


The Cultural Translation of Ginsberg's Howl in Turkey

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**Erik Mortenson,**  
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**Abstract:** In his article "The Cultural Translation of Ginsberg's *Howl* in Turkey" Erik Mortenson examines three Turkish translations of Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* in order to explore the ways in which Ginsberg's poem becomes redeployed in new cultural contexts. Orhan Duru and Ferit Edgü's 1976 translation presents a more politicized Ginsberg that draws on his anti-establishment credentials as a social activist. This comes as little surprise, since in pre-1980 coup Turkey rebellion was thought in purely political terms of right versus left. Hakan Arslan's 1991 update provides a less political and more familiar Ginsberg, in keeping with a society that left direct political struggle behind in favor of cultural politics. Şenol Erdoğan's version, published in 2013 by the controversial press 6:45, updated Ginsberg once again. Ginsberg became a marker of "hip," a spiritual guru who became equated with the mystical qualities of Sufism and Jalalad-din Mevlana Rumi. Tracing *Howl*'s translation history provides a sense of recent Turkish cultural history. But it also allows Beat scholars to theorize how the reception of the Beats generates new versions, and thus new readings, of these countercultural texts.

**Erik MORTENSON**

### **The Cultural Translation of Ginsberg's *Howl* in Turkey**

In the fall of 2014, the Turkish publishing house 6:45 (also spelled Altıkırkbeş) put together an art exhibit in anticipation of their forthcoming translation of Allen Ginsberg's long poem *Kaddish*. The show, simply called "Howl" and held at Galeri 44A in Istanbul's posh Nişantaşı district, gathered works that incorporated the limited edition of the press's *Howl* translation into art pieces that offered viewers a range of takes on Ginsberg's famous poem. Perhaps the piece that best captured the malleable nature of Ginsberg's work was by Olgu Ülkenciler. The artist cut a hole in the middle of the book with the inscription "The key is in the window / the key is in the sunlight / at the window" written at the top, and the viewer was left to maneuver this dangling frame across a range of images taped to the wall. What is the meaning of *Howl*? Any number of things, from the title page of *Das Kapital*, to an athlete's fist raised in a black power salute, a picture of Dostoevsky, the Turkish book cover to *An Afternoon in Yenisehir* (*Yenisehir'de bir öğle vakti*; 1973) written by imprisoned political activist Sevgi Soysal, or a jazz player strumming a bass, depending on where the viewer chose to position the book. The exhibition highlighted some of the possible ways of looking at Ginsberg's classic text.

While 6:45's exhibit rendered these various interpretations of *Howl* visible, the press's own translation is itself the product of a particular cultural moment. Translations are always interested, so it comes as little surprise that each reproduction of Ginsberg and his work carries traces of the concerns and preoccupations of the translators, editors, and publishers who produced it. As Lawrence Venuti argues, "Translation never communicates in an untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences of the foreign text by reducing them and supplying another set of differences, basically domestic, drawn from the receiving language and culture to enable the foreign to be received there. The foreign text, then, is not so much communicated as inscribed with domestic intelligibilities and interests" (482). Venuti's interest in the cultural dimensions of translation is indicative of a turn in Translation Studies as a whole towards a closer consideration of the social impact of translation in the 1990s. Drawing on the poststructuralism of the period as well as developments in cultural studies, critics began to analyze the social effects of translation and its attendant ethical ramifications. Venuti's point is crucial for understanding how Ginsberg's work is received in Turkey. The reception of Ginsberg's *Howl* operates under a process of selection. Those involved in the translation draw out certain possibilities latent in the text that resonate with their own interests and their readers' expectations. While this is true of any translated text, it is especially important for politically-engaged works like *Howl* that are often expected to perform countercultural work in the social field. *Howl*'s Turkish translations are inscribed in ways that push towards particular readings.

This paper explores the various Turkish translations of Ginsberg's *Howl* and the para-textual materials that accompany them beginning as early as the 1970s and continuing into the present day. The Turkish reception of Ginsberg, his work, and his image demonstrates the ways in which this American cultural icon becomes redeployed in particular moments as everyone chooses a version of Ginsberg that best fits their interests and needs. While the field of Beat Studies has embraced the transnational, the issue of translation has received less attention. This is unfortunate, since an examination of Ginsberg's Turkish appropriation allows us to see how local conditions influence reception, reminding us that there really is no one final meaning to the signifier "Allen Ginsberg." Ginsberg and his poetry perform cultural work in Turkey, and it is precisely in these particular moments of reception where a better understanding of what we mean when we say "Ginsberg" (or "Beat" for that matter) can emerge.

In their own cultural moment, Ginsberg and his fellow Beats were seen as direct threats to both social and literary propriety. The Beat lifestyle, stereotyped in the popular media as a dropping out of "normal" society, was a clear rejection of the middle-class consumerist lifestyle of the 1950s. The Beats were also seen as literary iconoclasts challenging staid academic critics and the traditional canon with poetry infused with the language of popular culture and the street. Today, the Beats are less iconoclastic than iconic, and while their works do still inspire many to question the society in which they live, they are far more likely to be seen as nostalgic reminders of a time when "us versus them" seemed far easier to define. Yet in Turkey, the Beats and their message of dissent remain socially relevant. Although Ginsberg and Peter Orlovsky were the only Beat writers to actually visit the country, publishers, editors, critics, readers, and others dissatisfied with conditions in Turkey have turned to the Beats and other countercultural forebears for alternatives. This unexpected return of Beat nonconformity and protest into new cultural and temporal conditions offers a unique opportunity

to rethink both the cultural logics that made Ginsberg's work so challenging in the first place as well as the possibilities his work might still hold for social critique in our highly-globalized twenty-first century.

There are three major translations of *Howl* into Turkish, each with their own particular history. Orhan Duru and Ferit Edgü's 1976 *Amerika (America)* bundled a selection of Ginsberg poems with those of Lawrence Ferlinghetti in order to offer Turkish readers a very political Ginsberg that drew on his Leftist and anti-establishment credentials. As interviews with those involved in the translation indicate, Ginsberg's work offered Turkish intellectuals of the period a means to be both socially engaged and literary. But as direct political struggle changed over to cultural critique with the 1980 coup, the presentation of Ginsberg's *Howl* in Turkish changed as well. Hakan Arslan's 1991 version, while acknowledging this earlier, political Ginsberg, offers more intimate access to Ginsberg the man. Arslan is committed to the communist cause, but filters that commitment through his personal relationship to Ginsberg's texts. Şenol Erdoğan's 2013 translation draws on Ginsberg's hipster credentials and spiritual concerns to offer his readers a portrait of Ginsberg as guru. Fusing Ginsberg's spiritual interests with the Eastern mysticism of Mevlana Jalaeddin Rumi's Sufism and drawing out the transgressive moments in *Howl* such as sexuality and drug use, Erdoğan harnesses Ginsberg to the publishing house 6:45's countercultural cause. As local conditions change, so do versions of Ginsberg.

The first major translation of Ginsberg's work into Turkish, Duru and Edgü's *Amerika*, was meant as an intervention into the moribund leftist poetry scene. In America, the Vietnam War had galvanized the counterculture, but Stalinism and McCarthyism had helped to discredit the communist Left. In Turkey, communism remained a viable political option until the 1980 coup. A wide spectrum of Leftists, from hardcore communists to more progressive socialists, battled right wing nationalists in oftentimes bloody street battles that claimed lives. Turkey had yet to embrace the sort of identity politics and celebration of individual freedom inaugurated by the 1960s counterculture in the West. Edgü and Duru were both committed Leftists, but they were also writers looking for alternatives to hackneyed forms of expression. Beat writers like Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti heralded a new form of protest that was simultaneously political, transformative, and literary.

What made Ginsberg so compelling to Leftists like Duru and Edgü was that he offered a new way to rebel. Socially engaged writing in Turkey had degenerated into polemic and propaganda, but Beat writers like Ginsberg offered critiques meant to be taken seriously as literature. Edgü's 1976 introduction to the translation, "Like a preface" (*önsöz gibi*), chronicles his discovery of the Beats and what they might mean for poetry at that time. Growing frustrated with both Turkish and foreign poets, Edgü laments: "I was asking myself, 'What could poetry do today?' ... If poetry is the act of giving a voice to human reality, this was readily done by those who confused art with political propaganda without batting an eye. I'm proposing two poets of the Beat Generation as a tangible and valid answer to the question: 'what poetry can do today?'" ("Birinci" 7-8). Edgü's preface highlights the bind socially committed poets were in during the period. The prevailing climate of revolution had generated its own clichéd and stale style of poetry. Writers like Edgü called for a new form of socially engaged writing that went beyond prevailing dogma. The Beats offered a refreshing insistence on lived experience rather than relying on the tired old ways of thinking. Poetry was now seen to "give voice to the human reality" as a means of "Howling" the frustrations of individuals in society. The personal was becoming political.

Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti were the two Beat poets best equipped to facilitate a move from political to cultural critique. Both had the sort of Marxist credentials that Turkish writers could understand, but sought to go beyond purely propagandistic work. As he chronicles in *Howl* (1956), Ginsberg was involved in communist and socialist activities from an early age. Ferlinghetti was likewise interested in Leftist social movements. In fact, both had made trips to Cuba and Nicaragua to witness first-hand the attempts to craft Marxist states. Ben Lee claims that "Ginsberg's work in the 1950s is shot through with references to political identities supposedly antiquated and actively discredited by intellectuals on both the Left and the Right during the Cold War moment" (368). Ginsberg's attempts to fuse the social movements of the past with the changing needs of the countercultural present makes him the perfect figure for the pre-coup Turkish Left. For those involved in violent political struggle, Ginsberg probably made little sense. But for Turkish intellectuals looking for a socially engaged literature, Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti offered political poetry that could be both political *and* poetry.

The social thrust of the Duru / Edgü translation is captured on its cover. Although the title is taken from Ginsberg's poem "America" which leads off the collection, Ginsberg is really "bundled" with Ferlinghetti. Although Ginsberg appears first, both names appear on the cover, divided by a backslash (see fig. 1). In addition, the faces of both poets appear underneath, in a sort of fusion, with Ginsberg

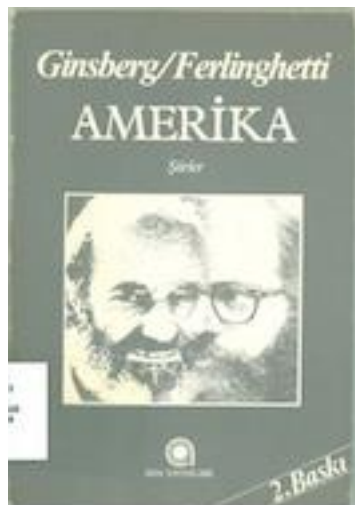


Figure 1. Duru and Edgü's translation brings together the revolutionary potential of both Ginsberg and Ferlinghetti, as these two poets share a name, a title, and even a face.

looking to his right in a serious manner and Ferlinghetti staring forward and smiling. The cover not only creates a connection between these two poets, but seems to suggest that they share the title as well as a common purpose—a description of America which the reader will go on to discover is highly critical. Ginsberg is bookended by his two most provocative pieces, "America" (1956) and "Howl" (1955-56), with the collection also including the drug-inspired "LSD 25" (actually "Lysergic Acid"; 1959), a poem Ginsberg had written to Kerouac on meeting his lover Peter Orlovsky ("Malest Cornifici Tuo Catullo"; 1955), and his rant against government and rationality, "Manifesto" (1974). Ferlinghetti is not as well represented, with only "One Thousand Fearful Words for Fidel Castro" (1961), "In Goya's Greatest Scenes" (1958), and "He" (1958) offered. But as the cover implies, taken together, the volume offers a selection of rebellious poems written in a diversity of styles that challenge the poetic as well as social status quo.

The emphasis on cultural rather than political critique can be seen in the short biography the translators offer on Ginsberg. After the requisite personal data, the translators include several details that locate Ginsberg's lifestyle choices in social contexts. Discussing his use of drugs, they quote Ginsberg's claim, "I believe marijuana is a political tool" (11). The use of narcotics might have mind-expanding qualities, but they are also a means of offering "political" resistance. Lifestyle choice, rather than membership in a political group, becomes the means of offering a challenge to the status quo. The translators go on to claim that "Because of his rebellious attitude in social issues or personal understanding he often had problems with the judiciary" (11). Not only does this provide Ginsberg with a sort of Leftist "street credibility" in Turkey as many found themselves in jail or afoul of the law, but it also demonstrates that personal and poetic expression is, in its own way, a social act of defiance. Poets, too, can challenge the system with more than empty slogans and meaningless words—they can let their personal feelings become political tools.

Despite the translators' celebration of Ginsberg and, to a lesser extent, Ferlinghetti, as champions of a new type of poetry, the cultural and geographical distance between these young groups of Turkish writers and intellectuals and their Beat colleagues meant that the Beats had to be explained before they could be appreciated. Despite some isolated translations of Beat work that appeared in the late 1960s and early 1970s, the Beats were still largely unknown in Turkey. Duru and Edgü tackle this problem in their translation of one of the later stanzas of *Howl's* first section, where Ginsberg writes "the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown" (CP 131). Duru and Edgü translate this as "madman, bum, and time's angelically beaten ones, **beat**, unknown" (*Çılgın, serseri ve zamanın meleksel dövülmüşü, beat, bilinmeyen*; 37). Reading the translation against the source text reveals a slippage in Ginsberg's work that is probably intentional. Is Ginsberg referring to two people here, "the madman bum" as well as "angel beat"? Or is he discussing a "madman bum and angel" who is "beat in Time"? Or are there actually three people, or at least three adjectives referring to the same figure, who is "beat in Time"? The difference is admittedly minor, but it speaks to an ambiguity of language running throughout the poem as Ginsberg switches from the collective "who" of the "best minds of my generation" to the individual cases that compose his litany (CP 126).

Duru and Edgü's translation is still ambiguous, but less so. A comma separates madman (*çılgın*) from bum (*serseri*), suggesting that these figures are part of a list. Although "çılgın" is often used as an adjective to mean "crazy," here it seems to be a noun, one of a series that will be added to "time's angelically beaten ones," to those who are "unknown," and ultimately to "beat" itself. The translators use the Turkish verb "dövülmek" or "to be (physically) beaten" to capture Ginsberg's "angel beat in Time," but go on to include the English word "beat" in boldface type. This list format provides the Turkish reader with a sense of what "beat" means by explicitly associating the untranslated term with the sort of marginal figures Ginsberg chronicles. Duru and Edgü add an extra "beat" to the line as a means to help define an English term unfamiliar to their readers.

The cultural moment of reception is also an important factor in Duru and Edgü's presentation of communism. While the translators are certainly frustrated with the political demographics of 1970s Turkey, it is surprising the extent to which they omit references to a movement which enjoyed such a strong following at the time. Shifting social expectations and censorship concerns might account for the lack of reference to "communism" in the Duru / Edgü translation. While they retain the reference to "Supercommunist" in Ginsberg's poem, they omit the entire stanza in part III where the speaker and Carl Solomon sing the "Internationale," though both later translators Hakan Arslan and Şenol Erdoğan include it in their translations (*CP* 127). In their "America" translation, Edgü and Duru use "I was a gun" (*tüfektim*; 16) rather than "America I used to be a communist when I was a kid I'm not sorry" (*CP* 146), though both Arslan and Erdoğan use "komünist" (43; 43). Edgü and Duru also drop "communist" from Ginsberg's line "America when I was seven momma took me to Communist Cell meetings" (17; *CP* 147). Duru and Edgü wanted to avoid the sort of sloganeering associated with dogmatic Leftist poetry, and thus leaving out references to communism might have been their way of disassociating their translation from hackneyed political poetry. But they also might have simply been avoiding the censor. The heyday of Turkish communism was between the 1960 and the 1980 coups, but even during this period government repression was rife. "Supercommunist" might have been strange or comical enough to pass the censors, but repeated reference to a movement maligned by the government could have caused problems. The 1980 coup struck a serious blow to the communist party, and thus Arslan and Erdoğan had no such fears using the term.

The 1980 coup ushered in a new Turkey. The violent clashes between the Left and the Right that had epitomized the pre-coup years had been suppressed, and the country was opened up to Western influence. Along with the arrival of consumer goods came cultural ones as well. (For a more detailed discussion of the Beats' arrival in Turkey, see Erik Mortenson's "The 'Underground' Reception of the Beats in Turkey"). In the process, Ginsberg was again updated for the times. Hakan Arslan, in his 1991 translation of a selection of Ginsberg's poems, sounds a more personal note. Beats like Ginsberg are no longer seen as an unexplored American phenomenon that might provide poetry a "way out." Arslan is himself politically engaged, a communist who spent time in a commune in the Aegean coastal town of Bodrum conducting workshops on Beat writing and Eastern philosophy (interview). But the Ginsberg he provides is less a comrade than a companion. In contrast to Duru and Edgü's more political Ginsberg, Arslan makes Ginsberg more familiar and colloquial. Ginsberg is still revealing his thoughts and baring his soul, but one gets the sense that they are listening more to a friend than to a spokesperson.

As with the Duru / Edgü translation, the cover material provides the first clue to the style of the material within (see fig. 2). The title immediately catches the eye. "Kuşbeyin" means "Birdbrain" in Turkish, and refers to Ginsberg's poem of the same name included in the volume. Written in a Dubrovnik hotel in 1980 and collected in *Plutonium Ode* (1982), as Arslan rightly comments, it is "one of Ginsberg's most political poems" (interview). Thus the title would seem to be in keeping with Duru and Edgü's earlier thrust to use Ginsberg in the service of a new form of resistance. The poem castigates both America and Russia, East and West; "Birdbrain" is "the ultimate product of Capitalism" as well as the "chief bureaucrat of Russia" (*CP* 738). But the poem is also self-mocking. After pronouncing "I am Birdbrain!" the speaker later explains, "Birdbrain became a great International Poet and went around the world praising the Glories of Birdbrain" (738-9). "Birdbrain" describes a type of thinking to which everyone is prone, rather than a pointed attack on a particular person or outlook. It demonstrates Ginsberg's ability to use humor to deconstruct the binaries of a postwar world, and in the process, re-examine his own position as poet-revolutionary desirous of both social change and personal fame.

The rest of the cover picks up on this study in contrasts. "Kuşbeyin," as in the English "Birdbrain," comes off as slightly comical, and for those with no knowledge of Ginsberg, its political intent would certainly not be immediately apparent. The rest of the cover material works against its comical title.

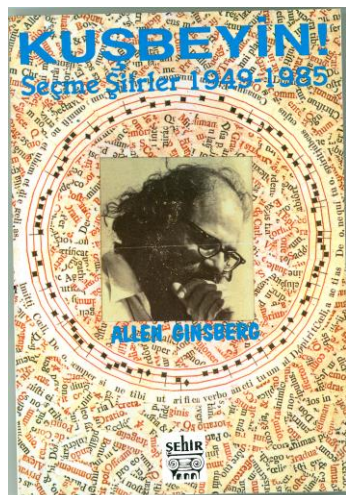


Figure 2. The cover to Arslan's translation is a study in contrasts. A photograph of a pensive Ginsberg is framed by a chaotic jumble of Latin script and musical notes, while the title itself screams "Birdbrain!" to the reader.

The front depicts a brooding or perhaps composing Ginsberg, surrounded by musical notations and a cacophony of Latin words pasted in an almost fanzine style. Together, the notes and Latin text (taken from a liturgy for a Gregorian chant) lend the cover a serious appearance. A picture of a pensive Ginsberg with head downcast and finger to lips indicates a thoughtfully meditative poet hard at work in the act of composing. But the pasted, fanzine style of the Latin words seems to undermine this idea of seriousness. The back cover, by contrast, presents an "everyday" Ginsberg, sitting on a wood bench in what is probably his Cherry Valley Farm almost smirking at the camera in shorts and a jean jacket. This photograph captures a sort of familiar, approachable image of Ginsberg. In the end, the volume goes on to promote both Ginsbergs in an effort to reveal not only his revolutionary ideas, but the idiosyncratic man himself.

Arslan's biographical note likewise marks a shift in focus from the political to the personal. There is a nod here to a more socially-engaged Ginsberg, and probably to the Duru / Edgü translation, when Arslan notes in the second paragraph, "Of the Beat generation, [Ginsberg] is the most political member after Ferlinghetti" (unpaginated). Arslan is clearly politically engaged, explaining, "I'm coming from a politicized generation in the 80s. After September 12 [the date of the 1980 coup] both Left and Right supporters, especially young ones, who were interested in intellectual stuff and literature started to seek new ways. They were asking if there were able to find new ways other than established ideological subjects" (interview). Although Arslan mentions Ferlinghetti, his translation does not include him. The rest of Arslan's biography demonstrates that he is more concerned with the Beats as a phenomenon and the new lifestyle issues that Ginsberg's work raises. Arslan relates that Ginsberg "tried narcotics" in order to "research the conditions of changed consciousness" (unpaginated). Marijuana is not stressed as a "political tool" but has become a matter of consciousness-raising. Arslan concludes with a series of short descriptions involving personal matters: "Exalted sexuality. Believed in love. A Jew" (unpaginated). This is not to say that Arslan does not see the political ramifications of a change in collective consciousness, but rather that the focus of his attention on Ginsberg has left much of the political behind to highlight the personal.

The new emphasis on the personal is apparent in one of the poems Arslan wrote to open the collection, "Another Part: A Beatnik's Lament." The poem is tellingly written in English and heavily influenced by Ginsberg's own style. Arslan begins, "Allen, what dreams I have of you in the nineties / for you don't know what a nice thing the Beat scene / in '84 / in Ankara" (12). Drawing on the language of Ginsberg's "A Supermarket in California" where the poet addresses Walt Whitman with "What thoughts I have of you tonight" and "America" where he extols the virtues of communism with the line "You have no idea what a good thing the party was in 1835," Arslan relocates the Beat 1950s of Ginsberg's celebrated early work to the mid-1980s of Turkey's capital (CP 136, 147). The tone of playful and respectful mimicry continues throughout. Arslan is mainly concerned with chronicling his own subcultural lifestyle as he lived it in post-coup Ankara, celebrating the sort of Beat lifestyle Ginsberg represents and castigating those with "fake hearts imitating a drop-out style which they never have, / unrealized sensibilities, books that weren't read, dreams in which / nobody believes,

hidden desire for money & luxury & being safe" (13-14). Writing from the early 1990s, Arslan can assume a bit more reader familiarity with the Beats and their message, and unlike Edgü, does not need to "sell" them to his readers. What emerges is the tribute of a fan, devotee, or fellow traveler for a role model, rather than a distant admirer.

Arslan's closer familiarity with the Beats and their texts is evidenced in his translations. In Ginsberg's "the madman bum and angel beat in Time" line previously discussed, Arslan gets "closer" to the source with his rendition "madman bum and angel beat in Time" (*Zaman'daki çilgin serseri ve melek beat*; 32). Arslan, like Duru and Edgü, leaves "beat" untranslated here, but while the latter place the term in a series in order to provide context for its meaning, Arslan keeps "angel beat" together as in the source text. Ambiguity is lessened, however, since the phrase "in Time" (*Zaman'daki*) occurs at the beginning of the sentence and thus refers to all the elements in the series, and because "angel" (*melek*) functions as a noun here—to make it a descriptor of the word "beat" would require another formulation in Turkish such as "melek gibi" (colloquially "angelic" or "angelic-looking"). For Ginsberg, some combination of these figures is "beat in Time." Arslan, following close to the source text and including the English term "Beat" with all its myriad connotations, is taking a risk. Arslan could have used "dövülmüş" (to be (physically) beaten), but his choice to retain the reference to "Beat" speaks to his desire for a closer rendering of the source text, his familiarity with the source material, and his assumption that his readers will know just what he is talking about.

The varying word choices of the translations are also heavily influenced by changing cultural contexts. The Duru / Edgü translation provides its readers with a Ginsberg that while not bowdlerized, is certainly less offensive and culturally challenging than later translators, resulting in a distance which lends the poem a more formal feeling. When translating Ginsberg's line "who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving genitals and manuscripts" (*CP* 128), Duru and Edgü use "manhood" (*erkeklikler*; 31), while Arslan employs "sexual organs" (*cinsel organlar*; 28). Female genitalia receive a similar treatment. Ginsberg's "who sweetened the snatches of a million girls" (*CP* 128) becomes "put honey on that place" (*oralarını ballayanlar*; 32) for Duru and Edgü, and "honey pot" (*bal çanağı*; 28) for Arslan. As we will see, these differences are not that great when compared with the profanity of the Erdoğan translation, but they do demonstrate a steadily increasing leniency in the acceptance of slang and profanity. All three works passed the censor, but it is possible that standards have changed (or lowered, depending on viewpoint) over the years, allowing for more provocatively worded translations that allow for both "closer" translations in some cases, as well as retaining the shock value that Ginsberg's poem had for a 1950s American audience.

It is also important to realize that Arslan's version was produced when English had overtaken French as the foreign language of choice in Turkey. While Arslan is a bit older, he was still caught up in the wave of global English that swept French aside. Arslan himself comments in our interview "I literally plundered the American Library in Ankara" (interview). This institution, now unfortunately defunct, provided access to English originals. Duru, too, had an intimate knowledge of both English and the Beats through his sojourn in the U.S. But Edgü was versed in the French tradition, as was most of his generation. American Studies were unheard of in 1960s Turkey, and only a handful of universities offered English literature. Foreign literature meant French literature. Edgü himself describes the process of translating, stating, "We would spread the newly-published French translations and original version of Beat Generation author's books and try to translate them into Turkish" ("Amerika Gözlerin"). Arslan's knowledge of English allows him a closer intimacy with Ginsberg and his texts, lending his translation a more "personal" feel that many I interviewed considered "better."

Despite, or perhaps because of, English's current dominance, Arslan favors an older Turkish style when translating. Personal preference plays an important role in any translation. Arslan is committed to the use of "Öz türkçe," or older Turkish words, and this penchant comes through in his translations. In *Howl*, for example, Arslan translates the line "who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes" (*CP* 126) using "koçaklamalar" for "odes" (25). While not exactly incorrect, this choice refers to a specific type of ode prevalent in Old Turkish folk poetry performed by Turkish bards. For the Turkish reader, it would signal *Howl*'s connection with an older Turkish poetic variant that existed before the Turkish people encountered Islam in their steady migration across Central Asia. Duru and Edgü simply use "şiiirler" or "poems" which, while perhaps basic, has the advantage (if one considers it so) of not introducing extra meanings into the translation (28). Erdoğan employs "methiyeler" or "panegyric," a form of petition to a patron called a "qasida" prevalent in Ottoman divan poetry but also employed by Sufis like Jalalad-din Muhammed "Mevlana" Rumi for more mystical purposes (12). But Arslan does not see any contradiction in translating American countercultural texts in a "pure" Turkish style. On the contrary, they are complementary: "Beat language is a new language



in terms of American literature. So is pure Turkish" (interview). Arslan sees a connection between the stylistic innovations of the Beats and his own desire to write in a more "Turkish" style. Translation necessarily involves personal choices, but those personal choices speak of desires firmly rooted in the political, social, and cultural moment of the translator's era.

Şenol Erdoğan presents his readers with a "hip" Ginsberg updated for contemporary Turkey. Ginsberg and his work, while certainly not known to everyone in Turkey, had been around for some forty years by the time of Altıkırkbeş's 2013 translation. The press plays on this fact, issuing the book in the City Lights Pocket Poets Series style, complete with a translation of the William Carlos Williams foreword and without any of the introductory front material that these previous two translators relied upon to acquaint readers with Ginsberg and his work (see fig. 3). In a special limited edition series, Ginsberg appears on the cover in the stencil style of a Banksy, further solidifying his outsider status and updating him for a new generation. The result is an interesting mix of the classic rebel and the contemporary renegade, sending a message that Ginsberg is not only a countercultural forebear whom the reader should know, but is at the same time an extant, vital member of an ongoing cultural rebellion.

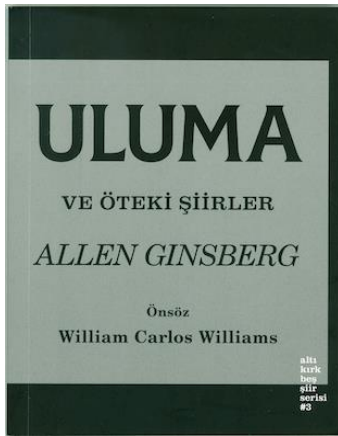


Figure 3. Altıkırkbeş presents their translation of Ginsberg in the iconic Pocket Poets series style made famous by City Lights. This classic cover invokes Ginsberg's cult status as both a leading member of the Beat Generation as well as an ageless hipster of the counterculture.

What makes Ginsberg so "hip" is his outsider status that Erdoğan plays up in the translation. Erdoğan tends to reduce the ambiguity in Ginsberg's *Howl*, making use of more direct and literal expressions that anchor Ginsberg in a world of outcasts, drug users, and illicit sexuality. Take, for example, Ginsberg's line "Who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad music" (CP 129). While the Duru / Edgü and Arslan translations are practically identical, Erdoğan changes "onions" into "rolling paper" (*sarma kâğıdı*) while "pushcarts" become "the cars of drug dealers" (*mal satıcılarının arabalarında*) to get "with rolling paper and bad music they cry for the romance of the streets in drug dealers' cars" (20). The Erdoğan translation tends to create literal scenes out of lines that convey an abstract mood or experiential situation or feeling. The use of drugs is highlighted throughout the translation to heighten the transgressiveness of the text. Where Ginsberg writes "ashcan rantings" (CP 126) Erdoğan adds "marijuana ash curse" (*esrar külünün laneti*; 13), and instead of "narcotic tobacco haze" (127) of the source text the translation reads "ot tezgâhını" or "joint-rolling preparations" (16). The same desire for a more transgressive text can be seen with regards to sexuality. When translating the previously-discussed "genitals and manuscripts" line, Erdoğan opts for the even more provocative "dicks" (*sikler*; 17) instead of "genitals." These choices, many of which are not at all necessary for the translation, demonstrate Erdoğan's desire to highlight *Howl's* transgressive aspects.

But Erdoğan also provides a more spiritual Ginsberg that is lacking in the other translations. To return to the "madman bum and angel beat in Time" line, Erdoğan's renders it as "mad bum in Time, and sanctified angel, unknown" (*Zamandaki kaçık serseri, ve kutsanmış melek, bilinmeyen*; 26). Erdoğan's use of the comma after "bum" makes it clear that these are two separate individuals, though whether they are both "in Time" is ambiguous in the Turkish. What is important, however, is that Erdoğan chose to translate "beat" into "kutsanmış," an adjective derived from the passive form of

the verb "kutsamak" that means "to sanctify, to bless, to consecrate." Erdoğan could have left "beat" untranslated, or used "dövüşmüş" to convey the sense of "beaten" by life or "downtrodden," but instead chose the more spiritual meaning championed by Jack Kerouac when he equated "beat" with "beatific." This message of a spiritual Ginsberg is reinforced by the limited edition's back cover, where a spiral is formed from the words "Holy." These words, left in English, derive from Ginsberg's "Footnote to *Howl*" where he declares everything "Holy": "Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an angel!" (CP 134). Duru and Edgü do not even include this poem in their collection, and though it appears in Arslan's volume, Erdoğan's decision to reprint the word "Holy" on the back page demonstrates his commitment to a more mystical Ginsberg that is lacking in the other translations.

This mystical reading of Ginsberg is given added force in a filmed reading of *Howl* produced by the press in 2008. Directed by Mehmet Ada Öztekin and starring Erdoğan and 6:45 owner Kaan Çaydamlı, the film presents Erdoğan's public reading of the translation in the university town of Eskişehir. The film begins with shots taken from the Bosphorous, the strait that divides the European from the Asian side of Istanbul, as a reed flute plays in the background. A voice then begins to recite the first eighteen lines of Jalalad-din Rumi's classic *Mesnevi* (composed 1258-73), a "masterwork of poetic narration and Sufi wisdom" (Halman 35). This well-known "Song of the Reed" is a metaphor for Sufi longing for union with God, "reed" being understood as both the plant cut from its surroundings and the "ney" or flute that it creates. The recitation of Mevlana and the playing of the reed flute during the opening scenes places *Howl*, both film and poem, in a religious context and helps the Turkish reader understand the sort of spirituality that Ginsberg and many of his fellow Beats promulgated. This recourse to Sufism also carries with it a political dimension. 6:45's promotion of a more open, gnostic practice could be seen as a challenge to what many feel to be a growing insistence on more rigid interpretations of religion encroaching on daily Turkish life.

The struggle to bring an author from one culture to another reveals differences that help us to understand how meanings shift across time and place. Tracing the translation history of Ginsberg and his work provides a sense of recent Turkish cultural history, but it also allows Beat scholars to theorize how the reception of the Beats generates new versions, and thus new readings, of these countercultural texts. Ginsberg's Turkish reception demonstrates that the meanings we ascribe to the Beat Generation and their writings will never remain static. As long as new readers bring new concerns, Beat works like Ginsberg's classic *Howl* will continue to be reinterpreted in ways that both highlight the range of their possible interpretations and allow us to glimpse new possibilities in texts and writers we thought we already knew. Tracing the Turkish reception of Ginsberg emphasizes the importance of local conditions, cultural expectations, and the needs of the particular moment as important factors in the making of a text's meaning. Ginsberg's American reception is likewise multifaceted, but the proximity to Ginsberg and his legacy in America sometimes obscures the myriad ways in which his work can be utilized. By offering such a broad range of possibilities, Ginsberg has made himself useful for several generations of Turkish writers, intellectuals, and activists. Ceaselessly exploring new avenues of being, Ginsberg ensured that his image and his work would continue to be highly amenable to the needs of the present, wherever that present happens to be located.

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