



Visions of Gerard

Jack Kerouac

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"His life...ended when he was nine and the nuns of St. Louis de France Parochial School were at his bedside to take down his dying words because they'd heard his astonishing revelations of heaven delivered in catechism on no more encouragement than it was his turn to speak...."

Unique among Jack Kerouac's novels, *Visions of Gerard* focuses on the scenes and sensations of childhood—the wisdom, anguish, intensity, innocence, evil, insight, suffering, delight, and shock—as they were revealed in the short tragic-happy life of his saintly brother, Gerard. Set in Kerouac's hometown of Lowell, Massachusetts, it is an unsettling, beautiful, and sad exploration of the meaning and precariousness of existence.

Visions of Gerard Details

Date : Published 1991 by Penguin Books (first published 1958)

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Author : Jack Kerouac

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Genre : Fiction, Novels

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From Reader Review Visions of Gerard for online ebook

Michelle says

"A few fall trees reach faint red twigs to it, smoke-smells wraith to twist like ghosts in noses of morning, the saw of Boisvert Lumberyard is heard to whine at a log and whop it, the rumble of junkmen's cart on Beaulieu Street, one little kid cry far off - souls, souls, the sky receives it all."

Christina says

Visions of Gerard is a beautiful but painful read. Kerouac is always, "into" whatever he's writing, but this one just delves so much deeper, and taps into the child-like innocence he meant to convey. The concept of a child lost is never easy, but getting to know the sweet and sensitive Gerard makes you angry for his death. Still, if you make it through this book once, then you'll occasionally want or need to go back and re-read Visions of Gerard, simply to remember that such lovely sweetness could ever exist.

Come to think of it, no book has ever been so appropriately named as this one.

Jack Waters says

3.5 stars

The first installation of Jack Kerouac's "Duluoz Legend" offers a brief glimpse into the short life of his older brother, Gerard, whose death at age nine was a deep loss to Jack.

Jack viewed Gerard as a saint, and writes from that perspective throughout while he tries to cope with death, life, existence, meaning, etc, maintaining that what Gerard taught him can also be accessed through the passed-down wisdom from the past.

It's got the expected Kerouackian flourishes, although it mainly displays young childhood rather than the freewheeling characters from his later oeuvre. Much of the book is touching, which I think is an overlooked aspect of Kerouac's writing.

I plan on reading through the "Duluoz Legend" books in order, even though I've read a number of them already.

dana says

truly his saddest and most evocative work. his ability to call upon childhood memories and weave them into this fictionalized autobiography is masterful.

Brandon Bohl says

A romantic account of what it is like to grow up in a mill-town in New England. Also a beautiful tribute and imagining of life with his older brother, whom Kerouac was too young to truly know before he passed at such a young age.

Robert Hobkirk says

The framework for this novel is the inevitable death of Kerouac's 9 year old, older brother, from an incurable sickness. Although the somber backdrop was a Debbie-downer, the style was uplifting. This book is loaded with poetic prose, making it my favorite Kerouac work. It could have been labeled an epoch poem, but poetry doesn't sell, not like novels. Truman Capote said Kerouac's stuff wasn't writing, it was typing. But stick your finger anywhere in this book and read an excerpt and you will recognize that Kerouac wrote it. Do the same with Capote, and anyone could have written it. To develop such a distinctive style as Kerouac did in a field that has been so heavily plowed by so many ploughmen before is no easy task.

You see the deep respect Kerouac had for his mother, suffering so much during the ordeal she lost her teeth one by one, suffering as only a mother can suffer.

Kerouac near the end, at the funeral, writes, "I want to express somehow, 'Here and Now, I see the ecstasy,' the divine and perfect ecstasy..." For me, I don't want to see ecstasy when God's Kingdom Comes; I want to see no more 9 year olds helplessly dying.

Jon Shaw says

Best read if you are a decently fast reader. It is stream of consciousness done supremely well, but if you stop to dwell it can leave you bewildered. I'm beginning to like Kerouac more and more.

Reid says

At times, frustrating and annoying due to the writing style and language, but also touching, memorable and a tear-inducing "elegy" for his long lost nine year old elder brother.

Geoff Hayton says

By far Kerouac's most vivid, heartbreaking, and creative book. It's the book where he had to do the most writing, the most composition, the most fabrication. Gerard died when he was four--all of these "visions" had to be generated, as opposed to most of his other work which is more creative memoir. This one actually purports to be a memoir, but couldn't be. After all, what do you remember about being four? Quote something you heard when you were four years old. Kerouac takes the diaphanous shades of his memory and

tries to build from them. This is the book that should have shut Truman Capote up for good. Why it just considered his best work I don't know. Maybe because jazz has nothing to do with it.

Jeff says

I'll apologize beforehand--this is kind of a ramby, not very good review.

I really liked this book. It's my first Kerouac book. During the first half of *Visions of Gerard* I tried to quit reading it. I wondered why I was reading it and what I would get out of it. It was hard to read and a little depressing. But, I couldn't leave it. I think there was the idea of needing to know how the story ended. I think I also wanted to finish the book for finishing's sake. But, then there was the appeal of Kerouac's writing style. I'm not sure what it would be called--beat, stream of consciousness or something else. It added to the emotion of the book as his long sentences would aid in building up the anxiety of the situations in the story. As a Christian, I found the book sad, because I believe that God allows bad things to happen for our good, not to punish us. Sometimes when bad things happen, we feel like God doesn't care about us. We may feel hopeless. Some of the characters in the book seemed to succumb to the hopeless feelings. It seemed to me that the point of view that the story is told from (Jack's 4 yr old character) was somewhat helpful in reading it. The innocence of Ti Jean seemed to add hope since he failed to understand the difficulty and the pain of what was happening around him. He admired his older, sickly brother and knew that Gerard's death was an end of his suffering.

Darinda says

Read in Kerouac: *Visions of Cody*, *Visions of Gerard*, *Big Sur*.

This is a story about childhood and brothers. Jack Kerouac wrote this book about his older brother, Gerard, who died at the young age of nine. Jack clearly adored his brother, with Gerard pictured as a happy older brother who was wise beyond his years. It's a heartbreaking story of grief and coping with death and existence.

I enjoyed this work by Kerouac more than some of his other writings. Though the subject matter was different than other books he wrote, the writing style is clearly Kerouac.

From *Visions of Gerard*:

And I wonder what Gerard would have done had he lived, sickly, artistic - But by my good Jesus, with that holy face they'd have stumbled over one another to come and give him bread and breath - He left me his heart but not his tender countenance and sorrowful patience and kindly lights -

"Me when I'm big, I'm gonna be a painter of beautiful pictures and I'm gonna build beautiful bridges" - He never lived to come and face the humble problem, but he would have done it with the *noblesse tendresse* I never in my bones and dead man heart could ever show.

Matt says

I read this at 17 or 18 in one full sitting while in the waiting room at mass general hospital while my

grandmother was ailing. I had the day off from school- nothing to do, nowhere to go.

I plugged in, and was completely taken over by the story.

I've revisited it since then, but not even close to the same experience.

You know how that happens? A book will just come into your life, and BLAMMO--- you're all about it.

Then, it slowly fades away into memory....

UNTIL, of course, your Dad unearths it from your basement, the one in the house you grew up in, and plops it down in front of you unexpectedly. The smell of old New England must is all over it, and it brings you back to when you were young and growing up in the town next door from Ti Jean himself....a properly Proustian experience.

Even though I've left Jack behind as a reader, he'll always have a special place in my heart. Like an old, earnest, errant friend from highschool who still lives in the town you grew up in...

J.C. says

This book seems the most personal of Kerouac's I've read thus far. More of his family, his home and the people closest to him, not some wayward adventure somewhere. Yet it feels like he still held back at the same time, that there was more to say on the subject of his brother. no doubt it effected him in a tremendous way (duh), and the mixture of Buddhist and Catholic beliefs on Kerouac's mind are integral with all of this as well. The book is brief, tragic and sudden. There are no periods (that i could find), and instead Em dashes run throughout. It's like a sort of destiny that the end comes at such a speed, one continuous thought.

Ryan Werner says

This beginning novel in the ongoing Duluoaz Legend gives a decent glimpse into the brilliance Kerouac would later achieve, but the glimpse arrives unfashionably late.

There's a style to the prose of Jack Kerouac (1922-1969) where he's some sort of middle passage, some sort of vessel that is constantly taking and giving. His state of reverie is always emphasizing the prettiness of things, though they may be nothing more than pretty destroyed. This constant observation and absorption doesn't leave much time to spend in a single place, a trait that serves Kerouac's work well.

However, Visions of Gerard (Penguin Non-Classics, ISBN: 0140144528) suffers from the same traits that make some of Keroauc's other work a success.

Capote's Famous Quote

Most fans of Kerouac, or anyone who has taken even the tiniest look into beat-culture, have heard American author Truman Capote's (1924-1984) quote about Kerouac's work: That's not writing, that's typing.

Maybe Capote just read Visions of Gerard. To think that his comment about Kerouac merely typing instead of actually writing is directed towards the nomadic quest for beauty in On the Road or the pros and cons of indulgence as found in Big Sur is almost preposterous. Despite the triumph of Kerouac's style in his other work, Visions of Gerard is flaccid and plodding, going nowhere and moving quickly.

A Strong Finish Comes Too Late

In Visions of Gerard, only need the last twenty (or thirty, to get in a scene or two with a living Gerard) pages are necessary to see what Kerouac was trying to accomplish in kicking off the Duluo legend: the loss of maybe not a saint, but the idea of sainthood and how it would effect Jack Duluo/Sal Paradise/Jack Kerouac in the years to come.

Aside from a few good lines here and there, the pages that precede the end are nearly worthless. Kerouac spends too much time in one place, spinning his faux-poetic prose into nothing much at all. The word-web of beauty that wasn't.

Ol' Jack tends to get boring and annoying in his struggle to type through the thoughts in his head. For the diehards, go ahead and read Visions of Gerard. It goes fast, and the last 20-30 pages are made of the sad wonder that only Kerouac can deliver.

When he starts writing through his thoughts instead of typing through them, he finally gives the reader an opportunity to see Gerard as the fallen angel he may have always been. Unfortunately, by the time Kerouac falls into his groove, the reader is already lost and uninterested, moving away from the same commonplace things that Kerouac rallies against in his other works.

Euan says

Few authors can write like this nowadays, or anyadays. I pick page 48 and page 49 to tell story of this novel in his words.

"Nonetheless, lots of pork chops and beans came to me via my old man's efforts in the world of business which for all the fact that't is only the world of adult baseball, procures tightwad bread from hidden cellars the locks of which are guarded by usurping charlatans who know how easy it is to enslave people with a crust of bread withheld - He, Emil, went bustling and bursting in his neckties to find the money to pay rents, coal bills - Ashes into bottom of furnace, that Ma herself shovelled out into pails, and struggled to the ashcan with, were ashes representative of Poppa's efforts"
