



Tristessa

Jack Kerouac , Aram Saroyan (Foreword)

[Download now](#)

[Read Online](#) ➔

Tristessa

Jack Kerouac , Aram Saroyan (Foreword)

Tristessa Jack Kerouac , Aram Saroyan (Foreword)

Tristessa is the name with which Kerouac baptized Esperanza Villanueva, a Catholic Mexican young woman, a prostitute and addict to certain drugs, whom he fell in love with during one of his stays in Mexico -a country that he frequently visited - by the middle of the fifties. Wrapped in a spiritual atmosphere that expresses the yearnings of Kerouac to find himself, "Tristessa", translated by Jorge García- Robles, a specialist in the beat generation, is the story of the strange loving relationship that the author had with Esperanza, as well as the significant description of the atmosphere that surrounded it, which depicts some key places of Mexico City back then. Hero of the beat generation, the creator of a model of life that would be followed by thousands of young people in the entire world, a sui generis mystic, "Tristessa", which until recently was not known in Spanish and that was published in English, is one of his fresher and better achieved works.

Tristessa es el nombre con el que Kerouac bautizó a Esperanza Villanueva, una joven mexicana católica, prostituta y adicta a ciertas drogas, de quien se enamoró durante una de sus estancias en México, país que visitaba con frecuencia, a mediados de los años cincuenta. Tristessa, en la traducción de Jorge García-Robles, especialista en la generación beat, es el relato de la extraña relación amorosa que tuvo con Esperanza, así como la significativa descripción del ambiente que la rodeaba, en la que aparecen retratos de algunos lugares clave de la Ciudad de México: Plaza Garibaldi, Niño Perdido, la colonia Roma. Escritor «al rojo vivo», como lo calificó Henry Miller, héroe de la generación beat, creador de un modelo de vida que seguirían miles de jóvenes en todo el mundo, místico sui generis, Tristessa, que hasta hace poco no se conocía en español y que se publicó en inglés apenas hace diez años, es una de sus obras más frescas y mejor logradas.

Tristessa Details

Date : Published June 1st 1992 by Penguin Books (first published 1960)

ISBN : 9780140168112

Author : Jack Kerouac , Aram Saroyan (Foreword)

Format : Paperback 96 pages

Genre : Fiction, Classics, Literature

 [Download Tristessa ...pdf](#)

 [Read Online Tristessa ...pdf](#)

Download and Read Free Online Tristessa Jack Kerouac , Aram Saroyan (Foreword)

From Reader Review Tristessa for online ebook

Aleksandar Šegrt says

motiv zaljubljenosti u kurvu zavisnu od morfijuma mi je bio obe?avaju?i, ali dosta tanko je ovo.

Joana says

A escrita subversiva de Kerouac prende-me profundamente. Este é um daqueles livros que nos engana, por variados motivos. Apesar da sua finura e de aparentar ser um livro sem grande conteúdo (a escrita subversiva engana-nos neste sentido) é um livro denso e cheio de entrelinhas. Kerouac escreve ao ritmo do tempo, do álcool, das drogas e da tesão e, por isso, é sempre tudo tão rápido, tão efusivo, tão fragmentário - afinal não é a vida assim mesmo?

Uma bela introdução a um dos grandes da Beat Generation que me fez ficar a ansiar por mais.

"We are nothing.

- Tomorrow we may be die.

We are nothing.

- You and me."

George Ballin says

What to say about Tristessa? It's a beautiful book but definately not for everyone. If you are ok with drugs, prostitution and despair this is a book for you. Needlessly to say I am.

Dewey says

As my twenties dwindle away, I've prioritized reading the remaining works of Jack Kerouac that interest and intrigue me before I find his style intolerable by virtue of age, particularly those written about other countries. Tristessa is one such work, set during two of Kerouac's frequent visits to Mexico City, and is centered around the love he had for a Mexican junkie who goes by that name in this novella.

Though feeling like it lacks the purpose that fueled On the Road and the Dharma Bums, Tristessa is, upon further reading, composed of the similar Kerouacian ingredients that make those two stories unique - adventure, Dharma-Bum-Buddhism and Kerouacs irreplaceable voice. But there are some other key differences too. Tristessa is a grittier tale, and one that is hard to imagine having been written before the Summer of Love. What I found most rewarding, however, is Kerouacs perceptiveness of Mexican culture, which he hides behind his carefree, adjective-laden voice but it is still there nevertheless. It is surprisingly deep for a writer like Kerouac and being one who studied cultural theory I found it to be a delight, even if it lacks the same type of engine that keeps On the Road going at the fast but steady pace that it does. It is also an interesting follow-up to the Dharma Bums, as it reflects upon the consequences of Kerouacs "Buddhist"

lifestyle, though whether the consequences are real or Kerouac's own personal invention are subject to debate.

This novella also challenges the idea that Kerouac was a misogynist. After all, it is quite inconceivable that a genuine misogynist would have such strong affections for a woman like Tristessa. Of course it's not an ideal portrayal of a woman either, but that in and of itself is not misogyny if it's not woman hatred, which it clearly isn't.

All in all, however, *Tristessa* is an essential read for any Kerouac fans and readers who can't get enough of Mexico. I liked how gritty it was: it is perhaps the only truly non-puritan story I can think of from an American writer that succeeds at being natural (though Kerouac is French Canadian too). But reading the *Dharma Bums* first is probably a good idea.

Mel says

Tristessa was breath-takingly gorgeous! I realised half way through he'd just been sitting in a junkie's room in Mexico City (with Burroughs) and it had been fascinating! It was so beautifully written, and touching and sad and everything that I love best about Kerouac.

Evan says

Tristessa, you wily little book flighty as a cat, I should practice Satyagraha and resist my sinister urges to hoo haa your ever-loving Holy graces and wonder in the traces of your manna, all manna of manna, all eat-table and unbeatable and good and thirst-slaking, forsaking my faculties and reveling in the alacrity of all things, like you Mr. K., chronicler of the haloed hollowed hollow-cheeked hollerers of Holiness.

Kerouac, you sing-song like sacred ping-pong, rhythmically and hymnally and hip hoppily in your cadences, and it sometimes seems like an incandescent incantation; an overpowering poetry of the putrid, you leap across chasms to bridge the spasms and orgasms of the morphine-morphed organisms into the divine om of the universally om-less. Your angels are skeletal and vomitous and not long for terra firma; they are lambs enamored of the calamitous; sheep leading themselves into deep revelries, seizing the moments of temporal and eternal sleep, deep dreamers pixellated and driven by ritual fixes.

Or not.

All right, pardon the Kerouac-i-ness; the Kero-whackiness..

For most of the way I couldn't decide whether it was best to read this book slowly and savor all the words or read it fast the way it was written, since the idea of the narrative is presumably an impressionistic one which requires one to pull back from the painting, eg. Seraut, and not fixate on the individual pixels. I decided on the swift approach partly because, when shorn of its pyrotechnics, there's not much to it all.

I liked Kerouac's *On the Road* mainly because I felt like it took me on a journey filled with limitless possibilities, whereas here we have mainly a static claustrophobic milieu occupied by junkies engaging in the mundane. Kerouac's extolling of virtually everything as wonderful, including he and his friends' appalling

lack of responsibility, struck me as gleefully Whitmanesque in *On the Road* and thus I was able to enjoy it, but here, I don't much see the charms of Tristessa or her self-destructive coterie, nor would any sober person. I sometimes think it takes an alcoholic and a junkie to see the romanticism in alcoholics and junkies. Otherwise I would tend to tell them to get the fuck out of my house, which is something I have done before.

It's debatable as a piece of poetic prose and sorely lacking as a piece of on-the-ground reportage, mainly codifying the usual stereotypes about Mexico.

And he walks in the rain a lot.

Stuart Ayris says

Tristessa. What a beautiful name - you can't say it aloud without feeling a sense of wonder, a sense of peace, a feeling that things are slowing down in the most perfect of ways. Yet this book (not sure it's a novel as it's not even a hundred pages yet not sure still it's a book as it's more like a film, a faded, dream sodden broken breaking film) is far from wonderful, far from peaceful and if pain is perfection then it's perfect indeed. Tristessa is what it's called and Tristessa is the name of the woman around whom Jack Kerouac bases this shattered piece of brilliance.

So what happens? What's the narrative? I could tell you (briefly) but it's not important. It would be like describing the meal of a hungry man when what is really at stake is the unbelievable hunger.

I have to confess that where Jack Kerouac is concerned I'm somewhat narrow-minded. I adore every single word, dictionary-wise and made-up, he ever wrote. Yeah I see that perhaps, particularly in Tristessa more than any other of his works, that he was a voyeur, that he observed the poor and the pained, the destitute and the intoxicated through the eyes of an author rather than the eyes of a buddha helper compassionate man. There are times in Tristessa when I just cringed - this fallen drug-addled angel that just needed medicine and help but Jack just sulks when he thinks she won't let him make love to her. He should take her to the hospital yet he takes her to a bar and glares as she takes in the eyes of others. He wonders at her blood on his coat and thinks nothing of the fact she just walks away other than the fact he wants her in his bed.

Ask *The Dust* by John Fante is the archetypal novel of the struggling artist who is so wrapped up in his own wonder that he treats others like mere props upon a stage. Tristessa runs it close. In the former there is irony - in Tristessa there is just sadness.

Jack Kerouac, mate. You wrote the most honest stuff I ever read - paranoid, selfish, brutal, magnificent. You made up your own words and you broke yourself to pieces in the process.

As I read Tristessa I just wanted to sneak in and take Jack out of that mad Mexico drug madness freakdom and take him to a park and see the sky and feel breath and open up to the true unchaotic wonder. Tristessa saddened me beyond belief. That doesn't mean you shouldn't read it. It's a snapshot documentary time in the life of a man who in my own weird world will always be more real than the next step. And it will always be to books such as this that I will turn when I am entirely lost. At three bottles of wine for a tenner at the corner shop that is likely to be fairly often...

Miguel says

"não devias ter feito o que fizeste, Senhor, que nos despertas do sono, não devias ter jogado o jogo do sofrimento-e-morte com os filhos que povoam o teu espírito, não devias ter dormido, devias ter assobiado a pedir música e dançado sozinho sobre uma nuvem, a berrar às estrelas que criaste, oh Deus, nem nunca devias ter congelado e dado os últimos retoques com todo o esmero nos teus filhos, nós, pequenos sofreadores delicados e amalucados - Pobre Bull, chora desalmadamente - parece uma criança, quando está a ressacar, e eu choro também, e Tristessa nem sequer deixa que as lágrimas lhe aflorem aos olhos..."

Tristessa passa-se na Cidade do México e, parecendo ser um excerto recortado de um outro trabalho maior, aquele a que Kerouac chamou a Lenda de Duluoz, à semelhança da restante obra, conta a história da relação que estabeleceu com uma bela mexicana toxicod dependente.

Tem duas partes, sendo que a primeira (a maior), mais descritiva que a segunda, consegue ser um desafio. O glossário da edição da Relógio D'Água sempre ajuda, em todo o caso. Aconselho que não desistam da primeira parte, uma vez que a segunda é arrebatadora.

Não é uma história de amor convencional. Jack sabia disso e orgulhava-se das notas que compunham esta obra.

Não recomendo que se comece por aqui, para quem esteja interessado em ler Kerouac. Pode ser um tanto frustrante, especialmente na primeira parte.

Foi uma boa experiência, fluída como é natural no autor, que faço questão de reler no futuro para compreender o texto em toda a sua dimensão.

Jesse Osborne says

While it was morphine-addled and convoluted, all of it was breathtakingly beautiful. The way Tristessa loves everything, cares about nothing, wants so badly to understand but at the same time is addicted to not knowing. The way Jack worships her, her name becomes a deity, Tristessa. He loved her, but in the age-old "could never be with her" way. It was heartbreaking, a reflection of the impermanence of living/loving, the inevitability of loss, but also the effortless beauty of the "live fast, die young" lifestyle. I would recommend, especially if you're a fan of Kerouac's prose because it reads like poetry, like a faded film strip, flawed and gorgeous.

J.P. says

Jack Kerouac is one of my all-time favorite writers, and a prime reason why I became a writer myself. The man wrote a slew of classic titles. However, Tristessa ain't one of them.

I feel like a heel for saying that, but it's only true. Tristessa is 96 pages of Jack Duluoz (Kerouac) mooning over a broken-down morphine junkie/whore who couldn't give a sh*t less about him. Kerouac compares this

woman, who's based on a real-life fling he had down in Mexico City, to everyone from Ava Gardner and Grace Kelly to the Virgin Mary. Honestly? Tristessa spends the book shooting up junk, being stoned on junk, being blacked-out from junk, being sick from junk and wandering the city looking for her next fix. That is, when she's not rooking various men (Jack included) out of money for her next fix, turning tricks to earn money for her next fix and making overblown pronouncements about the cruelty and pointlessness of life in Spanglish. Whatever JK saw in this woman does not translate to the page at all.

And here, the character of Duluoz is a hopeless fall guy for Tristessa. He tags after her like a puppy dog, throwing money at her, guzzling booze, taking the occasional shot of junk himself and hoping for a sexual encounter with Tristessa that never happens. The closest he ever gets is a light peck on the lips---and swoons over that like a schoolboy receiving his very first kiss. I found myself actually getting mad at him for being such a doormat.

And as far as Kerouac's style here? This is JK at his spontaneous-composing, self-indulgent worst. In other books, Kerouac's quicksilver style makes his prose breathe and sing. In Tristessa, he just sounds like a guy who got very high, sat down at the keyboard and promptly forgot everything he learned in junior high school English. At one point, JK actually admits that he's lost his train of thought. Parts of this book, especially toward its end, are pure gibberish. And the book doesn't so much end as simply stop---JK intimates that Duluoz finally gets a clue and decides to head home, abandoning Tristessa to her fate. But this is lost in a slew of yadda-yadda beatnik nonsense. And surprisingly, Kerouac actually uses the term "beatnik" here to describe a brunette junkie girl he spies during one of numerous visits to drug dens. (In the several JK biographies I've read, it was reported that Kerouac hated the word and never used it himself.)

I suppose I can give old Jack points for rendering a vivid picture of the environment in which Tristessa and company live. Kerouac was always a great painter of word-pictures and, at least in that respect, he doesn't disappoint. And if you're looking for a cautionary example of the bleak, empty and pointless lives that junkies lead, you've found it here. But is it worth slogging through a 96-page masturbation dream to get it? I say no.

If you're new to Kerouac, DO NOT START HERE. Try *On The Road*, *The Dharma Bums* or his true masterpiece, *Big Sur*. JK's penultimate effort, *Satori in Paris*, and his final novel, *Vanity of Duluoz*, are also vibrant books which are well worth the time and effort.

If you're a Kerouac completist, then fix yourself some strong coffee, put Charlie Parker on your stereo and dive in to Tristessa. But don't expect much. When the best thing about a book is its brevity, that's a problem.

Timb says

i never want to take morphine ever

Harish Venkatesan says

This is maybe a little more rambling/unstructured than usual for Kerouac (!), but overall, it's quintessential kerouacian stream-of-consciousness prose that's worth a read for when he finally hits his stride mid-book.

"since beginningless time and into the never-ending future, men have loved women without telling them, and the Lord has loved them without telling, and the void is not the void because there's nothing to be empty of."

Joshua Nomen-Mutatio says

My ratings for several books are based on how I felt about them when I read them. Several books that I loved/"really liked" I don't feel similarly about any longer, to put as simply and as fairly as possible. Kerouac is probably a perfect example of this. I loved reading about the melancholy psychological and geographical wanderings of Mr. Kerouac and his friends when I was 15 years old. It spoke to me in that way that people will describe books like *On The Road* and *Catcher in the Rye* as speaking to them and others for as long as those books continue to be spoken about. There's no real mystery as to why these kind of books appeal to so many people crossing/constructing that cliché, proverbial bridge between childhood and adulthood. I can still remember how pleasurable and edifying it was to read these books but I remember it with varying levels of self-embarrassment and hesitate to leap straight into that lukewarm pool of sentimentality concerning these books and the cluttered feelings and memories they invoke. And I hesitate, and continue...

Benjamin says

I myself can barely tolerate the writing of Kerouac. Too many run on sentences and drug addled thought processes. It's not that I absolutely hate it, but I think much of his popularity is based on name only without any regard to the finer details of his chaotic and exhausting prose. I feel as if I'm giving this a generous rating, based solely on the rare parts I actually happened to enjoy, while much of it was wasted effort to me. It was, and is, mainly an exercise of patience.

Rand says

Evidence of a great talent in slow decline, but still a fun read nonetheless. Reminiscent of his shorter works such as *The Scripture of the Golden Eternity* as well as *Mexico City Poems* and *Pomes All Sizes*. Kerouac's at his painterly best here, portraying both the horrors of opiate dependence and the despondency of life in a country without a strong economic base wholly without commentary. It is up to the reader to draw their own conclusions from this slim novella.

This book's place within the "DuLouz Legend" is truncated—it occurs within the whole of the time depicted in *On the Road* while beginning after the Dharma Bums with its middle beginning after *Desolation Angels*. For those unfamiliar with Jack Kerouac, DuLouz was one of the many alter egos he used in his many pseudo-autobiographical narratives. Also, he was an unrelenting drunk and unabashed & self-avowed misogynist who became instrumental in introducing ideas of Eastern spirituality to the burgeoning counterculture in the West in the latter half of the last century. This particular book is a better place to start than his most famous, *On the Road*, as it serves as a distillation of the multiple tensions which motivated him as an author and as a human being. It is at turns nihilistic (*soul eats soul in the general emptiness*) and hyper-aware (*Not one of the vast accumulations of conceptions from beginningless time, through the present and into the never ending future, not one of them is graspable*) and humble (*trying to remember my place and position in eternity*) and beautiful (*bodies in beds and the beatable surge when you go into your beloved deep and the whole world goes with you*).

As a text it is interesting for the sympathetic (yet ultimately tragic) portrayal of the title character, whom the narrator steadfastly resists the urge to take to bed throughout the course of the narrative—a more urgent need to transcend previous instances concupiscence is at times cited though there is no sustained discussion of this. From the exposition, the narrator views Tristessa as symbol of every woman he's ever harbored lust for and seeks to "save" her by enabling her drug habit; all while recognizing that her habit (which in time becomes his as well, briefly supplanting his alcoholism) is not sustainable but just her way of overcoming the pain which she endured by virtue of being a beautiful young woman in an economically impoverished patriarchal society. For those not in touch with their Latin roots, the word *tristesse* means only the most super-emo brand of the sads.

The edition I read was put out by McGraw Hill, the same publisher who did many of the textbooks I read as a wee one. (view spoiler)

Only the unsayable divine word. Which is not a word but a mystery. At the root of the mystery the separation of one world from another by a sword of light.

Peck says

The story has a power that just carries the reader along. I felt almost like the invisible companion of Kerouac shadowing him through the wet saturday night streets of Mexico city and into the lives of Tristessa and her companions. There are quite a few parts that I can't make any head or heel of but they for once - and it surprises me - they don't matter; they don't dampen anything that is beautiful about the stream of consciousness I was riding on.

Emily Seaman says

I would actually rate this book a -1. Hated it. Read to page 20 TWICE (it's a 97 page book) and couldn't understand anything that was going on. Something about roosters. Call me crazy, but I require books with punctuation.

Robin Friedman says

Many readers who love Kerouac consider "Tristessa" one of his finest novels. "Tristessa" has become the book of Kerouac that I return to most often. The book was initially rejected for publication, and it first appeared in paperback in 1960 following the success of "On the Road". The book initially may have been conceived as part of "On the Road." "Tristessa" is written in Kerouac's "spontaneous prose" style, with long rhythmic improvisational sentences and the feel of jazz. It is short, but deceptively complex, introspective, romantic, and sad. When I first read the book, I was taken by the descriptive passages and didn't pay much attention to the progression of the story. In my most recent reading, I got more from the story itself.

"Tristessa" consists of two short parts, each of which tells the story of the first-person narrator, Jack, as he makes two visits to Mexico City separated by about a year. Jack is in love with a morphine-ridden prostitute

named Tristessa. Part 1 of the book, "Trembling and Chaste" develops the ambiguous relationship between Jack and Tristessa. The reader meets Tristessa in her shabby room, surrounded by other addicts, including her supplier, a man named El Indio, and by cats, dogs, chickens, and by a crucifix over her bed. Jack is with her, but he leaves and takes the reader on a tour through the underside of Mexico City, rife with poverty, drugs, and prostitutes. The scenes with Tristessa are interlaced with discussions of suffering, religion and Buddhism. Jack is in love with Tristessa, but he has taken a vow of sexual chastity which he reluctantly tries to honor. Tristessa appears to be in love with Jack.

In the year that intervenes between the two parts of the novel, Jack works in a fire tower in the Northwest -- this story is told in Kerouac's "Desolation Angels" When he returns to Mexico City as narrated in part 2 of the book, Tristessa's life has deteriorated as she has become more hopelessly addicted. Kerouac's friend Old Bull Gaines is also in love with Tristessa as is her supplier of drugs, El Indio. Jack tries to rescue Tristessa from injury, overdose and possible death as he stays with her through the streets of Mexico City and tries to find her a home. He loses her to Gaines and realizes the impossibility of their relationship -- which, in the published text, remains unconsummated. At the close of the book, Jack dreams of writing "long sad tales about people in the legend of my life... This part is my part of the movie". And he invites the reader "let's hear yours."

"Tristessa" is a short, highly personal, and deeply moving novel. Kerouac told the story of his own troubled life in a series of novels that have stayed with me. Every person has their own story, albeit not necessarily that of the beats. Kerouac has told his, and he has challenged the reader to understand and to respond with sympathy and joy to his or her own story: "lets hear yours."

Robin Friedman

7jane says

[which I feel is part of her decline in the later book (hide

Frances Margaret says

Tristessa - the way it rolls down your tongue like a hiss, escaping like a slow death, is reminiscent of Kerouac's muse from Mexico. A long-time junky, dead eyes, dead love, dancing her way to ruins, untouchable.

One takes from this book the difficult but obvious truth, lessons greater than unrequited love. To fall in love with a junky is to step into a black hole. To live with a junky, one must become a junky. So all throughout this thing we have Jack tiptoeing around and against the void with his bottle of alcohol and notebook of poems, taking us through dizzying streets of men and women in rags, dead animals in ditches, morphine shooters in dark alleys and beloved Tristessa - sick without a shot, sick with goofballs...

It's a sad, painful, brilliant novella. A good entry to Kerouac's works, if one may ask. He is a true jazz writer, making good use of odd notes in language and still have it come out as music. Not many can achieve that. He is to be read in rhythm. In this book, Kerouac writes an ode to lost things, in the process of losing one. La tristesse durera.

