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REBELLION IN THE BEAT GENERATION: A STUDY IN ALLEN GINSBERG'S "HOWL"

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ABSTRACT

Allen Ginsberg (1926-1998) is a prominent figure of the Beat generation poets. Hampton (1997, p.1) explored that his poem "Howl" becomes "a manifesto of Sex Revolution and an issue of expression freedom in the 50th " ,20th Century"¹. He has unsuppressed character and feels relief in Indian retreat and counter culture .He protested against the politics of his country ,USA i.e. the Vietnam War and CIA exercise .He celebrated homo-sexuality ,his gay tendency and love for drugs .He is 'non-violent thug' as the critic Leonard said,1988 . In Colombia, he met Jack Kerouac, Lousian Carr, and William Bourough, together they founded The Beat Generation poets .In 1949 he was put in prison where he met Carl Solomon who deepened his poetry awareness .In Francisco he wrote "Howl" which has become a scream in the face of the politics class. He expresses the concerns and the ideals of the alienated poets of Beat Generation. Ginsberg has converted to Buddhism and practiced its rituals .He has addressed his citizens as follows,"America I have given you everything and I am nothing" (Ginsberg, 1956, Lines 1-2)² .He refused materialistic life and revived spiritual and ethical values .In fact without Allen Ginsberg , there would be no Beat Generation.

INTRODUCTION

Beat Generation was a countercultural literary movement in America in 1950s. Ginsberg's "Howl" was described as "the voice of America" and " the poem that changed America"³. It rebelled against the establishment and stimulated social changes in America and the world during the sixties of the twentieth century. Beat Generation called for the principles of individuality and intensity of expression.

Neal Cassady became the model and source of inspiration for the Beat poets. He resembled the soul for USA and generation. Beat Generation poets were influenced by Ezra Pound and William Carlos Williams. Beat poetry is featured with open-verse, spontaneity and spoken English. The poem resulted

from the Cold War. When "Howl" was read in San Francisco in October, 1955, it was regarded a rebellion and a beginning of Cultural Revolution in 1960s.

Ginsberg was the prominent figure of the Beat Generation. Charter (1986) argued that Ginsberg "brought the whole Beat Generation into being with the strength of vision of himself and his friends as a new generation"⁴. Ginsberg was a member of "Gay Liberation Movement" of 1960s and 1970s in San Francisco and "Hippie Movement" of 1960s. He gave up his religion from Judaism to Buddhism. In Columbia University he met Lucien Carr, Jack Kerouac and William Burroughs. He quitted attending his study in the university in 1945. Due to that he practiced a life of hopping, drugs and rebellious acts. To rejoin his study he had to enter psychiatric institute for treatment, and there he met Carl Solomon, an eccentric intellectual who incurred shock treatment. Ginsberg dedicated "Howl" to him and referred to him "great mind destroyed by madness".

Allen Ginsberg continued his activism against Cold War, Vietnam War and had close association with countercultural. "Howl" was written between 1955 and 1966. It has autobiographical experience of the poet. His father, as a poet, sustained his prosody. William Carlos Williams inspired him. The effect of his friends, Kerouac, Cassady, Burroughs, Herbert Hunke and Subterraneans, dropouts, revolutionaries, drug addicts, Jazz and musicians who all celebrated his eccentricity and homosexuality that are undeniable. Allen Ginsberg became a symbol of the avant-garde artist due to "Howl". Madness is present in the figures of his mother and Carl Solomon who suffered in an asylum. The poet dedicated his poem to Carl Solomon who has a level of highness due to his insanity. Ginsberg revolted against mental institutionalization which is symbolized in Moloch, the destructive symbol of mad, greedy capitalism that prevailed the country and resulted from McCarthyism (Archter, 2021)⁵.

Ginsberg used Whitman's long line "to build large organic structures". And Cezanne's aesthetic "petites sensation" and William Carlos Williams modernist new poetics of looking⁶

"Howl" falls in three parts and the fourth one is a footnote to the poem which is different from others in rhythm and structure. The very title, "For Carl Solomon" refers to the poet's friend and advisor, Solomon. Solomon represents manifestation of madness, post war generation. A "Howl" is a loud, instinctive animal-like voice. It is raw, crude, and unconscious scream arises from deep inside:

"I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness starving hysterical naked/dragging them through the Negro streets at dawn looking for angry fix."

The best minds are persons whom the society rejects for their unwillingness to conform to its established institutions and ideas as Ginsberg and his outcast friends. They include outcasts, rebels, junkies and sexual deviants. They are

angry and hysterical because of culture suppression. The poet called these persons "angel head hipster". The poet said, "a lament for the Lamb in America with instances of remarkable lamb-like youth". He thinks the fashion industry and the book industry are at the very heart of inference.

The youths directed themselves to slaughter. "Chained themselves to subways for endless ride from Battery to Bronx". The best minds are victims of themselves and society. They were prosecuted by the judgment because of their different lifestyle and their refusals of the establishment. They opposed "against the tobacco haze of capitalism"

Joseph McCarthy, who represents the political institution, believed that the principles of Beat ideology as Communist and a threat to America.

The Revolution against Establishment

In "Howl" line 115 Ginsberg focuses on sex which prevails the poem. The poet has sexual tendency and inclination toward the same sex. The sexual practices have become against the political and religious establishment. In the 50th of the last century, Homosexuality was prohibited and condemned. Ginsberg describes promiscuous sex unprude, graphic way in 1955. Neal Cassady becomes the sexual hero of "Howl" in his search for freedom by sex, "the Adonis of Denver". Ginsberg's heroes are eager for sex more than food, drink and spirituality. For spirituality they are unable to adapt. They are, martyrs-like, prosecuted and underwent self-destruction for defending their cause. His mentor Burroughs has gone self-destruction. In "Howl" there are several endeavors to commit suicide, "jump off Brooklyn Bridge"

"cut their wrists three time successfully, unsuccessfully".

Ginsberg (2000)⁷ has sympathized with the characters in "Howl". Madness and the madhouse have a great effect on Ginsberg's life, represented in the persons of Burroughs, Cassady, Solomon and his mother as well. Madness has formed the central theme in "Howl". They are "the best minds" as the poet describes. America has become "an armed madhouse". It is a nation of "visible madman doom". In line 270 Ginsberg identifies himself insane character as he addresses Carl, "ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe". Carl is the mad and intelligent of the generation. Best minds are holy and devoted for humanity.

MOLOCH

In part 1, Ginsberg debates the tortured lamblike youths, whereas in part 2 he discusses the case of the monster "that preys on the lamb" which takes the name of Moloch. "Howl" has a consequence of metaphors and symbols that threaten the holiness in the world and in the human nature. It makes a challenge to the establishment, political power, education and mental health (Raskin, 2004, p.142)⁸. The poet said that the whole poem centered on the phrase: "Moloch whose name is the mind". Moloch is the Canaanite God of fire whose people their sons sake of him. For Ginsberg it symbolizes suppression of modern industrial and military country. It is the beastly

capitalism .He is a God and a judge : "Moloch" , the heavy judger of men". He is the immoral power of the state.

He doesn't collect the people's hopes and ambitions. On the contrary, he collects the heartless dominance of industry and power .He is "pure machinery", 'electricity and banks" which represent industry and business. Ginsberg thinks that all Americans are part of Moloch, part of its power, "Moloch entered my soul early." He is a part of the minds of Americans who turns the Americans to be insane. Moloch, one day, causes the collapse to America. The best minds that decided to resist him drove to insanity and despair .They are blessed and cursed their way of life .Though Howl's Moloch represents gloom and woeful of the poem, there will be a hope in the horizon. The children rise te city, "Heaven exists and everywhere about us."

The third part of "Howl" is "Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland." Solomon represents real madness and wisdom as Solomon of Judaism. The modern world surrounds the Solomon in "madhouse" .Carl Solomon identifies all intellectuals and educated of 20th C. For Ginsberg, Madness is an image of creative sanity.

In the footnote ,the poet imparts a trait of holiness on everything , "everything is holy' which he seems to borrow from William Blake's "Marriage of Heaven and Hell" , "everything that lives is holy" and identifies with him. He reminds the Americans of their dignity.

Jönsson (p.11)⁹ explored that Ginsberg's "Howl" is "a poem which describes many of the beaten and maladjusted people who have passed in review during the forties and onwards". Ginsberg succeeds in displaying how no one could escape from the inhuman living conditions due to capitalism as well as in making us sympathize the helpless and hopeless situations of people.

CONCLUSION

As rebellious, Ginsberg utilizes his poetry as a vehicle to protest against various traditional social norms. His membership in Beat Generation effects on the foundation of his poetry. Therefore his "Howl" as the title implies is one of his weapons to satirize American capitalist society through shedding lights on people's agonies. The poem focuses on the spiritual side of life by depicting the inner entities. Moloch is a metaphor for the capitalist society who sacrifices its individuals' dreams, futures, and hopes for its interests. The impact of the oppressive authority is depicted through Carl Solomon's madness. However, the poem ends optimistically as Ginsberg hopes that all arrogant systems will be fallen one day.

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