

Analysis on Allen Ginsberg's Writerly Choices

Allen Ginsberg uses personification in his poetry to give a different perspective on otherwise inanimate things. This style is particularly evident in his poem, "America". In this poem, Ginsberg converses directly with America, and he takes on different tones to bring the country to life. His first main mood is one of narcissism: "My psychoanalyst thinks I'm perfectly right/I won't say the Lord's Prayer" (2). He then transitions to a more meek, guilty tone: "I'm obsessed by Time Magazine/I read it every week" (3). These lines accurately describe the overall attitude of America—loving oneself, and proving it to others by certifying it (hence the "psychoanalyst" reference). Of course, America then quickly lowers its head to engage in its guilty obsession with consumerism ("Time Magazine"). But America is brash: "Asia is rising against me" (p. 3). This abrupt first line of the stanza indicates that America changes its mind swiftly and makes potentially harmful generalizations. Later in the stanza, Ginsberg writes directly from the point of view of America: "I say nothing about my prisons nor the millions of/underprivileged who live in my flowerpots/under the light of five hundred suns". Through America's point of view, Ginsberg reveals that America knows about its systemic issues ("prisons" and "millions of/underprivileged"), and its tone implies that it is indifferent to them ("I say nothing"). Indeed, Ginsberg insinuates that America tends to shift the blame to others rather than deal with it itself. Ginsberg's tone becomes that of a trusted advisor to America: "America you don't really want to go to war./America it's them bad Russians./Them Russians them Russians and them Chinamen./And them Russians." (4). It is easy for America to say that another country is the root of all its problems, but this betrays a sense of almost human laziness; it is childish. This is further proven with his grammar and unnecessary repetition. Finally, Ginsberg critiques the way media is used to influence people in the last six stanzas. He writes about how Russia "wants to take our cars from out our garages" and "Him big bureaucracy running our fillingstations" (p. 5). The grotesquely incorrect images American puts on television are what the people see, and thus they begin to act, think, and talk like Ginsberg in this section. Writing from this intimate, sardonic perspective allows the reader to engage with the human aspects of America, which is all too important, because America is the product of us; the two are not separated.