THE BEATS: THE REPRESENTATION OF A BATTERED GENERATION

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THE BEATS: THE REPRESENTATION OF A BATTERED GENERATION

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ABSTRACT

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In the 1950's and 60's, a new era was marked in poetry; it no longer dealt with nature or love or even family, but with controversial social issues. A group of battered poets, who became frustrated with the constant crushing of people's individuality and freedom, decided to speak up. They called themselves The Beat Generation; they represented everything that is beautiful, truthful, and serene, which was revolutionary at the time. Allen Ginsberg was one of the founding fathers of this group of writers. His poetry mirrored the constant social and cultural oppression of the American people. This thesis discusses the contemporary American poet Allen Ginsberg and his views on life, society, cultural, and politically controversial issues. Allen Ginsberg’s poetry speaks volumes about individual freedom and love.
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INTRODUCTION

It is not easy to reach enlightenment or fulfillment in life, but at the moment when people do, they experience a sense of clarity that no one will ever know, a clarity that lets them speak up with no fear or remorse, as a constant relief from societal, cultural and political controversies. But how does one seek such a thing, or what is the tool that motivates us to embark on such a long journey, a mechanism of communicating issues that is not only close to one person, but also to the public? One person comes to mind, Allen Ginsberg, the contemporary American poet who used poetry to convey strong messages about American culture and politics. He sought truth through the power of the written word. Poetry, to him, was a way of life, a pathway that allowed him expresses his resentment towards his country and what it had become, an aggressively conformist society. His strong belief in individuality, love, freedom of speech and actions made Ginsberg produce the most powerful poetry.

World War II altered the political alignment and social structure of the world. Such an impact was evident in the United States; it changed the American way of life and questioned the normality of life. The mentality and general atmosphere of the nation was such that people constantly discussed the atomic bomb and the holocaust. These subjects were also the main themes of songs and political speeches which marked and entered the American folklore. Norman Mailer talked about the culture in postwar America in his article “The White Negro.” Mailer stated, “for the first time in civilized history, perhaps for the first time in all of history, we have been forced to
live with the suppressed knowledge that …we might still die” (Par 1). The consciousness of Americans had shifted; they questioned the normality of life and the changes that were forced upon them.

The war proved to be a powerful, altering force, Especially on American literature as well as social and cultural issues. It had a great influence on literary production, which resulted in Realism and Contemporary American literature. Like any other event, the War had its effect on the genre, but unlike any other situation, World War II proved to be the most effective. Concerns about the atomic bomb or the holocaust were used in songs or on television shows; the mentality of Americans changed from one of serenity to the constant anxiety and fear of the unknown. The dread that nothing was perpetual any more paved the way for a new kind of literature. Mailer wrote in "The White Negro", “our psyche was subjected itself to the intolerable anxiety that death being causeless, life was causeless as well, and time deprived of cause and effect had come to a stop” (Par 2). The reality that people dealt with on a daily basis resulted in a new writing style; the language changed to be more American, both written and spoken. There were newly invented words and phrases were evident in novels and poetry, such as "hung up" (Kerouac 72) or "duck and cover" (The Atomic Café), as well as the utilization of multiple dialects to let their writing get closer to readers and interact with them more openly.

Realism in American literature paved way to the next generation, of the Contemporary literature of the 1950's. In this era, writers and scholars approached subjects and themes that challenged their readers to feel and comprehend what it meant to be an American. Contemporary poets took an in-depth look at cultural, political, and philosophical issues that were deemed controversial, in which they stated that "the only reality is love" and there is only "one law which [is]
understanding oneself" (Ginsberg 26), to be able to see clearly and gain self-realization. They shocked their audience with the strong use of language and the blunt discussion of taboo subjects. This is what made this generation of writers different than their predecessors. Resentment towards a culture that repressed the person's individuality and freedom was talked about more openly with no fear or regard to their government. That group of contemporary Americans came to identify themselves as the "Beat Generation"; they were the most honest and outspoken scholars of their generation.

Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac were the founding fathers of the Beat Generation. Ginsberg and Kerouac met at Columbia University in 1942. Their love and respect for individuality made them reach a clarity and understanding of life. Kerouac argued in his article "The Origins of the Beat Generation" that they represented the unified voice of freedom, and their work stood for peace and connectedness (69-76). While the generation started as a rebellious movement, it was also a "group of new American men intent" (Kerouac 70) on representing the individual. The Beat poets always called for spiritual Catholicism; but not in its religious form, but in seeking truth and justice in life that could set the soul free (Ginsberg 127).

The Beats did not destroy lives, but acquired inner personality. They strongly believed in the "wild self-believing individuality" (Kerouac 72) that started to disappear after World War II, so they were calling the people’s attention to act and live their lives in accordance with what they believed in, to not allow anyone to dictate how they should live their lives. Kerouac, Ginsberg, Snyder and many other Beats stood for enlightenment. Through understanding the inner individuality a person could reach fulfillment in life. Furthermore, the Beats believed that by seeking
individually the person could become fully aware of reality and thus become truly free from any social, cultural and political constraints as they did in their poetry.
ALLEN GINSBERG AND THE BEAT GENERATION

The Beats were a radical group of poets who saw right through the fog of a possible corrupted life that led the basic American to lose his soul, and probably his humanity, started to speak out. They sought the celebration of humanity and they called for the liberation of the soul (Raskin 209). Through their strong-willed poetry, they communicated their fears and anxieties towards an unclear future. They sought the truth by using their poetry as a means of speaking to Americans to wake them up and open their eyes to the world around them. They encouraged Americans to search deep down inside themselves and seek their inner individuality without fear of any social or cultural reprimand.

The Beats’ poetry acted as a declaration of independence to marginalized people. Their representation of strong behavior toward a future that is unsettled made their work function as a document that led the generation to reach freedom. Beats’ poems were considered as a document that defended the peoples’ freedom of love and declared their independence from oppression, thus becoming a mirror image of the Declaration of Independence. The Beats’ poetry has been referred to as "declaratory writings," in which the writings express the importance of individuality and the right that each person has to voice their opinion without being prosecuted. They stood for truth, beauty and serenity. The Beat Generation strongly believed in releasing the inner self from the constraint of their society, because through the suffering the total enlightenment of the soul accomplished (Hoover XXVII).
The uniqueness of the Beat Generation was apparent in the way they represented their message. They expressed themselves by implementing other elements that strengthened their stance. The strong expressive language, auditory presentation of the poem, and even body and hand movements were considered some of the important features of the Beat Generation. Each performance, in itself, carried an extra emphasis on their poetry. For instance, "go fuck yourself," or "get fucked" are verbal literary techniques that help in conveying their feelings (Ginsberg 13, 39). The obscene language that they used in their verse was a necessity to show how they were dedicated in spreading awareness through people, that the true self cannot be a fixed identity but a free wondering soul (Raskin 190). The Beats’ were, and always will be, the strongest literary thinkers of their generation and many to come, especially in terms of the challenges they made to the literary culture.

The poets of this generation saw that their mission was to stand for individualism; the famous names among the Beats were Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs, Gary Snyder and many other intellectual writers who took upon themselves the duty to speak out for individualism. Ginsberg's poem *Howl* and Kerouac's novel *On the Road* are the most recognizable works of that era, and were considered the "pocket Bibles of the generation", and that is what Raskin identified with in that era by stating that it gave the younger generation a sense of identity after the War (XI). The Beats’ work offered a refuge for people in that era. The poets spoke the shared fears and anxiety of the masses. They showed that the written word is mightier than the sword (Baym 2632).

Allen Ginsberg was born in 1926 in New Jersey into a Russian Jewish family. He was the son of an English Teacher and established poet, Louis Ginsberg. The relationship between the Ginsbergs was of a mutual love and respect. Ginsberg got his
love of poetry from his father, who used to recite Emily Dickinson or Longfellow around the house (qtd. in Raskin 190). At the start of his poetry career, Allen Ginsberg did not send a copy of *Howl* to his father, because of the "explicit nature" (qtd. in Raskin 191). He respected his father far too much to shock him with the language, but after reading *Howl and Other Poems*, Ginsberg's father wrote back saying "it is a great poem full of energy" (Ginsberg 1995). Their relationship proved that it exceeded any jealousy or resentment, and that the elder Ginsberg recognized the greatness of his son's work without paying any attention to the strong language that Ginsberg used in most of his poems.

Even though Ginsberg loved his mother dearly, he struggled with her mental illness. When Ginsberg was a child, he used to spend a great deal of time with his mother. But as his mother’s illness progressed, Ginsberg started to withdraw from her. For a part of his life, Ginsberg ended up fearing the possibility that one day he would end up exactly like his mother. When Ginsberg's mother passed away, the Beat in him confronted the pain of losing a loved one by commemorating her memory by writing a poem. Ginsberg wrote *Kaddish* in 1956 which means “a ritual prayer of mourning” in Hebrew. The poem illustrates the Buddhist approach to life that Ginsberg believed in, which is behind every negative or positive situation, fulfilment can be obtained. That the personal journey of sorrows leads a person’s spirituality to freedom from any secular constraints, especially of societal norms.

Ginsberg’s official education took place at Columbia University, but in his sophomore year Ginsberg was expelled because of his first representation of an artistic voice. In 1945, the young Ginsberg sketched and wrote obscene phrases to demonstrate his opinion of the cleaning lady, who did not do her job very well. Two years before that, Ginsberg met and befriended Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs.
(Baym 2632). Their friendship paved the way for the success of their experiment: "the public, direct, performative, ecstatic, agonized, oral, and incantatory writing" came to be known as the intellectual literary movement of the battered souls, and thus, the Beat Generation came to be (Hoover XXX). The medium of their communication became poetry, and the poets used it as a way to express their deepest personal issues, or what it came to be known as a confessional of the cultural, political and social critique (Collins 3).

Throughout his literary life, Ginsberg came to be known as the father of Post-Modern American literature. His continuous concern for a greater awareness and individuality was the reason behind the raw but beautiful crafted poems. He stood for justice and equality among people in society, where each individual has the right to live his/her life according to what they saw fit, with no one dictating how to live or whom to love. He was regarded as the mind and voice of the generation who spoke without fear (Raskin 3). In several interviews, Ginsberg stated that "the entire society is nuts" or "the gay thing in that community was regarded as abomination", he was a pacifist who never believed in violence, and who always stood for the defense of individuality, and a call for a sense of uniqueness. His work called upon the therapeutic quality of poetry (Ginsberg 1997).

Ginsberg's poetry was the drug that fueled him. He thought of poetry as an induced state of mind in which he got high on life and the beauty that set him, and his readers, free. Through his traveling years between 1948 and 1956, Ginsberg exchanged letters with his friend Gary Snyder. In these letters one sees the true essence of Ginsberg's eternal love of poetry, and how he always spoke of his literary works as a bridge that connects people with their inner selves. In each letter that was exchanged, Ginsberg, or Snyder, would start relating how far they have gone into the
journey of self-discovery, and state their resentment towards politics and how it overshadowed Americans. But suddenly, with the mention of poetry, one can sense a shift in their spirit; their tone changed to a serene and peaceful voice. For example, in one of Snyder’s letters he said, “I can see a solid intelligent style […….] out of the straight emotional sound of Howl” (10), or at sometimes, where Ginsberg stated, “that poetry is the perfect pieces for amber-preservation for future and to clear up present day bullshit” (27). Poetry was a personal matter that can exceed any limits. The poem was calling the attention of the masses to the poet’s search of consciousness towards the "hidden fact of reality" (Ginsberg 40). Poetry was an important part of the Beats' life as it called for the equality of people and their free will.

There is no denying that the Beats' poetry, especially Ginsberg's, was all about language: the word should be free of any obligation and it should stand on its own and push the reader or listener, to go beyond the language. The Beats’ poetry was a cry for freedom and the use of rebellious language was an action towards a cultural and political oppression, and that was the visionary movement of the contemporary Beat Poets (Kerouac 73). In multiple interviews, Ginsberg stated that "poetry is the only place where you get a persons' subjective truth, what he wants people to know", and that the "poem is like a continuous broadcast"(Ginsberg 1995) that can go on for years representing the generation. For Ginsberg, as well as the Beats in general, poetry showed a commitment to their cause which is liberating the individual, to be free to express their uniqueness, love and free will.

Allen Ginsberg was the most famous literary thinker of his generation. His works were translated in many languages unlike other writers of his generation. In 1956, Ginsberg read his poem Howl for the first time in a small bookstore in San Francisco, in 1956 the book Howl and Other Poems was published by City Lights
Books (Raskin 191). *Howl* addressed Carl Solomon, whom Ginsberg met when he was in mental institution; the poem confronted the life of Americans and the new generation's issues. *Howl* was written when Ginsberg was in despair about a culture that has no future. It contemplated the fear that most Americans went through after World War II. It was "a self-mocking journal" of the personal life of Ginsberg and the life around him. He stated a couple of times that it was "for my own privacy" (Ginsberg 1995). Little did he know that his poem would be marked for ever as the starting point of the Beat literary movement.

Two years after its publication, *Howl* was prosecuted for obscenity. The language that Ginsberg used infuriated the American society in 1957, further, the language, the frankness of issues such as gay relationships, or the use of drugs, enraged the societal figures to take a stand against this book, and try to ban it forever. The defense attorney proved that *Howl and Other Poems* was a wrathful judgment by the author towards "situations that are visible but not seen" (Ginsberg 41). He proved that Ginsberg's poem was a harsh judgment towards the life that he was experiencing. It was Ginsberg’s stance on a changing nation as he saw it and expressed in his own language that marked "a new generation in the United States, where anyone anywhere" (Baym 3) has the right to express their liberal ideas without being judged for it. "Society was so murderous" (Mailer *par* 3) because it called for a unified soul, there was no one different from the other and each individual resembles other images of people. The Beats demanded from their generation to stand up and speak out for their individuality. They beseeched people to seek their singularity, and stand against the society and culture that oppressed their individualism.
SOCIAL, CULTURAL AND POLITICAL GINSBERG

Allen Ginsberg's poetry always challenged the social norms of America that constrained the individual. *Howl* represented Ginsberg's stance on how he regarded his society as being a force that choked individuality, forcing them to be swallowed by emptiness. And that is exactly how he opened up his poem:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix, angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night. (9)

This new country had erased individualism and marked each person as being the exact replica of one another. So the "angel headed hipster" stands for the Beat Generation, a group of people who decided to stand and represent the muffled sound of individuality, to tell people of their generation enough is enough, and they should not let society dictate how they live their lives. And that is what Ginsberg kept on repeating throughout his life which he called "deathly Public solitude" (126); this fixed personality forcefully shaped Americans and turned them into an exact replicas of one another. Thus, they should not let "madness" destroy them into little pieces of their selves.
The Beats always had a continuous concern for the human soul; therefore, at every given opportunity, Ginsberg would tackle such issues. His poetry questioned the cultural issues of his era because he believed that they crushed the soul. In *Howl*, he goes on to describe the issues as a shell of their former self:

> And rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in
> The goldhorn shadow of the band and blew the
> suffering of America's naked mind for love into
> an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone
> cry that shivered the cities down to the last radio
> with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered
> out of their own buddies good to eat a thousand
> years. (20)

He continued by writing that these "poor human" souls don't have the chance to feel free from the constant monitoring of society; that every human has the right to pursue their passion in life without having anyone inflicting altering beliefs. That was what the Beats believed in and called for: to treat society as the way it treated them. The culture, at the time, was a hostile environment that sought the destruction of humanity, and that is what the Beats wanted to fight, which is the societal aggression that was inflicted upon individuality (Raskin 6). The society of the 1950’s and 60’s tried to repress the generation’s identity, so the Beats stood up to that hypocrisy and told the generation to stand up for what they believed in. If the society is "butcher[ing]” their individuality and freedom, they should make a stand and embrace their uniqueness.
Ginsberg's poetry presented taboo subjects, such as gay and religious issues, to further demonstrate how society silenced the sound of individuality, that the societal restrictions have blocked the person's individuality. Ginsberg mocked the societal issues in *Howl* by stating:

> The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy!
> The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand and asshole holy!
> Everything is holy! Everybody's holy! Everywhere is holy!
> Every day is in eternity! Everyman's an Angel!
> The bum's as holy as the seraphim! The madman is holy as you my soul are holy! (27)

He mocked the religious and cultural views of America at the time; the belief that the holy or angelic person was the person who follows them, and anyone goes against them is regarded as unholy. Reaction to cultural oppression is evident in *Howl*. Raskin agreed that culture branded homosexuality is an evil sickness, and thus an outcast of society (4, 210-211). Therefore, Ginsberg called into consideration that all Americans have the freedom to follow what their hearts desire. Whether one is a "bum" or a "madman" one is "holy" in their own way, and society should not allow anyone to hold them back from what they are expected to be, to stand for what they are and what they hold dear.

Human relationships were important to Ginsberg and the Beat poets, and that is what he also presented in his poems, is the connectedness of human relationships. The Beat Generation saw human relationships as a holy matter that can make the soul whole and free. Ginsberg communicated the importance of having a certain relationship that would lighten life:
Where we wake up electrified out of the coma
by our own souls' airplanes roaring over the
roof they've come to drop angelic bombs the
hospital illuminates itself imaginary walls col-

collapse O skinny legions run outside O starry-
spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is
here O victory forget your underwear we're free. (Howl 26)

Through human relations a person can break free of social, cultural and political
constraints, and that was exactly what the Beats always conveyed in their poetry. The
true "victory" of the soul would not be fulfilled unless it was with the help of loved
ones or even family; these strong relations would have the power to overcome any
"wars" or "bombs" that America dropped on people. Kerouac concurred on the matter
when he stated that the Beats were a group of "comrades" who sought peace (76), and
as Gary Snyder stated in one of his letters to Ginsberg that they are a group who
sought love and serenity (30), as Snyder also stated that they were the “people [who]
won't stand [for the government] injustices, and that they will straighten American
politics” (31). Ginsberg and his group of “comrades” were always close, which made
their work speak to their generation of how much alike they were, and that each
individual could be free of anything as long as they had someone who would share
their path with them to their individuality.

The United States in the 50's was in constant motion: laws were being changed
to reflect the civil rights movement, and the continuous change in its political
structuring, especially after the Cold War, gave the people a sense of being beaten up
over and over by their government. The cynical way that Ginsberg critiqued his
country demonstrated his resentment towards it, and what it had become. Ginsberg
saw that this America was nothing but a shell of what it represented: the land of the
free. In his poem *America*, he discussed the dilemma of a changing country that
sought extreme forceful measures to one of peace, as he wrote:

America when will you end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with your atom bomb.
I don’t feel good don’t bother me.
America when will you be angelic?
When will you take off your clothes?
When will you look at yourself through the grave?
America why are your libraries full of tears? (39)

Ginsberg believed America was worse than it appeared globally or nationally. Poetry
represented an outlet for him, and he started to display his bitterness towards what
America was doing. So this intense feeling of dislike was a way for Ginsberg to show
that the had it with the constant wrongful representation. Ginsberg addressed the other
side of America that was the cause behind so much suffering. He did not like the truth
about his country's ability to create a "dehumanizing" machine (Beardsworth 100).
Ginsberg was fighting America and what it had become through poetry.

Another form of poetic technique that Ginsberg applied to help deliver his
message was imagery. He introduced multiple images that showed America as a giant
mental institute. Throughout *Howl* and *America*, Ginsberg presented images that
suggested America had become mentally ill, and when it took action, it was
destructive. Ginsberg conveyed, in his poems, that this America and its political
actions stood for being out of its mind. This new America was the real “madman”
who is in its constant move towards power, disregarded humanity or concern for its
individuals. In *America*, Ginsberg spoke to the nation and personified it as it is the
reason behind his madness. America had forced him to be locked within its social norms. He compared America as the "twenty five thousand mental institutions" (41), who sought its own destruction with its deranged thoughts about "them Russians and them Chinamen" (42). While in *Howl* he continued to describe it as this entity of madness:

Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless!
Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men!
Moloch the incomprehensible Prison! Moloch the crossbone
Soulless jailhouse and congress of sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgment!  (21)

The United States is not just "Mental" or an "incomprehensible prison" or "jailhouse."
It is now a dark, beastly entity called Moloch, who feeds on the souls of battered Americans. It feeds constantly on their mentality forcing them to madness or even death. Ginsberg stated in one of his publications on politics that it is a hypocritical country (62), and that it is an empty and hollow democracy (Beardsworth 103) that steals American individuality. Through these images in both poems, it is evident how the Beat poets, and Ginsberg, were worried about their generation. With any given chance, the Beat would speak their worries towards a country that was using their people, and that was how Ginsberg defeated the real "Moloch."

Another fascinating imagery that Ginsberg employed were images of slow death, because it showed how clearly he saw the country was becoming and what it did to everyone. The continuous deprivation of individuality led the person to death, and that is what he confessed in *Howl*. Ginsberg showed his audience that the slow fading of individuality within cultural oppression is led the people to their inevitable death. Words such as "drank turpentine", "motionless", "skeletons", "who faded"
represented the state of mind of individuals who had been repressed by the
government. The oppressed were those who will "die" or be "forgotten into ghostly"
manner (9-26). These words represented "symbolic criticism" of how society was
leading their subjects to total termination (Rexroth 188). Furthermore, all these words
represented how Ginsberg portrayed his strong beliefs in freedom of the soul, speech
and actions of the individual. It showed how society and government were working
hand in hand to smother peoples' individuality.

Satanic images are used brilliantly to symbolize the hypocrisy of the political
government. The Beats, including Ginsberg, saw the politics of America as sinful.
The government was marching Americans towards the destruction of everything they
stood for. This was one of the most perpetual issues in Ginsberg's mind; he believed
that the political government had major influence on their lives:

Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments! Invisible suburbs!
Skeleton treasuries! Blind capitals! Demonic industries! Spectral
nations! Invisible mad houses! Granit cocks! Monstrous bombs!
They broke their backs lifting Moloch to heaven! Pavements,
Trees, radios, tons! Lifting the city to heaven
Which exists and is everywhere about us!
Visions! Omens! Hallucinations! Miracles! Ecstasies!
Gone down the American river!
Dreams! Adorations! Illuminations! Religions! The whole
Boatload of sensitive bullshit! (Howl 22)

This version of America was disruptive (Ginsberg 127) because it discarded
American individuality. The poem shows how the Beats saw the beginning of a
flawed system that blinds and darkens the soul. The assault of the government on
Americans was evident in these lines, the violent attack of industrialized and political powers on people's lives that have been ruined forever. Ginsberg expressed his resentment for a "demonic" and "monstrous" country that repressed the peoples' personalities, and that this country was flourishing under false pretense and on American souls. The Beats, always, stood guard for the freedom of humanity, and that no matter what or who; everyone should speak their mind without any fear.

One of the infamous techniques that Allen Ginsberg implemented in his poems to express the importance of individuality was the usage of sexual innuendos. Most of his poems utilize images of genitalia and sex which the society regarded as the most obscene taboo. His poems were "full of sexual hijinks"(Kearful 98), but behind such a move, Ginsberg was openly expressing his personality:

Who howled on their knees in the subway and were
dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts,
who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly
motorcyclists, and screamed with joy,
who blew and were blown by those human seraphim,
the sailors, caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love. *(Howl 13)*

Ginsberg addressed society and the American generation of his time by expressing his openness towards the "natural way of life" which was sexual intercourse. In his interviews, Ginsberg called for the openness of sex and that everyone had the right to choose their life partner (Ginsberg 1995, 1997). He argued that the generation, like him, had the right to speak or act the way they saw fit. Each individual had the freedom to an open sexual life, where he/she had the choices to have a relationship with whomever they wanted. Ginsberg and the Beats stood guard for their generation, speaking for freedom to act and speak no matter what happened.
GINSBERG'S IDEOLOGY

Ginsberg's poetry was, and still is, considered a new form of poetry. The structure of his poems was written in long flowing lines, and each opens up with the path for his ideas. Ginsberg used multiple images that asserted certain poetic moves that enabled him to freely express to his audience his fears and concerns: whether it was the language, the broken sections, or the clipped sentences that marked his unique style in describing the fears and anxieties of his generation. This methodology differentiated him from his peers, it proved to be the power that drove him and gave him the courage to express the fears and anxiety. Beats’ loved their language. Jack Kerouac referred to it as "the long outlines of personal experience and vision, nightlong confessions full of hope" (72). They regarded their open verse and the use of American slang as the truthful expression of the repressed souls of the generation that would lead to a better future.

In the essay, "Notes for Howl and Other Poems," Ginsberg explained the reason behind writing the poem. Howl was written as ideas constructed in a single thought (Ginsberg 635-637). It was a poem written as a means of expression about the sadness of the world. Ginsberg further elaborated that the lines in the poem were "a long breath unit" (Ginsberg 635). It was an experiment to see how the word would sound when read out loud, or what kind of impact it could deliver to the audience. He stated "I just simply wrote, in long and broken short lines, spontaneous noting prosaic realities mixed with emotional upsurges" (636). Writing poetry was a release for him: it helped him to express his feelings and emotions openly to his audience.
Allen Ginsberg used obscenities in his poetry. The strong, shocking language was an expressive tool that related to his readers his resentment towards this new America. For example, in *America* he confronted his country’s control with a strong angry stand, as he said "America go fuck yourself" (39), or in *Howl* where he said "be fucked in the ass" (13). Although his approach in both poems was different, because *America* was a confrontational poem where he spoke up and faced the mistreatment in the face with no fear of punishment, while *Howl* was a confessional poem about the social, cultural and political repression and what it is like to be mistreated by this new life. The Beats had a unanimous love for this language because it was, and is still, concerned as "the face of the generation" (Kerouac 74). Ginsberg’s strong words were the result of his strong belief in individuality and free will, he related to his generation his bitterness of a place that used to mean a great deal to most of them. America represented a second chance to people, where race and gender issues did not matter; it was a country founded on freedom, but back then it was oppressing individuality and taking away their rights, like the right of free speech and who they could love.

Another aspect that can be related to Ginsberg's usage of the expletive words was the people's right to speak what they believed in. Telling his generation to speak up for what they held dear to them, whether homosexuality, or the dislike of any political or cultural norm, he made it fine to verbalize those feelings with no fear. The Beats’ poetry spoke about personality and how vulnerable they were (Hoover 130) after the War and the changes it had brought upon the Americans. Life no longer represented the white fences and happy families; instead it started to be open for ridicule towards such ordinary life. People "became more aware of the dark side of the postwar era, and the dark side of humanity, too, the mood in America shifted and
writers reflected it (Raskin 4). Ginsberg conveyed to his readers the idea of human rights; every person is entitled to express their freedom whether in action or through words.

The American idiom exemplified the generation and their message. The American idiom stood for the everyday informal use of the English language that is associated with American society. These idiomatic expressions paved the way to a naturalistic way of conveying message; this type of methodology increases awareness among the readers and commence them into a conversation. William Carlos Williams was one of the American poets who focused on this method of language usage in poetry. He always presented the idea of “to speak American within an American context (qtd. in Baym 1214). Williams called for bringing poetry into the everyday life by making it a natural way of representing contemporary issues. The simplicity of language and form has the ability to bring poetry to reach the intellect of Americans instead of it being directed to certain masses; in which the average person can identify with it no matter what their proactive is.

Ginsberg's use of American slang showed how he regarded it as the language of freedom which liberates the soul. In one of his interviews, Ginsberg stated that the American idiom speaks to readers and it is much easier for them to relate to what he is conveying (1997). By using everyday language, the Beats are making the controversial issues personal, not just for them but also for the people. The American idiom is the language of the soul, it liberates the person. In the same interview, Ginsberg spoke of how their generation’s poetry was all about the language in which he stated, "the language speaks to its readers"(1997), because it has the ability to be free of any obligations that stands on its own and it pushes the reader to go beyond it. The Beats saw that through their work people could be set free from all the
surrounding oppression. If their readers opened up their emotions they could let go of all the anxiety and be liberated forever from the constraints of society. And that is what Ginsberg sought through his poetry, the healing and liberating powers of words.

Also, the open verse is important in the Beats' work. The long, free verse represents their dream, especially Ginsberg's, of a grudge free America where people are equal. "The [long] tumbling line" (Baym 2633) became Ginsberg's trademark in poetry; to him it was a representation of a concern towards humanity. This style stood as a declaration of freedom, equality and love. That is exactly what Ginsberg did throughout his life; Ginsberg always fought for individuality and equality and the idea that no matter where a person came from, or what their beliefs were, no one had the right to ridicule them. In his 1995 interview, Ginsberg called this type of verse "idiomatic vocalization" where the poet communicates with the readers. So this free verse represented the breaking free from the constant attack on the people, whether it was physically or verbally (Ginsberg 4): it was the generation's concern for the people and a way to spread awareness about individuality.

The language of the Beat Generation established awareness towards the message, and that is what Ginsberg does in his poetry. Ginsberg's language captured the true essence of the Beats’ beliefs, and it pushed his readers to go beyond the words to the real meaning behind them. This "distinctive voice," (Hoover 130) called the reader's attention to the hidden truth of reality. It created a conscious awareness, or as Ginsberg called it, "panoramic awareness" (1995) that could penetrate into every one's mind. As Raskin stated, "Allen had broken down barriers. He made the private public-put the naked mind and body in the open" (215), whether it was the use of obscene language, or American slang, Ginsberg's technique shocked his readers and forced them to go beyond the words. It was a style that was designed to interact with
the readers by providing a reasonable doubt into the readers mind. In making this kind of poetry, the audience would rethink the message, and even see the possibility of a grudge-free country where every person has equal rights and should try to obtain them.

Thus, poetry is a view of reality; it is a speech act that represents humanity. To Ginsberg, and the Beat poets, poetry stood for beauty; it is the universal language that could relate to anyone and help guide them to reach fulfilment. Ginsberg’s strong belief in the power that poetry holds made him want to share this knowledge with the world. He called to people to search for their inner fulfilment, to prevent anyone from erasing their true self. In *Howl* he stated that it is the "pilgrim's state" (19), or in *America* it is the "mystical visions and cosmic vibrations" (40) that will make the person whole. The journey of self-discovery or seeking fulfilment was considered as a pilgrimage. Therefore, poetry was a spiritual quest for the truth of everyday existence. Once people started the journey they were destined to reach fulfilment. Through the correspondence between Ginsberg and Snyder, or even Kerouac, Ginsberg always praised the healing power of written language, how it changed the mood and intellect of the reader (22-23). Thus, in reaching this fulfilment, the human soul could see clearly the abusiveness that was being inflicted on individuals by society and the political government.

The style of Ginsberg's poems, also, was a reflection of his rebelliousness. Unlike conventional poems, Ginsberg's poems were created in stanzas; but, instead they were long, unbroken sentences, and sometimes, divided into parts to intentionally illustrate his hostile stance against an abusive society. For instance, *Howl* is divided into four parts symbolic of his defying standard verse. This difficult yet “symbol ridden style” (Kearful 89) was Ginsberg's idea of defying the social and political norm
of a changing country. Also, in America, the poem was structured as long and clipped sentences to stand for a country that was cutting little by little from Americans their individuality. He mocked what this country had become and what it stood for, like a tailor that is cutting and sewing the lives of people with no regard to their freedom. Ginsberg critiqued the true nature of his country (Kearful 92) as an entity that played with souls of Americans.

Exclamation and question marks was another sign of Ginsberg’s defiance. He used the exclamation and question mark because he was questioning everything that his country is doing, and he was defying them as well. He rejected "the crass capitalism of the United States" (Raskin 103). For example, in Howl he stated "Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men weeping in the parks!" (21). Also in America where he wrote "Are you being sinister or is this some form of practical joke?" or "Are you going to let your emotional life be run by time magazine?" (40) By implementing these punctuations, Ginsberg mocked what his country represented. His poetry declared independence from the entire spiritual cruelty that was being inflicted upon individuality. The question mark was questioned their way of life, while the exclamation is a loud protest against repression of individual rights. Each mark represented Ginsberg’s true belief in individuality, that each person had the right to speak through their anxiety about political hypocrisy. He encouraged people to speak up, he told them that no matter who they were, or where they come from, each person had the right to express their love, opinion, and beliefs. Ginsberg was a liberal activist who attacked the American injustice system (Raskin 103).
CONCLUSION

The rapid change in American literature paved the way for contemporary poetry, especially in the 1950's. This transformation was the result of the constant struggle of placement where Americans continuously questioned where they belonged, and who they were as persons. With a continuous search for inner personality, styles, techniques, and genres diversified in marking the uniqueness of contemporary literary scholars from the 1950's. Thus, contemporary literature tackled cultural and political issues with a firm stance. Whether it was their blunt discussion of sexuality or the usage of strong language, contemporary poets proved to be honest and free spirited persons. Those groups of individuals were known as the Beats.

The Beat Generation called for love, equality and freedom of individuality. They called forth to their generation to speak up for what they believed in with no fear of how society would perceive them. The Beats established themselves as literary scholars who stood for individuality. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, Gary Snyder, William Burroughs, and many others were the foundation of the Beat movement, and their constant search for inner peace made them reach clarity of mind—the ability to see clearly through the hypocrisy of their country was the result of the inner fulfilment that they reached through their poetry. They called for freedom: through the continuous search for enlightenment; one can reach fulfilment in life, and that is exactly what their work meant for them and their generation.
The literary life of Allen Ginsberg has proved him to be the most enlightened of poets. From the beginning of the publication of *Howl and Other Poems* until the end of his literary life, Ginsberg always made sure to speak in defense of the lost generation of the 50's and 60's, when personality was muffled by political or social issues. He and Kerouac started this literary movement seeking freedom for themselves and their generation, to break from the constraints of a societal and cultural oppression that was forced upon them. Ginsberg voiced his fears and anxieties towards this new America; a country that was so peaceful and serene but, had transformed into a devilish entity that was destroying their generation.

Ginsberg was a rebellious person. His personality drove his uniqueness and his most powerful poetry. He regarded poetry as a way of life. Poetry allowed people to communicate with each other, and to achieve a level of spirituality where a person could reach inner peace and understanding of life. Poetry to Ginsberg was the stimulation that gave voice to his Bohemian, Buddhist, and Jewish religious beliefs of life that should be free of any bias. Ginsberg's enlightened nature started with the love of poetry and flourished in a full understanding of life and individuality.

Although Ginsberg's poems started as a therapeutic process for him, each one of his poems was created to confront a part of his life that he deemed necessary to address. In *Howl*, he confessed his resentment towards societal and cultural oppression of individuality, while in *America* he confronted the political government of his country, which was erasing the individual's peaceful and liberal way of life. The poem *Kaddish* addressed the memory of his mother. Each one of Ginsberg's poems exemplified his way of seeking enlightenment. He believed in the healing power of poetry and that through conceptualizing sorrow or fear, a person will reach an inner peace and tranquility.
Ginsberg was an enlightened contemporary poet. His state of serenity made him see right through the fog of hypocrisy that his country was erasing and choking individualism. He stood for love, freedom, and individualism when society, cultural and the political government decided to repress individuality. Ginsberg was a bright light against repression and called for his generation to step forward and express their individuality. His poetry was an example to stand and face any kind of injustice that is being inflicted by society or government without fear or remorse, because once they do that they will reach a clarity and thus fulfilment.

Human relationships were one of the most important factors in seeking enlightenment. Ginsberg always saw human communication and connectedness as a holy matter, that through love everyone could reach enlightenment, thus serenity is fulfilled and the soul is free from any social, cultural and political shackles. Ginsberg was a great mentor on relationships. He talked openly about his life and relationships with his friends, family, and love. He attributed his success to his loved ones, whether it was Jack Kerouac or his father, he called for a connection with another human soul because relationships have the healing power that can help a person's soul and its journey of fulfillment.

The versified imagery of death and abuse that Ginsberg used reflected the darkness that he saw in the political government of the 50’s and 60’s. Each image that Ginsberg deploys in his poems contributed to his message of how America was exploiting its people. He criticized the government by using symbolism to attack the political regime of the 1950's and 60's in the United States. American government at that time was like a satanic entity that fed non-stop on the souls of Americans, killing their spirits and hopes. Ginsberg expressed his strong feelings about individualism that was being constantly repressed by the government. The result was a brutal attack
on individuality. Ginsberg fought back against such a regime and he engaged the same sense to his audience. He told a whole American generation to fight and seek control over their lives.

Vocalization of language and the use of the American idiom are contributed to Ginsberg's uniqueness. By using American slang he ensured the full attention of the audience and engaged them in a conversation about current issues of their lives. He advised them to always seek justice and freedom. Ginsberg chose this method because he felt that the readers would find the text more approachable. By employing ordinary speech, Ginsberg penetrated the minds of the everyday American reader; and because this language was "an idiomatic communication" (Ginsberg 1995) it raised awareness to the constraints of society and helped to develop clarity in American consciousness.

Let's celebrate the Beat Generation, especially Allen Ginsberg's literary work. He made his mark on contemporary literature and carried into the world his universal message of love, freedom, and individuality. Ginsberg crafted his poems in an honest way by representing his fears, regardless of any social and political restraints. He was an intriguing and modest contemporary poet who continuously sought truth. The enlightened state that he reached during his life empowered him to express himself without any fear. A poet is measured by his work, so Ginsberg is truly the father of contemporary American poetry. He sculptured his work to mirror the anxieties of the 50's generation, and represented his hope for a better life. "With Ginsberg's death, contemporary American poetry lost one of its most definitive and revolutionary figures" (Baym 2634). He will always be remembered as the father of the Beat Generation.
WORKS CITED


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