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Bakalářská práce

Generace beatníků Jacka Kerouaca

The Beat Generation by Jack Kerouac

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## Abstract

This bachelor thesis focuses on life philosophy of the Beat Generation in the period of 1950s and 1960s. The thesis briefly characterizes the era of the Beat Generation and compares it with inter-war Lost Generation. It also deals with lives of two main representatives Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac and their significant works. It concerns common themes and value of the generation itself, critics of the American society and the influence of Ginsberg and Kerouac's faith in God on their works in the analysis of the novel '*On the Road*', poem '*Howl*', and of the drama '*Beat Generation*'. In closing the thesis focuses on the play '*Beat Generation*' written by Jack Kerouac which was discovered a short time ago.

## Anotace

Tato bakalářská práce se soustředí na životní filozofii tzv. beatnické generace v době 50. a 60. let 20. století. Práce stručně charakterizuje dobu generace beatníků a srovnává ji s meziválečnou ztracenou generací. Dále se věnuje životům dvou hlavních představitelů Allena Ginsberga a Jacka Kerouaca a jejich významným dílům. V rozboru románu „*Na cestě*“, básni „*Kvílení*“ a v dramatu „*Beat Generation*“ pojednává o společné tématice a hodnotách samotné generace, o kritice tehdejší americké společnosti a o vlivu Ginsbergovy a Kerouacovy víry v Boha na jejich tvorbu. Závěr práce je věnován nedávno objevené hře „*Beat Generation*“ Jacka Kerouaca.

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# 1. The USA after the Second World War

## 1.1. Cultural and Social Situation

The period after the Second World War is sometimes called as a 'decade of youth'. Teenagers started to live their American dream – they wanted to forget about their parents' culture and build their own one. In the 1950s and 1960s young people emphasized the magnitude of existence of politic groups consisting of the youths. They wanted to bring a new ideology into the social and cultural life. In that time the wave of 'hippies' flooded with their ways of living and fashion style all over the United States. But the revolt of the youth was irrelevant.

The economy of the USA as well as of other states, which were fighting each other during the Second World War, was not on a high level but people did not suffer. They knew a happier period had started. (Temperley and Bigsby, 2006)

*'African American culture as such, which Jack Kerouac called 'misnoticed culture', was immensely popular then, since the Beats were extremely open to 'otherness'.'*<sup>1</sup>

The American society is so chaotic in the 1950s and 1960s that it is impossible to form concrete depiction of it. The society was divided into two groups of individuals. Some of them identified themselves with the spirit of that time and the other ones did not. Those who were set against the society desired love and belonging together because their souls were parched. *'As the American economy moved from Depression and war production to affluence, consumerism, and worldwide geopolitical dominance, writers turned away from economic and social concerns to engage more with spiritual and personal issues.'*<sup>2</sup> 1950s were the time of Cold War, the Korean War, the war in Vietnam and the time of reaction of the youth to the violence and anxiety from the Third World War. They protest to it by rebellious concerts, using drugs, free sex and political demonstrations.

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<sup>1</sup> Prochazka, 1997:285

<sup>2</sup> Dickstein, 2005:165

## 1.2. The Lost Generation

It is relevant to mention some facts about the literature in period between World War I and World War II. There are marked differences between the literature of the 1920s and 1930s and the literature after World War II. As period of the 1950s and 1960s had the Beat Generation, the Lost Generation characterized the 1920s and 1930s.

Both generations reacted to experience from wars but the responses of the Lost Generation were more concrete. Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg or William Burroughs did not write any novel or poem where they would describe situations from the battlefield because they did not directly experience it. They react to the war from another point of view. They describe their desperate feelings of violence of the war as well as of social and cultural situation in the United States of America after the war but they primarily illustrate hope for better future, wanted to show their boisterous way of life and they never stopped believe in God.

Writers such as Ernst Hemingway, Francis Scott Fitzgerald, Erich Maria Remarque, Thomas Stearns Eliot or Abraham Walkowitz belong to the Lost Generation. The term 'lost generation' accidentally comes from France and proves authors' perplexity or hopelessness. The Lost Generation got this label because *'it rejected all the older values, but as yet did not create the new ones. They lost not only all the values, but also illusions, hopes for a bright future, real feelings, certainties, and expectations and explanations. They also lost God.'*<sup>3</sup> Just the faith in God distinguishes both generations. Beatniks never lost their faith apart from the authors of the Lost Generation. They believed in themselves.

On the other hand they have some ideas in common. The influence of jazz music, the idea of changing place was identical for both generations as well as the idea of liberty and individuality. No matter if the main character of a concrete novel or poem is a man, a woman, an old or young one, a married or divorced one. Everyone is important in the post-war world. Especially women became frequent characters of writers' novels. E. Hemingway, E. M. Remarque or F. S. Fitzgerald wanted to express that women were equal men and should have the same opportunity to work, go to pubs or restaurant or choose the right partner like men do. Simply said, every person should have own freedom of choice.

Jack Kerouac was the greatest representative of the Beat Generation and Ernst Hemingway typified the Lost Generation. *'Just as 'The Sun Also Rises' became a manifesto*

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<sup>3</sup> Prochazka, 2002:240



of the '20s, Jack Kerouac's novel *On the Road* represents the 1960s.'<sup>4</sup> F. S. Fitzgerald's novel *The Great Gatsby* is also considered as an illustrative novel of the Lost Generation.

### 1.3. Topics in American Literature

The Second World War brought on the literary scene authors who fought in the front in the US Army and wanted to share the desperation, experiences with death, violence or hopelessness as well as the strength of human being and patriotism as authors of the Lost Generation did after World War I.

On the other hand a number of Jewish novelists entered into the American fiction, namely for instance Abraham Cahan, Bernard Malamud, Philip Roth or mainly Saul Bellow. *'The Jewish novelist was also the city novelist par excellence and came into prominence with a knowledge of the Holocaust and, therefore, great feelings of anger, guilt and fear.'*<sup>5</sup> These writers had different kind of experiences than those who fought. They were only waiting for death in the concentration camps during the war.

In the 1950s the blacks became respected by the society and it caused discovering of the black authors such as Richard Wright, Ralph Ellison or lately writing composer Toni Morrison on the field of literature. That was a big change in the American history. The readers could follow stories of black characters in the novels from these authors which was extraordinary. (Prochazka, 2002)

Generally the main topics of the post-war American literature were seeking of the sense of life and his importance, empty loneliness or disaffection. The authors did not want to be parts of the obnoxious mass culture and they refused to praise the modern American life. Some of them had such an opinion that American reality makes people disgusted and angry. The critics valued rather realistic novels that did not have happy ends and only rarely extolled American life. This kind of novels wrote for instance William Styron (*Sophie's Choice*), Saul Bellow, Norman Mailer or James Baldwin.

On the other side of the literary field there was a contradictory group of young writers, poets, musicians or other kind of artists who wanted to depict their feelings freely. They are called 'the Beat Generation'.

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<sup>4</sup> Prochazka, 2002:284

<sup>5</sup> Temperley and Bigsby, 2006:230

## 2. The Beat Generation

### 2.1. Genesis

The main representative of the Beat Generation was Jack Kerouac. He was the first, who came up with the term 'beat' in 1948. Kerouac heard this word in 1944 from mouth of thirty-year-old bisexual and drug addicted Herbert Huncke who used to say: Man, I'm beat! Later on he explained it: *'I used to use this expression, when I said 'Man, I'm beat!' as if I'm tired. It was my favourite word. And catching.'*<sup>6</sup> Kerouac was fascinated by the possible meanings of the word 'beat' and connected this expression with people who are tired, worn out, beaten to death and live on the edge of society and had much to do with poverty or homelessness too. While lives of these people did not have a value, they still had enlightened opinions and did not care about future at all. They lived minute by minute, hour by hour, day by day. Kerouac himself identified with these people, he called them 'the Beat Generation' and wrote about them. He also had the opinion that 'beat' means to manage to find the mystery. In his radical prose *On the Road* he describes through the mouth of the hero Sal Paradise that he was *'so lonely, so sad, so tired, so quivering, so broken, so beat...'*<sup>7</sup>, which presents the dictionary meaning.

*'To be beat was to display an intellectual genius and spiritual radiance stemming from the difficulty of living in a volatile era'* says Ian Bickford in *The Oxford Encyclopaedia of American Literature*. (Bickford, p.384)

Allen Ginsberg as the next extraordinary beat generation writer, Kerouac's friend and an important figure of this generation explains the term 'beatness' as follows: *'Beatness' means 'looking at society from the underside, beyond society's conceptions of good and evil.'*<sup>8</sup>

Kerouac also clarified a kinship of the adjective 'beat' with 'beatific' which mean having a joyful and peaceful soul. If we become conscious of Kerouac's faith in God, we can connect the meaning of the word 'beat' with a noun 'beatitude'. The Beatitudes are eight instructions from Jesus how to be satisfied and at peace, how to get a bliss and still hope:

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<sup>6</sup> Turner, 1997: 75

<sup>7</sup> Kerouac, 1957:73

<sup>8</sup> Prochazka, 2002:281-282

*'Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.*

*Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.*

*Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.*

*Blessed are those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, for they shall be filled.*

*Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy.*

*Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.*

*Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called children of God.*

*Blessed are those who have been persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven.'*<sup>9</sup>

## **2.2. Features of the Beat Literature and its Influences**

The beatniks spoke about God often. Ginsberg was Jewish and Kerouac had Catholic education. He made a note into his diary that the main point of life is to love God. Even *'Jack Kerouac insisted that the Beat Generation was primarily 'a religious generation', and even today's critics use the term 'secondary religiousness'.*<sup>10</sup> Words such as 'holy', 'angels', 'visions' or 'anger' had become the main material of the literature of the Beat Generation and later on these expressions went with Buddhist terms dharma, satori or nirvana. Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language explains these terms as follows:

- dharma – *'essential quality or character, as of the cosmos or one's nature; the doctrine of teaching of the Buddha'* (p.396)
- nirvana – *'freedom from the endless cycle of personal reincarnations, with their consequent suffering, as a result of the extinction of individual passion, hatred, and delusion'* (p.968)
- satori – *'sudden enlightenment'* (p.1270)

Jack Kerouac himself and also other beatniks sympathized with Buddhism. It is a religion that does not define God. This atheist religion proclaims that death is a natural part of being. This is the reason why Kerouac was not afraid of dead. In fact he was looking forward

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<sup>9</sup> Mt 5,3-10

<sup>10</sup> Prochazka, 2002:284

to it. Buddhism is also about lifelong searching which goes hand by hand with the ideology of the Beat Generation. Kerouac often meditated and abstained from sex that is also one of the features of Buddhism. Unfortunately as a catholic worshipper he could not harmonize these two different religions and he often got confused.

The other feature of the Beat Generation was a dream about black population as lucky men having a 'body-spirit' freedom. J. Kerouac, A. Ginsberg or N. Cassady sympathized with African Americans. There was a connection between them. The beat authors as well as African-American inhabitants believed in God and were looking for peace of happiness in every particular moment.

A chronicler Herb Caen made up the expression 'beatnik' in the context with the Soviet cosmic satellite Sputnik 1 in 1958. The tension between the USA and the Soviet Union carried on after the Second World War. They did not fight with weapons or kill each other, but they were locked in battle to be at the first place in the whole world, to be the strongest and the most influential one. Sputnik 1 was the first artificial satellite in our space and the era of discovering of the universe had begun. Herb Caen saw an obvious connection between the space discovering and the seeking of life sense.

*'A beatnik was anybody who wore long hair, beard or sandals, who engaged in civil rights demonstrations and other social activities of the early 1960s, and who lived a bohemian life-style.'*<sup>11</sup> This description also corresponds to hippies, so here the continuity between beatniks and hippies is obvious.

Already mentioned Herbert Huncke lived at the street as a criminal, used drugs and had unrestrained sex with prostitutes. It was him who introduced authors such as William Blake, Walt Whitman, a founder of modern American poetry and a propagator of escape from hypocrisy and artificiality, Percy Bysshe Shelley or William C. Williams to Jack Kerouac as well as Allen Ginsberg. They were fascinated by these authors because of their way of narrating which was unconventional. For example P. B. Shelley *'propagated political commitment of a poet as a bearer of progress and change'*<sup>12</sup> or William Blake *'saw the miracles of poetry in ordinary details.'*<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Prochazka, 2002:281

<sup>12</sup> Flajsar, 2006:76; my translation

<sup>13</sup> Flajsar, 2006:76; my translation

William Burroughs brought influence of French symbolism to the literature of the Beat Generation. Charles Baudelaire and Arthur Rimbaud, the ‘accursed poets’ (les poètes maudits) in the nineteenth century, could be rung among predecessors of the beatniks. *‘Rimbaud claimed that poet becomes a real visionary by systematic confusion of the senses and absorption of poisons.’*<sup>14</sup> As accursed poets looked for beauty in ugliness, beatniks considered spontaneity wonderful. Their literature is also filled with contrasts: homosexuality and heterosexuality, east nature versus west nature of the USA in the novel *On the Road* or motif of freedom in the restless society full of prohibition. Kerouac and Burroughs *‘believed that people living out of scope of rules, defying commands of corrupted society were more genuine than those, who accepted the rules.’*<sup>15</sup>

### **2.3. Characteristic Philosophy of Living**

The figures of the Beat Generation were concentrated in New York and later on in San Francisco, the city of immigrants and tolerance. Men or women of the Beat Generation had a characteristic way of living. They did not have a concrete aim of their lives. The main philosophy for them was to be independent, unrestrained and wild. Jack Kerouac wanted to try everything in his life no matter how long the life will be.

Kerouac with his best friends Allen Ginsberg, Neal Cassady and William Burroughs liked to spend time together. They met somewhere, smoked, drank alcohol, took drugs, read books and made a discussion about a sense of life and shared their knowledge about literature. Their big passion was travelling.

Any kind of drugs, short-term relationships with women or men, bisexuality and homosexuality define the Beat Generation. Critics of that period associated the Beat Generation with the youth’s criminality, theft and violence. Jack Kerouac was disgusted by this statement. The Beatniks did not teach the youth violence or criminality, they wanted to show them how to stay oneself in the broken society and enjoy the American way of life. Lucien Carr, whom Kerouac met at the University of Columbia, said about Kerouac, Ginsberg and Borouhgs: *‘My friends and I were a rebellious group who were trying to look at the world*

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<sup>14</sup> Turner, 2006:69; my translation

<sup>15</sup> Turner, 2006:69; my translation

*in a way that gave it some [new] meaning. Trying to find values... that was valid. And it was enough through literature that all this was supposed to be done.*'<sup>16</sup>

When we speak about the lives of beatniks, we have to mention that all of them liked to listen to jazz. Jazz is a kind of music of African Americans that introduces human being's freedom, everyone's individuality and leeway in making decisions. Beatniks did not distinguish the whites from blacks, they were not racist. Jack Kerouac wished being black, he thought the blacks more joyful life than whites: *'At lilac evening I walked with every muscle aching among the lights of 27<sup>th</sup> and Welton in 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.'*<sup>17</sup> From this utterance it is felt that Kerouac and also his close friends wanted to live by every specific moment not only by stereotype activities. This distinctive way of living is reflected in the way of the Beats' writing. They are verbally direct and concentrate on the rhythms of speech to catch their thoughts exactly word by word on paper. The Beats tried to transfer the jazz improvisation, intricacy and fluidity into the literature.

The romantic understanding Afro-American inhabitants as happy people who introduce spiritual freedom in connection with their bodies became a significant part of beat thought. Kerouac's recitation of his poem or novels on public was accompanied by jazz music and exactly this way of presentation of his composing characterizes the thought of symbiosis of the Beat Generation and the Afro-Americans.

All beatniks were bohemians. They hated everyday problems but they were not under the than society's influence. They still described life according to their ideas. Main topics of pieces of their works were the desire of being saved, of living a happy life and the never-ending searching.

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<sup>16</sup> Charters, 2000:11

<sup>17</sup> Kerouac, 1957:163

### **3. The Authors of the Beat Generation**

The main important novelists and poets of the Beat Generation are Jack Kerouac and his two best friends Allen Ginsberg and Neal Cassady. Neal Cassady is more likely famous because of his influence on Kerouac and Ginsberg. He also composed some poems but they are not as famed as Ginsberg's.

These three most important writers of the Beat Generation were not the only ones. William S. Burroughs, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Gary Snyder, Charles Bukowski, Gregory Corso or Michael McClure belonged to the period of this era. Even Norman Mailer was for some time connected to the thoughts of the Beatniks.

#### **3.1. Allen Ginsberg**

Irwin Allen Ginsberg was born in Paterson (New Jersey) on 3<sup>th</sup> July 1926 as the second son of Louis and Naomi Ginsberg's. He came into his father's poetic talent who worked as a schoolteacher. His mother emigrated from Russia to the USA and suffered from paranoid schizophrenia. Allen put up with the mental disease of his mother with difficulty. Later on in 1949 he *'was sent to Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Institution, where he met Carl Solomon, a troubled intellectual and publisher who connected with Ginsberg profoundly.'*<sup>18</sup> These kinds of psychiatric problems were caused by the illness of Ginsberg's mother.

At his seventeen Allen came to Columbia University to study law, where he met Jack Kerouac and the Beat Generation became to form. Young Allen started to be aware of his homosexual orientation and Jack Kerouac impressed him with attractive appearance. In the 1950s and 1960s homosexuality was understood as a sexual perversion and it became agonizing for Ginsberg to accept himself with everything he was. Kerouac, Boroughs, Cassady and other friends helped him and supported him in the time when he was settling up with his different sexual orientation. They fully tolerated him.

Homosexual Allen fell in love with Neal Cassady, who had a wife and a child. Unfortunately for Neal's wife, Neal and Allen kept a sexual relationship. Cassady was the one, who did not care about feelings of others. He only wanted to try everything he could

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<sup>18</sup> Bickford, 2004:110

manage during his life. One of those tried thing was the homosexual contact things. Allen was aware about Neal's philosophy and respected it. Finally by 1954 he met Peter Orlovsky, who became his life partner.

### 3.1.1. Modern Poetry

Maturing Ginsberg and Kerouac spent time walking and philosophizing about spirituality, God and literature. It was just at university where Ginsberg became deeply interested in literature and started to write his first poems. He gave preference to free verses. He and Kerouac alike wanted to bring something new into the American literature as well as into the world one. Kerouac had done it in prose, Ginsberg in poems.

Also Ginsberg wanted to leave formalism and develop the poetry that would fill his new knowledge. The beat poets as well as Allen Ginsberg considered the American literature too conformist. They were gluttoned by the homogenous poetry. *'Their natural reaction was looking for unbounded forms of poetry and creation of poetics of frank confession that should have had a liberating effect...'*<sup>19</sup> The novelty of the poetry consists in the motifs of madness, sexual perversion, taking drugs, characteristic influence of the east religions, criticism, vulgarisms, protests against the mass media and its impact on the youths.

A peculiar trait of the poetry of the 1950s and 1960s is interconnection of poems and music. As has already been said, the literature of the Beat Generation is affected by jazz musicians' improvisation. Allen Ginsberg brought the real context with the external influence into the poetry. He read his poems out to the public to the accompaniment of jazz music. His poetics is sometimes called as a 'poetics of extreme sincerity'. *'The aesthetic theory of the Beat Generation, if such a thing exists, is based on spontaneity and intuition. All the academic standards of strict formal adherence to convention and proper taste in subject matter are destroyed.'*<sup>20</sup> Ginsberg does not abide by the punctuation and his verses in the poems are free. The missing punctuation shows the liberation from the rules. In fact, this generation brought freedom into the poetry and had started the period of post modern literature. Ginsberg or Kerouac did not use full stops, commas or paragraph structure in their writing because these rules disrupt a stream of ideas and with punctuation a poem or a piece of prose becomes less prompt.

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<sup>19</sup> Flajsar, 2006:76; my translation

<sup>20</sup> Prochazka, 2002:285



Ginsberg belongs among the first authors, whose poems are based on taboo topics. He describes drug addicts, sexual intercourses and often uses vulgarisms. *'William Burroughs considered Ginsberg an innovator of the openness of poetic expression and civil bravery long before the others set out that way.'*<sup>21</sup> Ginsberg criticised the American society in his poems all his life. The poems that do not primarily have the critical theme are either dedicated to somebody, for example *Howl* is addressed to Carl Solomon, whom Ginsberg meet in psychiatric clinic in Berkeley, or they became a reaction on the death of Ginsberg's intimates. *Kaddish* and other Poems is a reflection of Ginsberg's mother who died in 1956.

*'My poetry is an Angelic Frenzy and it has nothing in common with dull materialistic whims... Mysteries of an individual imagination that are trans-conceptual and nonverbal – I mean the Spirit which is unconditional by nothing – are not for sale to this mind, they do not bring any benefit this world...'* states Ginsberg about his poetry in notes to the collection of poetry *'Howl and Other Poems'*.<sup>22</sup> He wanted to explain that poetry comes out from individual and that is the only way of understanding it.

It is possible to conclude that Ginsberg was a kind of predecessor of a new approach of literary theory, specifically approach of form, content and author. Poetry should bring answers to questions of readers and provoke them next questions. Readers should find themselves in the concrete poems. Poetry is also the way to covertly notify public or individual of disagreements, critics or other opinions of an author.

### **3.1.2. The Rest of Ginsberg's life**

All beatniks avidly travelled and did not care about what was going to happen next minute, hour or day. They all were kind of hedonists. Allen Ginsberg was not an exception. He did not travel only through the United States but also visited some European, Asian and African countries. He tried various kinds of drugs of Mexican Indians in practise in Mexico and went to India to learn more about east religion, especially about Buddhism. This beat poet also substantially influenced lots of lives of the youth in the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic in the late 1960s. In Prague *'he was named 'May King' before being deported as a corrupting*

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<sup>21</sup> Flajsar, 2006:79; my translation

<sup>22</sup> Ginsberg, 1970:193; my translation

*influence.*'<sup>23</sup> No wonder that young teenagers and adolescents in occupied state were fascinated by Ginsberg's appearance, opinions and uncontrollable spontaneous behaviour.

Ginsberg still more often appeared in public reading his writings often with jazz accompaniment aloud. As Czechoslovak poet Jan Zabraná presents in the collection of translated Ginsberg's poems in 1970, '*there were always wall-to-wall people during poetry reading evenings and public performances, where 'a precious bird' could be seen.*' (p.204) From his poems it is possible to deduce that Ginsberg spoke youth's mind and that is the reason why he was so popular among the young generation. He defied the rules and the actual situation in the US' society.

His death is quite an exception among the beat writers. Most of them died in relatively young age because of unhealthy way of living. In 1997, at age of 71, '*he was diagnosed with terminal cancer and given only a few months to live... In early April, he called Burroughs, and gracefully declared, 'I thought I would be terrified, but I am exhilarated!'*'<sup>24</sup> Because he was religiously minded, he was not aware of death. His heart was not empty as it was the one of the lost authors. Before he died, he could fully realize the success of his writings by Pulitzer Prize that he got in 1995.

### **3.1.3. Ginsberg's collections of poetry**

Apart from his most popular collection '*Howl and other Poems*' there exists the following ones which he wrote throughout his long literary career from 1960s till 1990s.

Howl and other Poems (1956)

Kaddish and other Poems (1961)

Reality Sandwiches (1963)

Planet News (1971)

The Gates of Wrath: Rhymed Poems 1948-1951 (1972)

Mind Breaths (1978)

Collected Poems 1947-1980 (1984)

Cosmopolitan Greetings Poems: 1986-1993 (1994)

Howl Annotate (1995)

Illuminated Poems (1996)

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<sup>23</sup> Bickford, 2004:112

<sup>24</sup> Bickford, 2004:113

### 3.1.4. Howl

Ginsberg's collection of poetry, *Howl and Other Poems*, became one of the major events in the existence of the Beat Generation. It was published in 1956 and raised a wave of agitation in whole United States of America. A few weeks after the publishing Ginsberg read the poem Howl at the recitation evening in San Francisco and the audience was absolutely shocked.

Lawrence Ferlinghetti decided to sell the book in his City Lights bookstore and later on was arrested for supporting propagation of such indecent poetry. A judicial process with Ferlinghetti started one year later and so the Beat Generation appeared at the public. Ginsberg could not be arrested because at that moment he was in Morocco. Fortunately, *'after a much-publicized trial, 'Howl' was declared to have literary merit, and thus could not be termed 'obscene'.*'<sup>25</sup> It became immediately very well selling book in whole country, year by year *'Howl and Other Poems'* was translated into the other language and was bought by translators all over the world.

As Ginsberg presented in the notes to the book *'Howl and Other Poems'*, his poems follow Kerouac's style of narrating because it is also kind of spontaneous composing written in a very short time, in order of a few hours.

Influence of Dadaism, mysticism, naturalism and free verse of Walt Whitman is evident in the poem Howl. The free verse and illogical linking of words would shortly characterize this poem. The collection, especially the poem Howl, is highlighted by naturalistic verses such as *'...finished the whiskey and threw up with groaning into the bloody toilet...'*<sup>26</sup> Repetition of the words or word clauses is characteristic in Ginsberg's verses.

Ginsberg dedicated his collection of poetry to Jack Kerouac, William S. Burroughs and Neal Cassady. Poem Howl itself was given over to Carl Solomon and William Carlos Williams wrote an introduction of the poem, where he described Ginsberg in way he got to know him: *'he was always on the point of 'going away', where it didn't seem to matter; he disturbed me, I never thought he'd live to grow up and write a book of poems.'*<sup>27</sup> W. C. Williams was fascinated by the way of Ginsberg's living and writing and that became the reason why he

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<sup>25</sup> Bickford, 2004:111

<sup>26</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:14

<sup>27</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:7

was interested in introducing the poem 'Howl'. He claims how hard the life of young Allen Ginsberg with his insane mother used to be. Ginsberg composed the poem itself as a reaction to the hell which he had to overcome. Williams' last sentence of his introduction sounds as follows: '*Hold back the edges of your gowns, Ladies, we are going through hell.*'<sup>28</sup> It briefly and clearly captures the meaning of the poem.

#### 3.1.4.1. First Part

In fact the first part of 'Howl' is written in one long complex sentence in free verse form. The opening main clause '*I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness...*'<sup>29</sup> is expanded by subordinate clauses that all begin with relative pronoun 'who'. The relative pronoun maintains a rhythm of whole poem. One relative clause that always has a form of enjambment (it is contained in two or more lines in the poem) symbolizes one verse and one unit of breath during a recitation.

Ginsberg combines incompatible units in the verses to make a modernistic poem. For instance he uses a substantive 'hipsters' with an adjective 'angel-headed'. To be acquainted with the meaning of hipster, Webster's Encyclopaedic Unabridged Dictionary of the English Language explains this noun on the page 673 as 'a person who is hip, a person, especially during 1950s, characterized by a particularly strong sense of alienation from most social intercourse and endeavour'. The word hipster becomes contrast in connection with the adjective angel-headed. Ginsberg depicts appearance and way of living of these 'angel-headed hipsters' and speaks for those who went through the era of the Beat Generation. These unemployed faithful hipsters are living in a cold flat, looking for a drug, drinking wine, chatting about their memories, listening jazz, dreaming about Heaven, and they are not afraid about time and money. Their lifestyle became wild when they met each other. They live with often repeated sexual intercourse not only with women but also with each other. These hipsters suffered so much that they lost their mental health. This deduction is obvious from Ginsberg's own experience in the psychiatric hospital that presents following verse: '*...presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy...*'<sup>30</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:8

<sup>29</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:9

<sup>30</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:15

The first part of the poem can be understood as a dream or vision because it begins 'I saw...' Ginsberg wanted to describe and share his vision with readers all over the world. It seems like a prophecy about America. On the other hand readers can understand it as Ginsberg's direct testimony. He describes everything good or bad that he experienced in the American society after the World War II. America was going to collapse because of its materialism, technological progress and bureaucracy. Ginsberg believes that the future of United States of America is in hands of those who are able to revolt against the society. Hipsters actually mutinied against the American society. They showed their protest by their rebel way of living. Ginsberg describes often repeated taking drugs such a hallucinated Bensedrine, marihuana or Peyote which is a kind of drug gained from one kind of Mexican cactus and is also banned in the USA. Cigarettes and whiskey or beer were everyday nourishment of the beatniks.

Ginsberg also mentions places where beatniks spent their lives: streets of the African American, dark filthy flats, railway stations, Paradise Alley which is the street where first beatniks met or Brooklyn and Bronx that are the districts of New York City; he also hints the travelling passion of beatniks because he named cities or the famous natural beauties of the North America such as the River of Colorado, banks of Hudson Bay, East River, Chinatown, New Jersey, Mexico, Rocky Mountains and of course Denver as the second home of beatniks after San Francisco.

There appeared places of other continents in the poem because beatniks did not travel only around America but went also to Europe, Africa or Asia: '*...who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz/ or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to/ converse about America and Eternity, a hopeless task, and so/ took ship to Africa...*'<sup>31</sup> The connection of the terms jazz, sex and soup looks absolutely illogical as well as America and Eternity. The then America cannot exist for a limitless time because it was going to hell. The poet rather started to speak about going somewhere else than staying at one place and converse about such a topic like 'America and Eternity'. Ginsberg is popular for his explicitness and non-standard puzzling words together and this verse proves it. His openness and revolt against the rules is also evident in the using of plentiful vulgarisms: '*...the roof waving genitals and manuscripts...; who let themselves fucked in the ass by saintly*

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<sup>31</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:11

*motorcyclists,/ and screamed with joy,/ who blew and were blown by those human seraphim...*’<sup>32</sup> This also verified the homosexuality and bisexuality of beatniks.

Ginsberg calls God at the end of the first part of *‘Howl’* because he is on the brink of madness: *‘...eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani...’*<sup>33</sup> are the last words of Jesus when he was crucified and in fact they mean ‘Father, Father, why have you left me’. Ginsberg identifies himself with Jesus. He feels desperate as same as Jesus. *‘...with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their bodies good to eat a thousand years.’*<sup>34</sup> Here Ginsberg actually does believe in the popularity of the poetry of beatniks even they exist in such an infected society. He asserts that their poems will be not forgotten even in thousand years. The poetical hearts of hipsters or beatniks will be cut out within the meaning of giving everything from themselves into the verses of particular poems.

#### **3.1.4.2. Second Part**

This part does not have so many vulgarisms as it has the previous part, is shorter and in fact has the same form. As every verse in the first part begins with the relative pronoun ‘who’ this middle part of the poem contains verses with ‘Moloch’ at almost every beginning of the verses. Ginsberg uses exclamation mark behind every statement, which does not always have a capital letter at the beginning, to express his real anger and madness.

Ginsberg asks a question at the beginning in the middle part of the *‘Howl’*: *‘What sphinx of cement and aluminium bashed opens their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?’*<sup>35</sup> He blames Moloch for it. Moloch became a cause of the misery of people. According to the Bible Moloch is the highest Canaan God, to whom parents bring their children to burn them as a peace-offering. This act is ridiculous as same as the society in America during 1950s and 1960s. People do whatever society puts forward even it does not have any sense and they do not struggle to their dreams and needs come true. Ginsberg’s *‘Howl’* means his propagation of unrestrained love and worldwide peace and clarification of his resistance of violence and tyranny. This part of *Howl* perfectly shows his timeless opinions.

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<sup>32</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:12

<sup>33</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:16

<sup>34</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:16

<sup>35</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:17

Ginsberg calls Moloch in desperation to vent his anger and his opinion on the metropolises, factories, skyscrapers and electricity. He names him '*Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! ... Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless! Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men! ... Moloch the incomprehensible prison! ... Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned governments!*'<sup>36</sup> Ginsberg is fed up with all the vehicular traffic and smell of motor oil. According to him Moloch owns all the demonic factories, electricity, chimneys and skyscrapers and leads America by ten armies that symbolize ten fingers of Moloch. Modern industry, which Moloch has created, is the source of such a spoiled society. People are getting spoiled or insane because of the industry. They feel they need money, but the beatniks claim that having plenty of money is not the main aim of living.

In gradation Ginsberg feels that Moloch has accidentally become a part of his body like a devil: '*Moloch who entered my soul early!*'<sup>37</sup> Ginsberg thinks he got insane and had to be treated in psychiatric hospital in Rockland because of Moloch.

### 3.1.4.3. Third Part

The third part of the poem tells readers about the way of treating of insane disease caused by the modern society – going to psychiatric hospital in Rockland. Allen Ginsberg finally met Carl Solomon who is also mentally ill. They can understand each other very well. In the last part the repetition is more typical than in the two previous parts. Every verse begins with 'I'm with you in Rockland' and gives the poem a fluent rhythm. Ginsberg is sympathetic to Solomon. He describes what is happening in Rockland and what the insane Solomon is doing there.

Ginsberg sees his own mother, who experienced depressions too, in his friend Carl Solomon. Ginsberg got to know difficulties of such an illness. He understood the indescribable feelings that every psychosis can cause so he needed somebody who could support him when his mother died. The verse '*I'm with you in Rockland where you imitate the shade of my mother*'<sup>38</sup> proves it. It seems ridiculous that he made a friendship with somebody who has also some psychical problems. It would be more likely if Ginsberg found somebody

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<sup>36</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:17

<sup>37</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:17

<sup>38</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:19

who was mentally health. Ginsberg feels a support in Solomon and calls him as a shade of his mother because he actually misses his mother in the psychiatric hospital in Rockland.

Manifestly unsurprisingly Ginsberg put readers into the environment of psychiatric hospital and assimilated them into there. When we read the text of the poem, we feel insane too. Even somebody who has never gotten to know the symptoms of a mental disease become familiar and can easily imagine how it takes place. One day the patient can be in a good mood and the next morning absolutely deranged: *'I'm with you in Rockland where you pun on the bodies of your nurses/ the harpies of the Bronx/ I'm with you in Rockland where you scream in a straightjacket that you're/ losing the game of the actual pingpong of the abyss...'*<sup>39</sup>

Ginsberg also describes the environment of the psychiatric hospital as a prison, preciously 'an armed madhouse'. He wants to run away from there but he cannot because he is controlled by doctors. Ginsberg calls the nursing staff mentally ill, too. He also feels his soul became empty there.

Once again as in the both previous parts of Howl, Ginsberg blames for all filths the United States of America: *'I'm with you in Rockland where you hug and kiss the United States under/ our bedsheets the United States that coughs all night and won't let us sleep...'*<sup>40</sup> The patients cannot sleep because they are disturbed by what is going on behind the walls of the 'madhouse'. Ginsberg does not hide his opinion about nakedness. According to him the synonym for nudity is 'freedom'.

Ginsberg imagines his comeback to his house in the very last verse of the second part of Howl and knows he will be still unsatisfied after he finishes the therapy: *'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 the Western night.'*<sup>41</sup> The adverbial Western characterizes Ginsberg's as well as other beatnik's positive relationship to west part of the United States of America.

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<sup>39</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:19

<sup>40</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:20

<sup>41</sup> Ginsberg, 1959:20



#### 3.1.4.4. Footnote to Howl

Footnote to Howl symbolizes the climax of the whole poem. In fact Ginsberg resigns from everything and screams 'holly' in a panic attack in connection with everything what comes into his mind. He begins with holy parts of the body, goes on with the holy beatniks and ends with holy soul. *'Everything is holy! Everybody's holy! Everywhere is holy! Everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an angel!'*<sup>42</sup> Even with opinion that America became desperately different from the past Ginsberg does not stop believe in God and holiness. He actually finds comfort in the unearthly power and in the glimmer of hope.

A typewriter as a product of hanging over messages becomes a poem for him. He relieves his feelings of it. His closest friends are everything for him. He also names himself holy despite of his revolt and rebellion: *'...holy Allen holy Solomon holy Lucien holy Kerouac holy Huncke/ holy Burroughs holy Cassady holy the unknown buggered and suffering/ beggars holy the hideous human angels!'*<sup>43</sup> Ginsberg does not use commas in the fit of spouting of words and names and so the whole text gives the impression of chaos, spontaneity or illiteracy. Ginsberg does not forget adore his mother and he fully accepts her illness: *'Holy my mother in the insane asylum!'*<sup>44</sup>

Cities like New York, San Francisco, Seattle, Paris, Moscow or Istanbul are the places that Ginsberg names nearly at the end of the footnote. Love for travelling and discovering places looks obvious in the verses not only of Ginsberg but also in poetry or prose of other beatniks.

Ginsberg mentioned forgiveness at the very end of the footnote to show that America still has the hope to recover from the miserable atmosphere inside the society and culture. The only thing that it needs is mercy, faith and generosity.

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<sup>42</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:21

<sup>43</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:21

<sup>44</sup> Ginsberg, 1956:21

### 3.2. Jack Kerouac

He was born on 12<sup>th</sup> June 1922 in Lowell (Massachusetts) as the third child of Leo and Gabriella Kerouac. Gabriella sold shoes and Leo worked as a printer. Jack had two siblings – a brother Gerard and a sister Caroline. Lowell was an ugly, industrial town and Kerouac did not like it as much as other cities that he visited but half of his novels are settled in Lowell because he always came back into childhood in his memories. He says that home is a paradise that we have to leave in his novels.

In 1926 his brother Gerard died. Kerouac was only 4 when it happened and it influenced his life and work. Later on Kerouac wrote *'Visions of Gerard'* about his brother's 'holiness'. His father had another influence on Kerouac's life. He had problems with alcohol, lost his job and the whole family had to move.

Jack learned only French until he was five so he started learning English as a second language and that explained why he had problems with norm English in his adulthood. He was a very silent child with his own inner world but very clever. He went to a church school and then to High School in Lowell. On the high school Kerouac found the areas of activity that formed his personality. He joined a literary circle, was good at athletic, baseball and football. He started to be interested in reading, journalism and jazz. He met Mary Carney and had a relationship, which did not go well but they stayed always in touch. Later Kerouac said that she was the only woman that he loved. She became the main character of novel *'Maggie Cassidy'*.

In 1939 Kerouac went to New York to play football on Columbia University. He tried marihuana for the first time in his life in some jazz club and lost his virginity. One of his friends Joe Kennedy said about Kerouac: *'I think, he always looked for something, but I am not sure if he found it. He always thought about something instead of understanding things as they are. When something looked logical it didn't do him. He wanted to find something what is missing here.'*<sup>45</sup> The best known novel of Jack Kerouac 'On the Road' precisely reflected the never-ending and repetitive seeking, meditation, contemplation about live, space and God.

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<sup>45</sup> Turner, 2006:49; my translation

### 3.2.1. Inception of Writing

In 1940 Kerouac broke his leg and had to stop playing football. This meant for him more time for reading, watching movies and dramas. He loved novels of Thomas Wolf. Wolf's description of American landscape, Mississippi, greenish paint-peeled buildings, railways and Indian paths substantially enriched Kerouac's imagination. Wolf inspired him to wander and discover the genuine America. Kerouac suddenly wanted to get to know the huge continent.

Later on Kerouac decided to leave the university and he thought it was his best idea. After that he changed lot of jobs (a sport reporter, a construction worker, a seller of soda water, a cook etc.). The USA was in the war and Kerouac wanted to work at American navy. But it did not take a long time. When he came back from the sea he got an idea to write a saga, as John Galsworthy composed, that would map his own life. *'I was sure about it. I wished to write whole my life what I had seen by my eyes, had said by my own words, to puzzle all of it as a contemporary historical record to be known about what was really happening and what people were really thinking about'*<sup>46</sup> Writing became Kerouac's real fill of his life.

When Kerouac saw his father dying because of cancer, he was indescribably sad. In the loneliness he remembered Jesus' calling on the cross: 'Father, father, why did you leave me?' He found the encouragement in work on the new novel 'The Town and the City'. This novel is about Jack's life between Lowell and New York.

Jack dreamed about a tour to the West. He studied maps and decided to hitchhike to Denver with Neal Cassady. Neal Cassady was a son of an alcoholic from Denver. Neal loved women and sex. Jack and Neal exchanged letters and Neal's style of writing influenced Jack to write without rules, which was often criticized. Neal and Jack met in New York in December 1946 and the time of being on the road had become. Jack Kerouac could finally see the American landscape, Mississippi, corn fields of Iowa and Illinois and tops of Colorado mountains. He met cowboys, farmers, wanderers and cattle breeders. He wrote everything down into his notebook. He got fancy for San Francisco because it was a place of Jack London. Kerouac wrote about this city: *'San Francisco is the last great city in America. Then*

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<sup>46</sup> Turner, 2006:61; my translation

*the land ends. Poets and vagabonds can come there and drink wine on the street.*'<sup>47</sup> During their travelling they did not need money – they stole food on the petrol station and begged.

Neal Cassady had his own literary theory: *'It is important to get rid of rules, egocentric style, long words and subordinate clauses and to loosen way only the communication of feelings.'*<sup>48</sup> Jack liked Neal's ideas and free way of expressing. He wanted to combine classic literature with naturalness, to write about real experience instead of fiction and use a natural language. That means writing like speaking - write down exactly the words that were in his head at the concrete moment, not think about the form a lot.

### 3.2.2. Addictions

Kerouac lived two lives – one for his friends, fun, adventure and travelling and the second one for his family. *'He divided his time between wild experiments with the Columbia group using different drugs – Benzedrine, morphine, marijuana, alcohol – and a straight life in his parents' working-class household.'*<sup>49</sup> As it is said higher above, drugs were peculiar in beatniks' way of living. Benzedrine was the most frequent and favourite drug. The two lives we could describe also in Kerouac's faith. He never stopped believing in Jesus Christ as a son of God but he also had faith in Buddhism which is based on meditations and reaching nirvana. When Kerouac meditated, he could remember all his previous lives that he describes in letters to Neal Cassady and his wife Carolyn. She infers that Buddhism provides Kerouac the immediate remedy for any painful situation that has met him. She also says in the biography *Off the Road*, where she reminisces to her live with Neal Cassady, Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac: *'It seemed as a cowardly escape to us, not as a road, how to grow up and overcome obstacles and it disallows us to be close each other.'*<sup>50</sup>

His life was full of contradictions and when he became older and older he spent more time with a bottle of any alcohol in his hand and so from 1960 Jack Kerouac had been addicted to alcohol. Lawrence Ferlinghetti offered him to take a rest in the house on the Pacific coast by Big Sur. Kerouac felt lonesome there, emptiness of his heart and started to think that he was becoming an insane person. He heard imaginative voices and had paranoid hallucinations. He also spoke about seeing the Madonna, angels or Jesus' cross. There was

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<sup>47</sup> Turner, 2006:91; my translation

<sup>48</sup> Turner, 2006:93; my translation

<sup>49</sup> Charters, 2000:9

<sup>50</sup> Cassady, 1990:230; my translation

created the eponymous prose by Kerouac during ten days in Big Sur. He recapitulated his life and was afraid of obsolescence. He got married to two different women but both marriages ended up with annulment. He had two children but never cared about being a father, never earned money for family only for travelling, buying drugs and cigarettes. Only to his widowed mother he donated.

Kerouac liked to drink alcohol and smoke cigarettes and weeds during his life as well as every man of the Beat Generation. He drank about one litre of whiskey every day before his death. He definitely was addicted to alcohol even he had never believe it. The health complication came because of unstopped drinking. His friends could not help him. He became paranoid, heard imaginary voices and he saw angels and Christ's cross before falling asleep. He was worried of becoming older. He never grew mentally grew up or became responsible. He was beat. He *'tried repeatedly in his final years to quit drinking but did not succeeded and he died in St.Peterburg, Florida, on 21 October 1969 from a gastrointestinal haemorrhage due to cirrhosis of the liver.'*<sup>51</sup>

Jack became very introverted during last years of his life. He was often speechless and the only topics that could bright his eyes were his childhood in beloved Lowell, music, reading and football. This explains an utterance that he proclaimed in 1961: *'I am not a real beatnik. I am kind of freaky, withdrawn, mad catholic mystic, with the only aim – a hermitage in forests, a calm senile composing, a sweet reflection about paradise (where everybody comes one day).'*<sup>52</sup>

### **3.2.3. Selection of Kerouac's work**

We can apparently perceive autobiographical elements in all Kerouac's novels. For instance, *The Town and the City* introduce Kerouac's childhood and maturing, *The Dharma Bums* describes Buddhism in America, *Maggie Cassidy* is a novel about Kerouac love at high school and *Big Sur* is a real cottage where Kerouac spent time.

There are chronologically arranged Kerouac's works in the list below.

*'The Town and the City (1950)*

*On the Road (1957)*

*The Dharma Bums (1958)*

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<sup>51</sup> Bickford, 2004:370

<sup>52</sup> Turner, 2006:198; my translation

*Dr. Sax (1959)*  
*Maggie Cassidy (1959)*  
*Lonesome Traveler (1960)*  
*Rimbaud (1960)*  
*Big Sur (1962)*  
*Visions of Gerard (1963)*  
*Desolations of Angels (1965)*  
*Satori in Paris (1966)*  
*Scattered Poems (1971)*,<sup>53</sup>

### **3.2.4. On the Road**

On the Road, that includes autobiographical elements as well as other novels, became the most often read novel of Jack Kerouac. Even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century it has found many readers especially among the youth ones in the USA as well as in other states all over the world. Jack Kerouac was inspired by the American scenery to write the novel. His aim was to discover the USA from the east to the west, from the north to the south and when he did not find any place, where he would fulfil his needs, he travel to Mexico. Exactly this Kerouac's travelling and discovering became a basic motif of the popular novel On the Road.

This book does not rank among the classical fabulist novels, but Kerouac as an excellent narrator gave the story a quick momentum. He uses his own diary notes to straightforwardly depict the road with nature and his and his friend's experience. Kerouac made some adjustments, as Ginsberg suggested him, before the book was officially published. The original text is spontaneously written on the thirty-meters-long piece of paper without punctuation and paragraph structure. He anarchically disrespected literary rules because exactly in this way of writing he saw the fully-fledged piece of work. Kerouac's piece of work is natural and impulsive as well as Ginsberg's poems that react on the prose of Jack Kerouac.

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<sup>53</sup> Austin, 2004:370

### 3.2.4.1. The Road

The novel's name itself reveals readers the main plot before they start to read it. Jack Kerouac loved American nature. Because he was angry with temporary American society he wanted to travel, to see different places, to find something that would persuade him about better place to live and to experience excitement.

He autobiographically introduces the main character of *On the Road* as Sal Paradise who is in fact Kerouac himself. Sal is a narrator of the story and he felt his life is boring. He says at the beginning of the first part of the book: '*... everything was dead. With the coming of Dean Moriarty began the part of my life you could call my life on the road.*'<sup>54</sup> Dean Moriarty enters to the story as the second main hero of the novel and accompanies Sal on the road through the USA and later on also through Mexico. Jack Kerouac spent an important part of his life by travelling with his best friend Neal Cassady who showed him that life can be exciting and unserious and every person can be free in the broken society. Neal as same as Dean lives his life spontaneously and believes that to live correctly is not primary. To have a feeling of contentment and to reach beatitude becomes more important for them.

During the story Sal and Dean travelled from one place to another several times. It was not only one way as the name itself evocates. If the novel was understood only as a depiction of one important part of Kerouac's life, it would have a plural in its name – *On the Roads*.

The road depicts not only the American communications that go through the continent and that the main characters of the book travel but it also symbolizes the road coming towards finding something valuable. As we dealt with the main characteristic of the Beat Generation in the previous chapters, beatniks always wanted to find something that would explain them the sense of living. The road means the life of never-ending discoveries. '*... all I wanted to do was sneak out into the night and disappear somewhere, and go and find out what everybody was doing all over the country.*'<sup>55</sup> Sal and Dean do not travel only for fun, excitement or adventure. They do not want only discover better place to live and run away from the spoiled society to the unspoiled nature. They also want to get known themselves better, to look calmly into their heart and find peace in their souls.

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<sup>54</sup> Kerouac, 2000:3

<sup>55</sup> Kerouac, 2000:60

Beatniks saw the wreck of the society in materialism and oppression of weaker and other human race than white is. Readers follow Sal and Dean's narrating, thinking and speaking about philosophy and their life dreams during the story. In fact, when the readers follow the two main heroes, they also subconsciously sympathize with the philosophy of the Beat Generation.

#### 3.2.4.2. Influence of God

Sal Paradise as well as Jack Kerouac was fascinated by the nature of America. He adored mountains, rivers and canyons. The description of spectacular nature defines travelling through different parts of America and visiting favourite cities such as San Francisco or Denver. *'I took a walk down by the Mississippi River and watched the logs that came floating from Montana in the north – grand Odyssean logs of our continental dream. Old steamboats with their scrollwork more scrolled withered by weathers sat in the mud inhabited by rats.'*<sup>56</sup>

Kerouac saw the beauty of God in the American landscape because it is not as destroyed as the American society and culture. When it is destroyed, it is not God's fault but people's. On the road he could run away from the stereotype of disgustingness and that is the reason why he adored the nature and enjoyed every particular moment in it. The enjoyment of staying in the nature is seen in Kerouac's playing with colours and in the gradation. *'The sun goes down long and red. All the magic names of the valley unrolled - Manteca, Madera, all the rest. Soon it got dusk, a grapy dusk, a purple dusk over tangerine groves and long melon fields; the sun the colour of pressed grapes, slashed with burgundy red, the fields the colour of love and Spanish mysteries.'*<sup>57</sup> When Sal Paradise with his friend Dean travelled from the east to west or from the north to south they found out how the nature is changing in every part of the USA. The weather in the south is sunnier than in the north, the greener landscape is spread out in the north. Only the sun, the moon and stars look still the same everywhere. God also stays invariable.

God created virgin nature. Thanks nature people can procreate and people are born as holy humans, as Beatniks purport, who are spoilt by civilization that they themselves set up. Beatniks simply regret civilization because they consider it the reason of such a materialistic society. Sal and Dean in our novel regret modern age too. To be more precise, they wish not

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<sup>56</sup> Kerouac, 2000:93

<sup>57</sup> Kerouac, 2000:72



only to live but also have a rollicking good time. These two main heroes wanted to show a new vision of life without civilization values.

God gives us freedom with our birth and this is something, what some of us sometimes forget. People think they have only obligations, have to earn money to survive and only this can bring them happiness. Kerouac in the character of Sal Paradise criticizes these people who cannot live independently. *'This is the story of America. Everybody's doing what they think they're supposed to do.'*<sup>58</sup> Sal and Dean in this story of America show that they are not supposed to do anything. To be satisfied and free introduces their only duty. They discovered the USA because they wondered what people do all over the country.

It is not coincidental that Kerouac named the main hero of the prose Sal Paradise. Sal is only a shorten form of the name Salvatore. The name is morphologically derived from salvation which means saving from sins and devil. Kerouac gave this name to the character because he himself wanted to be redeemed. He believed that after death he would reach close proximity of God in Paradise.

#### 3.2.4.3. Home

In fact, Sal and Dean both loved being on the road. They never stayed in one place for longer time and when they came back to New York (the city from where they started their first journey) they started to think about next place to go. The journeys were never properly planned. They lived minute by minute, did not care about next morning, and the following song accompanied them on their roads:

*'Home in Missoula,  
Home in Truckee,  
Home in Opelousas,  
Ain't no home for me.  
Home in old Medora,  
Home in Wounded Knee,  
Home in Ogallala,  
Home I'll never be.'*<sup>59</sup>

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<sup>58</sup> Kerouac, 2000:61

<sup>59</sup> Kerouac, 2000:232

It is obvious the desperation of having a real home from the last verse of the song. They wanted to find place where they would be the happiest but finally they found out that they are the most satisfied on the road and in fact they do not need to have home when they have one another.

The philosophy of Jack Kerouac's life was inspired by way of living of Jack London, who spent part of his life in the wild and became a kind of a bum. Jack, influenced by his friend Neal Cassady, also liked to live wildly and spontaneously and he screened this philosophy into the character of Dean Moriarty. One of Dean and Sal's talks shows how spontaneous they were:

Dean: *'You see, man, you get older and troubles pile up. Someday you and me'll be coming down an alley together at sundown and looking in the cans to see.'*

Sal: *'You mean we'll end up old bums?'*

Dean: *'Why not, man? Of course we will if we want to, and all that. There's no harm ending that way. ... What's your road, man? – holyboy road, madman road, rainbow road, guppy road, any road. It's an anywhere road for anybody anyhow.'*<sup>60</sup>

The road was home for probably all the beatniks. As it is known, Ginsberg also travelled a lot. One day they felt home in San Francisco and another day it was for instance Denver or Columbia. They felt at home simply lying on the grass with stars above their heads or driving a car on the American highway. On the road they could feel independent, they could do whatever came onto their minds, sleep wherever they want and wake up whenever they want. They did not go to work because they need only little money to be happy. In fact they did not need a lot to be satisfied and have fun. There was nobody to whom they would have to look after, because they did not trust in family, so they had money only for themselves.

Jack Kerouac had never had family in the true sense of a word and so identically had Sal. They both had only short-term relationship or marriage. Dean Moriarty as Neal Cassady actually had one life love – Carolyn (her name is Camille in the novel). Unfortunately neither him is not the exception of the Beat Generation. He also has short sexual relationship with plenty of women and when Camille gives him a child he does not care. He does not need family because he lives for his beat friends and for self to avoid American social and political problems.

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<sup>60</sup> Kerouac, 2000:229

The last part of the novel depicts the most adventurous trip to Mexico. Kerouac completed the story by ‘repetition’ of the beginning. ‘*Sal Paradise is back in New York, alone and sad, while Moriarty continues having adventures of his own at a manic pace.*’<sup>61</sup> Sal was more depressed than Dean and mostly follows his crazy ideas. Sal’s aim was to become a writer but Dean wanted to travel and enjoy fully his life not only stay at one place. The reason why Sal decided to go onto the road was his disappointment and wanted to start a new life. During the journey he burns with joy. The comebacks from journeys are always harder than being on the road. He does not have anything what would keep him in New York, city from where they started their first trip. Sal considers Dean a travel and life guide. He finds feeling of happiness and freedom with him.

### **3.2.5. Beat Generation (drama)**

It is no wonder that topics such as alcohol or drug addicts, nudity or vulgarisms of characters also came onto stages of American theatres. Not only beatniks wrote about such uncommon issues. It was caused by lifestyle of young people that writers were interested in new topics as well as in the new writing style. The slang of the youth also had an impact on the language of beatniks’ works.

There was a huge increase of new movies in the United States and popularity of television and radio had not had such parallel. New topics also came into the theatres but drama is not as characteristic as prose and poetry for the beat works. Jack Kerouac was inspired by Samuel Beckett who belongs to the main representatives of the absurd drama and Ernst Hemingway who did not endeavour to make some new sort of writing. He wished to make a new kind of drama – something that would shortly and accurately express the life philosophy of beatniks.

The play of Jack Kerouac himself ‘*Beat Generation*’ aptly depicts how the days of beatniks looked like. He said about his drama: ‘*What I wanta do is re-do the theater and the cinema in America, give it a spontaneous dash, remove pre-conceptions of ‘situation’ and let people rave on as they do in real life. That’s what the play is: no plot in particular, no ‘meaning’ in particular, just the way people are.*’<sup>62</sup> He did not want to write a revolutionary drama. He only wanted to show how easy could be make up a play just by description of

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<sup>61</sup> Bickford, 2004:371

<sup>62</sup> Homes, 2005:VII

ordinary people during an ordinary day and because of this Kerouac's play became revolutionary. It does not have any equivalent and maybe because of that the play was never played in last century.

The fact that this play was discovered only in 2005 in New Jersey proves the still topicality of the Beat Generation. *'In bits and pieces it is reminiscent of Tennessee Williams...'*<sup>63</sup>, a famous American dramatic who focuses on his own experience in his drama. Kerouac as well as Williams is also inspired by his own everyday life and his play in three acts only describes atmosphere of beatniks who meet in a flat in New York and converse about everything as same as in reality Kerouac, Ginsberg, Cassady, Huncke and other beatniks did.

Kitchen sink drama belongs to the next term and feature that is connected with the play *'Beat Generation'*. As the term itself indicates, kitchen sink drama means *'genre of British drama which depicts the real and often sordid quality of family life. The plays are socially and politically motivated, seeking to focus attention on the destruction of moral values caused by consumerism and the breakdown of community.'*<sup>64</sup> This play also describes a real life of the characters that are different race.

### 3.2.5.1. The Act One

The play is settled into New York City in an apartment of young people. We do not know the owner of the flat but an African American guy Jule and a white guy Buck meet there. Already here at the very beginning of the play we can see that Kerouac does not make difference between the whites and other human races.

Of course wine does not miss there. Buck mentions that *'there's no way to recreate the effect of that first glass which you get in the morning when you wake up.'*<sup>65</sup> The delight of this first glass of wine in the morning is beyond comparison of everything.

Later on other people come onto stage – Milo, Tommy and Slim. These men work as brakemen. Here we can see the next connection with Kerouac's life because he also had

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<sup>63</sup> Homes, 2005:VII

<sup>64</sup> *Kitchen-sink drama. Unlimited TV, Broadband and Phone Packages: Now with FREE YouView Box | TalkTalk* [online]. [cit. 2013-06-24]. Dostupné z: <http://www.talktalk.co.uk/reference/encyclopaedia/hutchinson/m0097418.html>

<sup>65</sup> Kerouac, 2005:2

experienced such a job. As same as Kerouac liked reading the Bible, Milo is a weird man who always carries the Bible in his pocket everywhere. Obviously, here readers expect the conversation about God, religions, spirituality, philosophy or human existence in general. Milo is the one who believes in God fully and is persuaded about going to Heaven after his death. He believes that everybody will meet there. Buck asks him question and is skeptical about God's salvation: *'I'm trying to get you to say 'God is Words...''*<sup>66</sup> Because God created the whole world and gave us the chance to live and struggle to pass information and love others from our hearts, so in case we have a gift of prophecy we should speak or write.

Kerouac probably feels his God is hidden in writing and so he understands it as his mission of life. He speaks through Buck as well as Milo in the play even if their opinions are not always coincident. Milo believes in ghosts, angels and extra-terrestrial existence. The main theme of the conversation and of whole play is the existence in general. There is no dynamic storyline.

There is a chess game between Milo and Slim during the speculating about God and Heaven. This game is not included in the drama by coincidence. The black and the white figures of the game are moved by 'black' and white men. We do not know the colour of Milo's and Slim's skin. The race of the character is mentioned at the very beginning of the play, so readers know the race only of two characters. Milo and Slim play the game regardless of the race. As they choose the colour of the chess figures so our God chose us to be sent to the Earth and He superintend us regardless of race.

In the second half of the Act One we learn about the opinion that money is not the most important thing in man's life. Jule tells Milo with anger: *'...everybody likes money but that's all you talk about, man...'*<sup>67</sup> The reader again can see the similarity with beatniks' life. They never care about money because they claimed they did not need it.

Readers understand the conversation very easily even though it is often disturbed by everyday activities such as making a cup of coffee, refilling the glass with wine, moving the chess figure or lighting the cigarette. A. M. Homes names this acting as a philosophy of a particular moment in the introduction to the play (p.viii). Kerouac perfectly expresses the action of ordinary people in the small untidy apartment as it likely happens in every home.

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<sup>66</sup> Kerouac, 2005:6

<sup>67</sup> Kerouac, 2005:22

### 3.2.5.2. The Act Second

The middle act of the play is divided into two scenes. The first of them takes place at the horse race where Milo and Buck gamble on horses to win money. A new character Manuel, a brakeman too, appears. They do not care about how much they can win or lose on the other hand. They enjoy the atmosphere with beer and hotdogs. Milo is again the one who is listened by Buck and Manuel because he speaks about deep topics like in the previous act. He uses the addressing 'disincarnate entities' in one of his speech which is the mark of spiritualistic temperament. Again we can see Kerouac's personality screened in the character.

The dialogue between the characters about possessing money in the pockets or not is the main theme of the second act. Men gamble and do not care about the won money - they even do not believe in the possible winnings. They only want to enjoy being together and their hobby which is horse race.

There are also women with men on the horse race but as in other Kerouac's works they are not as elaborate as male characters. Men only realize women's presence and when women speak it is not anything deep.

There is one fundamental utterance from Milo's mouth about surviving at the Earth when he speaks about a man who became conscious of his previous life as a Roman Soldier. He '*took three days for him to die and during those three days he learned how to withstand pain and content his mind and face the patient death.*'<sup>68</sup> Everybody rebirths one day and has to be to patient and look deeply into the heart to survive the current life otherwise he ever cannot be satisfied.

We can see another influence of Kerouac in creation of Manuel's personality. Firstly Manuel wishes to buy a typewriter as same as Kerouac bought it. Manuel tells Milo about money: '*Milo you cant win, you cant lose, all is ephemeral, all is hurt! These are my feelings! I'm a sly gambler... but I wont gamble in Heaven!*'<sup>69</sup> He realizes the money is of peripheral importance. He also knows that what is on the Earth cannot be the same in Heaven. There exist no rules here but people, coming into Heaven only in form of souls, cannot live with sins there. No matter if the Heaven is Christ's, Mohammed's, Buddha's or the Torah's. Heaven must be always clean. Manuel also respects all the religions.

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<sup>68</sup> Kerouac, 2005:72

<sup>69</sup> Kerouac, 2005:75

Jazz music provides accompaniment through whole text but it is the most visible in this second act. Expressions of musical instruments such as drums, trumpets, flutes or saxophones penetrate dialogs of the characters and are connected with angels: *'Hey Milo it's ta ra tara tara tara tara, the bright herald archangel the cat with the long trombone at the start of the race, you dig that?'*<sup>70</sup> Manuel says. The text impresses the feelings as it was sung or accompanied by music because of these sounds.

### 3.2.5.3. The Act Three

Normally, readers expect a denouement of the story at the end of drama but because this play does not have any plot-line there is no happy or bad end in the last act of it. In fact, the play could simply carry on as it began.

New characters called Irwin and Paul come into the play. The main theme of this final act consists in talking about religion in a living-room of a ranch-style house, especially about Buddhism.

There is also a bishop entering into the conversation. While they talk and philosophize they smoke, drink alcohol and laugh. Bishop as an experienced believer knows much about the bliss and hardship of any faith. He says: *'...being a Buddhist, or having read about it, involves Dhristi... which is spiritual patience... We must no expect the Grace of God so soon in a stage of im-patience you see.'*<sup>71</sup> As it said in the previous act, surviving on the Earth needs patience. Here, in the last act, the topic about patience goes even deeper. People do not need patience only for surviving on the Earth to wait to see salvation but they need it primarily for their faith. It is hard to believe in something or somebody that has never been seen by man's eye. In this speech expressed by the bishop it is wonderfully said how life is transitory. The expectation and the attempt to find a life sense becomes the only hope for people who have to believe to come to Heaven. *'And – precisely – which means we cannot expect salvation, or nirvana, eh, if you wish to call it that, without making some effort in the direction of God, some movement.'*<sup>72</sup>

We can just guess why Kerouac made the character of bishop from Czechoslovakia by origin. Kerouac probably knew about hard politic situation and totalitarian system in post-

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<sup>70</sup> Kerouac, 2005:82

<sup>71</sup> Kerouac, 2005:97

<sup>72</sup> Kerouac, 2005:97

war Czechoslovakia and wanted to mention by only one word to highlight another country different from the United States of America where the situation had become maybe even worse than in his home country.

In addition to expectation and effort, the other beautiful idea of the third act is love. Paul is connected to Saint Paul and urges people on loving each other no matter which sex or sexuality are. *'I think everybody should love everybody, I think that's the only message – it's the only message and nobody ever believes it.'*<sup>73</sup> It seems like Paul speaks through God's mouth.

The climax of the whole drama is surprisingly closely connected with Allen Ginsberg's Footnote to Howl. Irwin, Buck, Paul and bishop are shouting one another down by whom or what is actually holy:

*'Bishop: I think the world is going to be holy.*

*Irwin: Do you think the alligator is holy?*

*Paul: And the hair is holy?*

*Buck: Is Milo holy?*

*Paul: Is Buck holy?*

*Irwin: Is Paul holy?*

*Buck: Is Irwin holy?*

*Irwin: Is all holy?*

*Bishop: I suppose. I would hope so.'*<sup>74</sup>

Bishop always answers everything and never had asked. Kerouac thinks about holiness through the characters of the play and finally answers his own question. In Ginsberg's Howl the key word of the end of the poem is 'holy' with the difference that Ginsberg does not ask. He immediately states that everything is holy with exclamation marks.

The play ends when the characters fall asleep with accompaniment of flutes. Again there is seen beatniks' fondness for music because they felt free listening to it.

*'Irwin: Buck's playing the flute under the stars.*

*Paul: I wonder why...*

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<sup>73</sup> Kerouac, 2005:99

<sup>74</sup> Kerouac, 2005:109-110



*Irwin: Must be because... he's trying to figure out what all this is all about... whatever it's all about, you know... the world is what form is, and that's all you can say about it, huh?'<sup>75</sup>*

Buck is playing the flute under the stars symbolizes the close relationship to nature, to the sky, to whole universe. Irwin concludes the conversation by that we cannot do anything to change the world because it was created by God the way it is. The only thing that we are able to do is to change ourselves.

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<sup>75</sup> Kerouac, 2005:120

## 4. Conclusion

The bachelor thesis focused on two main representatives of the Beat Generation – Allen Ginsberg and Jack Kerouac – and their revolutionary works. Three works of three literary kinds were chosen for analysis to show the same features in the different kinds of the literature.

All three analyzed works show the same features of the Beat Generation. Ginsberg as well as Kerouac proceeded from their personal lives and friendship to write such valuable pieces of work. The autobiographical features appeared in every Ginsberg's and Kerouac's work. Topics like faith, taking drugs, drinking alcohol, unrestrained love, homosexuality and bisexuality characterize the novels or poems of these two authors, too.

Ginsberg mainly gives American society, mentally diseases, homosexuality, and drugs a thought in his poem *'Howl'*. There is an apparent turn to God throughout the poem and Ginsberg's desperation of the spoiled society of the United States of America. He blames god Moloch for the dirtiness in relationship among people and thinks that all the factories are the cautions of broken society because people become materialists with the industrial development and do not care about the feelings among each other.

Kerouac rather depicts his own experiences from a never-ending trip throughout the whole United States of America and Mexico than thinking about problems of American society in his novel *'On the Road'*. He expresses his opinions through the mouths of the main characters. The novel is still favourite because Kerouac expresses his opinions with honesty. Readers understand the purpose of the novel after they finish it. Faith in God also influenced Kerouac. His faith is Christian but on the other he was interested in the east religion, especially in Buddhism. The novel *'On the Road'* contents ideas of turning to Buddha, meditations and believe in nirvana. There is an obvious religion plurality and respect in all beatniks' philosophy.

The third and last analyzed work, a drama *'Beat Generation'*, simply confirms the beat philosophy of Kerouac and Ginsberg. We can believe or not that the play was discovered only in 2005 but it does not have to be true. Kerouac did not have to hide his works because he wanted to show his opinions about the American society and living in general. There is an

idea that this play came among the readers but was not understood in that time and that is the reason why it was not played.

The play introduces the everyday life of beatniks in three short acts. The plot is not as important as the environment and atmosphere of the play. In fact, the play does not have a serious plot. The drama briefly shows the lifestyle of the main characters. They look like the ordinary people but they are not because they have sophisticating hobbies such as philosophizing about life, purpose of money and about their souls that will go to Heaven for sure.

Obviously, all three works have something in common. All the beatniks are individualists and adventurers. Kerouac as well as Ginsberg wrote because he wanted to get to know answers to questions. They both wanted to solve misunderstandings. Every beat piece of work is evidentially inspired by jazz music, by drug experience and by philosophy of countries of Asia. The language of the characters of the novels is always vulgar and they do not follow the grammatical rules. The parts of description of nature, environment or characters themselves are also narrated spontaneously.

Beatniks created a new way of narrating and became important in the history of the American and world literature. Their spontaneous way of writing was, and still is, favourite among young readers because they look for something new in literature. The authors of the Beat Generation brought this new way of expressing into the literature and it is the reason why they became ones of the representatives of the post-modern art.

No wonder that Kerouac and Ginsberg influenced many lives of young people in the United States of America and later on all over the world, too. It is possible to say that the beatniks were pre-step to the era of the hippies and ‘underground’.

Kerouac became more popular after his death than during his life. His work was understood only in 1970s and 1980s when his friends and girlfriends wrote about their relationships or friendships with Kerouac. For instance, we can mention the novel ‘*Off the Road*’ by Carolyn Cassady or ‘*Memory Babe*’ by Gerald Nicosia.

In 1989 after the November revolution Allen Ginsberg was invited by Vaclav Havel to Czechoslovakia and to Palacky University in Olomouc to have lectures about the beat poetry. The importance of the beat literature is evident from Ginsberg’s visit not only in Czechoslovakia but also in other countries all over the world.

Kerouac's novels and Ginsberg's poems are still read even now in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. There exist people who follow the philosophy of beatniks and travel around the world by cars which they stole or hitchhiked. Beatnik's works influenced also other artists like painters, travellers, chronicles, journalists, dramatics, musicians or film-maker. In 2010 the movie '*Howl*' with readings of the eponymous poem was made in Hollywood and two years later the movie '*On the Road*' came to the cinemas. This is the approval that the Beat Generation still lives.

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