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## PART IV: OTHER VOICES AND THEIR INFLUENCE

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The challenge to standard stereotypes that Kinsey had made encouraged others from a number of disciplines to also investigate—even a handful of academics who had previously avoided the subject. Perhaps the most controversial individual included in this section is Walter H. Breen, who wrote under the name of J. Z. Eglinton. Wayne Dynes, who did the initial planning for this book, originally solicited Breen's biography because he felt Breen's belief that intergenerational sex (what Breen called Greek Love or ephebophilia) should be distinguished from androphile homosexuality (sex between adults) was important. The issue of pederasty or ephebophilia has been a hot issue in any discussion of male homosexuality, and it was with considerable trepidation that Breen's biography was included in this book. Although a believer in pederasty (he was arrested and convicted on child molestation charges) his research on the topics are a valuable source to the whole question of same-sex relationships in a historical perspective. It should be added that intergenerational sex is in part dependent on definitions of age of consent, and many countries have either long held or recently established the age of consent for males as fourteen or sixteen, the same as it is in those countries for females.

Among those he influenced to investigate homosexuality was Warren Johansson, a polymath, who tracked down some of the most obscure references to same-sex relationships in the past. Johansson knew more obscure historical facts about same-sex relationships than anyone else; many sought him when they had questions. Johansson corresponded with Kinsey, for example, providing him with information about Sigmund Freud's acceptance of homosexuality as a fact of life rather than as an illness.

Another controversial writer was Donald Webster Cory—Edward Sagarin by birth. His 1951 book on *The Homosexual in America* appears often in these pages as a source of information for many who were attempting to find out about their own sexuality. But Cory was, as his biography indicates, uncomfortable, to say the least, about his own same-sex inclinations. In fact,

under his academic name, Sagarin, he often appears to be homophobic. It is this ambivalence that he has toward his own sex drives which make him an interesting subject.

Perhaps one of the most influential academics in bringing about change in attitudes toward homosexuality was Evelyn Gentry Hooker, whose studies indicated that homosexual men could not be identified as different on the standard projective tests then in use from the heterosexuals. Her conclusions remind one of the old children's story about the emperor who had no clothes, and it took a comparatively simple experiment to demonstrate this. George Weinberg, who coined the word *homophobia*, was one of a tiny handful of psychotherapists in the 1960s willing to take a stand against the psychiatric profession's classification of homosexuality as a pathology. Also included in this series of biographies is my own, insisted upon by the editor in chief of the series in which this book appears. Bullough was both a scholar and an activist, leading the charge to change the policies of the American Civil Liberties Union on gays and lesbians, and in the process becoming a public spokesperson for removing homosexuality from the lists of pathologies and perversions, at time when many gays and lesbians were still reluctant to go public.

Although many authors, playwrights, artists, poets, and others have been gay or lesbian, including many contemporary writers such as Gore Vidal, few took the public road that Allen Ginsberg traveled in debating, asserting, and demanding gay rights. For this reason he is included in this collection, and his biography begins this section.

Also helping to challenge public opinion on homosexuality was a number of other people whose contribution, although only peripheral to the issue of homosexuality, helped the public define what homosexuality was all about. Belonging in this group of people is Christine Jorgensen, whose surgical change from female to male forced psychiatrists and physicians to re-examine their own ideas about what was involved in sexual identity. Less well known to the general public but equally influential was Virginia Prince who believed that transvestism and homosexuality were two different phenomena and should not necessarily be linked together. She started a worldwide movement that includes a wide variety of behaviors usually now grouped together under the category of transgenderism.

As everyone knows there are also gay queens, and while their importance in the Stonewall riots finally has been recognized, they were early on the scene of being public about their sex preferences. Particularly important in this respect was José Sarria. The Empress of San Francisco who helped the citizens of San Francisco laugh with her and made the city much more tolerant of the acceptance of gays and lesbians. Her royal court became a standard ceremony in many of the cities of the United States. In a similar vein,

not to be overlooked are the bar owners, not all of whom were exploitive of their gay clientele. Charlotte Coleman was particularly important in San Francisco and her activities again help explain how that city became so openly tolerant of its gay and lesbian citizens.

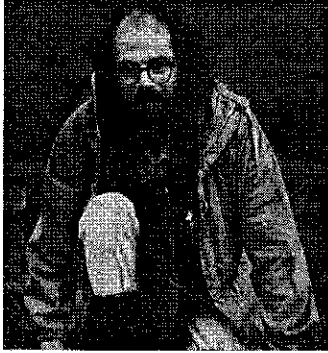
Probably the most important factor in enabling the gay movement to grow and expand from its initial base in Los Angeles was money. ONE, Inc. had a hand-to-mouth existence until Reed Erickson and the Erickson Education Foundation came to its rescue. Erickson, a female-to-male transsexual, became the angel for many gay causes, giving in the end several million dollars to the cause. The symbol of what he accomplished is the archival holdings of lesbian and gay topics in Los Angeles in the ONE/ILGA archives on the campus of the University of Southern California, and the Bonnie and Vern Bullough collection at California State University, Northridge.

A major breakthrough in the religious opposition to homosexuality was the establishment of the Metropolitan Community Church in Los Angeles. Troy Perry calls himself a Christian in spite of Christianity. His success led other religious groups to go further than they had before in coming to terms with homosexuality and lesbianism.

As the movement gained success, the nature of the leaders changed. Many retired but a few continued. One who continued on was Morris Kight in Los Angeles. Kight, who was long an activist in fighting for the civil rights of others and a closeted gay for much of his early life even though he worked for gay causes, emerged as an important out-of-the-closet leader in the 1960s, symbolizing the change in the gay movement even before Stonewall. In the aftermath of Stonewall, he played a more important role, just as many of the activists who had joined the battle earlier were being pushed out of leadership roles or began to be regarded as old fashioned and out of step, although many of them hung on through the changes. They were important, and it is their stories that this book tells.

## Allen Ginsberg (1926-1997): On His Own Terms

Gwen Brewer



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Although many of the important twentieth-century writers were gay, most of them remained rather closeted about it. This was not the case of poet Allen Ginsberg, whose very fame in part rested on his willingness not only to proclaim his own homosexuality but to write seriously and poetically about it and to campaign for gay and lesbian rights. This, he insisted, was part of his being, and he gloried in it, proclaiming it everywhere, lending his support to gays when it was not popular to do so. As gay power grew, he remained controversial, even defending the National American Man-Boy Love Association (NAMBLA). He enjoyed being a spokesman for those who were

different, and he did make a difference.

Allen Ginsberg was born in Paterson, New Jersey, to Russian Jewish parents. His mother, Naomi Levy, immigrated to the United States when she was ten with her Marxist family, who opposed Czarist Russia. A bright, outspoken woman, she loved poetry and loved to sing as she played the mandolin. She evidently enjoyed being a mother and had strong ties to her two sons, Allen and Eugene. She was a strong communist all her life; her sons heard many political arguments and even attended doctrinaire communist camps during alternate summers. Unfortunately Allen's mother developed paranoid schizophrenia and spent increasingly frequent periods in asylums while the boys were growing up. During periods when she was home, Allen often had to miss school to care for her. She separated permanently from Allen's father in 1943, and she died at Greystone Sanatorium in 1956. Allen's feelings about his paranoid mother haunted him all his life. He dealt with them in two poems: the long "Kaddish," written shortly after "Howl," and "Black Shroud," written twenty-five years later.

His father, Louis Ginsberg, was a poet who earned his living as a school-teacher. He was an agnostic Jew who observed traditional Jewish holidays, and he was an active socialist. He married Naomi Levy in 1919 and cared for her and supported her through many illnesses. In 1949 he married Edith, a bright, lively woman who formed a warm, understanding relationship with Allen. Although they disagreed in politics and poetry, in both of which Louis was more conventional than iconoclastic Allen, father and son were close. They wrote each other frequently, with Louis objecting to what he considered crude and vulgar passages in Allen's poems, but praising and being proud of his son's fiery, imagistic poetry. Louis died in 1976.

Ginsberg's personal aesthetics matured slowly. Growing up in a home in which both father and mother were passionate about poetry, Ginsberg was surrounded by words and was a prolific reader. His decision to become a poet, however, did not crystallize until he was in college. At Columbia University, influenced by Lionel Trilling and Mark Van Doren as well as his father, he played with traditional aesthetics. As Ginsberg matured, he was more influenced in what and how he wrote by Walt Whitman, Ezra Pound, and William Carlos Williams, all of whom opened up the literary canon. Williams, also from Paterson, critiqued Ginsberg's early poems, and later, at Ginsberg's request, wrote an introduction to "Howl," the poem that shocked the world and made Ginsberg famous. Ginsberg came to think that artists should put "the raw material of your own actual experience in your work, whether it fits accepted aesthetics or not" (Ginsberg, 1993, p. 15). Photographers such as Alfred Stieglitz did that, as did William Carlos Williams in his poetry, which was built through visual images. Ginsberg liked Ezra Pound's description of one kind of poetry in *How to Read*: phanopeia, "the casting of images upon the visual imagination." Phanopoeic artists such as the photographers Alfred Stieglitz, Charles Sheeler, and Robert Frank, and poets such as William Carlos Williams and Hart Crane appealed to Ginsberg. These artists "shared a common aesthetic of precise observation, and understood the importance of close attention to detail" (Ginsberg, 1993, p. 15). Shared human experiences, feelings, and ideas were always extremely important to Allen Ginsberg.

In 1948 he had an experience that strongly affected his aesthetic consciousness for the next fifteen years. He had been reading deeply in the works of visionary William Blake. Ginsberg had a visionary experience of eternity, which he thought took him beyond himself into deeper creativity. Aesthetic exploration became his great aspiration. Largely to that end, he tried to recapture that experience by experimenting with mind-altering drugs: marijuana, mescaline, heroin, LSD, psilocybin, ayahuasca. To Ginsberg, drugs were not for partying; they were for expanding the mind, for opening up the consciousness. But a terrifying vision of death caused by

his prolonged drug use eventually caused an oppressive anxiety within him that was so horrendous it made him vomit. Yet, he still wanted to recapture that Blakeian vision that would take him beyond his human limitations.

His release from drugs came through his study and eventual espousal of Zen Buddhism. In 1953 he spent many hours poring over Buddhist texts in the New York Public Library. Chanting mantras became another way to expand consciousness. Later, he and Jack Kerouac had a serious correspondence about Buddhism. In 1962 he and Peter Orlovsky traveled extensively in India, participating in many Hindu rituals and ceremonies. For example, in Calcutta, he participated in celebrations praising the Hindu goddess Kali and smoked ganja while spending nights in burning ghats. In India, his negative feelings about drugs were reinforced when he received word of the suicide of his friend Elise Cowen due to a breakdown from use of amphetamines. Depressed, he asked many holy men in India what he could do to attain his vision. He was told that he should accept his humanness, fulfilling his needs within his human self. Taking this advice, he liberated himself from drugs, and in 1972 took Buddhist vows. During the 1970s, he meditated a great deal, sometimes even eight hours a day. He chanted mantras during poetry readings and used a Tibetan bell and a harmonium as props. Over the years he met many Zen masters. The most influential was Tibetan Buddhist Chögyam Trungpa, whom he met in 1970.

Ginsberg reported that he became conscious of sexual fantasies at age eight and by fourteen had sexual crushes on many of his male classmates. Conscious that he was different, he did not tell anyone about his same-sex preference until he became close friends with Bill Burroughs and Jack Kerouac, with both of whom he eventually had a sexual relationship. Although he had long-term intimate friendships with these men, neither he nor his two partners regarded the relationships as sexually fulfilling. Kerouac preferred women, and Burroughs never really came to terms with his bisexuality.

His first complete sexual experience was with his Beat friend Neal Cassady, a socially fluent, self-assured, confident, smooth, virile, handsome, married bisexual hustler. Cassady was open to anything. Ginsberg reported his relationship with Cassady as intense and exciting. It was also a sadomasochistic one in which Cassady was the dominant. As described in detail in his poetry, dominance/submission roles excited Ginsberg. The relationship was fairly shortlived, but later briefly renewed in Denver where Cassady carried on simultaneous affairs with his former wife, LuAnne Henderson, with his wife to be, Carolyn Robinson, and with his old friend Ginsberg. Cassady ultimately rejected Ginsberg.

Ginsberg had many brief sexual encounters with other men and even had some experience with women, notably Sheila Williams Boucher, with

whom he briefly lived in San Francisco. During this time he also participated in a series of ménage-à-trois as well as group orgies. Then he met Peter Orlovsky, with whom he had his first completely reciprocal lovemaking experience. The relationship, which they considered to be a marriage sealed by vows (Ginsberg listed Orlovsky as his wife in *Who's Who*), began in the mid-1950s and continued, with some periods of separation, for thirty years. It was an open relationship, in part because Orlovsky was bisexual, and Ginsberg did not object to Orlovsky's periodic affairs with women. Ginsberg divulged in a *Playboy* interview, however, that their sexual relationship had ended by 1968 (Schumacher, 1992). Orlovsky was moody and dependent; Ginsberg was the dominant person, and his heavy-handed advice and criticism caused considerable resentment in Orlovsky, who not only became increasingly alcoholic but had several bouts with mental illness. Ginsberg recognized that his experience with Orlovsky repeated his experience with his "mother and the chaos she created" (Miles, 1989, p. 527).

The core of Beat group included Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, and Bill Burroughs. These three had an intimate camaraderie in the 1940s. They trusted each other and had the same attitude toward "hyper-militarization, . . . the Atomic Era and the Age of Advertising, . . . Orwellian double-think." Ginsberg says of them in retrospect, "Well, I had a sacramental sense of these friends. . . . I was in love with them both in one way or another—with Kerouac physically and with Burroughs sort of spiritually. I admired Burroughs as a seventeen-year-old boy would admire a man of about thirty years—it was almost a kind of hero worship. They were teachers to me, and I have a very strong devotional sense toward them both." They were all interested in writing, and by 1953 they had all written their first major works and were "sort of cemented together for life" (Ginsberg in *Snapshot*, 1993, p. 9).

Other people became part of the Beat group—Neal Cassady, Gregory Corso, Lawrence Ferlinghetti, Peter Orlovsky. The Beatnik movement fed the countercultural revolution of the 1960s. Rejecting traditional values and codes of the "Establishment," especially materialism, it heralded individual freedom and creativity and the value of intimate friendship with its candor and honesty. Ginsberg's poetry reflects his beliefs. Ginsberg was an erudite man, but he rejected intellectual analysis and opted for the spontaneous verbal outpouring of his being. Such spontaneous outpouring was reinforced by the Buddhist belief in living in the moment. His poems reflect immediacy. No slow, careful composing for him; instead a capturing of what his mind was thinking in the passing moment. The words on the page were not superficial. Their immediacy came only after hours of meditation. William Deresiewicz (2001) accurately describes Ginsberg's poetry: "Long lines of thought unspool in image after startling image, gradually weaving them-

selves into argumentative structures of stunning density, originality and depth" (p. 6). His poetry reflects his intimate thoughts—condemnation of political actions of the United States; feelings about his mother and other relatives and friends; responses to daily happenings; explicit references to penises, anuses, juicy intercourse. In a section of his poem "I Went to the Movie of Life," for example, written from 4:30 to 6:25 a.m. on April 30, 1987, Ginsberg asks whom he should love, describes in sequence two men, and then realizes that there is no one to bring him scrambled eggs in bed when he wakes up, naked, from a dream.

Who should I love? Here one with leather hat, blond hair  
strong body middle age, face frowned in awful thought,  
beer in hand by the bathroom wall? . . .  
No one I could find to give me  
bed tonite and wake me grinning naked with eggs scrambled  
at noon assembly when I opened my eyelids out of dream

(Ginsberg, 1994, p. 21)

Ginsberg became seriously interested in photography in 1984. He was coached largely by Robert Frank, author of *The Americans*, which had a strong impact on twentieth-century art photographers (Kohler in Ginsberg, 1993, p. 7). Under the influence of Frank, Ginsberg looked discriminately at the snapshots he had taken in the 1950s and 1960s. The art photographer Berenice Abbott also helped develop his photographic sensibility. Bob Dylan took an interest in Ginsberg's snapshots, asking that Ginsberg send him a large number to critique (Ginsberg sent 140) (Ginsberg, 1993, p. 14). These people helped Ginsberg look with a new eye at the many old snapshots that he took, "not to show others, but as keepsakes of my own total sacramental, personal interest in intimate friends." This capturing of important moments with intimate friends pervades his poetry also. He describes the pictures taken in Tangier in 1957 and 1961 as capturing "occasional and intermittent epiphanies" (Ginsberg, 1993, p. 10). Many of the pictures that had caught these fraternal moments turned out to be have artistic merit, and Ginsberg published them in 1993 in *Snapshot Poetics: A Photographic Memoir of the Beat Era*. Ginsberg realized that good photography had much in common with his own poetry: in both, the individual artist captured specific, real images of his chosen focus. After 1984, Ginsberg thought and taught about the parallels between photography and poetry (Kohler in Ginsberg, 1993, p. 7). He continued taking pictures and had many shows—in New York and throughout the world.



In spite of Ginsberg's conscious desire to gain media attention, in person he was kind and generous. He was interested in other people and looked for what held people together, what they had in common, not how they were different. One of his biographers, Michael Schumacher, reported that after eight years of doing research on Ginsberg, interviewing him many times and interviewing friends, family, and even nonfriendly acquaintances, he "came away in admiration of Ginsberg's candor, generosity, and overall spirit of humanity" (Schumacher, 1992, p. ix). Ginsberg needed love, approval, attention—and, sensitive to other people's needs, he gave these to family and friends.

To support himself he worked at a variety of unskilled jobs, and mooched off and shared with friends who were often as broke as he was. After "Howl" made him famous, his fees as a guest lecturer helped support him. For most of his life, he existed near the poverty level, but this did not seem to hinder him. He helped found the Jack Kerouac School of Disembodied Poetics at Boulder, Colorado, taught there for a time, and continued to give readings and lectures there. Ginsberg ultimately achieved financial security when he was appointed to a permanent position at Brooklyn College.

As his fame grew (and his fees rose), his tours extended. He traveled all over the world lecturing and reading his poetry. In his travels, however, he was never just a tourist. He read extensively about the places he visited to understand the history, the people, the culture, and the beliefs. He particularly enjoyed China, where many of the Chinese intellectuals seemed envious of his ability to be so candid. Ginsberg wrote in his journal that in China there seemed to be different levels of discourse: a public one and another, private level of consciousness with entirely secret views. What men really think, he said, "they tell only their wives, not even their children" (Schumacher, 1992, p. 683).

Ginsberg had a knack for working with people well known in other fields. With composer John Cage's music, he matched his photographs. He and Philip Glass paired poetry and music, and he did the same with rock musicians. With Russian poet Yevgeny Yevtushenko he wrote a political manifesto about Nicaragua. He collaborated or dialogued with W. H. Auden, the Beatles, Paul Bowles, Jean Genet, LeRoi Jones, Timothy Leary, and Andy Warhol. He had active exchanges with other poets—Robert Bly, Robert Creeley, Gary Snyder, and Philip Whalen. Not all was sweetness and light, however, and he had powerful enemies. Norman Podhoretz, for example, repeatedly attacked him for glorifying "madness, drugs, and homosexuality," charging that he ridiculed anything that society believed to be "healthy, normal or decent." He claimed that Ginsberg and Kerouac (and other Beats) played a major part in ruining a great many young people who were influ-

enced by their "distaste for normal life and common decency" (Miles, 1989, p. 530).

Ginsberg was always fighting for the underdog and against the accepted protocol of the mainstream. Everyone knew where he stood, whether it was condemnation of Israel's actions on the West Bank, the unjustness of the Vietnam War, the injustice of America's role in overthrowing President Allende of Chile, or his vociferous opposition to any kind of censorship. Because he was just as outspoken abroad as at home, he was thrown out of both Cuba and Czechoslovakia for voicing his opinions about what was taking place in those countries.

Overall, he had a tremendous impact on his times while living in the world on his own terms. As far as homosexuality is concerned, he has to be counted as a moving force in encouraging other gays and lesbians to come out of the closet, if sometimes only to indicate that not all gays and lesbians were like him. He was a leader of the Beat generation; and although the movement has been criticized, as it has been by Norman Podhoretz and others, for challenging the status quo and by feminists for its sometimes misogynist views, the camaraderie and openness, the warmth and flamboyance of Ginsberg and his many male friends helped give strength to those who did not want to be forced to publicly conform to what they did not believe in, but who wanted to be themselves as they really were. He helped gays and lesbians realize they could be open about themselves.

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Walter H. Breen (J. Z. Eglinton)  
(1928-1993)

Donald Mader



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Recent scholarship has emphasized homosexualities rather than simply the term *homosexual*. It is startling to note that, although coming from a very specific point of view, one of the pioneering studies by an American, *Greek Love*, anticipated this by at least thirty years. Walter Henry Breen (also known under his pseudonym J. Z. Eglinton) was the most important theorist of man-boy love to appear since the German figures (Benedict Friedlaender, Hans Blüher, the *Der Eigene* circle, Gustav Wyneken, and John Henry Mackay) in the first third of the twentieth century. Although retrograde (at least as compared with Mackay) in explicitly looking back to a Greek model,

Breen independently affirmed, as they had, the distinction between what he termed "Greek love" (pederasty, or intergenerational homosexual relationships) and "androphile homosexuality" (eroticism between adult males). Although he himself argued that androphile homosexuality had usurped the "true" tradition of homosexuality which belonged to Greek love, viewed in a critical perspective this renewed insight opened the way in the United States for an understanding of homosexual behavior as a protean rather than a unitary phenomenon. In addition, he applied critical and historical research skills he had honed in his other areas of expertise to the exploration of the whole span of nearly 3,000 years of the recorded history of homosexuality. In an era—the 1950s and 1960s—when most writers favorable to homosexual behavior were either celebratory (Garde/Leoni) or wrote from a descriptive, sociological perspective (Stearn, Cory/Sagarin), Breen made a notable academic contribution to uncovering the history of homosexuality,