

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Counterculture

Counterculture emerge because there are set of ideas, beliefs, and values that opposed the dominant culture which, in this context, meant capitalism, protestantism, and militarism (Neville, 1970). On the other hand, counterculture also referred to a group of people, those people who because of their different ideas refused to live in straight society and dropped out of it. The counterculture thus described both new social practices such as drug use, free sex, and nondirective education.

Batzell argues that a minority culture marked by a set of values, norms and behavior patterns which contradict those of the dominant society (Batzell 1994; 116). Then, his argument was supported by Leech which he assumed that a way of life and philosophy which at central points is in conflict with the mainstream society (Leech, 2002). Both of those argument supported by Dessaur in his journal about the definition of counterculture;

...refers to a coherent system of norms and values that not only differ from those of the dominant system (where this and nothing else is the case we speak of subcultures) but also comprise at least one norm or value that calls for commitment to cultural change, that is to a transformation of the dominant system of norms and values (Dessaur, 1974).

In other words, Dessaur's view of counter-culture as a coherent system of values, which differs substantively from the mainstream and calls for change, implies a conscious critical self-awareness.

One of phenomenal counterculture in America influences the Sixties counterculture and as its precursor is The Beat Generation. The beat generation is considered as the precursor to the counterculture in 1960. As cited from Carmona (2012) this counterculture includes Hippies, Beatniks, along with popularizing the spiritual movement of Buddhism in America. One of the major achievements of the beat generation is the ability to bring literature to the street (Reizman, 2012).

2.2 The Beat Generation

In the early of 1950, some of New York bohemian writers traveled to San Francisco and made contact with their brothers and they started a countercultural rebellion, and The Beat Generation was born (George and Starr, 2002; 5). The Beat Generation was born because this group of people has the same idea which stands against the situation that happens in America after World War II. As cited from American Heritage Dictionary in Carmona (2012) that The Beat Generation is a group of American writers in the 1950's which influenced by eastern philosophy and religion such as Buddhism, and known especially because they use non-traditional form and their rejection of conventional social values.

The term "Beat Generation" was invented by Jack Kerouac in 1948, this term was introduced to the public in 1952 when John Clellon Holmes wrote an article "This is The Beat Generation" for the New York Times Magazine (Zhang,

2013). The three pillars of the movement, Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs, met in 1944 at Columbia University, New York. Both Ginsberg and Burrough were homosexual, but Kerouac was considered as bisexual (Carmona, 2012). Founders of the Beat movement were sexually attracted by all kinds of lost existences such as desperate men, crazy men, criminals, outcasts of society and other weird individuals whom were rejected by normal society (Kristyna, 2012).

There are number of writers, poets, and artist that made up the beat generation such as Gregory Corso, Gary Synder, Lew Welch, Michael McClure, Leroi Jones, Kenneth Rexroth, Neal Cassady, and Bob Kaufman (Carmona, 2012). Kristyna (2012) argues that the members of the Beat Generation mostly interested with jazz music, sex, drugs, and personal freedom. Thus, The Beat Generation is not only interested with controversial works but also music, drugs, and sex, because it gave them inspiration in writing and their daily life.

Despite the fact that this movement was represented primarily by novelists and poets, it actually attracted other people such as artists, musicians or painters (Tindal, 1994). Everyone could be Beats and it does not care whether they were black, white, Buddhist, Jewish, man, woman, rich or poor, all were allowed. Particularly these individuals constituted the main inspiration of future poetry, novels, and other literary works. Therefore it can be said that the members of the Beat movement obtained a rather crazy reputation in society during this time.

As Dominic in *The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English* (2006; 537) points out that The Beat Generation can be characterized as a literary movement

of poets and novelists. It exists in New York and also in San Francisco, where we can find a publishing house City Light, established by Lawrence Ferlinghetti, whom was closely connected to this movement. The main feature of this movement was a public reading of their literary works. Beats did not only create works mere written word but they wanted to give it life. For this reason they organized public readings, where they mediated their works live to young people and were trying to renew their interest in literature. Therefore their works were connected with jazz music and public performances.

2.2.1 The Beat Counterculture

The Beat Generation starts to express their rejection into the mainstream culture through their works. The Beat movement is considered as a response to World War II (Reizman, 2012). In other words, the Beat could be considered as literary movement which rebels the situation in America at that time.

As Cunliffe which cited in Van Durme (2014) he categorizes the Beat movement as a group of protesters contesting the ruling American traditions, values and classes. In other words, the beat is not only against the situation of America at that time, but also the tradition, norms, values or even classes.

In essence, the beat generation is considered as the precursor to the counterculture in 1960. As cited from Carmona (2012) this counterculture includes Hippies, Beatniks, along with popularizing the spiritual movement of Buddhism in America. One of the major achievements of the beat generation is the ability to bring literature to the street (Reizman, 2012). They did this in a

number of ways, by holding poetry reading, where the poem could be heard and appreciated in coffee houses and art galleries around the world (Periz, 2013). This generation has some central ideas that become the focus on their writing and their lives.

2.2.2 Central Idea of the Beat Generation

According to Zhang (2013, p.4) the central ideas of "Beat" generation are experimentation with drugs, alternative form, sexual freedom, an interest in Eastern religion, and a rejection of middle class value.

1. Experimentation with drugs

The original members of the Beat Generation used a number of different drugs, which included the following: alcohol, marijuana, Benzedrine, morphine, and LSD (<https://www.boundless.com/u-s-history/textbooks/>). Much of this usage was experimental, in that they were often initially unfamiliar with the effects of these drugs. The Beats claimed that these drugs could enhance creativity, insight and productivity. They used different types of drugs to achieve some of spiritual enlightenment (Lawlor, 2005; 86). In other hand, drugs become vehicle to expand their consciousness, in order to get inspiration in their creative process (Mortenson, 2004; 54). In brief, the experimentation of drugs that many of Beat writers did with drugs led to a kind of mental instability and never ending search of sensation.

2. Alternative form

Alternative form means the strategic rejection of conventions grammar, spelling, and punctuation. Beat works challenged both traditional American values and contemporary writing styles (Corso, 2004). Beat writers abandoned traditional forms in favor more experimental writing. In other word, this movement tries to abandon the literary forms and structures of formalist poet. Thus, they tries to transform the rules of writing and set the system which would enable a writer to express the flow of his thoughts without obligation to observe restricting literary principles. According to Carl D. Malmgren (1989) Beat poem was called as a rebellion against all forms of authority. It rejected the notion that the writer must distance himself from his material. They try to break it with the established order was such that they did not only turn on societal order, but against the established literary world, not only in action, but also in form and language (Van Durme, 2014).

The works of beat generation mostly created in unrevised composition means that the first thought that they wrote is the experimentation that they made. They claimed that unrevised thought as the first thought (Reisman, 2012). The first thought claimed as the best thought that they write. The Beat Generation believes that the first words or thought they put down in their works was considered as their individual experience. Reizman also argues that Beat works became more bold, straight forward, and expressive (2012; 14). Thus, the goal of the beat generation writers was to defy conventional writing styles which became mainstream styles at that time.

3. Sexual Freedom

Sexual freedom means the convention of traditional gender. Many of the key Beat Generation figures were openly homosexual or bisexual, including two of the most prominent writers Ginsberg and Burroughs (Matterson, 2003). They did not seek to hide their sexuality, beliefs, or experimentation, some of things that made them who they are (Lawlor, 2005). Many of them met each other through homosexual social connections. For example in Ginsberg's *Howl* and Burrough's *Naked Lunch* it is contained explicit homosexuality and sexual content.

4. An interest in Eastern religion

The publication of Jack Kerouac's Novel *The Dharma Bums* in 1958 first alerted the public that The Beat is interested in Asian thought. Trigilio (2007) argues that The Buddhist influences present in the works of some beat writers, which Buddhist themes are adopted whenever it was convenient. Buddhism gave them philosophical and religious basis from which to offer a revision of Western ontology and religious exceptional.

Rejecting the standardized, lowest-common-denominator religion presented in many of today's churches, increasing numbers of Americans seem to be attracted to the novel teachings and emphasis on direct religious experience offered by the Asian traditions such as form of Hinduism and Buddhism (Jackson, 1988). At one level, the Beat writers may be seen as early leaders in the post-

World War II "turn to the East," whose attitudes and use of Asian religious thought provide important insight into the impact of the East on modern American religious beliefs. One of the members of the beat generation that joined Buddha monastery is Garry Snyder in 1956 and he write their works entitled Myth and Text.

5. Rejection of Middle Class Value

The Beat movement tries to reject the values of America (Reisman, 2012). In this context, the beat intends to reject the middle class values of American society. The definition of middle class is rather complicated as indicated by a poll which is found that many of Americans regard themselves be a middle class (Skerl, 2004). This would imply a very large segment holding these middle class values. As Mussana in *Encyclopedia Britannica* (2008) states that the middle class may be said to include the middle and upper levels like clerical workers, those engaged in technical and professional occupations, supervisors and managers, and such self-employed workers as small-scale shopkeepers, businessmen, and farmers. Max Weber (2008) who defines the middle class as consisting of professionals or business owners who share a culture of domesticity and suburbanity and a level of relative security against social crisis, in the form of socially desired skill or wealth.

Every generation has its middle class, majority, and norm, which are decided by that era's standard of behavior and thought. If we trace the biography of the Beat generation writers, whose real lives a fictionalized in the novels; one

notes that many of them actually had middle class roots. The Beat Generation member dissatisfied with the middle class values which they view as being restrictive and head in one direction of material prosperity (Reisman, 2012). This generation reject against things like conformity and consumerism in the post World War II society.

According to Klaus Eder in his book *The New Politics of Class* (1993) the first concept of the middle class is 'good life'. He argues that the concept of good life is a religious notion based on the thinking that good life is led by good people. This will be important later when we try to evaluate the role of religion in the beat generation given that spirituality was such an important theme in Beat writing and life style.

Eder finds the second concept of the middle class being the consensual social relations of the idea of "an authentic life-form where people interact as equals and free persons". He underscores the importance of communication as a central feature of the middle class culture and asserts, as will later be seen, that counter cultures in general tend to subvert the communication feature by communicating through ritualized and specialized codes of communication. Ironically the beat generation pursued this very core value of the middle class by protesting the literary limitations.

2.3 Semiotics

Semiotic is the study of the sign process or signification of a symbol. Semiotic aims to find meanings behind the signs, whether it is word in text,

pictures, sound, or gesture (Chandler, 2002). Basically, sign is not only in the form of words, images, sounds, gestures, and objects, but it is also related to how meaning is constructed and understood. As in Preminger (2001) which cited in Krisyanto (2006) social, people, even cultural phenomenon could be considered as signs. Thus, the phenomenon in our daily live could be assumed as sign. Sign is completely arbitrary that there is no necessary connection between the sign and its meaning (Saussure, 2008). The functions of semiotic study have already spread to all aspects in human life. The study of language, gesture, rhetorical discourse, visual communication, media, myths, narratives, eye contact, advertising, culture, and even art forms or literary works are some aspects that semiotic takes part (Danesi, 2004: 4). We can see that those aspects are surrounded by sign. Sign is not only organized as symbol or picture, text and language inside the text is including into sign.

Umberto Eco in *Semiotic and the Philosophy of Language* (1986) argues that the field of semiotics covers quite a diversity of signs. He defines semiotics as a relationship among a sign, object, meaning, and how the signs are used in social and cultural interaction. Jonathan Culler as cited in Newton (1997) explain that semiotic of literature should be related to signifying process and interpretative conventions which make it possible to communicate with readers. In brief, semiotic is a study to interpret the relation between the signs and meaning, and also how the meaning is constructed.

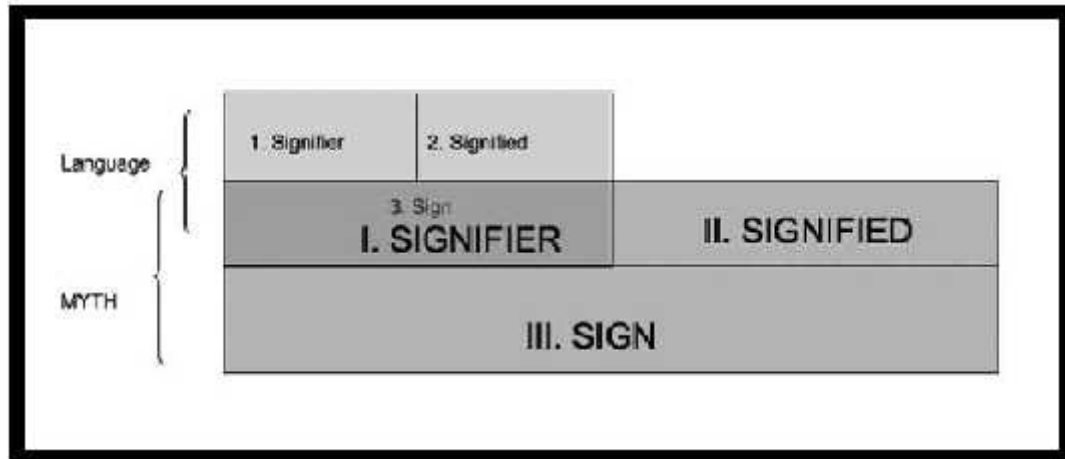
Ferdinand de Saussure and Pierce are considered as founders of modern semiotics. They reveal the figures which relates semiotics with human life.

Saussure presents a two part model of sign or called as dichotomy model which consist of signifier and signified. He defined a sign as being composed of signifier (*signifiant*), the form which the sign takes and signified means the concept it represents. Then, Pierce used three part of analysis which consists of representament, object, and interpretant. Sign is the association between signifier and signified, and this process known as “signification”. The other semiotic figure is Roland Barthes. He said that semiotic consists of three term; signifier, signified, and sign (Chandler, 2002). In Barthes model, sign is not only is the case of language or what appears, but there is a relation with the society, culture, value, history, or ideology.

2.3.1 Semiotic Model by Roland Barthes

Roland Barthes is a French literary theorist who was born in 1915. He gave a great contribution in semiotic study through his works and study *Mythologies* in 1957 and *Elements of Semiology* in 1964. Barthes used dichotomy model of Saussure which consists of *signifier* and *signified*. In addition, Barthes developed the dichotomy model of Saussure model into triadic structure as like as Pierce. Barthes assumed that semiotic consists of three terms: signifier, signified, and sign (Chandler, 2002). Then he evolves it into a systematic model which focuses on two order of signification (Fiske, 1990). The order of signification consists of denotation and connotation. According to Chandler (2002) denotation and connotation are two terms that describes the relationship between the signifier and signified.

Figure 2.3.1 the schema of order of signification by Roland Barthes



The first order of signification is denotation which related with the description of definition, literal meaning, obvious or commonsense meaning of sign. Denotation could be defined as the literal meaning of the sign itself. Denotation also can be understood as what the sign or the object serves, it can be assumed as what appears (Fiske, 1990). For example, the image of shark denotes a fish, or related to the type of fish.

On other hand, semiotic model of Roland Barthes does not only focus on in the first order of signification. Besides denotation, there is connotation which is called the second order of signification. At this level, connotation uses the denotative sign as its signifier and attaches it to an additional signified. Connotation is a sign which is interpreted or viewed by the reader based on the interpretation and background of the sign. Tinarbuko argues that Connotative meaning is the meaning that is related with feelings, emotions, cultural value, and ideology (2008; 93). This concept is used to explain how people in society give a specific meaning into a sign. For example, the image of Garuda if we see in

denotative level it only means a bird or type of bird. But if we see from connotative level, it means the symbol of *Pancasila* because this symbol is defined through the convention. In addition, connotation explains the implicit, indefinite meaning between the signifier and signified. It creates second layer meaning which is formed when the signifiers contains psychology aspects such as feeling, belief, or even ideology.

According to Chandler (2002) there are three aspect that cause denotation meaning change into connotative. First, the convention depends on social and cultural convention. Then, association could be defined as the association or relation between of the signifier and signified. Last, in cultural value sign is determined by the relationship between sign and other sign within the system as a whole, and different place has a different value.

In his study *Mythologies* Barthes introduces the meaning of Myth. Barthes argues that the orders of signification called denotation and connotation combine to produce ideology which has been described as a third order of signification or known as Myth (Chandler, 2002). . In the third (mythological or ideological) order of signification the sign reflects major culturally variable concepts underpinning a particular worldview such as masculinity, femininity, freedom, individualism, and objectivism. Levis Strauss saw myth as mediating between nature and culture For Barthes, myths were the dominant ideologies of our time (Chandler, 2002). Myth is a form of message, it is not a concept or idea but the way people interpret or construct the meaning. In the signification, the connotation meanings can reach mythological status as the text and the ideology

work together to make it meaningful. Myth can be seen as extended metaphor, like metaphors, myth help us to make sense of our experiences within culture (Lakoff, and Johnson 1980). After connotation meaning become permanent, it could be called as myth, where people agree with the convention of the sign and make it as something constant. Barthes also describes myth as a second-order meaning of the signifier and signified that brings more cultural meanings (Barthes, 2002). Thus, myth is a message that the creator of the meaning wants to convey.

2.4 Poetry

Poetry is one of literary works that could represent the idea of the writers. Poetry is the product of the poet's imagination and the best words in the best order (Peck, 1988). Poem must be writes by emotional freedom. Moreover, poems are not language but the content of the language. Furthermore, poem could be the part of the poet life, because the poets write poem with feeling, especially what they feel at that time. As Olilia and Jantas (2008) points out that poetry is a kind of verbal or written language which used to express an emotion, experience, and idea.

2.5 Howl Poem

Allen Ginsberg wrote Howl in 1954 and 1955 and first read it publicly at the event known as Six Gallery Reading in San Francisco on October 7, 1955 in front of an audience formed by other literary figures like Jack Kerouac, Kenneth

Rexroth, Michael McClure and Lawrence Ferlinghetti (Periz, 2013; 2). It is officially published in 1957 in the book collection of poem entitled *Howl and Other Poem*. As in Hart in *The Oxford Companion to American Literature* which cited in Kristyna (2012) Howl coming from the poetry collection Howl and other poems written by Allen Ginsberg, a propagator of pacifism, love and eastern religion Buddhism, which together formed the basis of the latter hippies, although he had such complicated life, he became a respected university teacher of literature whom was admired by students and hippies. From his slender youth, he was in contact with poetry because his father was a teacher of literature who also wrote his own poems, although their styles of writing were completely different. The poem Howl, which I choose to analyze, was dedicated to Ginsberg's close friend Carl Solomon. Howl is a 112 lines poem narrated in first person. As cited in Indulal (2008) Howl poem consists of three parts with fragmented narrative structure. First part portrays the lives of people whom the speaker called as "the best minds of my generation" which related with their community as known as Beat Generation. Their minds are destroyed by madness. Among them are drug addicts, homosexual, and other social outcasts. Second part describes about the figure of Moloch, a false God that has destroyed the minds of the people that portrayed in the first part. The last part describes the condition of the people living at a mental hospital called Rockland, and also this part is dedicated for Carl Solomon, the man whom he met at Rockland or mental hospital.

The publication of Allen Ginsberg's Howl in 1956 marks a turning point in the history of Beat literature, not to mention American literature in general

(Zhang, 2013). The long-form poem is intended to be read aloud, almost chanted, a sort of return to an oral tradition that had been neglected in literature for a long time. The problem occurred in Howl inaugural publication in 1957. Lawrence Ferlinghetti as the publisher of Howl was taken to court because the poem regarded as obscene material (Indulal, 2008). There are two factors why Howl is considered as obscene material; First, the use of vulgar language and content. Second, the poem portrays what is considered as form of social deviance in American society.

The trial made instant celebrities of Ginsberg and his generation (Reisman, 2012). After going through the trial process, that brought nine experts witnesses. The Judge of the trial Clayton W Horn decided that Howl is not considered as obscene. It happened because the ban of Ginsberg's Howl in 1957 for its obscene content resulted in a trial that Ginsberg won with the backing of American Civil Liberties Union (Whiston, 2000). The defense was based on the First Amendment (which protect freedom of speech and of the press) and Howl was deemed by Judge Clayton not to be obscene, but indeed to have social relevance (Zhang, 2013). It is clear that Howl is immune to the kind of censorship, and it is only an art that describe the real situation and conflict that Ginsberg feels. Furthermore, the obscenity trial made national headlines and brought the small press world as well as the beat generation into public eye (Carmona, 2012).

With Howl, Ginsberg takes the reader/listener on a tour of the underside of America. There are drug-addicts, drifters, prostitutes, and swindlers. Foul language and slang are common throughout the work, as well as drug use and

criminality (Van Durme, 2014). All of these things were shocking to the 1950s establishment. But for Ginsberg, he was simply following the path of his inspiration. Ginsberg writing style emphasizes personal expression and spontaneity. He cited Walt Whitman as one of his greatest influences, and one can certainly hear echoes of Whitman's primitivism throughout Ginsberg's corpus of work. Ginsberg also inspired from other poets such as William Blake (Periz, 2103; 4). His poetic style was constructed from the basics of these two poets.

2.5.1 Background of Social Issue Reflected in Howl

Ginsberg works *Howl* contains several social issues not only in US but also in some country that he and his generation have ever stayed. The beat generation includes Ginsberg is a bohemian and they travelled into some country to learn some culture and religion. Members of the Beat Generation concentrated in urban centers mostly New York, San Francisco, and in bohemian neighborhoods (Periz, 2013; 2).

In *Howl*, Ginsberg questions American society and its values, and expresses his disillusionment with the American Dream, motivated by a feeling of oppression (Periz, 2013; 4). In his work he defended different values such as spirituality, the search for alternatives lifestyles, individual freedom and new sexual habits. In writing *Howl* Ginsberg uses a triadic verse form, the form used by his mentor William Carlos Williams, but he extends the lines out to his own long breath length. Each line was meant to be spoken in a single breath. Ginsberg was specifically trying to use Kerouac's prose and the way his own

rhythms mirrored jazz music as inspiration. The Beat generation was influenced by the late-night impromptu jazz marathons they often witnessed in Denver, New York, and Chicago. The attainment of freedom is also connected with roaming across the USA during in which beats had been randomly visiting each other as it was described in details in Kerouac's book (Trigilio, 2007). One of the most important places was city Denver, the birthplace of Neal Cassady who inspired mainly Ginsberg and Kerouac by his never-ending enthusiasm for living, his adventure.

One important thing to note about "Howl" is that it is a male-centric poem (Periz, 2013). Ginsberg speaks from a male point of view, but it is a decidedly homosexual male point of view. Like other Beat writers, Ginsberg's poem creates women that are simply ancillary characters to the male protagonists. Women are there for sex, for children, and to be a kind of anchor for men to the "real world." This role is not one that is ever glorified. The male is the hero. He is free to experiment in life; with drugs, with sex, with art.

Howl is partly a reflection on what American culture and society of the 1940's and 50's had done to those that would not line up in conformity to American culture and politics. Location begins to become an important theme in "Howl." The poem now starts to move through different locales all over the United States. This movement of place is characteristic of Beat literature. The post World War II generation that the Beat's were a part of was the first American generation that had the ability to travel widely with relative ease. Automobiles had become easily available to middle and lower class families. Systems of state

and national highways connected distant locales and, later, the interstate system which began being built in the 1950's, would connect the entire country with high speed roads. This ability to travel to different places, to see and experience different parts of the country, and to observe a kind of national life was a central theme to Beat literature.

Though "Howl" is not as interested in describing America, its people, or its places, the poem is demonstrative of the Beat impulse to move and to travel (Trigilio, 2007). For example is New York as a meeting place for many of the Beat writers such as Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs. These figures became central to connecting other members of the Beat movement from all across the country, like a Brooklyn, New York scene. The scene plays off of the image of idealistic scenes of nature and civilization contrasted with the psychedelic experiences and harsh living conditions for the Beats. Ginsberg then moves to the Bronx another borough of New York City. It is the idea of domesticity that is contrasted with drug abuse and drinking. The drug was used widely by the Beats to help them keep the stream of consciousness style, a frenetic pace of words and thoughts that is characteristic of their writing. Ginsberg wrote a great deal of his poetry while on Benzedrine.

2.6.1 Theoretical Framework

This research will figure out the central idea of The Beat Generation in Howl poem by using Roland Barthes semiotic analysis theory to reveal the meaning of the signs from the denotative level and connotative level. Then, find

the chain of meaning from denotative to connotative in order to get the information from where the words, phrase, and clause emerge because of convention, association, or cultural values