

THE BEAT GENERATION

THE BEAT GENERATION WAS A GROUP OF AMERICAN POST WORLD WAR II WRITERS WHO CAME TO PROMINENCE IN THE 1950'S

ALTHOUGH IT NEVER WAS A LARGE MOVEMENT, ITS INFLUENCE AND CULTURAL STATUS WERE LARGELY RECOGNIZED.

STUDENTS IN UNIVERSITIES STARTED TO QUESTION MATERIALISM PREDOMINANT IN POST WAR SOCIETY.

BEAT GENERATION WAS A PRODUCT OF THIS QUESTIONING. THEY SAW CAPITALISM DESTRUCTIVE AND ANTIETHICAL TO HUMAN SPIRIT AND SOCIAL EQUALITY.

THEY THOUGHT OPENLY SEXUAL DISCUSSION WAS HEALTHY AS OPPOSED TO WHAT WAS BELIEVED BY THEIR PARENTS GENERATION.

THEIR LITERATURE WAS MORE STRAIGHTFOWARD AND EXPRESSIVE THAN IT HAD BEEN TILL THEN.

UNDERGROUND STYLES LIKE JAZZ WERE ESPECIALLY EVOCATIVE FOR BEAT WRITERS, WHILE THREATENING TO THE STABLISHMENT

TO MANY, THE ARTISTIC PRODUCTION OF THE BEAT CROSSED THE LINE INTO PORNOGRAPHY AND THEREFORE, WERE OBJECT OF CENSORSHIP.

SOME DISMISSED THE BEAT GENERATION LITERATURE AS MERE PROVOCATION, A MEANS TO GET ATENTION, NOT SERIOUS ART BUT TIME HAS PROVED THAT THEIR IMPACT WAS FAR MORE SIGNIFICANT.

ACADEMIC COMMUNITY SAW THEM AS ANTI-INTELLECTUAL WHILE MAINSTREAM SOCIETY WAS HORRIFIED BY THEIR SUPPOSED SEXUAL DEVIANCY AND ILLICIT DRUG USE.

POLITITIANS AS SENATOR JOSEPH MCARTHY IDENTIFIED ELEMENTS OF BEAT IDEOLOGY AS COMMUNISTS AND A THREAT TO THE NATION `S SECURITY.

BY THE FIFTIES THE MOVEMENT HAD SPREAD AND GROWN.
THEY USED TO MEET IN COFFEE HOUSES TO SHARE THEIR THOUGHTS.
JAZZ CLUBS WERE ALSO GATHERING PLACES.

CENTRAL ELEMENTS OF BEAT CULTURE INCLUDED EXPERIMENTATION WITH DRUGS, ALTERNATIVE FORMS OF SEXUALITY, AN INTEREST IN EASTERN RELIGION, AND A REJECTION OF MATERIALISM

THE MEMBERS OF BEAT GENERATION DEVELOPED A REPUTATION AS NEW BOHEMIAN HEDONISTS WHO CELEBRATED NON-CONFORMITY AND SPONTANEOUS CREATIVITY.

ITS MAJOR REPRESENTATIVES ARE ALLEN GINSBERG, WILLIAM S. BURROUGHS, AND JACK KEROUAC.

HOWL IS A POEM WRITTEN BY GINSBERG IN 1956. IT IS PART OF HIS COLLECTION OF POETRY TITLED *HOWL AND OTHER POEMS*. *HOWL* CONTAINS MANY REFERENCES TO ILLICIT DRUGS AND SEXUAL PRACTICES BOTH HOMOSEXUAL AND HETEROSEXUAL.

NAKED LUNCH IS A NON-LINEAR NARRATIVE WRITTEN BY BURROUGHS AND PUBLISHED IN 1959. IT IS ABOUT THE EXPERIENCES OF WILLIAM LEE –THE MAIN CHARACTER- STARTING IN UNITED STATES FLEEING FROM POLICE AND THEN GOES ON JUMPING FROM ONE SET TO ANOTHER, DEALING WITH MANY DIFFERENT SITUATIONS AND CHARACTERS. IT REFLECTS BURROUGHS OWN EXPERIENCE IN MANY PLACES FROM U.S. TO MEXICO AND HIS ADDICTION TO DRUGS (HEROIN AND MORPHINE)

THE BOOK WAS BANNED IN BOSTON AND LOS ANGELES BECAUSE OF OBSCENE LANGUAGE.

BOTH *HOWL* AND *NAKED LUNCH* WERE THE FOCUS OF OBSCENITY TRIALS THAT ULTIMATELY HELPED TO LIBERALIZE PUBLISHING IN THE U.S.

JACK KEROUAC WROTE “*ON THE ROAD*”. IT IS A NOVEL BASED ON THE TRAVELS OF KEROUAC AND HIS FRIENDS ACROSS AMERICA FIRST PUBLISHED IN 1959- IT IS CONSIDERED A DEFINING WORK OF THE BEAT GENERATION WITH ITS MAIN CHARACTERS LIVING LIFE AGAINST A BACKDROP OF JAZZ, POETRY AND DRUGS.

HIPPIE MOVEMENT

DURING HIS PRESIDENTIAL CAMPAIGN IN 1960, JOHN F. KENNEDY HAD PROMISED THE MOST AMBITIOUS PLAN: "NEW FRONTIER," A PACKAGE OF LAWS AND REFORMS THAT SOUGHT TO ELIMINATE INJUSTICE AND INEQUALITY IN THE UNITED STATES. BUT CONGRESS DID NOT SUPPORT IT.

IT WAS NOT UNTIL 1964, AFTER KENNEDY WAS SHOT, THAT PRESIDENT LYNDON B. JOHNSON COULD CARRY OUT A PROGRAM OF REFORMS. THAT YEAR, JOHNSON DECLARED THAT HE WOULD MAKE THE UNITED STATES INTO A "GREAT SOCIETY" IN WHICH POVERTY AND RACIAL INJUSTICE WOULD HAVE NO PLACE.

UNFORTUNATELY, THE WAR ON POVERTY WAS EXPENSIVE—TOO EXPENSIVE, ESPECIALLY AS THE WAR IN VIETNAM BECAME THE GOVERNMENT'S TOP PRIORITY. THERE WAS SIMPLY NOT ENOUGH MONEY TO PAY FOR THE WAR ON POVERTY AND THE WAR IN VIETNAM.

THE VIETNAM WAR WAS THE PROLONGED STRUGGLE BETWEEN NATIONALIST FORCES ATTEMPTING TO UNIFY THE COUNTRY OF VIETNAM UNDER A COMMUNIST GOVERNMENT AND THE SOUTH VIETNAMESE WITH THE AID OF THE UNITED STATES ATTEMPTING TO PREVENT THE SPREAD OF COMMUNISM. ENGAGED IN A WAR THAT MANY VIEWED AS HAVING NO WAY TO WIN, U.S. LEADERS LOST THE AMERICAN PUBLIC'S SUPPORT FOR THE WAR.

IN 1964, THE DRAFT BEGAN.

IT DIVIDED THE NATION. SOME YOUNG PEOPLE TOOK TO THE STREETS IN PROTEST, WHILE OTHERS FLED TO CANADA TO AVOID THE DRAFT.

MEANWHILE, MANY OF THEIR PARENTS AND PEERS FORMED A "SILENT MAJORITY" IN SUPPORT OF THE WAR.

IN 1968 THE BRUTAL NORTH VIETNAMESE TET OFFENSIVE CONVINCED MANY PEOPLE THAT THE VIETNAM WAR WOULD BE IMPOSSIBLE TO WIN.

SINCE ITS END, THE VIETNAM WAR HAS BECOME A CLEAR SAMPLE FOR WHAT NOT TO DO IN ALL FUTURE U.S. FOREIGN CONFLICTS.

BESIDES, THE STRUGGLE FOR CIVIL RIGHTS HAD DEFINED THE '60s. IN GENERAL, THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT STAYED OUT OF THE CIVIL RIGHTS STRUGGLE UNTIL 1964, WHEN PRESIDENT JOHNSON PUSHED A CIVIL RIGHTS PROYECT THROUGH CONGRESS THAT PROHIBITED

DISCRIMINATION IN PUBLIC PLACES, AND AGAINST WOMEN AND MINORITIES AND PROMISED EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES IN THE WORKPLACE BUT THESE LAWS DID NOT SOLVE THE PROBLEMS FACING AFRICAN AMERICANS: THEY DID NOT ELIMINATE RACISM OR POVERTY AND THEY DID NOT IMPROVE THE CONDITIONS IN MANY BLACK URBAN NEIGHBORHOODS.

STUDENT ACTIVISTS GREW MORE RADICAL. THEY TOOK OVER COLLEGE CAMPUSES, ORGANIZED MASSIVE ANTIWAR DEMONSTRATIONS AND OCCUPIED PARKS AND OTHER PUBLIC PLACES. POLICE USED GASES AND CLUBS TO BREAK UP PROTESTS. FURIOUS ANTIWAR PROTESTORS TOOK OVER UNIVERSITIES AND THE URBAN RIOTS THAT HAD ERUPTED ACROSS THE COUNTRY EVERY SUMMER SINCE 1964 CONTINUED AND INTENSIFIED.

WITHIN THIS CONTEXT THE HIPPIE COUNTERCULTURE APPEARED.

COUNTER CULTURE DEFINITION: IT IS A SUBCULTURE WHOSE VALUES, NORMS AND BEHAVIOR DEVIATE FROM THOSE OF MAINSTREAM SOCIETY. A TRUE COUNTERCULTURE INCLUDES A SIGNIFICANT NUMBER OF PEOPLE AND PERSISTS FOR A NOTABLE PERIOD OF TIME. WHEN OPPOSITIONAL FORCES REACH CRITICAL MASS, COUNTERCULTURES CAN TRIGGER DRAMATIC CULTURAL CHANGES.

HIPPIES GREW THEIR HAIR LONG AND PRACTICED "FREE LOVE." SOME MOVED TO COMMUNES. (a group of families or single people who live and work together sharing possessions and responsibilities), AWAY FROM THE TURBULENCE THAT HAD COME TO DEFINE EVERYDAY LIFE IN THE 1960s. THE US COUNTERCULTURE OF THE HIPPIES REJECTED THE CULTURAL STANDARDS OF THEIR PARENTS, ESPECIALLY THOSE REGARDING RACIAL SEGREGATION AND VIETNAM WAR.

HIPPIES MAIN CHARACTERISTICS:

- IT WAS COMPOSED MAINLY OF PEOPLE BETWEEN 15 AND 25 YEARS OLD
- REJECTED ESTABLISHED INSTITUTIONS, NUCLEAR WEAPONS AND VIETNAM WAR
- THEY EMBRACED ASPECTS OF EASTERN PHILOSOPHY AND SEXUAL LIBERATION.
- THEY WERE OFTEN VEGETARIAN AND ECO-FRIENDLY.
- THEY PROMOTED THE USE OF PSYCHEDELIC DRUGS (WHICH THEY THOUGHT EXPANDED CONSCIOUSNESS) AND
- MANY OF THEM LIVED IN COMMUNES

IN GENERAL, THEIR IDEOLOGY FAVOURED PEACE, LOVE AND PERSONAL

FREEDOM. THEY EXPRESSED THEIR FEELINGS THROUGH MUSIC, POP ART AND OP ART, STREET THEATRE, SIT INS IN PUBLIC PLACES.

NEW MUSIC GENRES APPEARED LIKE PSYCHEDELIC ROCK.

MUSICIANS WHO EXEMPLIFIED THIS ERA INCLUDE JIMMY HENDRIX, THE DOORS, CREAM, BOB DYLAN, PINK FLOYD, JANIS CHOPLIN AND MANY OTHERS.

LARGE OUTDOOR ROCK FESTIVALS PLAYED A KEY ROLE IN SPREADING THIS COUNTERCULTURE.

IN THE SUMMER OF 1969, FOR EXAMPLE, ALMOST HALF A MILLION YOUNG PEOPLE ATTENDED THE WOODSTOCK MUSIC FESTIVAL IN NEW YORK. IT TOOK PLACE DURING THREE DAYS THAT REPRESENTED THE BEST OF THE PEACE-AND-LOVE GENERATION.

FLOWER POWER WAS A SLOGAN USED BY THE HIPPIES DURING THE 60'S AND EARLY 70'S AS A SYMBOL OF PASSIVE RESISTANCE AND NON-VIOLENCE IDEOLOGY.

THEY EMBRACED THE SYMBOLISM WITH FLOWERS EMBROIDERED, VIBRANT COLOURS, WEARING FLOWERS IN THEIR HAIR AND DISTRIBUTING FLOWERS TO THE PUBLIC.

THIS METHODOLOGY WAS MEANT TO TURN ANTI-WAR RALLIES INTO A FORM OF STREET THEATRE REDUCING THE FEAR, ANGER AND THREAT THAT WAS INHERENT TO MASSIVE PROTESTS

THE EXPRESSION WAS COINED BY POET ALLEN GINSBERG IN 1965 AS A MEANS TO TRANSFORM WAR PROTESTS INTO PEACEFUL AFFIRMATIVE SPECTACLES.