

**Západočeská univerzita v Plzni**

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**Bakalářská práce**

**Beat Generation**

**-**

**historical and literary view**

**Kristýna Pozníčková**

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*Vedoucí práce:*

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Prohlašuji, že jsem práci zpracovala samostatně a použila jen uvedených pramenů a literatury.

*Plzeň, duben 2012*

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Na tomto místě bych chtěla poděkovat paní Mgr. Vladaně Šimáčkové za užitečné rady a za pomoc při zpracování této bakalářské práce.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

The reason why I have chosen this topic for my bachelor thesis is that I am interested in this literary movement not only in terms of its literary works but also from the perspective of their particular lifestyle, opinions and pointing out of problematic issues, which appeared in the USA at that time. In my opinion these issues remained in existence till this day and still represent current problems of our world that we should not forget to.

My bachelor thesis is divided into two main parts – theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part contains chapters concerning a description of the period of the 1950's in the USA, fundamental characteristics of the Beat Generation, a description of the origin of the word 'beat', an introduction of the main representatives of this movement, their formation and contribution to the hippie movement.

The practical part is dedicated to the literary analysis of three chosen publications written by representatives of the Beat Generation in which I tried to demonstrate their literary features as well as their way of thinking, opinions and criticism of the era and show that they significantly contributed to the development and revival of American literature. The first publication I chose is the novel *On the road* written by Jack Kerouac. The second novel *In watermelon sugar* comes from the pen of Richard Brautigan and the final text is the poem *Howl* which is composed by Allen Ginsberg, who was also called the father of the Beat Generation.

To find necessary information I used various printed sources especially biographies of beatniks for instance *Naked Angels* by John Tytell, a couple of history books such as *America: A Narrative History* by George B. Tindall and David E. Shi and also publications which I chose for my literary analysis. For seeking of appropriate definitions and for completing of printed information I utilized several internet pages such as Encyclopædia Britannica.

## 2 HISTORICAL VIEW

### 2.1 United States in the 1950's

The period of the fifties was preceded by events between the years 1945-1950. In 1945, the Second World War had officially ended and a large number of American soldiers came back home to begin a new life. This period of time was marked by several important events. The preservation of CIA (Central Intelligence Agency), which was established during the war and its function was to assure intelligence reports however, over time it started to monitor also inner affairs of the USA. Hereafter we can state distribution of spheres of influence among winners of the war, the beginning of the Cold War taking place between the USA and the Soviet Union, which lasted till disintegration of the Soviet Union or foundation of OSN and NATO for preventing other possible world wars in the future and many others [1, p. 634-651].

As presidential nominee Adlai Stevenson uttered in 1952: "God has set for us an awesome mission: nothing less than the leadership of the free world" [2]. These words exactly expressed America's effort to become the most powerful country in the world and justified its frequent military interventions as it was in the case of fight against the threat of communism [3, p. 10].

The fifties can be characterized in two ways. On one hand, it was a time of enormous economic growth, abundance and population explosion. Technical development flourished, large companies were founded and manufacture of numerous new products flooded the American market. This resulted in an overall increase of income, which in turn caused almost everyone could buy a house or a car. In addition, people used to this purpose also money saved during the war. People wanted to find a calm place to live after the horrors of war and started moving to nice



houses in the suburbs [4, p. 650-655]. “Domesticity, religiosity, respectability, security through compliance with the system, that was the essence of the fifties” [5].

The fact that they could afford houses was because the banks were willing to lend them a sufficient amount of money. This was the beginning of the indebtedness phenomenon of America, which remains until this day. People got used to the fact that if they did not have enough money to buy a house, a car or other things, they would easily get a loan from a bank. Prosperity became the main factor of this time. People started to spend more time in new growing shopping centers and took shopping itself as a kind of relaxation [6, p. 650-655]. Because of growing relocation to the suburbs, more people needed to drive cars which led to the building of roads and highways. There was therefore a growth in the car industry. “The result was the breakdown of mass transportation, pollution, congestion, depletion of fossil fuels, ugliness, and frequent fatalities” [7].

The general aim of this period for the male gender was to find a well-paid job, to get married, have children and live in their own house in the suburbs. Women on the other hand were expected to take care of the family, the whole household and occasionally attend charitable events. These increasing pressures of uniformity and conformity in society resulted in the lives of people became very similar [8, p. 650-657].

Americans were influenced mainly by the media and ingenious advertisements which made people buy consistently new products, believing that without them they would not achieve a happy life. The medium, especially in the form of television had a huge influence on their lives [9, p. 652-653]. “As late as 1946, there were only 7,000 television sets in use throughout the nation. By 1960 they numbered over 50 million” [10]. “The TV dinner was introduced in 1954, and by 1956 Americans for the first time were spending more hours watching their sets than working for pay” [11]. Surrounded by all these achievements, people

did not want to admit the existence of problems in society which showed the dark side of these years.

The fifties were on the other hand a period of racial segregation and poverty. Nuclear weapons were developed, there were military interventions, a fear of communism, sexism, the Cold war, the Korean war and other difficulties during this time. Americans whom were scared of communism, tried to suppress any sign of its spreading. America took all measures to get rid of this threat which resulted in the massive unemployment of people who were suspicious of being communists. This situation did not take place only in government, which had to face to numerous allegations aroused by the then Senator McCarthy whom took as his goal to get rid of all possible hidden communists. The process of the revelation of communists affected also American companies. "Teachers, government workers, entertainers, and many others were dismissed" [12]. Fear of communism caused extensive closures of libraries and censure, in order to protect people of communist ideas [13, p. 6-7; 10; 13-15].

Well-known social critic Paul Goodman described this period of time as follows: "a Closed Room with a Rat Race as the center of fascination, powerfully energized by fear of being outcasts" [14]. Americans were obsessed with the achievement of an ideal life and personality. They began to buy various books which gave them pieces of advice as how to achieve this or that [15, p. 6-7; 9].

All these things were now a part of the American dream: "the belief that everyone in the US has the chance to be successful, rich and happy if they work hard" [16]. Nevertheless with such an increasing power in large companies, it was almost impossible for a small entrepreneur to survive in business. The special case was the position of women in society. During the war they replaced men in the work force and had a possibility to discover the working environment. This situation enabled them to find out that life can be about something else rather than taking

care of children and the household. Therefore it is clear that their return to the positions as housewives and full-time parents was not accepted by women with a large enthusiasm [17, p. 655-657].

However this concept of life was not accepted by all Americans. A wide range of people who criticized uniform culture, the materialistic way of thinking and the overlooking of problems such as racial violence or militarism, started to express dissatisfaction with the situation in America. It is clearly not by accident that such a type of movement such as the Beat Generation appeared during this time.

## **2.2 Fundamental characteristics of the Beat Generation**

The Beat Generation can be characterized as a literary movement of poets and novelists. Its sphere existed in New York and also in San Francisco, where we can find a publishing house City Light, established by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whom was closely connected with this movement [18, p. 537]. The members of the Beat Generation had on one hand a liking for jazz music, sex and personal freedom. However on the other hand they were people who were interested in considerably intellectual topics such as the illumination, Zen Buddhism, purification and of course literature [19]. Despite the fact that this movement was represented primarily by novelists and poets, it actually attracted other people such as artists, musicians or painters [20].

According to Collins Dictionary they are defined as follows: "members of the generation that came to maturity in the 1950s, whose rejection of the social and political systems of the West was expressed through contempt for regular work, possessions, traditional dress, etc, and espousal of anarchism, communal living, drugs, etc" [21].

Members of this movement lived absolutely voluntarily on the margin of society because they did not want to join in with "normal" people, in

other words, 'squares' [22]. This term describes: "a person considered to be old-fashioned or boringly conventional in attitude or behavior" [23].

Their desire for freedom and inner uneasiness forced them to roam across the U.S. and for this reason they often changed their professions. They were not scared of hard work and went through numerous jobs as brakemen, workers for security, shop assistants, gas station attendants among others. Personal pleasure and kicks were the things they desired [24, p. 15].

The main feature of this movement was a public reading of their literary works. Beatniks did not suffice mere written word; they wanted to give it life. For this reason they organized public readings, where they mediated their works live to young people and were trying to renew their interest in literature. Therefore their works were connected with jazz music and public performances. An example of connection between jazz music and literature we can find in Kerouac's bop prose [25, p. 19-20].

A large number of them also recorded their works on cassettes and later on CDs, for instance we can mention CD *The Beats in Prague* or *Jack Kerouac Collection*. Their poetry and novels were set to music in order to sound more vivid and to get closer to the public of that time [26, p. 5-7].

The Beat movement was not fully unanimous and did not make out any kind of new ideology as it was in the case of other literary movements who had a common interest and platform. They were influenced by each other despite the fact that one was writing poetry and the other prose [27, p. 5]. They were also greatly inspired by a group of accursed poets from France from the nineteenth century. The main representatives of this group such as Rimbaud or Baudelaire as similar to beatniks wrote their poetry under the influence of drugs and alcohol [28, p. 69].

Beatniks could be distinguished by their unconventional behavior and frequent location at the edge or beyond the law which was mainly caused by their positive attitudes to drugs (chiefly marijuana) and included other

offenses. Founders of the Beat movement were attracted by all kinds of lost existences such as desperate men, crazy men, criminals, outcasts of society and other weird individuals whom were rejected by normal society. Particularly these strange individuals constituted the main inspiration of future poetry collections and novels. Therefore we can say that the members of the Beat movement obtained a rather crazy reputation in society during this time [29, p. 21; 69].

### **2.3 Origin of the word 'beat'**

The word 'beat' came into existence in 1948 on the basis of conversation between Jack Kerouac and another writer John Clellon Holmes. During their discussion Kerouac named his own generation as a 'Beat' Generation. This term was originally used in connection with music however in the concept of the Beat Generation; the meaning was described as being beaten down, poor, exhausted or at the bottom of the world. "Holmes thought enough of the phrase to use it as the working title of a novel, eventually published as "Go," and to write an article for the Times Magazine, in 1952, called "This Is the Beat Generation," in which he credited Kerouac with the term" [30].

Notwithstanding to the publication of above mentioned article *This Is The Beat Generation* popularization of the term 'beat' came after the publication of Kerouac's *On The Road* in 1957 when The New York Times magazine labeled it as a cult book of this movement. The term 'beat' latter contributed to the creation of word 'beatnik' which was created by journalist Herb Caen and which then served as a word to name a member of the Beat Generation. Beatnik is based on the connection of word 'beat' and 'sputnik', which was launched into space by Russians in 1958. The reason why the term was created from these two words is that beatnik as well as sputnik was far out [31].

However it is true that beatniks were considered as significantly different and weird their literary contribution enabled us to see also the opposite viewpoint of America at that time including the then political system often going beyond its remits [32, p. 275-276].

## 2.4 Main representatives

Among the main representatives of this movement ranks Allen Ginsberg with his best known works *Howl and Other Poems* or *Kaddish and Other Poems*, a Jewish prayer for his mother Naomi Ginsberg [33]. William Seward Burroughs who is famous for his novel *Naked Lunch*, which became an inspiration for musicians such as Patti Smith or Frank Zappa, and which was admired by supporters of avant-garde and hipsters [34, p. 11; 14 ] described in Cambridge Dictionary as “someone who is very influenced by the most recent ideas and fashions” [35]. Except of *Naked lunch*, we can also mention his novel *Junkie* related to Burroughs’s interest in drugs [36, p. 12]. The last main representative is Jack Kerouac and his cult book *On the road* or *The Dharma Bums*, inspired by Zen Buddhism [37].

Among less known beatnik we can classify for instance the poet Gregory Corso and his poetry collection *Happy Birthday of Death* or *Long Life Man* [38]. Other authors who were also strongly connected with the Beat movement are Richard Brautigan, an author of novels *Trout Fishing in America*, *In Watermelon Sugar* [39] and Ken Kesey for his *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, the novel filmed in 1975 by the native of the Czechoslovak Republic Miloš Forman, and many others [40].

These writers shared several common characteristics and also similar, not too happy, destinies. The first resemblance is related to a beatnik’s unhappy childhood and complicated family relations, as it was in the case of Kerouac’s and Ginsberg’s relations with their mothers. Ginsberg’s mother was diagnosed with a mental illness and Kerouac’s

mother had to support the whole family after death of her husband [41, p. 59-60].

These complicated childhoods caused them serious psychological problems and troubles which they had to deal with throughout their whole lives. Both authors also were not originally Americans as their families immigrated to America from Europe. Ginsberg's parents were Russian immigrants whereas those of Kerouac came from France. Kerouac, who received a scholarship thanks to his performances in football, was closest to the image of an average American from the whole movement, whereas Ginsberg represented a prototype of the intellectual interested in literature [42, p. 59; 60; 87].

Unlike Kerouac or Ginsberg, Burroughs was born into a wealthy family, never suffered from poverty and from an early youth proved a literary talent by writing of *The Autobiography of a Wolf* at just eight years of age. He belonged to the most well-read and well-travelled members of the Beat Generation and one of his most interesting life events is the fact that he married a German Jewish woman, who was fleeing from Nazis. He did this in order to help her to get to America and save herself. On the other hand, he murdered in drunkenness his next wife Joan while pretending to be William Tell and was released on bail until the judgement [43, p. 26; 34; 54-55].

While Jack Kerouac became a star in the 1950's thanks to his book *On the road* and as Ginsberg became an idol of the hippies in the 1960's, Burroughs fame did not begin until the 1970's after he came back from Europe, where he lived a considerable part of his life [44, p. 11-14]

## **2.5 Formation of the Beat Generation**

This movement started to form in the middle of the 1940's at Columbia University in City of New York where Kerouac and Ginsberg

studied literature. Nevertheless considering their volatility, their wild lives and psychological problems it was hard for them to finish it. Kerouac gave up his studies however Ginsberg, whom was for some time expelled from the university, finally finished his studies and became a university teacher. At the time of their studies they acquainted, through Kerouac's girlfriend Edie Parker, with William Seward Burroughs, much older and experienced graduate of literature and linguistics at Harvard University who also studied anthropology and was interested in psychoanalysis. He was the one to which they looked up to and were inspired by [45, p. 42, 44; 61; 67; 69; 87; 91; 94; 110]. From 1945 to 1946, they even shared the same flat in Upper West Side. They then started as a community of people with similar attitudes to life, tolerance to drugs and love to literature and only a few years after they developed in the Beat movement [46, p. 11].

This fellowship of people with the same viewpoint of the world began to meet in jazz bars, cafés and galleries in which they publicly recited their poetry [47, p. 19]. Their influence and way of life finally broke the long lasting theory of the American dream. The theory, which was strongly connected with wealth, making profits and which was immensely criticized by the Beat movement and in afterwards also by the hippie communities in late of 1960's [48, p. 21; 23].

Initially the underground and provocative community became very popular after a public reading was organized by Allen Ginsberg in Six Gallery in San Francisco in 1955, during which he recited a part of his poem *Howl* [49, p.110-111]. This popularity was even more so enhanced by Kerouac's best known novel *On the road* in 1957 [50, p. 663-664].

The publication of Ginsberg's collection of poetry *Howl* by publishing house City Light, the main base of beatniks owned by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, unleashed a storm of indignation and Ferlinghetti was accused of dissemination of pornography [51, p. 3-4]. Ginsberg's poem *Howl* became a frequent target of literary critics who questioned its



amateur style of writing and usage of wound-be free verses; however among underground public this poem had success [52, p. 175-177].

One thing known about these authors is the fact that they were very often accused of moral outrage and obscenity in their works. Aside from Ginsberg, we can mention the work of William Seward Burroughs, *Naked Lunch*. This book was classified as pornographic and was seen as describing all negative aspects of American culture from the boring life of squares through to the international politics of America under the office of President Dwight David Eisenhower [53, p. 11; 96-97].

As I stated above, after the works were published, the Beat movement gained popularity and was acclaimed and sought-after by young people, who felt, as well as beatniks, lost during this time and who also criticized society based on money and selfishness of the avaricious Americans. Bohemians in the form of beatniks exactly captured the mood of this time. It is important to mention that sympathizers of this movement were not so numerous as in the case of the hippie movement nevertheless it was primarily beatniks who contributed by all their existence concerning their lifestyle, attitudes, opinions, literature and tolerance to drugs to revolution of hippies in the 1960's [54, p. 1-4]

## **2.6 Contribution of the Beat Generation to the formation of hippies**

Hippies were a movement that appeared in the 1960's and which completed what members of the Beat Generation commenced. This generation of flower children was born after the end of Second World War during the population explosion [55, p. 711].

Their emergence was preceded by the formation of other movements that were also unsatisfied with a complex situation in the USA. Among most known groups we can mention the Civil Right movement fighting for the rights of black people, Students for Democratic

Society or radical anarchistic group Hells Angels [56]. A person who claimed allegiance to the hippies can be defined as: “a person of unconventional appearance, typically having long hair and wearing beads, associated with a subculture involving a rejection of conventional values and the taking of hallucinogenic drugs” [57].

Origin of the term flower power dates back to autumn of 1965 when a group of students at Berkley University organized an anti-war demonstration during which they were advised by Allen Ginsberg to use a large number of flowers as a symbol of peace. This Ginsberg’s advice assisted in the formation of whole hippie movement and made him one of the icons connected with this movement [58, p. 25-30].

Hippies as well as the Beat Generation and all other groups which were not part of mainstream society belonged to the so-called counterculture which can be defined as: “a way of life and set of attitudes opposed to or at variance with the prevailing social norm” [59]. Their inspiration by beatniks was quite clear:

In the Beat Generation in San Francisco, writer Lawrence Ferlinghetti describes the Beats as “Stone Age Hippies,” noting that many of things that fascinated the Beats – Eastern religion, pacifism, ecological consciousness, homosexual rights, and hedonistic lifestyles – became hallmarks of hippie culture as well [60].

The hippie movement can be therefore classified as a type of descendants from the Beat Generation. It was especially the aspect of lifestyle and drugs which was shared by these two movements. For instance the concept of living together was already established by Ginsberg who had been accommodating all kinds of lost existences in his apartment for an indefinite period of time which indisputably influenced hippies to live in commune [61, p.12-13]. The most known hippie communes of that time were for instance Haight-Ashbury in San Francisco or New York City’s Green Village. It is not by the accident that

hippies chose for their main base the same cities as it did the Beat Generation [62, p. 3-4].

Aside from this, there was also positive attitude to drugs. Beatniks experimented with various kinds of drugs as benzedrine, heroin or morphine [63, p. 43-44] whereas the most preferred drug of hippies became LSD which was promoted by Timothy Leary, a psychologist and ex-Harvard professor, who had been examining various effects of this drug. He itself defined that:

*Hippy* is an establishment label for a profound, invisible, underground, evolutionary process. For every visible hippy, barefoot, beflowered, beaded, there are a thousand invisible members of the turned-on underground. Persons whose lives are tuned in to their inner vision, who are dropping out of the TV comedy of American Life [64].

This movement was among other things also distinguished by its disapproving opinion of the Vietnam War, which represented the reason of the military drafts and caused a large loss of American soldiers [65, p. 714]. This period of time is credibly depicted in Forman's movies *Hair* [66] whereas his other movie *Taking off* is described from the perspective of parents whose children left home and joined the hippie movement [67].

Popularity of this movement lasted from the 1960's until the beginning of the 1970's when an enormous amount of people had tried to live the life of a hippie. Among the main cultural events of the hippie movement we can classify Be-In taking place in San Francisco, Monterey Pop Festival in 1967 and the most famous festival Woodstock which took place near the town Bethel in the state New York in 1969. This festival hosted such stars as Janis Joplin, Jimi Hendrix or popular band The Who and was visited by 70, 000 enthusiasts [68].

### 3 LITERARY VIEW

#### 3.1 On The Road

##### 3.1.1 Main information about the book and the author

According to the name of the book we can assume that the main topic is the road. *On the road*, a book of Jack Kerouac was his second novel, after *The town and the city*, and its publication in 1957 started up a real madness that provided the Beat Generation a large number of adherents [69, p. 84].

This piece of work is considered a fiction and also an autobiography at the same time as it is written on the basis of Kerouac's own experiences during his roaming across the USA [70]. The book represents a specific style of writing called spontaneous bop prose inspired by jazz music such guitar players as Charlie Parker and Lester Young. It was jazz that inspired Kerouac so much that his book is literary expressed by riffs [71, 19]. For a better explanation, a riff is "a tune which continues or appears regularly in a piece of music while other parts change or are added" [72].

Publication of the book was preceded by Kerouac's real journeys to the west coast, during which he made detailed notes concerning descriptions of diverse landscape, his considerations, discussions with Dean Moriarty and anything else, what he saw as interesting. The book itself represents a depiction of wild times that were full of parties, jazz concerts, experimentation with drugs and real experiences in the eyes of beatniks [73, p. 83-89].

##### 3.1.2 Description of characters and their attitudes to life

The book narrates about adventures and hitchhiking of Sal Paradise (full name Salvatore), across the U.S. and since the book is semi-autobiographical the main character, symptomatically named Paradise,

represents the author's deformed profile. Sal Paradise lives in New York City with his aunt and begins his life as a writer, who is almost all the time out of pocket. He embodies the main narrator of the story and is omnipresent throughout the book.

The second important character of *On the road* is Dean Moriarty whom character is based on Kerouac's friend Neal Cassady, a man who is described as hyperactive, extremely talkative womanizer with irresistible aura and kind of crazy man with a penchant for fast driving and for taking of any drugs that are available [74].

Affected by his birth on the road, his father-tramp and by the time that he spent in reform school and in prison for stealing cars, Dean Moriarty represents the main connection across all characters in the book. At the beginning, he is described by the author as follows: "He was simply a youth tremendously excited with life, and though he was a con-man, he was only conning because he wanted so much to live and to get involved with people who would otherwise pay no attention to him" [75].

Among other characters we can mention Dean's first wife Marylou, who is based on Cassady's real first wife, LuAnne Henderson, Camille as a second wife Carolyn Cassady and Old Bull Lee, a character inspired by the other principal beatnik, William Seward Burroughs. William Seward Burroughs alias Old Bull Lee is described as follows:

He was a gray, nondescript-looking fellow you wouldn't notice on the street, unless you looked closer and saw his mad, bony skull with its strange youthfulness—a Kansas minister with exotic, phenomenal fires and mysteries. He had studied medicine in Vienna; had studied anthropology, read everything; and now he was settling to his life's work, which was the study of things themselves in the streets of life and the night [76].

Other less important characters contained in the book were also based on real persons from Kerouac's environs.

All people who appear in this book have something in common – the way of their life. We can observe their lack of life goal and ambitions. They live just for the present and do not think of tomorrow. As well as beatniks also the characters of the book represent people who still discuss their plans concerning parties, meetings with their friends and make money as fast as possible although they are able to spend them without thinking to the future on alcohol, drugs and gas. In other words, simply put, for freedom.

Obsessed with the magic of travel, aimless roaming and looking for something which is not specified, they cross from one to the other end of America and do not hesitate to “borrow” some gas from petrol station or to steal a car in the case of a lack of money. The specialist for these little thefts in the book is Dean Moriarty. Their lifestyle contains never-ending visits to bars or jazz clubs. They try to not to waste any minute of lives which ultimately explains why their lives are so frantic.

In comparison to the “ordinary” people of that time and their promises of faithfulness to each other, characters of the book and beatniks as well are unable to meet their commitment and prefer sexual promiscuity. This proneness can be observed throughout the whole book. As example we can mention the relationships of Dean Moriarty, who had three wives. At first, he was married to Marylou who was also his only real love as it was stated in the book. His second wife became Camille with whom he had two children and his last wife was Inez who gave birth to his third child. Nevertheless, finally he ended up with Camille, his second and also most constant, most embittered and best-knowing wife as you can see from following extract, the letter which Camille wrote to Dean:

My heart broke when I saw you go across the tracks with your bag. I pray and pray you get back safe... I do want Sal and his friend to come and live on the same street...I know you'll make it but I can't help worrying - now that we've decided everything. . . Dear Dean, it's the end of the first half of the century. Welcome with love and kisses

to spend the other half with us. We all wait for you. [Signed] Camille, Amy, and Little Joanie [77]

The way of thinking of Kerouac's characters and their previous description perfectly express the behavior, attitudes to life, value system and recklessness of beatniks of that time. As well as beatniks themselves, also the characters of the book are not able to stay in one place and their inner feelings run them to continue on their journey, to discover other places, to meet new people, to gain new experiences, states of blessedness and other various moods. They are hungry for life and experience everything fully. Some of the main features of their behavior we can see below:

But then they danced down the streets like dingedodies, and I shambled after as I've been doing all my life after people who interest me, because the only people for me are the mad ones, the ones who are mad to live, mad to talk, mad to be saved, desirous of everything at the same time, the ones who never yawn or say a commonplace thing, but burn, burn, burn like fabulous yellow roman candles exploding like spiders across the stars and in the middle you see the blue centerlight pop and everybody goes 'Awww!'[78]

### **3.1.3 Symbolical features of the book**

Apart from delineation of the main characters in the story, the book is interspersed with poetic passages describing the landscape of diverse parts of the USA in which the author wants to give us a picture of how the America looked like at that time. All these features can be found in the following extract which uncovers Kerouac's talent for connection of poetic and geographic descriptions:

We wheeled through the sultry old light of Algiers, back on the ferry, back toward the mud-splashed, crabbed old ships across the river, back on Canal, and out; on a two-lane highway to Baton Rouge in

purple darkness; swung west there, crossed the Mississippi at a place called Port Alien. Port Alien - where the river's all rain and roses in a misty pinpoint darkness and where we swung around a circular drive in yellow foglight and suddenly saw the great black body below a bridge and crossed eternity again. What is the Mississippi River? - a washed clod in the rainy night, a soft plopping from drooping Missouri banks, a dissolving, a riding of the tide down the eternal waterbed, a contribution to brown foams, a voyaging past endless vales and trees and levees, down along, down along, by Memphis, Greenville, Eudora, Vicksburg, Natchez, Port Alien, and Port Orleans and Port of the Deltas, by Potash, Venice, and the Night's Great Gulf, and out [79].

However, Kerouac did not pay his attention simply to descriptions of the landscape. Depictions of diverse sorts of people and a specific atmosphere, which engage all our senses, are present throughout the whole book.

Whole families lingered around doing this. All around there were shacks and drooping trees and a wild cinnamon smell in the air. Frantic teenage Mexican girls came by with boys. 'Hoo!' yelled Dean. 'Si! Mañana!' Music was coming from all sides, and all kinds of music. Stan and I drank several bottles of beer and got high. We were already almost out of America and yet definitely in it and in the middle of where it's maddest. Hotrods blew by. San Antonio, ah-haa! [80]

The book does not contain only a type of description stated above. Some of the passages include descriptions full of slang, expressive and emotionally charged words which are nevertheless still expressed in a poetic way as it is seen in the following extract:

We wandered around, carrying our bundles of rags in the narrow romantic streets. Everybody looked like a broken-down movie extra, a withered starlet; disenchanting stunt-men, midget auto-racers, poignant California characters with their end-of-the-continent sadness, handsome, decadent, Casanova-ish men, puffy-eyed motel blondes, hustlers, pimps, whores, masseurs, bellhops-a



lemon lot, and how's a man going to make a living with a gang like that? [81]

Kerouac in his piece of work does not just amend the subject of descriptions but he also differs passages in which includes a form of primitive way of thinking, when characters simply yell to each other, discuss their sexual experiences, look for drugs and talk about their momentary "girls" in a vulgar way and deeply philosophical discussions concerning the sense of their life, their dreams and desires. A large number of these discussions are in motion under the influence of diverse narcotics such as Benzedrine or at least under the influence of alcohol.

Despite of the fact, that America was a place, where racial animosity and racial segregation were an absolutely common thing, Kerouac expresses in the book his admiration of the black people. He exalts mainly their enthusiasm for life, sense and talent of music which is so different from white "ordinary" people:

At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27th and Welton in the Denver colored section, wishing I were a Negro, feeling that the best the white world had offered was not enough ecstasy for me, not enough life, joy, kicks, darkness, music, not enough night. I stopped at a little shack where a man sold hot red chili in paper containers; I bought some and ate it, strolling in the: dark mysterious streets. I wished I were a Denver Mexican, or even a poor overworked Jap, anything but what I was so drearily, a 'white man' disillusioned. All my life I'd had white ambitions; that was why I'd abandoned a good woman like Terry in the San Joaquin Valley [82].

I was only myself, Sal Paradise, sad, strolling in this violet dark, this unbearably sweet night, wishing I could exchange worlds with the happy, true-hearted, ecstatic Negroes of America [83].

Another feature which is strongly recognized in the book is a beatnik's love of and an inspiration of jazz and also blues of that time. Characters

often visit concerts and other musical performances and try to enjoy them fully by merging with the music as well as beatniks did it.

“Uproars of music and the tenorman had it and everybody knew he had it. Dean was clutching his head in the crowd, and it was a mad crowd. They were all urging that tenorman to hold it and keep it with cries and wild eyes, and he was raising himself from a crouch and going down again with his horn, looping it up in a clear cry above the furor. A six-foot skinny Negro woman was rolling her bones at the man’s hornbell, and he just jabbed it at her, ‘Ee! Ee! Ee!’ Everybody was rocking and roaring. Galatea and Marie with beer in their hands were standing on their chairs, shaking and jumping. Groups of colored guys stumbled in from the street, falling over one another to get there. ‘Stay with it, man!’ roared a man with a foghorn voice, and let out a big groan that must have been heard clear out in Sacramento, ah-haa! ‘Whoo!’ said Dean. He was rubbing his chest, his belly; the sweat splashed from his face [84].

Passages containing a description of jazz concerts are full of energy that is emitted from the main characters, especially the never-ending energy and enjoyment of Dean Moriarty expressed by a large number of interjections. The author tries to depict a real atmosphere and to draw readers into the story.

The book *On The Road* became after its publication something like a modern bible for young hipsters, who started as well as Kerouac did it, to hitchhike across the U.S. and craved for new experiences and roams. The reason why this book was so admired is that it perfectly reflects youngster’s uneasiness, feelings full of contradiction and need for rebellion. It was primarily Kerouac’s lifestyle which was much admired by the current youth [85, p.15; 17; 21]. “Ultimately William Burroughs once remarked a bit cynically that Kerouac opened a million of buffets and sold a million of Levi’s” [86] (trans. from Czech).

Aside from the author’s ability to attract young readers, he achieved also something else. His writing actually almost flawlessly imitates a real spoken word and that is the reason as to why conversations in the book

are displayed in a way to which they were really going on. The book which on the first sight looks like a narration of young writer Sal Paradise consisting of numerous slang expressions and vulgarisms contains also the deep thoughts of the author. The main topic, 'road' is not described only as a road itself (transfer from one place to another) but also as a spiritual path of particular characters. The aim of this book is then the road itself as it is expressed in the well-known proverb '*Even the way may be a target*'.

### **3.2 In Watermelon Sugar**

#### **3.2.1 Main information about the book and the author**

The next book called *In Watermelon Sugar*, which I chose for my second literary analysis, comes from the pen of other American author Richard Brautigan. The reason for his association with the Beat Generation is that he was existing in their company in San Francisco from the beginning and his lifestyle, attitudes to the world and literary features had much in common. As well as other beatniks also Brautigan did not have a happy, calm childhood. His parents divorced and he spent his childhood in poverty by moving from one place to another. In addition, he was diagnosed with a paranoid schizophrenia in his youth and spent some time in hospital while undergoing a shock therapy. When he got in touch with members of the Beat movement, he started to write poems which were in their style and also closed apart from the beatniks to other American poet, Henry David Thoreau. These are the reasons why neither style of writing, applied by Brautigan, did not belong to mainstream literature, preferred by ordinary readers of that time [87].

### 3.2.2 Symbolical features of the book

The story of the book takes place in a small village with the remarkable name iDEATH. Inhabitants of iDEATH live in a complete peace and behave in a proper, right way. They share the same opinions and attitudes to life, however the book also narrates about individuals which are not so satisfied with situation in iDEATH. Everything looks to be so perfect that it seems to be a little bit terrifying in comparison with the real world. People there are not stressed by anything, they live a common life and meet each other in iDEATH. The made-up world in a book, created by Brautigan, required a large dose of imagination and creative spirit.

The book contains a certain features that are quite unusual and we cannot find them in writings from other authors. The first thing which is quite uncommon is the fact that the narrator of the story does not have any name. However he does not mention his name, he offers to readers to give him whatever name, they want, and states some examples of what his name could be: "If you are thinking about something that happened a long time ago: Somebody asked you a question and you did not know the answer. That is my name" [88]. Or it could also be: "Perhaps you stared into a river. There was somebody near you who loved you. They were about to touch you. You could feel this before it happened. Then it happened. That is my name" [89].

The narrator describes his life in an imaginary world consisting of piney woods, rivers, vegetable statues, the baseball Park, the aqueduct, the Watermelon Works, the Forgotten Works, tombs and bridges made up of watermelon sugar after all almost as everything in this world:

'The night was cool and the stars were red. I walked down by the Watermelon Works. That's where we process the watermelons into sugar. We take the juice from the watermelons and cook it down until there's nothing left but sugar, and then we work it into the shape of this thing that we have: our lives.'[90]

While reading the book we discover that the narrator also writes a book. He is one of the few who decided to write a book because those who were writing books lived long ago and no one in iDEATH occupies themselves by writing any book. Even though the topics of books, written by their ancestors as books about needles or about owls, did not discuss anything interesting or fundamental. Just the fact that inhabitants of iDEATH do not write books and even do not read them signifies a sweet nescience and their intention to live a simple uncomplicated life without unnecessary knowledge about the world around them. Another curiosity can be fact that people in iDEATH probably do not use any kind of tender. In the book we can find people with a profession in Watermelon Works or sculptors but as well as it was similar in the communes of the 1960's in America, members shared all, even themselves which proves their unrestraint and spontaneousness in relationships representing group love among all.

Some of inhabitants of iDEATH, for example like Fred, work in Watermelon Works where the watermelon sugar is manufactured and used for the creation of other things and some of them spend their time by building of statues from vegetable which represent like some other things in iDEATH, a certain obscurity. These vegetable statues come from past times and although nobody knows why someone built them, they just continue this weird tradition.

In the landscape of iDEATH we can find a trout hatchery, The Tomb Crew which buries each dead person into a glass tomb that is put under the water where the tombs light each night or homes that have a river inside of the living room. The sun in iDEATH has a different color each day and growing watermelons have just the color which the sun has in that particular day. Just by such descriptions Brautigan proves his disinterest in observance of common rules on which our real world is based because in his world there are no rules or limits and anything is possible. At the beginning of the book the narrator talks about uninvited

visits of his former girlfriend who has already been dead for several months and so we can also mention author's ignorance of perception of time.

As it was stated above, the main material used for building and the creation of almost all things in iDEATH is the watermelon sugar. The sugar made from watermelons is on one side sweet, harmless, innocent environ but on the other side it can also be sticky and it is hard to break out of it. This ambiguous meaning of watermelon sugar is there quite strongly recognized. Inhabitants of iDEATH live closed in this sweet watermelon environ which gives them an idyllic picture of their lives but the fact that in normal real world buildings are made up of bricks and mortar and all iDEATH and the surrounding world is built only from the sugar which does not have a good consistence for this purpose, ultimately implies a particular fragility of this imaginary world.

The name of the local village iDEATH is compounded from the words 'I' and 'death' and represents a completely new name which has also its hidden meaning similarly to the watermelon sugar. This word can express a theory that thinking of oneself and frequent usage of 'I', figuratively said, leads to 'death'. iDEATH is an embodiment of human's selfishness and efforts to achieve their own goals no matter the cost. It is probably not by accident that this book contained such warnings at a time when America tried to strengthen its international position in order to become the most powerful country in the world. Therefore we can disprove any hypothesis that Brautigan's book simply tells a story about an imaginary world which has no link with the real world and the events of that time. A clear example of this was the development of the atomic bomb and militaristic actions such as the Vietnam War which faced a considerable public disagreement or the Cold war between USA and Russia in order to gain world domination and suppression of communism.

After all, thinking of oneself and inconsiderate behavior of people can be found throughout the whole history of mankind. People have always

focused on their own goals and happiness regardless of the others and this fact is quite strongly recognized also in these days. Nevertheless it was the world's technical development which was strongly refused by the author and which is viewed as a way in which people use it for destruction of the planet, in order to make profits and devastate many human's lives. Avariciousness and materialistic mentality was also one thing criticized by the Beat movement at a time when people only cared about their careers and high income.

The word formation of iDEATH is not the only example of compounding that we can find in the book. The name of one of the main characters, inBOIL, is also created this way. inBOIL does not live in iDEATH like the rest of the inhabitants. His home represents The Forgotten Works which can constitute a certain remains of a long-forgotten past. The Forgotten Works are full of forgotten things which were used in the past and inhabitants of iDEATH rarely go to this area and almost ignore its existence. The Forgotten Works represents the home of inBOIL and his gang. This group of people presents those who are not satisfied with the situation in iDEATH and they punctuate idyll of this small village.

The name inBOIL evokes all qualities including suicidal tendencies, alcoholism, inappropriate behavior, instability and split personality. He does not blend into the idyllic village iDEATH similarly to the beatniks who did not blend into the urbane and conforming society of the 1950's, a time when people tried to achieve ideal life and family background. He chooses to live on the margin of society with only a couple of his followers. This situation can be markedly similar to the situation of beatniks who were also misunderstood by the public and voluntarily chose a completely different way of life to the rest of mainstream society.

Constantly dissatisfied with the life in iDEATH, inBOIL decides to show to the inhabitants of iDEATH what the real sense of iDEATH is in order to solve the unsustainable situation. He comes to village with other

members of his gang and they commit a mass suicide. This radical and brutal solution of situation by mass suicide confirms the fact that inhabitants of iDEATH do not listen to their different co-inhabitants and do not pay attention to their problems. They just want to live their problem-free life and pretend that there are not any issues. The same situation had been enacted in America in the 1950's and subsequently in the 1960's. People did not want to admit the existence of such problems as racism, war interventions, exaggerated threat of communism and other principal events of that time. The strong stress put on conformity, togetherness and the lack of acceptance of people with different attitudes to life automatically excluded them from mainstream society.

"I'll show you," inBOIL said. He pulled the blade out. It looked sharp. "This is iDEATH," he said, and took the knife and cut off his thumb and dropped it into a tray filled with trout just barely hatched. The blood started running down his hand and dripping on the floor. Then all of inBOIL's gang took out jackknives and cut off their thumbs and dropped their thumbs here and there, in this tray, that pond until there were thumbs and blood all over the place [91].

"All right, men. Off with your ears." "Hail, iDEATH," and then there were ears all over the place and the trout hatchery was drowning in blood.[92]

"This is iDEATH," he said. "Oh, boy. This is really iDEATH." Finally he had to sit down, too, so he could bleed to death [93].

"We've proved iDEATH," inBOIL said. Pauline suddenly started to leave the room. I went over to her, almost slipping on the blood and falling down. "Are you all right?" I said, not knowing quite what to say. "Can I help you?" "No," she said, on her way out. "I'm going to go get a mop and clean this mess up." When she said mess, she looked directly at inBOIL. She left the hatchery and came back shortly with a mop. They were almost all dead now, except for inBOIL. He was still talking about iDEATH. "See, we've done it," he said. Pauline started mopping up the blood and wringing it out into a bucket. When the bucket was almost full of blood, inBOIL died. "I am iDEATH," he said. "You're an asshole," Pauline said. And the last thing that inBOIL ever saw was Pauline standing beside him, wringing his blood out of the mop into the bucket [94].



Among other interesting characters in the book, we can refer to tigers that appear in the book through the narration of the main nameless character. Tigers are described as very dangerous inhabitants who eat only children's parents in *iDEATH* but on the other side they can play musical instruments, sing and make long walks on the moon. Because of their dangerousness, people started to hunt them and finally they exterminated them all.

The fact which is quite unusual was that tigers were committing these terrible violent acts and at the same time they were an embodiment of kindness. They smiled to children while they were eating their parents and apologetically explained that that they just have to do it like that. As compensation for the loss of the parents they offered to tell the children a fairytale or help them with something. Dread of tigers therefore lies in the combination of their king character, their smile and their dangerousness. Their meaning in the book is not clearly shown.

"Those were my folks," I said, finally. "We're sorry," one of the tigers said. "We really are. ""Yeah," the other tiger said. "We wouldn't do this if we didn't have to, if we weren't absolutely forced to. But this is the only way we can keep alive.""We're just like you," the other tiger said. "We speak the same language you do. We think the same thoughts, but we're tigers" [95].

Richard Brautigan showed to the world an absolutely new, unique and inimitable style of writing. However the story is narrated in a very simple and comprehensible way which remains a fairy tale, it contains the essential opinions, tendencies and characteristics of that time.

This book is poetic prose with elements of dark humor, wordplays and surrealism [96]. The poetic character of this prose can be seen already in the first sentence of the book: 'In watermelon sugar the deeds were done and done again as my life in watermelon sugar. "I'll tell you about it because I am here and you are distant" [97].

The author intentionally guides the qualities of the main characters and their reactions to particular situations to extreme exaggeration. His wordplays with language makes the book changeable and unstable with no observation of the rules of writing. The narrator of the story does not follow any chronological storyline and information is stated randomly.

The brilliance of this book lies in the fact that it can be understood differently and offers readers a chance to explore a completely different world which is not restricted by the rules of their real world. Together with an intentional lack of information and incompleteness of the story the reader can deduce his or her own conclusions and hypothesizes and this is the reason why the book of Richard Brautigan is so extraordinary.

Richard Brautigan by his writings gained favour of hippies who occurred in the 1960's and who appreciated Brautigan primarily because of his negative opinions of mainstream society of America [98].

### **3.3 Howl**

#### **3.3.1 Main information about the book and the author**

The last literary work which I chose for my literary analysis is the poem *Howl* coming from the poetry collection *Howl and other poems* written by Allen Ginsberg, a propagator of pacifism, love and eastern religion Zen Buddhism, which together formed the basis of the latter hippies [99, p. 283].

The particularity of his writing roots began in his deformed childhood with his mentally ill mother and his own serious psychical problems which he tried to solve by various kinds of therapy. Aside from this, he had to also mentally cope with his sexual orientation because as it is clear from his poetry, he was homosexual. This orientation was not specific only to Ginsberg; it was also the case of Burroughs who had the same

orientation despite the fact that he was twice married [100, p. 46; 85; 86; 89].

Although he had such complicated life, he became a respected university teacher of literature whom was admired by students and hippies. From his slender youth, he was in contact with poetry because his father was a teacher of literature who also wrote his own poems, although their styles of writing were completely different. The poem *Howl*, which I chose to analyze, was dedicated to Ginsberg's close friend Carl Solomon, who as well as Ginsberg travelled around the world and became a writer whose books *Mishaps Perhaps* and *More Mishaps* were published in Ferlinghetti's publishing house City Lights [101, p. 86; 87; 101; 102; 110].

### **3.3.2 Symbolical features of the poem**

#### **3.3.1.1 First part**

The poem *Howl*, which is divided into three main parts is ended by a footnote to *Howl*, and represents an extensive criticism of American society and politics of the 1950's. It points out widespread issues as racial violence, the military interventions of the USA in foreign countries, the censure of literature and other problems of that time.

In the first part of the poem, Ginsberg starts with a depiction of individuals who despite their better than average intelligence suffer in that time in America and voluntarily choose to live on margin of society. These individuals are seen by the rest of society as desperate men who take drugs, drink a lot of alcohol and seek a good upbringing although they do not realize that it is exactly the other way around. Members of then society are perceived by beatniks as people who live in a lie, contentedly surrounded by their property, who confuse money with happiness, worship a consumerism and successfully ignore all uncomfortable issues

of that period. In the poem we can find a persisting contrast of desperation and madness with their intelligence, a desire for enlightenment and foresightedness concerning the current situation and future of America and American society.

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, [102]

We can find here Kerouac's preceding theory that illumination and connection with heaven often belong to lost existences, outcasts and crazy men. The connection of desperate men with exceptional individuals who avoid normal society and reject living in the world of consumerism, wars and racism can be seen in Ginsberg's *Howl*.

Consumerism was only one part of capitalism in America that was criticized by the Beat movement as you can see in this verse: "who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism" [103]. America by its actions set the theory that we can reach happiness and satisfaction only through asset accumulation. This trend has after all remained in existence till these days as people judge each other according to their appearance which is strongly dependent on their financial situation.

This poem also contains lots of autobiographical elements which were aside from Ginsberg typical for other representatives of the Beat Generation: "who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull" [104]. "who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge" [105].

The first extract mentions the fact Ginsberg himself was actually expelled from the university because of obscene writings and Kerouac

was similarly expelled from the army and diagnosed as paranoid schizophrenic although he actually was not. He just did not stand strict regime and acceptance of authorities [106, p. 62; 91].

The second extract deals with their ability to lead long discussions about serious topics that concerned philosophical, religious or political fields (Zen Buddhism, situation in America or literature) as well as about anything that came to their minds (their visions or dreams). Some of these discussions we can find also in Kerouac's book *On the road* as it contains a large number of conversations between Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty (in reality Neal Cassady, who represented the main inspiration of the Beat Generation because he was an embodiment of all about what beatniks wrote.)

The poem is also a demonstration of a disinterest in money, a means of materialism, which were also strongly criticized by this movement as they worshipped the way of day to day life and did not think about the future. "who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall," [107]

We can notice that this attitude to money was also adopted by hippies in the late of the 1960's. Some parts of the poem are entirely clear whereas the others are simply random enumerations expressing author's associations as in this extract:

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery  
 dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops,  
 storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon  
 blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree  
 vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn,  
 ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind, [108]

The fifties were among other things a period of people's psychical devastation as a consequence from experiences from war, criminals and mental hospitals. This topic was discussed more by the author Ken

Kesey, who was classified among the authors of the 1960's and who wrote the novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, which was later filmed again by Czech director Miloš Forman [109]. Ginsberg who himself underwent therapy and presented his own experiences and findings about these psychological practices:

a lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon, yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars [110]

The poem also contains the intensive effort of beatniks to attain personal and inner freedom which was unfortunately thwarted by the American government or police. These public authorities often investigated members of this movement in connection to the violation of drug laws or other less serious offenses. In this extract you can see how these actions were perceived by beatniks: "who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication, " [111]

The attainment of freedom is also indivisibly connected with roaming across the USA during in which beatniks had been randomly visiting each other as it was described in details in Kerouac's book. One of the most important places was city Denver, the birthplace of Neal Cassidy (in *On the Road* Dean Moriarty), who inspired mainly Ginsberg and Kerouac by his never-ending enthusiasm for living, his adventure, typically beatnik's life and his raw charm to which, except of beatniks, succumbed a large number of women.

A well-known fact is that Allen Ginsberg was very attired by Neal Cassidy and therefore it is not surprising, that his adventures are also part of this poem [112, p. 92]

who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to each other's hotrod-Golgotha jail-solitude watch or Birmingham jazz incarnation,

who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out if I had a vision or you had a vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity,

who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver & waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver is lonesome for her heroes, [113]

However the Beat movement is distinguished by its liking for kicks, alcohol, drugs and frequent offenses, they tried to transform the rules of writing and set the system which would enable a writer to actually express the flow of his thoughts without obligation to observe restricting literary principles no matter whether it was Kerouac's bop prose or Ginsberg's unusual and unrhymed verses. This effort to set the writing free can be seen below:

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before you speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head, the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what might be left to say in time come after death, [114]

### **3.3.1.2 Second part**

As it was mentioned previously, the author focused on rhythmic repetition of certain word at the beginning of each verse. The word in this part is Moloch, "symbol of cruelty, of everything what destroys a human being (called according to Moloch, the mythological Semitic god of the sun, fire and war)" [115] (trans. from Czech). The constantly repeated

exclamation of the word Moloch has its hidden meaning as it is described in stated definition.

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable dollars!  
 Children screaming under the stairways! Boys sobbing in armies!  
 Old men weeping in the parks!  
 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!  
 Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!  
 [116]

According to the above extract, the word Moloch is there naming for all issues and shortcomings of America with which beatniks were not satisfied and which became their target of criticism. Among the most criticized things are the traditionally mentioned actions of the American government through military interventions and also society based on money as it is in the following verse: “Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo!” [117]

This criticism is also recognizable in part which expresses the fact that American’s practice actions concerning weapon development, actions in favor of government and other issues will turn against them. “They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pavements, trees, radios, tons! lifting the city to Heaven which exists and is everywhere about us!” [118]

The final verse of the second part pictures real and intensive desperation and suffering of a generation which is literally mad and which is brought to the brink of madness simply by the atmosphere and conventions of that time.

Mad generation! down on the rocks of Time! Real holy laughter in the river! They saw it all! the wild eyes! the holy yells! They bade



farewell! They jumped off the roof! to solitude! waving! carrying  
flowers! Down to the river! into the street! [119]

### 3.3.1.3 Third part

In the same way how the two previous parts are written, the third part also contains repetition. However in this case a whole sentence is repeated: 'I'm with you in Rockland'. This sentence is again at the beginning of each verse and refers to psychiatric facility located in New York City.

It is important to mention that this center was of the same kind that Ginsberg was placed in and it was just in the psychiatric center he met the man to whom he dedicated this poem, above mentioned Carl Solomon [120, p. 100-101].

Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland where you're madder than I  
am  
I'm with you in Rockland where you must feel very strange  
I'm with you in Rockland where you imitate the shade of my mother  
I'm with you in Rockland [121]

This below mentioned passage also, as it was in the second part, contains references to executed healing practices such as a shock therapy which was quite cruel and often used as you can see: "I'm with you in Rockland where fifty more shocks will never return your soul to its body again from its pilgrimage to a cross in the void" [122]

The final verse of this part contains poetic expressions of the most important characteristic of the Beat movement – the road, the real and also the inner one.

I'm with you in Rockland  
in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey on the highway  
across America in tears to the door of my cottage in the Western night  
[123]

### 3.3.1.4 Footnote to Howl

The last part, which is not a real part of this poem, is called *Footnote to Howl*. This part can be described as something like a prayer or sacrament to the beatnik's lives and expresses Ginsberg's admiration of other members of the Beat Generation and after all of everything, with which they were connected.

This part is an expression of all what was important and literally holy to Ginsberg and contains the two most important thoughts of this poem. The first is stated in following extract where Ginsberg mentions his closest friends and simultaneously beatniks. He declares them to be holy and calls them "suffering beggars holy the hideous human angels!" [124] By this he presents a theory that their lives were determined by a misunderstanding environment and that it was the reason of their deformation. The second one consists of poetic expressions of Ginsberg's lifelong motto: "Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Our! bodies! suffering! magnanimity! Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul!" [125]

This poem is the image of that time as it was seen by the Beat Generation. Ginsberg here depicts the reality which contained all fundamental events and tendencies of the 1950's such as militarism, issues concerning sexual orientation, racism, conventions, actions of the public services and many other things in the eyes of his generation which is in this poem called mad because of all above mentioned issues. The name of the poem *Howl* evokes a desperate screaming expressing madness of the then generation and the author tries here to get out all of his emotions, opinions and attitudes which he had been carrying inside a long time. The poem is full of slang words and vulgar expressions used to strengthen the author's urgency and desperation.

This poem can be considered as an accusation of America as a whole and rejects and criticizes everything that America was based on in the

1950's. Its publication unleashed a storm of indignation, but nevertheless bad advertisement is also good advertisement and so the poem gained a large dose of attention and finally became a Ginsberg's most known peace of work [126, p. 175-177].

## 4 CONCLUSION

The writing of this bachelor thesis enabled me to expand my knowledge concerning this literary movement, the period of time in which they lived, and broadened my vocabulary with new expressions and words. I examined a large number of biographies and historical books on this basis and I have formed a believable depiction of that time and clarified former ambiguities.

The most complicated part of my bachelor thesis was definitely the literary analysis of Ginsberg's poem *Howl* which consists of a large number of unknown and slang words which in connection with poetic form caused me problems to discover their corresponding hidden meaning or symbolic features of the Beat movement.

I have entrenched myself in the fact that the criticism and opinions of the Beat Generation on then social and political issues were constructive and can be applied more or less in the contemporary world. Among the main issues common for both periods of time we can mention the manifestations of racism which are present in all parts of the world although it is not as visible as it was in 1950's in America, the burning question of homosexual orientation, which up until recent years has been considered as a mental illness, censorship in media dependent on the influence of powerful corporations, the preservation of a materialistic way of thinking supported by TV commercials and billboards and the threat of nuclear destruction of the world due to frequent military interventions and spreading of weapons of mass destruction (Iran, North Korea).

All these things have remained in existence up until these days and our generation should deal with these issues in appropriate and least drastic way.

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## 7 ABSTRACT

My bachelor thesis focuses on the literary movement of the Beat Generation in America. The thesis is divided into two main parts – theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part deals with a description of the 1950's, fundamental characteristics of the Beat Generation, the part describing the origin of their name, their formation and contribution to the hippie movement. The practical part relates to three chosen publications ( *On The Road*, *In Watermelon Sugar*, *Howl*) which are analyzed in order to show all above mentioned characteristics and the literary features of the Beat Generation.

With this bachelor thesis I wanted to point out the fact that all issues that were criticized by the Beat movement are still current in today's society. Among the most visible we can classify racism, ineffective military interventions, poverty or persisting threat of nuclear destruction. The worst problem of this situation is the fact that in comparison with people in the 1950's, who were considerably worried concerning these issues, people these days have gotten use to everyday bad news and are more indifferent to everything. They focus on money, career and their individual happiness and do not think forward to the future generations.



## 8 RESUMÉ

Moje bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na literární hnutí beatnické generace v Americe. Práce je rozdělena do dvou hlavních částí - teoretické a praktické části. Teoretická část se zabývá popisem padesátých let, základními charakteristikami generace beatníků, částí popisující původ jejich názvu, jejich vytvořením a také přispěním ke vzniku hnutí hippies. Praktická část se týká tří vybraných publikací (Na cestě, V melounovém cukru, Kvílení), které jsou analyzovány tak, aby ukázaly všechny výše zmíněné charakteristiky a literární znaky generace beatníků.

Touto bakalářskou prací jsem chtěla upozornit na skutečnost, že všechny problémy, které byly kritizovány beatnickým hnutím, jsou v dnešní společnosti stále aktuální. Mezi ty nejvíce viditelné můžeme zařadit rasismus, neúčinné vojenské vměšování, chudobu nebo stále přetrvávající hrozbu jaderného zničení. Nejhorším problémem této situace je fakt, že ve srovnání s lidmi v padesátých letech, kteří se těchto věcí velmi obávali, si lidé v dnešní době na každodenní špatné zprávy zvykli a jsou vůči všemu více lhostejní. Soustředí se na peníze, kariéru a vlastní štěstí a neberou ohled na budoucí generace.

## 9 APPENDICES

**Well, what do YOU know about babies?**

**1. If baby is bald, should you worry?**

If your neighbor's baby has curls while yours has just fuzz, don't fret! Many babies don't grow much hair till they're a year old. In the meantime, use pure, gentle Johnson's Baby Oil to help keep baby's scalp smooth, free from "cradle cap." Use also for daily "smoothovers" after baby's bath, at every diaper change.

**2. Does a new baby have a "language"?**

Yes—not words, but music! Every baby has several special cries—listen carefully and you'll learn to recognize the hunger cry, boredom cry, pain cry! A cross, fretful wail often means little chafes and prickles are bothering baby—help keep his skin smooth and free from irritation with frequent sprinkles of soft, silky Johnson's Baby Powder!

**3. Should grandmothers have a say in bringing up baby?**

For advice on baby's health, your doctor is your best bet. But grandmas are gold mines of work-and-worry-saving tips! They'll approve Johnson's Baby Products for baby's nursery tray just as your doctor does. Johnson's Baby Products are made specially to agree with baby skin—more mothers buy them, trust them, than all other brands put together.

**Johnson's BABY OIL**

**Johnson's BABY POWDER**

Johnson & Johnson

They all look  
at things differently

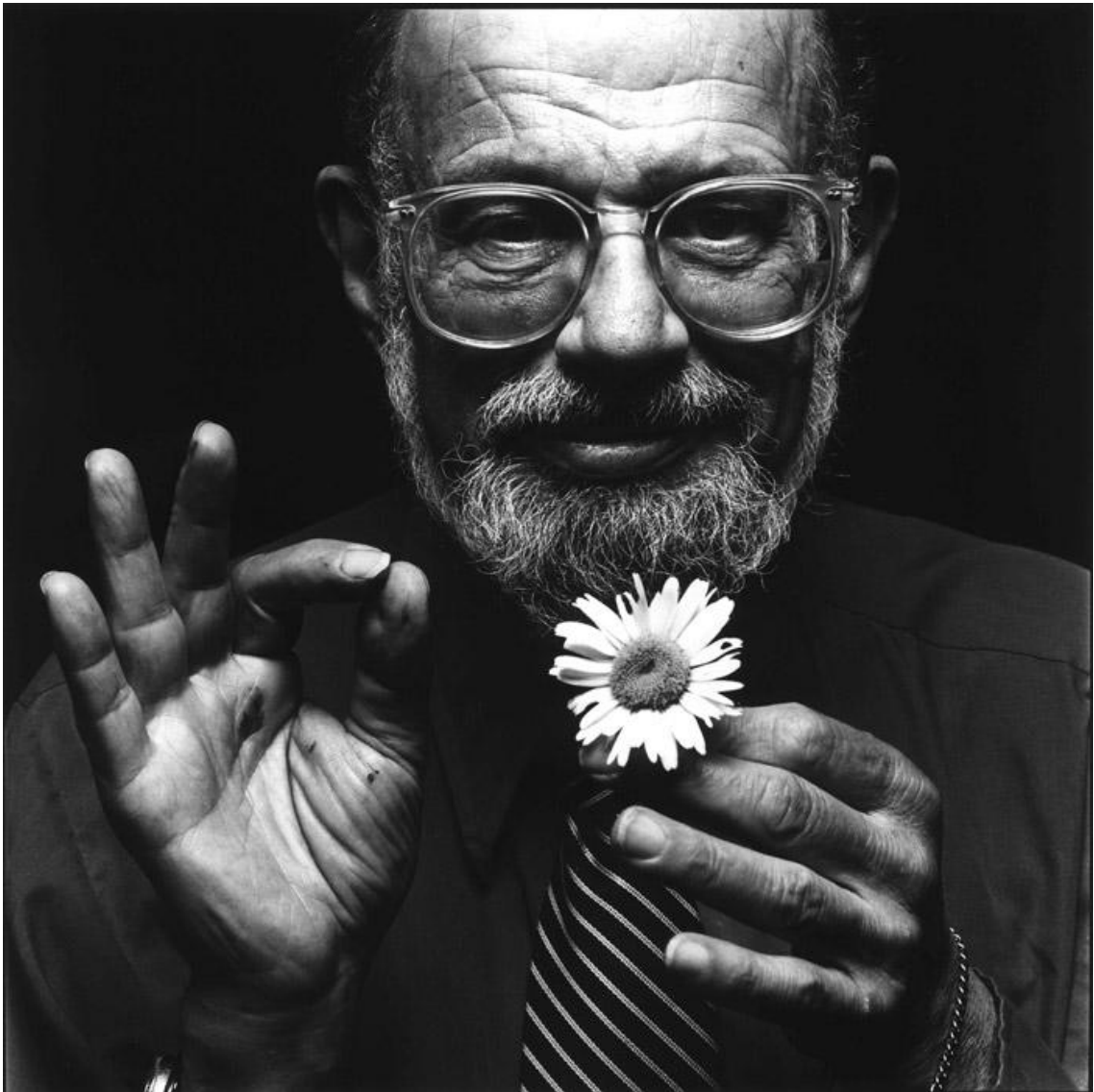
*“Choose-it-yourself”* breakfasts, as only Kellogg's makes them, please a variety of different tastes. You set out the assortment America likes best. Everyone takes his choice from all kinds of Kellogg's favorites, all fresh and crisp. Can you think of an easier, happier way to serve up 10 healthy servings of good grain nourishment for your family?

**Kellogg's VARIETY PACK**  
10 PACKAGES ALL FAVORITES

**Kellogg's** VARIETY PACK  
The cereal assortment America likes best

\*Kellogg's is a trade mark of Kellogg Company (Bak., Fl., S. Pat., U.S.A.)

Source: <http://history.hanover.edu/courses/excerpts/227ads.html>



Source: <http://4.bp.blogspot.com/-UfEuT4krOpU/Tqan0CP1U2I/AAAAAAAAABBE/RhZJWsEZ6HU/s1600/AllenGinsberg.jpg>





Source: <http://www.podcastcafe.org/radiofreefundifiles/tag-jack-kerouac.html>



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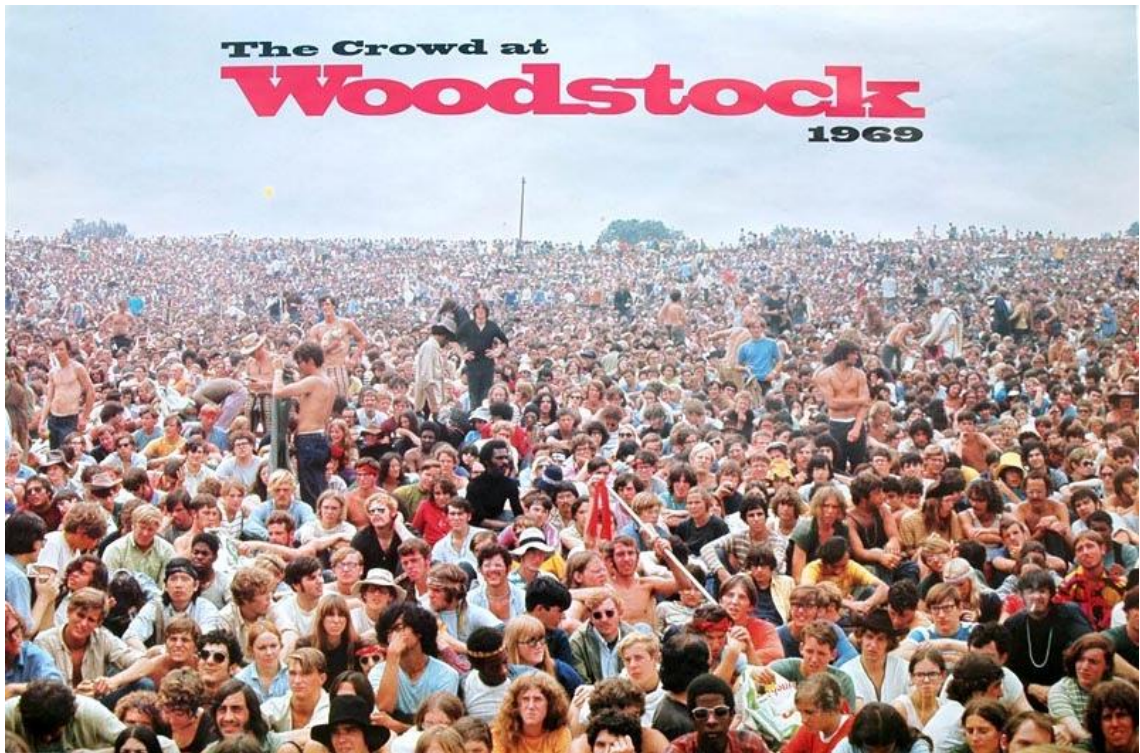


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