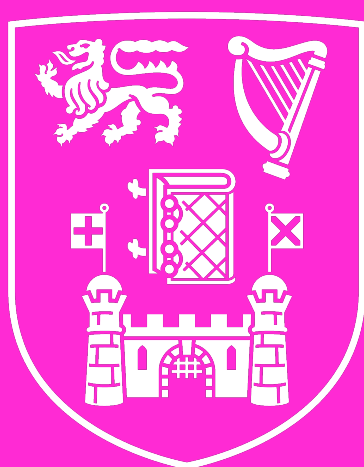




# "Girls Who Say Nothing and Wear Black": Women of the Beat Generation and Their Influences Across Irish Women's Writings

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## Introduction

- ★ How many literary geniuses do you know? How many of those are women? Legendary Beat Generation writer Allen Ginsberg's answer is 0 for 2 (Johnson & Grace, 2002).
- ★ This research aims to firstly illustrate the exceptional literary merit that can be found in women's writings. Specifically pertaining to the women poets of the Beat generation, this study examines why it is that they may have been overlooked in this sense, and largely excluded from the literary canon.
- ★ This question is important to our ability to sustain a deep and critical insight on the effects of gender marginalisation on women writers themselves and indeed our understanding of literary history. My research additionally proposes an influence on contemporary Irish poets to further exemplify the importance of these writers.

## Methodology

- ★ This research used a qualitative, literary-critical methodology which utilised close textual and contextual analysis of selected works by Diane di Prima, Lenore Kandel, Ruth Weiss, Elaine Feeney, and Kimberly Campanello.
- ★ A key aspect was my opportunity to travel to The British Library London to consult archival materials, to utilise alongside other digital and physical media from the libraries of Trinity College Dublin.
- ★ This process was informed by feminist literary theory from critics such as Hélène Cixous and Kate Millett.



## Key Findings

- ★ Naïvely, I began this project wanting to speak as little about the male figures of this literary movement as possible, but it was found that in order to reasonably answer my research question that this was impossible.
- ★ Not only was it found that U.S. American society failed these women greatly, but consequently so did their own, 'progressive' male peers.
- ★ This is of considerable significance to understanding how art communities support each other internally even now, as the structures under which these inequities operated did not simply disappear, and instead such inequities may now materialise in these communities in different ways.

## Conclusions

- ★ It has never been a question of merit. The women of the Beat Generation were obstructed by the misogyny that permeated the society they lived in and their artistic circles that mimicked it.
- ★ That elements of their influence can be found in recent Irish poets even without mainstream or commercial visibility, is a further testament to such merit which has been ignored.
- ★ That the work of these women is so political by their content and their own existences, that it is so defiant and adamant to effect change, is to ensure that in reading them that you, personally, will experience change too.
- ★ The next step for this project is further, more intersectional exploration of marginalised women writers and deconstructing the barriers which opposed them as a means of understanding present disparities in this regard.



## Literature cited

- ★ Johnson, Ronna C. and Grace, Nancy M. 'Visions and Revisions of the Beat Generation'. In *Girls Who Wore Black: Women Writing the Beat Generation*. New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2002. Pp. 1-24.
- ★ Johnson, Joyce. *Minor Characters: A Beat Memoir*. London: Methuen, 2006.

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"THE BEAT MOVEMENT LASTED FIVE YEARS AND CAUSED MANY YOUNG MEN TO GO ON THE ROAD IN EMULATION OF JACK KEROUAC. YOUNG WOMEN FOUND THE PURSUIT OF FREEDOM MUCH MORE COMPLICATED. NEVERTHELESS, IT WAS MY REVOLUTION." (JOHNSON, 2006.)

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