

# The Beat Generation, the Marginal Social Group of the Post WWII American Literature: A Study of Chandler Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness* and John Clellon Holmes's *Go*

Randi Armota

Institute of Social Sciences, Istanbul Aydin University  
Dept. of English Language and Literature-Istanbul Aydin University-Besyo Mah  
Inönü Cad. No. 38 -Küçükçekmece, Istanbul, TURKEY

## Abstract

This study investigates the Beat generation as a marginal social group of the Post WWII America and looks at Chandler Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness* and John Clellon Holmes's *Go* as the first works of the Beat movement which has had a significant impact on the American culture and society. The cultural and social legacy of the Beats can be traced to the sixties counterculture, hippies, anti-war movements, and even the civil rights movement. Their literary impact has been even more significant. The poets such as Allen Ginsberg and Lawrence Ferlinghetti and the novelists such as Jack Kerouac provided American literature with a fresh and original perspective, also making remarkable contributions in terms of form and style. The reason why I chose to study the Beat literature is the dissident attitudes of its writers and poets and the way they created a unique dissident culture. Their importance in terms of challenging the mainstream values of the post-war American society cannot be overlooked even if we view the modern American literature from a very broad perspective. On the contrary, their anti-establishment and anti-war attitudes inspired the critical responses toward the Cold War between the US and The Soviet Union that emerged after the Second World War, the Red Scare, McCarthyism, policy of containment, conformity, consumerism created and supported by capitalism. Their anti-bourgeois and anti-materialistic attitudes provided a basis for the sixties counterculture and civil rights movement, and more importantly, they questioned the prejudices and discrimination against people on racial, ethnic, and ideological bases existing in the American society. The Beats' search for an authentic form of life and a personal identity outside the mainstream is brought under scrutiny. This study specifically deals with the themes of individualism and bohemian and hedonist lifestyle as an alternative to the American conformity and the white middle class values. The first section contains a review of the origins of the Beat Generation and is followed by a critical examination of it. The second chapter examines the general context of the post WWII America and views the post war America from the social and political aspects. The social and literary aspects of the same era are also discussed. The third chapter focuses on marginality and individuality vs. the mainstream White Middle Class Values in Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness*, while chapter four debates hipsterism and hedonism vs. consumerism and conformity in John Holmes's *Go*. Both works are significant for portraying a search for a more authentic lifestyle. They show the harsh consequences the characters are faced with after rejecting the mainstream white middle class values. One such consequence is being treated as outcasts and being marginalized. The characters cannot be integrated to the American society and because of their lifestyles they are judged harshly and stigmatized. So, both works deal with the judgmental attitudes of the white middle class American society, which include racist, misogynist, and homophobic behaviors and which turn into heavier social and moral pressures, causing suppression of individual expression. The novels describe the suffocating atmosphere caused by social pressures and stigmatizing attitudes that frustrate the Beats who reject being mainstream career-oriented, consumerist conformists and give us an idea about how the American society after the WWII has been actually divided by the racial, ethnic, and sexual lines and how it is impossible to reduce it into one large homogeneous whole. The rebellious spirit reveals itself in the form of an energetic scene of subcultures such as the Beats that prefer to explore alternative ways of being and to acquire a variety of experiences rather than becoming regular members of the mainstream middle-class.

**Keywords:** The Beat generation, Marginal group, Counterculture, Authentic form of life, Bohemianism, Hipsterism, Hedonism

## 1. Introduction

The Beat generation is a sub-cultural movement which appeared in the post WWII period. Historically and sociologically speaking, it is the extension and continuation of the Bohemian post-World War II culture in the United States of America. The Beats dissented bourgeois culture; the culture that they named as 'squares', which the previous Bohemians used to call 'philistines' or 'bourgeois'. The Bohemians, as the ideological background of the Beats, are a group of artists and writers living an extraordinary life isolated from the middle and upper middle class white Anglo Saxons. The Bohemian culture is characterized by group dynamic Bohemians from different ethnic, racial and cultural backgrounds who shared common features such as alienation in the American

society. That means stands for “the sense of separation and place-bound estrangement from main-stream society; activism in the form of speed sudden spasms of energy and information, mixed and flowing amorously” (Elteren, 1952, p. 72).

The Beat Generation was frequently linked to Existentialism, the movement that flourished in Europe, as both were driven by a similar intellectual energy, anxiety and sense of alienation. Moreover, both rejected society, and insisted on the notion that the individual had to define himself and his reality only through his own choice. The Beats can also be linked to the Existentialists in two other senses; first, through their suspicion that logical structures like science or pure rationality can cover neither the whole range of reality nor the meaningful experience. They believed that reason can turn into a form of totalitarianism and conservatism. Secondly, through their experience of anxiety and search for authenticity, the Beats were also remarkably harmonious with the mainstream existentialism. They both shared common belief about the rottenness of the Western civilization. They thought that “rottenness consists of the de-humanization of modern man by the inhuman growth of institutions, the pressures for external conformity and a collective refusal to examine the self” (Burdick, 1959, p. 554).

### **1.1 The Beats' Political Attitudes**

The attitudes of the Beats were shaped by the harsh conditions and gloom that followed the Second World War; the circumstances under which the Beat members were brought up. The fantasy and horror of a potential nuclear engagement with the Soviets inhabited their mind since childhood as a result of the Cold War. They spent their teenage years in a chaotic world. The unpleasant circumstance of the Cold War affected them in a way that they expressed their thirst for freedom and their sense of curiosity by adopting a lifestyle characterized by rebellion against the mainstream society and the world. In order to escape the depressing conditions of life, the Beats decided to create a special world, where they could enjoy an authentic moment away of the frustrating reality of the postwar America. To accomplish this, they adopted a bohemian lifestyle which is characterized by freedom of thought, Hipsterism, sexual promiscuity, drug use and alcohol, and a Bohemian lifestyle. The members of the Beat Generation had the lust for individuality, independent mind, and the rejection of collectivity.

Burdick (1959) says that the Beat Generation is often viewed as apolitical, apathetic, selfish, and borne out of the post-WWII era of prosperity. They are viewed as rich kids who chose a bohemian lifestyle as a matter of fashion, as part of a teenage rebellion, and inspired too many imitators, and eventually transforming into the beatniks and hippies of the fifties and sixties. (Burdick 1959) declares that the Beats are never viewed as coming out of World War II. They are the next generation, the post-war generation. For them it was all supposedly history. although the core of the Beat group – Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg and William S. Burroughs – met during the war. The Beats had not gone to war and they had not even considered it worth mentioning in their writing. The Beats weren't about the past; they wanted to define the future. To them the war was this dumb foolish thing humans had done to each other, and it had no real reason.

### **1.2 The Beat Generation as a Sub-culture**

When we investigate the birth of the Beat Generation, we have to stop at the year 1945, when America tolerated the war time, and eventually arose as a superpower almost unharmed from the conflict that devastated Europe. It managed to maintain control over its own people and America's major opponent, the Soviet Union. This reaction to potential external threats has been known as the policy of containment that is to put an end to the expansion or influence of the communist ideology, by creating strategic alliances in areas of conflict. This was joined with the so-called the 'culture of containment'. The US administration in that time took advantage of media, business, and the religious institutions to form a society that meets the goal of keeping the state powerful, and to make people believe that they were finally benefiting after years of distress. Although America displaced the war industry with the production of consumer goods, people still felt like their life was meaningless. As an attempt to create a new way of living in the postwar America, parallel to the efforts of developing new ideological, social, and economic environments, the farmlands were dramatically changed into suburban housings. This development contributed in the creation of the so-called 'the culture of consumerism'. After years of suffering the war and its negative outcomes, Veterans were able to make use of the GI Bill, to make families and to own houses. Living in the suburbs represented wealth, success and the realization of the 'American Dream'. The establishment of an average white middle-class family equipped with all house appliances, which lived in the American suburbs in the 1950s, symbolized the development of the postwar culture in America. However, not all the Americans were included with the positive changes. While most of the whites were lucky enough to leave the slum ghettos of the city, seeking a new way of life supported by the GI Bill, the racial, ethnic, and the religious minorities such as Jews, Catholics were left behind. In case members of those minorities were capable of affording buying houses in the new suburbs, they were prevented from home ownership and they were not welcomed by the White neighbors.

Changes in the social, cultural and physical landscape of postwar America were not welcomed by all

Americans. Refusal of the new lifestyle was not exclusive to those who were excluded from it. Actually, many among the white middle class began to raise questions about the suburbs and what they represented, and the way these changes might influence the American life. It was obvious that providing loans and mortgages to those who preferred the suburban areas by the government and the banking companies caused the decline of the city-centers. The investments in transportation services that favored the suburbs resulted in the fall of the city as a central point of life. This is what gathered a group of Americans together to form a culture of diverse ethnic and racial background but keep their racial and ethnic identities. Its members shared the sense of rejection of the so called the 'American Dream' and the mainstream norms which were created by the above-mentioned factors. Many intellectuals like those who established the Beat generation, questioned all aspects of this new culture of consumption, putting emphasis on literature, class, gender and race as well as the general sense. Thus, containment as a cultural figure remained just a discourse instead of an actually accomplished hegemony. Because, the minorities were neglected in the process many whites were not convinced with it, especially such intellectuals as the Beats and their companions, who were a part of this postwar discourse of questioning. The writers of the Beat Generation used space as a way of challenging the central discourses of American culture of the fifties and the cold war era. The Beats aimed at establishing a cultural entity that exists between the middle-class in the suburbs and cities in a hand, and those marginal districts of the city often populated by low-income people who were unable to move to the suburbs on the other hand; for instance, the working class, blacks, ethnic minorities, criminals as well as lesbians and gays. The Beats tried to form a culture within the large scale of the preexisting culture where they anticipated living with a minimum of inconvenience by the white middle class. They mostly lived in spaces abandoned by the white middle class and turned to margins of urban society. By limiting contact with the white community, the Beats wanted to represent a more authentic way of living to engage with other groups instead. But then again, the Beats were not completely accepted by those marginal societies. They were viewed with suspicion, and they were regarded as outsiders. The Beats' attempt to mingle in those marginal societies was often met with rejection and even violence occasionally. They were a small integrated group, assembled in New York City in 1944. Its members were Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Allen Ginsberg and Lucien Carr. The term 'Beat' was coined by the most celebrated member of the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac. It "Implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw and it has several relevant connotations. In a musical sense, the word 'beat' suggests keeping the beat, harmony with others. More specifically, it implies the jazz beat" (Gray, 2004, p. 641). In sociological and psychological sense, it stands for the condition of the stranger, a person who is alienated and restrained; the one who criticizes the values and disciplines of society. "It involves a sort of nakedness of mind and ultimately of soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness" (Holmes, 1952, p. 2). Then by 1946, other members like John Clellon Holmes joined this marginalized bunch of writers and cultural protesters. Over the next five years, until 1951 or 1952, the Beats formed a marginal group, searching for meaning where previously none had been found. This is the period where Kerouac and Holmes both gathered the research for their novels and began writing them. The years between 1950 and 1952 were important for the publication of Kerouac's first novel, *The Town and the City*, and the publication of Holmes' novel, *Go*. Both works delineate the parameters of the culture and ideals of what Holmes would term as 'the Beat Generation.' However, this is also where the first chronological issues arise. When Holmes wrote his defining article *This is the Beat Generation* (1952), the characters described in the article were dramatically different than the ones in his novel, published the same year. The Beat Generation made a permanent influence on the structure of modern American society. Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* dramatically expanded the notion of what was acceptable in literature. By paying attention to issues like personal freedom and self-expression, it challenged the censorship which functioned as a force which maintained control over the public discourse. Besides, the Beats curved up a very important subject when they pushed the discussions of environmentalism and ecology into the mainstream. Before that time, environmentalism as it we understand today did not really exist. Playwright, Poet, novelist, and essayist, Michael McClure shares these concerns with several other members of the Beat Generation. More often, McClure's approach to nature and environmentalism is different from that of the seventh century Buddhism and the nineteenth century Romanticism. Instead, McClure approaches it in a scientific way that is based on biological and ecological disciplines. He depends on the scientific disciplines as a means of discussing environmental problems and the importance of reconnection with the nature. His ultimate goal is the 'recovery' of what he refers to as 'the biological self'.

Hipsterism, a common characteristic of the Beats, with its opposition to the predominant puritanical morality and white class mainstream values, can be defined as a way of life embracing sexual freedom, a drug-related lifestyle, fashion, and music. Their significant practices and attitudes like new dress codes, Jazz Music, drug abuse, the emphasis on sexual freedom and the like have been made a unique model, a behavior form and pattern that allowed the Beats to relate to wider social and cultural practices than just an artistic one. By doing so, they tried to create a special world outside the mainstream; a world where they might enjoy the authentic moment of their lives.

### 1.3 Sex, Drugs, and Crime

The Beats' early life, particularly between 1944 and 1956, was tough and intolerable. It has been referred to as the underground period because it was frequently characterized by violence, confusion, desperation and suffering among the early Beat group and their fellows. For instance, David Kammerer was killed by Lucian Carr. Neal Cassady as well as Gregory Corso were imprisoned and spent a considerable time in reform school. William Burroughs was addicted to drugs, so he lived in exile. Jack Kerouac pursued his separate life and was solitary. For all the difficulty that members of this group faced in life, they did not lose the desire and will for writing. Early works of the Beat appeared in 1950s. Kerouac wrote *The Town and the City* (1950), Holmes wrote *Go* (1952), Chandler Brossard wrote *Who Walk in Darkness* and George Mandel wrote *Flee the Angry Strangers* (1952), likewise William S. Burroughs wrote *Junkie* (1953). The period between 1956-1962 was a time of constant success in the Beats' public life. It was referred to as 'the public period' for it witnessed the act of reading the Beats products at art galleries and coffeehouses mainly in New York and San Francisco. Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* and Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* in 1957 became nationally and even internationally acclaimed. Writers of the Beat Generation chose urban areas to live in such as New York and San Francisco, and in the bohemian neighborhoods like Greenwich Village, Columbia University, and Times Square. They gathered in spaces such as clubs, cafés, and galleries. They frequently shared alternative spiritual and ideological beliefs, as well as unusual sexual and family values. Then, after years of rejection, they were finally successful to achieve a position in the public media. *New York Times Magazine*, published Holmes's *This is the Beat Generation* (1952), which first introduced the movement to the public. These novels attracted young people as they claimed individuality and personal liberty away of the predominant bourgeois routine. They suggested joy, pleasure, and a psychological relief attained by the weekend parties, sex, drugs, and rock and roll music. All these brought about a different atmosphere and hailed the birth of a subculture for the post WWII youth. Despite the fact that the mass media offered a negative image to the public about the Beats, as they considered them as a threat to the capitalism's mass production, the group eventually attracted additional members. For the mass media unintentionally contributed to the increasing fame of the Beats' by drawing the attention towards this movement. The Beats kept inspiring the young generations of artists with their courage and directness.

### 1.4 critical approach of the Beat Generation

The 'wild boys' of the Beat Generation were not lost. Their surge, energy and temper and attitude as well as their firm determined faces tells everything about them and express them better than words may do. The Beat generation lacks that deprivation which made so many of the achievements of the Lost Generation heroic actions. Furthermore, weeping over the abandoned ideals, and the disapproving of what they might have been considered nonsense morals, which so obsessed the members of the Lost Generation, do not concern young people of the Beat. They take these things for granted. They were brought up in this breakdown, and no longer cared for the morals. "They drink to come down or to get high, their excursions into drugs or promiscuity comes out of curiosity, not disillusionment" (Holmes, 1952, p. 2). They are alienated and in search of meaning in life. Not many among the Beats would protest against their reality that they have ignored the future and excluded it from their lives. They do not feel they need the predominant social values in their lives, and their negligence for the social norms doesn't make them feel guilty; they rather care for the everyday life problems. They don't not pay attention to the question what do they live for, but rather how to live. It is exactly at this point that the highly educated individuals like authors, writer and ordinary people gathered by a common feeling and think about the social matters. They produced new literature and a sub-culture in an attempt to find a meaning for their lives outside the mainstream stereotypes.

The Beat Generation's aesthetic choices were criticized severely. The academic community described the Beats as anti-intellectual and rude. The mainstream America was concerned about their attitude towards sexuality and drug use. They considered it a deviancy. Politicians such as Senator Joseph McCarthy, who is known by hostility against the communists and other left-wing supporters, accused the Beats' for siding with Communism, and subsequently, for being a threat to the nation. Critics such as Lizabeth Cohen, A. Johnston, and Barbara Ehrenreich, argue that the Beats opposed the consumer culture of the American 1950s. But, their opposition to consumer culture lacked a clear ideology and thus resulted in "an unprincipled rebellious behavior" (Essif, 2012, p. 2), such as collecting speeding tickets while criticizing the capitalist system which produces these fast cars. They continue their criticism by considering that the Beats sustained consumerism in spite of their opposition to the consumer culture of the middle class; they developed a Beat form of consumption. His *Partisan Review* article: *The Know-Nothing Bohemians* (1958), is a rough critique of Ginsberg's *Howl*, and Kerouac's *The Subterraneans*, and *On the Road*. The central idea of his criticism is that the Beats' adoption of spontaneity is an anti-intellectual behavior that leads to a primitiveness that can simply turn toward violence and mindlessness. He also states that there is a connection between the Beats and crime. Ginsberg responded to this criticism in an interview with *The Village Voice* in 1958. He says the he and Podhoretz went to the same school, but Podhoretz is the kind of intellectual who is just out of touch with the twentieth-century, and that he writes for

the eighteenth-century mind. Adding that the Beats created what he calls a 'personal literature' by that time. The Beat Generation seems to have become one of the most prominent literary movements in contemporary American culture. Although criticized and ignored by contemporary critics and scholars, time has proven that its influence goes beyond literature, reaching fields such as arts, society and religion. The Beats gained readers generation after generation. They continued to inspire young generations of artists and musicians with their courage, directness, spirit, and energy. Perhaps The Beatles is the most famous music band that was inspired by the Beats. Today, the Beats are acknowledged as icons of America's counterculture. The Beats' spirit is experiencing a big revival all around the world in terms of enthusiasm for a free life.

Nowadays, the frustrations and concerns caused by the modern age lead people to a search for meaning or at least for means of distraction. As for the Americans, driving a car towards the West Coast represents an attractive idea for the youths who wish to search for fun. The Beat generation embodies the spirit of youth and rebellions, and more significantly, the spirit of freedom. People feel the desire to experience freedom like the protagonist of Kerouac's *On the Road*.

## 2. The Cultural Aspects of the Post-World War II America

The post-WWII period in the United States was characterized by swift economic, political, social as well as literary changes. Those changes were vast and diverse at the same time. According to Life magazine, life in America was noticeably flourished after the WWII. After that America and its allies won the war, the USA subsequently arose as the leader of the world. The country's economy was booming. Universities began to fill with veterans who were taking advantage of the G.I. Bill, a law that offered a series of benefits for the returning veterans of the WWII. It proposed low-interest loans for those who wished to start a project, as well as low-cost mortgages and cash payments of schooling and living costs. Moreover, it included one year of unemployment compensation (Gray 2004).

The result of the American involvement in the WWII was an improvement in its economy. Americans concluded the decades of the 1930s upset with domestic issues, as the economy, unemployment and the need to treat the ideological divisions. By the end of the Second World War, however, that mood had changed. Gray (2004, p. 553) says that the United States of America had become a global superpower, committed to the international field. In the post-World War II era, capitalism, and the open market challenged the Soviet or communist collectivism and the organized economy. The military industry started to reduction the production of military equipment. However, the conflict mitigation did not permanently cease the arms production. The next decade witnessed the invention of different and more powerful weapons. Parallel to that, construction was flourished. People who were suddenly and unexpectedly liberated from the repression of the war started to demand the consumer durable goods of the recent mass society such as televisions, refrigerators, and cars.

The only nation to emerge after the war with a strong industrialized stand and a powerful economy is America. It presented itself to the rest of the world as well as to Europe as an economic phenomenon. According to (Gray 2004), in 1949, the per capita income of the United States was twice that of Britain, three times that of France, five times that of Germany, seven times that of Russia. It had only 6 percent of the world's population: yet it consumed 40 percent of the world's energy, 60 percent of its automobiles, 80 percent its refrigerators and nearly 100 percent of its televisions. This is what Richard calls the 'society of abundance'. America transcribed its perspective of the modern culture into its European allies and to other parts of the world, where it claimed the right of interference and control. During the period between the 1940s into 1950s, the US Administration attempted to form a specific style in every aspect of life, from art to popular culture.

(Gair 2008) explains that President Eisenhower (1952 – 1960), was interested in maintaining the economic abundance, and cultural hegemony through the strategy of the mass inertia and inactivity. The discourse of Eisenhower was represented by giving the citizens the choice in managing their business, and he claimed that the state must not interfere in the daily life of the individual. Beyond everything, starting a family was no longer a difficult process. Because, the economic condition of most of the Americans was enhanced. It was an age when after several decades of crisis, people finally became able to enjoy the fruits of their labor and, take advantage of the natural resources of the homeland without any fright that one day, those resources might run out. At that time, domestic changes started to take place. The Americans were finally able to make use of the booming. Many among them started to move over from the small towns or cities to the suburbs to buy newly built houses. The reason behind this migration was buying cheaper houses. People became more optimistic about their future; families started to have babies, having resulted in an increase in the birth rate. All the above-mentioned developments have changed America into a worth living place in the eyes of many. At least that is how America seemed to be at the very beginning, very optimistic and hopeful. It appeared in an image which supported the 'American Dream' from the mainstream's perspective of the term—that is the material wealth.

Nevertheless, if we take a closer look at the political field, the economic condition, and the social system, we will discover that people began to lose their optimistic view about the future. The image of America as a worthy living place was eventually crushed by people's realization of the political and social systems'

disintegration; Particularly, after some shocking events that occurred, following the end of WWII; events, such as the emergence of the nuclear Bomb, political assassinations, the outbreak of the Cold War, and the Vietnam War. All the mentioned events led to the rise of the Civil Rights, the Anti- War movements and the counterculture of the following years.

## 2. 1 The Political Aspects

During the WWII, many countries fell under the control of dictatorship. Japan, for instance, dominated the East Asia and the Pacific. Nazi Germany headed for West Europe, and Russia. Fascists of Italy threatened invasions. Before all of this had happened, the American Congress had legislated Neutrality Acts in the 1930s. The law was set to isolate the USA, and keep it of any kind of involvements in wars after the World War I. In order to avoid involvements in any war that had no direct impact on the American nation, the diplomatic policy of America stuck to the idea of sidestepping military alliances with other countries. The policy also concentrated on reducing the diplomatic affairs with other countries, to avoid unfavorable conflicts. However, by the German invasion of Poland in 1939, this policy was ended. The Anti-Nazi feeling was growing. During the presidency of Franklin D. Roosevelt (1933-1945), United States started to support its European Allies by sending armaments, and financial supports. Japan tried to reduce the American hegemony and power in the Pacific by the famous attack on Pearl Harbor in 1941. This event urged America to enter the war (Yannella 2011).

In general, the outcomes of WWII, and its sad memories had a very negative influence on mankind as the whole and on the America as well. There were unreasonable Mass deaths. (Yannella 2011) declares that there were 22 to 25 million military deaths all around the world. Nearly, 9 million Soviet soldiers, 5.5 million Germans, 4 million Chinese, and 2 million Japanese, and almost 4,000 American soldiers were killed. In addition to that, approximately, 35 million civilians were reported as death all over the world. Among them were 13 million Soviet citizens, 14 million Chinese, 3 million Indonesians, 2 million Poles, and 2.5 million Germans, and around 1,500 American civilians died. Probably, the cruelest genocide took place during the WWII, was the notorious Holocaust; in which 6 million Jews were killed either burned or as a result of a deliberate starvation. It was estimated that during the Japanese's invasions of the Asian countries, about 25 million civilians were killed. In 1945, the US air force started to firebomb Japanese cities. As a result, hundreds of thousands of civilians were killing. In the same year, America dropped atomic bombs on both the cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. It is said that Hiroshima bomb directly killed about 80,000 civilians, meanwhile, Nagasaki bomb killed about 70,000 people right away. The number of deaths was subsequently increased because of the serious injuries and the radiation effects. So, those frightening numbers continued to spin in the minds of Americans, especially veterans, as many among them started to see nightmares continuously.

It is stated in (Blair 1974) The feeling of victory by the Americans was shortly replaced by intolerable living conditions. The brutal attacks of the Hiroshima and Nagasaki outraged many Americans, as these most of the major newspapers started to publish the event as the headline of their first pages. This booming event raised discussions and unresolved questions about the need to use atomic bombs in the first place, and the possibility of using the nuclear power for peaceful aims instead. It made the Americans be suspicious about technology and the new source of power. They began to raise questions about their future and destiny. (Steinbeck 2008) displays such a psychological effect on people in his novel, *The Winter of Our Discontent*. Ethan, the central character of the novel, embodies the anxiety of the nuclear bomb and the feeling of mistrust against the government. He indicates that whenever an issue becomes too great, Man has the protection of ignoring it and not thinking about it. But, it will eventually go deep to his/her mind and gets mixed up with many other problems already there. In the result, it creates a feeling of restlessness and disorder that drives everyone to think about getting something before it is all gone. (Wittner 2009) declares that the atomic assault on the Japanese cities created a shock in the world. Hundreds of thousands of people came together by popular campaigns that raised slogans which claimed saving humanity from nuclear destruction after being informed of its catastrophic impacts.

The Protesting movements argued that nations do not have to create weapons of mass destruction to secure their interests. However, as soon as the WWII was over, the cold war was begun. It was an arms race between the two superpower countries, the USA and the Soviet Union. The conflict was an extension to the long-standing division between the two nations which was dated back to the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. Later, the conflict between the two was mitigated when they became allies during the WWII. Finally, when the war was over, the old differences once more came to existence.

The fear of Communism controlled the American policy in 1950s. The Americans saw Communism as a threat to the American way of life. They defined it as "The destruction of democracy" (Layman, 1997, p. 184). Senator Joseph McCarthy led a campaign to hunt the individuals, who he doubted of having ties with the Communist Party. He often appeared on TV; warning people that Communists attempted to destroy the American nation. This anti- communist enthusiasm dramatically increased as a result of McCarthy's violation. He provoked the public opinion against the Communists; destroying the lives and careers of those who were

public figures such as intellectuals, writers, even Hollywood stars.

## 2.2 The Social Aspects

Russell (2002) states that, the foreign policy of the United States tended towards war in order to exploit the war for her strategic interests. It can be seen that throughout the post-WWII era, this policy led to many conflicts. Events which resulted in awful outcomes made the American society suffer. Thus, such a policy resulted in a sense of loss among the Americans. One of the most upsetting and dreadful moments the American people had been through, was when the veterans came back home after WWII. They returned home safe, but they brought some bad habits with them. Some of them returned with drug abuse habit after that they had been wounded and given medicinal doses of morphine. They picked up some of those drugs and brought them home. In fact, many among those veterans were sent to asylum for being dangerous on society. Their addiction made the American government think of finding a solution for those veterans, because their staying in society would have a destructive effect on American society.

As soon as World War II ended, the social fabric started to get weak, as “There was considerable expression of public concern about the lack of available housing for returning veterans, unemployment, high divorce rates, juvenile delinquency, and mental illness” (Yannella, 2012, p. 57). Juvenile delinquency – that is offenses against the law made by people less than 18 years old – had long been recognized as a serious problem and America’s main discussed postwar subject. When the war was ending in 1945, there were extensive news stories of teenagers involved in street fights, gang wars and murders as well as offenses like vandalism and shoplifting— stories that troubled the American society long after the WWII. For instance, Philip Yannella points at a report by the FBI. In the report, the statistics indicated that in 1945, crime in 2,000 cities had increased by 12.4 percent and, even more shocking, that 20 percent of people arrested were minors; the average age of the American criminal was now 17. He also maintains that children were not given proper discipline, and the authority of institutions such as the home, the church, the school and the law had become too careless and ineffective to play their constructive role in developing the American post-war society. They couldn’t direct the society in the right way, and much worse they failed to keep the high human values as before.

In the most popular and influential book of the postwar era, *Growing Up Absurd* (1960), Paul Goodman argues that the deviants were righteous young boys and men “who made choices and invented ways of living that were infrequently charming, generally stupid, and regularly disastrous” (Goodman, 1956, p. 9). He is strictly arguing that there were deep social causes for deviant behavior; that the abundant American society was contemporarily lacking in many of the valuable and useful goals, as well as the most basic objective opportunities that would support growing up. It is lacking in sufficient man’s work. It is lacking in authentic public speech, and that the people of America are not taken seriously. It lacks the opportunity to be beneficial. It frustrates aptitude and creates stupidity. It corrupts patriotism. It corrupts the fine arts. It limits science. “It dims the sense that there is a creation. It has no honor. It has no community” (Goodman, 1956, p. 12).

Articles appeared in magazines reported terrible and shocking stories regarding the decline of American society. According to (Yannella, 2012), on January 1947, *Newsweek* reported that some 840,000 preschool and school children suffered from neurotic behavior problems, and that each year about 1,000 children under age 15 were sent to institutions for the insane; in addition to a January 1948 story reported that half the hospital beds in the nation were occupied by victims of mental disease; and a March 1955 article reported that one in twelve children would spend time in mental institutions. Similarly, in 1948 a conference under the name of *An International Congress on Mental Health* was assembled in London with the attendance of 37 nations. According to (Freeman 1984), the conference concluded that one-seventeenth of the nation was psychotic. They were either reserved in institutions or stayed there for a limited time, and that one out of every ten people would spend some periods of his/her life in a mental institution. Moreover, two million men were rejected for having neuropsychiatric conditions that made them ineligible for jobs and duty. Mentally ill patients were treated in the worst ways that one could possibly imagine. They used to be treated by shock therapy, known as Electroconvulsive therapy. Yet, the worst treatment was prefrontal lobotomy, which involved a surgery of the cerebral cortex. Albert Deutsch, an outstanding postwar historian in his book of *The Shame of the States (1948)*, tries to show the conditions of the mentally ill people and how badly they were treated. Deutsch (1948) indicates that he was reminded of the Nazi concentration camps at some places in Germany. Deutsch mentioned that he entered buildings crowded with naked humans herded like cattle and treated with no concern, and they had a stinky smell. Hundreds of those patients he maintains were living under leaking roofs, surrounded by decaying, moldy walls.

Shortly after the war was over, articles about mental illness began to appear in the press just like those of juvenile delinquency, and continued sharply into the 1960s. Society began to ignore such problems as the booming economy began to pervade the entire country. In his book of *Screening the Beats: Media Culture and the Beat Sensibility* (2004), David Sterritt marks the fifties as “an era of number of qualities and imperatives beginning with the letter C: Consensus, Conformity, Conservation, Consumerism, and Cold War” (Sterritt, 2004,

p. 1). American society wanted to update the old Victorian system: fathers made daily trips to big cities in quest of whatever power and money they can lay their hands on, mothers stayed in peaceful suburbs to look after the house and kids. Leisure days were times when everyone's labor is paid off at the end. Citizens, who chose not to adopt this pattern, or prove incapable of doing so, were odd, useless, or both.

### 2.3 The Literary Aspects

The revolutionary features of the post WWII America go beyond the social and political changes to include the literary field as well. American literature displays the image of the country. The American literature in of the second half of the twentieth century was as diverse as the political and social scenes. In the period between 1945 and 1950, the literary representation of common national sense continued. In the period between 1945 and 1950, literature represented the common national sense, as there was a cultural homogeneity in the 1950s. In terms of patriots, writers gave the priority to the construction of the American society in such a way that it could resist Communism. Generally, literature offered the notion of a cultural conformity to a people that were united by the fear of the external threat caused by the war. Materialistically, they wrote to take benefits of the mass marketing in the consumer world that was created by the authority. Writers thought that a novel, a play, or a short story is a representation of the experiences of an entire people. The American literature of (1945-1960), set up the "representative American short story" (Bayam 2279) for the upper-middle-class readers. It was published in *The New Yorker* magazine. While subjects leaning to more homely interests were published in *The Saturday Evening Post* magazine. Advertisements on fancy cars like Cadillac and Mercedes-Benz in were published on *The New Yorker*. While, ordinary cars which were bought by middle class consumers were published in the *Post* and *Collier's*. Similarly, posters on homes' electric supplies appeared on the page opposite to a short story which begins with its character's sharing life in a modern electric house. This reality explains that there was a uniformed American lifestyle, especially for the middle and upper-middle class families. There were attempts to support the idea of cultural conformity among people. Weekly magazines and the medium were used to for the purpose of homogenization. Mainly television; comedies and serious drama made sure to show all the best features of the American life. During the 1960s, the culture conformity was declined. At the same time, the understanding of literature met serious challenges. The critical movements of the period formed a new literary mode, and writers started to respond to those critical movements with new literary strategies. The first development that appeared was 'The Death of the Novel'. Discussions made by some writers argued that social reality had become too unstable to serve as a reliable center of their narratives. They instead, followed chaos as an alternative to the so called the cultural homogeneity. Because, they thought chaos was the reality of the American cultural scene. The technology which was supposed to serve cultural conformity--ironically functioned against such a trend. Because, global awareness was increased by television, and air travelling concealed the boundaries of time and space. Mainly, the unity of time, space, and action was no longer useful to provide a ground to build a literary work upon. As more about the world became discovered, the writer's ability to make sense of the whole was challenged. Producing inclusive terms seemed to be unachievable. As a result, writing in American shifted from sameness and homogeneity into chaos as a cultural fact. It also shifted because of the tragic events that took place in the Post-War II period, precisely during the 1960s, when America witnessed serious conflicts and violence.

Militarism, social discrimination, conformism, consumerism, technology, and materialism, all together shaped the Post-WWII America. Hence, the literary products were dramatically influenced by those historical events. Such an influence can be best noticed in the works of the Beat Generation, Black Arts. Such works portray the sense of human loss and disability during and after war time. *Hiroshima* (1946), is a novel by John Hersey. It portrays America's dropping off the atomic bomb on Japan. It narrates the story of a number of Japanese citizens who experienced the destruction of their city by the atomic bomb. It describes the image when thousands of innocent people were killed and injured. The full text was read on radio. The tragic events and the dramatic scenes performed by the characters generated strong feelings in the hearts and minds of the readers, which brought about a public discontent of the American political position.

Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) is one of the most well-known novels of the American postwar literature. The story is of a young black man who struggles to survive in the racially divided society of America in the pre-Civil Rights period, when segregation laws striped African-Americans of the same basic human rights as the whites had. The protagonist has no identity, no name, and no address. He draws his invisibility to the reader. He is alienated to his own country. Even when he travels, he feels like irrelevant to the landscape, the thing that causes him difficulties. The novel starts with a harsh reality about his life; and the way he is abandoned by society: "I am an invisible man" (Ellison 2). He explains that he was a man of flesh and bone, and he had mind. He says he was invisible because people refuse to see him, and when they approach him, they see his surroundings and anything except him. The society refuses to see him as a human being. He even wishes that people could know and notice him as the ghost in the poetry of Edgar Allan Poe, or those of Hollywood movies.

Another well-known of the post-war American literature is Jerome David Salinger's *Catcher in the Rye*



(1951). The novel expresses the emptiness and aimlessness in the life of the American individual. The protagonist Holden Caulfield realizes that the flourishing life of the postwar America was meaningless. He is disappointed by the phony world. He also shows that the unpleasant reality of America was masked with luxury. So, Caulfield worked on exposing that hypocrisy. The novel anticipates the social and cultural turmoil that will take place in the next decades.

One of the celebrated novels of the post-war era is Norman Mailer's *The Naked and The Dead* (1948). It pictures the frightening views of the war by telling the story of the difficult lives of a small group of soldiers who experience dehumanizing situations during their service in the South Pacific. The intolerable world created by Mailer reflects the sad reality. However, in the essay, *The White Negro* (1957), Mailer's best expresses the WWII. He considers the War as a reflection of the gloomed human condition. Millions of people were killed in concentration camps out of the heartless torture. The essay let the reader face the perverted image of Man and the society that he created (Mailer 1948).

The most famous Beat figure Jack Kerouac wrote the novel of *Dharma Bums* in 1958. The story is narrated by the character. The novel shows the influence of Buddhism on Kerouac. Japhy is the narrator of the story, who desires a very simple life. Through Japhy, Kerouac expresses his longing and heartbreak over the old days and the wild American spirit. He criticizes with astonishment the lost America by the unlovable silence of the postwar suburban houses which are all similarly arranged on both sides of the street. Family members are no more having conversations, because of television. "It begins to appeal like everybody in the world is soon going to be thinking the same way... electrified to the Master Switch" (Kerouac, 191, p. 52). By using the term Master Switch, Kerouac wanted to signify the authority's tendency of controlling the American society. He highlights the image of a modern America with a robot-like and lifeless society.

### **3. Individuality vs White Middle Class Values in Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness***

This chapter discusses Chandler Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness*, which is a record of the Beats' search for individuality and experience in the marginal areas of America as an attempt to escape the white middle class values marked by conformity, conservativeness and rejection of the other. The novel is an autobiography of a month of Brossard and his friends' life in Greenwich Village, narrated by the character Blake Williams, who is the author Brossard himself. The study displays the tension between the ethnic groups in Greenwich Village that shows the cultural conflict and class distinction that takes over the mainstream trend of the American culture in the post-war era.

The post-war era was the time of systematic racism. Racist thoughts, feelings, as well as actions were built into the Americans' daily life. It was substantially profitable for whites, meanwhile painful for the colored the others. Subsequently, the essential part of the life of both the Whites and the colored others is either directly or indirectly determined by the country's systematic racism. Bankers and plantation owners' approach to individuals was based on racial discrimination. According to (Brossard 2000), in the late 1940s, when the events of *Who Walk in Darkness* takes place, a poll was made by *Gallup*, reveals that 43 percent of those who took part in the poll approved racial segregation in buses and trains. Furthermore, most of them rejected whites and blacks working and living together in the US army. A few years before the novel was written, a survey revealed that half of the people who took part in the survey thought that white people should have the priority at any kind of job.

The Beats demand individuality through sexual freedom. The Beats challenged the white middle class values by putting the emphasis on those forms of sexuality that are ostracized by the society--such as bisexuality or homosexuality. Such things are outrageous to the white American middle class norms and therefore, unwelcomed to a regular family pictured within the 'American Dream'. The Beats found another way to hedonism which was Jazz music, where they found a space for self-expression and independence. They constantly spent money over the bars and clubs which that offered offer Jazz music. Through the pursuit of hedonism, the Beats had been creating, a hypothetical world that is different from norms that the middle class Americans accepted. The Beats world was for those who were tired of the social repression. The Beats adopted Hedonism, and free expression of individualism as a resistance against the white middle class values that created such an identity which is marked by perusing material wealth, consumption, racism and the rejection of the other --that is colored people, whites who think differently and live outside the mainstream social norms. I argue that racism and the white middle class values creates 'inauthenticity' -- that is black people passing for white.

The character Henry Porter is a man with a light black skin who suffers from identity issues. Due to his dark skin, he is ostracized by society. As a result, he desperately tries to pass as a white to get accepted by the racist white middle-class American society. Brossard shows Porter's inauthenticity throughout the novel. Porter's inauthentic personality is reflected by the way he chooses to deny his origin and race in an attempt to acquire a better position within the white society of the post -WWII era in America; however, people keep taking him for a 'Negro'. Porter's 'inauthentic' attitude is also reflected in his marriage to a woman that he doesn't really admire. She is a Spanish lady from San Francisco who definitely doesn't belong to the white middle class

community. When he occasionally talks about her, he makes fun of her unawareness of cultural matters, and her attachment to the housekeeping, so on. Porter had a child who died at the age of three months. He and his wife were going to the movies quite often and she spent a lot of time in kitchen preparing fine meals for her husband. According to Brossard; soon after Porter's child dies, he becomes literary minded. Basing on that, he decides that his wife is a burden on him and that the lifestyle he has in California is meaningless. So he leaves his job and abandons his wife to move in New York where he begins his literary career and start a new life pursuing a different personal identity. He tries hard to get rid of his Western accent, but he is unsuccessful at doing so. Porter's inauthenticity becomes stronger when he does things, that he doesn't really believe in nor does he like. He tries to adopt the Harvard student's man's identity by dressing like a Harvard man; however, he hates Harvard men. In fact, he can't succeed in adapting the Harvard style of dressing; he simply misses many details about such a style. Therefore, people can't take him as a Harvard man. Along with that, he begins to pursuit such a kind of girls Harvard men usually go after. He meets a Bennington girl who had been followed by many other men. Porter courted her by making use of his boldness and his talent in dancing. She was tired of over mannered men of Harvard types so she made a relation with Porter for three months believing that he was the one she was looking for. Furthermore, she intended to marry him. But first she thought Porter might have been in need of using psychoanalytical therapy. It seems that she felt his inauthenticity- trying to pass as a white, besides his unstable personality and his apathy/carelessness, which are characteristics that the Beats are known for. That's why she might have estimated that Porter was not a normal person and he that he is in need of psychoanalysis before she marries him. She convinces him to do so and she afforded the money needed for the psychiatric treatment sessions. However, he stops going to the analyst after five weeks of sessions. Furthermore, he leaves the girl without even explaining to her why he has to leave her. "Being with her had convinced Porter that he could make the grade with her type. It gave him confidence to know this. It made him feel like he was going to acquire style" (Brossard, 2000, p. 18). Porter has always been in conflict with society about his race, and he has never had enough courage to face the truth about it. No matter how hard he tries to fit in the predominant norms, he always gets rejected by the majority.

During the post war period, seeing a white girl with an African American boy used to be considered as an odd view to be seen in the street. Blake Williams describes such a situation at Greenwich Village:

Walking towards us was a Negro boy with a white girl. They were holding hands. The Italians they passed on the sidewalk stopped talking and stared after them. The couple looked straight ahead. The girl was quite good looking. They passed us, avoiding looking to us. Theses spade intellectuals really think they've made it when they get white girl, Porter said. The guy is crazy to do that down here, Max said. The Goths beat up three of these dark boys last week for doing the same thing. What about the cops? I said. The cops? What a laugh, Max said. The cops don't care if these guys are beaten up. Most of them approve it (Brossard, 2000, p.75).

The above quotation exemplifies the tension between ethnic groups of America during the Beats' era. It demonstrates how bizarre and unacceptable is seeing a black and white couple together. Even the cops that represent the state authority approve it when black guys get assaulted because of dating a white girl. Williams' speech also shows the inauthenticity of some black men when they try to chase white ladies in particular just because they consider having love affair with whites as an achievement that may raise their rank within such a racist society.

Chandler Brossard is dramatically influenced by the philosophy of existentialism, which claims individuality. He derives the existential tendency from both the French philosopher and writers Sartre and Camus to protest conformity and alienation caused by the middle class values. The Existential values of the character Mersault in Camus's novel attract Chandler Brossard with his indifference to the predominant social norms, and his alienation. "Existentialism grew out of the nihilistic philosophy of Frederic Nietzsche, which proposed that life is inherently meaningless. For the existentialist, man is both free and condemned to give his life meaning" (Cusatis, 2010, p.16). This can be seen in Brossard's characters, when they search for freedom and individuality through nihilism. They spend their time moving from a bar to another searching for joy and authentic moment out of the mainstream; breaking all the middle class values by interacting with the racial and ethnic others, premarital sex, abortion, and smoking marijuana. As for Sartre, he summarizes his existential thinking in three words: "existence precedes essence. That is, humans exist before they can be defined as anything" (Cusatis, 2010, p. 16). Sartre's belief is based on the principle that Man is subject--not object. That he/she must be free in making choices. This subjectivity is quite clear in the characters Blake and Grace of Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness*, when they defend individuality and refuse to go with the mainstream, neither with that of the white middle class values nor the wilderness of the marginalized minorities. The notion of personal identity is the essence of existentialism, and existential questions invade Brossard's novel: "Who am I? What does it mean to live authentically? What gives life meaning?" (Cusatis, 2010, p. 17).

The conclusion of *Who Walk in Darkness* engages with Grace and Blake's shock at the end of their search for a better life outside the mainstream cultural space. The characters come into collision with the

violence that ruled the marginalized spaces of America once they hear about Harry's tragic accident when he gets badly beaten up by a bunch of Italian gangsters. Grace tells Blake: "Oh, God. Let's go away, Blake. Let's get out of this terrible place" (Brossard, 2000, p.245). Signifying that life outside the mainstream often and unavoidably ends with tragedy. She suggests to him to get back to the majority. This clarifies that the Beats reject to become a part of the mainstream culture and claim their individuality as a more 'authentic' life in the marginal spaces. They challenge the middle class values that offered conformity, racial and class discrimination; yet, they couldn't achieve their goal. As it appears, crossing from a cultural space to another was accompanied by rejection and violence.

So, they withdraw from the marginal social spaces to get back at the mainstream culture. Speaking of this novel, it does not offer any clear alternative philosophy that might replace or compete with the predominant one in terms of political, social, personal changes at the time when the novel was written. But it created a platform for hedonism that provided a model in America in the 1960s under the banner of the Beat Generation, and a space of self-expression.

I intended to clarify that 'materialism' and the 'culture of consumption' that is attached to the 'white middle class', parallel to racism and class rupture of the post war American society shape the identity of the Beats. This also shows the loss of faith in social principles, rejection of society and its classical values, creating a group mostly made of whites to explore the margins of society in a journey for self-exploration and a quest for a new personal identity and a new life outside the mainstream. Finally, the Beats get no answer at the end of their self-exploration journey. So, they consequently get thrown back to the mainstream mass culture without offering a clear alternative. They were thrown back to the mainstream mass culture, after getting repelled by the marginalized community, who reacted against them in a racist and cruel manner, like the tension described between the ethnic minorities in the marginal spaces that reaches climax by Harry's being beaten down by an Italian gangster group for his white identity. But, they were successful in creating a platform to proportional changes in terms of individuality, like challenging the predominant conservative principles by inventing the interrelationships like the one between Blake who belongs to the white middle class and Grace with her Italian background who used to be considered as non-decent by the whites. They also supported freedom of sexuality. Yet, they failed in creating dramatic changes at high levels in terms of domestic policy—that is having no plan to change the policy of containment, materialism, and collectivity in favor of individuality. In addition to that, they spent no effort to improve woman's life and presence at least as far as *Who Walk in Darkness* in concerned.

#### **4. Hedonism vs White Middle Class Values in John Holmes's *Go***

*Go*, John Clellon's first novel, was first published in (1952). As Holmes acknowledges in the introduction to (Holmes 1980), the novel was based on real characters and real events. Moreover, many of the dialogues were literal copies of actual conversations. Consequently, it can be considered as a document of the Beat generation, picturing real-life events from 1948-1950 into a novel form. As a novel, it presents advancement toward self-understanding. As a documentary, it presents the essential group of Beat writers and other personalities related with this movement during the Cold War from a critical as well as sympathetic perspective.

*Go* explores the Beat's pursuit of pleasure (hedonism), their glorification of 'the underworld' and petty crime. It was Holmes who in collaboration with Jack Kerouac, introduced the term 'Beat Generation'. During the summer of 1948, Holmes met Kerouac at Allen Ginsberg's apartment, when Kerouac was twenty six years old and Holmes was a novelist of twenty two. They became friends. One night, they both sat around Holmes's apartment on Lexington Avenue thinking of their friends' characteristics and attitudes, their tiredness and oppression with all the forms. It was then, when Holmes recalled that Kerouac had suggested the idea of a 'Beat Generation'. So, the phrase made its way into *Go*.

*Go*, the work of a knowledgeable interpreter and observer of the Beat group, is an autobiography that displays the Beat writers from a perspective that is critical and sympathetic at the same time. The novel indicates the two directions the beats took, one as a beaten down or defeated group/movement, and another, as more idealistic. Holmes wanted to structure his novel as a 'descent into hell' (Garcia, 2002, p.151), reminiscent of Dante's *Inferno*. The characters, want to experience the world of crime in search for spiritual conformity and meaning of life, by breaking all the predominant social norms, and exploring the marginal spaces of the country and establishing interaction with whites/hipsters and the cultural, ethnic, and racial minorities, who rejected the middle class social norms.

The novel is divided into three parts. The first shows the life of Paul Hobbes and his wife Kathryn—that is, John Clellon Holmes and his wife Marian in reality, as they increasingly start to get involved in the bohemian lifestyle affected by Paul's Beat friends: David Stofsky (Allen Ginsberg), and Gene Pasternak (Jack Kerouac). Hobbes is trying to reintegrate himself and find a direction following the Second World War: he gets back to school, reads, and attempts to write a novel however without much confidence. Bill Agatson (Bill Cannastra), whose disgraceful and often cruel behaviors evolved from a deadly revelation of the world, and his inability to actually believe in anything, is hurting Verger (Russell Durgin) who deeply admires him. The second part of the

novel marks the arrival of Hart Kennedy (Neal Cassady) in town. Kennedy is a stranger to the city. He is the white guy who is pushed by the eagerness and energy which the Beats are known for. It is this enthusiasm that affects his bunch of friends, and drives them to explore the marginal/hip spaces out of white middle-class territories such as Times Square, *The Go Hole*; the place that they never wished to go before the arrival of Kennedy. Parallel to geographic exploration of the 'underground world', His everlasting movement involves everyone in the novel in crime as moving around the city trying to get hold of drugs. Hart loves life and his eagerness for everything is largely infectious. Stofsky and Pasternak like him, and Paul is fascinated by his incredible ability for movement and action. It is with the interaction between Hart on a hand, and Paul and Kathryn on the other hand, the couple begins to smoke a joint, and they are present when Hart and Ed Schindel (Al Hinckle) steal gasoline. This causes Kathryn to openly protest, but Paul is silent even though he is not comfortable with the idea of stealing at all. This causes Stofsky to brutally criticize him for his hypocrisy, for going along with everyone's manners even though he secretly disapproves. Kathryn moves between conservative middle class values and the need for experimentation, and she even sleeps with Pasternak, but she never really accepts this way of life. She is attached to conventionality. At the end of Part II, Kathryn finds Paul's love letters to Liza, and she wants to leave him. She cannot stand the fact that Paul has lied to her all along three years. Afterwards, she becomes increasingly concerned with a new morality; a question of honesty versus hypocrisy rather than a matter of physical loyalty. Finally, the third part of the novel marks the movement from the 'hot' world of Hart Kennedy to the 'cool', and illegal world of the underground with Little Rock (Little Jack Melody), Albert Ancke (Herbert Huncke), and Winnie (Vickie Russell). To support the drug habit, they get involved in crime. Hobbes reaches the understanding that the transfer from 'hot' to 'cool', and the elimination of the senses by abusing them, is the beginning of the end. He also comprehends that he is unlike these people.

Hobbes was married to an Italian woman named Kathryn when he joined the army, before he started service in the WWII. Unlike Brossard, Holmes connects the story with the past, I mean, with his childhood, and then, his life along with his affairs and marriage, to clarify how he has reached the stage he was at when the story begins and why there is conflict in his marriage and his choice of career. By connecting the characters to life before the war, Holmes claims that restlessness was not exactly a postwar feeling. Both Hobbes and Kathryn were unhappy even before the war. Indeed, the war itself is described by Holmes as a temporary respite from having to grapple with this feeling of discontent or emptiness. Kathryn is a poor girl, a daughter of a laborer. by making advantage of living in a good neighborhood, she tries to convince herself that she will be able to get rid of what she considers as the 'stain' of her ethnic and class belonging. Back to Hobbes, his parents separated when he was a child, he grows up in Westchester in the margins and corners of the middle class areas. He hates their values and attitudes and desires to live in the big city. He meets Kathryn while he is a university student, and she works for a company. Holmes describes their relationship as "two dejected conspirators in an alien city, who have almost given up hope of making contact with a legendary underground" (Holmes, 1952, p 30). After their marriage, Kathryn follows him to San Diego, leaving behind everything to live with him in a rooming house and work as a counter at a store.

As soon as Hobbes finishes his military training there, they both get back to New York. After a period, the couple realizes that the manner of their love making had changed, and that their relationship is no longer that of a regular, stable marriage. They got together by a marriage that was based on the mutual need for escaping the inconvenient social circumstances. They have both been outside the middle class zone of acceptance, and got tired trying to fit in the predominant social norms. Both of them have the desire to pursue happiness together. They thought that their marriage would be the answer to their sufferings, and that they can together achieve the missing sense of satisfaction, and that their marriage would enable them to encounter the sense of alienation and isolation they were both going through as a result of the white middle class values. But soon, the marriage becomes a burden for both of them. Space and distances between them begin to increase as if they were moving in different directions. Hobbes is shocked by the fact that he has failed to fulfill the middle class perspective of happiness and success and being taken for a productive man by the society. This disappointment drives him to the university, and he starts to study philosophy as a way to search for meaning in life, and to "Re- assimilate himself and find a direction following the war" (Varner, 2012, p. 152). Meanwhile, Kathryn keeps working to support the family, which is another circumstance that increases the isolation between the couple. Practically, Hobbes is unable to make real changes into his life; he rather deepens the gap between him and the middle class society, while his wife keeps working to support the family, not having enough time to take care of her own life, nor to plan for her future. After he graduates from the university, he begins to work as a critic in magazines and writes some short stories taking advantage of the improvement in his intellectual level as a result of studying philosophy. He starts to assist his wife financially to afford the expenses of life. After his relative success as a writer, Hobbes feels the need to be admired and appreciated as an intellectual man by his wife, who is too busy working, and unready to really understand or discuss her husband's ideas or show any kind of interest in his working field. As a result, he becomes attracted to another woman named Liza, his former colleague in the university. He thinks that she will understand him more than his wife Kathryn does. They eventually get

involved in what might be described as a mental or spiritual affair that secures him a source of love that is based on intellectual and social agreement, and brings him psychological and spiritual relief. They write letters to each other, even when Liza stops writing him back; he keeps writing to her and keeps the letters at home without sending to her. The relationship becomes a one sided love, in a quest for an authentic moment that he cannot achieve by his ordinary marriage love afforded by his wife Kathryn. Because Kathryn has taken the middle class lifestyle for granted, and because of the incompatibilities in thought and education between them; she is unable to understand Hobbes's ambition to change his boring life by searching for authenticity somewhere outside the middleclass environment. So, by committing infidelity by the involvement in a relationship with another woman that he thinks she will give him the authentic love, Holmes revolts against one of the most predominant middle class values, which is the marital commitment.

Hobbes drives Kathryn to hang out with his new friends Stofsky, Pasternak in bars and parties, discussing topics that are interesting to the Beats, such as adventures and exciting experiences, and their own perspective of life and happiness, which is totally different from that of the predominant middle class thoughts; subjects that Kathryn is not so much into. This group of friends differs from the previous group whose members were mostly authors. Members of the new group do not rely on papers, or have a fixed perspective of any cultural/political issue of the country; they rather react to the daily matters and events spontaneously. The thing that Hobbes realized about them when he hangs out with them; the thing that distinguishes the group from the middle-class is their reaction to life. At that point, Hobbes knows them superficially. He is not deeply involved in their lifestyle yet. But the more he gets involved in the hedonist life, the weaker his relation with Kathryn becomes. As she begins to feel bad because of keeping up with Hobbes at the expense of her own life and needs. Hobbes still has the desire to affect Kathryn to change her thinking and her lifestyle in order to fit in his new life, and to understand him. He tries to involve her in the hedonist life—that is the pursuit of pleasure in the sense of the satisfaction of desires as the ultimate goal in human's life. So, he takes her out to the clubs, where he hangs out with his hedonist friends. One day, when Hobbes and Kathryn discuss the love affair between Gene Pasternak and his married lover Christine, Hobbes is surprised by discovering that Kathryn is open to the idea of an extra-marital affair. She asks him: “what would you do if I wanted to sleep with another man? Should I do it? You're always asking me” (Holmes, 1952, p. 61). Hobbes replies as:

If you wanted to, yes... if you were attracted to a man and wanted to sleep with him, why should I be worried until after you had done it?... If you came back and told me that he was better than I was, that would be one thing. I'd have to do something about it then. But it was just pleasurable, but not better than what we have, what would I have lost? (Holmes, 1952, p. 61)

The above dialogue shows that Hobbes's rejection of 'commitment' goes even beyond the sexual commitment in marriage. He tries to pull Kathryn's leg into his world of 'freedom' and 'coolness', rejecting all the middle class norms; by convincing her that an open sexual relationship is not as bad as it could hurt them, and that their love to each other will not get negatively affected. By doing so, Hobbes will be revolting against one of the most important middle class values of the post war American society— that is sexual fidelity. The conservative society of the 1950s, used to consider sex outside marriage a taboo and a moral issue. So Hobbes here embodies the Beats' freedom of sexuality that challenges the middle class.

Hobbes is getting obsessed with an idea that nothing is important to his hipster friends - they are beyond any morality or interest other than the present: But looking back into the room where Ankle and Winnie were lighting up sticks of tea and trading opinions of mutual friends now in jail, he felt that he had dropped into a world of shadows that had drifted out of the grip of time, which was now inescapable to him; a world in which his values were a nuisance and his anxieties an affront (Holmes, 1952, p.262). After hearing Ankle and Winnie exchanging opinions about their memories of some of their friends who eventually ended up in jail, Hobbes's interest in them turns to horror. As he realizes the uselessness of their insights, and that they would one day be destroyed by their irresponsible and wild ideas, he becomes very uncomfortable. He realizes the fact that they are gradually disintegrating, and that the madness of their ideas and lifestyle might eventually lead them to abyss. These dangers never concerned his hipster friends but him. So, he gets ready to leave the place in pain.

In conclusion, the two of them tripped back down River Street, holding one another's hands through the rain and dark around them, as they could barely catch the last ship back to New York. Kathryn says to him drowsily: “you won't let me fall off the boat, will you?” (Holmes, 1952, p. 311); he holds her closer, gazing out across the darkness and impulsive water at New York, and a beam of lights towards which they were moving. For a moment, he keeps looking forwards among the uptown towers, expecting to see a light coming from their apartment, when he roughly says to himself: “Where is our home?” (Holmes, 1952, p. 311), as he couldn't find it. This statement raises questions and doubts about this symbolic resort to domestic love as a means of salvation.

## Conclusion

As was argued in the introduction, this thesis is about the emergence of the Beat Generation as a sub-culture

opposed to the values of the white middle class. The Beat movement is a reaction to the social, political, and economical changes that the United States of America witnessed in the fifties and the sixties. The country went through an economic booming in the post war era. As America shifted from the war industry to the production of consumer goods, in which white American citizens were mostly benefited. Making use of the GI Bill, and even the priority in getting jobs, people who wanted to make families and start a new life, could easily build houses in the countryside, to change it to suburban inhabited by the consumer white middle class society, leaving the cultural and ethnic minorities suffer poverty and segregation in the marginal areas of the county. Parallel to that, the government of the United States practiced the policy of containment as a response to the cold war with the Soviet Union, under the pretext of the policy of containing and controlling communism. People's liberty was deprived, and the Americans had been culturally and ideologically controlled through social media, and a lot of intellectuals who claimed individualism were repressed via the FBI institution. In addition to that, the Americans lived under the condition of a constant anxiety of a sudden death because of the fear of an expected nuclear war with the Soviets.

All these facts led to creation of the white middle class society that is known by conservation, conformity and consumption. It is marked by its rejection of individuality, in terms of personal freedom and freedom of ideology, even, by the rejection of the racial other. It was also marked by the pursuit of material wealth that is embodied in the so called the 'American Dream'.

Driven by the unpleasant living condition, the thrust for freedom and sense of curiosity; a group of intellectuals, mostly whites, revolted against the mainstream trend, and the so called 'American Dream'. To escape the depressing conditions of life under the predominant norms, and to create and enjoy an authentic moment of a virtual life away of the frustrating American reality of the post WWII; they decided to change their approach to the 'American Dream' from material gains to joy and pleasure in their life, through the search for experience in the marginal spaces which are inhabited by the African Americans, and other ethnic minorities such as Porto Ricans, Italians, beside criminals, gays and lesbians; to pursue the existential concept of authenticity --that is obtaining freedom and fullness of life, with the affirmation of the individual of 'real' self, in which the proportion of congruency between individual's everyday behaviors and this 'real' self becomes the base for evaluating the authenticity of Man's life. They were driven by an intellectual energy, anxiety and sense of alienation. They rejected the conventionality which embodied the white middle class values and they insisted on the idea that the individual should define himself and his reality only through his own choice. Through hipsterism, they opposed the predominant puritanical moralities; and they brought hipster attitudes and practices such as freedom of sexuality, new dress codes, and self-expression through Jazz Music, as well as drugs habits into fame.

The group name themselves the Beats, the term that had been coined by the most famous member of the Beat Generation, Jack Kerouac. It indicates the feeling of having been used, it has several meanings. In a musical sense, the term 'Beat' stands for keeping the beat, being in harmony with others. More precisely, it refers to the jazz beat. In sociological and psychological sense, it calls the condition of the outsider, a person who is out and down; the one who observes society and rejects its values and disciplines.

In Chandler Brossard's *Who Walk in Darkness (1952)*, the Beats' seeking for authenticity is displayed through their support of individuality as a response to the white middle class values. The search for authenticity is embodied by glorifying and supporting individualism, and the refusal to go with middle class values. In Brossard's novel, Blake Williams's claim for individuality is shown by a comparison of his authenticity with the inauthenticity of the character Henry Porter.

Blake goes beyond the mainstream norms and the white's conservative values by entering the marginal spaces of the country and interacting with the marginalized and segregated ethnic and cultural minorities of America, claiming individuality regardless of ethnic and cultural background. On the other hand, the inauthenticity of the character Henry Porter that is caused by the racism and the cultural segregation that the white majority practiced against the minorities is displayed. Porter is a 'Negro' who is desperately trying to pass white by pretending the Harvard style that he doesn't admire in the first place, in order to avoid racial segregation and to get accepted in the white middle class social zone.

In the second section of chapter three, the Beats' rebellion against the white middle class values is discussed along with the issues of hedonism and petty crimes. Hobbes involves himself and his wife Kathryn in an experience in the underground world of the marginal spaces of the country, in search of an authentic life gained via ultimate hedonism—that is to Hobbes, getting rid of all the white moralities and social norms, in an attempt to escape the social conformity of the white community.

In the conclusion of both novels, the characters' journey of spiritual exploration ends with trauma. William Blake is shocked by the cruelty that controlled the marginal world. The white Beats who entered this world are discriminated against, and rejected with violence; refusing to give a chance to the Beats to insert an individualism that can replace the predominant prejudice and cultural segregation.

Similarly, Hobbes spiritual journey ends with trauma in the novel of *Go*. As the protagonist rejects

consumerism and refuses material wealth to interact with his hipster friends who lead him to adopting a hedonist lifestyle; at the end, he realizes that hedonism doesn't give him authenticity. He, instead, experiences emptiness and meaninglessness. Finally, he comes to the conclusion that this emptiness and carelessness will ultimately lead to one's perdition as it happened to Agatson, as a result of too much excitement and carelessness caused by the abuse of alcohol. So, the protagonists of both novels get back to the mainstream, leaving the question of what solution did these two novels suggest as alternative to the white middle class values ambiguous. However, in the long term, they represented the beginning of what will later become a social code that attracts young people of different ethnic and cultural identities. They shared the same cultural and social space that is represented by a special dress code and attitudes linked to the Beat culture, where teenagers and young people could experience freedom of expression and sexuality, regardless of race and social class.

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