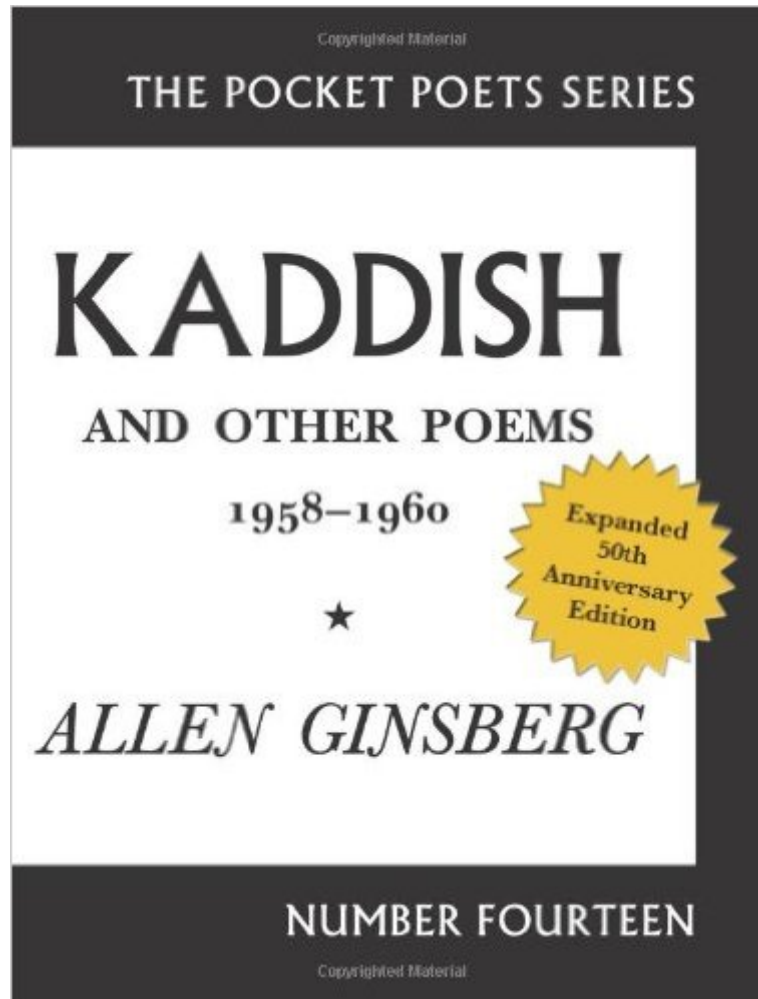


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Kaddish And Other Poems: 50th Anniversary Edition (Pocket Poets)



Synopsis

Allen Ginsberg's "Kaddish," a poem about the death of his mother, Naomi, is one of his major works. This special fiftieth anniversary edition of *Kaddish* and *Other Poems* features an illuminating afterword by Ginsberg biographer Bill Morgan, along with previously unpublished photographs, documents, and letters relating to the composition of the poem. Allen Ginsberg, founding father of the Beat Generation, inspired the American counterculture of the second half of the twentieth century with his groundbreaking poems. Bill Morgan is the author of *I Celebrate Myself: The Somewhat Private Life of Allen Ginsberg*. He lives in New York City and Bennington, Vermont.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Appearances to the contrary, "Kaddish" was not a poem that commemorated a life, but one that attempts to exorcise a ghost. The spirit was Ginsberg's mother, a tortured soul who haunted the poet. Kaddish is at its heart a repudiation of a smothering mother, a feckless father, useless brother and antiquated traditions. The poem was an exercise in a kind of separation through sadomasochism. It could be said that Ginsberg was both a product and victim of his time. A transitional figure when transgression was increasingly a means of establishing one's creative reputation. Throughout the work, Ginsberg's slaps at paper tigers, violates wilting standards of taste, and dispenses with fading taboos with ease of washing one's hands. Reading this book today, in our time of profitable exhibitionism and confession without contrition, seems entirely beside the point; it is often quaint, an artifact from a time when blue jeans were a mark of defiance. Ginsberg

attempts to speak at the volume of Whitman, but there are degrees of exuberance, and, in his case, he's merely annoying. He's like the man who arrives at a party already drunk and grows only more embarrassing. The words vomit and vomiting appear frequently, and one does not have to be a Freudian to suspect Ginsberg not only finds his memories revolting. Even free verse requires a certain discipline to demonstrate, if nothing else, a degree of sincerity. I read the book to its end and then read each poem again and felt cheated. Kaddish is a kind of Beat Kabuki, its chaos, its incoherence, is part of its form, if not, ironically, its gravitational center. I grew bored with the poems' hipster attitude, namedropping, and Zen and Hindu references.

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