

Abstract:

The main objective of this thesis is to study the high point of the Beat Generation's production in Paris between 1957 and 1960 and to determine why it encouraged their major contribution to literature, art and criticism worldwide in the last quarter of the 20th century and today. Though most were born and educated in the United States, many of the most important Beat writers journeyed across the world in search of artistic recognition and determined to perform literary experiments they had failed to execute back home.

This thesis will provide an overview of the Beat pilgrimage to Paris, a city which has been coined "an arbiter of cultural value in the postwar era."¹ The thesis also attempts to examine the ways the Beats' time in Paris was invaluable for their influence on literature beyond American borders and how their writing was shaped by the oeuvres of such French writers as Rimbaud, Proust, Gide, Apollinaire, St.-John Perse, Céline, Cocteau, Genet, Michaux and others.² This thesis will survey the intersection between French and American culture and the influence of both on Beat authors and the list of works to be analysed includes but is not limited to Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), and "Kaddish" (1959); William S. Burroughs's *Naked Lunch* (1959), *The Soft Machine*; Jack Kerouac's *Satori In Paris* (1966), *Big Sur* (1962), *On the Road* (1957); Gregory Corso's "Bomb."

The transnational point of view informs my reading of these works, encouraging me to focus on the circulation of art beyond U.S. borders. Thus, by examining French literature and culture as an integral part of the Beat Generation's prose, poetry and art, this thesis will reveal the cultural, creative and emotional engagement these writers shared towards Francophone literature and the city of Paris. This thesis also considers intertextual and intercultural communication in collaborative works such as *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks* by William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, and the appropriation of French texts by Beat writers.

This paper concludes by defining the role of Francophone culture in the literary development of the Beats as a transnational countercultural movement, and suggests how they continue to contribute to international literature.

¹ Loren Glass, *Counterculture Colophon: Grove Press, the Evergreen Review, and the Incorporation of the Avant-Garde* (Redwood City: Stanford University Press, 2013) 120.

² Veronique Lane, *The French Genealogy of the Beat Generation* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2017) 3.