from different cultural backgrounds and landscapes. Via these encounters Sal experienced clear perception and reflected on different relations that involve him with these worlds. Emerson's Self-Reliance, Naess's Self-realization and Deep ecology help interpreting some parts of the novel. Sal became aware of the commonness between humans that transcends the apparent differences between peoples. Moreover, he realizes that he is an integrated member of the unified whole world and he cannot realize himself as an isolated entity.

Keywords: crossing; Jack Kerouac; natural world; new consciousness; the road

Introduction

Social norms, conventions, and judgments towards the other shape the views and behavior of the individual. Sometimes people try to break from what restricts their personal liberty and views of the world. Several literary works reflect people's love to escape their unsatisfying lives into the natural landscapes, which are worlds of comfort because of their simplicity. They have experienced affinity for these worlds.

Poets such as William Wordsworth described their psychological encounters with landscapes they have come through. In his poem "Lines Composed a Few Miles Above Tintern Abbey" the speaker expressed his state of mind that he experienced when he encountered natural landscapes .

Another work that illustrated the human tendency to escape the tamed world of civilized societies to the primitive world of purity is Mark Twain's "Adventures of Huckleberry Finn" (1884). In this Narrative, Huck, an outlaw teenage boy, desired to avoid social restriction. Buckton-Tucker (2010: 261) considered Huck a naïve hero who attempted to escape his society and wander, searching for the unknown, the paradise he yearned for.

One of the narratives that represent humans' eagerness to flee social confinements to is "On the Road". It was published in 1976. In this Narrative, Kerouac's Sal (1976: 8) desired to enjoy worlds. Different representations in "On the Road" can be interpreted as attempts to involve the individual in the affinity to different places and people and expose him/her to a new conception of life. Then, they can enjoy this new horizon reflecting on different relations throughout Sal's trips.

This study introduces Jack Kerouac as one of the American writers who have contributed to the changing American view of life. Moreover, the study examines the influence of Transcendentalism on Kerouac's views and writings. Further, the fact of people's commonness as it is raised in the Narrative is one of the study's aims.

Examining how Sal's detachment from social confinements and interpreting his psychological preparation for a new and clear perception of the world is essential part of the discussion in this study. It is also necessary to investigate how Sal's engagement with the different others helps him obtain a new conception of the other lands and peoples.

Sal's engagement with different groups of people and natural worlds is important in his education. Encountering different peoples and places is helpful in experiencing affinity to the unified whole world and the commonness between humans. His engagement with the Mexicans and people of color, whom his society considered them underclass minorities, also gave him opportunities to adopt a different view of himself and the 'other.'

1- Literature Review

1.1 Jack Kerouac, a Remarkable American Writer

Jack Kerouac was one of the American intellectuals whose writings have reflected the desires of his generation. At his time people had materialistic conceptions of life. Kerouac's life and work have greatly interested scholars who claimed his influence in the American young generations' minds.

Michelle (2010: 28) considered Kerouac an inspirational writer of his time. Kerouac has attempted to resist the American dominant values and enjoy his style of living. The American middle-class has rejected his concepts of life. Lujano (2017: 146) claimed that Kerouac invented a new genre of literature. His work has supported the freedom of expression in American literature. Kerouac and his group 'The Beats' were unaccepted when they questioned mainstream American life and its values. Luyten (2013: 61) argued that Kerouac presented himself as a serious writer who wrote one work after the other inexhaustibly, confirming his continuous productivity.

In his writing, Kerouac has used his imagination to bring the whole world together and supports the notion of the commonness of mankind transcending the barriers between people. This aspect of his view of life echoed Walt Whitman's vision of the unified world and humanity as a single entity. This notion is represented in his "City of Orgies" (1860). In this poem the poet presents his experience in Manhattan. He traveled in his imagination and enjoyed affinity to remote waters, mountains and deserts.

In his novel "On the Road" Kerouac reflected Whitman's view that the landscape he encountered is representative of the whole universe. Sal's reflection on these landscapes indicates that he has been unrestricted in his view of the world.

In "Doctor Sax", Kerouac adopted free and simple living conditions in the sake of happiness. He expressed his expectation of changing social values in "The Dharma Bums". He emphasizes his belief in the human and the natural world as sources of happiness.

Kerouac continued his adventure narratives in subsequent books. He published his novel "Mexico City Blues" in (1959), "Big Sur" in (1959) and the novel "Desolation Angels" in (1965). Another work was a selection of novels he called "The Duluoz Legend," in which he represented his life until 1965. In (1953) Kerouac wrote "Subterraneans" which was published in (1958).

The quest for new meanings and identities constitutes a recurrent motif in Kerouac's novels. This quest has brought a remarkable change in the American views of life. Hobby (2010: 209-210) insists that the novel "On the Road" contributed to the changing readers' attitudes towards social standards and beliefs.

In the winter of 1946, Kerouac met Cassady, an example of a rebellious person. They established a deep friendship. Then, the two friends started

their trips across the United States. He kept records these trips from 1947 to 1950 in "On the Road". Hobby (2010: 207-208) believed that Kerouac has tried to frame his work on the writing of the American writer Thomas Wolf. He has acknowledged Wolf for directing his attention to America as an inspirational world instead of a place of agony and suffering .

1.2 Critics' views on the Narrative

Ireland and Gemie (2015) claimed that the novel "On the Road" introduced a way of travel in which the physical journey caused the psychological journey of education and self-purification that enhanced 'self-discovery.

Rodriguez has also approached the narrative examining the social and political consequences of Kerouac's experience tackling the issue of race raised in the novel. He considered Kerouac's dealings with the minorities as a call for new values in American culture. Rodriguez (2013) considered the novel as a journey for something new and to the true self. Kerouac's intention showed that another America was possible. His representation of people from different races and backgrounds and their actions were considered a revolution against post-World War II American values.

The "pearl" Sal seeks represents the pure perception of a human's life and his/her relatedness to the other. He reflects on different relations that constitute this universe, within which he attempts to realize his position. Bill (2010) considered Kerouac a romantic traveler from a different tradition. Kerouac's Sal sought authenticity; his search for "the pearl" was a search for what has been abandoned of the American "mythical past.

Sal's desire to be on the move was derived from his consciousness of the unlimited opportunities the road provides to obtain knowledge. Kerouac (1976: 8) insisted that during his quest, somewhere he was going to undergo a new understanding of life. According to Sorensen (2012: 19) Sal was trapped between his desire to depart and his need to be somewhere. This reflected his constant desire for a continuous movement and his demand for organization and stableness.

1.3 Previous Studies

Most of the studies on "On the Road" focus on the social and cultural aspects of the Narrative. According to Zech (2016) "On the Road" was an attempt, at America's in-between stage, of sociocultural development. He has appreciated the novel in the framework of threshold. The novel, as an adventure narrative, criticized the social disintegration and hypocrisy in American society through its characters. Zech claimed that instead of

reconstructing, Kerouac and his characters are just countercultures and rebellions.

Another researcher, Backman (2012), focused on the influence of the way the individual conceptualizes places in the characters' quest. Backman supposed that sticking to an area is a limiting force of identity. He employed a number of theories that explore American culture and concepts. He found out that when the main characters crossed the confining area that shaped their view of the world, they took responsibility for their doings and had the chance of self-realization.

This paper examines Kerouac's unrestricted view of the underclass minorities when he interacted with them. Therefore, "On the Road" helped the changing views and prejudices towards minor groups in the American community. The narrative echoed the American literary heritage that celebrated the commonness of humanity. Carmona (2012) examines the sociological aspect of "On the Road". He supposed that the Beats' desire to write for peoples of color and Mexicans has kept their popularity over sixty years. Carmona concluded that "On the Road" helped push the boundaries between different peoples.

1.4 Methods of Analysis

The natural world became an inspirational source of education that guided Sal to rethink of different bonds within this world. He came through different natural landscapes and expressed his perception of nature and himself as integrated world. It was helpful to employ Ralph Waldo Emerson's Self-Reliance, one of the most apparent facets of American thoughts and character. This concept was reflected in Sal's reflections on the worlds he encountered. Emerson (1995: 26) believed that nothing could direct him and shape his behavior except his instinct. In "On the Road", the notion of 'Self-Reliance' was clear when Kerouac (1976: 5) confessed that his people were those who refrain themselves from social mainstream.

This perception is represented throughout the Narrative in Sal's different view of people of color, his engagement with the Mexicans, and other situations in which the character lives. Approaching "On the Road" based on the concept of Emerson's Reliance is helpful understand and interpret such situations. These situations emphasize the concept of man's individuation. Emerson (1995:23) insisted on the idea that human's nature is his guide and not the social rule and norms.

On the road, Sal encountered sites where he perceived the surroundings following his instinct. Consequently, he projected his views on other different peoples and locales.

Deep Ecology, an environmental movement, also proved to be important in interpreting Sal's psychological development. It considered humans as components of the environment. This philosophy focuses on Man's relatedness to the other components of nature. Eventually, this directed attention to the profound ties between different groups of humanity. Rice (2011: 46) claimed that deep ecologists enjoyed transcending what they thought of as narrow, imperfect human sphere to what they consider as vast, perfect, nonhuman integrated world. Humphrey (2012: 254) claimed that Earth is more than humans.

2. Analysis and Discussion

On the road, Sal was heading to the unknown. He came through different environments and sites. This provided him with opportunities for a clear conception of different relations within this world. He did not think of a specific locale to be his destination. On his way to Denver, he expressed his intention of being on the road, the world of his discovery and education. He (1976: 35) claimed he crossed America and he would discover the fact of this life.

2.1 Jack Kerouac Began his Trips

Kerouac's route was unplanned. He (10-11) drove to Chicago, Denver, and finally to San Francisco. This lack of directionality is indicative of the vast opportunity the world provided for Sal's new consciousness. Sal was heading to a new, open world with unlimited borders and tracts. "Somewhere" and not a specific location would be the source of his learning. He crossed to the unknown and believed he will learn about the world. He considered it as "the pearl". Then Sal began to be aware of the integrity of the different components of this world and their equal reflectiveness of the entire world.

Nature dominated the beginning of the narrative. Kerouac's Sal expressed the change in weather. When Sal started his trip it began to rain violently (10). This help to reflect the overwhelming change he experienced. The metaphoric violent rain could be his strong desire to resist the pulling force of his society. He began to break social norms and expectations. He began

to experience a sense of liberation from what prevent exploring his individual thoughts. Kerouac's Sal (15) experienced a different personality and was not scared.

This moment was a milestone in Sal's psychological change and new conception of life. Sal began to detach himself of the tamed world in his city. He was away from the American mainstream that capsuled his perception of himself and the world. He marked it by "halfway across America". Then, Sal was ready to get out of his narrow self into a broader, unified, integrated world. Throughout the Narrative, Sal continued to transcend his narrow self and his social prejudices against others.

This was a continuous process in his journeys. Sal (273) insisted his claim that he experienced change in his perception when crossed the bridge. Sal experienced moments of transformation in his perception that would lead to a fundamental change in his personality. Talukder (2016: 231) believed that in order to experience self-awareness one must transcend his narrow self and engage with the other. Then one enjoy a clear perception and identify himself/herself within their world.

Sal first was unable to identify the world he encountered. (10). At that time the new world seemed to Sal obscure and gloomy. It needs a profound reflection on the different relations that constitute this world in order to position himself within.

Sal began to reclaim his individualistic principles and his own way of perceiving things in the middle of his journey. He started to exercise his own judgment. Sal recounted, "Everybody is doing what they think they are supposed to do" (61). Emerson (1995:26) believed that the individual must not adhere to the norms and directives of his/her society. This concept of nonconformity is emphasized during Sal's engagement with the Mexicans and people of color. This experience opens new horizons for Sal's recognition .Sal began to perceive his relatedness to the worlds he encountered.

2.2 Sal's Complete Detachment

Sal emphasized his detachment from the American mainstream in his words (1). The metaphoric death is his inability to identify with the situation and lack of emotional connection to his society. Sal was disconnected from, what appeared to him, lifeless attitudes and beliefs. Sal expressed his clear dissatisfaction with the values of his third-class society. He continued breaking social boundaries when he expressed his love of people outside the

American mainstream. He expressed his love for spontaneous people who enjoy living within the vast world of freedom from social constraints. He loved living an individualized life free from all sorts of confinements of social obligations. (5-6)

Sal desired to get out of what he considered 'death' and pursue his individual authenticity. Emerson (1995: 31) claimed that any human is individualized and needs to transcend his social confinement to enjoy his clear perception and define his path. This concept is echoed in Sal's individualistic view of life and his unrestrained perception of life. His desire was to follow his own instinct (58). The metaphoric star is Sal's instinct that enlightens his views of life and carries him to break the social barriers, enjoying the limitless horizons of his thoughts. Now, he is unconstrained, "like spiders across the stars", with a high spirit of exploring the world. Luyten (2013: 56) claims that Kerouac has guided a new perspective of life.

During his crossings, Sal realized "the road is life" (212). The road is the free world that took him to diverse places with their diverse constituents and cultures. The road represents a world of what Sal was seeking for; meanings through encountering different locales and peoples. He began to experience an affinity for these places and peoples. He sang lines reflecting his desire not to be attached to a particular place. For Sal, the home is not a specified locale (255). Sal's sense of detachment was more clear. The different locales he came across reflect different aspects of American cultures. All these locales came to be alike in his view. This new perception is essential to evoke his search for belonging and his indulgence in others. Eventually, this helped to experience change in Sal's personality.

2.3 Being on the Road and the Natural World

The narrator of "On the Road" can see the incredible Rockies from any part of Denver. (47) In many parts of the Narrative, the mountain scenery overwhelms Sal.

This emphasizes the sense of belonging to the natural world. He described the beautiful mountains in Arizona: "There was a heaven of sunrise" (164). He experienced moments of spiritual transcendence when he encountered the natural landscape. This world began to be a source of his learning. Kerouac's Sal recognized the origin of a river in the Rocky Mountains (273). A new stage of Sal's life began and his thought flew. Then he began to determine his position within this world; he was aware of the cyclic nature of the relationship of mountains, Earth and man. Hamlin (2016) believed mountains are the Earth's foundation (185).

Hamlin's statement interprets Sal's overwhelming involvement in the mountains.

Then when Sal crossed the desert, Sal continued involving himself in natural landscapes. In deserts, Sal could find the freedom and simplicity that city life was deprived of. Crossing deserts, Sal's pure perception was clearer. In the desert in Mexico; they believed they left the world of troubles behind and embarked in an unfamiliar journey that enhanced a clear and pure understanding of the world. They saw themselves as pioneers and the gray desert eventually guided them to the world where they could experience clarity of perception. Dean drove to the next destination content by his new awareness. Upon reaching their destination, he felt they reached a state of a blessed affinity to the heaven. (276-77) These words capture Sal's physical and spiritual transcendence. He was in a journey to a new understanding of himself and the world. His continuous pursuit of the next destination is suggestive of his desire for new discovery. The heaven was a state of joy and peace Sal experienced.

Sal's sense of belonging to the natural landscape became deeper. This sense helped his perception that all individuals were elements of one unified universe. He, with his fellows, continued driving through the dark jungle. He experienced a sense of oneness with the jungle and he enjoyed this interconnectedness. (294) According to Kidari (2012: 41-42), when the individual experiences harmony with the natural world his/her perception transcends the materialistic views of the surroundings. Humphrey (2010: 253-254) claimed that identifying the bonds with the natural world leads the individual to perceive all entities as aspects of a single reality. No one can be the exact other, or they could be one "mass", but there are links that bring them together as one.

Sal then obtained "The pearl" he sought for.. It is the fact that he is rooted and integrated with this complex world. Sal did not recognize this fact before he involves himself with nature. Rice (2011: 48) claims that identifying the human self within the natural world was possible in the modern age. It is not an easy process because it needs a considerable change in the conventional thought of the individual. Getting out of a single self to a broader space of this life is essential.

Perceiving his integrity to the natural world eventually results in his recognition of the integrity of people from other places and races. This happened when Sal pushed the boundaries and experienced "new horizons".

This provides him with a cure for his dissatisfaction with mainstream social values. On his way to Denver, Sal meets people on a truck. He remarks:

Sal hitchhiked a truck drove by two cheerful farmers from Minsnsota. On the back of the truck Sal met young boy from different marginalized groups. He learnt that the drivers pick up any person they found on the road. He enjoyed the friendly atmosphere and felt an affinity with those people. (22-23) They share the space and were in high spirits, enjoying the world on the road. This engagement was an essential event in Sal's learning process. Sal broke social prejudices and assumptions about life and other people. He learnt there are space and opportunities for everybody in this wholesome world. Sal here was exposed to an open- minded view that promoted his respect for others and eventually the idea of the commonness and unity of humans. Gecas (1982: 11-12) argued for the importance of social encounters for 'self and other'. Any individual could be able to construct his/her views about themselves and the world. This construction was the outcome of a traveler's journey, not the view that an individual already brought from one situation to another.

Then, Sal began to experience a different personality when he was exposed to the 'other' on the road. In the Narrative, he described this experience when he rented a cheap tent next to Okie cotton pickers in a migrant worker camp five miles out of Sabinal. He, willingly, departed the comforts New York provided and enjoyed the hard cotton picking activity with people from different ethnic group. He remarked he was not experienced person, therefore it was a difficult job that caused physical pain but it was enjoyable to him. It was beautiful kneeling with whom his society considers sub-class. Working with these people gave him a chance to recognize the importance of work. (97) This experience provided him an opportunity to understand and empathize with this minor group. He recognized that life is enjoyable when one indulges in other. Sal reflected commitment to collaboration with other people and celebrated this experience. This indulgence and working in the field brought him closer to what he could identify himself with Earth. He experienced the comfort of communicating with Earth and began reflecting on his relatedness to it.

On the road, Sal realized the difference between the world he was born in and the world he has discovered on the road. He considered his life within his white society as not enough life. He claimed that it did not give the utmost pleasure. (180). Sal expressed his desire for more meaningful and rich life experience that he could not achieve within the limitations of life with his people. He was eager to live within a greater whole and connect his

own personality and his own views. When he engaged with people of color, Sal wishes he "were a Negro". (179), he found what he has been searching for within this group. Sal escaped the middle-class capsule and lived the absolute comfort of living. This became clear when he tried to behave "like an old Negro cotton-picker" (97). Now, he counteracts the conceptions of his society in attempts to experience the joy of living with the other. As with any group, these people have what makes them individualized. Sal was convinced they have a joyful life, a life his white world could not offer.

Sal also had an interaction with people from Mexico, a marginalized ethnicity. They faced discrimination in certain parts of the United States. Engaging in this minor group and their culture helped him to refrain himself from the American mainstream concepts and contact his innermost being. His dealings with them reflected his denial of old ideas and breaking the norms of life in New York. He tries different jobs to support his girlfriend Terry, a Mexican worker, and her little son. Heller (2007: 5) defined this situation as spontaneity that enabled any person to look for his/her world with a non-subjective view or to lose self-orientation and do whatever they desired.

Sal's engagement with the Mexicans is a step towards a new consciousness. He experienced a sense of belonging to the Mexicans and behaved in the same way they do. (97) Mexicans' view of Sal takes one back to Sal's state of mind when he crossed the desert, the forest and the mountains and the affinity he experienced with these landscapes. These natural landscapes were the habitat of ancient civilizations and associated with the cultural heritage of the Mexicans. This interaction supported the fact of the integrity of different peoples where the different cultural background does not make sense once Sal considered all locales on the road as home for him.

Sal's work in the field with the Mexicans helped to deepen his sense of interconnectedness to the earth. (94-97). This recognition prepared him for further change in his perception and engagement with the different other. He communicated with the Mexicans though there was no common language that could bridge cultural divides and enhanced his sense of belonging and unity. He transcended the language barriers and enjoyed a connection with nature. Sal expressed his deep connection to the Mexicans as well as the environment. (283) He lives moments of clear understanding of these people through a spiritual bond breaking social walls. This brings one back to

reflect on Sal's feelings when he experienced connection and oneness with the jungle. The spontaneous engagement with the other, people and the natural world, helped projecting Sal's personality that adopted a new conception. He had consideration of the different other. This prepared him for recognizing the common humanity that binds all individuals together. He began to reflect on the commonness of human origin. He was preoccupied with the fantastic whole world that brought all humans together. Emerson (1995) commented on this fact; recognizing the relatedness of things is dependent on the skill of the eye that could grasp the properties of the other. Any individual could be identified within his/her greater world and they are reflective of it. (266)

2.4 Defining Oneself within a Unified World

Returning to the beginning of the Narrative, Sal recounted Dean as a character who reflected multiple harmonized features. (2) When he met a cowboy in Omaha, Nebraska, he perceived as a reflective character of the American individual. (17) Sal's skillful eyes then could recognize the multiplicity and unity of the broader universe. Then this eye could figure the commonness between people from different parts of America. Sal, again, transcended the geographical and cultural boundaries when he recognized the cowboy's individualism and freedom that connected him with "any beat character".

Throughout the Narrative, Sal came across different sites and people that seem much alike. (274) from the desert to mountains, forests and different cities Sal lived the interconnectedness between different geographical sites. Moreover, he bridged the cultural divides and interacted with people from different backgrounds. He emphasized the fact that under the apparent diversity there is profound commonness and interconnectedness between humans. He expressed this experience when he approached the city of Gregoria. He thought that he did not drive across the United States cities but driving across the world. He realized himself among the Fellahin Indians. He considered them the fundamental strain of humanity that stretches all over the world. (280) Sal again expressed his desire to transcend the geographical and cultural boundaries. His consciousness of this integrated world inspired him to draw a vivid image of the landscape he crossed. He realized that landscape reflects all parts of the world. Sal found himself among the "Fellahin Indians", and claimed that he can identify himself amongst this primal existence of humans. According to Kidari (2012: 38& 49) transcending the individual self ends in interconnectedness to the whole world.

3. Conclusion

Sal's desired to break away from the social molded attitudes towards the other. This gave him the opportunity to engage to different locales and stereotyped people. Sal in "On the Road" enjoys exploring relations that involve him as an integral part of the whole world. Encountering landscapes and different ethnic groups, he transcends into broader views of life. He realized the interconnection of all humans and celebrated the solidarity with these different peoples. He transcended language barriers and communicated with the Mexicans. This helped him to defeat the common view of kinship and enjoy a sense of shared humanity with this minor group. He was free to think of the importance of work. He became closer to Earth and lived a strong bond with this Earth. Driving from the tamed worlds of cities to the vast natural landscapes he discovered the common basic qualities of human existence throughout the world.

From Sal's experience one learns the importance of living in harmony with other people and with the natural world. His reflection on the affinity with natural landscapes is a reminder of humans' behavior concerning this world. There should be empathy and respect when one deals with this interconnected world.

4. Suggestions for Further Studies

Kerouac's "On the Road" is an interesting piece of prose influenced by Jazz music. This could be an area of investigation. Another topic that could be an area of study is hints of Buddhism in his views of the world.

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تجاوز سال الحواجز في رواية جاك كرواك "علي الطريق"
كوثر سرالختم عوض الكريم علي—استاذ مساعد في اللغة الانجليزية (ادب)

الخرطوم—امدرمان

جامعة امدرمان الاهلية

kawtharalsir@gmail.com

مستخلص البحث

في رواية جاك كرواك "على الطريق" سافر سال, الشخصية الرئيسية, عبر الولايات المتحدة الامريكية. لقد عبر الحدود الجغرافية والفواصل الثقافية. فحصت هذه الدراسة الرواية وقدمت الحجج الطريق كان عالما "مفتوحا" للفرد ليدرك حقيقة إستكماله بالعالم بأسره. وجد سال فرص عديدة ليتشابه مع البشر من إثنيات وخلفايات ثقافية مختلفة. كذلك اتاحت لسال فرص للاندماج في عناصر لاطبيعة المختلفة. تدبر سال في بعض العلاقات التي تربطه مع العوالم التي مر بها فعاش لحظات من الفهم الواضح الجلى لهذه العوالمز ساعدت بعض الفلسفات الباحث في تحليل بعض اجزاء الرواية لتحقيق اهداف البحث احدى هذه الفلسفات هي "تحقيق الذات" لاميرسون, والبيئة العميقة" لناس. خلصت الدراسة الى ان سال أصبح أكثر وعيا" وادراكا" ان هنالك تشابه بين البشر يتجاوز الاختلافات الظاهرية بينهم. أدرك سال ايضا" انه لايمكن للمرء ان يدرك نفسه ككيان منعزل عن هذا العالم المتحد .

الكلمات المفتاحية: جاك كرواك, العالم الطبيعي, وعى جديد, الطريق