

# The Poetry and life of Allen Ginsberg



Allen's Harmonium 1997

Edward Sanders

Dedicated to the building of  
the civilization envisioned by  
Allen Ginsberg in such poems as “America”:

When can I go into the supermarket and buy what I need  
with my good looks?

and “Death to Van Gogh’s Ear!”:

Now is the time for prophecy without death as a consequence

and “Memory Gardens”:

Well, while I’m here I’ll  
do the work—  
and what’s the Work?  
To ease the pain of living.  
Everything else, drunken  
dumbshow.

The Poetry and Life of Allen Ginsberg  
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# THE POETRY & LIFE OF ALLEN GINSBERG

## Part I

1926-1943

In a way Allen Ginsberg's life was  
shaped by pogroms and the surge of  
revolution  
in the Jewish Pale of Settlement

first in the 1880s  
and then in the pogrom-evil years of '03-'05  
which caused his grandparents on both sides  
to flee to the freedom of the USA

### THE PALE

The Pale was the legal zone in western Russia  
set up through the centuries  
where almost 5 million Jews  
were forced to reside

The Pale extended from the Baltic Sea in the north  
to the Black Sea in the south.  
In the 19th Century it included Lithuania,  
Belorussia (White Russia), the Crimea  
Bessarabia & much of the Ukraine.

### GRANDPARENTS IN THE PALE

Allen Ginsberg's grandfather, Pincus, was born in a town called  
Kamenetz-Podolskiy on the upper Dniester River  
He was orphaned early,  
then moved to Pinsk further north in the Pale

There were ghastly new restrictions on Jews in 1881

in the repression after the assassination of Tzar Alexander II  
and many instances of government-sanctioned pogroms.  
The Tzar even banned the Yiddish Theater;  
and restrictions were increased on where Jews  
could live in the Pale.

There were quotas set up on the number of Jews  
to be let into the universities,  
and to legal, medical and government jobs.

It was in this context that Pincus Ginsberg fled to the USA  
in the 1880s  
to settle with relatives in Newark, where he met his future bride  
Rebecca Schechtman–  
Louis Ginsberg, Allen's father, was born in '95

### HIS MATERNAL GRANDFATHER & GRANDMOTHER

Mendel Livergant  
was Naomi's father  
(changed to Morris Levy at Ellis Island)

& lived in a village named Nevel  
south of St. Petersburg, west of Moscow  
& north of Vitebsk  
in the middle of the Jewish Pale  
where he sold Singer sewing machines to the peasants

Mendel married a woman named Judith  
they had four children,  
all of whom wound up in Allen's poems–  
Eleanor, Max, Sam & Naomi  
who was born in 1894

Naomi grew up speaking Yiddish  
She played the mandolin  
Her parents were sympathetic  
to the revolutionaries.

In the Russo-Japanese war of 1904  
Mendel Livergant and his bro' Isser  
went to the U.S.  
to avoid getting drafted  
(& underwent the name-change  
from Livergant to Levy)

& Judith & the kids  
 moved to Vitebsk  
     a city of radical ferment  
 (where Marc Chagall  
     had lived when young)

–Vitebsk was later destroyed by the Nazis.

Then there was  
 what they called the Revolution of 1905  
 when the Tzar’s soldiers opened fire  
 on 300,000 marchers petitioning for  
     the 8-hour workday, more money, the  
     right to vote & a parliament  
     & 100 protesters,  
 some praying and carrying ikons  
 fell dead in the snow  
     by the Winter Palace  
 after which  
 there were massive strikes in cities  
     all over Russia,  
 and then massive repression  
 including ghastly pogroms  
     in the Northern Pale

–pogrom is the Russian word for “devastation”

This was the year that  
 Naomi, age 10, & her mother and sisters  
 escaped to New York  
     to Orchard Street

(Isser’s family went to Winnipeg)

& her father Morris opened a candy store  
 in the Lower East Side

Then the family moved to Newark  
 Naomi went to Barringer High  
 in 1912  
 where, both age 17, she met Louis Ginsberg.

## ONE SOCIALIST, ONE COMMUNIST

Allen's mother was a communist

Louis was a socialist like his parents

& thus was established a  
classic pull-&-shove  
in the family  
'tween the two sets of politics

## NAOMI'S FIRST BREAKDOWN

Naomi had gone to Normal School  
& become a teacher  
in Woodbine, NJ

She suffered her first breakdown in 1919  
light was painful to her  
she lay in a dark room 3 weeks  
She was not yet married  
but later that year, with the opposition of  
her future mother-in-law  
she and Louis were hitched

The first son, Eugene, was born 1921  
and named after the great American Socialist  
Eugene Debs

## THE BARD

The bard named Irwin Allen Ginsberg  
was born at 2 a.m. on June 3, 1926  
in Newark, NJ

They named him after  
his great-grandfather  
S'rul Avrum Ginsberg

Louis was an English teacher  
at Central High in Paterson

He was a well known poet  
with three volumes published during his lifetime

“Would that all sons’ fathers were poets!”  
 A.G. later exclaimed, in his “Confrontation with Louis  
 Ginsberg’s Poems” in Louis Ginsberg’s  
 Collected Poems.

An early family apartment was  
   on Fair Street in Paterson  
 (now torn down  
 & not far from the Great Falls  
   in the Passaic River)

where Louis sat  
   in the evenings  
   at a modest wooden desk  
 ’neath a gooseneck lamp  
   writing poetry  
 –a desk that Allen later acquired  
   after his father’s passing in ’76  
 and brought to his apartment  
   in the Lower East Side

Allen wrote a poem when he was nine or ten  
 which was published in the Paterson Evening News  
 He could still recall it 60 years later:

“Once upon my window sill  
 A sparrow hopped but then stood still  
 I asked him why he did the latter  
 He said to me, ‘It doesn’t matter.’  
 Men kill a cow for mutton pie  
 So should I confide in you my woe?”

Allen, his brother and mother spent  
 two summers at Camp Nicht-Gedeiget  
 which means “No Worry”  
   near Monroe Lake  
   in Orange County  
   about 60 miles north of  
 New York City (Louis wd visit on weekends)

Allen’s first songs were  
 learned at his mom’s communist meetings:  
 “On the Line” &  
 “The Red Flag”

Around 1929  
 after Naomi had pancreas surgery  
 she flipped again–  
 Light and sound hurt her  
 She was sent to Bloomingdale Sanatorium  
 not far from Tarrytown

Around 6 months later  
 she was let out  
 and joined the family in Paterson–  
 1930

'35

1935, Naomi another session with flip  
 again light gave her great pain  
 After two months she came out of it

Then a few months later,  
 either late '35 or early '36,  
 she went under again  
 and was sent to Greystone and  
 given shock treatments

Naomi returned home in '36

Naomi more paranoid  
 Was sent back to sanatorium on June 24  
 She was there three years (Greystone)  
 and let out in 1939

1940

He was an early “Jack the Clipper”  
 an attribute that remained  
 throughout his life

as he amassed many many many news clippings  
 on Hitler and Mussolini, and the Spanish Civil War.  
 in the late '30s into 1940

He learned of his gayness apparently by high school time  
 but kept many locks on the door  
 He wrote his class Graduation Poem



& wondered which college to attend

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He leaned toward Columbia  
to follow a friend from Paterson High

He kept getting crushes on fellow students  
One student, Paul Roth, went to Columbia  
later became a doctor

Allen kept his crush in secrecy

'42

Naomi was again hospitalized at Greystone  
in '42 and '43.

## Part II

'43

### The Vow to Help the Working Class

The slender & nervous sixteen year old  
took the ferry from Hoboken to Manhattan  
on the way to the university entrance examination  
and made a solemn vow  
that if he got into Columbia  
he would devote his life  
to helping the working class

(Ginsberg was prone to vows—  
see his later vows with Neal Cassady  
and Peter Orlovsky)

He enrolled at Columbia in '43, age 16  
an Ivy league school— hardly a citadel of sentiment  
for the workers

even with exradicals like Lionel Trilling  
and Marxist art-genius Meyer Schapiro  
as his mentors

That was the school year  
he'd meet young Republican Jack Kerouac  
and continued his fierce training in rhyming

(He forged beautiful skills at rhyme  
 to which he returned toward the end of his life.  
 He was famous throughout his career for his  
 spontaneous rhymes)

Among his faves were Thomas Wyatt &  
 Christopher Smart (1722-1771)  
 whose “Jubilate Agno”  
 was written while Smart was crazed.

Ginsberg  
 with a crazy mother  
 was very very sensitive  
 to  
 craziness  
 Crazy Wisdom  
 Crazy Times  
 & Vision

Another big influence, of course, was  
 Walt Whitman, Ginsberg’s life long “unwobbling pivot”  
 described by him in a letter to one of his college professors as  
 a “Mountain too vast to be seen.”

Decades later, when reading from Whitman to his students,  
 he would weep during “When Lilacs Last in the Dooryard Bloomed.”

And so Irwin Allen Ginsberg began  
 a polite, Cold War liberal Columbia upbringing–

In December o’ ’43 he met one William S. Burroughs  
 who was working as a bartender in the Village  
 His parents, who operated a gift shop and  
 garden supply shop in Fla., sent him \$200 a month–

Ginsberg & Kerouac  
 learned much from Burroughs’ library  
 Ginsberg first experienced Blake there,  
 and Baudelaire

Big impact on future Beats:  
 Burroughs’ Book Hoard

Another life-long friend A.G. met his first year in College  
was Lucien Carr, a polished & confident youth from St. Louis  
whom Allen first saw in Lionel Trilling's Great Books Seminar

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'44

Naomi had been released from Greystone  
& Allen often went with her to the opera

Louis & Naomi broke up that year  
Her paranoia & all the fights  
were finally too much for both to endure  
Naomi moved to NYC

where she had a love affair with a doctor  
for the National Maritime Union  
& lived with him for a while.

Around May of '44  
the 'Zap\* met Kerouac  
who was then a merchant seaman  
(it was World War II)  
apparently at the pad of  
Edie Parker and Joan Vollmer  
on 118th Street  
(the crowd hung out at the nearby West End Bar)

Kerouac flunked out of Columbia in '42  
In Dec '42 he joined the Navy, but then feigned  
bonk bonk to get a discharge  
then joined the merchant marines.

Ginsberg and K. were talking buddies

On August 14, Lucien Carr killed David Kammerer  
Burroughs' pal from St. Louis  
who was erotically obsessed with  
the attractive young man

-late at night, in Riverside Park, Upper West Side of  
Manhattan  
knifed him twice in the heart

tied up the body & rolled it in the Hudson River

---

Burroughs gave Carr some cash and some advice  
Kerouac helped dispose of the death knife  
and Kammerer's glasses

•

Through Burroughs Kerouac and Ginzap  
discovered uppers, particularly benzedrine  
available in drugstores in inhalers  
an important force  
in Kerouac's novels  
and Ginsberg's poems

& in the forging of literary frenzy

•

August 16 Carr turned himself in  
confessed, charged with murder

Burroughs and Kerouac were arrested  
& Kerouac's father refused to bail him out.

Jack was taken from jail to marry Edie Parker

Then, freed on bail, they went to live in  
Grosse Pt., Mich. for a while  
—a brief while

'45

3-16-45 a Columbia U dean  
rushed into Ginzap's room at the college  
and found him in bed with Kerouac  
(they had on shorts)  
sleeping

Allen had written "Fuck the Jews" with accompanying  
skull and crossbones on the window,  
putatively to miff the reportedly anti-Semitic  
cleaning woman.

Ginzap had also written on the glass  
“Butler has no balls” (Butler was one of the  
college’s deans)

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AG had to wipe off the words  
and was suspended from college  
ordered to see a shrink  
and tossed from the residence  
for having the unwelcome overnight guest (Kerouac)  
& for the graffiti

AG later told his biographers he was trying to goad  
the antisem cleaner

### A YEAR FROM COLLEGE

After this, age 18,  
he took a year from college

He worked first as a welder at  
Brooklyn Navy Yard, till April  
then at Gotham Book Mart, but  
owner Frances Steloff fired him.

June of '45 he received his draft notice.  
Hitler was dead &  
Hiroshima a few weeks ahead  
He declared himself homosexual  
was sent to merchant marine training school  
for rest of summer of '45

Beginning in August  
he was in U.S. Maritime  
Service for 3 1/2 months

During '45 Kerouac's father dying of C  
and Jack spent lots of time at home

Ginsberg and Jack  
began talking about the “New Vision”

early urgings that lead to the B.G.

Ginsberg fell in love with Kerouac  
Down in the gay part of Manhattan, by th'

West Side docks,  
they caressed one another

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'46

Naomi living with Eugene, who was out of  
the WWII army & off to law school  
She was prone to stride around nude  
A.G. apparently felt his mom's nudity  
reinforced his gayness

(see Ginsberg's poem "Kaddish")

In th' fall of '46 Ginzap readmitted to Columbia

Same fall Kerouac was living in Ozone Park (in NYC)  
working on The Town and the City.

& Lucien Carr was let out after two years  
for the Kammerer killing

Ginsberg was in constant communication with his father,  
often by card and mail  
The correspondence was often  
what they call brutally direct

Fall of '46 Neal Cassady to NYC with  
17 year old wife LuAnne  
Cassady was from the flophouse realm of  
Denver

'47

January, Ginsberg met the youth from Denver

Cassady was already friend of Jack Kerouac  
A.G. and Cassady made it first  
on a cot in a Harlem pad  
in January '47

March Cassady split back to Denver

Summer Kerouac and Ginsberg joined him there

Ginzap went to Denver

to be with Cassady  
 Cassady was very involved with  
     girlfriend Carolyn  
 –also seeing first wife, and  
 various others, plus furtively  
 making it with A.G.

Ginsberg frustrated,  
 wrote fairly good poem on August 23  
     “The Bricklayer’s Lunch Hour”

writing rhymed quatrains on Benzedrine  
 the summer o’ ’47 in Denver

Hitching ca end of August 47  
 with Cassady toward Burroughs’  
 grass ranch  
     in New Waverly, Texas

they took a vow of love and fidelity  
 kneeling together in Oklahoma  
 (as mentioned in “The Green Automobile”)

Ginsberg dropped out of Columbia again, and after summer  
 took merchant ship to Africa and back

Then rest of fall worked odd jobs in Paterson

Winter to pad in East Harlem

In the Milieu of Aimless Frenzy

Naomi moved in with her sister Edie  
 who worked days as a union organizer.  
 Naomi getting crazy  
     fearful of relatives with bags  
     of germs  
     on the fire escape  
 or the “three big sticks” in her back

1947 she flipped again & was  
 sent to Pilgrim State on Long Island  
 Hitting her head against wall  
 Docs recommended lobotomy  
 Allen signed forms okaying

it in late Nov. 1947  
(a source of some of his later guilt)

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I think she was there till she died  
on June 9, 1956

'48

Winter of 47-48 the 'Zap returned to Columbia  
in a frenzy

Writing a paper on Cézanne  
for Meyer Schapiro  
he'd take some tokes  
then go Cézanne-staring  
at MOMA

On way back from a seder in Paterson  
(at Louis' house)  
Allen and Kerouac  
parted at 125th St.  
Allen demanded Jack hit him--  
"I wanted attention from him  
any kind of attention"

April Cassady wrote he was married, and wife  
was pregnant

"Two Sonnets" After reading Kerouac's manuscript,  
The Town and the City Spring of 1948

Serendipity  
Allen's friend w/ tb  
from whom he rented a pad w/

orange crate shelves  
theology studies  
St. Theresa of Avila  
Plotinus  
St. J of the C  
all material for "Howl"

Living in East Harlem- June-July 1948:



where he had an auditory “vision”

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heard a voice chanting Blake’s “Ahh, Sunflower, Weary of Time”  
and “The Sick Rose,” and “Little Girl Lost.”

(Out of that vision his early poem,  
“On Reading William Blake’s ‘The Sick Rose’”)

### WATCH OUT, BARD

He crawled  
    onto the fire escape  
to the window next door  
He tapped and shouted  
“I’ve seen God!”  
    to two startled women

## Part III

We left Allen Ginsberg in his East Harlem apartment  
in the summer of ’48  
where he had experienced a powerful auditory “vision” of  
the Bard William Blake chanting poetry

an experience that was to be key in Ginsberg’s  
next fifteen years as a poet.

Around this time Allen began inserting questions  
into his poetry—

His very early works  
contain few, if any  
bardic questions:  
but when he gets to his

"Vision" poem:

    "On Reading William Blake's 'The Sick Rose,'"  
written at the time of the Blake Voice Vision,  
"The Sick Rose" and "Little Girl Lost,"

there are three sentences ending in question marks.

After the Vision of Blake, the Elegant, Pulsing Question  
became one of his most powerful poetic devices

(There are 47 question marks in Allen's Collected Poems  
in the poems BEFORE he wrote "Howl" in 1955)

("Howl" has no question marks  
because "Howl" is, in a way, the long declarative  
throb-answer to  
hundreds of questions he had already asked.)

In his Blake Vision, of course, he sensed Eternity  
and it set off a long hunger to  
"see Visionary Indian Angels who WERE Visionary Indian Angels"

(The next fifteen years were a quest for Cosmic Consciousness  
up until his poem "The Change" written after experiencing  
the Calcutta ghats  
amoil with flame  
-a poem renouncing the  
"power" he had constructed out of  
the Blake Vision)

The Blake Vision also had "Holy Loner" aspects  
that brought into focus  
his "feelings of rejection as a confessed homosexual  
and as a Jew,"  
as the writer Paul Christiansen has pointed out.

His father, Louis, watched his son with a wary eye:  
July '48:  
Louis' advice re Neal  
"Dear Allen, Exorcise Neal.  
-Louis"

'49

There came a time in February o' '49  
when a bedraggled, Loner Beat, Famished Phantom  
named Herbert Huncke showed up at A.G.'s pad  
at 1401 York Avenue

just released from prison, feet blistered, socks wet  
and talking suicide

He was the archetypal "Madman beat in time"  
of the "Howl" threnody

Allen offered him a place to stay  
 Not long thereafter Huncke began bringing his pals to the pad  
 a heist gang  
     that used the place for storage of stolen stuff

On April 23 all were arrested,  
 even the Bard Allen Ginsberg,

it made a big splash in The New York Times:

One of the accused, Allen Ginsberg, of 1401 York Avenue  
 told the police that he was a copy boy for a news service who  
 had “tied-in” with the gang, all with police records, to obtain  
 “realism” he needed to write a story.

Sure, Allen sure.

A sad sad dad bailed out his son  
 Mark Van Doren, of the Columbia U faculty, offered help  
 and Lionel Trilling introduced the Bard to a Col. U law prof  
 who recommended that A.G. plead bonk bonk

Allen did just that  
 and was sentenced to Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Institute

There wasn't a room available right away  
 so he lived with his dad in Paterson

and then on 6-29-49

the up-a-creek Bard went into the 6th floor ward of the  
 Institute on  
 168th Street

where he met poet Carl Solomon  
     to whom he was to dedicate “Howl”

## Part IV

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg  
 when he was in Columbia-Presbyterian Psychiatric Center  
 in Washington Heights

after being swept up on the edges of a heist gang  
run by the future Beat hero,  
but then down and out, Herbert Huncke

-There was a car chase, with Ginsberg  
one of the occupants  
and a famous arrest that made the  
front page of The New York Times

Several professors at Columbia pulled strings,  
as they say,

and Ginsberg entered the Washington Heights shrink zone  
in late June of 1949-

He was very depressed

Then one day Ginsberg was standing in the hallway  
watching a guy being wheeled into the ward

swollen from insulin shocks

and began one of the more famous of  
20th century literary conversations

He traced through his visionary experiences  
(the Voice of Blake in Harlem '48 for instance)  
The man listened exceptionally unimpressed, then said,  
"Well, you're new here. Wait awhile and you'll meet  
some of the other repentant mystics."

The man asked who Ginsberg was. "I'm Myshkin,"  
Allen replied, referring to the rather crazy prince in  
Dostoevsky's The Idiot.

The bloat-faced man then said, "I'm Kirilov," referring  
to a character in The Possessed.

The shock patient was Carl Solomon, to whom the Bard was to  
dedicate "Howl" five years later.

A talented writer, Solomon was living proof to Ginsberg  
that the best minds of his generation were  
destroyed by madness.

Solomon had once seen a performance in Paris by  
Artaud himself

and on another famous occasion  
had thrown potato salad at  
a lecturer speaking On “Stéphane Mallarmé  
and Alienation”  
at Brooklyn College

immortalized later in “Howl.”

Ginsberg wrote William Burroughs from the  
institute and said he was again thinking  
of becoming a labor lawyer

Burroughs wrote back in a disquieting mood:  
“I think the US is heading  
in the direction of a  
socialist police state  
similar to England, &  
not too different from  
Russia. I congratulate myself  
on my timely withdrawal.”

'50

2-27-50  
'Zap  
left the  
nut house  
& moved in w/ Dad  
in Paterson

He was convinced, at that moment,  
that the best course for his life  
was to find a job, get a girlfriend, return to Paterson.

He told Jack Kerouac his days of being gay were over

Five days later Ginsberg sent 9 poems to the  
great William Carlos Williams

(having just seen Williams read at the Guggenheim Museum)

including “Ode to the Setting Sun,” a New Jersey industrial  
landscape graveyard poem  
(written in the Psychiatric Institute)  
which predicted the great “Sunflower Sutra” o’ 1955

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The Letter to WCW  
with 9 poems, and “several other verses  
form the text of the small collection known as  
The Gates of Wrath, which was later  
lost for many years, it seems, and was only  
able to be published when Bob Dylan  
found it in his archives around 1968

The Gates of Wrath’s themes are “passionate love and  
the divided self.” Plus, of course, thanatopsis

No other bard since Poe has so delved death.

Ginsberg once told me what an influence Poe was  
on his poesy.

The thanatopoesis opted early, as in  
“In Death, Cannot Reach What Is Most Near” &  
“This Is About Death”  
both from mid-1949

The first version of “The Shrouded Stranger”  
was in The Gates of Wrath

“The Shrouded Stranger”  
to me  
is his first poem  
to match the pulses of his psyche

•

In the spring of ’50  
in Provincetown  
true to his promise to the psychiatrists  
he had his first heterosexual love  
an out-of-door bliss-zap by the docks

with a woman named Helen Parker  
who had once been engaged to John Dos Passos  
They fell in love

but he was not willing to leave Paterson & his therapy  
 for life with her in P-town  
 and a few months later she set aside Ginzap  
 for a singer named Ramblin' Jack Elliott!!

That was the spring he was hired as a reporter  
 for a labor newspaper, Labor Herald,  
 in New Jersey

but he was fired in September

then decided he'd go on prole-patrol with a job in a  
 ribbon factory in Paterson.

Meanwhile his father Louis  
 had married a woman from Paterson named Edith  
 & Louis & Edith had purchased a house.

Always a family man  
 Allen & Edith were close over the years  
 & Edith was pleasantly tolerant  
 of the young men soon  
 to form a Generation

1951

Meanwhile in '51  
 Williams put two of Ginsberg's letters into the fourth  
 book of Paterson, published that year

and in the spring in an apartment on West 20th  
 across from a seminary  
 Jack Kerouac wrote On the Road  
 cooked for and coddled by his wife Joan Haverty

That summer she was pregnant  
 He insisted she have an abortion. She refused.  
 And he dumped her  
 refusing to pay for the  
 prenatal doctor  
 & denying he was the father of  
 Jan Michelle Kerouac  
 born on 2-16-52

From mid-'51 to the end of 1953  
 the 'Zap lived in NYC

(which was not published till 1961)

'52

New Directions' James Laughlin  
accepted some "prose poems" for publication.

'53

Good poem:  
"The Green Automobile" 1953-1954

& in the summer  
Ginzap worked as a copy boy  
for the New York Herald Tribune  
\$45 a week

and almost every day  
of these years he read torrentially  
and asked 10,000s of questions  
(Allen asked more questions, I think,  
than anyone I ever met)

In late '53  
to Florida to hang out w/ Wm. Burroughs  
then Havana, then Mexico

for a few months of many adventures.

'54

One of the adventures included  
making himself some huge drums  
suspended by vines  
and tapping a rubber tree to tip his drumsticks

(See his poem, "Siesta in Xbalba Chiapas-SF")

That spring he split for California  
to be with Neal Cassady

and lived for a while in an impossible  
ménage à trois



He savored the quick and flaming literary scene:  
Kenneth Rexroth, Robert Duncan, Jack Spicer, Kenneth Patchen

the year of Allen's great song  
"The Weight of the World is Love."

He moved to a pad on Nob Hill with a girlfriend, Sheila Boucher  
and the 'Zap picked up a job for \$250 a week  
doing market research

Then in December he met Peter Orlovsky  
a friend of the painter Robert LaVigne  
and they soon became lovers

Orlovsky came from a troubled impoverished family  
the third of five children  
and had been on his own since age 17  
He brought his brothers Julius & Lafcadio  
into the beat milieu with him.  
Both brothers were in and out of hospitals.  
Julius once remained silent for 14 years,  
(or so A.G. once told Ezra Pound & Olga Rudge)  
in the mode of a Manichaeon  
because he felt that the entirety of evil in the cosmos  
was coming from his mouth and body

'55

Ginsberg's  
shrink  
at Langley Porter  
told A.G.

it was OK to  
move in w/ Peter Orlovsky  
give up his job  
& write poetry

"I asked him what the  
American Psychoanalytic Association  
wd say about that  
& he said

‘There’s no party line  
 no red book  
 on how people are supposed  
 to live

If that’s what  
 you really feel  
 wd please you  
 what in the world  
 is stopping you from doing it?”

On February 3  
 Ginsberg moved out of his hotel  
 (he’d broken with Sheila)  
 across the street from the Hotel Wentley  
 (famous from John Wieners’ poem sequence)

and moved to 1010 Montgomery  
 Then 8 days later  
 P.O. moved in also

He & Peter  
 took vows to one another.  
 A.G. was reading many books  
 but writing little

He was interested in experimenting in W.C. Williams’  
 triadic line  
 or indented tercets  
 combined with Jack Kerouac’s long-breathed lines–  
 when he turned 29 on June 3

Peter then went off to NY to visit his family.

Allen took a hitchhiking trip to Yosemite, Lake Tahoe, etc.  
 then back to SF

One day in early August  
 He began typing  
 on a used typewriter  
 on scratch paper  
 with nothing to gain  
 nothing to lose

the first 12 pages of “Howl”

(He had a line from  
an earlier notebook

“I saw the best mind angel-headed hipster damned”)

–I saw an early version of “Howl” at the  
Whitney Beat show in ’95  
and remarked to Allen about the indentations  
–which, of course, are not in the final version–  
and he told me he had been  
imitating W.C. Williams–

Then, the same day he wrote those brilliant  
long-breathed pages beginning with  
“I saw the best minds of my generation....”

he chant-jotted the Carl Solomon  
section (Part III)

Peter returned from his trip  
to the East Coast  
when high on peyote  
he & Peter went forth on a  
peyote-halo walk in SF

and spotted  
the Sir Francis Drake Hotel  
looming in lit-up gloominess  
like the blood-eating fire god Moloch

So he added the  
Part II Moloch section  
beginning “What sphinx of cement....”

He began the revisions of Part I which  
lasted a number of months

In September ’55, A.G. and P.O.  
moved to 1624 Milvia  
in Berkeley  
for \$35 a month

revising revising revising revising  
tuning the lyre for the Mind Entire.

## Part V

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg  
in the fall of 1955  
when he was still revising "Howl"

### CITY LIGHTS

In 1953  
a poet named Lawrence Ferlinghetti, & Peter Martin  
founded a paperback book store in San Francisco called  
City Lights Books

A.G. and Ferl' met in August of '55  
Ferlinghetti didn't want to publish Empty Mirror  
but liked the manu of "Howl" Allen showed him-  
and wanted to publish

### THE SIX GALLERY READING

Ginsberg learned that  
a young bard from Wichita  
Michael McClure  
had been invited to set up a reading  
at the Six Gallery  
but had been too busy

Ginzap took over the planning  
and lined up  
McClure, Phil Whalen, Jack Kerouac, et al.  
w/ Kenneth Rexroth as mc  
for Oct 13, 1955  
It was a Thursday

There were about a hundred  
in the audience  
First Philip Lamantia read  
Then McClure's  
"For the Death of 100 Whales"  
then Phil Whalen

after which Ginsberg read "Howl" (Part I only)  
building in confidence

    -Kerouac shouting "Go! Go!"  
    while beating rhythm on a wine jug-

The crowd was "blown away"  
    (to use the parlance of a few years later)

Ginsberg was in tears  
    by the time he roared to its end  
as was Rexroth.

Snyder ended the Six Gallery reading  
w/ his "A Berry Feast."

(A good account of the Six Gallery reading can be  
found in Michael McClure's book *Scratching the  
Beat Surface*)

There was an actual orgy after the reading  
which I always forgot  
    to ask A.G. to describe-  
    dang!

•

One afternoon  
    on a SF bus  
he came up w/  
    the "Footnote to Howl" finale:  
    the famous chant of "Holy Holy Holy.."

'56

Naomi died on June 9, 1956  
    while Allen was in California  
As the casket was lowered  
at Beth Moses Cemetery  
    in Farmingdale, LI  
the rabbi would not chant Kaddish  
because a minyan

(10 men)  
was not on hand

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Naomi quiescat

It ate at his heart  
she'd not had the proper chant  
and he began a search  
to write one of his own.

In July of '56 Ginzap took off  
on a ship, the USNS St. Pendleton  
carrying Cold War stuff  
to the arctic circle  
for the Defense Early Warning  
radar apparatus up there

carrying the proofs of Howl  
which City Lights had set  
(printed at Villiers Press in London)

There were errors in the line breaks of the 10-league lines  
He had to pay for the fix-ups himself!  
(Though it only ultimately cost \$20  
he volunteered to pay up to \$200!)

While on ship, Phil Whalen forwarded mail  
to A.G. (which he picked up in Takoma)

One was a letter from Naomi  
just before she died

She mentioned the mimeographed "Howl" he had  
sent her, and she lamented how  
"I still have the wire in my head."

"I'm looking for a good time," she wrote  
"I hope you are not taking drugs  
as suggested by your poetry.  
That would hurt me.  
Don't go in for ridiculous things.  
With love and good news.  
Naomi"

After Howl was published in August '56

among the recipients:

Pound, Moore, Eliot, Auden, Jeffers, Charlie Chaplin,  
Carl Solomon, Patchen, et numerous others  
over 100 copies

There was a big article in the  
September 1956 New York Times  
by Richard Eberhart  
on "West Coast Rhythms" which ID'd A.G.  
as an important young poet.

A.G. always helped his friends  
get their books published  
This is not so common  
among literati

It was the Best Minds factor  
Ginsberg promoting his friends  
Kerouac, Corso, Burroughs, Snyder, Whalen, &  
even Levertov, Niedecker, Oppenheimer, et al.

Fall o' '56  
Ginsberg  
met Denise Levertov  
in Guadalajara  
& added her  
manuscript o' poems to  
his collection  
to show editors

Returning to NYC the same fall  
Peter and Allen stayed with Elise Cowen  
in what is known as Yorkville, in Manhattan,  
Upper East part.

A.G. had manuscripts by Snyder, Whalen, Duncan, Dorn,  
Creeley, Lamantia, Levertov, McClure, and Charles Olson  
even

He surged into The New York Times offices  
on West 43rd  
and requested a review of Howl

(Don't you wish you had the guts  
to do that for YOUR book of verse?)

30

Mademoiselle, thanks to the 'Zap, published Levertov  
and even some Burroughs.  
He approached Time, Life, Esquire, The Hudson  
Review, Partisan Review, The Kenyon Review, The New  
Yorker, and New Directions, et al  
demanding ink for himself  
and the Best Minds group

'57

Ginsberg  
helped persuade Don Allen  
to do the famous San Francisco Scene  
issue of  
Evergreen Review (#2)

(which I purchased at the University of Missouri bookstore that fall)

Early '57 Kerouac, Allen, Peter, Gregory  
split for Tangiers and Paris  
(Ginsberg loaned Kerouac \$225  
for the passage, which he had a lot of trouble  
getting repaid.)

In Tangiers Allen spent 5 or 6  
hours a day  
typing Burroughs' manuscript  
later known as Naked Lunch  
(Burroughs concept of how even the reverse side print  
showing through as giving  
sense to text-flow cut-up sequencing)

•

In March, U.S. Customs seized 520 copies of Howl  
coming in from the printer in England

May 21  
two cops bought Howl at City Lights  
and it was handcuff time

The American Civil Liberties Union took the case



In October the judge declared “Howl” not obscene  
a huge historic “victory” for a generation  
that had discovered new sounds for  
America’s great Liberty Bell

The media hay harvested by Ginzap  
from the “Howl” triumph  
catapulted him into a worldwide fame  
which was to last till his death  
in April of 1997  
almost 40 years later.

In Nov 1957 Ginsberg wrote Kerouac  
from Paris  
announcing he’d written the lines  
much of which later graced part IV of “Kaddish”

Farewell  
with long black shoe  
Farewell  
smoking corsets and ribs of steel  
Farewell  
communist party & broken stocking  
with your eyes of shock  
with your eyes of lobotomy  
with your eyes of stroke  
with your eyes of divorce  
with your eyes alone  
with your eyes  
with your eyes  
with your death full of flowers  
with your death of the golden windows of sunlight...

## Part V

We left the story of the great Bard Allen Ginsberg  
in November o’ ’57  
when he wrote Kerouac  
from Paris to announce he’d written many of the lines  
that would later form one of the most riveting

He was already famous from the publication of Howl  
and the victory by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's  
City Lights Books  
in the "Howl" obscenity trial.

'58

In February in London  
he read all of "Howl"  
felt full of tears  
as the reading built in the  
howlin' intensity he  
gave those early readings  
that he was reading to Blake himself  
the "Soul in the Fog."

July '58, A.G. returned to NYC  
He was a famous poet

and he had written some remarkable poems in Europe  
"Death to Van Gogh's Ear" "Poem Rocket" "Europe! Europe!"  
and the beautiful threnody "At Apollinaire's Grave"

He was more and more fascinated with Whitman's prophecy  
of the Fall of America:

"I'd like to write a monstrous and golden political or historical poem  
about the fall of America....  
talk about Dulles the way Blake talks  
about the kings of France shuddering icy chill  
runs down the arms to their sweating sceptres."

I remember how excited the NYC poetry scene was in 1965  
when John Ashbery returned from living in Paris

It was the same whenever Allen returned  
There was that klieg light buzz to a room  
A hush and electric spark at his entrance

I think it was because he made you believe wherever he went  
that the world was going to get better  
through the power of Bardery alone

Jack Kerouac on the other hand  
was having a bit of trouble with fame

Fame has a way of eating livers  
and it was snacking away on the anxious author of On the Road

Kerouac's mom, Gabrielle, had been  
sending hate letters to Ginsberg in Paris.

Meanwhile Ginsberg successfully urged James Laughlin  
at New Directions  
to publish Corso and Snyder

•

We have already traced how when his mother died  
(Allen was in S.F.)  
the rabbi refused  
to chant the Kaddish  
because there was not a ten-man minyan  
to codify the chant

His mind kept whispering "kaddish kaddish kaddish....."  
on his triumphal return to NYC  
after 18 months in Europe  
till one night in mid-November of 1958

Allen was at the pad of a friend  
in the West Village named Zev Putterman  
They listened to Ray Charles  
Allen chanted from Shelley's "Adonais"

They took some morphine and meth  
in an pre-hep-B, pre-AIDS mode of needles and nickel bags

He told the story of Naomi  
now dead two years  
and when he traced the tale of Naomi denied

Zev Putterman found a copy and chanted it

The 'Zap walked home from the West Side  
to his East 2nd Street pad after the Putterman Kaddish  
yearning 'pulsively

He jotted nonstop from 6 a.m. Saturday  
till 10 p.m. on Sunday  
taking some Dexedrine  
till 58 pages were done

He began editing and reworking in January '59  
a process that lasted till '61.

'59

In early '59 a famous underground flick was filmed  
by Robert Frank and Al Leslie  
more or less based on Act Three of  
Kerouac's play, The Beat Generation

The shooting lasted 6 weeks, but MGM had  
copyrighted the name B.G.  
so it was renamed Pull My Daisy  
after the poem/tune written  
by Allen, Jack & Neal  
back in '49

Also early that year a  
benefit by Ginsberg at Living Theater at 14th & 6th  
I attended  
so that William Carlos Williams' Many Loves  
could be produced

On February 5th a big reading at Columbia's McMillin  
Theater  
1,400 packed the place  
and 500 outside  
-a kind of bardic vindication  
for all his undergrad troubles.

It was around that time also  
there was controversy over the banned issue  
of the Chicago Review

A section of Naked Lunch was selected for publication  
in the Chicago Review in early '59  
plus Kerouac's "Old Angel Midnight,"  
and prose by the estimable Edward Dahlberg

but a right-wing columnist in the Chicago Daily News  
wrote about it in a column called  
“Filthy Writing on the Midway”

so that the university pulled it.

The 'Zap and Corso and Peter went to Chicago  
to protest

(Allen read “Howl” in Chi  
which Fantasy released as a record)

There was a benefit for the Chicago Review legal expenses  
at the Gaslight on MacDougal Street-  
Miriam and I went

We were students at NYU  
we'd met in Greek class

& on our dates

paid careful attention to Beat readings in coffeehouses  
the Beat bookstores of 4th Avenue,  
beat folkies in the park, Beat summertime drum sessions  
on the Staten Island Ferry  
in honor of Edna St. Vincent Millay  
& any place where poets clutched spring binders

(See the story “The Poetry Reading” in Tales of Beatnik Glory)

In the summer Ginzap went back to CA  
& first took LSD as part of a research project  
conducted by Gregory Bateson  
at the Mental Research Institute in Palo Alto

While 'Zap was in CA that summer  
Corso sold his tv, bed, etc  
for cash to return to Europe.

'60

Allen kept polishing polishing polishing  
the verse to be published in '61  
in Kaddish and Other Poems

“I write so little,  
painfully & revise... I don't

have your football energy  
                   for scrawling endlessly on pages....  
 I guess all this publicity is bad," he wrote to Kerouac  
 after Kerouac had advised:  
                   "Beware of fame,  
                   poems will be nonsequitur"

•

Beat Political Split:

Kerouac supported Richard Nixon in the fall 1960 elections  
 Ginsberg Kennedy.

At Tim Leary's place on Nov. 26, '60  
 he took some psilocybin  
 and believed he could cure  
 Leary's bad hearing  
 and fix his weak eyes

Mr. Leary was hesitant  
 to allow the naked Irwin Allen Ginsberg  
 to roam the streets of Cambridge  
 to preach love  
 zonked in a pro-tem Messiah mode

The Mailer Rule:  
 (Nov. 19, 1960)

Do not stab your wife  
 at the party  
 where you  
                   are set to announce  
 your candidacy for mayor.

At the same unfortunate party  
 Ginsberg and Norman Podhoretz  
                   —a famous Beatbaiter—  
 had a famous-at-the-time squabble  
 with Ginsberg calling P. a fuckhead  
 and P. calling G. an idiot.

## Part VII

And then came 1961  
the year of the Kennedys

and Allen donated the handwritten draft of  
“Kaddish” to the Living Theater  
for a benefit  
(De Kooning and Kline gave paintings  
& Paul Goodman + John Cage also manu’s)

Ginsberg was caught in the age-old  
“You’re famous, now what?” problem.

Allen took very seriously  
his psychedelic experiences with Tim Leary

to the point he felt he had to proselytize  
their use  
for a New Consciousness  
and a New Aeon

Among the first of those he turned on to psilocybin  
were Thelonius Monk, Dizzy Gillespie, Willem de Kooning  
Franz Kline & Robert Lowell.

“The Revolution has begun,” he wrote to  
Neal Cassady as a New Year’s salute

March 23, Peter and Allen departed for Paris  
on the SS America

There was a young woman named Elise Cowen,  
who had typed the final version of “Kaddish” for Allen  
and very much in love with him

She was there waving on the dock, with Allen’s brother Eugene,  
Carl Solomon, Janine Vega, LeRoi Jones,  
and others

waving waving

In Paris 'Zap discovered

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Burroughs had become obsessed with experiments in cut-ups  
(a writing technique Brion Gysin had discovered)

Burroughs used the cut-up method  
to break down what Burroughs called th'  
either/or "Aristotelian Construct"

Burroughs had checked out of the  
Beat Hotel in Paris for Tangiers

& Corso, Allen, Peter Orlovsky  
split to hang out at the Cannes Film Festival  
then by boat to Tangiers  
to hang with Burroughs

a crazy set of months  
which scholars of Beatdom  
nod and noodle over

Burroughs was always "difficult" as they say  
and there were plenty of miniature storms  
among those attracted to the author of Naked Lunch

The reviews for Kaddish and Other Poems  
were coming in  
and were not of the type such  
a great poem should command

Allen left Morocco in late August for Greece  
He had royalties! sacred royalties!  
One check from Ferlinghetti for the  
big sales of Howl

and another - \$450- from the magazine Show Business Illustrated  
for a piece on the Cannes Festival

After Greece, he went to Israel  
where he met the socialist theologian Martin Buber

then  
the 'Zap  
was depressed going  
to India (first from Israel to Kenya)



some say because he seemed to have lost his  
sense of identity.

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Perhaps Burroughs' cut-up method, in part,  
had pared away the power, word & image  
& flung the Bard into a place  
of frantic futility & galactic mush-gush

He was singing the "Famous First Book/You're Famous/  
What Next? Blues."

(I'd heard he was depressed— I was a 22-year-old student  
at New York University—  
and began sending him issues of my mimeographed magazine  
Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts  
which, when he wrote back, he told me  
had helped bring him out of his darkness

(part of his depression perhaps came after his  
friend Elise Cowen— in Feb. of that year— had  
jumped from her parents' apartment window  
to her doom  
—see Joyce Johnson's fine book *Minor Characters*  
for more information on Elise Cowen,  
whose poetry I published in my magazine.)

Allen's self-analysis  
in India:  
not to be so  
Jeremiah-like  
& drive opponents  
into a raging corner.

One of the finest nature poets, Gary Snyder,  
and his brilliant wife Joanne Kyger  
arrived in Delhi in late February '62  
just days after Allen and Peter O

The four soon split for the Himalayan foothills  
in search of a well-known holy man named Swami Shivananda

Ginsberg was to search and search  
in India for the final answers from holy guys

Snyder, of course, knew much about Zen practice  
and in his calm teacherly way  
    tried to fill the frenetic Allen  
        in on the waves of Zen

40

They traveled more, and went to the town where the Dalai Lama  
had set up his Tibetan gov't in exile

The Dalai Lama granted the four an hour's audience

He was not that interested in trying acid.

    It was in India, after many travels  
    that the mail caught up with A.G.:  
    the news that Elise had suffered a nervous breakdown  
                                    and jumped

In Bombay, just before Joanne Kyger and Gary Snyder  
were to leave the country

Gary, Allen and Peter  
gave a public reading  
    attended by over 100, including the American consul-

    Summer of '62  
    Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
    was reluctant  
    to accept  
    either one  
    of A.G.'s  
    suggested titles:

    Bunch of Poems  
    or  
    Hiccup  
    for the tome teleos'd  
    as  
    REALITY SANDWICHES

## Part VIII

We left the story of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
when he was in India with his mate Peter Orlovsky

His great books, Howl and Other Poems  
and Kaddish and Other Poems  
had already been published

He was an international celebrity  
yet he was in a depressed mood in India

and was seeking out holy men  
and learning the mantras & melodies  
he was soon to bring to America  
and sing  
with his ever-present finger cymbals-

The poets Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger, then married,  
joined Allen and Peter

They traveled to the Himalayan foothills to see  
Swami Shivananda  
and then to visit the Dalai Lama  
before Snyder and Kyger returned to their  
home in Kyoto, Japan.

In May '62 the 'Zap visited Sikkim where he met Gyalwa Karmapa

considered a direct descendant  
of the Buddhist poet Milarepa  
who lived around 1000 A.D.

The meeting went well  
"He offered to  
teach me tantra  
& I offered to  
teach him pills,"  
he later humorously described it.

In the fall of '62 Ginsberg went  
what I would call ghat-batty

He began to visit the Nimitallah Ghats in Calcutta  
smoking pot (with many others there also)  
"a strange visionary experience"  
which helped him to observe the ghastliness  
with a measure of calm, as he jotted to Kerouac





For instance when he had visited the Caves of Ajanta  
with Gary Snyder

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he'd marveled at Snyder's singing  
of the Prajnaparamita Sutra--

Allen then decided to chant mantras at his readings

(Allen made sure that all of his friends got  
copies of the Prajnaparamita Sutra  
Mine resides on the wall of my Woodstock studio)

He flew from Calcutta to Bangkok in May of '63  
then to Saigon  
where the U.S. was just then beginning its  
twelve-year violence

Then to Cambodia to see the beauty of Angkor Wat  
and wrote his well-known poem of the same name

then on June 11 to Japan  
for additional time with Gary Snyder and Joanne Kyger  
in Kyoto

He was there for five weeks  
then took a train to Tokyo  
On the train he wrote his eery, scary  
poem-chant "The Change"

in which he summarizes his spiritual quest  
since the 1948 vision of William Blake  
through all the spiritual flashes  
of the 1950s and early '60s  
the burning ghats of Calcutta  
the visits to holy people

and, simply stated, decided  
that it was time to renounce the impersonal concepts  
of "Vision"  
and return to the body.

He sent me the poem "The Change"  
and I published it that year in my magazine  
at a secret location in the Lower East Side.

## Part IX

We left our tracing  
of the great bard A.G.  
after he wrote a poem  
    important to his bardic path  
                    called "The Change"  
on the Kyoto-Tokyo express in July o' '63

in which he pulled away from his intense drive  
for universal vision  
    and a Hunger for Prophecy & Futurity  
and came to know the "truth of only the  
    body" as in the halls of the Kremlin  
    and Kennedy's doomed White House

"the schemers draw back  
weeping from their schemes."

On the hurtling iron horse he jotted,  
    "In my train seat I renounce  
    my power, so that I do  
    live I will die...."

He was headed back to the USA  
from travels to India, Japan and SE Asia  
                    in '62 & '63

no longer needing to alter  
                    the unalterable.

He had an invitation to a poetry conference in  
Vancouver organized by Robert Creeley  
                    in July of '63

It was a big success  
and Ginzap was out of his doldrums.

The great Charles Olson  
also at the Conference  
    told Allen, "I am one with my skin."

Allen was also  
    "I'm actually happy,"

After Vancouver

Allen returned to San Francisco  
staying with Lawrence Ferlinghetti and his wife Kirby

Ginsberg then moved back into one of his old apartments in SF  
on Gough  
and his early love Neal Cassady and his girlfriend Anne Murphy  
moved in also!

(Cassady had already met Ken Kesey  
and the proto-Merry Pranksters  
on their voyage into Learyland)



### The Beginning of The Vietnam War

Madame Nhu

sister-in-law of Pres. Diem of 'Nam  
was coming to 'Frisco  
and A.G. decided to join the protesters

He fashioned one of the most unique posters in  
the history of peacework,

printing the following on a large sign  
on which he also sketched the Buddha's footprint  
three fish joined at one head:

Name hypnosis and fear is the  
Enemy— Satan go home!  
I accept America and Red China  
To the human race.  
Madame Nhu and Mao-Tse Tung  
Are in the same boat of meat.

However interesting as a sign in a picket line  
outside the Sheraton Palace Hotel

the Vietnam War was to continue  
another 12 years.



'64

Late in '63 Allen flew back to NYC  
experiencing a severe money drought

Robert Frank wanted to make a movie of "Kaddish"  
so the bard went every other day  
to Frank's house to write a possible scene

For each, Frank, the bard later wrote, paid him \$10

"& thus kept me in money for about two months  
while I was getting on my feet again."

Finally Allen gave it up, because  
of the "areas of embarrassment & invasion of privacy"  
as he jotted in his diary  
if he had transformed elliptical verse  
to the harsh light of dialogue.

In early '64  
'Zap met Bob Dylan  
at Ted Wilentz' house  
through the writer Al Aronowitz

Ted & Eli Wilentz had the very best bookstore on the set  
It was then at 8th Street and MacDougal

and above it Ted lived  
and set up a kind of literary salon.

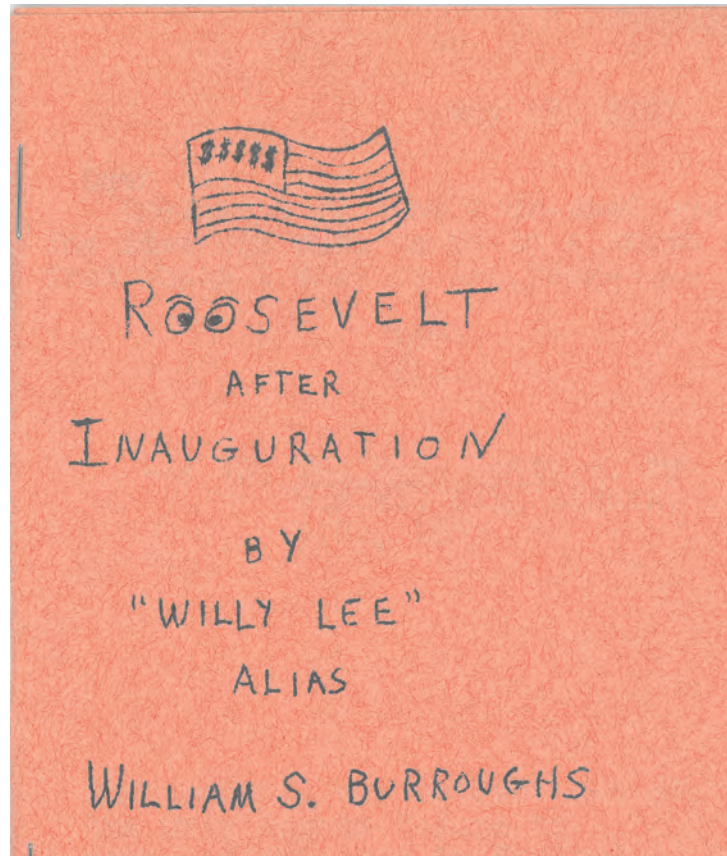
Thus began an association 'tween bard and minstrel  
that lasted from '64  
all the way to Ginsberg eagerly trying to stay alive  
in early 1997, diagnosed with liver cancer,  
in order for Dylan, Paul McCartney, Patti Smith,  
et al  
to perform in an MTV salute to the 'Zap.

•

It was now too that I met the bard  
and we began the first series of many capers  
together

The first was when he drew the cover stencils  
for a little book by William Burroughs called  
Roosevelt After Inauguration

which I published in Feb. '64  
when the printer refused to allow it in  
the City Lights edition  
of Yage Letters



Allen's Hand-drawn Cover for the Fuck You/ Press  
edition of Roosevelt After Inauguration

I felt so incredibly awed & honored  
when he treated me  
as an equal

He took me to parties and introduced me to  
literati such as Norman Podhoretz, John Hollander  
& Mary Frank

Allen & Peter O moved to a legendary pad  
at 704 East 5th

My Peace Eye Bookstore was just about to open  
a few blocks away  
at 383 East 10th  
& a few months later we began to hold rehearsals there  
for a folk-rock poesy/satire band called the Fugs

Some of the ambience of A.G.'s place on East 5th  
can be picked up in Tales of Beatnik Glory,  
particularly the story  
"Siobhan McKenna Group Grope"

I was putting out "rare book" catalogs  
and had just graduated from NYU  
One day I went over to Ginzap's pad  
to scrounge some literary relics  
for my catalog

I'd heard  
of a signed Dylan Thomas  
dress shirt  
that'd shown up in someone's catalog.

A.G. graciously donated his cold cream jar  
by the bed, and inscribed it as follows:

"This is the jar of bona fide ass-wine or cock  
lubricant, into which I regularly plunged my  
hardened phallos to ease penetration of P. Orlovsky....  
winter 1964," and signed it.

It was not the fastest-selling item  
in my catalogue  
&, as I recall, I gave it later  
to Richard Avedon  
during a Fugs photo shoot.

•

All of a sudden the real estate people were  
calling the grid of tenement streets  
(slums since after the War of 1812)  
the East Village



For some reason, the Dept. of Licenses began to  
bust poetry readings, if you can believe it

Allen Ginsberg, Ellen Stewart of the Café la Mama, Joe Cino, myself,  
Jackson MacLow and others began to protest–  
(young firebrands Henry Stern and Ed Koch helped us)

We started a campaign that ultimately led  
to the city gov't pulling back  
and letting verse be heard without chop-bust.

But it wasn't easy, and it wasn't instant.

Then, late in 1964, LeMar  
The Committee to Legalize Marijuana  
was formed

(and there was a demonstration,  
I think it was January 10, 1965  
outside the Women's House of Detention  
in the West Village  
in a mild snow  
with Allen, snowflakes on his beard,  
holding a "Pot Is Fun" sign  
one of the most widely spread images of the time.)

•

NYC in '64 also cracked down on Lenny Bruce  
He had a way of putting together crisply timed and  
brilliant routines that ruffled prudes  
and angered squares–

His routine on Adolf Eichmann is as controversial now as it  
was 33 years ago. Ditto for his vignettes on Jacqueline Kennedy  
and the JFK assassination & the one on Eleanor Roosevelt's bosom.

(Bruce's famous Rule #16 [deny deny deny, even if you're caught]  
is being used right now, as I type this  
during the Clinton/Lewinsky Spurtgate  
controversy)

Bruce was arrested in NYC  
and Allen developed a petition in his defense  
which was signed by a wide selection of Americans,

from young Woody Allen through Reinhold Niebuhr to Bob Dylan,  
Lillian Hellman, Susan Sontag, Paul Newman, John Updike  
& many others

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## Part X

The great bard Allen Ginsberg  
was invited to Cuba  
by the minister of culture  
to a writers' conference in Havana  
in January o' '65

The State Department said no,  
but the bard threatened to sue  
so he was given a visa

(Many of us would have muttered, "Oh, the  
gummint doesn't want me to go, I'd better  
change my plans,"  
but not Ginzap)

The rules allowed him to fly in via Mexico City  
but he had to RETURN by way of Prague

The CIA and its pals in organized crime  
were desperate to snuff Fidel

and the political climate in Cuba  
was on its guard

That's not all that was on its guard  
for reasons that are utterly unobvious  
America had its own worshiper of surveillance  
& violation of privacy

one J. Edgar Hoover, then  
the head of the FBI  
and busy already

trying to disrupt the antiwar movement  
and overestimating (it kept his budgets & prestige high)  
the threat to the Flag from America's miniscule Communist Party

Anyway, J. Eddie Hoov'

that spring o' '65

sent out a one-page secret document  
declaring Irwin Allen Ginsberg "potentially dangerous"

& possessed of a "propensity for violence and antipathy  
toward good order and government":

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE  
FEDERAL BUREAU OF INVESTIGATION

WASHINGTON, D.C. 20535  
April 26, 1965

~~SECRET~~

In Reply, Please Refer to  
Bureau File 105-137059  
New York file 105-71471

Chief  
United States Secret Service  
Department of the Treasury  
Washington, D. C. 20220

Re: Irwin Allen Ginsberg  
Internal Security - Cuba

Dear Sir:

The information furnished herewith concerns an individual who is believed to be covered by the agreement between the FBI and Secret Service concerning Presidential protection, and to fall within the category or categories checked.

1.  Has attempted or threatened bodily harm to any government official or employee, including foreign government officials residing in or planning an imminent visit to the U. S., because of his official status.
2.  Has attempted or threatened to redress a grievance against any public official by other than legal means.
3.  Because of background is potentially dangerous; or has been identified as member or participant in communist movement; or has been under active investigation as member of other group or organization inimical to U. S.
4.  U. S. citizens or residents who defect from the U. S. to countries in the Soviet or Chinese Communist blocs and return.
5.  Subversives, ultrarightists, racists and fascists who meet one or more of the following criteria:
  - (a)  Evidence of emotional instability (including unstable residence and employment record) or irrational or suicidal behavior;
  - (b)  Expressions of strong or violent anti-U. S. sentiment;
  - (c)  Prior acts (including arrests or convictions) or conduct or statements indicating a propensity for violence and antipathy toward good order and government.
6.  Individuals involved in illegal bombing or illegal bomb-making.

Photograph  has been furnished  enclosed  is not available  
 may be available through *U.S. Secret Service, New York, New York*

Very truly yours,

~~SECRET~~  
*J. Edgar Hoover*  
John Edgar Hoover  
Director

1 - Special Agent in Charge (Enclosure(s) (2)  
U. S. Secret Service, New York, New York

ENCLOSURE

Enclosure(s) (1)  
Registered Mail

Upon removal of classified enclosures, if any, this transmittal form becomes UNCLASSIFIED.

105-137059 - 6

*1 copy to Secret Service 5/7/65 - JWS/jff*

Things started out okay  
He was given a spacious room at the Havana Riviera.

Ginsberg was ever attentive  
throughout his career  
to the concept of having fun at night

so the first evening he took a bus to La Rampa  
known for its nightlife

There he was approached by some young men

who published a literary magazine called El Puente  
(The Bridge)

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They asked if he was Allen Ginsberg  
Yes, he was

and they took him to an out-of-the-way club  
and began to speak freely about the oppression in Cuba

There was a police group, they said, called Laca Social  
which was harassing gays

and those known derisively as los infernos  
–apparently a Cuban type of beatnik.

People could be arrested for long hair and beards  
even though it was Castro's own appearance

The young people asked Ginsberg to tell Castro about  
the persecution from Laca Social

As swamped with interviews and attention as anywhere else  
Allen began speaking in public against Laca Social  
and the accusations of oppression

A reporter asked Allen what he would encourage Castro  
to do, should he get to meet him

Allen said he would inquire why Laca Social was  
abusing los infernos and gays  
and why was pot not legal, and why not do away  
with capital punishment and instead give  
those prisoners magic mushrooms and  
jobs such as being the elevator operator  
at the Havana Riviera hotel?

Allen kept bringing up the issues  
in interviews

He visited Hemingway's house  
and was a judge  
at the festival's poetry competition

One of Allen's translators  
was a young man



This young translator was taken to the  
police station one night  
and asked about his  
association with the 'Zap

The man was detained again  
after an evening in a theater  
and Allen was angry

He demanded an explanation  
from the Cuban minister of culture, Haydée Santamaria,  
during a meeting he had with her.  
Haydée Santamaria was a  
heroine of the revolution & revered in Cuba—  
She had watched her fiancé and her brother too  
tortured to death by Batista's goons

Allen was upset at what she said,  
that Cuba was taking a stand on homosexuality  
because "too many gays  
were making public spectacles  
of themselves and seducing impressionable  
young boys"

and, in a moment that caused a national scandal,  
Ginsberg pat-swatted her rear  
as she left the room.

Things grew chilly in Cuba right away  
for the American bard  
His poetry reading was canceled at the university

He learned that the minister of culture  
was also upset with Ginsberg  
for suggesting that Raul Castro was gay  
and Ché Guevara cute

At a luncheon a few days later  
Ginsberg tried to set things right  
with Haydée Santamaria  
on the rear-swat  
He'd meant it to be friendly  
he said

She was in addition miffed over Ginsberg's  
 talking about marijuana  
 to young people

Allen countered her upsetness  
 by suggesting that Cuba invite the Beatles  
 (whose Help! was just out)  
 to perform

During the discussion on having the Beatles, Santamaria said  
 "They have no ideology  
 We are trying to build a revolution  
 with ideology."

Ginzap's days in Cuba  
 were going into the toss-out countdown

After a couple of parties  
 -'65 was a year in which  
 there was often a party  
 AFTER the party  
 and so it was that night: back-to-backers,

and finally he was asleep around 6 A.M.  
 when three soldiers  
 & an immigration official  
 beat on his door

and took him to the airport  
 to a plane bound for Czechoslovakia.

•

### THE KING OF THE MAY

In Prague, Allen was treated well  
 He was a guest of the Writers' Union  
 and was the beneficiary  
 of one good aspect of a socialist country:  
 there were performance royalties  
 due him, built up in a bank  
 from his poetry being  
 read by others at a literary café  
 There were also other royalties

There was the sense of thaw in Prague  
that three years later would lead to the  
famous Prague Spring  
(followed by a Soviet invasion)

Allen was having a ball  
He was always thrilled by the  
hundreds who wanted to interview him

& he was the hero in the neobeat cafe known  
as the Viola  
where huge blow-ups of Fred McDarrah's  
photographs of American artists and beats  
were arrayed on the wall

He wrote an excellent love poem  
"Message II"  
from Prague to Peter Orlovsky  
(p. 348 in Collected Poems)

Allen planned to stay a month in Prague  
including trips to Moscow and Poland.

In late March of '65 he trained from Prague to Moscow  
chrono-tracking himself in his intricate journals.  
His diaries always scorched with  
his erotic explorations on the road  
which, as we shall see,  
would betrouble him yet again  
with another authoritarian/police state

In Moscow the famous bard  
was the official guest of the Writers' Union  
once Tolstoy's mansion

Lots of smoked salmon, borscht, vodka, caviar and  
visits to St. Basil's, the Kremlin, the Pushkin  
Museum and the  
huge Gum dept. store

He met the poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko  
and true to his relentless vision

Ginsberg plied him with his theories  
of open gayness, ganja and LSD

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This was Russia after all, land of a million ears,  
and Yevtushenko asked him not to continue

"I feel rejected," A.G. said after the rebuff from  
Yev'.

Nor did Yev' dig Kerouac's theories about  
spontaneous composition.

With the poet Andrei Voznesensky however  
the bard formed a long-term bond  
that lasted the rest of his life

Ginsberg went to Leningrad, toured the Hermitage  
then went by train to Warsaw,  
where on April 10  
another one of his fine peripatetic works  
"Café in Warsaw" (page 350 of Collected Poems)

then to Krakow, and by car to Auschwitz  
-there's a famous snapshot of A.G.  
by the Arbeit Macht Frei  
gates of the evilness zone

Then it was back to Prague  
just in time for the ancient festival  
in honor of May Day  
called Majales

The commies had banned it about 20 years  
and '65 was the first year  
it was realloved

Students were to vote for a King of the May  
and there would be a beauty pageant to  
select a Queen

By a strange series of circumstances  
(the poet Josef Skvorecky was to have been the King  
but he became ill)  
Allen was voted in as the Kral Majales  
the King of the May!

He had always wanted to be the world's  
     King of Maytime  
 so it was something  
     that made him smile the rest of his life

On May 1 Allen was brought to the May Day parade  
 wearing a golden cardboard crown  
     escorted by five beauteous damosels  
 and a rout of students  
     some with top hats and canes  
     right out of the 1890s

He was dazzle-driven on a flatbed truck through Prague  
     clinging his finger cymbals  
     and singing mantras

thousands and thousands pouring to the streets  
     driving past Franz Kafka's pad  
 with Allen giving speeches  
     like someone out on the stump  
     whenever the truck should stop

Allen had been elected King of the May by  
     an overwhelming vote  
     and the partying continued till midnight  
 the moment the Queen was to be elected.

The Czech Communist Party secretary for cultural affairs  
 waxed furious at  
     the spectacle of a gay beatnik  
     chanting to Shiva  
     & eyeing guys

elected the Kral Majales

and so on the spot nullified A.G.'s election  
     and called a halt to the nominations for Queen.

It was too late  
     as evinced by the bard's fine poem,  
     "Kral Majales," p. 353 in Collected Poems.

Meanwhile the secret police had placed A.G. under surveillance

'Zap was a secret policeperson's dream come true  
They all drooled to surveil him

J. Edgar Hoover  
the Cuban police  
and now the Czech

One of Allen's notebooks came into the possession  
of the Czechoslovakian fuzz

I recall a few months later at the Berkeley Poetry Conference  
he described some of the items in the notebook  
that might have put secret police in a tizzy  
—one in particular  
that described erotic experimentations  
with a broom

On May 5 he was punched and hit by a man  
snarling with homophobia— then  
taken in custody by police

The officer snarled "Bouzerant! Bouzerant!"  
Fairy! Fairy!

Allen hummed the seed syllable "Om"  
to quell the violence

Then he was set free, but next day  
police said they had his notebook  
and at the police station  
they told him it was being turned  
over to a prosecutor for illegal writings

And then he was tossed from another  
authoritarian nation

"due to many complaints about your presence  
in Prague from parents and scientists and  
educators who disapprove of your sexual  
theories." This was May 7, the  
day he wrote the powerful

"Kral Majales"

He was held incommunicado  
and put on a flight to London

where he was to hang out with  
Dylan  
and the surging Beatles.

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## Part XI

Allen always loved the time  
he was the  
King of the May

in a country where they had just  
begun to allow Kafka's *The Trial*  
to be published  
again—  
driven through the streets of Prague  
past Kafka's house  
clink-clanging his  
finger cymbals  
and wearing a golden crown

It had been one of those  
frozen moments of fun

Then the police had come for him  
and shipped him to London  
They'd stolen one of his notebooks  
& he was upset about it

On the plane he wrote his poem  
"Kral Majales"

•

### GINSBERG MEETS THE BEATLES

There was some genius-level music  
being made in '65  
by the Beatles,  
and Bob Dylan

Both the Beatles & Dylan were in London  
when the kicked-out Kral Majales from Kafkatown  
arrived.





Allen was a bit drunk  
 as he rushed to greet  
                   the ill-at-ease singers  
 (who were glancing around to make sure  
                   no cameras were snapping)  
 for the 'Zap was naked, wearing his jockey shorts on his head,  
 and a "Do Not Disturb" hotel doorknob sign  
                   attached to his Clinton.

•

Allen spent time with the poet Basil Bunting in Newcastle  
 Bunting had been a pal of Pound and W.C. Williams  
 and had been "rediscovered"  
                   by young English poets

Ginsberg's June '65 poem "Studying the Signs" after reading  
 Bunting's book Briggflatts.

Another distilling beautiful 4-page poem,  
                   from the chaos of the first half  
 of '65, "Who Be Kind To" p. 359 in the  
                   Collected Poems

was written for the International Poetry Reading  
                   at Royal Albert Hall on June 8

(which Allen and the filmmaker Barbara Rubin  
                   organized-  
 with 7,000 people in attendance,  
                   including Indira Gandhi)

Then a week in Paris  
 strip-searched at JFK and a pocket-lint search  
                   for pot

returning to the USA June 29.

•

### HALL DANCE OF GUGG JOY

Most of us who are honored  
 with Guggenheim Fellowships in verse

wait patiently  
     for the check  
 but not A.G.  
     who, upon returning to the States,  
 raced to the Guggenheim offices  
 on Park Avenue South

to do a dance of Nike! Victory! Triumph!  
   and Joy of Cash!  
 through the hallways and offices  
 (and perhaps also to get  
     the fellowship check  
     a little ahead of schedule)

The Guggenheim gave him the largess  
 for one of his most important poetic ventures—  
 He purchased a VW camper  
     & outfitted it with a desk, bed & icebox

so that he could drive around the nation  
     while composing a series of travel poems  
     including the fine “Wichita Vortex Sutra” of ’66

•

In July Allen flew to SF  
     for the Berkeley Poetry Conference  
 one of those gatherings  
     whose impact ripples out through  
     decades in the world of  
     poesy & theory—

Gary Snyder, Robert Creeley,  
 Jack Spicer (who would pass away soon after), Robert Duncan  
 John Wieners, the great Charles Olson  
 plus some of us (then) younger bards:  
 Ted Berrigan, Lenore Kandel, and myself

(Donald Allen, editor of the New American Poetry anthology,  
 arranged for Grove Press to fly me out  
     —many thanks to Grove Press, which I too casually  
     forgot formally to thank 35 years ago)

Ginsberg read to a huge crowd in Wheeler Auditorium

where, later in the week, Charles Olson  
gave a genius-level Bacchic talk  
that astounded a generation.

65

In August, after the Berkeley Poetry Conference  
A.G. went camping with Gary Snyder for a month  
in the Cascades, Crater Lake National Park,  
and Mount Rainier in Oregon

They were alone in the vastness  
reading Milarepa's poems aloud in the morning  
Allen learning again  
the ineffable Zen centeredness

that made the bard Snyder  
such an emblem of the times.

## Part XII

1965 was a great year  
to understand the soul of the great bard  
Allen Ginsberg

for it was then  
we see how he refused to be isolated  
from the broader culture  
no matter how controversial he might have seemed  
and he dared to be his own history.

We have noted how  
in August of 1965, after the Berkeley Poetry Conference,  
A.G. went camping with Gary Snyder for a month  
in the Cascades, Crater Lake National Park,  
and Mount Rainier in Washington

alone in the vastness  
reading Milarepa's poems aloud in the morning

While Allen was away  
I was picking up his mail for him in New York City—  
My Peace Eye Bookstore was thriving on East 10th  
and the Fugs were performing at standing-room-only

That August, while Ginsberg was in the mountains with Snyder  
we learned of an attempt by the Federal Bureau of Narcotics  
& Dangerous Drugs  
(forerunner of the DEA)  
to set the 'Zap up for a pot bust

It was an archetypal event  
Allen responded to it  
with his own investigation  
conducted over decades

into the involvement of U.S. gov't agencies  
in dealing and drug smuggling.

What happened was this:

A couple of young men, Jack Martin & Dale Wilbourne  
had been arrested for alleged  
possession of marijuana

Four BNDD agents  
met with Martin  
and threatened additional charges  
plus a bail bump-up from \$5k to \$100k  
unless he set up Ginsberg  
for a pot arrest.

(Ginsberg had been very outspoken for legalization  
The photo of him at a Lemar march  
with a "Pot is Fun" sign  
had been published around the world)

"We want Ginsberg," one of the agents had said.

We learned about the incident  
& I put out a press release about it  
The Fugs and others held a benefit for the defendants  
where the Federal agents in question  
showed up outside the gig  
and harassed people!

As a further emblem of his soul

Ginzap did not quail  
and vacuum his pockets

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Instead he went on the offensive  
began clipping articles on  
    how many times the police  
themselves were arrested for selling drugs  
started asking questions  
    (Ginsberg I think asked more questions  
    in his life  
    than anyone in the history of  
    Western Civilization)  
and later, of course, the famous  
    bet Ginsberg made with the  
    head of the CIA, Richard Helms,  
    over CIA involvement in the heroin racket

•

That fall, Ginsberg was in California  
    & took part in large antiwar rallies  
    in Berkeley & Oakland

organized in good part by Jerry Rubin.

(The Fugs drove across  
    America in a VW van  
    to take part in the rallies  
One of our concerts  
was with Ginsberg and Country Joe & the Fish  
    at UC Berkeley.)

There was a march from Berkeley  
    through the black area of Oakland  
    and into downtown Oakland

Ginzap and Gary Snyder  
    sang mantras  
    from a sound truck  
to spread peace

But the police stopped the march  
    at the Oakland city limits  
& members of the Hell's Angels bike gang  
    tore into the head of the march

and pulled down a  
PEACE IN VIETNAM sign

68

They cut the speaker wires  
& the march ended right there.

Several weeks later  
another march was scheduled  
and the H. Angels again threatened violence

Allen organized a public forum  
for a kind of debate 'tween  
the Vietnam Day Committee  
(sponsor of the upcoming march)  
and the H.A.'s.

The bikers came away  
still planning to disrupt the walk.

Then Ken Kesey  
proposed a meeting  
'tween the march organizers & the bikers

at Sonny Barger's house in Oakland

The Angels had some kind of ultra-'noidal vision  
of the Domino Theory

The D.T. held that, like a line of dominos falling in a flowing ripple  
the nations of SE Asia would  
tumble to commie

& it was somehow felt that  
the dominos led across the moily Pacific  
and would implode  
upon a commie Oakland  
-too much amphetamine.

Most of those at Kesey's pad  
dropped acid  
except Ginzap,  
who feared what they called in those days a  
Galactic Bummer.

The talk oozed acrimonious

till A.G. opened his small harmonium  
and began to chant the Prajnaparamita sutra

69

Soon some Angels joined the chant  
and Neal Cassady, Ken Kesey  
and everybody finally.

Barger put Dylan's "Gates of Eden" on the player  
and the Angels agreed not to  
break up the rally

Allen wrote one of his better poems of the year,  
"First Party at Ken Kesey's with  
Hell's Angels"  
dated December '65.

It was an example of quality peacemaking  
The Angels issued a press release  
they were not about to attack a bunch  
of dirty commies

& the march occurred without any violence.

## Part XIII

We left off our tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
in the fall of 1965  
when he intervened  
with the Hell's Angels  
to get them not to  
attack an antiwar march  
in Oakland

Bob Dylan was in California in late '65  
He gave Allen \$600  
with which he purchased a  
reel-to-reel Uher tape recorder  
just about the finest you  
could get in that era

(Dylan also bought the bard Michael McClure  
an autoharp, and Peter Orlovsky an amplifier)

Allen took the Uher with him

It was portable, with a shoulder strap  
 and a hand held microphone  
 with a pause button

Thus, on the beach  
 on the road  
 in the woods  
 at a party  
 or at Ferlinghetti's cabin in Big Sur

Ginsberg could experiment  
 with a kind of spontaneous verse  
 acutely observational in the mode of W.C. Williams  
 with the long lines of Blake  
 & the eye of a photographer  
 (Ginsberg's photos later became  
 very well respected- he took  
 literally tens of thousands of them,  
 beginning in the 1940 proto-Beat era  
 all the way to his death in 1997)

Allen did his best work  
 after periods of introspection & study  
 and now he was ready to take on a Whitman-level  
 study of America  
 in early 1966  
 with the Vietnam war  
 throbbing in the background.

The war the war the war  
 Dylan's politics had shifted to the right  
 as far as Vietnam was concerned  
 It chilled McClure when Dylan  
 let it out &  
 refused to take a stand against  
 the Vietnam War  
 and in fact took what would have been called  
 in the era  
 an imperialist stance.

During recent months  
 Allen & his father Louis  
 had been arguing furiously by letter  
 over the war



and it was in the context  
of Blake, Uher, Williams,  
the beauty & balefulness of his nation  
that Ginsberg  
began, in a few weeks,  
his great poem "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

Tim Leary was arrested on 12-23-65  
in Laredo for grass  
(On trial on 3-9-66  
and given thirty years in the slams!)

My Peace Eye Bookstore was raided on January 1, 1966  
& I was charged with obscenity  
for my magazine  
(though I later won the case)  
Allen immediately did a benefit for me in Los Angeles

On January 26  
the 'Zap began a long journey in his  
new VW van  
across the USA  
driven by Peter Orlovsky  
and recording instant verse  
in the front seat with his Uher

the line breaks  
indicated by the clicking  
of the on/off switch

The camper meandered here & there in the west  
and into Texas  
and then up to Kansas  
where the radio blurt-blared  
with religiosity & war news

Barry Farrell, one of Life magazine's best writers,  
traveled with Allen  
on the Wichita Vortex trip  
writing a big story, "Guru Comes to Kansas"

Driving in to Wichita  
the bard began dictating the lines

that were to become the 18-page poem  
which he finished on February 14.

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“Thy sins are forgiven, Wichita!  
Thy lonesomeness annulled, O Kansas dear!  
as the western Twang prophesied  
thru banjo, when lone cowboy walked the railroad track  
past an empty station toward the sun  
sinking giant-bulbed orange down the box canyon–  
Music strung over his back  
and empty handed singing on this planet earth  
I’m a lonely Dog, O Mother!  
Come, Nebraska, sing & dance with me–  
Come lovers of Lincoln and Omaha  
hear my soft voice at last....”

A post-acid post-Whitman song of a great nation  
published in the Village Voice  
on April 28  
a further revelation  
of his stature  
as an American bard

•

Allen found time to write the liner notes  
for the second Fugs record  
which we recorded that spring.

•

April 17, Gordon Liddy, later  
sent to jail for his role  
in Nixon’s dirty tricks team,  
led a raid by Dutchess County police  
on Tim Leary’s huge 2,500-acre estate in Millbrook  
loaned to him by Billy Hitchcock

29 people were there and searched,  
and all 64 rooms of the mansion searched  
but no grass was found.

Liddy was sure he had found something  
ascribable to Leary  
but it turned out to be peat moss

Allen helped organize a full-page ad in The New York Times  
to help Mr. Leary

In June Allen testified in D.C.  
against making LSD illegal  
to no avail.

The summer of '66  
saw the death of the brilliant poet Frank O'Hara  
struck down by a dune taxi  
on Fire Island July 24

Allen wrote his  
"City Midnight Junk Strains" for Frank O'Hara  
(p. 457 Collected Poems)

The next day  
Bob Dylan had his motorcycle accident in Bearsville  
an injured neck and other bruising

Three weeks later Allen visited Dylan  
bringing him some books, Rimbaud, Blake,  
Dickinson, Shelley.

The fall of '66  
loomed like the frenetic highway  
of the same name  
hundreds of interviews, readings, letters, journal entries,  
skin-slurps, hookahs, plane trips, arguments & kisses

He wrote "A Vow" on October 11  
a fine example of what could be called the Scold Poem.  
Like the great Norman Thomas,  
the bard was sometimes content merely to scold-  
singing his vision of calming down the Greed Machine  
(p. 460, Collected Poems)

Then came the great year of Flower Power, 1967

## Part XIV

The Year of Flowers

Gary Snyder  
 began the Human Be-In  
     on January 14  
     in the Golden Gate Park polo field

with a riff on a conch shell

The formal name for the event was  
 “Gathering of the Tribes for a Human Be-In”

The name of course  
     came from the Sit-Ins  
     in the South  
     to integrate lunch counters, say,  
                                     at Woolworth’s  
 & later the popular Teach-ins  
 against the war in Vietnam

Now it was Be-In  
 and this one event set the  
     cultural tone of the year  
 along with the rhymed doublet: Flower Power

There were 20,000 there to surge  
     in primary-color splendor  
     with the fine Pacific psyche-light  
     at last outshining  
                     the Puritanical searchlight  
                     from Plymouth Rock

as the Grateful Dead, Jefferson Airplane, Quicksilver  
 Messenger Service, Jerry Rubin, Gary Snyder, Tim Leary,  
 Lenore Kandel, Ginsberg & others  
     made words and music.

All across America that spring  
 there were Be-ins, Smoke-ins, Love-ins,  
     Tipi-ins and In-ins

Ginsberg was everywhere,  
     like a bardic blur  
     chanting his nation

& cling-clinging his finger cymbals.

On  
 February 12, for instance, a huge celebration in  
 Toronto called Perception '67  
 with Marshall McLuhan, The Fugs, Paul Krassner

In May in Cleveland, a benefit for the ultraharassed young  
 poet named d. a. levy  
 one of America's  
 great unsung.

•

Ken Kesey had purchased a farm near Eugene, Or  
 & 'Zap visited  
 -Neal Cassady and the Merry Pranksters were there

May 25, they took the great psychedelic tour bus  
 called Further  
 on the road  
 to a gig at Western State College in Oregon  
 with the Jefferson Airplane

It was the last time Ginzap would  
 see great pal Neal Cassady.

•

JUNE 27

The year before  
 after a Fugs concert  
 the police had invaded Peace Eye Bookstore  
 & seized many issues of  
 Fuck You/ A Magazine of the Arts

I was arrested; the ACLU took my case  
 and after a trial before 3 New York judges  
 I was found not guilty

So I threw a victory party at Peace Eye June 27  
 1967

The great bard was there  
 The place was totally packed  
 on a hot summer night  
 when some neighborhood kids

began to toss firecrackers  
through the open door

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We went outside to cool them out  
A.G. came too

One of them was brandishing  
a wide-tipped hunting arrow  
It was an emblem of Allen  
as he sank to his knees on the sidewalk  
in front of the wide-eyed youth  
and made his hands in the shape of a mudra

The young man raised his arm back  
as if to hurl it into the bard's neck

but Allen's calm words  
caused him to put it down  
to his side

—another emblem of conduct by a great poet

•

On July 5 'Zap flew to Italy  
for the Spoleto Festival, where he met Ezra Pound  
and tried to get Lb to abandon his famous multi-year silence  
though all he would do was shake Allen's hand  
then it was off to London  
& a party for 'Zap at James McNeill Whistler's house  
Allen was always thrilled when the bacchants of rock & roll  
allowed him to hang with them  
as when he sat in the recording booth  
during the Rolling Stones' recording of "We Love You"  
with Lennon and McCartney doing harmony

July 20  
Allen gave a talk "Consciousness and Practical Action"  
at the Dialectics of Liberation Conference in London

at which, also, Gregory Bateson gave a seminar  
"Ecological Destruction by Technology"  
which astounded the American bard—  
Bateson had predicted Global Warming decades  
before it came to public parlance.

Allen took his father Louis and stepmother Edith  
on what they call a “whirlwind” tour of Europe, then  
after his parents had returned to the States,

July 28 driving to Wales  
he stopped for a visit to Wordsworth’s Tintern Abbey ruins  
& then once in Wales

a poem writ on acid, one of his better,  
called “Wales Visitation”

•

That summer, while Allen was in Europe  
his mate Peter Orlovsky was in Bellevue  
after too much amphetamine

Peter was spotted in those months cleaning  
the cobbles of Avenue C with a toothbrush

I remember he sold me his Bellevue pajamas  
for \$6 one day in the park after he escaped  
I wanted to wear them at Fugs shows

•

On September 23 drove to Sant Ambrogio to have lunch with  
Olga Rudge & Ezra Pound

He brought along his harmonium  
sang Lb the Prajnaparamita sutra—  
a few weeks later, in mid October  
he visited Pound again at his winter home in Venice  
played “Eleanor Rigby” and “Yellow Submarine”  
and Dylan’s  
“Gates of Eden” & “Sad-Eyed Lady of the Lowlands”

One evening he spoke at length with Pound  
after walking around Venice checking out  
locations mentioned in the Cantos

Pound spoke finally of himself & his troubles—  
“But the worst mistake I made was the stupid suburban prejudice of anti-  
Semitism. All along, that spoiled everything.”

October 21 was the day of the  
 Exorcism of the Pentagon in D.C.  
 & Allen visited again with Pound  
 & his longtime companion Olga Rudge

helping the grand old man of meter  
 try to escape his past

\*

Ginsberg was one of the greatest  
 givers in the History of Verse

Charles Rothschild, one of the managers of the Fugs  
 began to help Allen get properly paid for his readings  
 Allen wanted

what other famous writers obtained  
 for barding

He'd formed a non-profit corporation  
 The Committee on Poetry  
 (I was vice-president for a few years)

to create a sense of order  
 in the thousands upon thousands upon thousands  
 that Ginzap gave away to help others.

In '67, the Year of Love  
 he gave away around \$20k

\$4,000 to the filmmaker Jack Smith, \$1,500 each to  
 beat bro's Corso and Huncke  
 the West Coast communitard Irwin Rosenthal, \$2,500

\$1,500 to the great artist/scholar/filmmaker Harry Smith  
 \$400 to Ken Kesey, and money to the filmmaker Barbara Rubin,  
 to the bards Ray Bremser, Diane di Prima, Amiri Baraka,  
 Charles Plymell, et alia bardifica

He paid the Chelsea Hotel bill for the English poet Basil Bunting  
 when Bunting came to NYC  
 to read at the Gugg

He bought a new harmonium for Bhaktivedanta  
 & four Vedic chanting records for Ezra Pound

•





beginning with the startling image  
 shown to the world  
 of Guevara's face in death  
 almost seeming to smile.

“One radiant face driven mad with a rifle”  
 he wrote  
 “Confronting the electric networks”

## Part XV

The great bard Allen Ginsberg  
 kept his famous shoulder to the wheel  
 in the ghastly year known as '68

In February  
 Ferlinghetti replied  
 he loved Allen's next book of verse  
 Planet News  
 especially the beautiful poem from '67  
 called “Wales Visitation”

February was also the month  
 his friend and onetime lover Neal Cassady passed away  
 Cassady had gone to a wedding in  
 San Miguel de Allende  
 He'd left his bag at a railroad station  
 a few miles away  
 and after the party  
 drunk and high  
 he died on the tracks  
 walking back

He was the first of the beatnik hexad  
 to pass.

His “Elegy for Neal Cassady”  
 laid down beautifully the grief  
 of someone who'd lost a soul buddy  
 with memories of discourse  
 Spirit to Spirit  
 as in the lines,  
 “I could talk to you forever,

The pleasure inexhaustible,  
discourse of spirit to spirit,  
O Spirit”

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(p. 488, Collected Poems)

•

Late in February Allen (and the Fugs) performed  
in Appleton, Wisconsin  
where Senator Joseph McCarthy is buried

We performed an exorcism  
that enraged the right.  
Right wing radio man Paul Harvey  
growled enormously about it  
on his show

but we summoned his soul  
–the Fugs, Ginzap, and about 50 locals–

with Allen commenting on the Great Redbaiter’s homophobia  
but we were respectful

Allen recited a Hebrew prayer, and an invocation to Shiva  
and we recited the Prajnaparamita Sutra  
then sang “My Country ’Tis of Thee”

then a few minutes of Hare Krishna  
after which I chanted the final words of  
Plato’s Republic  
in Greek

people left friendly items  
on and around the stone

then we got the hell out of there

•

### THE FARM

Huge stacks of mail  
and the endless ring ring of the phone

helped make the bard want to get to silence

& he asked filmmaker Barbara Rubin  
to look for a place in the country.

A big factor in wanting a country place  
was to help get Peter Orlovsky off methedrine  
His condition had gotten more serious than  
toothbrushing the cobbles of Avenue C  
in a meth-addled thirst for cleanliness.

Peter, of course, was a poet of stature. I often think of  
his graceful lines in Don Allen's New American Poetry:  
"...on a hill a butterfly  
makes a cup that I drink from, walking over a bridge  
of flowers."

Allen and Barbara Rubin had been occasional lovers  
He made it with women more often  
than commonly known  
& she apparently had a passion to marry the bard  
a passion she shared with but a few of her friends

She looked around Sharon Springs and Cherry Valley  
west of Albany,  
near Jewish summer resorts  
She was increasingly drawn to orthodox Judaism  
which may have led her where to search

She found an old farm outside Cherry Valley  
surrounded by state forest  
90 acres, run down, no electricity

Allen bought it  
& he and Barbara went to the farm mid-March '68

In addition to helping Peter,  
who came to the farm with his oft-hospitalized brother Julius  
Ginsberg also had in mind getting Kerouac up there  
to dry out his liver

Though Barbara Rubin soon drifted away from her dreams  
of marriage with the bard  
the Farm remained a factor, a haven for poets & seekers  
for the rest of A.G.'s life  
through the 1990s

•

MAY '68

one of his more  
controversial poems  
    “Please Master”  
the 1st bardic evidence  
of his interest in what they call  
    “rough trade”

•

Allen agreed to come to Chicago in August  
as part of a Festival of Life

It was intended to be a rock & roll antiwar peace party

but the year had other intentions  
It was a year of pings  
    –the pings of bullets

Martin King in April– ping!  
Robert Kennedy in June– ping! ping!

The great uprisings of students in Paris  
    and Columbia University  
& the biggest antiwar movement  
    since just before World War I

So that by the time of the Chicago Democratic Convention  
there were soldiers everywhere  
    and a thuglike convention  
    where dissent was suppressed, as we shall see.

•

Allen had taught many of us the mantras  
he'd brought back with him from India

and just before the Democratic Convention  
he and I issued a statement  
published in the underground press  
calling for those who came to Chicago

to chant OM  
to quell the violence.

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GINSBERG IN CHICAGO, AUGUST 1968

Allen had an assignment (and press pass)  
to cover the convention for Esquire Magazine  
(along with Terry Southern, William Burroughs and  
Jean Genet, who sneaked into Chicago from Montreal)

Allen's French was very good  
and I was amazed how well  
he translated for Genet

The city had refused to issue permits  
for participants in the Festival of Life  
to camp out in Lincoln Park

where each night at 11 p.m., the police  
would billyclub and teargas everyone out of the park

Allen sang OM for hours,  
and sometimes I joined in

MONDAY, AUGUST 26

Barricades were built in Lincoln Park  
to defend the right to sleep there  
at 12:30 a.m. the police  
clubbed and attacked the barricades

Tonight they marched behind  
a street sweeper truck whose  
water tanks had been  
converted to hold tear gas!

(These ghastly police state devices  
maybe gifts from Garden Plot or the CIA Chaos program?)

To me this was the last mote of proof  
in 1968  
that the Nation was lost

Ginsberg said  
"I got gassed chanting AUM

with a hundred youthful voices  
under the trees...

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The Daily Mayor has written a  
bloody vulgar script for American Children."

•

#### GINSBERG SHOWS ABILITY AS HALFBACK DURING TEARGAS ATTACK

We left the park to return to the Hotel Lincoln  
(next to Lincoln Park, where we were staying)  
but there were snout-nozzled cops there  
lobbing tear-gas grenades  
which plomfed near our feet.  
We crouched down and dashed through  
the hostile molecules  
heads low, knees high  
as if we were halfbacks  
on a high school football team  
toward the lobby.

TUESDAY AUGUST 27

At dawn on the 27th  
Ginsberg came back to the park  
singing various mantras  
for several hours  
till his voice became hoarse and whispery.

Allen was the only bard in the history of Western Civilization  
to have over-ommed,  
that is, he'd uttered the seed syllable "Om" so many hours  
trying to quell the violence  
he peace-pained his voice  
and was omming, at the end,  
like Froggie the Gremlin.

That night the protesters threw a  
60th Unbirthday Party for Lyndon Johnson  
at the packed Chicago Coliseum  
Six thousand people were there  
While Phil Ochs sang "I Ain't Marchin' Anymore"  
a guy burned his draft card  
and then in one amazing sequence of seconds

there was a sudden poof-up of  
 maybe a hundred blazing draft cards  
 pointillistically patterning  
 the Coliseum audience.

Ginsberg's voice had not yet returned  
 from his many hours  
 of chanting  
 to quell the violence  
 so he passed me a note to read  
 to the audience:

“Introduce me as Prague King of May – Ed– in my turn,  
 you explain I lost my voice chanting Aum in park – so please  
 you read my piece – then I’ll do 3 Minutes of Silence Mind  
 consciousness & belly breathing”

•

WEDNESDAY AUGUST 28

That afternoon  
 Daley had allowed  
 a single rally at the bandshell  
 in Grant Park  
 sponsored by the Mobilization–  
 From 10 to 15,000 showed up

About 4:30  
 Dave Dellinger addressed the crowd  
 through a portable bull horn  
 to announce a nonviolent march to the Democratic Convention.  
 4 1/2 miles  
 from Grant Park

Grant Park is connected to downtown via a series of bridges  
 across railroad tracks to the west  
 Lines of soldiers prevented the march from leaving  
 over any of the bridges  
 and many of us sat down in front of the troops while  
 U.S. Army helicopters circled overhead

It was very scary  
 There were fixed bayonets  
 & jeeps with barbed wire





A few of us had pushed fresh daisies  
into the rifle barrels at the Pentagon  
just 10 months ago  
and now, even though  
I again had fresh white flowers  
I knew this was a different type of event  
and that I would likely have been  
bayoneted and shot  
pushing petal in metal

Finally, after hours of negotiations,  
the protesters found a way  
of getting out of Grant Park  
and they surged  
across a bridge  
& gathered in front of the Hilton  
on Michigan Avenue at Balbo

In the lobby where the Democrats  
prepared to go to the convention hall  
four miles away  
soldiers with helmets & guns  
marched past the plush divans  
& the potted trees

Then, without warning, a throng of police charged the  
demonstrators at 7:56

smashing, macing, beating  
apparently to clear the avenue

Jeeps with machine guns mounted to them  
arrived at the Hilton

"Wahoo! Wahoo!"

like the bomb riding cowboy  
at the end of Dr. Strangelove  
shouted an officer on a three wheeled motorcycle  
as he mashed into the crowd

Thus began hours of bloodshed  
In the streets outside the Hilton and Convention Center  
and it was there  
in the surgery-room glare of the television lights--

that thousands took up the chant

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"The whole world is watching  
the whole world is watching....."

McCarthy volunteers set up  
a first aid station on the Hilton's 15th floor  
at his suite

They gave up their passes  
to get the injured up to the rooms

Humphrey was on the 25th floor--  
An aide opened a window and complained  
of tear gas

On the nominating floor four miles from the Hilton  
CBS-TV's Dan Rather gave a live report,  
"A security man just slugged me in the stomach,"  
to which Walter Cronkite replied,  
"I think  
we've got a  
bunch of thugs here,  
Dan."

Inside the convention that horrible night  
Senator George McGovern was a last minute peace candidate  
after McCarthy refused to lead a floor fight  
against Humphrey

Senator Abraham Ribicoff was giving his nominating speech:  
"With George McGovern," said Ribicoff, "we wouldn't have Gestapo tactics  
on the streets of Chicago."

Mayor Richard Daley, his face reddened with malevolence,  
shouted, "Fuck you, you Jew son of a bitch!  
You lousy motherfucker, go home!"

Daley was seated in the front  
Ribicoff looked down at Red Face, and said  
"How hard it is to hear the truth."

Allen Ginsberg leaped to his feet in the balcony  
and began shouting "OMMMMM" for about five minutes  
Meanwhile, outside  
in the television lights  
the teargassed, terrified and angry crowd

continued its own version of ommmmm,  
chanting, "The Whole World is Watching!  
The Whole World is Watching!"

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(This section adapted from 1968, a History in Verse)

## Part XVI

After the ghastly Democratic convention  
in August '68  
in Chi

the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
condensed his feelings  
in an interview with Playboy:

Chicago had no government, he said,  
"It's just anarchy maintained by pistol. Inside the  
convention hall it was rigged like an old Mussolini strong-arm  
scene— police and party hacks everywhere illegally, delegates  
shoved around and kidnapped, telephone lines cut."

He spent the rest of the year  
at his farm in Cherry Valley, NY  
(not far from Cooperstown)

They were good months. There was  
plenty of organic produce,  
no electricity,  
and he built a meditation room in the attic.

Over the years he attracted an entire generation of  
poets and the creative  
to the Cherry Valley area—  
so much allure there was in his soul-mind.

His book Planet News came out  
from City Lights that fall

He bought a pump organ  
& spent the Cherry Valley winter  
(& wow does it get cold up there!)  
writing melodies to William Blake

Readers will recall Ginzap's '48 auditory "Vision" of

Blake chanting “Ah, Sunflower, Weary of Time”  
& “The Sick Rose”  
in a tenement in Harlem  
spiritual experiences  
that profoundly affected his verse.

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He turned to the “prophetic simplicity”  
of Blake’s songs  
after the “Police State shock despair” of Chicago.

The fine keyboard man Lee Crabtree,  
who had been in the Fugs  
visited the farm and showed Allen  
how to transcribe his melodies.

Once that fall Ginzap drove to Woodstock  
where he sang his version of Blake’s “Grey Monk”  
with members of the Band  
at Big Pink.

•

## CRACKDOWN ON UNDERGROUND PRESS

Ginsberg had begun his multi-decade investigations  
into the secret police  
There was an extensive network of what they called  
Underground Newspapers  
all over the States–

Around October of ’68  
a CIA Chaos (Civilian Disruption) Agent  
(Chaos was a disruption program against the  
anti-war movement)  
whacked out a memo which noted  
“the apparent freedom and ease in which filth,  
slandorous and libelous statements  
and what appear to be almost treasonous  
anti-establishment propaganda  
is allowed to circulate”  
in underground papers.

The CIA smut-sleuth then suggested a strategy for silencing  
the underground:

“Eight out of ten,” he wrote, “would fail if a few phonograph record companies stopped advertising in them.”

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The CIA of course denies it directly carried out the concept of interdicting the record company moolah stream—

Instead the FBI did it. In January of '69 the San Francisco office of the Bureau

wrote to headquarters  
that Columbia Records  
by advertising in the Underground  
“appears to be giving active aid and comfort to enemies  
of the United States.”

The memo suggested the FBI persuade Columbia Records to stop advertising in the underground press

It worked.

By the end of the next year  
many record company ads had been pulled  
& a number of undergrounders had folded

Ginsberg sniffed this crackdown out  
and spent years researching it

finally supervising a book, based on his  
research, for the PEN American Center

called The Campaign Against the Underground Press.

•

MARCH 12, 1969

Ginsberg (and Kerouac too) kept everything  
doodles on napkins  
drafts of poems, bus tickets,  
you name it

On March 12, Allen began shipping the many  
boxes of his papers  
from his dad's attic in Paterson  
to the Special Collections department

•

Allen's melodies to Blake  
revealed another of his Muse skills:  
he was good at shaping melodies—

The Fugs had done some recording  
at Apostolic Studios  
at 39 East 10th  
with an engineer named David Baker

We liked what he did  
and so when Allen Ginsberg wanted to record his  
settings of William Blake  
I recommended Apostolic

The summer of '69  
when Allen recorded there—  
he had some fine musicians to help—

Julius Watkins, who had played with the Thelonius Monk Quintet,  
on French horn,  
Elvin Jones played drums on some of it

Charles Mingus recommended Herman Wright on bass

Don Cherry breathed some hot trumpet & percussion  
onto the oxide-dappled tape.

Allen recorded 19 Blake tunes  
that June & July  
which were released, as they say,  
by MGM Records in 1970

•

In October of '69  
Allen was just about to leave for a poetry tour  
beginning with Yale  
& then a teach-in about Vietnam  
at Columbia U

He was up at the farm

Gregory Corso  
had come for a visit

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It was the night of October 21  
the phone rang  
Gregory answered,  
it was the writer Al Aronowitz

He turned to Ginsberg–  
“Al! Jack died.”

Early the next morning  
Ginsberg and Corso  
walked through the early snow  
to the woods up the hill  
& carved Jack’s name  
in a tree

## Part XVII

Kerouac was watching The Galloping Gourmet  
eating some tuna & sipping whiskey  
in his living room  
jotting in a notepad  
when the blood burbled up his throat.  
He never regained consciousness

Allen wrote a beautiful poem, “Memory Gardens”  
after Jack’s funeral  
with the lines  
“I threw a kissed handful of damp earth  
down on the stone lid  
& sighed  
looking in Creeley’s one eye,  
Peter sweet holding a flower...”

& ending with:

“Well, while I’m here I’ll  
do the work–  
and what’s the Work?  
To ease the pain of living.  
Everything else, drunken



•

The fall of '69 saw John and Yoko's  
Bed-In for Peace  
in Canada

Allen was mentioned in “Give Peace a Chance”  
so he called Lennon during the Bed-In  
to give good wishes.

In early December the 'Zap testified at the ghastly  
Chicago Conspiracy Trial

It was a rough time  
Allen was subjected to what William Kunstler  
depicted as “a refined form of fag baiting”  
by sex-&-drug obsessed  
prosecutors

But it was probably the first & only time  
mantras & the Seed Syllable Om  
were ever sung in a Federal trial  
plus Allen chanted from memory  
much of “Howl”

•

Allen's poetry was becoming ever more imaged with  
environmental issues  
beginning in 1970

when he was in Philadelphia for the first Earth Day  
April 22  
walking with Senator Ed Muskie & thousands  
on a three mile walk  
from the art museum to a park

Then 12 days later  
the hideous shootings on a campus hill  
at Kent State University  
–the subject of Crosby, Stills, Nash & Young's  
“Four Dead in Ohio.”

Allen was investigating  
 the involvement of US agents & agencies  
 in the drug business  
 & during a meeting with former Attorney General  
 Ramsey Clark  
 A.G. learned about the FBI's sleazy campaign  
 against Martin Luther King

He was still fascinated by Whitman's concept  
 of the Fall of the nation  
 & was writing the verse that was to become  
 The Fall of America  
 poems of these states  
 1965-1971

Allen stayed at his Cherry Valley farm for  
 much of 1970  
 It was run as a commune

with a busy moil of guests & residents  
 Ray & Bonnie Bremser & 3 year old child,  
 Peter Orlovsky & his good friend Denise Mercedes,  
 Gregory Corso,  
 & oodles of visitors such as Robert Creeley  
 Ann Charters, Carl Solomon, Herbert Huncke  
  
 a big thatch of the Best Minds crowd

#### THE MARCH '71 HELMS BET

As we have noted, Allen began researching  
 the drug trade  
 & asking thousands of questions  
 wherever he went

Being a Jack the Clipper, Ginzap amassed  
 hundreds of clippings and articles on the subject  
 (a bunch of which he sent me in 1970)

It was inspired by the 1965 attempted set-up of  
 him by Federal narcs, & by the continued troubles  
 two consecutive generations were facing (Huncke,  
 Corso, Burroughs  
 & then the Ken Kesey/flower child generation)

Allen “developed information,” as they say, that the CIA  
was involved in drug distribution  
    & that a CIA-operated air base at Long Cheng  
        was being used as a dope depot  
                for opium -running

Then, on March 4, 1971 he read with his father Louis  
at the Corcoran Gallery in DC

At a reception beforehand Ginsberg met  
the head of the Central Intelligence Agency  
    Richard Helms

Many would have fawned, bowed & quailed  
    at a meeting with the great secret policeman  
    who had a fascination, it later was learned,  
        with CIA mind control experiments  
        robowashing and programmed deeds

but Ginsberg was not afraid  
and challenged Mr. Helms about CIA  
    involvement in the drug trade

Helms denied it, of course,  
and then they made a bet

If Allen was right about CIA/drugs  
    then Helms would meditate an hour a day  
    for the rest of his life

If Allen was wrong,  
    he'd give Mr. Helms his bronze dorje

The liberal D.C. establishment  
    was a bit miffed & horrified  
        at the great bard's  
                exchange with the spymaster  
but it was another illuminating  
    look into his soul—

Seven years later C.L. Sulzberger of The New York Times  
wrote the 'Zap a letter:

“Dear Allen,

I fear I owe you an apology. I have been reading a succession of pieces about CIA involvement in the dope trade in South East Asia and I remember when you first suggested I look into this I thought you were full of beans. Indeed you were right and I acknowledge the fact plus sending my best personal wishes.

Cy Sulzberger”

(4-11-78)

As far as I know, Allen never attempted  
to get Mr. Helms to start  
a daily meditation practice

## Part XVIII

We left the tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
in March of 1971  
when he made a bet with the spymaster Richard Helms  
in D.C.  
that the CIA had been involved  
in drug trafficking  
in Southeast Asia

Pshaw! Pshaw! sputtered the wry spy guy  
but Ginsberg was correct  
(and out of it came his marvelous tune, later,  
the great “CIA Dope Calypso”)

The Seventies had begun  
& the Bard was as famous as ever  
on his 45th birthday June 3

By '71's end he'd written 575 pages of verse  
he later placed in his Collected Poems

The spring of 1971 he spent in California  
where, in May, he met Chögyam Trungpa

the founder of the first Tibetan Buddhist center in the USA  
Tail of the Tiger, located in Vermont

(they'd met very briefly before, in India)

Trungpa urged Allen to “make up your own poems  
on the spot.

Don’t you trust your own mind?”

The next night, at a benefit, the 'Zap unlocked the lid of his  
little Indian harmonium

and spontan’d forth with a 25 minute  
piece called

“How sweet it is to be born here in America.”

Thus had begun in verse

what Kerouac had long ago urged,

bebop level spontaneity  
grounded in Mind

(I know from first hand experience A.G.’s genius  
at spontaneous verse– in the spring of 1966  
when the Fugs were recording their second album  
one night we all made up spontaneous verses  
at a recording studio up by Lincoln Center

I have it on tape  
–he was very very adroit  
at the instant laying down  
of interesting lines)

June 30 Allen set Blake’s “Tyger Tyger Burning Bright” to music  
while that summer helped put together a petition  
to the Swiss gov’t to grant political asylum  
to Timothy Leary

on the lam after escaping from jail  
convicted for just a tiny amount of grass

The petition of 25 writers included Kenneth Rexroth,  
Anais Nin, Ferlinghetti, Kesey, Laura Huxley, Michael  
McClure and others

#### UNKNOWN BENEFACTOR

Out of the U.S. mail blue an “unknown benefactor”  
sent Ginsberg a round-trip ticket to India the summer o’ ‘71

He left in September

–he'd not been there for 9 years  
 and was horrified  
     at the ghastly poverty & starvation  
 he viewed in refugee camps  
     long lines, not enough food to be given

& huge throngs of people on Jessore Road  
     'tween Bangladesh & Calcutta  
     failing & falling & filling  
     the fire-fumed ghats  
 He wrote a long poem, "September on Jessore Road"  
     in which he chant-sang against  
     the malice-moiled powerful of the world  
     more concerned with napalm  
     than relief of suffering

It's the final work in his book  
     The Fall of America  
     poems of these states  
     1965-1971

October 9, 1971  
 was John Lennon's 31st birthday  
 & he and Yoko Ono were in Syracuse, NY.

The day before the great album  
     Imagine  
     had been released

Allen visited them at their hotel room that night  
     for a party

Jonas Mekas filmed it  
 Allen on harmonium & finger cymbals, Lennon on guitar  
 Phil Spector & Klaus Voorman also on guit's  
     doing the kind of thing so easily done  
     in those days  
 a jam session consisting of  
 mantras, Blake's "Nurse's Song,"  
 and then a medley of Lennon/Beatles  
 including "Yellow Submarine"  
     & "Give Peace a Chance."

•

That fall also Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky read at NYU's

on the south side of Washington Square

Allen, still surging with Trungpa's urging  
to go Spontaneous  
created a poem on the spot  
that lasted an hour, titled  
"Why write poetry down on paper  
when you have to cut down trees to make poetry books"

Unknown to the Bard,  
Bob Dylan & David Amram  
were standing in the back of the hall,  
digging the spont'-riffs

Dylan and Amram  
came over to Ginsberg's pad later that night  
where they jammed  
with Amram on his famous French horn,  
Dylan on a Guild  
& the 'Zap on harmonium

(Dylan gave him some chord lessons  
so that Ginsberg discovered he  
could improvise in a 12-bar blues format  
-Lightbulb!)

### THE RECORD PLANT SESSIONS

This led to some memorable recording sessions  
beginning on November 9, '71

at the Record Plant in NYC

Dylan brought a pal from Woodstock with him  
the singer/guitarist Happy Traum.  
Also on the sessions were Jon Sholle, David Amram, Ginsberg,  
and a number of poets  
including Gregory Corso, the Russian bard  
Andrei Voznesenky, and others

The filmmaker Barbara Rubin was on hand  
and I was there too  
my book on the Manson group, The Family, had just

I remember that someone was playing on a milk crate with  
wires stretched across it like a psychedelic psaltery.

There was a second session November 17  
Allen improvised an early version of  
“CIA Dope Calypso”  
with Dylan on guitar

There were other tunes, including “Going to San Diego,”  
an anthem urging  
everybody to go to San Diego  
and protest Richard Nixon  
(after Kent State & the secret bombing of Cambodia)  
–San Diego was at that time the site of the Republican Convention  
though later it was moved to Miami Beach

They also recorded Allen’s “September on Jessore Road”  
which he was just putting in final form  
in these temporary moments  
in the quick flow of the Seventies

## Part XIX

The poet, publisher & counterculture leader John Sinclair  
had been set up for a miniscule pot bust by an undercover  
agent in Michigan  
and sentenced to “10 years for 2 joints”  
It was a very very very unjust sentence.

By late 1971, John had been caged in maximum security  
for a couple of years  
and was a burning cause in the counterculture.

After I’d finished my book on the Manson group  
I wrote a long investigative poem called  
“The Entrapment of John Sinclair”  
tracing the Sinclair set-up  
which John Lennon read when it was published  
in the Los Angeles Free Press .

Lennon decided to do a concert in support of John Sinclair  
They booked Crisler Arena in Ann Arbor



It was an eery police state time in America—  
The entire weight of Attorney General John Mitchell's  
apparatus was about to focus on Lennon  
& sometimes our phones clicked and popped  
like a performance poet  
doing throat-boings

Miriam and I were living a couple of blocks from Lennon & Yoko Ono  
in the West Village  
and somehow our phone lines got crossed

I kept hearing this English chap trying to make calls  
while I was on the phone  
Finally I realized who it was,  
It was Lennon!  
so I complained to the phone company  
who said there was a shortage of lines  
which caused the screw-up

(which I found not quite believable)

The concert for John Sinclair occurred on a chilly December 10th  
Ginzap began the night by singing mantrams  
for about a half hour  
and performed one of his spontaneous poems.  
Stevie Wonder had just come out with "Superstition" and  
overwhelmed the packed crowd with his  
rendition

The great Phil Ochs was there; I read a poem, Bob Seger performed  
Jerry Rubin spoke, & others including Dave Dellinger & Rennie Davis

Phil told me that Lennon had called him to sing a song  
he'd written about Sinclair,  
He imitated Lennon's voice doing the opening lines  
"It ain't fair, John Sinclair  
Ten for 2 for smoking air"

The crowd was stunned to silence when John Sinclair spoke to  
the 20,000 from a phone at Marquette Prison.

There was a party afterwards,  
and the last thing that happened  
was Allen— it was almost dawn—

fingering chords on his harmonium &  
 singing to a very sleepy Lennon & Yoko  
 his long lament about suffering in India  
 "September on Jessore Road."

Lennon had told us that he was willing to do concerts  
 in city after city  
 till the counterculture hero was set free.

Fifty-five hours after Lennon and Yoko's performance  
 they let John Sinclair out of prison.

The Republicans had intended at that time to hold their  
 convention in San Diego  
 to renominate the Nix man  
 & Lennon had agreed to participate  
 in big demonstrations  
 in San Diego

I think it was then  
 that the INS, the FBI, the U.S. Senate even  
 took fierce action to toss Lennon out of the country.

1972

Early '72  
 saw a staged version  
 in a theater in Brooklyn  
 of the great poem "Kaddish"  
 which ran for a month

Allen then left for a tour of Australia with Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
 I remember he returned with tales of  
 the Aborigines and their concept of  
 "Universal Dream Time"

In May  
 in Boulder, Colorado  
 Allen took Buddhist refuge vows  
 He'd decided to place himself in the lineage of  
 Chögyam Trungpa,  
 the Tibetan Buddhist teacher  
 whom he had met in '71

He loved Trungpa much in the  
 way he'd loved Jack Kerouac

that is, one who called him to account  
at just about every point  
yet remained a friend

•

When Ginsberg was visiting Gary Snyder  
in Nevada City, California  
he decided to call presidential advisor Henry Kissinger  
at the White House

He got through! Allen wanted the future Secretary of State  
to get together with peace movement leaders  
such as Dave Dellinger  
to forge a dialogue.

Apparently Eugene McCarthy offered to host such a meeting  
and Allen tried to set it up,  
but, you know, a bard can get through  
to someone like Kissinger once,  
but not twice.

I recall how Allen told me  
he had these dreams about Kissinger  
which caused such anger  
that he was grinding  
his teeth down  
as he slept!

•

In June there was a weird break-in at the Democratic offices  
at the Watergate Hotel complex in D.C.  
Some CIA-connected guys, plus a right wing Cuban,  
were arrested  
and thus the Fates were about to unravel  
what Nixon was trying to weave

Ginsberg went to Miami with Peter Orlovksy  
to commit civil disobedience  
at the Republican Convention (moved there from San Diego)

He had prepared an ambitious collection of verse,  
The Fall of America (Poems 1965-1971)  
one of his finest books  
& it was about to be published in late '72  
to win him the National Book Award

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1973

Early in the year the 'Zap  
fell on ice at his Cherry Valley farm  
and broke his leg. A few weeks later, April 19-21  
Miriam, daughter Deirdre (then 8), and I  
visited A.G. at the farm

As we wended our way o'er very rural road-ruts  
in our Land Rover  
I spotted A.G. sitting in a reclining aluminum chair  
in bibbed overalls and leg-cast  
by the driveway

He was writing some short poems he called  
"Annotations to Amitendranath Tagore's Sung Poetry."

Just as we arrived he jotted:

"Right leg broken, can't walk around  
visit the fishpond to touch the cold water,  
tramp through willows to the lonely meadow across the brook—  
here comes a metal landrover, brakes creaking hello."

He read it to us, hot from his bard-eye.  
We spent a couple of days there.  
Part of the fun was going with Allen to a farm auction  
We went rockhounding in nearby road cuts  
for Devonian fossils &  
Miriam & Allen cooked a groovy stir-tossed dinner  
of asparagus/Chinese mushrooms/onion chunks/ ginger/oil  
in a huge iron frying pan  
a repast that A.G. had learned from Gary Snyder

On Easter afternoon  
we drove the pain-legged bard back down to  
his apartment in the Lower East Side  
with his cast arest on a round-topped trunk  
we'd bought at the auction

## Part XX

1973

When Miriam, I and Deirdre  
 had visited the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
 we'd found him in an introspective mood  
     after breaking his leg on the ice at his  
                     farm in Cherry Valley

He did seem more subdued  
     & he was in pain

He had just been inducted, with Kurt Vonnegut,  
 into the very prestigious  
     American Academy of Arts & Letters

It was the months of the Watergate mess  
 and it slowly was becoming apparent  
     that Nixon might come to justice.

Because of John Lennon's 1971 concert for John Sinclair  
 & his general antiwar stance  
     the forces of Attorney General John Mitchell  
     tried to toss him out of the country  
     though he was living here legally

They reached back to a small pot bust in England  
 as an excuse

Lennon brought his energy & vast international clout  
 (plus his big financial resources)  
     to organize an impressive defense

Allen did what he could to assist Lennon  
 and during that year he also worked his network  
     to defend Timothy Leary who had at long last  
     been seized by the U.S. in Afghanistan,  
     after a long flight from  
     another miniscule pot bust  
     that had 'shroomed  
     in police state stupidity  
     into a big deal

It was also the year Abbie Hoffman was busted,  
charged with dealing  
& energy was poured forth to help him also.

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Thriving in the chaos-moil, Allen went on a long tour of Europe  
still on crutches, leg in a cast

His new collection, The Fall of America  
Poems 1965-71  
was getting the type of attention & praise  
that bards tremble to receive

### THE CIA/KISSINGER OVERTHROW

Meanwhile, before he could be byebye'd  
Nixon, plus Henry Kissinger and the military-industrial-surrealists  
in their serial aggression  
organized a coup against the elected leftist gov't in Chile

On September 11, CIA-backed military men  
attacked the presidential palace and  
killed the elected president of Chile  
Salvador Allende

It was a time of evil.  
When the great Pablo Neruda died a few days later  
the new right-wing nut government of Chile  
would not allow a public funeral

Ginsberg had been a friend of Neruda's  
and mourned.  
He vowed to try to have Kissinger imprisoned  
if Nicanor Parra or any of his other  
Chilean friends  
should come to evil.

Another great poet died also around that time  
W. H. Auden on September 28  
A.G. & Auden had not long ago read together  
in England

It was adding up.  
It wasn't so much Time's Wingéd Chariot  
but the whack whack whack of the Scythe Man  
in the Time-Track

& the futility of it all

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that pointed the bard toward

meditation & an actual religious practice.

He was about as famous as a bard can be

but it was a different fame than that gi'en poets

more belovéd by the people

such as, say, John Greenleaf Whittier

or Robert Frost

It was the fame of turbulence, of an acid-age Sappho,

or a Whitman without the 19th century constraints

of jail-risk & censorship

So, the great bard turned to

Vajrayana Buddhism

& the teachership of Chögyam Trungpa

Ginsberg took part in a 3-month retreat near  
Jackson Hole, Wyoming in late 1973

He sat many hours a day

sorting through his rich

mind-river

& wrote a lot

including "Mind Breaths"

which would be the title verse

for his book of 1978

1974

Ginzap won the well-deserved National Book Award

for The Fall of America

Poems 1965-71

—with some fine poems,

including "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

& the poem about calming the Hell's Angels in the fall of '65

at Ken Kesey's

& the elegies to Neal Cassady

& Ché Guevara

& Frank O'Hara

& I can't not mention the poem

"Consulting I Ching Smoking Pot

Listening to the Fugs Sing Blake."

It was about the only major literary  
 award Allen received  
 He always hankered for more—  
                   the Pulitzer and, say, the Nobel Prize  
 though he was just a tad too, uh, erotic  
                   for the long-sought phone call from Stockholm.

Once we were talking about the MacArthur Fellowships,  
 and the 'Zap brought forth a kind of high-pitched, anguished,  
 c'mon! tone to his voice:

                  "I want one of those!"

•

Meanwhile Chögyam Trungpa  
                   wanted to open a Buddhist poetry school  
                   in Boulder, Colorado

                  & asked Allen, Anne Waldman, & others  
   to help him

It was the summer of Nixon's famous farewell  
                                   helicopter trip  
                                   cleansing the White House

& there was a mote of hope in the nation.

Allen & Anne Waldman  
                   became the cofounders of the school  
 but what to name it?  
 Anne came up with the Gertrude Stein School  
                   —probably in the long term  
                                   a better name, though not  
                                   without drawbacks  
 but A.G. wanted a Kerouacian symbolism  
                   and Anne summoned what was to be:  
 The Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics  
 which had its first  
                   summer session in '74.

This was the same summer A.G., Peter Orlovksy  
 & Orlovsky's friend Denise Mercedes, worked on his cottage  
                   at Kittkidizze  
                   in the gold country



1975

In the spring of '75  
Bob Dylan was back in New York  
with a kind of '64-'65 hard edge  
hanging out in Greenwich Village clubs

His album Blood on the Tracks  
had been a big success.

After the summer he decided to go on the road  
in a bus  
with friends

Bass player Rob Stoner he charged with setting up a band.  
And he invited Joan Baez, his  
friend from the early '60s

The concept grew  
to include security guys, advance workers  
(who go in advance to every place where a  
concert will happen  
to set up hotels, meet with concert hall staff,  
work the media  
et alia multa)

D. had decided to make a movie  
Sam Shepard was brought aboard  
to write spontaneous scripts

At 4 a.m. one morn Dylan called Ginsberg  
& invited him to join the  
tour

Allen got Dylan's permission  
to invite William Burroughs  
but W.B. wasn't about to  
get sucked into the  
chaos/coke/chasm  
of a mid-'70s rock & roll flow.

## Part XXI

We left our tale of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
in the fall of 1975

when he was invited by Bob Dylan to  
join the Rolling Thunder Review

It was ten years since Dylan had given Allen  
the money to purchase a fancy Uher tape recorder  
with which he wrote his brilliant  
“Wichita Vortex Sutra”

Allen continued his awed perception of Mr. Dylan  
and was flattered  
to be asked aboard the Thunder

It was organized in secrecy  
Apparently not even the musicians knew  
what town they would play in  
till the day of the gig

There were many musicians  
who performed in segments,  
and then all came onstage for the finale:  
“This Land is Your Land”

And so it began.  
On November 3, after a few concerts,  
Ginsberg, Dylan, Sam Shepard, Peter Orlovsky  
and the film crew  
visited Jack Kerouac’s grave in Lowell, Massachusetts  
where A.G. chanted from K.’s Mexico City Blues  
then he and Dylan sat cross-legged by the stone  
& composed a slow spontaneous blues  
exchanging stanzas for Kerouac  
'Zap on harmonium, Dylan on guitar.

The Rolling Thunder buses came to Madison Square Garden  
December 5, 1975  
for a concert  
to raise money to help free  
Rubin “Hurricane” Carter

The night before R. Thunder had performed  
in the prison where Carter was being held  
for a murder he did not commit

(\$100,000 was raised at the Garden  
and, after six more years, Carter was finally freed)

### SNOWMASS

Meanwhile, an incident occurred  
at a Buddhist retreat in Snowmass, Colorado  
that caused quite a stir in literary circles.

The well known American poet W.S. Merwin &  
his partner, Dana Naone,  
were attending what is known as a Seminary

Merwin and Naone had spent the summer at Naropa  
in Boulder

He'd given a reading with John Ashbery  
a couple of lectures, and a workshop

That fall Chögyam Trungpa invited the couple  
to take part in the Seminary, which lasted three months,  
from early September till around Thanksgiving, 1975  
at the Eldorado ski lodge, at Snowmass, about 14 miles  
northeast of Aspen.

There were from 125 to 130 in attendance.  
At the Seminary about a month was spent on Hinayana,  
a month on Mahayana and the final 30 days on Vajrayana

The schedule set two weeks of lectures & classes  
followed by two weeks of sitting & meditation

### A Halloween Party

Trungpa decided to have the group hold a party on October 31  
and that everyone should wear a costume

The party was held in what Merwin described as a  
“semi-dark ski-lodge dining room” of “boom-resort architecture.”

The place was packed



Early in the year  
Allen had to leave the Rolling Thunder Review with  
the very bad news that his 80 year old poet father,  
Louis, had been diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

Always a family man, Allen rushed to his father's aid  
"Don't ever grow old," was Louis' advice. Louis required  
constant care, but it appeared as if he would survive for a while

so the bard could take a two week trip to Paris & Brussels.  
In March he taught a course at Naropa  
on the poetry of Charles Reznikoff

#### Recording with John Hammond

In June the bard began recording with producer John Hammond  
who'd done primal sessions for  
Bob D. and Bruce Springsteen

The 'Zap  
unafraid and unhesitant as always  
brought Hammond the improvised blues from the '71 Dylan dates  
plus his settings of Blake  
& a copy of his book First Blues

Hammond produced 8 new songs in the June sessions  
which, with the tunes from the Dylan sessions,  
were enough for an album.

Columbia, in its beneficence,  
coughed up an advance of \$3,000  
plus paid session rates for the musicians involved  
(Arthur Russell, Jon Sholle, David Mansfield,  
& a young man on recorder from Glassboro State College in  
NJ named  
Steve Taylor  
who was to become very important in the bard's  
experiments in music  
the next 21 years)

•

Allen was teaching at Naropa the next month—  
America's Bicentennial  
when July 8 a horrible call that Louis had passed away in his sleep.



Allen Ginsberg  
now in his fifties  
kept up his complicated balance  
of research, writing, actual Buddhist practice, founding a school,  
coping with his eros,  
& singing now, always, the High Metabolism  
Gotta Roam Blues  
(a midlife variety of his "Father Death Blues")

These were the years he  
was formally investigating the activities of  
the FBI & intelligence agencies.

(The reader will recall how A.G. in the '60s  
& early '70s did historic research in  
the connection between the CIA  
& drug smuggling from Southeast Asia.  
There was his famous bet with CIA  
chief Richard Helms of 1971.)

An attorney named Ira Lowe, in D.C. helped Allen  
and others (including myself)  
get their secret files

F.O.I.A.

Though some complain that it's still difficult to get their files  
one of the marvels of America is  
the Freedom of Information Act of 1966  
which requires that the records of U.S. government agencies  
be made available to the public.  
The law states that such information must be made available  
within ten working days as a rule  
to the person requesting it.

The law exempts nine classes of information including  
some related to national security

The F.O.I.A. was amended by the Privacy Act of 1974, which requires federal  
agencies to provide individuals with any information in their files relating to them and  
to amend incorrect records.

It was this law that A.G. used to sail into the  
 haunts of the secret police to examine its campaign  
 in the 1960s which effectively  
 wiped out the Underground Press movement

Allen amassed a big collection of FBI and government documents.  
 He worked with the writers/editors group called PEN  
 and its Freedom to Write Committee  
 to present this research to the public  
 –a project he called “Smoking Typewriters”

\*

### READING WITH LOWELL

February 23, '77 Allen read with Robert Lowell  
 for the Poetry Project  
 at St. Mark's Church in NYC  
 Since Lowell had enormous stature  
 in the academic world  
 the reading gave Allen  
 a sense of well-tuned satisfaction,  
 as he said at the time:

“What this means is that people won't be able  
 to attack me so easy anymore  
 because I'm, in a sense, protected by his regard.  
 If he's willing to read on the same platform with me  
 & say I wrote a masterpiece –Kaddish– it means  
 I can't be considered a barbarian jerk,  
 which is what I've been having to listen to  
 year after year.”

It was a famous reading and the great Lowell,  
 who had once, in 1965, declined to attend  
 a White House Arts Festival because of the war,  
 was so soon to pass away, age 60,  
 on September 12

### LUNCH WITH COUNTERINTELLIGENCE CHIEF

I had a chat on the phone with the 'Zap



on April 25, '77

He said he had picked up from Ira Lowe some of my  
FBI files,

one of which indicated the Bureau had  
Miriam's and my pad on Avenue A (in the '60s)  
under surveillance  
since, for instance, it described how once I left the house  
& entered an automobile.

He and Peter Orlovsky had recently lunched  
with the legendary former CIA counterintelligence chief  
James Angleton

Angleton, whose cover was blown as director of counterintelligence  
in fine reportage by Seymour Hersh in the New York Times back in '74  
(Angleton complained later to Hersh that his wife  
had no idea for 31 years he was the feared  
counterchief  
and as a result had left him!)  
had been forced from his job.

Anyway, by the time Peter Orlovsky & Ginsberg had lunch with him  
the superspy was working on a book, Allen told me,  
& quite anecdotally fluent.

Angleton told Ginsberg he had ordered Ezra Pound into the  
Pisan tiger cage in '45 to keep him from being killed  
by Partisans.

At the time Allen was researching the names of  
those whom the FBI & CIA had sent into U.S. domestic groups  
such as the Panthers  
to sow dissension  
under Cointelpro or Chaos.

Angleton, a lifelong friend of T.S. Eliot's,  
gave A.G. the name of a deputy director of the FBI  
who, he said, held a master list of provos & informers.

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The PEN Center report was published in 1981  
by City Lights Books  
under the title Unamerican Activities, and included  
Ginsberg's Smoking Typewriters

and other essays on the activities of the secret police  
to stifle the alternate & underground press.

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That summer I taught a month-long class in  
Investigative Poetry  
at the Naropa Institute in Boulder.

The class voted to work together on a single  
poetic investigation  
& to my surprise  
decided to take a close look at

the incident between the poet W.S. Merwin, his  
mate Dana Naone, and Chögyam Trungpa & his  
vajraguards  
that had occurred at the Buddhist retreat  
in Colorado on Halloween '75.

For a month the class conducted interviews  
& searched for the truth  
by creating a composite weave  
of statements from those who  
had observed the event & aftermath

The result was a book, fabled in its time, titled  
The Party, A Chronological Perspective on a Confrontation  
at a Buddhist Seminary.

To his credit, Allen did nothing whatsoever to  
hinder the research  
though it pained his heart.

## Part XXIII

We left our history of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
in the summer of 1977

when he was supervising an investigation  
of the activities of the FBI and the CIA  
and other intelligence agencies

against the antiwar and Underground Press movements

As we have noted he secured the services of  
attorney Ira Lowe in D.C.  
to help poets get their files

(Lowe obtained some of mine for instance)

Ginsberg was at the level of Blizzard Fame  
The letters, phone messages, knocks on the doors,  
manuscripts demanding book blurbs  
    blizzarded in to Box 582  
    Stuyvesant Station  
    NY, NY 10009

In the late summer/fall of 1977 Ginsberg worked  
on his next book for City Lights, Mind Breaths Poems 1972-77  
with some excellent poems, "Don't Grow Old,"  
(about his father)

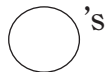
"Ego Confession," plus a high-energy  
poem about being mugged  
on East 10th

    in which he was probably the only  
    person in the history of  
    Lower East Side muggery  
    to have chanted "Om Ah Hum"  
    o'er and o'er during the mugging,  
and in the book another fine poem  
    "Contest of Bards"

•

There was never a bard with so many friends  
& so many humans whom he animated

He had circles in France  
Circles in Italy  
Circles in LA  
Circles in Boston  
There were Circles from his visits to India  
Circles in China! &



all through Eastern Europe!

& all swirling in his retentive mind

Most of them felt DIRECTLY connected to him  
and they all wanted action!

•

October of '77  
he was in the air on the way  
to a symposium called "LSD: A Generation Later"  
at UC Santa Cruz

and dropped a hit in the plane  
thinking about the CIA & LSD.  
Later at the symposium  
he told what he had done and asked  
"Am I, Allen Ginsberg, the product of  
one of the CIA's lamentable, ill-advised, or  
triumphantly successful  
experiments in mind control?"

•

There comes a time in the  
Glut of 20th Century Stuff that a bard  
especially a pack rat like Allen  
HAS TO ACHIEVE SOME SORT OF  
Zenification of the data chaos!

The 'Zap kept everything  
doodles on napkins  
gigantic blizzards of incoming mail

He had moved to a building at 437 East 12th street  
near Avenue A and Tompkins Park  
where he had taken two apartments on the  
same floor and connected them

The result was a complex of small rooms  
that served him well

He finally had walls for bookshelves; a room where all the  
tapes of his readings were organized (he  
taped EVERY single reading- there must have  
been thousands of cassettes)



do prostrations  
at his new pad on East 12th.

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•

Ginsberg performed in Woodstock, NY in December of '77  
with Peter Orlovsky, Happy Traum & a  
young man named Steven Taylor  
whom he'd met at Taylor's New Jersey college in '76

It was amazing. Taylor had a beautiful high tenor voice  
and could follow Allen's vocal phrasing as  
adroitly as a ventriloquist!

& those of us in the audience at the Woodstock Artists Association  
were astounded  
at how Taylor's harmony voice floated  
in a kind of mystic perfection  
above Allen's bardic bass

For the rest of Ginsberg's life Taylor worked  
with him,  
touring, recording, arranging, and  
annotating his melodies.

Allen was upset with  
never-too-brave Columbia Records  
for recently declining to release the bard's album  
produced by John Hammond

Allen told me at the time that a Columbia executive  
said, "Ginsberg, you're shaking  
your putz out there  
in front of everybody" &

"What if William Paley heard it?"  
was another comment  
(Paley was the founder of CBS)

The album had such classics as  
"Everybody's Just a Little Bit Homosexual,"  
"Hard-on Blues"  
& "CIA Dope/Calypso."

John Hammond's comment on the project:  
"It's absolutely brilliant"

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•

Allen spent the winter of '77/'78 at his Cherry Valley farm

though I note that in January o' '78  
he came out on stage one night  
improvising poetry at an Iggy Pop concert.

That year  
Ginzap taught a line-by-line course on William Blake's  
The Book of Urizen

(after Allen passed away, I heard that  
the transcriptions of his various lectures on Blake  
at Naropa were something like 2,000 pages long)

Allen began to focus on the Rocky Flats nuclear plant near Boulder  
where they built the plutonium triggers  
for the Bomb  
Plutonium had leaked out into nearby ground water.

1978 was a big year for the anti-nuke movement.  
It was reflected at Rocky Flats by ongoing demonstrations  
particularly at the railroad tracks leading into the place

In June of '78 Allen  
wrote his antinuke/antibomb "Plutonian Ode"  
& less than a day after finishing it  
he was arrested for blocking the railway  
at Rocky Flats.  
At the court hearing where he entered a plea  
he read the poem to a crowded room  
then returned to the tracks  
—a group of protesters had put up a tepee on the ties—  
& was arrested a second time.

## Part XXIV

We left our history of the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
in the summer of 1978 when  
he was arrested at Rocky Flats

released  
then returned to be arrested again  
the same day

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blocking the railcars of plutonium  
coming in to build the triggers of doom.

•

November 30-December 2  
saw the great Nova Convention  
in New York City  
honoring William Burroughs

There was a wide variety of performers  
including John Cage, Merce Cunningham,  
Brion Gysin, Laurie Anderson, myself,  
Anne Waldman, Frank Zappa, Philip Glass  
& others  
including Robert Anton Wilson  
& Timothy Leary

to celebrate the shy-bold humorist  
and space prophet from St. Louis.

•

Two books in '78:  
Mind Breaths  
and a book of his correspondence  
with Neal Cassady

•

In February 1979  
The National Arts Club gave Allen its Gold Medal  
for his lifetime achievement in poetry

at the club headquarters on Gramercy Park South  
with the great Ted Berrigan as master of ceremonies

Luminous minds of many sorts were on hand  
such as John Ashbery, who said,  
"I think he's changed the role  
of the poet in America. Now everybody



experiences poetry. It's much closer to us now  
 than it was twenty years ago. And I think  
 that is due not only to his poetry  
       but to his truly exemplary way of living."

Allen toured in the spring through Europe  
 with Peter Orlovsky and Steven Taylor  
       By now Taylor was the musical firmament  
       on which the 'Zap rested

Taylor brought Allen's songs  
                                   to art  
 with his perfect harmonies  
 & his skills at arranging

That summer Allen taught a course at Naropa  
 that went line by line  
       through Wm. Blake's "Vala, or the Four Zoas"

In the fall he toured Europe again for several months  
 in those exhilarating/exhausting  
                                   cycles of the thrill of performance

only to return to his New York office  
 & Glutted Mountains of mail and duty!  
       in what Thomas Carlyle called the  
                                   "Dry-as-Dusts"

The politics of America of course impinged  
                                   upon its most political of Bards

Back in July of '79  
 the Sandinista National Liberation Front  
 had tossed out the creepy Somoza family dictatorship  
 (in place since 1934)

The Sandinistas nationalized some industries  
 & right-wingers around the world rolled their eyes  
                                   in Domino-Theory dread.

During those months the slow-building stage was hauled into place  
 that led to the Contras  
       Irangate  
       & the continuing involvement of

Another big crisis was the November 4 seizure of 66 U.S. embassy  
employees  
in Tehran by students

who demanded the return of the Shah of Iran for trial.  
(The Shah was in the United States for cancer treatment)

President Carter was perceived as “weak” for his handling,  
especially when the attempt on April 24, '81  
to rescue the hostages failed.

Ginsberg’s bardic sniffing skills  
were sniffing  
a right wing drift  
& he didn’t dig it

•

Meanwhile his guru, Chögyam Trungpa  
had encouraged the bard to consider  
wearing a suit and tie  
so as to get a more serious  
hearing from his audiences.

Allen’s haberdasheries were the various Goodwills  
in the cities he visited  
but soon he began to sport  
white shirts, ties and suit coats.

I chuckled at the emphasis on suits and ties  
recalling how I’d seen the great 'Zap  
back in 1959, and then in '60  
at poetry readings  
wearing the same shirt  
& it wasn’t clear if it had been  
given a intervening wash

•

Added to the moil in Nicaragua & Iran  
was the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan

where there had been a Marxist coup in 1978

followed by the kind of shooting &  
 clique-kill confusion  
 that led to a Soviet invasion  
 in December of '79.

This gave the CIA and other clandestine services  
 the chance  
 to intervene secretly against the Russians  
 in a long & hounding war

a legacy that's still not very well understood  
 (& will not be till  
 the activities of the CIA & Reagan's CIA director Wm Casey  
 are fully explicated.)

Carter was battered by it  
 especially when he stupidly refused  
 to allow American athletes to compete  
 after training all their lives  
 in the 1980 Moscow Olympics

1980

And so, when 1980 blossomed in the Time Garden  
 Allen Ginsberg faced  
 an uncertain American future--

After all, had he not won the National Book Award  
 for a tome titled The Fall of America?

Thanks to Steven Taylor in the main  
 Allen began to write Public Poems  
 with Music  
 on political themes

a pattern he continued all the way to his passing in 1997

Political Poems with Music for 1980 include  
 "Birdbrain" and  
 "Capitol Air"

1980 saw Allen compose one of the century's finest  
 environmental poems:  
 his "Homework"

with its startling series of lines

on what it would be like to clean up  
the Earth’s polluted air & waters,  
beginning

“If I were doing my Laundry I’d wash my dirty Iran  
I’d throw in my United States, and pour on the Ivory Soap,  
scrub up Africa, put all the birds and elephants back in  
the jungle,  
I’d wash the Amazon river and clean the oily Carib & Gulf of  
Mexico,  
Rub that smog off the North Pole, wipe up all the pipelines  
in Alaska,  
Rub a dub dub for Rocky Flats and Los Alamos, Flush that  
sparkly Cesium out of Love Canal  
Rinse down the Acid Rain over the Parthenon & Sphinx.....”

& flowing onward with startling images  
-It’s worth finding and memorizing  
& then to take action!  
Allen would have wanted your  
action.

MARCH 1980

The Party was published  
-the poetry group I’d taught at Naropa had voted  
to set it loose to the public  
& it was nicely produced by Susan Quasha at  
Station Hill Press in Barrytown near Bard College.

Tom Clark also published a book on the Trungpa/Merwin/Naone  
incident,  
The Great Naropa Poetry Wars

and so Allen was upsettedly swept up again in the moil & boil  
of this matter  
for about another year  
till the literary kettle ceased to spew.

Over his shoulder the bard heard the iron clacks  
of Reagan’s stern-wheel’d chariot.

Reagan showed the kind of robotic persistence  
that Democrats often lack:

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He tried in '68, ping!  
He tried in '72, ping!  
He tried in '76, ping!  
and then in 1980, he won the nomination!

Carter swung to the right on domestic issues  
He refused to support Senator Edward Kennedy's  
historic  
"Health Care for All Americans Act"

and the first real chance for a National Health Care System  
since Truman's 1948 proposal  
was shot down in  
grimy conservative-Democratic  
lack of vision

•

That year the bard received a \$10,000  
NEA Creative Writing fellowship

He'd become friends with financier George Soros  
For years the bard went to the New Years parties  
thrown by Soros and his wife Susan  
Back in the late '70s he was worth a mere \$600 million  
and when Allen won the NEA  
he called him and asked what he  
could do with the money

Soros laughed & suggested he put it in the bank.

•

In October the filmmaker Barbara Rubin died  
of postnatal infection  
in France  
after giving birth to her fifth child

She was a ceaseless advocate for interesting art & music  
during the '60s  
(She was the first one to point out to me the presence  
of the Velvet Underground)

Barbara had located the Cherry Valley farm Allen bought  
& can be seen rubbing Dylan's aching head  
on the Bringing It All Back Home album jacket

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Rubin, whose films include Christmas on Earth,  
once hoped to settle down with Allen in Cherry Valley  
later married and lived as a devout Chasid  
till the Scythe Man seized her early too early too early

•

Allen was on tour in Europe  
when someone told him the ghastly news  
December 10 of John Lennon's shooting,  
an event that tore out the soul  
of a decade much  
as Kent State had done  
in 1970

To Allen it was as if someone had stolen the  
Mona Lisa's smile  
from the time-track.

## Part XXV

In 1981  
on rising  
he'd record his dream thoughts  
in the long gift of Jung & Freud

do prostrations  
(as part of his Buddhist practice)  
then discuss his daily schedule  
with Bob Rosenthal  
the General Manager of his  
interface with the  
gnawing public

It was a year when Ronald Reagan & th'  
neo-cons  
began the attack on the Nicaraguan Revolution

•

He'd returned to his two-apartment complex  
 on East 12th in NYC in early 1981  
 after a long five-country tour of Europe  
     with Peter Orlovksy & Steve Taylor

He was at the age where a big one-nighter tour  
 started to take what they always  
 call a "toll"

–a sort of Scorch Tax  
     on his physicality and his continuing  
 ability, to use the words of Tuli Kupferberg,  
 to "stay above room temperature."

•

He always carefully arranged the things  
 of his pad  
     artworks, books, meditation zones  
     his writing supplies

almost as minutely precisioned as, say,  
     Robert Creeley

•

Early in March  
 novelist Bill Burroughs, Jr., son of William  
 died in Florida  
     of cirrhosis of the liver  
 He'd had a transplant in '76  
 I remember him throwing up blood  
     in our apartment at Naropa one summer

Later, hopelessly craving alcohol,  
 he would sit on the floor of the Liquor Mart  
     in Boulder  
     chugging vodka

to join the flow  
 of the solar system's  
     second generation stardust  
 as quickly as he could.

Allen returned to Naropa in the spring

where he taught a minutely detailed  
“Literary History of the Beat Generation”

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& organized Bill Burroughs, Jr.’s papers  
made sure that Billy’s journals were  
typed into manuscript form

as for the “Literary History of the Beat Generation”  
it was duly taped  
& no doubt transcripts are held in the  
Allen Ginsberg Library at Naropa

Conservatives & Literary Opponents  
sneered at Ginsberg often  
as some sort of  
barbarian invader

but in truth he was a better scholar than  
just about all of them.

Time will drum this truth.  
In fact, he was a great scholar  
The same ferocity for accurate detail  
he brought to, say, the history  
of the CIA & heroin smuggling  
in SE Asia

he brought to the details of  
Poesie’s History.

He could recite by mind  
thousands of lines of verse

& knew the history of poetic things  
as much as any staid professor  
in bentwood walls

How do I know this?  
Read the transcripts of his essays,  
interviews & lectures

June ’81

The ’Zap had gone back to NYC and  
was getting ready for a long tour



when he went to a club called Bonds to  
meet a group called the Clash

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and went backstage to meet them

The lead singer, Joe Strummer, asked the bard  
to read some poetry

Instead he proposed his po-tune "Capitol Air"  
They rehearsed it

a few minutes

& A.G. sang it for the 3,000 awaiting

thus adding a new-wave hero band to those with whom  
he had performed (the Fugs, Phil Ochs, John Lennon,  
Dylan, et alia multa)

SUMMER '81

Ginsberg worked on the proofs of  
Plutonian Ode: Poems 1977-1980  
for City Lights

his 8th for Ferlinghetti's great House  
(if you count Iron Horse, published  
in tandem with Toronto's Coach House Press)

•

All these tastes of the mega-stage  
with rockers  
helped him hunger to form a band.  
In August I heard from a staff member  
that Ginsberg was going to call his band  
Glass of Chicken

Glass of C. apparently  
was Corso's term for Shambhala

•

A RETURN IN TRIUMPH

The bard loved to return to Columbia  
for triumphal readings

as if he had some sort of spot on the palm  
 from his university days of the '40s

November 14, 1981  
 marked his third historic reading  
 at McMillan Theater

for a 25th anniversary recitation of "Howl"  
 Was it really twenty five years  
 since the great threnody/joy psalm  
 had been published!?

Jack Kerouac who had beaten time  
 on a jug of Burgundy  
 and shouted "Go! Go!"  
 during the first performance  
 at the Six Gallery back in th' fall o' '55  
 was gone  
 Neal gone  
 the surge of the late '50s & '60s gone  
 & the nation was oozing & spewing to the right

yet the theater was packed  
 His family far and near had gathered  
 and as one person who was there has described it:  
 "Many luminaries, including Carl Solomon were present.  
 Steve Taylor accompanied Allen..... The audience  
 was literally awestruck, one of the only times  
 I've experienced that. Allen made many funny asides  
 annotating his works  
 as he read."

Thunder always thunders.

•

In late '81 he moved to a house in Boulder  
 where he was to headquarter for the next five years  
 devoting himself more to the  
 growth of the Jack Kerouac School  
 of Disembodied Poetics  
 at the Naropa Institute

& left his New York office

worked on the text for  
Plutonian Ode: Poems 1977-1980  
for City Lights

•

EARLY '82

At Jimi Hendrix' Electric Ladyland studio  
on 8th St. in the Village  
the Clash were recording

Ginsberg spent a few days with them  
helped write three or four tunes  
His suggestions they tested  
on empty tracks  
to gauge their flow  
The bard loved the ambience of  
successful rockers  
and couldn't resist the urge to teach  
bringing them Gregory Corso's newest book for instance,  
and the City Lights classic Clean Asshole Poems by Peter Orlovsky.

The album was called Combat Rock  
and the bard, not always so modest  
did not ask for  
publishing royalties on the  
tunes he helped doctor.

•

JANUARY 16, 1982

Tuli Kupferberg & I got together  
with some hot musicians, including Coby Batty,  
John Zorn, Marc Kramer, Randy Hudson &  
Steve Taylor  
to play the Mudd Club in New York City

It was not quite a reunion of the Fugs  
(who had not performed since 1969)  
but close enough

I invited Allen to sing along with us when  
we performed Tuli's great tune "Nothing"  
from the first album of '65

Tuli basso'd forth with his traditional verses  
"Monday nothing Tuesday nothing  
Wednesday and Thursday nothing....."

The music was slow and properly eery  
John Zorn on saxophone  
Kramer on scary organ  
Coby Batty on hand held drum

Then Allen sang a verse  
in a slow Ancient Bard voice of declination:  
"New York Nothing  
Moscow Nothing Washington DC Nothing  
Salvador War fooooo Nothing  
Chögyam Trungpa (pause) Buddha (pause) Nothing"

•

Allen & Peter O flew to Nicaragua on January 21  
at the invitation of the poet Ernesto Cardenal  
(the minister of culture  
after the Sandinista Revolution of '79)

for an international literary festival  
in honor of the national poet of Nicaragua, Rubén Darío

The bard did not want to incite the kind of trouble  
he had  
back in 1965  
when he had been tossed, first from Cuba  
& then from Czechoslovakia

for this time the circumstances were very different.

Much had been learned by 1983  
of what the CIA and military intelligence  
had done in Chile in the early '70s  
to destabilize & overwhelm the  
freely elected left-edged government

Allen knew those intricacies, knew them well  
 & wanted to see for himself  
                                   what was going on in Nicaragua  
 without helping  
                                   the harbor-miners & Contra-feeding maw  
   of the Reagan era.

It was an era of the Lie  
 (For instance, New York's own Senator Patrick Moynihan  
 resigned from the Senate Intelligence Committee  
 in 1985 when CIA director Wm. Casey flat-out lied  
                                   under oath about the CIA mining of  
   Managua's harbor)

The Sandinista National Liberation Front that  
 finally overthrew the ghastly Somoza family dictatorship  
 was named for Augusto Cesar Sandino  
                                   a great Nicaraguan patriot  
                                   who was killed by Anastasio Somoza  
                                   on whose orders he was lured to an airport  
                                   in Managua and offed in '34.

The FSLN, as it was known, put together a broad coalition,  
 including business interests, to get rid of the dictatorship,

but Daniel Ortega's Sandinistas felt the opposition of the USA  
 from the very beginning

                                  During the festival  
 Allen, Ernesto Cardenal  
                                   & Yevgeny Yevtushenko  
 wrote a "Declaration of Three"  
 which called on the "world's writers to come  
 to Nicaragua to see with their own eyes  
 the reality of Nicaragua, and lift their voices  
 in defense of this country,  
                                   small but inspired."

Not long after Allen and Peter returned from Managua  
 a CIA destabilization plan, worth \$17 million in '82 dollars  
 oozed into the media.



now brought to Boulder a list of humans that included  
 Wm Burroughs, Gregory Corso, Diane di Prima, Carolyn Cassady,  
 Herbert Huncke, John Clellon Holmes, Lawrence Ferlinghetti,  
 Carl Solomon, Robert Frank, Joyce Johnson, Ken Kesey,  
 Ted Berrigan just months to live, Ray Bremser, Anne Waldman,  
 Michael & Joanna McClure, Timothy Leary, Paul Krassner &  
 Kerouac biographers  
 Ann Charters, Dennis McNally, Gerald Nicosia  
 plus Abbie Hoffman  
 & father-thirsty Jan Kerouac  
 now almost 30

There were over 130 “accredited” as they say  
 reporters on hand

Robert Frank filmed conversations  
 on the Chautauqua porch  
 where those of the Beats or Beat-touched  
 bumped & interacted  
 were introduced, or renewed antique friendships

A.G. was everywhere  
 urging and coordinating  
 sleeping just five a night

till it was over  
 & he took to bed for three days

It made Naropa good bread  
 but it had cost the Bard a few thousand of his own money  
 but money never measures the love of a soul

It was another pay-out for Jack  
 in the lineage of  
 Ginzap pressuring Mark Van Doren  
 on The Town & the City  
 so that Robert Giroux  
 accepted it unread from Van Doren  
 & a \$1,000 advance

& Ginzap coming up with the ending of Doctor Sax  
 & hundreds of other benevolences  
 toward his thankless pal





The reader will recall how back in 1978  
 the feeble-thinking & cowardly Columbia Records  
     had refused to put it out  
     so Hammond, the discoverer of Dylan,  
             formed his own label.

There had been additional sessions in '81  
 and now here it was,  
     24 tunes

### TO SING OR NOT TO SING

“...I know Allen will follow me around the world  
     with his terrible singing voice...”  
     –Ted Berrigan  
     Ann Arbor Song

In the matter of his music and singing  
     some liked, some disliked

Some felt it detracted from his writing  
     but it came from a long tradition  
     going back to Archilochus  
         & the choice of a bard  
         to sing, to chant, to recite  
         & to do all three  
             in freely-chosen combinations

Allen loved his voice  
 His phrasing was very good  
     Check out “Ballad of the Skeletons”  
     or the fast-metered  
     “CIA Dope Calypso”

&, with Steve Taylor singing harmony  
     say, on “Father Death Blues”  
     or “Do the Meditation”  
         it was very pleasing to see & to hear

but the 'Zap used as few chords as John Lennon  
 or the early Dylan  
     and, as art songs,  
         wend weakened in the Time Track

however brilliant the Mind & Voice  
infiring them.

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### A SCHOLAR AT SONG

Steve Taylor told me how once  
during the '80s  
he went to the Metropolitan Opera with Allen  
& the bard knew all the melodies & words  
of La Traviata by heart!

### PETER IN TROUBLE

As Allen and Steven Taylor toured Europe  
Peter Orlovsky was set to join them  
bringing his banjo & his fine skill at yodeling

yet Peter was again in sore trouble.

Always a caregiver  
& attentive to the super-minutiae of healing  
he'd nursed his father Oleg dying of cancer  
that fall  
trying to "ease the pain of living"  
till November 12 he'd passed away in NYC

He arrived in Europe  
moily & erratic  
& needing care himself

& strayed beyond Beat Generation standards  
for deportment on the road  
which were among the most relaxed standards  
in the history of western culture.

1983

John Lennon had suggested that A.G. do "Jessore Road"  
(from his 1971 tour of India  
the refugee horror on the road from  
Calcutta to East Pakistan)  
with a string quartet

Steven Taylor composed it & it was recorded in Amsterdam  
with the Mondrian String Quartet.

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Allen was in an interesting film called  
Poetry in Motion  
much of it shot in Toronto early in the year

then he went out on a big  
tour to “support”  
the double First Blues

returning to

’s of correspondence

•

June 3, his 57th birthday  
celebrated with his brother Eugene  
who had just turned 62

•

Burned out from Naropa he  
became codirector emeritus  
after ten years with Anne Waldman  
(and year ’pon year of flaming youth eagerness staff)  
creating probably the finest academy of its time

•

AUGUST 1983

The poet of beautiful vowels  
Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
& his City Lights Books  
had published all of Allen’s great collections

and what a March of Ink they were!!

Howl and Other Poems  
Kaddish and Other Poems  
Reality Sandwiches  
Planet News

The Fall of America  
Mind Breaths  
Plutonian Ode

– twenty five years of  
Bardic sizzle cymbal  
in the Final Ensemble

•

This was the year he secured the services  
of a young book agent  
famed for his brashness & boldness  
named Andrew Wylie  
who had begun his agenting in 1980  
by representing the great I.F. Stone  
in his book *The Trial of Socrates*.

Wylie urged the bard to publish a *Collected Poems*  
with a major publisher  
Allen was hesitant at first  
not wanting to break his  
long-time flow with Lawrence Ferlinghetti

They telephoned the author of *A Coney Island of the Mind*  
and he was less than happy  
so AG.. was ambivalent about proceeding

Then there was a breakthrough  
Wylie negotiated a six-figure contract  
with Harper & Row (later HarperCollins)  
which allowed Ferlinghetti  
to keep all of AG's *City Lights* books in print

Harper & Row would publish a *Collected Poems*,  
an annotated edition of "Howl,"  
(in the way that such a book had been done  
for Eliot's "Waste Land")  
a book of new poems (which was to  
contain the exquisite poem "White Shroud"),  
a volume of Letters,  
one of Essays, and one of Journals

(Wylie, who had studied ancient Greek at Harvard,  
then written for the underground papers and owned

a bookstore on Jones Street in the West Village,  
 w/ stints at cab driving and showing up at Max's Kansas City  
     in the afternoons for free fried chicken,  
 surged forth to become one of the most successful  
 of American literary agents  
     with around 300 clients at the  
     time of this writing  
     & offices in NY, London, Madrid, Tokyo  
     and perhaps other places too)

•

### MIRACLE DREAM

He was always a Dream Man  
 and so  
     he awakened before full light on October 5  
 in his apartment in Boulder

from a dream  
     no Gentleman from Porlock  
     would interrupt

to write one of his finest poems.  
 He called it "White Shroud"

It began with 10 rhymed & semi-rhymed couplets  
 the first one:

    "I am summoned from my bed  
     to the Great City of the Dead"

He was walking with the great pacifist writer  
     David Dellinger  
 It was a kind of Sheol, or Bronx Elysium

He comes across  
 a cranky-haired shopping bag lady sleeping on a wooden platform  
     in an alley  
 whom he startingly recognizes as Naomi!

    He spots  
     a nearby basement store  
     room where he could  
 live

“she needed my middle aged strength and worldly money knowledge,  
housekeeping art. I can cook and write books for a living,  
she’ll not have to beg her medicine food, a new set of teeth  
for company, won’t yell at the world, I can afford a telephone...”

Then he awakened  
in a “glow of life”

before dawn  
wrote down his poem, ran out of ink  
went downstairs  
where Peter Orlovksy was already up

“I kissed him & filled my pen and wept.”

•

I remember how A.G. had wept  
reading the Crazy Jane poems of Yeats.

'56

'83

a 27 year  
flow of guilt  
for Naomi

still minyan-less  
still with wires in her body  
still singing the Internationale  
from the Beyond

for a mother  
dying weirdly  
never dies.

## Part XXVII

FALL 1983

I spoke with Allen on October 25  
We chatted about many things

how to improve relations with Russia  
for instance  
& techniques he'd learned from Trungpa  
on the struggle against nukes

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He mentioned he was leaving Boulder

"I'm retiring here  
I'm about \$10,000 in debt  
because I've been sort of inert  
I've got about \$10,000  
in secretarial fees....

[He'd not been touring since the spring]

I'm coming back to NY  
[after a few years in Boulder]  
"I've hired an agent, Andrew Wylie,  
to peddle my books to Madison Avenue  
for a standard edition of poetry & prose  
about 4 volumes– collected poetry & everything.

I'm coming back to NY in December  
& I'm going to try to restructure my  
whole finances."

I broke in, "I thought you did some investing with your brother  
I thought you were set up for life!"

He protested, "Oh No! NO  
I'm just living on what I make from readings  
and what I get from City Lights  
(reportedly about \$7k a year)

E.S.: "I thought you had salted away  
a lot over the years."

A.G.: "No, I've got to do it now (laughs)  
I'm going to see if I can do something  
w/ my papers at Columbia  
to get an annuity out of them  
as Robert Bertholf suggested

I have all of my stuff  
more or less intact

I sold some stuff to Columbia  
 Literary letters from Burroughs, Kerouac & Corso  
 That's the only thing missing  
 The "Kaddish" I gave away  
                                   to the Living Theater  
                                   [for a benefit auction]

They say it's worth anywhere from  
 200,000    500,000    a million  
                                   nobody knows  
 I'm getting too old to run around now.

I'm getting more and more interested in  
                                   technical stuff  
 writing glyconics  
                                   & things like that"

Want to hear some?"

"Sure," I replied.

Then he chanted a complicated pattern of verse he'd written  
 in metrical couplets: the first line a glyconic  
 & the second in what's known as 2nd Asclepiadean:

[ — ∪ — ∪ ∪ — || — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ]

— ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —  
 "One deep time I could write of death

— ∪ — ∪ ∪ — || — ∪ ∪ — ∪ — ∪  
 Love joy God in my youth Loves in my heart I carry

— ∪ — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —  
 Now new love in my age I feel

— ∪ — ∪ ∪ — — ∪ ∪ — ∪ —  
 Right speech come to my heart Time for the Muse to Weep...."

& other glyconic/Asclepiadean couplets  
                                   chanted he  
                                   in his thrilled-with-verse  
                                   voice of the Bard

"I find it easy to do those,"  
                                   he said



Through Henry Geldzahler, then the NYC Commissioner of Culture,  
and Raymond Foye, Allen met a famous young artist  
named Francesco Clemente  
and his wife Alba  
and began a friendship that lasted to the end.

AG always had a flair for design and drawing  
and festooned his books at signings  
with ornate ouroboroi, skulls with flowers in the teeth,  
and many kinds of intricate inkery

The bard worked with Clemente on a remarkable & beautiful edition  
of “White Shroud”

A.G. hand-inked the poem into a folio at Francesco’s studio  
on December 20  
and then the artist illustrated the brilliant verse  
with some thrilling watercolor figures  
including a stunning green ouroboros at the close  
where, instead of the snake holding its tail in its mouth  
a human head mouths a breast

The folio was published as a book  
for a Clemente exhibition in Basel in '94

'84

The New York Times Sunday Magazine ran “White Shroud”  
early in the year

and then on March 15 The New York Times  
published a blacklist created by the Reagan-era  
United States Information Agency  
of prominent Americans not to be  
invited for government-funded overseas appearances—  
there on the blacklist along with Ralph Nader,  
Walter Cronkite, Betty Friedan and Coretta Scott King  
was the great bard Allen Ginsberg!

•

Meanwhile, the 'Zap set about creating  
a little better sense of order  
in his part of the universe

All his life  
 all the way back to the Spanish civil war  
 he'd been a compulsive news clipper  
 and he was also the Kodak Man!

Ann Charters had gathered some of his photos  
 back in 1970  
 for a small collection called Scenes Along the Road

but few sensed what photographic hugeness  
 lurked in the Forest Ginsberg!

Ginsberg's photos were "on deposit" along with his gigantic archives  
 at Butler Library at Columbia

On deposit meant that they were open to scholars  
 with the bard's permission

Over the years he'd sent people to the photos in the archives  
 and sometimes the prints & negatives both wd. disappear

A.G. asked a young writer & publisher named Raymond Foye  
 to work on the photos

Foye went to Butler Library  
 & was rather horrified to see the negatives out of their sleeves  
 & scattered here and there in the boxes

There were thousands upon thousands of  
 his photographs  
 many of them still in their '40s/'50s packets  
 from the Tompkins Square Park pharmacy  
 where he'd had them developed

Many were the large old-style negatives, 2 1/4-inch square,  
 which stood the test of blow-up well

that is, would a scrubbly-chinned, defiant Jack Kerouac  
 leaning up against a Lower East Side roof-wall in 1953  
 stand the test of becoming a 11X14 art print?

Foye tried to keep a chronological sense of the rolls  
 putting the negatives into archival sleeves  
 creating a numbering system in 3-ring notebooks

AG studied the prints and contact sheets  
selecting what he liked

He tried blowing up a few of the negs  
onto top quality 11X14 paper

Brian Graham made prints of those choices  
(Graham is Robert Frank's printer)

Borrowing an idea from his friend the photographer Elsa Dorfman  
Allen wrote detailed histories  
which he inscribed on blank space at the bottom fronts of the photos.

Foye and Allen put together a portfolio of signed prints  
and Foye began to show them to galleries and dealers  
The Spencer Collection at the NY Public Library  
was among those who purchased a set at \$5,000

The Holly Solomon Gallery on 57th Street  
agreed to do the bard's virgin show  
which Foye curated  
(with an opening in early '85)

Thus was born another industry in the Forest Ginsberg:  
A.G. – Chronicler of the American Beat Generation Experience

Up to then his cameras had been  
not that carefully chosen & his techniques  
dancing somewhere 'tween luck, Cage, & excess energy.

He pestered his pal Robert Frank  
one of America's finest photographers for advice.

And met the great Berenice Abbot  
who once had worked with Man Ray  
A.G. dug immensely her NYC photos from the 1930s

"It was like going back in a time machine..."  
he later wrote.

She urged him to get a camera with large negatives  
He got Abbot to accompany him to Olden's camera store in NYC  
to check out the action on a Rolleiflex

Another example of the bard  
throughout his career  
reaching out to the best minds  
for the best advice.

After his early negatives were blown up  
and it was seen they were art

the same bard who  
made his own  
big set of drums  
in the jungles of Chiapas  
in '54  
was utterly unafraid  
31 years later  
to leap into the art of  
the Visual Muse.

In fact, he went click-batty for a while  
He shot thousands upon thousands of pictures  
during his roamings  
One person on his staff spent all her time  
keeping track of the prints

It was a visual diary: "It's beginning to replace writing a lot,"  
he wrote, "not the poetry, though, but the peripatetic notes  
I used to take."

At first, before the explosion of photo shows,  
it was a financial drain,  
as he blew up hundreds of shots and alternate shots  
of the same view  
to large size prints

•

## HAWKING CHUCKLING AT THE EDGE

One of Allen's key assistants  
during those years  
was his bibliographer, Bill Morgan  
who'd worked since 1980 on a very detailed  
bibliography– it included even rounding up  
the multitude of book blurbs

He started cataloging all the books in Ginsberg's apartment  
Then around 1984  
began work at Columbia  
    "to organize those hundreds of boxes"  
        as he later described it

Around that time Barry Miles had gotten a contract  
from Simon and Schuster  
    to write a bio of Allen

The 'Zap worked out a deal  
for Morgan to get a percentage of Barry Miles' S&S advance  
  
so that Morgan could work full-time  
        bringing order -heh heh-  
    to the "word horde"

Allen loved to feel  
    as if his work were organized  
        in a retrievable, graceful  
            raked-sand Zen Zone

(you can see it in the order he made  
    in the room, say,  
        where he began "Howl"

except that apparently,  
in the Universe  
    you create more disorder  
        when making order of your things  
according to Hawking's A Brief History of Time

so that if you memorized all of Bill Morgan's two-volume  
bibliography of the great poet's writings  
        for instance

you would create disordered energy in the form of heat  
    from the ordered energy of food  
        lost in the air around you  
            in convection and heat

such as to increase the disorder of the Universe.

•

That year, 1984, he jumped out on  
two little tours of Europe

and on June 4 took time to  
come to a reunion of the Fugs  
at the Bottom Line

–you can hear his voice shout-crooning along  
on the live CD that we have left behind in the time-track.

\*

Meanwhile the commissions & contracts for this & that piled up  
Raymond Foye was smiling when he told me that  
it would take Allen fifteen minutes just  
to describe the basic array of projects  
he had to complete

Guilt was never far away from the dark-diaried bard  
who seemed to savor having something lurking  
& guilt-demanding  
such as sitting in a well-appointed cabin that spring of '84  
at the Atlantic Center for the Arts in Florida  
an easy gig as a Master Teacher yet  
worrying about the introduction to his  
Collected Poems  
which he'd not yet finished

•

He spent the '84 summer in a Boulder town house complex  
which Naropa rented in those years for its summer faculty

and finally completed Collected Poems 1947-1980 on July 18  
837 pages of flow  
with 88 pages of notes

He quit smoking  
& was swimming regularly in Boulder Creek  
which flows down from the mountains  
& across the city

At summer's end

as he prepared to face the

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impending publication of his heart's work  
he wrote a fine little  
addendum to Christopher Marlowe:

It's All So Brief

I've got to give up  
Books, checks, letters  
File cabinets, apartment  
pillows, bodies and skin  
even the ache in my skin.

September 14, 1984  
(p. 57, White Shroud)

echoing, say,  
that searing final line of loss  
in Olson's Maximus Poems:

My wife my car my color and myself

## Part XXVIII

### A TRIP TO CHINA

We left our tracing of the great bard's life  
with the completion of 88 pages of notes  
for his Collected Poems

which now Harper & Row  
was taking to galleys  
corrections, design  
& ink  
& the great bard was not the sort  
to wait around  
eating his nails.

In October he traveled to China  
with a delegation that included  
Gary & Masa Snyder, Francine du Plessix Grey,  
Harrison Salisbury, William Least Heat-Moon, Toni Morrison,  
Maxine Hong Kingston, William Gass  
for the American Academy of Arts & Letters

A.G. prepared himself by studying  
the '66-'76 Cultural Revolution in China

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& learned that  
“I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness”  
meant to the Chinese those wrecked  
by the Cultural Revolution

Gary Snyder  
moved by the visit to Cold Mountain temple  
where Han Shan had lived  
Gave the monk there his '58 translations  
of the Cold Mountain Poems  
and wrote some verse on the spot  
“At Maple Bridge”

As for Allen, he was shock-miffed  
at the rather puritanical Chinese culture  
& made sure he talked aplenty  
on sex & politics & personal freedom  
He had a gig to file reports on China  
to UPI

From Shanghai on Dec. 14  
he sent me a packed postcard:  
“The Cultural Revolution here 1966-74 was like worst  
elements of U.S. right and 'left' takeover, bookburning,  
gangs of street kids with spears going downtown to torment  
old bearded scholars, etc. New Economics '4 Modernizations'  
now really interesting “open door” of Mind too. Students shy,  
eager, virginal, good English, a few able to talk frankly private  
thoughts.

Been down Yangtze Gorges on 3 day boat- & various cities,  
teaching. Now on weekend vacation rainy train Shanghai to  
Nanching, travel with postgraduate English student translator  
interpreter whose wife had baby last week- mist & smog,  
marvellous small scale farming fields along the R.R. line, heavy  
industry, umbrellas, cranes, orange buses, beehives along the  
road.

Mental open door limited by Party rigidity, karma of past  
crimes, official figure 20,000,000 'bad elements' sent to work  
camps country or killed 1957-1976. Merry Xmas Happy  
Hanukah New York to Miriam & Didi-  
Allen Ginsberg.”





1985

In January

the photo show, called "Hideous Human Angels"  
 at the Holly Solomon Gallery  
 was a fiscal success  
 & another strollway opened wide  
 in the Forest Ginsberg

I count 47  
 photo shows  
 all o'er th' world  
 'tween '85 & '96

February 2

Harper & Row published  
 Collected Poems 1947-1980

It was one of the best selling books of verse  
 in the history of western civilization

&amp; the reviews flowed forth-

It upset Gary Snyder  
 that the Collected Poems  
 was snubbed by the official culture

didn't get the awards it was due  
 He mentioned the Pulitzer  
 & the National Book Award

I could guess why

What Kenneth Rexroth called "The light from Plymouth Rock"  
 still beams mightily  
 o'er what used to be called squaresville-  
 There were too many hard cocks  
 trails of semen  
 & attacks on the military-  
 industrial surrealists  
 to win corporate sponsorship

•

## HARRY SMITH: HOUSEGUEST

'85 was the year the artist/filmmaker/magician  
 Harry Smith  
     came over to visit  
 –a car backed into him & fractured his knee–  
 he was homeless  
 & stayed about a year in the bard's guest room

“Harry Smith painter, filmmaker, sound archivist  
 & occult bibliophile, roommate for bulk of year”  
     is how the bard described it in  
     his biographic précis

The bard had always attracted the verbally combative  
 such as Kerouac, Lucien Carr, Barbara Rubin, Burroughs,  
 Corso–  
     some of the sharpest tongues in a  
     sharp-tongued time

& now Harry  
     One part of his brain a brilliant creator  
 One part a ruthless destroyer  
     capable of even gutting his own work  
 & a wit as pointy as a laser knife

It wore on Allen  
     though one of his finest photographs  
     (the first on his new large-neg Rolleiflex)  
     had been taken of Harry not long before  
     in Harry's tiny room at the Breslin Hotel  
     pouring some milk.

When Bob Dylan came over for a visit  
 Harry refused to get up  
     and chat with the singer.

Dylan (and much of his generation)  
     had been impacted by  
 Harry's famous Folkways collection  
     Anthology of American Folk Music

Allen's psychiatrist finally  
 suggested that

because he was raising the Ginzap's blood pressure

•

SUMMER OF '85  
Naropa in Boulder

There was a symposium with William Burroughs & Norman Mailer  
on the subject

“The Soul: Is There one, What Is It, & What's Happening  
to It?”

I recalled a dinner

at Burroughs' bunker on the Bowery  
on Valentine's night '74:

He was talking about the Soul  
how out-of-body sex was possible  
like John Donne's  
floating lovers  
& how he also believed that  
souls crisp up and die  
at 10,000 degrees  
& that was America's great sin:  
it was the nation that first murdered souls.

•

November-December 1985 the bard went to Moscow  
with a writers delegation  
from the American Academy of Arts & Letters

There's an eery snapshot by the bard of  
writer Louis Auchincloss  
standing next to Dostoevsky's writing desk  
at the Dostoevsky Museum  
in Leningrad  
(in 'Zap's 1991 photo book from Twelvetrees Press)

It was just before Glasnost  
and the bard complained of political and erotic censorship  
whereupon a bureaucrat with the Moscow Writers Union said  
“Henry Miller will never be published in the Soviet Union.”

1986

The bard became Distinguished Professor at Brooklyn College  
replacing John Ashbery

who was in the second year of  
his MacArthur Fellowship

Ashbery had invited Allen to B.C. a couple of times  
& had been impressed with Allen's teaching at Naropa  
and so recommended him for the gig.

It was a good choice.

Ginsberg began at something like \$60k  
(it advanced to \$85k during  
his years there)

& later also taught at the CCNY graduate school  
on West 42nd

Freed from his administrative duties at Naropa  
the bard tossed himself into his new gig  
with an überworkaholic dedication

–with the same

high metabolism, guilt & need for bardic laurels–

–working too hard

when sleep was required

tired eyes like bruised apples–

that he gave to his photos

his diaries

his politics

his love life

his search for verse

#### THE NICARAGUA STATEMENT

At the PEN International Conference in NYC  
he drafted, with Arthur Miller and Günter Grass  
what he called a  
“controversial widely-endorsed delegates’  
statement against American  
intervention in Nicaragua”

and he went for the second time  
to the Rubén Darío Poetry Festival  
in Nicaragua

We have noted now & then on the bard's  
complex relationships with Cultures:

Italy England France Germany Scandinavia  
Russia Eastern Europe: Poland, Czech. & Hungary  
China & of course India

In each place  
he had pals  
and passions


For instance, India  
Indira Gandhi had been at the Royal Albert Hall in '65  
when Ginsberg read  
Also there was a woman named Pupil Jayakar,  
a close friend of Gandhi's  
Around 1985 A.G. was contacted  
by Pupil Jayakar, then the Indian minister of culture  
who wanted the bard to organize a poetry reading  
as part of a two-year Festival of India

Allen accepted the task  
but basically handed the project  
over to Bob Rosenthal

who recalled, "Allen suggested a pan India festival with tribal  
dancers, Vedic chanters, Baul poets Dalit (untouchable) poets"  
as well as several poet friends from Calcutta

This was under the umbrella of A.G.'s  
Committee on Poetry

Part of it was a Festival of Poets in Bhopal  
and Rosenthal worked with the Indian gov't  
"and got together a tour in the USA which included bilingual  
readings at the Museum of Modern Art in NYC hosted by Lita Hornick,  
UCLA, Santa Fe and maybe Chicago."

Another example of  
the vast s of the Zap.

## 60 YEARS ON EARTH

There was a  
 Festschrift: Best Minds: A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg,  
 edited by Bill Morgan and Bob Rosenthal  
 with glory-zings from the likes of  
 Cage, Creeley & other best minds.

He wrote a foreword to John Wieners' Selected Poems: 1958-1994  
 for Black Sparrow Press

•

White Shroud: Poems 1980-1985 out from  
 Harper & Row

with some of his finest verse  
 including the title poem

Out too that year the interesting  
 Howl Annotated  
 edited by Barry Miles  
 from Harper & Row

It was modeled on the Waste Land facsimile book  
 & featured scans of the original  
 typed manuscript of Part I  
 with numerous hand corrections

and then also facsimiles  
 of four subsequent drafts  
 with their many alterations

& then 18 typed drafts  
 of Part II ("What sphinx of cement & aluminum.....")

& then various version of Part III  
 ("Carl Solomon, I'm with you in Rockland")

& also various versions of the "Footnote to Howl,"  
 ("Holy! Holy! Holy!")  
 some of which I thought were  
 a little better than the Footnote the  
 Bard finally chose

•

There was a “Howl” 30th anniversary panel  
& Gala Reading at the MLA convention  
in NYC

SUMMER OF 1986

A man of means in Texas named Michael Minzer  
wanted to finance a CD project starring Ginsberg

He’d already produced a recording in Dallas  
of “Airplane Blues” and Blake’s “Nurses Song”

Minzer met that summer with young Hal Willner  
who’d been music coordinator for NBC’s “Saturday Night Live”  
since ’81  
Willner was renowned for his “multi-artist tribute productions”  
and asked Hal to produce the Ginzap

Willner has a tendency, going into such a project,  
to project a maddening vagueness  
as to particulars & methodology  
but he is famous in the music world  
for knitting fine art from Chaos.

Allen was skeptical for months  
–he was as scorched as Samuel Beckett’s toast from  
being burned down by Columbia Records  
& from all the offers  
o’er the years  
that had wound up as  
dried foam  
on the failure bucket.

•

MACEDONIA

The ’Zap was invited to Lake Ohrid in Macedonia  
to the Struga Festival  
to receive their annual award  
a laurel wreath of gold



Steve Taylor composed his remarkable string quartet piece  
to "White Shroud"  
& it was premiered August 25 in a cathedral  
with the Pro Arte Quartet  
under the ikon painting of the black Madonna  
on the inside of the dome

On this tour the 'Zap also went to Budapest  
& and also some benefits for Solidarity  
in Krakow & Warsaw

## Part XXIX

1987

Peter & Allen's year of planned separation ended  
Peter wanted A.G. to sell his archives  
& move with Peter to  
Chögyam Trungpa's Buddhist center in Nova Scotia  
and bring there also Peter's sister, brothers & mother

Meanwhile Trungpa  
was gravely ill  
He'd been in and out of a coma  
for a number of months

from too many Bacchus vines  
on the Vajra

•

This was the year the Bard tried to  
"slow down"  
Of course perhaps his own metabolism  
was signaling the braking  
He had now passed over the festschrift  
year

Why are some writers so Driven?  
I think of the frantic eyes  
of Dickens & Dostoevsky

& Ginsberg

“my queer shoulder at the wheel”

always groaning

o'er all the work

that teemed on his desk

APRIL 4

Trungpa passed away of heart failure on April 4

His body was embalmed in salt

and placed in a meditation position

in an upright closed box of wood

at the Karmê Chöling center

in the Green Mountains of Vermont

& carried in a procession

to a two-story brick stupa

in a meadow

and there atop it

the leader was cremated

with thousands assembled.

The bard was once again seeing flames

& smoke

eat love.

“Universe is Person,”

the bard once wrote.

“Mind is outer space,”

he also wrote.

“Candor ends paranoia,”

a sentence for the Path

•

BAD BLOOD

May 9

There was a three day symposium

at St. Mark's Church  
to mark the 20th Anniversary of the Poetry Project  
with readings and panels

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I'd ended the reading on Saturday night  
with my "Yiddish Speaking Socialists of the Lower East Side"  
sliding my hands into the gloves of the Pulse Lyre  
to forge sweet tones  
beneath those socialist days

A bunch of us went out afterward to the Taj Restaurant  
on East 6th  
(Ed Dorn, Alice Notley, Ginsberg, Jerry Rothenberg,  
Anselm Hollo, Bob Rosenthal, Anne Waldman  
& others)

I was feeling upbeat rather than beat-up  
I showed everybody the plastic handcuffs  
I'd kept as a souvenir  
from the sit-in a few days before  
at the CIA in Langley.

Allen sat across from me &  
mentioned John Clellon Holmes  
locked on the path of mouth cancer  
how he'd had his jaw, his  
tongue & part of his throat removed—  
it will give him an extra year, he said,  
to write more, & wind up  
his affairs

& then we were talking about  
cyclical vengeance

He said there was speculation that the MOSSAD was behind  
the murders of Indira Gandhi & and Anwar el-Sadat  
to block peace  
(Gandhi had been at A.G.'s reading at Royal Albert Hall in '65)

He'd thought it was paranoia  
till he brought it up with William Burroughs  
who thought it not at all impossible

"It's a terrible problem," he said,  
"Bad blood"

& then the bard who was famous for being able to chant verse  
by the hour

who knew poems like "Lycidas" by heart  
then recited some lines

from Yeats' "Meditations in Time of Civil War":

"Vengeance upon the murderers,' the cry goes up,  
'Vengeance for Jacques Molay,' In cloud-pale rages, or in lace,  
The rage-driven, rage-tormented, and rage-hungry troop,  
Trooper belaboring trooper, biting at arm or at face,  
Plunges towards nothing, arms and fingers spreading wide  
For the embrace of nothing: and I, my wits astray  
Because of all that senseless tumult, all but cried  
For vengeance on the murderers of Jacques Molay."

Bad Blood Bad Blood  
Born in the Time-Flood

•

SUMMER OF '87

Allen was pulling his text-dappled oar  
on his teeming Boat of Books  
at the Naropa summer session

They had invited Marianne Faithfull to teach  
Her CD "Strange Weather," produced by Hal Willner  
had just come out  
and it was impressive—

she had a thick-woven, true-toned voice  
you liked to hear.  
Faithfull played her CD for the bard  
& Allen gave her some cassettes of his tunes in exchange

She listened  
& then made a lawyerly pronouncement  
"Maybe you shouldn't sing"

The message was don't sing please don't sing  
but you're a great reciter of  
your great American lines

That settled it. Allen decided to work with Willner  
on a spoken verse/music project

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in the hugely cool tradition of

Kenneth Patchen, Kenneth Rexroth  
& the Kerouac/Steve Allen session

Allen went back to New York  
after the close of Naropa's season.

The bard, Willner, and exec. producer Minzer  
chose 80 poems  
which A.G. read one night at his pad on East 12th

Everybody listened to the tapes  
& the 80 was winnowed to 50.  
Willner has very extensive contacts  
among the better musicians and composers  
He contacted about 12 of them &  
invited them to A&R studio in NYC to hear AG read his verse

AG rerecorded the selections for six hours, then  
poems were assigned to composers such as  
Gary Windo, Steve Swallow, Mark Bingham, Arto Lindsay,  
Marc Ribot, G.E. Smith, Lenny Pickett, Bill Frissell, et al.

They created music to swoop around the words  
17 pieces  
that flowed across the AG bardic passion-zone  
from tender family memories to rougher modes  
–from “Aunt Rose” to “Shrouded Stranger” to “Kral Majales”  
to the spank-me ditty, “C'Mon Jack”

After a week in the studio  
A.G. performed with some of the musicians  
at the Bottom Line in NYC  
on August 21

as part of a Fugs reunion  
in honor of the 20th anniversary of the  
Summer of Love

Peter Orlovsky was there.  
During one of our tunes  
he started screaming “Lydia! Lydia!”  
in a soprano voice  
over and over

enraging some of the audience  
 & then security guys  
     carried him away  
     eyes widened  
     & legs spread wide

(The sessions and mixing for Allen's project  
 continued into the next year  
 -Chris Blackwell and Kim Buie of Island liked the project  
     & voted to release The Lion for Real)

•

There was a festival inspired by the presence of  
 William Burroughs in Lawrence, Kansas  
     in August of '87  
     called the River City Reunion

A.G. had an exhibition of his photos at Lawrence  
 & gave a beautiful reading of  
     “Howl”

Much of the audience could follow it  
     with pursing lips  
 or memory-flashes  
     as if listening  
     to great music long familiar

Allen had suggested that Hal Willner  
     produce a CD of Burroughs

so Willner visited Burroughs at his house  
 to begin the CD project known as Dead City Radio

Another project brought into place by the  
     bard of howl.

•

There's a general bardic rule  
     that says that a poet  
     should never declare herself  
     a deity

yet on October 31

A.G. tossed off a brief poem called "Proclamation"  
which began

I am the King of the Universe  
I am the Messiah with a new dispensation

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It was the mindset of  
wanting to stroll naked through  
Cambridge in 1962  
after his first psilocybin with Leary

or, say, 1948, when he crawled out on  
the fire escape in Harlem  
to startle the neighbors with  
"I've seen God!"

•

#### PEACE NOW '88

Early in the year called '88  
he flew to Israel  
to teach a course called Photographic Poetics  
with Robert Frank  
at the Camera Obscura School in Tel Aviv

While there in Tel Aviv  
he took part in a huge Peace Now demonstration  
against the bad treatment of Palestinians  
in occupied territories

He read his 1974 poem "Jaweh & Allah Battle"  
before a crowd of 60,000  
(one of his best political poems,  
ranking, say, with the 1980 eco-chant "Homework"  
"Jaweh & Allah Battle" was  
later set by Philip Glass as part of Hydrogen Jukebox)

Back in New York  
the bard began attending weekly meetings  
with around 100 Jewish writers/artists  
(among them, Norman Mailer, Kate Millett, Susan Sontag, Erica Jong,  
& Roy Lichtenstein)  
to forge a stand on the treatment of Palestinians

AG arranged to have the PEN center come out against

## Part XXX

### An Opera with Glass

The opera Hydrogen Jukebox began calmly enough  
when Philip Glass ran into A.G.

in the St. Mark's Bookshop

and asked the bard if he'd perform with him  
at a benefit for the Vietnam Veterans Theater  
at the Schubert Theater

Allen took down from the store shelf  
The Fall of America

and showed Glass "Wichita Vortex Sutra"

The performance went well  
and there were meetings at  
Ginsberg's apt to plan a grand collaboration

Work began in earnest in the fall of 1988  
with neither Glass nor Ginzap  
impressed with the

wormwoody proposals of Dukakis or Reagan  
in the struggle for the Presidency

They selected a trail of verse  
as a descant on the real America  
and its real future—

Did the bard chant accurately  
when he named one of his books  
The Fall of America ?

Glass and Ginsberg selected sections & slivers  
"Iron Horse," the beautiful "To Aunt Rose"

Peter O's 29th birthday poem from Calcutta '62,  
"Wichita Vortex Sutra"

"Going to Chicago"

"The Green Automobile"

"Cabin in the Woods"

and the 1974



“Jahweh and Allah Battle”

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fresh in mind from chanting it in Tel Aviv.

the Moloch section of “Howl”

& sections from the “National Security Agency Dope Calypso”  
intermingled with his poem “Violence”

& ending with the

po/tune he composed on the plane  
coming back from Boulder after father Louis passed:  
“Father Death Blues”

(The American Music Theater in Philadelphia

sponsored perf’s in the spring of 1990

w/ the world premieres at the Spoleto Festival in Charleston,  
SC & Spoleto, Italy in June 1990)

The opera featured six singers, a small ensemble of keys,  
winds & percussion, with Martin Goldray directing

•

In ’88 there was another opera

based on the bard’s works

at th’ Hamburg State Opera House

titled “Cosmopolitan Greetings”

with Robert Wilson directing & music by George Gruntz

•

A tour of Japan next

with readings,

plus an anti-nuke rally in Osaka

& benefits at Seika & Kyoto Universities

with his friend the poet Nanao Sasaki

“to protect Okinawan Shiraho Blue Coral Reef.”

•

JUNE 25, 1988

Lowell, Massachusetts began to  
celebrate its hometown boy

In late June they dedicated the  
 Kerouac Commemorative Park  
 with 15 passages from Kerouac  
 cut upon 8 three-sided granite columns  
     more or less dolmen'd  
     into the array of a mandala

•

### Harry Smith

Harry could be like a lasery sandbur  
     but had a gentle fraction inside  
         that brought him intense friendships  
         especially with women

Miriam would talk with Harry for hours on the phone  
   over the years

so A.G. arranged for Harry  
     to live at Naropa as a kind of  
         “Shaman-in-Residence”

He had a cottage on campus  
     which became a kind of Seekers' Abode  
         an Adytum  
     where he collected things, made hundreds of tape recordings  
     from '88 to '91

(After Harry passed away it  
     became the Naropa hand-set print shop.

–A.G. had first met Harry in the '50s at the Five Spot  
 at a Thelonius Monk gig. Harry was taking notes on  
 Monk's syncopation. Harry brought Allen to his pad  
 and rolled some of his movies. Later A.G. took a reel  
 to Jonas Mekas, thus introducing Harry  
     to the prime instigator of the  
     underground movie movement)

•

The 'Zap delivered  
 the Charles Olson Memorial lectures  
     at SUNY Buffalo

Meanwhile his photo career was in full careen, with  
shows in Tokyo, Krakow, Warsaw, Tübingen, Whistler House in Lowell,  
Fogg Museum in Cambridge, Vision Gallery in Boston, & Tilton Gallery  
in NYC

•

The end of the century saw the  
kudzuing of ghastly right wing think tanks  
& foundations  
well funded & weird

In October o' '88  
the right-winger's right-winger, Senator Jesse Helms,  
with the help of the Heritage Foundation  
vom'd forth a law which forced the F.C.C.  
to enforce a 24-hour ban on "indecent" language  
on all the nation's airwaves

The 'Zap realized "There goes Howl"  
& so, again, rose to the protection

& in his own words "organized consortium P.E.N. American Center.  
A.C.L.U. with Pacifica Radio to oppose F.C.C. censorship of arts broadcasting."

(The results? There were court decisions in 1993 which left in  
place a ban on erotolalia from 6 a.m. to 8 p.m., with freedom to  
chant eros over the air from late in the evening till dawn.)

•

### POE JOB PHOBIA

I spoke with the bard on 12-16-88  
He was in the hospital  
He seemed short of breath  
The dr., he said, told him  
he was healing like a young man

I was calling to ask him to  
perform at place called the Kitchen in January  
to protest the crackdown in Czechoslovakia  
on the Plastic People band  
and a cultural leader named

He said, "If I'm healthy, count me in."

He said he'd been reading a hostile biography of Bob Dylan  
& we talked a bit about what I'd come to call the "Poe Job"  
such as what Goldman had done to Lennon  
The Poe Job of course goes all the way back to  
Rev. Rufus Griswold's hate-bio of the Raven man

The bard was feeling a bit Poe'd himself  
He'd read the manuscript of Barry Miles' biography  
which was about to come out  
and he felt Miles was harsh on his Buddhism  
by which I guess he meant  
the considerable space  
Miles devoted to  
the '75 stripping at Snowmass  
& its literary aftermath.

1989

We gathered January 29 at the perf space called the Kitchen  
on West 19th  
to call upon the government of Czechoslovakia  
to give total freedom of speech  
to its artists and singers

There were many performers, including Eliot Sharp,  
Vicki Stanbury & the Plastic People's own  
Bratislav Brabenec  
with his long-toned saxophone

Allen had healed enough to  
read "Kral Majales"

and Steve Taylor & I sang my  
"Incantation Against the Government of Czechoslovakia"  
to the overflow crowd.

Not many months ahead:  
the nonviolent rev in Czechoslovakia

•

The 'Zap was honored at a banquet Feb. 11  
at the Associated Writing Program's Convention  
in Philadelphia

The Fugs performed with the bard.  
We wrote a melody to  
his '55 masterwork  
"The weight of the world is love."

& it still gives a thrill to listen to the tape of it  
from that night  
with 1,000 screaming writers & professors  
at its close

At the end A.G. and the Fugs sang Blake's "Nursing Song"  
with the sing-along final lines,  
repeated o'er and o'er  
"& All the Hills Echoéd"  
to an ecstatic crooning auditorium

again a thrill to hear  
over 10 years later  
Allen's voice had all its fine bass qualities  
that night  
in key in control & reaching  
his golden thread toward Blake

•

Barry Miles' 533 page biography Ginsberg  
was published by Simon & Schuster

I liked its honesty  
& how Miles was able  
close as he was to the bard  
to get to a critical distance

•

As for Allen, there was a further frenzy  
of readings at schools & colleges

He kept up the flow of fund raisers

that year

180

I count at least 11 benefits

for WNYC, AIDS Prevention, Abbie Hoffman  
Foundation, Lower East Side homesteaders, squatters,  
Hanuman Books, Albert Hoffman Memorial Library in LA,  
et alia

In addition he had some more photo exhibitions  
in LA, Chi, Poland, Austria & Germany

and his fine spoken verse/music CD

The Lion for Real

by Great Jones/Island Records

produced by Hal Willner

(secret executive producer Michael Minzer)

•

In May he moved his office from his East 12th pad  
to 2nd Avenue & 14th

subletting two rooms from the daughter  
of Arlene Lee

(Lucien Carr's ex & Mardou Fox in K's Subterraneans. It was in torrid  
eros with Arlene Lee in the '50s, A.G. once told me,  
that his dong was perma-bent to the left)

Then a few months later

the office moved to 41 Union Square, th' 14th floor

probably the only poet  
ever to have his own staff  
& office in the former Great Zone  
of the Left

•

In a more controversial area  
he attended a NAMBLA convention in '89

Sometimes he complained to me he was being attacked  
from the right for his love of youth

He was always extremely candid in matters of eros

"Candor ends paranoia"

he wrote in "Cosmopolitan Greetings"

but he would travel to colleges  
 & give forth the message  
 it was okay to make it with  
 his legal-age students

& now and then I give a reading at a college  
 where they still talk of the furor from  
 A.G. erotic talk  
 of decades ago

“I myself don’t  
 like underage boys,” he once told The New York Times  
 “But they have a right  
 to talk about the  
 age of consent.  
 I see it as a free speech issue—  
 a discussion of the law.”

•

The bard helped get a three-year grant  
 for Harry Smith  
 from the Grateful Dead’s Rex Foundation

On December 2, Bush & Gorbachev  
 announced the end of the Cold War

and on December 29  
 the writer Vaclav Havel  
 was elected the president of Czechoslovakia

## Part XXXI

1990

In March A.G. came to the Zen Center  
 near Woodstock  
 with Anne Waldman.  
 He recited the libretto of Hydrogen Jukebox

Later we chatted  
 He told me that Burroughs  
 sold \$180k of his shotgun-paint-tube-splatter  
 on-plywood/collage paintings last year

He'd taken up art after his trilogy  
 Cities of the Red Night  
 The Place of Dead Roads  
 & The Western Lands

Burroughs gets up, Allen said, smokes a j  
 takes his methadone,  
 writes till 4 p.m.  
 then dinner & a few drinks, then zzz

“And he's healthy!”  
 the bard said with a cackle,  
 comparing W.B. to himself  
 crunched with high blood pressure,  
 gout, diabetes, et al.

### PRAGUE

That spring Allen organized a visit to Prague  
 to celebrate the warless revolution

He'd not been back since  
 being tossed in '65

This time he was received by the Lord Mayor Mr. Koran  
 & President Vaclav Havel

and re-laureled as King of the May once again!  
 and toured various colleges  
 reading & lecturing

•

Hydrogen Jukebox premiered  
 with Philip Glass  
 at the Spoleto Festivals  
 in Charleston, SC & Spoleto, Italy

I spoke with him when he returned  
 & he mentioned how he dug being called Maestro  
 at opera houses

•

The 'Zap was an American delegate



And what was probably the first lecture by a major poet  
in the history of Western Civilization:

“ Chemical Substances & Poetics,”

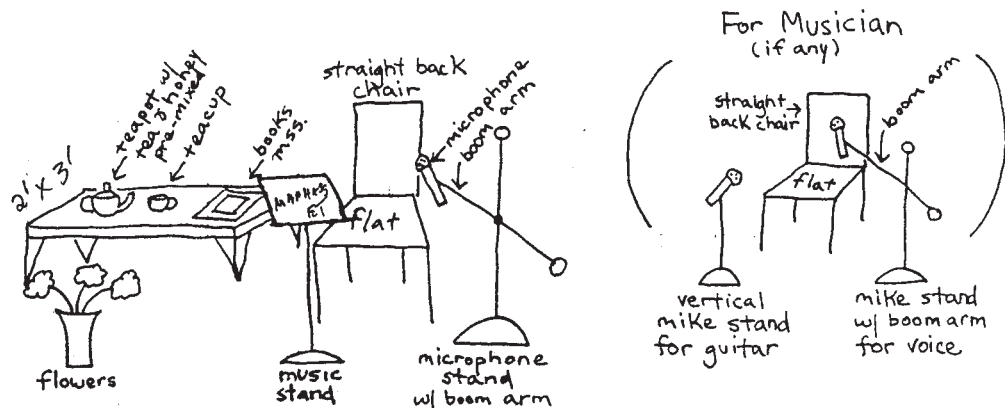
at the Albany College of Pharmacy  
in Albany, NY

•

### A GOOD SYSTEM FOR BARDING AROUND

In his final years  
the bard had the same stage setup  
wherever he read

A sketch of the stage was included in a rider  
to his contracts:



The flowers on the lower left were to be,  
in the bard's words, "a modest bunch of flowers, preferably  
non-florist, local weeds or garden growth."

His rider also called for a pot of chamomile tea and honey  
"already pre-mixed to save mess of honey on mss. and audience time."

1991

Around the time of the Gulf War's  
inception of spent uranium-shell bombardment

Ginzap was a guest lecturer for a week

There's a fine photo by Gordon Ball  
showing cadets in grey uniforms  
reading "Howl"  
one with his long thin fingers  
wrapped up over his short-shorn hair

Oddly it was America's poets who sensed  
the underlying  
sham of Desert Storm  
& Allen joined Poets Against the Gulf War

•

There was a MLA Special Session on "Kaddish"  
with Gordon Ball and Helen Vendler  
in San Francisco

and the book Allen Ginsberg Photographs  
from Twelvetrees Press in Santa Monica

#### MORE SCURRY HURRY FLURRY OF '91

- Master Class at the Walt Whitman Birthplace Association, Long Island, NY
- Symposium on Tiananmen Square with Feng Lizhi at the New York Academy of Sciences
- Keynote Speaker, Buddhist Psychology Conference, at th' Karma Triyana Monastery in Woodstock, NY
- Symposium with Lewis Hyde, "Art & Politics." at Kenyon College, Ohio
- Great Falls Preservation and Development Corporation 200th Anniversary,  
Paterson, NJ
- Reading Jack Kerouac's Dharma Bums & Jacob Rabinowitz's Translations of Catullus for Spring Audio Cassettes
- Harriet Monroe Poetry Award at the University of Chicago

TOUCHING THE COOLING NOGGIN



There was a party for the Portable Beat Reader  
at the Poetry Project at St. Mark's Church  
February 5

Joyce Johnson, Hettie Jones, Ann Charters, Peter O.,  
Herbert Huncke, Allen and I read

It was a fine, unsentimental evening  
& afterwards Miriam & I, Ann Charters & A.G.  
had a late dinner at  
Kiev on 2nd Ave. & 7th.

He mentioned how he had helped Jan Kerouac  
sue for a share in Jack's estate  
She now got 50%, he said.

•

In Paris the French minister of culture, Jacques Lang  
presented the bard with the  
Chevalier de l'Ordre des Artes et des Lettres

& he was also elected  
fellow of the American Academy of Arts & Sciences  
in Boston

#### NODDING AT NAROPA

I taught a course at Naropa that summer  
on setting up multi-decade information systems  
to assist in the long-term writing of verse.  
Our apartment  
was next to A.G.'s

which gave us the first evidence  
of the bard's declining health  
I was distressed at his condition  
He could be seen sleeping at readings  
He had severe diabetes  
& at dinner parties  
he would excuse himself  
to rush back to his apt  
to shoot up his insulin



perhaps as a kind of response to Maya Angelou's  
poem at the inauguration

It had many good points  
which Clinton mostly ignored  
(the bard sent him a copy)

•

February 28  
the bard called with the ghastly word  
that Carl Solomon  
had passed away that morning  
from lung cancer

•

& a few days later, March 2  
the World Trade Center bombing  
–fundamentalism cursing the American city

•

March 26 I went to his apartment  
and filmed the bard reading his  
“New Democracy Wish List”

It was a fine slice of his '93 life  
because while we were running tape  
various pals called the bard,  
Phil Whalen, Gary Snyder,  
and ex-governor Jerry Brown  
who wanted A.G. to write a pamphlet  
for a series he was starting

•

Around this time he began Buddhist retreats  
with (and benefits for)  
Gelek Rinpoche of  
Jewel Heart in Ann Arbor

plus annual benefits for Tibet House  
with Laurie Anderson

•

The bard went to his 50th high school class reunion  
at Eastside H.S. in NJ

•

SOLOMON

“ah Carl.... now you’re really in the total animal soup of time–”  
“Howl”

I always admired Solomon’s  
good-hearted, very aware Lonerism  
& I was surprised  
that no one seemed to be giving him a public memorial  
to I called Ed Friedman at the St. Mark’s Church  
and Allen too of course

and helped organize the one  
which was held at the Church on June 16

That day I bused to NYC from Woodstock  
and visited Allen’s office on Union Square

He had just come from a dr.’s appointment  
I was surprised at how much of the office was devoted  
to his photos! There was a shot of a very beautiful  
Joanne Kyger from 1963  
    & a young Harry Smith that looked  
    just a tad like  
    d.a. levy of Cleveland.

The bard gave me a big piece of kombu energy seaweed–  
very expensive he said, from a rich friend  
He cracked off about a square foot– you chew it  
    for proper bardic metabolism

Also a copy of Louis Ginsberg’s collected works  
& Solomon’s final big book

The bard through the 33 years of crossed paths

always loaded me down with books, CDs,  
clippings, manifestoes & urgings

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The highlight for me at the Solomon memorial  
was singing harmony with Allen on the  
Prajnaparamita Sutra  
while playing my 3-stringed Strum Stick

Ted Morgan, Ann Charters & others spoke  
then Gregory Corso  
read a fresh poem written in big scrawls  
on a crumpled & folded paper.

The bard closed the night with “Howl”  
He started slowly, then built it up in a  
rhapsodic, rapturous way  
He later said he given it an “operatic rendition.”

Allen had to split almost at once  
because he’d promised to appear that night  
at the opening of a club called Shaman.

•

That fall the 'Zap had a sabbatical from Brooklyn College  
so in a horror vacui temporis  
he filled in the gap  
with a four-month tour of Europe

I saw him on September 5  
just before he left  
He had come to Woodstock for my musical drama Cassandra

He’d read a pamphlet on Bosnia by George Soros, the financier  
who was spending some of his millions  
promoting free trade & democracy  
in Eastern Europe

Soros was alarmed at the rise of nationalism  
“His point,” the bard said, “is that replacing the  
Cold War mentality now  
is a hypernationalism  
that threatens the peace  
not only of Europe  
but of the whole world



and that's going to be the big plague of the future  
and the cause of wars."

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He taught with Anne Waldman at the interesting  
Schule für Dichtung in Vienna in September

and went to Budapest, Belgrade, Bydgoszcz, Krakow,  
Lodz & Warsaw

Then traveled to premieres of  
Jerry Aronson's "The Life and Times of Allen Ginsberg"  
in Paris, Berlin, Prague, Barcelona, Madrid, Córdoba,  
and Athens  
in a long ego-ribboning  
line of praise & money-scoop

He performed in Berlin at a Jewish festival  
& did a few tunes with the klezmer band, the Klezmatics.

In Athens he wrote one of his better hortatory poems,  
"C'mon Pigs of Western Civilization Eat More Grease"  
(in his final book Death & Fame)

He toured to Dublin  
where he did what he called a "TV collaboration"  
with a rock star named Bono  
of the band called U2

At trek's end the bard visited Paul Bowles in Tangiers  
& the spots  
he had haunted with Peter Orlovsky  
& Jack Kerouac  
back in '57 & '61

Then it was back to the States in January  
for a Vajrayogini Buddhist retreat with  
Gelek Rinpoche in Michigan.

Gelek Rinpoche was Allen's Buddhist mentor  
following the demise of Chögyam Trungpa.

•

Hydrogen Jukebox  
which had been recorded in a studio in '92 and '93

1994

The CD Kronos Quartet H Howl USA  
came out early in the year  
On it the bard performed the poem to music  
on a CD that contained a piece called “Cold War Suite”  
with the voice of the great I.F. Stone!  
On January 20 he performed “Howl” with the Quartet  
at Carnegie Hall

Tikkun magazine honored  
A.G. at its January 16-17 conference  
“because of his important contribution  
to progressive culture, and because of his unique  
blending of Jewish particularism & universalism.”

•

### NEW AMAZING GRACE

Since '92 I'd been collecting verses  
from poets & composers  
for The New Amazing Grace

The verses could be on any subject  
and very secular  
except that I wanted just a faint beam of  
hope— like the “sunlight in the window”  
in Naomi's final letter  
in “Kaddish”

NPR had picked up my quest and had broadcast a piece  
on it  
so that a big influx of submissions had come in from  
ministers in the heartland & regular folk, but

I was having trouble getting New Amazing Grace verses  
from some of my bards

Pete Seeger was one of them  
Finally I wrote him to the effect that I couldn't  
believe that one of the greatest song writers

The guy who wrote “Turn, Turn, Turn,”  
 & “Where Have All the Flowers Gone”  
 & half of “If I Had a Hammer”

couldn't come up with  
 a 4-line quatrain for NAG.

It worked. Seeger finally mailed his in on April 14

Burroughs, Ferlinghetti and Ginsberg were other holdouts  
 though all ultimately came through

Allen called one evening in late January & said he had a verse  
 and started singing it.

It was something like,  
 “When you grow old  
 you'll shit your pants.....”

I broke in, “No! No!”

I never would have thought I'd ever edit or censor  
 my hero

but I mentioned that the NPR piece  
 had brought in a rinse of submissions  
 from Methodist ministers  
 & the regular folk of radio land

(I had no idea he was having incontinence problems  
 from his diabetes)

On March 14 he wrote:

“Re Amazing Grace– I've just  
 not been able to do anything– or  
 nothing's occurred to me– my head full  
 of panic at unfinished CD Rhino notes now  
 delaying release of the 4 CD's another  
 2 months, my overload responsible–  
 I'll still try–  
 Love Allen”

I wasn't sure he even knew the melody and meter for  
 “Amazing Grace”  
 so I sent him a note with the  
 metrical structure:

U-U-U-U-  
 U-U-U-  
 U-U-U-U-  
 U-U-U-

in 3/4 time

Two weeks later he called  
 complaining that he'd been up all night

and sang me some very beautiful verses

After he'd finished

& I'd remarked how excellent they were, he asked  
 "Do you know where I am now?"

"No."

"I'm on the toilet."

The verses arrived  
 in the mail

a few days later:

*Stamps for Amazing Grace*

○ homeless hand on many a street  
 Accept this change from me  
 A friendly smile or word is sweet  
 As fearless charity

Woe workman who hears the cry  
 And cannot spare a dime  
 Nor look into a homeless eye  
 Afraid to give the time

So rich or poor no gold to talk  
 A smile on your face  
 The homeless poor where you may walk  
 Receive amazing grace

I dreamed I dwelled in a homeless place  
 Where I was lost alone  
 Folk looked right through me into space  
~~And~~ passed with eyes of stone

*Alcubinsberg*  
 4/2/94

“Your last letter with ballad  
meter ( ◡-◡-◡-◡-◡- ), helped clarify the  
form.

Here’s 4 stanzas. The last  
stanza could go first

Use 2, 3 or 4 of the stanzas  
in any order you edit.

Thanks for the prompting &  
persistence– but I lost a night’s  
sleep working it over!

Love  
Allen”

It was some of his  
final finest verse.

MAY 8, 1994

I went to NYC to mc a panel at St. Mark’s  
on Investigative Poetry  
& once downtown I  
called A.G. He was just getting up  
after a party he’d thrown last night  
for his Brooklyn College students

He’d been dreaming, he said,  
as he awakened, about Olson’s poem  
that begins “Mud & wattles” (#4 of “The Songs of Maximus”)

He dubbed for me a tape of Joyce reading from  
Finnegan’s Wake  
and Wilde reading “Ballad of the Reading Gaol.”

Then we went to the church  
for the panel with Bernadette Mayer, Nourbese Philip,  
David Henderson and A.G.

Then oodles of kids and poets to Ginsberg’s for dinner,  
then back to the church for a poetry reading  
Backstage Allen told me that

Jan Kerouac was going to hold a press conference  
at the upcoming NYU Beat Festival  
challenging Kerouac's mom's will

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A slice of a day in  
the life of Allen

MAY 15, 1994

I spoke with the 'Zap  
He told me that Johnny Depp  
had paid Kerouac's estate \$50,000  
for one of Jack's jackets

(I must have mis-heard him,  
because I think it was only a mere \$15,000)

NYU BEAT FEST  
May 17-22, 1994

Its formal name was "The Beat Generation  
Legacy and Celebration"

It was the kind of conference  
that the bard always  
joyed to serve

in that it validated  
all the frenzied years  
of forging a generation

It was sponsored by the NYU School of Ed  
Ann Charters and A.G. were the honorary chairs

•

One of the B.G. panels was titled  
"The Legacy, Connections & Influences"  
with myself, Doug Brinkley, Gordon Ball and others.

I was innocently sitting at the red-clothed dais  
when Hunter Thompson arrived  
in a curl-brimmed beige campaign hat  
& a green shirt

and handed me a lit hash pipe  
 in front of 8 or 900 people  
 in packed Eisner & Lubin Auditorium

What could I do but  
 flow some smoke  
 from my distinguished writer pal?

•

They invited Jan Kerouac  
 who chanted some work  
 at Eisner & Lubin Auditorium one evening

She was screwed up physically at 42  
 Was on dialysis I heard

& yet she read with great vitality  
 & even chant-sang a poem  
 to a rap track

and looked not that different from when she  
 was a 14-year-old wild child on Avenue B  
 in 1966.

MAY 19

There was a big reading at Town Hall on 43rd Street  
 of the poets at the conference

Anne Waldman & I m.c.'d  
 We called William Burroughs in  
 Lawrence from a phone on the stage  
 & he read a piece

Then later backstage  
 based on what A.G. had told me  
 I mentioned to Michael McClure  
 that Johnny Depp  
 had paid 50 grand  
 to Kerouac's estate  
 for one of  
 Jack's jackets

Ferlinghetti was out on the mike

Corso & the Russian poet Andrei Voznesensky  
were chatting nearby

Ray Manzarek & McClure were just  
about to go out  
to do their poems w/ piano

when McClure flipped me  
his hard-analysis Dorian eye, & said  
"I have five or six of those."

"So do I," I replied,  
my mind shifting cunningly  
from free will  
to Goodwill  
thinking, of course, that  
Depp might need a  
2nd coat for when  
the 1st is in the cleaners  
& a third for his summer home

#### A HOME FOR HIS ARCHIVES

Allen wanted his archives  
to go to his alma mater

but the Atropos/Lachesis/Clotho trinity  
had other plans

The archives had been brought to a sense of order  
after years of work by Bill Morgan  
(& also Jacqueline Gens)

A few years previously it had been appraised  
in an item-by-item manner  
by Bob Wilson of the Phoenix Bookshop

at over \$4 million  
(and Bill Morgan told me Wilson  
did not actually get through all the items)

It was a perilously lofty figure



In the end Columbia could not find the  
resources to acquire the trove

It turned out that Stanford University  
had money– there had been a hiring freeze on personnel  
The library wanted to spend their \$  
on one large expensive item.

A scholar named Steve Watson  
was doing some research at Stanford  
The librarians there thought Columbia  
owned Allen's files  
and when they were told otherwise  
they called Bill Morgan

By now the bard had selected an unwobbling price  
–a million dollars  
(excluding A.G.'s massive photo archives)

Morgan negotiated back and forth for several weeks  
with the bard's agent Andrew Wylie  
handling some of the fine points

among which was the provision that the bard  
would be given 2 week's free room & board  
per year at Stanford  
to visit his treasures

Key professors at Stanford, Marjorie Perloff in particular,  
plus Gilbert Sorrentino and Diane Middlebrook  
stepped forth to urge the purchase.

## Part XXXIII

### A CELEBRATION OF THE BARD AT NAROPA

They organized a celebration  
of Allen that July at Naropa called  
Beats & Other Rebel Angels: A Tribute to Allen Ginsberg  
It was a huge one  
& since there was a kind of  
edge-of-frenzy

tap tap-ing at the edge of the Beat Generation anyway  
there was Cannes-esque  
flavor to the celebration

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as Meredith Monk, Miguel Algarin, Joanne Kyger, Ferlinghetti,  
Amiri Baraka, Galway Kinnell, Sharon Olds, Robert Creeley,  
Gregory Corso, Philip Glass, Michael McClure, Francesco Clemente,  
Raymond Foye, Anne Waldman, David Cope, Gary Snyder, Antler,  
Andy Clausen, Ken Kesey  
& a pleth' of Others  
flew to the high air of Boulder.

They dedicated the Allen Ginsberg Library  
July 3

My part included a lecture on July 5,  
"The Ginsberg Method: How to Keep from Getting  
Boxed-In in a Chaotic World."

7-8-94

I watched the great bard  
read his "Sunflower Sutra"

& jotted in my notebook,

"How afire  
this spire"

•

There were a series of national ads for the Gap clothing line  
One featured Andy Warhol, another William Burroughs  
and one with the text:

"Allen Ginsberg wore khakis"  
for which the bard received \$20,000  
which he donated to Naropa

He insisted that the ad state the Naropa donation  
but it was printed in such small pointed type  
that you needed a  
magnifier to see it.

•

The bard did a book signing at Barnes & Noble in SF  
which miffed Lawrence Ferlinghetti  
because of the store-eating  
aspect of big chains.

201

Out came, in the fall o' '94,  
the 4-CD set from Rhino Records called  
Holy Soul Jelly Roll Poems & Songs 1949-1993

& the 'Zap went forth on what they often call  
a "whirlwind" tour  
of signings & readings  
to promote sales

### ARRIVALS AT STANFORD

In September o' '94  
The bard's papers began arriving at Stanford

174,601 items in around 500 boxes  
all meticulously indexed w/

24,179 pp of manuscripts  
18.9k of "Journals & Notebooks"  
& 2,500 tape recordings

Hey o bright scribe of 2002,  
want to write a 50,000-page  
bio of a bard?

•

The fall of '94 saw a right-winger named Newt Gingrich  
& a ghastly cohort of like-minded wing nuts  
take over Congress  
for the first time in 40 years  
the Senate too fell to a form of right-winger  
a bit more polite than Gingrich' sneer squad.

The bard had a fearful take  
on the right-wingers froth-fingering  
the throat of America  
They boded no good  
he felt

for freedom,  
especially for gays

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and any who might fall into  
the remarkable category of  
“madman beat in time”

•

### NEW AMAZING GRACE

I was barding around  
& flew to New York from Milwaukee  
then headed to Allen’s house on November 20  
to get ready for the first performance  
of the New Amazing Grace  
a benefit for the Poetry Project & St. Mark’s Church

We practiced at the church during the day  
–a remarkable gathering of top-rank gospel singers  
plus musicians such  
as Steve Taylor & Coby Batty

The audience was treated to a thrilling  
hour and a half  
of beautiful singing

The quatrains of Waldman, Rothenberg, Creeley,  
Schickele, Seeger, Bly, Wakoski, Eshleman,  
and about 75 others  
soared to a sacred/secular zone  
of great power

But it was when Allen Ginsberg walked upon the  
stage among the singers  
to soft-voice his four amazing quatrains  
that the summit was found

The audience had been given copies of all the lyrics  
and encouraged to sing along.  
By the close of the evening  
everyone was on their feet and trembling the walls



She was not allowed  
    There were some exasperated words  
& apparently security guards escorted her out

Meanwhile a long banner was unfurled in the room  
    “SAVE JACK’S PAPERS”

•

A group of poets calling themselves the Unbearables  
held some parody events  
–such as a Kerouac Impersonator contest–  
    calling the \$120 per head NYU conference  
    “The Beats Sell Out”

June 6 was a big night at Town Hall  
    on 43rd Street off 6th Avenue called  
“An Evening With Jack Kerouac: Poetry and Prose with Music”

As I entered the Unbearables picket line was chanting  
“Where are the Fugs  
Now that we need them?”

A bunch of us read, focusing on Kerouac’s writing  
Graham Parker, Odetta, Anne Waldman, myself, & others  
including Gregory Corso  
    who wowed them  
    by complying when the audience  
    shouted for “Marriage”

Annie Leibovitz was posing us  
for Vanity Fair  
    in the upstairs dressing room at Town Hall

I sat next to Allen  
    who looked weak and shallow

He said he’d had a pulmonary embolism last week  
They’d done a chest X ray  
and it had blipped on the negative



of Kerouac's words  
as Allen exited stage right  
to his cab.

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•

The 'Zap made it to his photo exhibit "108 Images" at  
the Venice Biennale on June 8  
with Hiro Yamagata, a rich & famous Japanese artist  
who was reported to be supporting Gregory Corso  
with \$3,500 a month

The invitation to the Yamagata Venice exhibition  
bore a color photo of a psychedelically painted  
Rolls Royce convertible  
with whitewalls  
parked in an opulent yard

•

With the money from the  
Stanford archives purchase  
A.G. purchased and rehabbed  
Claes Oldenburg's former loft  
on East 13th near 1st Avenue  
Larry Rivers also lived in the building

(Oddly enough they found the place  
in an ad in the Times.  
Rosenthal hired an architect  
though the bard worked on the design  
& the long loft was completely redone,  
with separate offices & a guest room)

Allen told me that the monthly maintenance  
was kept low  
because a McDonald's  
rented the ground floor  
on the 14th Street side of the  
building

There was a bit of jeering and sneering in the media  
over the sale of his archives.

In an interview with The N.Y. Times



he said that his agent got 5%, the archivist Bill Morgan  
 who slaved 13 years on the trove  
     & set up the deal 10%  
 plus a giant slice for taxes &  
     “I was left with a third  
 I bought the loft  
 Now I’m back to square one.”

All of us wanted him to get into  
 that building as quickly as possible

One night Miriam and I walked the bard  
 up the three flights to his apartment on E. 12  
 & it was a painful experience

He walked very very slowly  
 pausing at each landing  
     breathing heavily

I was reminded of how Chekhov  
 in his final winter  
     decided to stay in Moscow  
     to be with his wife Olga Knipper  
 but the flat was on the upper floor  
 & it took the wrack-lunged doctor  
     as much as a half hour  
     to pause-puff up the steps

Miriam noticed how very yellow  
     his skin seemed to be  
 She thought, “Why are they taking so long fixing  
     up that place so beautifully  
     when it’s killing him  
     to walk up the steps  
 He’ll be dead before he gets to use it.”

diabetes  
 gout  
     high blood pressure  
     liver prob’s  
     congestive heart failure

-thock thock thock





DECEMBER 8  
BEAT CULTURE AND THE NEW AMERICA  
1950-1965

210

There was an interesting show on the Beat Generation  
at the Whitney Museum  
curated by Lisa Phillips  
which opened on December 8

I bused down to the opening  
It was a typically jittery NYC art crowd  
as manic in '95  
as it was in '65 or '55

I'd never seen so much well-turned-out black attire  
There must have been several million dollars' worth  
of fresh purchased noir!

A girl on a bench wearing wide black lipstick  
in the Whitney lobby  
was frantically wave-drying  
her just-painted black fingernails  
while a friend to her side in black sunglasses  
was chatting on a cell phone  
—an image of an image as Plato described in the  
Allegory of the Cave.

Inside was a mighty flow of images!  
Especially a glass topped case of  
William Burroughs' cut-ups

& the manuscript of On the Road  
in a shrine-case

DECEMBER 10  
BEAT NIGHT AT THE WHITNEY

Then on Dec. 10th  
there was a reading at the Whitney  
A.G. with Steve Taylor, and myself with Steve, plus  
David Amram, Michael McClure w/ Ray Manzarek  
& actor Keir Dullea reading  
Beat texts

Miriam and I were getting ready in Woodstock

when Allen called early in the morning with bronchitis  
and asked for “Pavarotti’s” throat therapy

(A doctor friend of mine had helped restore  
my voice before a Fugs reunion  
–he’d gotten the method from from Pav’s dr.)

I read it to him:

1. Take lots of liquids
2. Squirt Vanceril down throat  
every ten minutes
3. Don’t talk
4. Just before show time  
spray Afrin down throat

Then you can fully  
croon.  
It works.

We drove to NYC  
to 437 East 12th, the bard’s pad

where Steve & I rehearsed the Sappho poem  
we’d sing in Greek at the Whitney

Allen was still weak.  
Miriam didn’t see how he could possibly perform.  
An accupuncturist & massagist were working on him

yet somehow by show time  
the bard was ready–

(It was sometimes the same with Gregory Corso  
–backstage you might think  
he could never go on  
yet, like a Kennedy, he’d spring up  
and press his lips to the mike  
in full bard vitality)

He performed the beautiful section  
“Oh mother, what have I left out  
Oh mother, what have I forgotten....”  
from Kaddish

and the fine pol-song “Ballad of the Skeletons”  
with Steve Taylor

It was in The Nation that week  
Allen was less than pleased with the quality  
of Calvin Trillin’s political poems  
The Nation published

so that “Ballad of the Skeletons”  
was his answer lick  
(to use a guitarist’s term)  
on what pol-poesy should be

in the tradition of his “Capitol Air”  
“Hum Bomb” and “CIA Dope Calypso.”

(beginning around this time the bard,  
working with poets Andy Clausen & Eliot Katz  
began collecting pol-po’s [political poems]  
from his friends  
particularly on America’s rightward drift.  
The pol-po’s were to be published in a  
special section of The Nation)

The Whitney gave us a Town Car  
for the trip back downtown  
with Corso announcing he’d support Colin Powell for pres  
& A.G. heading  
to a Harry Smith celebration at St. Mark’s.  
where they were rolling Harry’s ’53 3-D movie  
called Number 6

& Miriam & I said good bye to  
bard Corso & bard Ginsberg  
and drove back to Woodstock

## Part XXXIV

1996

If you look at the Raw List  
of things he did  
in the year before his

it's just about as complex  
as Beat Frenzy '56

Ginsberg was determined to go the Thomas Hardy path:  
to write great poetry as he geezered

•

In February he played at the annual  
benefit for Tibet House at Carnegie Hall

In the audience was Danny Goldberg  
then the president of Mercury Records  
who had helped launch a spoken word label called Mouth Almighty  
(headed by Bill Adler & Bob Holman)

Allen sang "Ballad of the Skeletons"  
& Goldberg offered to release it on Mercury/Mouth Almighty

•

In March the 'Zap  
collaborated with Ornette Coleman  
in a "poetry/jazz telecast" from Paris

He toured with Philip Glass  
in France & the Czech Republic  
doing portions of Hydrogen Jukebox

& he scarfed further moolah from  
Retentia, the Muse of the Retained Image  
from a photo show in Milan

•

I called Allen's office on April 10  
The bard was in Texas  
and there was bad news  
about his congestive heart condition  
a very serious situation

How about his new loft?  
It won't be ready for a few months,  
I was told.

On April 13, I chatted with Allen  
 He was back in his NY pad  
 and seemed okay

I wanted some more info on his '77 lunch with  
 CIA spook James Angleton  
 (for 1968, A History in Verse)  
 &, as always,  
 he grabbed it out of his lobes  
 with not a missed beat  
 including some unfriendly remarks from the spy-sleaze  
 on Martin King  
 (that the great American was “nothing but a  
 whoremaster and a hypocrite”).

•

More good news from Retentia in April  
 the bard went down to D.C. for readings  
 & a part in the National Portrait Gallery photo show  
 “Rebel Poets & Painters of the 1950s”

In May there was the fine Illuminated Poems  
 with illustrations by Eric Drooker  
 from Four Walls/Eight Windows

### BALLAD OF THE SK'S

May was the month they recorded “Ballad of the Skeletons”  
 w/ Lenny Kaye producing  
 Apparently they did a basic track and vocal  
 with Lenny on bass and Marc Ribot on guitar  
 David Mansfield on guitar  
 The era of “mailing around the ADAT”  
 for overdubs had long begun  
 so they forwarded an ADAT (digital 8-track tape)  
 to Philip Glass who laid down some piano

Then it was sent to Paul McCartney  
 who put on a bunch of stuff  
 including guitar, drums, an organ part & maracas

Mouth Almighty brought in Hal Willner



known for his miracle mixes  
to work the faders, settings, pannings  
and knobs

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“He took a little bit of bagginess out of the record”  
said Bill Adler  
o’ Mouth Almighty

•

Jan Kerouac died on June 7 at 44  
in Albuquerque the day after her spleen was removed  
She had been on dialysis since '91  
the author of Baby Driver of '81  
Trainsong of '88 & she'd been working on Parrot Fever  
about her mother Joan Haverty

•

His usual bard-in-residence  
for the summer session at Naropa  
Then he spent ten days with Burroughs in Lawrence  
taking pictures, and helping edit Burroughs' essay on  
“Bureaucracy & Drugs”

In August  
he read the Blake-thread “Sunflower Sutra”  
to music by Philip Glass  
& conducted by Yehudi Menuhin  
at Avery Fisher Hall, Lincoln Center

•

On August 8 beat hero Herbert Huncke  
respected writer of tales  
passed away at 81  
at Beth Israel in NYC

thock thock

•

In September the bard went on a  
Buddhist retreat for ten days  
with Gelek Rinpoche



On September 20 it was announced  
that filmmaker Gus Van Sant  
would direct a music video  
for “Ballad of the Skeletons”

Then, again at the St. Mark’s Church on October 8  
there was a musical party for the bard’s  
Selected Poems 1948-1995  
the release of “Ballad of the Skeletons”  
& the thirtieth anniversary of the great Poetry Project

AN EVENING WITH  
ALLEN GINSBERG  
AT THE POETRY PROJECT

## Mixed-up Time-Travel

celebrating the Poetry Project’s 30th Anniversary and  
HarperCollins publication of *Allen Ginsberg’s Selected Poems 1947-1995*

READINGS & PERFORMANCES by Allen Ginsberg with Art Baron  
Kim Deal Lenny Kaye Tuli Kupferberg Norm MacDonald  
David Mansfield Lenny Pickett Colin Quinn Lee  
Ranaldo Marc Ribot Stephan Sald Ed Sanders Steve  
Shelley Steven Taylor Hal Willner Carro Yellin  
MEMBERS OF THE JAZZ PASSENGERS & OTHER SPECIAL GUESTS

√ 8 PM Tuesday, October 8, 1996 St. Mark’s Church in-the-Bowery

We had a quorum so we could call ourselves the Fugs  
& we began with the core of our vision  
Wm. Blake’s “How Sweet I Roamed”  
with the great David Mansfield on  
mandolin!

I was surprised when the bard asked  
Tuli, Steve & me  
to include “River of Shit” in our set  
so I composed some new words for the bridge  
to fit the night

& performed it with  
the all-star cats  
some from Sonic Youth  
& Saturday Night Live.

People

tend ne'er  
 to speak  
 in public  
 of their rears or  
 their daily  
 visits to the  
     porcelain vortex

but the bard who could  
 write brilliant pol-po's  
 and ruminative philosophical poems  
     to limn the age

never let his audience  
     forget the vortex.

& so the Fugs roared forth with "Wide Wide River"  
 and the audience "caught fire" as they say  
     and roared along with us.

•

I was beginning to notice a memorial quality  
 in this string of salutes to the distinguished professor.

They seemed to me fueled by his obvious physical decline  
 these fetes for the 'Zap  
     in the '94-'95-'96 triad

They celebrated Chekhov  
 at the opening of The Cherry Orchard  
     in 1904

He could barely stand erect on stage  
     rained upon with flowers  
     and speeches of glorifications  
         from actors, journalists & the heads  
         of literary societies

as if he were already gone

•

He finally moved to his shiny new loft  
in September o' '96

Peter would have the double apartment on East 12th  
–he had originally been a cosigner of the lease  
& so had legal claim under the  
ever crumbling NYC rent control rules  
–in place since the rent struggles of World War II.

•

One of his final poems was a salute to his  
fast-voiced accompanist & arranger  
since '76 Steve Taylor  
now on the faculty at Naropa, and married to Judy Hussie

Generous as ever the bard  
helped pay the maternity bills  
for Steve & Judy's baby Eamonn  
born 12-3-96

1997

In February as in recent years the bard performed  
in an all-star Carnegie Hall benefit for Tibet House  
with Philip Glass, Michael Stipe, Natalie Merchant  
& Patti Smith.

### THE MTV SPECIAL

In his elegant loft  
appointed so well with light-hued wood  
fresh shiny floors  
& un-catabolized white on the walls  
the hourglass  
was doing what it does so well  
& the fate shears  
were staring at the bard-thread.

I stayed there overnight on February 13  
I'd taken part in a CD project with a bunch of recording artists  
to lay down poems of Edgar Allan Poe

(I set to music the sonnet “To Helen” & “The Haunted Palace”  
from “The Fall of the House of Usher”  
–I learned from the bard that Poe had been  
one of his first inspirations)

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The CD was produced, as had been A.G.’s The Lion for Real  
by Hal Willner & Michael Minzer  
for Mouth Almighty Records

After the sessions I headed for the loft  
on East 13th

At last enough wall space for his art collection  
His records, books & CDs!

I was glad that the great Bard  
had a pad with bowling alley bigness

Along a wall past his piano and a pump organ  
was a spacious votivity zone–  
a prayer rug & cushions  
a cabinet & a table with candles  
& Buddhist relics

beneath some tankas  
whose meaning he could trace  
with intricate tale  
& Trungpa’s large “AH”  
on the wall of peace, love,  
acceptance, surrender.

He showed me his guest room  
which sported a painting by Paul McCartney  
& he took me into his bathroom  
to marvel at his bidet!

The bathroom had its own window  
which looked out onto the loft  
toward the windows overlooking 14th street!

As weakened as he was  
he told me he had a new boyfriend  
and he was going to have his own  
MTV Unplugged!

I slept on a long white leather-covered couch  
he assured me he'd gotten from the Salvation Army

220



The Bard's living room with Salvation Army couches

His bed was at the other end of the wide-hearted loft  
The light stayed on by his distant bed  
in his nighttime habit  
    of journals & verse

I heard the padding of slippers at 4 a.m.  
through the high-vaulted loft  
I looked up and agreed with Miriam  
    how yellow his face skin shone  
        as he passed in the hour-glass silence

When we awakened  
he offered a fresh rhubarb tart & rice milk,  
    plus coffee & a hard boiled egg  
        for breakfast

Hal Willner came over  
to talk about the A.G. MTV Special scheduled for July 20  
Allen was about as excited as I'd ever seen him  
He said Dylan had agreed to do it,  
plus the hot young singer named Beck, and Philip Glass  
& he thought McCartney  
    would come

He checked his blood, then shot up some insulin

He asked where he could get pump organs fixed  
for even his little hand-held one from Benares was broken

I suggested doing a Net-search for pump organ sites  
–Bob Rosenthal agreed

I mentioned the big victorian pump organ  
with the nice bass sound I'd borrowed  
back in '85 to write some arias  
for an opera the Fugs were doing

I said we'd ship it from Woodstock  
down to the loft  
so that he or perhaps even Dylan, McCartney or Glass  
could thunder-pump it for the Unplugged  
(we did ship it a few days later)

He was going out to lunch with Bono of U2  
Got dressed in his flower-tied finery  
On the kitchen window sill  
was a goblet of pennies  
next to the Tarot card for Justice



Ten days passed  
& the great bard was feeling ever more fatigued so on February 23  
Bob Rosenthal accompanied him all weak & unsteady  
on the shuttle to Boston to see his cardiologist

On the flight A.G. read a poem from the night before  
called "Fame and Death"

beginning “When I die  
I don’t care what happens to my body.....”

222

It was then, in Boston I think, that his doctor  
asked him to go off all his various medications  
to try to focus on the cause  
of the tiredness.

MARCH 4

The bard left his sickbed in Boston  
to shuttle back to NYC  
in order to see Steve Taylor & Judy Hussie  
& new baby Eamonn  
in from Colorado for a visit.  
Aboard the plane  
he write a little rhymed poem “A fellow named Steven”  
(p. 73 in his final book, Death & Fame)

## Part XXXV

March 15 Gary Snyder called Ginsberg  
Bob Rosenthal answered  
who told him the diabetes, the heart murmur  
and various medications had joined  
to make the bard very very disoriented  
& fatigued

He called A.G. in the hospital  
who told his old pal he’d been diagnosed  
with a recurrence of hepatitis C  
“from years ago in India or Mexico.  
He was so medicated that he wasn’t able to  
talk very clearly,”  
Snyder later wrote.

•

When Allen was brought to Beth Israel  
an emergency room doctor  
handed him a poem  
asking for suggestions



and the frail poet complied on the spot!  
 made some notes on the page  
 & the bard who wrote in Asclepiadeans  
 improved the poem  
 of the devotée of Asclepius

•

Of his final poems the most beautiful, to me  
 is the simple yet complex  
 four quatrain “Starry Rhymes”  
 at 4:51 a.m. on March 23, ending

“Orion down  
 North Star up  
 Fiery leaves  
 Begin to drop”

and then the next night  
 in tightly rhymed couplets  
 “Thirty State Bummers”  
 his final political poem, a remarkable  
 summation of the evil side  
 of the American imperium  
 it’s secret wars, support for killer dictators

with doublets such as  
 “Richard Helms Angleton live  
 we were lucky to survive”

We WERE lucky  
 to survive these oppressionists

•

March 27 at 2:29 a.m. in the hospital  
 “w/ dangerous hepatitis C” in the bard’s words  
 he awakened from a dream  
 that he’d had a baby

and there was a “glow of happiness next morn,  
 warm glow of pleasure half the day”

•

He phoned the world  
                   in cordless profusion  
 probably made 500 calls  
                   maybe more

A.G. called Gary late at night in Nevada City  
 He'd just been diagnosed  
                   with the teminality  
 He had two to five  
 Gary said he'd come to NYC for a visit in a few weeks  
 and the call sang to silence with A.G.'s sob

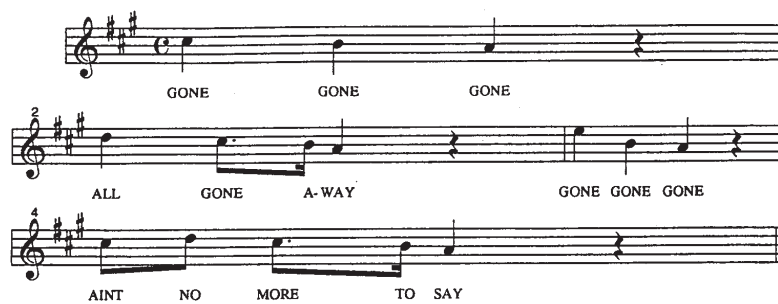
•

He called Steve Taylor in Boulder:  
 "...the doctor came in and I said well what's the news  
 and he said not good and I said cancer and he said yes. And I  
 said any operation or remedy... and he said no... They gave me  
 four to five months... But I've been weakening, I can tell,  
 and I think maybe only one or two... I was amazed how calm I was...  
 Some kind of equanimity- must have been all those years  
                   of Buddhist lectures, sitting...."

Taylor asked if he should fly to NYC before the Fugs went to Italy  
 He said "No, carry on,"

          Taylor could visit after the tour, and  
                   maybe they could do some recording

Taylor asked if the bard had any new songs and he sang:



Steve Taylor sent us a note  
                   that Allen was in the hospital

Right away I called Allen's # in NYC  
 & reached Peter Hale  
                   long time staff member

who sketched out the bitter truth:  
 “He has liver cancer  
 There are so many nodes there’s  
 no way to pick it out–  
 a liver transplant is out of the question

He’s making a lot of calls  
 & writing furiously.”

•

How many phonecalls? Maybe a thousand?  
 To Dylan, McCartney, boyfriends, girlfriends,  
 relatives, writers  
 & a long sad tearful call to Burroughs.

To Hal Willner he said  
 “Sorry for not doing the Unplugged”  
 He suggested Hal check out the 25 hours of  
 tapes from the Knitting Factory in ’96

•

That afternoon, March 30, the bard called Woodstock  
 & spoke with Miriam  
 Peter Orlovsky, he said, was going to be his  
 attendant

“He wouldn’t leave me alone  
 if I were sick in bed, dying,  
 grey-haired...he’d have pity on me,”  
 the bard said long ago

and he recalled how carefully Peter had cared for  
 his failing father Oleg back in ’82)

He assured Miriam he was not in pain  
 He’d finished his book  
 & he would be receiving guests at home.

He told her of the dream  
 wherein he’d had a child  
 and awakened very happy  
 It was the day, he said, they’d  
 given him the bad news

He asked how Miriam was  
 & wanted to be remembered to our daughter Deirdre  
 He said he wasn't afraid

She said, "We love you."  
 He replied, "I know."

•

A few hours later  
     when Miriam described the call from Allen  
 I dialed him at the hospital  
 He was having a meeting with Bob Rosenthal  
                                     and couldn't talk long

He said he'd finished his book  
     & was signing some photos

The perils of his illness, however,  
 were not so great  
 as to stop the  
     famous pr instincts of the bard  
 –he was afraid I was going  
 to break the story of his  
     terminal illness  
                                     in the Woodstock Journal  
 "Don't write about it in the Journal,"  
 "Of course I won't," I replied.

"I'll send you a new poem," he said.

The bard with maybe a 25-page press list  
 & the keenest sense of ink since Whitman  
     wanted to coordinate one more release

"OK honey," he said  
 "See you in a while  
 Love you."

•

Among the calls were those to wealthy friends  
 asking them to keep up their support,  
 say to Naropa

“This is great!”  
    he exclaimed to Bob Rosenthal  
“I’m dying, & no one can  
    say no!”

He was trying to reach George Soros  
whose Christmas parties he attended  
    to ask for help  
but couldn’t get through.

Maybe the 'Zap could have gotten Mr. Soros  
to fund the much-needed  
    Golden Bard Retirement Home network!

## Part XXXVI

They brought him home on Wednesday, April 2  
    to the light-wood-hued  
    loft with his books & paintings

& set up his final encampment

They placed a hospital bed near the  
    white-bearded photo of Whitman  
    on a white brick wall  
    between two windows that looked  
    upon 14th Street

•

There were plans to bring in portable  
    recording equipment  
and possibly try to do his MTV special  
    from his resting place

Peter Orlovsky was there  
helping him into his pajamas

It was around then, w/ Shelley Rosenthal’s help  
that they made a mighty  
fish head health stew on the stove

with all kinds of shellfish & restorative items  
tossed aboard

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Wednesday night he listened to his final music  
Ma Rainey's "See See Rider"  
and they brought down a blues text  
from his well-ordered walls  
so he could sing along

•

Miriam & I were at the Woodstock Journal office  
that night late  
getting the paper out before we  
flew off to Italy for Fugs reunions

so we missed a message from the bard. First a cough,  
then a weak voice, "This is Allen Ginsberg. It's  
Wednesday night, 10 or 10:30. I'm out of the hospital  
and back home. I think the last time I talked to you  
I was too tired to say much, but I'm home now.  
So you call, you know, lunchtime 12:30 or 1:30."

#### THURSDAY, APRIL 3

The next day A.G. was fairly alert  
coming up with instructions for the next few weeks  
and settling in for a multi-month Hey Jude fade

He was on the phone with Nanda Pivano  
from Italy, one of his finest translators,  
when he started to throw up

Rosenthal told her he'd have to hang up  
& the bard said he wanted to go to sleep.

He'd written a letter to Bill Clinton  
which noted he was sending some poems  
but he'd not gotten to choose them

•

That afternoon before we left for Newark International  
I called but they said he was asleep

It must have been after that terrible moment  
on the phone with Nanda Pivano.

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FRIDAY, APRIL 4

Night came and then morn  
& both Bob Rosenthal & Bill Morgan were worried  
came early to the loft

Peter was not there  
He had gone out  
and purchased a hot bicycle.

Bob went in to awaken the bard  
to see what they should do  
but he could not be roused

They even went so far as to give a pinch  
but the genius so easy to be awake slept fast

They called the hospice doctor  
who quickly came  
& judged he'd suffered a stroke in the night  
had just a few hours to live

The staff called the family  
& his brother Eugene & family arrived  
late in the morning

•

The Fugs were in Milan  
but Steve Taylor called the loft to get filled in  
We'd just returned to our hotel  
from a rehearsal place  
along a canal designed  
by Leonardo da Vinci

when we heard about the stroke  
Bill Morgan said that  
the end was very near.

We shared a loaf of olive bread  
then opened some liquor

and held our glasses high, clinked them,  
“Here’s to the soul of Allen Ginsberg.”

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TURN TURN TURN  
(TROPÉ TROPÉ TROPÉ)

Voice to voice to voice  
by e, by fax, by phone, by street-stop  
the word spread worldly

& I heard there were satellite trucks  
with their focusing dishes outside the building

The loft filled with friends  
Old pals gathered in quiet grief

There were Peter Orlovsky, Rani Singh, Shelley Rosenthal  
(& her and Bob’s two sons Aliah and Isaac)  
Francesco and Alba Clemente  
Philip Glass, Patti Smith and her daughter,  
Oliver Ray, Andrew Wylie  
Larry Rivers came down from his loft above  
Roy Lichtenstein, Raymond Foye  
Gregory Corso,  
George & Anna Condo & many others

They went to sit beside him  
hold his hand,  
whisper a message,  
kiss him, weep

•

Andrew Wylie later said  
“I certainly worshiped him  
I thought he was a great man  
He had this amazing effect on me  
I always felt good for a day and a half  
after seeing him.”

Wylie put his words on an important  
part of the bard:  
the good feelings lasting days  
from interactions



•

Gelek Rinpoche flew in from Michigan  
 He and other monks  
 chanted and prayed  
     by the bard's extensive  
     sitting zone & altar in the midroom.

•

Allen's cousin and doctor, Joel Gaidemak  
 was on hand as was a hospice nurse  
     to administer morphine

Two narrow tubes went up to his nose  
     with oxygen

Joel lived upstate, and the bard over the years  
 had "counted on his opinion a lot  
     in medical matters"  
 Bill Morgan later said

He was the kind of doctor, far too rare,  
 who would actually explain things  
     in bard-mind depth

•

Everybody was aware of the bard's  
 photos of the dying Julian Beck & his uncle Abe Ginsberg  
 so the delicate issue of photos arose  
 A few went out to purchase cameras.

Corso wanted a picture with Allen  
 He crouched by the death cot  
     with his arm over the bard  
     while someone took a snap  
     with a toss-away Woolworth's camera

(Oddly too that evening all of Corso's books,  
 signed over to the bard  
     from all those years  
     somehow vanished  
 from the pad)

•

A friend who was there told me of one  
of the bard's young pals  
sitting on the death bed  
his back to Ginsberg  
laughing and chatting

•

At last the quiet grieving day departed.  
They sent out for food  
and late in the evening many left  
–his brother, weeping and  
saying good bye  
Gregory, others.

and then about 2 a.m.  
people sacked out here and there

•

It was said his face perked up  
toward the end  
how the stress-lines smoothed  
“I had never seen him so handsome,”  
wrote Rosebud Pettet  
in her careful  
memoir of those hours

•

The artist George Condo  
made some sketches  
for a painting  
which the bard had said was okay

•

Old friend Rosebud Pettet  
sat stroking his feet

the bard attired in a Jewel Heart T-shirt  
frailer and skinner than any had seen

but his face showed peace  
     to Rosebud closely looking

His breathing slowing down to 20  
     19, 18 per minute

And then at 2:40 a.m.  
     Saturday morn  
     4-5-97  
     he seemed to try to sit up

and then his diamond brain ceased being served.

Thus left earth  
 the bard called Allen Ginsberg  
 whom so many of us loved

the Lion faced one  
     in the long Egyptian boat  
     no doubt getting  
     as close to Osiris  
     & the sun disk  
     as he can

Buddha singing one  
     on a blue Tara raft

Kaddish chanting one  
     on a boat made of stone

Fun shouting one  
     on a boat made of froth

Pain relieving one  
     on a boat made of sighs

•

People were asked to give space  
 & touch him not till  
 certain prayers and inductions were performed.

His body was cordoned off for hours  
 as Gelek Rinpoche & the lamas

-there was something about  
waiting till his cheeks  
had sunk in a certain way  
plus I think they had to grant the bard some initiations  
which he had not had a chance to receive

All through Saturday they sat and chanted  
till finally Bob Rosenthal called the  
midnight squad from the morgue  
who zipped the phantom all skinny  
in a body bag

Peter Orlovsky  
at the bed's foot  
hands pressed together  
& bowing at the zip

Thus went back toward sunshine  
the great bard Allen Ginsberg  
O float on the wave just a bit more, bard flower

-Edward Sanders  
March 1997-December 1999

## Afterword

# The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg

I did not plan to write a book on Allen Ginsberg, but rather an extended elegy, which I began at the time of his death in April of 1997 when for a while grief seemed to course without limit. I would be walking down the street and suddenly weep thinking about him. After a while, I decided that maybe silent mourning was the proper route, and decided to abandon the inch or so of notes I had made for the elegy.

In September of that year, I taught a course called "The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg" at the Schule für Dichtung in Vienna. To prepare, I created a fairly thick 3-ring notebook which included a history I put together of his life. In 1998 I decided to run some of that notebook in the Woodstock Journal. There was a favorable response from readers, so I kept publishing the notes, polishing them and adding new sections till it became obvious that a book was forming.

The life of Allen Ginsberg was very complicated, so *The Poetry & Life of Allen Ginsberg* is really a kind of pathway through the Forest Ginsberg, and because it is a pathway I have had to leave out a great many interesting anecdotes, events and interactions. Allen's soul was such a great and positive beacon that he attracted literally thousands of people who felt close to him. Inevitably this walkway through the Forest Ginsberg could not touch a number of important connections in his life, and I ask for the indulgence of those poets, activists, filmmakers, musicians, family members, painters, Beat Generation scholars, & friends in countries all around the world, who had their own complicated relationships with the great bard Allen Ginsberg, and whose memories are not heard and seen along this pathway.

There are two good biographies of Allen Ginsberg, *Dharma Lion* by Michael Schumacher, and *Ginsberg* by Barry Miles. Read together, each with a slightly different point of view, Allen Ginsberg emerges as the great human that he was. His journals, his multitudinous interviews, his poems (always biographical), the endnotes to his books, his descriptions of his photos, and my own files, including many clippings, journals, letters and tapes from my own numerous interactions, performances and capers with him for thirty-four years, were helpful in creating this book. The memories of my wife Miriam, and of Bob Rosenthal, Bill Morgan, Raymond Foye, Rosebud Pettet, Steve Taylor, Andrew Wylie, Hal Willner, Bill Adler and others were very helpful, and I am very grateful for them.

I loved him, and he is in my mind almost as if he were alive even as I type this on a warm spring day, wishing he were staying across the street at Raymond Foye's house (as he sometimes did) so I could go over there for a chat (and some good advice, for he was a teacher around the clock).

He kept everything— doodles on napkins, the 60,000 letters of friends, the 18,900 pages (and more) of journals, and just about every fragment of his time-track, so it might be interesting for someone to do a Total Biography of Ginsberg.. He seemed to be asking for it with his tens of thousands of photos, his thousands of recordings and interviews, so perhaps a day-by-day bio, maybe 25,000 pages long, is what is required. That would be a Joycean endeavor. On the other hand, his final ten years would make a fine project for a biographer.

I cannot be the one, but I have written a temporary path, with log bridges over streams and ropes down cliff sides, through the Forest Ginsberg, for your study and enjoyment.

—Edward Sanders  
Woodstock, NY

## ALLEN GINSBERG

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 Illuminated Poems Illustrated by Eric Drooker, Four Walls Eight Windows, NYC 1996  
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- The Ballad of the Skeletons w/Paul McCartney, Philip Glass Produced by Lenny Kaye, Mouth Almighty/Mercury, 1996
- Howl, U.S.A. Lee Hyla score, Kronos Quartet, Nonesuch, 1996
- The Lion For Real: Produced by Hal Willner, Mouth Almighty/Mercury, 1989, 1996
- Holy Soul Jelly Roll: Poems & Songs 1949 -1993. Four CD set, produced by Hal Willner, Rhino Records; 1994
- Hydrogen Jukebox, music by Philip Glass, libretto by Allen Ginsberg, Elektra Nonesuch #9 79286-2, 1993.
- Cosmopolitan Greetings Jazzy Opera, Music by George Gruntz, words by Allen Ginsberg, 2 CD's Migros- Genossenschafts-Bund Muzikscene Schweitz MG BCD9203, Postfach 266 CH-8031 Zürich, Switzerland, 1993
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- First Blues, A.G. on Harmonium, Recorded by Harry Smith, edited A. & S. Charters, Folkways Record FSS 37560, NY, 1981. In Print c/o Smithsonian Institute, 955 l'Enfant Plaza, Washington D.C. 20560; Cassette order department: 301-443-2314 fax: 443-1819
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Paul Bowles: The Complete Outsider - Produced & Dir. Catherine Warnow & Regina Weinreich, 1993; First Run Features, 153 Waverly Pl New York, NY 10014; [Appearances]

Evening with Allen Ginsberg - (with Don Was, bass acc.) Lannan Foundation, 5401 McConnell Ave., L.A., CA 90066, 1990. Good performance video, some conversation.

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It Don't pay to be an Honest Citizen. 78 min. color copyright 1984 Object Productions/Jacob Burckhardt 201 E. 4th Street NYC 10009. [Bit part].

Voices & Visions. Series on Modern American Poetry in 13 one-hour segments, Jan. 1988 PBS broadcast. Allen Ginsberg appears in the segments on Whitman and W.C. Williams. Available in video cassette and 16 mm film through N.Y. Ctr. for Visual History, 625 Broadway, NYC 10012, 212-777-6900. [Comment on W. C.W.]

Beat Generation. Renaissance Motion Pictures, 23 W. 73rd St. suite #101 NYC NY 10023. 212-496 0088. Produced by Janet Forman, 1987. [Appearances.]

What Happened to Kerouac. 96-minute, 1985. Directed by Richard Lerner & Lewis MacAdams, a Richard Lerner Production, New Yorker Films, 16 W. 61st St., NYC, 10023, 212-247-6110. [Appearances.]

Father Death Blues. Part of "Don't Grow Old," for the Manhattan Video Project, Out There Productions, Inc., 156 W. 27th st., Ste. 5-W, NYC, NY 10001, 1984. [4 minute music poetry video].

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Allan 'N' Allen's Complaint. 30-minute color video, Nam June Paik & Shigeo Kubota. Appeared at 1983 Whitney Museum Biennial. Dist. by Send Video Arts, 1250 17th St., San Francisco, CA 94110. [Interesting feature.].

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Fried Shoes, Cooked Diamonds. With Corso, Burroughs, Leary, Orlovsky, Anne Waldman. Dir. Constanzo Allione. Dist. Mystic Fire Video, 24 Horatio St. #3, N.Y. 10014.

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## ARCHIVES

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## ONWARDNESS

Allen Ginsberg Trust  
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New York, NY 10009





