

Allen Ginsberg:

An Inventory of His Collection at the Harry Ransom Center

Descriptive Summary

Creator	Ginsberg, Allen, 1926-1997
Title	Allen Ginsberg Collection
Dates:	1944-1979
Extent:	3 boxes (1.25 linear feet), 1 oversize folder, and 2 galley folders
Abstract:	This collection of poet, peace activist, and co-founder of the Beat movement Allen Ginsberg contains a handful of his works, including <i>Empty Mirror</i> and a theatrical adaptation of <i>Kaddish</i> , correspondence with Peter Orlovsky, Jack Kerouac, and others, and notebooks by and letters to Peter Orlovsky, Ginsberg's long-time companion.
Call Number:	Manuscript Collection MS-01621
Language:	English
Access	Open for research. Peter Orlovsky's journal pages are circulated in photocopy form only.

Administrative Information

Acquisition	Purchases, 1965-1994 (R13149, R12249, R12047, R11945, R8877, R8433, R4485, R2396)
Processed by	Chelsea S. Dinsmore, 2000
Repository:	Harry Ransom Center, The University of Texas at Austin

Biographical Sketch

Allen Ginsberg, American poet and one of the founders of the Beat movement, was born in 1926, the second son of Louis and Naomi Ginsberg. His father was an English teacher, a poet, and a socialist; his mother was a communist and an active member in the Party; both were children of Russian-Jewish immigrants. Naomi also suffered from paranoid delusions and Ginsberg often stayed home from school to take care of her during her depressions. She entered several institutions for varying lengths of time and eventually had to be permanently committed. The experience of watching the decline of his mother's mental health made Ginsberg very sensitive to and uniquely qualified to deal throughout his life with people of varying mental states.

A good student despite his difficulties at home, Ginsberg entered Columbia in 1943 as a pre-law student, but with a strong interest in poetry. He contributed frequently to various student publications. He was expelled for one year in 1945 after he scrawled obscene phrases in the dust on his dorm window and was subsequently found in bed with Jack Kerouac. The issue of homosexuality was not brought up at his disciplinary hearing with the Dean, rather he was fined for having an unregistered overnight guest and for the obscenities, and expelled for one year in the hope that he might mature enough to continue his education.

Ginsberg promptly moved in with William Burroughs, who became his mentor, exposing him to readings far outside the narrow scope of Columbia's conservative literature department. While living with Burroughs, Ginsberg was also immersed in the New York underground drug, crime, and sex scene and became friends with Lucian Carr, Neal Cassady, and John Holmes, among others, as well as Kerouac who was also studying with Burroughs. Ginsberg returned to Columbia but continued his experimentation with drugs and writing forms. In 1947, Ginsberg dropped out of Columbia and took a merchant ship to Africa and back. Returning to East Harlem, Ginsberg suffered a sort of break-down and experienced a vision which gave him a glimpse of creative realms outside the norms of the material world. He and Kerouac, who had also had a conversion experience that year, turned to Buddhism and other Eastern influences, turning their backs on Western religion and the status quo.

In 1949 Ginsberg moved out of East Harlem and into downtown Manhattan where Herbert Huncke and several of his friends began storing stolen goods. The police raided the apartment and Ginsberg served eight months in the New York Psychiatric Hospital where he met Carl Solomon who offered further challenges to his convictions about poetry. Ginsberg continued to write the collection of poems later published in 1972 as *The Gates of Wrath*.

Through the 1950s Ginsberg traveled through Mexico and Cuba, and eventually reached California. He began studying Zen and other eastern philosophies and in 1956 he gave his first public poetry reading, performing *Howl* to a stunned audience. At the age of 29, Allen Ginsberg had produced a work of poetry that would speak to an entire generation.

Ginsberg traveled to Europe and Tangiers in the late fifties with his lover Peter Orlovsky and settled back in New York in 1959. He traveled to Peru in 1960 and in 1961 began a trip which lasted six years and took him through India, Eastern Europe, and parts of Asia including Vietnam. While visiting Gary Snyder in Japan, Ginsberg had another personal revelation, this one showing him that the way to alternative realms was not found by going outside of himself via mind altering drugs, but rather by looking inside himself through the use of meditation. The stories of his travels and of "the Change" were published in *Planet News* (1968).

From 1970 onward, Ginsberg's fame grew. He traveled around the country participating in peace rallies and sit-ins, and published widely. As his writing began to make money he set up a non-profit organization and donated the money to destitute writers, independent newspapers, and the legal defense of arrested peace protesters. He purchased a farm in upstate New York which he and various friends made relatively self-sufficient. He contributed lyrics to and performed with the punk rock band the Clash, performed with Bob Dylan's Rolling Thunder Tour, and jammed with John Lennon. He continued to teach, speak, write, and perform into the nineties. He died of liver cancer in 1997.

Sources

Dictionary of Literary Biography -- Volume 16: The Beats: Literary Bohemians in Postwar America. Ann Charters, Ed. (Detroit: Gale Research Company, 1983).

Miles, Barry, *Ginsberg: A Biography.* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1989).

Scope and Contents

Correspondence and a theatrical adaptation of Ginsberg's poem *Kaddish* make up the bulk of the Allen Ginsberg Collection, 1944-1979, supplemented by holograph and typescript works by Ginsberg, journal and notebook entries by Peter Orlovsky, and critical works about Ginsberg by other authors. The collection is organized into four series, arranged alphabetically by author and chronologically where possible: Series I. Works, 1951-1970 (.5 box); Series II. Correspondence, 1944-1979 (.5 box); Series III. Peter Orlovsky's Personal Papers, 1961-1964 (1 box); and Series IV. Third-Party Works and Correspondence, 1954-1968 (1 box). This collection was previously accessible through a card catalog, but has been recataloged as part of a retrospective conversion project.

The Works Series contains several poems by Ginsberg including "The Green Automobile" and "Primrose Hill Guru," as well as a statement to the Senate subcommittee investigating the use of LSD. Additionally, two revised typescripts and galley proofs for *Empty Mirror* are present. A complete list of Ginsberg's works in this collection is provided in the Index of Works at the end of this guide.

The Correspondence Series is divided into two sections, outgoing and incoming. The outgoing section contains a great many letters from Ginsberg to fellow Beat writer Jack Kerouac and Ginsberg's long-time companion Peter Orlovsky, in addition to other friends and writers. The incoming correspondence includes a few letters from consular officials as well as friends and admirers. Individual correspondents are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

The Peter Orlovsky Series is composed of various bills, calling cards, notes, drafts and other fragments of Orlovsky's professional efforts. Several pages of journal entries are present in addition to an address book. People writing to Orlovsky include publishers, friends, and family. Due to their fragility, the journal pages are only available to researchers in photocopy form. Individual correspondents are listed in the Index of Correspondents.

The Third-party Works and Correspondents Series contains several critical works about Ginsberg's poetry, a few unidentified poems, and multiple drafts of Jerome Benjamin's efforts to adapt Ginsberg's long poem *Kaddish* for the theatre. There is a small amount of correspondence between friends of Ginsberg and Orlovsky, generally about one or the other of the two. Individual authors and their works are listed in the Index of Works by other Authors and individual correspondents are listed in the Index of Correspondents at the end of this guide.

Related Material

Other materials associated with Allen Ginsberg are located in the following collections at the Ransom Center:

- Beck, Julian
- Bowles, Paul
- Cassady, Neal
- Corman, Cid
- Corso, Gregory
- El Corno Emplumado
- Ford, Charles Henri
- *Genesis West*
- Haldeman, Charles
- Lowell, Robert
- Maas, Willard
- Malanga, Gerard
- *New Departures*

- Owen, Peter
 - Paterson Society
 - Walter, Eugene
 - Zukofsky, Louis
-

Separated Material

5 folders of newspaper clippings with biographical information, literary criticism, and published works by Ginsberg were transferred to the Ransom Center's Vertical Files.

32 photographs of Ginsberg, his family, and friends were transferred to the Literary Files of the Center's Photography Collection.

12 commercial cassette tapes of Ginsberg reading his poetry were transferred to the Center's Library and are described in the University of Texas Libraries catalog.

Index Terms

Correspondents:

Kerouac, Jack, 1922-1969.

Orlovsky, Peter, 1933- .

Subjects:

American poetry--20th century.

Beat generation.

Beat generation--Fiction.

Document Types:

Galley proofs.

Scripts.

Sound recordings.

Series I. Works, 1951-1970

A-Z

box 1 folder 1

Empty Mirror, 1961, two typescripts with revisions and front matter, 51pp (galley proofs removed to galley folder 1)

**folder
2**

Series II. Correspondence, 1944-1979

Outgoing, 1944-68

A-Z **box 1 folder 3**

Kerouac, Jack

1945-49 **box 1 folder 4**

1950-55 **folder 5**

1956-68 **folder 6**

LaVigne, Robert, 1955-59 **folder 7**

Orlovsky, Peter

1956-63 **box 1 folder 8**

1965-67 **folder 9**

Incoming, A-Z, 1962-79 **folder 10**

Series III. Peter Orlovsky's Personal Papers, 1955-1964

Address book, various bills, calling cards, and medical reports, 1963

**box 2
folder 1**

Journal pages, 1961, typescript pages, 4pp (fragile original pages removed to galley folder 2)

**folder
2**

Orlovsky, Peter, 1964, unbound holograph notebook, 118pp

folder 3

Notes, drafts, and sketches, 1963, 41pp

**folder
4**

Correspondence, 1955-1964

A-J

box 2 folder 5

K-Z

folder 6

Lehmann, Maxine, 1962 (removed to Oversize Folder 1)

Orlovsky Family, 1961-64

box 2 folder 7

Pommey, Janine, 1961

folder 8

Series IV. Third-party Works and Correspondence, 1954-1968

Works, 1954-68

A-Z; Unidentified

box 2 folder 9Benjamin, Jerome, *Kaddish: A Dramatic Mass* (adaptation), nd, 15 typescripts and copies, most with revisions, several with notes by Ginsberg**folder
10-11**Benjamin, Jerome, *Kaddish* (cont.)**box 3 folder
1-9**

Manganotti, Donatella, "Aspects of the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg," 1964, carbon copy, 33pp

**folder
10**

Tobias, Allen, "Mind Is Shapely, Art Is Shapely: The World's a Beautiful Flower: A Critical Biography of the American Poet Allen Ginsberg," 1967, typescript copy, 40pp

**folder
11**

Correspondence, A-Z, 1961-67

folder 12

Allen Ginsberg Collection--Index of Correspondents

Box and folder numbers are followed by a number in parentheses which indicates the number of items by that person. A single item is indicated where there is no number in parentheses following the box and folder number. Where there is correspondence from Allen Ginsberg, the number in parentheses is followed by the phrase "from Ginsberg." So in the example:

Orlovsky, Marie--1.10, 2.7 (8)

there is 1 letter from Orlovsky in box 1, folder 10, and 8 letters from Orlovsky in box 2, folder 4.

- Baraka, Imamu Amiri, 1934- --1.3 (from Ginsberg)
- Behal, Rameshkumar--2.5 (2)
- Benares Begger's Home--3.12
- Carl Hanser Verlag (publisher)--2.5
- Carpenter, Sue--2.5
- Carr, Lucien, 1924?--1.3 (from Ginsberg)
- Chatterji, Sandeepan--2.5 (3)
- Choudry, J.C.--2.5
- Christian, John--1.3 (from Ginsberg)
- City Lights Bookstore--3.12
- Congdon, Kirby--2.5
- Corso, Gregory--3.12
- Cowan, Elsie--2.5
- D.M. Library, book sellers--2.5
- Di Prima, Diane--1.3 (from Ginsberg)
- *East Side Review*--2.5
- *Esquire*--2.5
- Fakir, Asore--2.5
- Ferlinghetti, Lawrence--3.12
- Firma K.L. Mukhopadhyaya--3.12
- Freeman, Ed--2.5
- Gangopadhyaya, Sunil--2.5
- Grinberg, Miguel--2.5
- Heiserman, Jerry--1.10
- India. Consulate General--2.5
- Indian Ministry of Home Affairs--1.10
- Inman, Will, 1923- --2.5
- Instituto Internazionale del Disco S.p.A.--2.5
- Jones, Leroi--see Baraka, Imamu Amiri
- Karl O. Paetel (firm)--2.6
- Kerouac, Jack, 1922-1969--1.4-6 (135 from Ginsberg), 2.6
- Kokinnen, Eila--1.10
- LaVigne, Robert--1.7 (24 from Ginsberg)
- Loewinsohn, Ron--1.3 (10 from Ginsberg)
- Major, Clarence--1.3 (4 from Ginsberg)
- Marshall, Edward, 1932- --1.3 (2 from Ginsberg)
- Mead, Taylor--2.6
- Mitra, Manjula--2.6 (14)
- Mother Press--3.12
- Muktikanth, Naganand--3.12

- Muralidhar, N.--1.10
- New York (N.Y.) Police Depart.--2.6
- New York (State). Governor's Office--2.6
- O'Hara, Frank--2.6
- Orlovsky, Katherine--2.7 (10)
- Orlovsky, Lafcadio--2.7 (2)
- Orlovsky, Marie--1.10, 2.7 (8)
- Orlovsky, Nicholas--2.7 (2)
- Orlovsky, Oleg--2.7
- Orlovsky, Peter, 1933- --1.8-9 (83 from Ginsberg), 2.7 (7)
- Pal, Romondra Nath--2.6 (5)
- Perveen--2.6 (2)
- Pivano, Fernanda--2.6 (2)
- Pommey, Janine--2.8 (8)
- Raman, A.S.--1.10
- Rice, Ron--1.10
- Rosenthal, Irving--1.10 (2), 2.6
- Sanders, Ed--2.6 (2)
- Saroyan, Aram--1.10
- Schlecter, Henry--1.10
- Skir, Leo--2.9 (2)
- Snyder, Gary, 1930- --2.6 (2)
- Thompson, Bob--1.10
- U.S. Congress. Senate. Committee on the Judiciary--3.12
- U.S. Consulate. India--2.6 (4)
- U.S. Veterans' Administration--2.6 (4)
- Varanasi Registration Office--2.6 (3)
- Vial, Ron--1.10
- Whitney Museum of American Art--3.12
- Wilcox, Dan--2.6
- Wilentz, Ted--2.6 (4)
- Winning, Henry--1.3 (7 from Ginsberg)
- Zimardi, Ronnie--1.10

Allen Ginsberg Collection--Index of Works

- Art-Anti-Art--1.1
- Documents on Police Bureaucracy's Conspiracy Against Human Rights of Opiate Addicts...--1.1
- *Empty Mirror*--1.2, Galley Folder 1
- "First Manifesto to End the Bringdown"--1.1
- "The Green Automobile"--1.1
- Inspired by an Attack of Bell's Palsy...--1.1
- Primrose Hill Guru--1.1
- Statement before Senate Subcommittee on Investigating LSD--1.1
- To Krishnamurti--1.1

Allen Ginsberg Collection--Index of Works by other Authors

- Benjamin, Jerome
 - • *Kaddish: A Dramatic Mass*(adaptation)--2.9-3.10
- Dowden, George
 - Interview with Allen Ginsberg--2.9
- Evron, Boaz
 - "Leaving the Battle"--2.9
- Horovitz, Michael
 - Spring Welcomes You to London--2.9
- Kamalakar, Narayan
 - Oh! Sing to Me Truly--2.9
- Manganotti, Donatella
 - "Aspects of the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg"--3.11
- Orlovsky, Peter
 - "By now he's dead and buried?..."--2.5 (with East Side Review letter)
 - "Where is the world but the way of a lonely street?..."--2.5 (with East Side Review letter)
- Rhagw, Dandaratte
 - "The road goes from the house to the station..."--2.9
- Tobias, Allen
 - "Mind Is Shapely, Art Is Shapely: The World's a Beautiful Flower: A Critical Biography of the American Poet Allen Ginsberg"--3.12
- Unidentified Authors
 - Love Poem for Peter Orlovsky--2.9
 - Ode to P.O.--2.9