

Allen Ginsberg, A Beat Poet:

A Study of "Howl"

A Thesis

Presented to

The Faculty of

the Graduate School of Language and Culture,

Hiroshima Jogakuin University

In Partial Fulfillment

of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Tomomi Tanioka

January 1998

Contents

Introduction	1
Chapter I	
Circumstances in 1950s	6
Chapter II	
Destruction of the Inhibition	21
Chapter III	
Liberation of Humanity	38
Conclusion	54
Works Consulted	58

Introduction

It is well-known that Jack Kerouac, the author of *On the Road*, used the phrase "Beat generation" for the first time. In 1948, this phrase arose out of a conversation between Kerouac and John Clellon Holmes, who was also a novelist and a friend of Kerouac, when they discussed the nature of a generation, recalling the Lost Generation in their minds. Late in 1952, Holmes carried an article on this conversation in the *New York Times Magazine* under the headline "This is the Beat Generation."

It was the face of a Beat Generation . . . It was John Kerouac . . . who . . . several years ago . . . said 'You know, this is really a *beat* generation.' The origins of the word beat are obscure, but the meaning is only too clear to most Americans. More than the feeling of weariness, it implies the feeling of having been used, of being raw. It involves a sort of nakedness of mind, and, ultimately, of a soul; a feeling of being reduced to the bedrock of consciousness. In short, it means being undramatically pushed up against the wall of

oneself.

(*Passionate Opinions* 58)

It is said that this is the first time the phrase "Beat generation" was revealed in the public eye. Then Kerouac published anonymously a fragment of *On the Road* under the title of "Jazz of the Beat Generation." In this way, the phrase "Beat generation" was born and gradually penetrated among the people in its early history.

As to their actual activities, in San Francisco, a poetry movement was growing vigorously by the success of local poets Kenneth Rexroth and Lawrence Ferlinghetti in a mid 1950s. Rexroth was one of the strong supporters of a beat poet Allen Ginsberg; Ferlinghetti is the owner of City Lights which is the nation's first all-paperback bookstore and had just started publishing local poets. They had periodically poetry reading sessions, drinking liquers and listening to jazz music in cafeterias or art galleries. Later, this movement comes to be called San Francisco Renaissance. In 1954, Neal Cassady, who was a model of the protagonist Dean Moriarty of *On the Road*, Jack Kerouac, and Allen Ginsberg moved to the San Francisco Bay area. They were old friends, deeply interested in art as well as poetry since they met at Columbia University: It was, therefore, natural that they came directly to join in the poetry readings. In October, 1955, 100 to 200 people got together at an art gallery, the Six Gallery, in San Francisco, when six poets read their original poems that

evening. When Allen Ginsberg, one of the poets and who was the last to read, read the first line of his poem "Howl," it is said that the crowd was paralyzed with horror and astonishment at once. Generally speaking, this is the beginning of the Beat movement.

Turning now to the meaning of "beat," despite the fact that Holmes tried to define it as "a sort of nakedness of mind, of soul . . ." in the quotation above, it seems that the word "beat" tended in its early history to mean only "the feeling of having been used"; the sense of negative meanings including something like "beaten," "wasted" and "worn hard," in publicity. Later, Jack Kerouac defined simply that the word "beat" means "poor, down and out, deadbeat, on the bum, sad, sleeping in subways" in his book *The Origins of the Beat Generation* (1959). In addition to these, according to Allen Ginsberg's explanation, "the word 'beat' is a term much used then in Times Square: 'Man, I'm beat,' meaning without money and without a place to stay . . . So, the original street usage meant exhausted, at the bottom of world, looking up or out, sleepless, wide-eyed, perceptive, rejected by society . . . Or . . . meant finished, completed, in the dark night of the soul or in the cloud of unknowing." (*The Beat Book* 14)

Furthermore, the influence of the media must be pointed out. At that time, besides the meaning of "beaten," the word "beat" referred to some movements of the rhythm of music,

especially jazz, like for example, "the beat of drums," "the beat goes on." It is said, however, that most media did not recognize that aspect of the word "beat." The reason may be that the members called beatnik in the Beat movement presented their uncommon and remarkable works and lifestyles. As a consequence, it is not an exaggeration to say that the only one side of the meaning, "beaten" or "wasted," was emphasized in public, not only because of the media, but also of the effect of the social background in those days.

This was the meaning of "beat" in the early days, but Jack Kerouac added further a new definition to the word "beat." In 1958, he proposed publicly to connect the word "beat" with the word "beatitude." It means supreme blessedness and happiness. This discovery contributed to widely open the meaning of "beat" and pushes their activities to various fields, for instance, music, painting, and film making of today. At present, there is a lot of different views of "Beat generation," "Beat movement," or, the word "beat" itself; therefore, it is useful to quote from Allen Ginsberg's account:

So "beat" was interpreted in various circles to mean emptied out, exhausted, and at the same time wide-open and receptive to vision A third meaning of "beat," as beatific . . . Kerouac . . . was trying to indicate the correct sense of the word . . .

. A fourth meaning that accumulated around the word is found in the phrase "Beat generation literary movement." This phrase referred to a group of friends who had worked together on poetry, prose, and cultural conscience . . . The fifth meaning of the phrase "Beat generation" refers to the broader influence of literary and artistic activities . . . These groups refreshed the Longlived bohemian cultural tradition in America.

(*The Beat Book*, xv "Foreword")

The writer of this thesis wants to study a beat poet, Allen Ginsberg, and discuss his poems written in 1940 to 1950s, especially "Howl." In the first chapter, she will focus on the historical and social backgrounds in which Ginsberg lived and wrote "Howl," then tries to grasp the contents of this poem in the second chapter. The final chapter, analyzing the form of his poem "Howl," she will approach to the significance of "Howl," and seek for the meaning of "beat" in this poem.

Chapter I

Circumstances in 1950s

Allen Ginsberg's "Howl" was written in 1955-1956, then published in 1956 for the first time in San Francisco. This work is made up of three sections and a concluding "Footnote," appended to the sections.

In part I, Ginsberg speaks through the omniscient "I," omniscient, in the sense that this character represents not only the poet himself but also an all-seeing super being, who attempts to convey the internal essence of people called a "hipstar," recalling his actual experiences. This part, from the beginning to the end, consists of long lines unique to this "howling" subject. Part II opens with mythical images, which the poet points out using symbols. There is shown the fundamental cause of the destruction which "I," the poet, enumerated in part I. Part III of "Howl" itself is a kind of elegy for Carl Solomon as is indicated in the subtitle, who was a close friend of the poet, and a patient of mental disorder. Ginsberg's personal emotions for his friend appears intensely in this part, against the surrounding world.

"Footnote" seems to be indispensable for "Howl," though it was

added later. This final part implies the direction to which "I," the poet, should advance in his effort to find the three meaning of life, as is suggested in its biblical tone of the Revelation. It leads to the end of "Howl."

This poem begins as follows:

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at
dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heaven-
ly connection to the starry dynamo in the
machinery of night,
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat
up smoking in the supernatural darkness of
cold-water flats floating across the tops of
cities contemplating jazz, . . . (49)

In the opening lines of the poem, we can see "the best minds of my [his] generation" is already "destroyed." It is expressed in the way, however, too noncommittal for the reader to comprehend the process or reason of the destruction. There is only one expression, "by madness." In part I, the image after being "destroyed" grows up fancifully but realistically, and makes the image clearer to the reader; the people who is "destroyed" is described in detail in a series of "who . . . , /who" While "I," the poet, does not try to tell at all

the cause or reason of the destruction in part I, although he must know why they are "destroyed," as well as what "madness" is. It is useful to examine the part II at first, for the purpose of understanding this poetry more profoundly.

There are reasons Ginsberg uses the words "destroyed" and "madness":

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed skulls and
ate up their brains and imagination?

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and
unobtainable dollars! Children screaming under
the stairways! Boys snobbing in armies! Old men
weeping in the parks! (54)

The first interrogative sentence can be a question in order to seek the answer to what "destroyed" "the best mind of my generation," or what "madness" is. It is possible to consider the words "bashed open" and "ate up" mean destruction, as well as "their brains and imagination" stands for parts of "the best minds of my generation." The words "sphinx of cement and aluminum" symbolizes one of basic factors derived from "madness."

Then the word "Moloch" is repeated in the lines to follow. This word plays the role of "sphinx of cement and aluminum," and at the same time, the central essence of "madness." The word "Moloch" is in the Bible:

And thou shalt not let any of thy seed pass through

the fire Mo'lech, . . . (Lev,18.21)

And he defiled To'pheth, which *is* in the valley of the children of Hin'nom, that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Mo'lech. (1 Kings, 23.10)

As these quotations show, Moloch is the name of a Canaanite idol, to whom children were sacrificed as burnt-offerings. Today, it includes the meaning of "an object to which horrible sacrifices are made" (SOD, 1: 1809) in general. Ginsberg, in this poem, seems to use the word "Moloch" as a metaphor of a "civilized" society in the United States subjected to. The "Moloch," in "Howl," is figured out to express a monster or a demon, which damages the people and society in those days especially in the United States. In other words, it is an evil existence for Ginsberg, as Thomas F. Merrill, the author of a book on Ginsberg in the Twayne's series, defines the word "Moloch" as "social illness." (56)

"I," the poet, looks "Moloch" at various places in the realities as follows:

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the
crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of
sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgment!
Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stunned
governments! . . .

Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments! invisible suburbs!
skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic
industries! spectral nations! invincible mad-
house! granite cocks! monstrous bombs! (54)

"I," the poet, confirms the image of "Moloch" consecutively in realistic images such as "Robot apartments!" and "electricity and bank," (54) and also in obscure but meaningful ones such as "blind capitals" and "monstrous bombs." In these lines, it seems that the expressions: "Moloch the vast stone of war!," "Moloch the stunned governments!" and "demonic industries!" are important to see the nature of the context of "Howl," in the United States in the fifties.

There are three key words for the sake of a survey of the fifties; "war" in "Moloch the vast stone of war," "governments" in "Moloch the stunned governments!" and "industries" in "demonic industries." When we look at these words from the historical point of view, we can firstly understand that "war" indicates concretely World War II which was fought from 1939 to 1945, and the Cold War that had controlled all the world ideologically after World War II. The former is regarded as one of the most remarkable matters in the human history that still have great influence in modern minds, as well as the most nearest war for "Howl," and the latter had a strong power on the whole world in the time when "Howl" had been written. Secondly, "government" points out probably the oppressive and

authoritarian political system: for example, the "red purge" that was dominant in the measures taken by the U. S. government in order to bring the Communists under complete control. And thirdly, it is possible to understand that "industries" represents remarkable progress in the economic system of mass production and mass consumption led by giant companies, supported by the rapid development in science and technology. Needless to say, these three elements are correlated; the United States won the power to lead the world and became the leader of the world after it gained a great victory in World War II. As a result, the country became to be wealthy, and plunged into the period of a social and economic stability.

Todd Gitlin tells about the word "affluence" as the symbol of economical and material flourish with universal extent in the fifties in the United States, in his book *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Years of Rage*. (23) According to him, the word "affluence" was adapted frequently to represent the richness in the fifties both materially and psychologically. As this word illustrates, he recognizes that the United States was the most thriving country in the world in the fifties, most of the developed countries, especially Western Europe, being devastated by the War. Such an aspect of a rich society in the United States in the fifties is described in another poem of Ginsberg "Death to Van Gogh's Ear!":

Poet is Priest

Money has reckoned the soul of America
Congress broken thru to the precipice of Eternity.

Machinery of a mass electrical dream! A war-creating
Whore of Babylon bellowing over Capitols and
Academies! (73)

Money! Money! Money! shrieking mad celestial money
of illusion! Money made of nothing, starvation,
suicide! Money of failure! Money of death!
Money against Eternity! and eternity's strong mills
grind pit vast paper of Illusion! (74)

These are the beginning and the end of "Death to Van Gogh's Ear." This poem is included in *Reality Sandwiches* published in 1963. It opens *Reality Sandwiches* and was written in 1957. At that time, Allen Ginsberg was staying in Paris with his lover Peter Orlovsky. Ginsberg gained a true love with Orlovsky after he had parted from Neal Cassady, and then they had left New York for Europe. For Ginsberg, this European trip cultivated his insight to observe objectively the condition of the United States at that time, as Gordon Ball says that this trip greatly enlarged and enriched Ginsberg's perspective.

There is a draft of "Death to Van Gogh's Ear" reproduced in *Journals Mid-Fifties 1954-1958*, edited by Gordon Ball.

The poet must be priest because now the prophets of

money have destroyed the soul of America
broken thru Congress to the precipice of Eternity

(407)

As this draft shows, Allen Ginsberg's intention appears more clearly here than in the published version. A vague line "Money has reckoned the soul of America" in the published poem is based on "now the prophets of money have destroyed the soul of America." This "Money" implies not only the real currency as medium of exchange but also the civilized society overflowed with a large quantity of commodities in the fifties in the United States. In these quotations, the word "destroyed" should be emphasized. Ginsberg used this word and the word "mad" in "Howl." Thus, these phrases "shrieking mad celestial money" and "money have destroyed the soul of America" can be applied in the opening line of "Howl," "I saw the best mind of my generation destroyed by madness, starving, hysterical naked." So, it can be said that "Money" is "madness" and, just like "Moloch," "destroyed" "the best mind of my [his] generation" and "the soul of America." Obviously Ginsberg's attitude toward "Money" is critical and negative because he considers "Money shrieking mad celestial of illusion" and "Money have destroyed the soul of America." Therefore, both words "Money" and "Moloch" are bad and negative for "I," the poet. Furthermore, the poet continues to blame and deny as "Money made of nothing, starvation, suicide! Money of failure! Money of

death!" Ginsberg's negative attitude like this also comes out in the aspect of wars.

There is a poem titled "America" included in *Howl and Other Poems*.

America when will we end the human war?
Go fuck yourself with atomic bomb. (62)

America you don't really want to go to war. (63)

It's true I don't want to join the Army or turn
lathes in precision parts factories, I'm near-
sighted and psychopathic anyway.

America I'm putting my queer shoulder to the wheel.

(64)

In these lines, we can see that this poet exceedingly hates wars. The poet seems to lay stress on "America" as a kind of system which possesses power or right to enforce on her people an obedience to her will; he suspects it as "America you don't really want to go to war." This means that there is some tanglement in the poet's mind about the society he faces. According to John Tytell's *Naked Angels* (1976), Ginsberg mentioned the society and people during the Cold War in his *Paris* interview:

The Cold War is the imposition of a vast mental barrier on everybody, a vast anti-natural psyche. A

hardening, a shutting off of the perception of desire and tenderness which everybody *knows* . . . [creating] a self-consciousness which is a substitute for communication with the outside. This consciousness pushed back into the self and thinking of how it will hold its face and eyes and hands in order to make a mask to hide the flow that is going on. Which it's aware of, which everybody is aware of really! So let's say shyness. Fear. Fear of total feeling, really, total being is what it is. (6)

In the sixties, various serious happenings occurred as visual evidences of the corruption in the United States. In 1963, President Kennedy was assassinated, who was the first non-WASP president elected only two years before. Martin Ruther King, Jr. and Robert F. Kennedy were also killed from racial and political motives in 1968. In addition, Malcolm X had been assassinated in 1965 too. People who possessed a great influence on American society at that time were successively killed. On these social and political backgrounds, there were a lot of active movements in the sixties to win the rights of various suppressed minority groups, for example, the Civil Rights Movement, the black riots, students' activities and women's liberation movements. As a result of all these elements, the whole America was in a state of agitation. The United States plunged into the age of confusion. In the

fifties, some gloomy prospects darkened people's mind, as Ginsberg stated : "Which it's aware of which everybody is aware of really! . . . Fear. Fear of total feeling really, total being is what it is," despite that America was in "affluence." Ginsberg was sensitive of such obscure anxiety, which was still hidden under the surface, as "Fear" and the second part of "Howl" show. He described the desolate land in America in the fifties, using the word "Moloch" as the cause of these feelings. John Tytell observes precisely of the circumstances of people and society in the fifties in his writing *Naked Angels*, as follows:

Foundlings of the fifties, the Beats were like a slowly burning fuse in a silent vacuum. The post-war era was a time of extraordinary insecurity, of profound powerlessness as far as individual effort was concerned, when personal responsibility was being abdicated in favor of corporate largeness, when the catch words were coordination and adjustment, as if we had defeated Germany only to become "good Germans" ourselves. The nuclear blasts in Japan had created new sources of terror, and the ideology of technology became paramount; science was seen as capable of totally dominating man and his environment. And the prospects of total annihilation only increased the awesome respect for scientific powers.

This statement by Tytell is true of these lines in the second part of "Howl":

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom I
 am a consciousness without a body! Moloch who
 frightened me out of my natural ecstasy! Moloch
 whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch! Light
 streaming out of the sky! (55)

As this passage implies, "Moloch" finally "entered" "I," the poet, especially into his "soul." The civilized society in America in the postwar era oppressed men without their being aware of the fact, and in addition, put them under its control through their "coordination and adjustment." The American society in the fifties ruined the character of "the best minds of my generation" with its destructive power. Therefore, "Moloch" deprived man of his "soul," as the expression "Moloch who frightened me out of my natural ecstasy!" So, it is reasonable that "Lacklove and manless in Moloch!" (54) J. C. Holmes applies the word "the broken circuit" to such a manless era in his essay "The Philosophy of the Beat Generation." (72) John Tytell explains about "the broken circuit" as follows:

It was as dangerous a condition as a hot electrical wire discharging energy randomly into the universe without a proper destination. . . . the emergence of the new postwar values that accepted man as the vic-

tim of circumstances and no longer granted him the
agency of his own destiny . . . (15)

In this quotation, we can see the horrible circumstances between man and the society in the fifties in America. The richness only on the surface of the society has a power over men in the society and governs them. Man is under its control. Allen Ginsberg confesses concretely such circumstances and his real mind in his poem "Paterson."

what do I want in these rooms papered with visions
of money?

How much can I make by cutting my hair? If I put new
heels on my shoes, bathe my body reeking of
masturbation and sweat layer upon layer of
excrement . . .

if in antechambers I face the presumption of depart-
ment store supervisory employees,
old clerks in their asylums of fat, the slobs and
dumbbells of the ego with money and power
to hire and fire and make and break and fart and
justify their reality of wrath and rumor of
wrath to wrath-weary man, . . .

what war I enter and for what a prize! the dead
prick of commonplace obsession,
harridan vision of electricity at night and daylight
misery of thumb-sucking rage.

I would rather go mad, gone down the dark road to
Mexico, heroin dripping in my veins, . . . (12)

blood streaming from my belly and shoulders
flooding the city with its hideous ecstasy, rolling
over the pavements and highways
by the bayoux and forests and derricks leaving my
flesh and my bones hanging on the trees. (13)

This poem is included in *The Gates of Wrath: Rhymed Poems 1948-1951* (1972).

The atmosphere in this poem is covered with the depressions as "leaving my flesh and my bones hanging on the trees" expresses. In the first line "What do I want in these rooms papered with visions of money," "I," the poet, seems to be grievously disappointed at the reality that he faces. Moreover, "I," the poet, become more ironical or more nihilistic against its circumstances, as these lines "old clerks in their asylums of fat, the slobs and dumbbells of the ego with money and power" and "what war I enter and for what a prize!" indicates. In the end of the poem, we find that "I," the poet, is completely overwhelmed by the reality that he lives a life, because "I," the poet sees "the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness," in other words, by "Moloch." In "Howl," Ginsberg depicts concretely both the outside and inside of the

circumstances as it was in the fifties in the United States, powerfully expressing the influence of "Moloch." They were just beaten.

Chapter II

Destruction of the Inhibition

The Introduction, "For Carl Solomon," to *Howl and Other Poems* by William Carlos Williams ends as follows:

Hold back the edges of your gowns, Ladies, we are
going through hell.

This indicates to the reader how fearful is the world described in the poem, as the word "hell" implies. William C. Williams also states that "It is a howl of defeat" which Carl Solomon and Allen Ginsberg shared. As mentioned in the first chapter, behind this poem lies a spiritual state particular to the fifties in the United States. And the spiritual state which exerted not only its influence over people and the society at that period, but also "destroyed" "the best minds of my [the] generation" pointed out by the first line of "Howl." Thus, this poem is conditioned by such a negative opening, and filled with the "howl" of people who were defeated by the circumstances in the decade. Ginsberg expresses this "howl" of people through characterizing people who are called the "hipster." We can see this in the first four lines of "Howl" quoted in the previous chapter.

In the part I of "Howl," this "hipster," is described to behave, in many different and peculiar ways, in various places, to the rhythms of the repetitive "who . . . /who" The passage well over 230 lines with "who . . . /who . . . " in the first part powerfully illustrate the "hipster." Offering an instance of the "hipster," Neal Cassady is looked upon as one of the typical "hipsters."

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad
stolen night-cars, N. C. , secret hero of these
poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver—joy to
the memory of his innumerable lays of girls in
empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses'
rickety rows, . . . (51)

Here, the initials "N. C." stands for Neal Cassady, and we can see him as a "hipster," carrying out his instinctive and irresponsible sexual acts, on every occasion that comes across his way. Moreover, Neal Cassady plays the role of a "secret hero of these poem." Dean Moriarty, a central character of Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*, was also modeled after Neal Cassady. He acts impulsively and vigorously and talks with his fellows in the way called "hiptalk" throughout this novel. According to the novel, Dean was once committed to a reformatory in New York in his boyhood, and never settled in one place after he had gone out of the reformatory. He leads a wandering life all over the United States with his girl

Marylou, and lives true to his instinct. As a convincing proof for his instinctive actions, many cases of his sexual intercourse are repeatedly depicted in the novel; Dean seems to energetically pursue opportunities to satisfy his desire. From this, Dean Moriarty, or Neal Cassady, is an outsider to the world at large, in that, he is shameless, totally free from the "moral" of the world with entirely no inhibitions. He goes on his own way and does whatever he wants to do.

In "Howl," "I," the poet, makes a veritable hero of Cassady as well as Kerouac does Dean Moriarty in *On the Road*. According to his character given in these lines, N. C. is always full of vitality and devotes himself to going his way, ignoring commonsensical virtues, as the words "cocksman" and "his innumerable lays" indicates. It is said that Norman Mailer first has accounted for the "hipster" in his essay "The White Negro." Edward Halsey Foster quotes Mailer's definition of the "hipster" in *Understanding The Beats* (1992) as follows:

The hipster, in Norman Mailer's classic definition, set out "to encourage the psychopath in oneself, to explore that domain of experience where security is boredom and therefore sickness, and one exists in the present which is without past or future, memory or planned intention, the life where a man must go until he is beat, where he must gamble with his energies through all those small or large crises of

courage and unforeseen situations which beset his days, where he must be with it or doomed not to swing." (5)

As this quotation indicates, it is clear that the "hipster" is quite different from ordinary people, who wastes themselves in trying to keep their affluent, materialistic lives going, paying respects to the social decorum, in a word, slaving themselves to the worthless appearances.

The "hipster" contains an element of "psychopath"; and this character voices complaints about the situation "where security is boredom" and "sickness" at that time. We can see that the "hipster" rejects the prevailing political and social order in the American life in the fifties. That is to say, the "hipster" refuses absolutely the circumstances which was brought about by the manufacturing "Moloch." For Norman Mailer, the "hipster" is also an existential model such as "one exists in the present which is without past or future," as well as a prophetic model as being hinted in the quotation "he must gamble with his energies through . . . unforeseen situations which beset his days." The present reality which the "hipster" faces unflinchingly is of primary importance, to live in their own way.

At the same time, the "hipster" senses instinctively the existence of negative, destructive elements hidden behind a rich and stable society. He has doubts whether the apparent

affluence is truly worth sacrificing lives. In "Howl," "I," the poet, looks at the image of the "hipster," who performs bizarre acts in various places:

who chained themselves to subways for the endless
ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine
until the noise of wheels and children brought
them down shuddering mouth-wracked and battered
bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in the
dream light of Zoo, . . . (49)

who cut their wrists three times successively
unsuccessfully, gave up and forced to open
antique stores where they thought they were
growing old . . . (52)

who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out
of the subway window, jumped in the filthy
Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the
street, danced on broken wineglasses barefoot
smashed phonograph records of nostalgic
European 1930's German jazz finished the
whiskey and threw up groaning into the bloody
toilet, moans in their ears and the blast of
colossal steamwhistles, . . . (52)

In these quotations, the "hipster" whom "I," the poet, sees

is tremendously active. The "hipster" willingly performs daring, extraordinary actions, such as "the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx" under the influence of a nerve stimulant, "cut their wrists three times successively," "sang out of their windows," and "fell out of the window of a subway train." Thus, the "hipster" is not a passive but an active character. The chain of these actions, however, implies a negative and gloomy attitude to the environment rather than positive one. The "hipster" is "shuddering mouth-wacked," and he "thought they were growing old and cried" and "threw up." It seems that the "hipster" ruins himself. As a result, the "hipster" is "battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance" by the circumstances as "I," the poet, "saw the best minds of my [his] generation destroyed by madness." So, in this poem, there is the "hell" which William C. Williams pointed out. In the first part of "Howl," there is the image of the "hipster" described by the poet, who, with various desperate actions, struggles frantically against the forces of the circumstances controlled by "Moloch."

Norman Mailer recognized that the "hipster" is an existential being, and we can find that Allen Ginsberg was partly an existentialist, describing the "hipster" in this way; he takes an existential concept of the time as Norman Mailer has suggested. We find some expressions about the concept of time in "Howl," for example, the words "Eternal" and "Time."

who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston
seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the
brilliant Spaniard to converse about America &
Eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to
Africa, . . . (50)

who threw their watches off the roof to cast their
ballot for Eternity outside of Time, & alarm
clocks fell on their heads every day for the
next decade, . . . (52)

who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out
if I had a vision or you have a vision or he
had a vision to find out Eternity,
who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who
came back to Denver & waited in vain, who
watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver
and finally went away to find out the Time, &
now Denver is lonesome for her heroes, . . .
(52)

In these quotations, the "hipster" whom "I", the poet, sees in
this poem, assumes the attitude to seek for "Eternity." The
"hipster" concentrates his consciousness intently on the
reality or on "Time" when the "hipster" attempts to live
truly. To adduce evidence in support of it, there are many

words which strongly impress the reader with the actual state of their daily lives, to cite a few examples, words "cold-water flats," "paint hotels" and "Fugazzi." Allen Ginsberg seems to intend to describe the actuality of life the "hipster" is now leading, that is, he is trying to outline the characterized life of the "hipster." He searches for the concept of "Eternity" through the reality, in other words, by sticking to the reality of the passing moment. Thomas F. Merrill summarizes his explanation of Ginsberg's idea of time in his book in the Twayne's series, as follows:

. . . Ginsberg's whole attitude towards time. Time to him always present tense because he acknowledges only time which is "lived through." Los Angeles, for example, is not just a place existing only when he or she is "digging" it. In that sense, the individual is a solipsist of sorts who creates the reality of Los Angeles in the mind, timeless and placeless, holy and eternal. (63)

According to Merrill's statement, it is true that Ginsberg, in his cataloguing "who . . . /who . . ." lines in the present tense, describes various attempts of the "hipster" in search for Eternity by way of exposing the reality of life. He does not want to pursue an abstract "essential nature of man," but tries to disclose in his poems concrete images of the man actually living now. The "present tense" is always on

Ginsberg's mind, and there is vividly represented an actuality with detailed images in the present moment in "Howl." He has felt that "Moloch" extends adverse influences over the society and people in the very moment when Ginsberg was alive. So, it is important for Ginsberg to give a full detail of a the "hipster's" actual life in his milieu.

There is another kind of "hipster," like Neal Cassady, in "Howl," Carl Solomon, whom this poem is dedicated to "for Carl Solomon" indicates. The part III of "Howl" is an elegy for Carl Solomon and we can have a glimpse of him in the part I of "Howl" as follows:

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a
trail of ambiguous picture postcards of
Atlantic City Hall, . . . (50)

ah, Carl, while you are not safe, and now you're
really in the total animal soup of time . . .

(53)

The former quotation refers to a postcard Carl Solomon sent to Ginsberg, in which only one word "Vanished" is written without a signature. The latter seems to describe the situation that Carl Solomon had to bear, the oppressions of living in modern civilization. In 1949, when Ginsberg was a student at Columbia University, he was involved in a criminal act, which was carried out by Herbert Huncke, who was a

"hipster," and the model of Burroughs' *Junkies*, and a friend of Ginsberg's, which led to a traffic accident. Ginsberg was ordered by the school authority, to Columbia Psychiatric Institute for chastisement for eight months. He met Carl there. According to Tytell, Carl Solomon was a so-called "genius"; he had been admitted in 1943 to the City College when he was only fifteen. Without finishing the college, however, he joined in the marchant marine after the war to go and see abroad; and when he came back to New York, "Solomon was in a very negative, nihilistic state, thinking about suicide and lobotomy." (95) He perpetrated a trifling misbehavior, and was eventually sent to the Psychiatric Institute.

Ginsberg and Solomon talked a lot about literary and philosophical matters there; they discussed Walt Whitman, Jean Genèt, and French Surrealist writers. It seems that the experience that Ginsberg had in the mental hospital made him wonder what a madness is and whether Carl Solomon was really in mental disorder. Such doubts in Ginsberg on the state of human mind are evidently shown as follows:

I'm with you in Rockland
where you scream in a straightjacket that
you're losing the game of the actual pingpong
of the abyss
I'm with you in Rockland

where you bang on the catatonic piano the soul
is innocent and immortal it should never die
ungodly in an armed madhouse (50)

"Rockland" is a famous place for jazz music, and it is also known as the locale of a mental hospital in New York, Graystone Mental Hospital. Ginsberg seems to have used the word "Rockland" for the mental hospital, because, in another book of his poetry, *Kaddish and Other Poems* (1961), the word "Rockland" is used impressively several times, to mean the asylum. "Kaddish" is a kind of elegy for Allen's mother Naomi Ginsberg, who was neurotic. She died of excessive nervousness at Greystone in 1952. In "Kaddish," Ginsberg openly and freely depicts Naomi's abnormal behaviors at the mental hospital and her physically and emotionally sick body.

Too thin, shrunk on her bones--age come to Naomi--
now broken into white hair--loose dress on her
skeleton--face sunk, old! withered--cheek of
crone--

One hand stiff--heaviness of forties & menopause
reduced by one heart stroke, lame now--wrinkles
--a scar on her hand , the lobotomy--ruin, the
hand dipping downwards to death-- (107)

These lines are so realistic that they may administer a shock to the reader.

In these lines, we find that Ginsberg accepts reality of

"madness" as it is without turning his eyes away from old and poor Naomi. There are interesting lines in "Kaddish" where Ginsberg tells his idea about madness and sanity through the sick Naomi:

By that afternoon I stayed home from school to take
care of you--once and for all--when I vowed
forever that once man disagreed with my opinion
of the cosmos, I was lost--

By my later burden--vow to illuminate mankind--this
is release of particulars--(mad as you)--
(sanity a trick of agreement)--(96)

As this quotation indicates, it is clear that Ginsberg conceives a grave doubt about the actual significance of madness. The word "you" means Naomi. The poet seems to be certain of the difference of madness from sanity, the different cases of Carl Solomon, Naomi, and himself. Moreover, his critical attitude toward the common idea of reality of life, which takes it for granted that Solomon and Naomi was "mad" not sane, is clearly shown in such lines "now you're (Carl Solomon) really in the total animal soup of time," and "sanity a trick of agreement." Tytell explains madness and sanity in his book as follows:

It is now clear that during the forties and fifties the Beats were operating on a definition of sanity that defied the expectations of their time, . . .

.
Recognizing that madness was a kind of retreat for those who wanted to stay privately sane, the Beats induced their madness with drugs, with criminal excess, and the pursuits of ecstasy. They used "madness"—which they regarded as naturalness as a breakthrough to clarity, as a proper perspective from which to see. (11)

Here, the concept of "madness" is one of the key words for the Beat generation writers. According to this explanation of Tytell's, the Beats seems not to trust the concept of "sanity" that was common in public in the fifties in the United States. Their distinction between "madness" and "sanity" is centered on whether they are satisfied with their lives based on the popular ideas of "normalcy." They tried to make sure whether every one around them was "mad" or "sane." "In the terms of their time, the Beats were regarded as madmen," (10) by those people. It was them, however, who accepted, in halfway, the insane circumstances of life, that were mad and insane. In the first line of "Howl" "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness," (49) "I," the poet, asks which is "mad," the world, the circumstances, or the "hipster." The word "madness" represents the basic idea necessary to grasp the essence of "Howl." In this poem, the symbolical "Rockland" is a small cosmos that expresses the circumstances in the way

which "I," the poet, sees them. We can see the same world through Carl Solomon and Naomi in "Rockland," just as described in Ken Kesey's novel *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest* (1962). In this novel, the protagonist McMurphy is a mental patient shut in a hospital, but, at the same time, he, who strenuously resists the wrong authoritarian system of the hospital that is generally recognized correct is eventually found to be a saving hero for the patients. Thus, to "I," the poet, "Rockland," that is, the circumstances in the fifties in America, can be taken as mad as McMurphy's hospital. In this way, Neal Cassady or Carl Solomon, in a word, the "hipster," is a "secret hero of these poems." (51) So, in "Howl," there is a paradoxical approach to the distinction between "madness" and "sanity" is ironically shown. That is, "I," the poet, asserts with emphasis the possibility that "madness" can be "sanity" as well as "sanity" can be "madness," as the first line implies.

The similar contradictory approach is also seen in the poetical technique in "Howl":

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly
motorcyclists, and screamed with joy, (51)

who hiccupped endlessly trying to giggle but wound
up with sob behind a partition in a Turkish Bath
when the blond & naked angel came to pierce

them with a sword, (51)

Here, we can find a semantic disruption between the words "saintly" and "motorcyclists." There is absurdity in the collocation of these words. Nobody thinks that the words "saintly" and "motorcyclists" harmonize each other in meaning and imagery. Generally speaking, the word "saintly" is used in order to imply something spiritual, something holy without physical or worldly concerns; whereas "motorcyclists" means persons who ride motorcycles mostly concerned in physical or mechanical performances and have no "holy" images in themselves. Moreover, the same discrepancy is obvious in "saintly" men being "fucked in the ass." The same can be said of the "angels"'s action in the latter quotation. As a result, the "hipster" can be "angelheaded hipsters" (49) in "Howl." These expressions, derived from his paradoxical way of seeing the world, are destructive and invite unfavorable reactions of the shocked reader. Ginsberg uses these expressions deliberately in order to look hard at the accepted moral and acknowledged values at that time, challenging the common views of the world.

In analyzing "Howl," it is indispensable to notice the fact that there are many vulgar slang expressions in the poem. The slangs, furthermore, are mostly used to destroy the sexual and moral taboos which were still prevalent in the fifties in America at least on the surface. The result was that *Howl and*

Through the diverse images of the "hipster," "I," the poet, observes the world, which is negative and shabby and just like the "hell," as William C. Williams mentions in his introduction. Ginsberg destructs the accepted commonsensical views in the fifties in the United States by intentionally using these expressions; paradoxical arrangement of ideas and obscene words, in the somewhat similar way as William S. Burroughs uses drugs to expose the man's interior depth. And he pursues "holy and eternal," as Merrilles implies in the above quoted passage, in spite of such a negative opening, in other words, he pursues a beatific world, positively accepting everything "holy," thus:

The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is
holy! The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and
hand and asshole holy!

Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is
holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an
angel! (57)

Chapter III

Liberation of Humanity

In the second chapter, the writer of this thesis has discussed the content of "Howl." There, she has pointed out that the people who are called "hipsters" are described vividly in detail by Allen Ginsberg. This "hipster," through "I," the poet's eyes, is characterized as an outsider to the common world, as Neal Cassady actually was in the fifties in America, and he has also existentialist's ideas of world and lives in it, expressed in taboo-destroying expressions and paradoxical ideas. The "hipster" displays his incomprehensible and enigmatic behavior in various places in "Howl." William Carlos Williams' "hell" was there; and "I," the poet, "saw," as the essential state of American society at the moment, "the best minds of my [his] generation" being "destroyed by "madness," which is brought about by "Moloch." In the poem, "Moloch" plays a symbolic role and implies a materialistic and "civilized" society in the fifties in the United States, as is discussed in the first chapter of this thesis. Ginsberg uses the word "Moloch" in order to show his sense of values at that time and to accuse the emotional entanglement behind the

affluence and wealth of the American society in the decade. He was successful in his attempt generally to destroy the moral sense and acknowledged values accepted in "Howl" in the United States. In it, he has sought "Eternity" and looked for the "holy" world by facing the reality without a flinch. In this final chapter, the present writer tries to analyze the sense or the idea to which Ginsberg has consequently arrived, from a standpoint of the poetic form.

Allen Ginsberg began seriously to write poems in 1943, when he entered Columbia University. There, he was deeply influenced by Mark Van Doren, a Pulitzer Prize-winning poet, and Lionel Trilling, a novelist and literary critic; and there he met the Beats: William S. Burroughs and Jack Kerouac. He started writing poems and began to join in academic discussions and arguments with his fellow students in literary criticism and poetry. His early poems are rather traditional in their forms. For example;

Bare skin is my wrinkled sack
When hot Apollo humps my back
When Jack Frost grabs me in these rags
I wrap my legs with burlap bags

My flesh is cinder my face is snow
I walk the railroad to and fro
When city streets are black and dead

The railroad embankment is my bed

I sup my soup from old tin cans

And take my sweets from little hands

In Tiger Alley near the jail

I steal away from the garbage pail . . . (10)

This is from "The Shrouded Stranger," written in 1949-51 and included in *Empty Mirror: Early Poems* (1961). Clearly, this poem is written in a traditional form, and it is divided into stanzas. And the poem is rhymed, with the scheme of AA, BB: "sack" "back," "rags" "bags," . . . and "jail" "pail." Moreover, lines are basically iambic, and there are alliterations such as "My flesh" and "my face," "sup" and "soup." Ginsberg seems to have adhered to traditional forms when he was composing poems like this. One of the possible reasons is the influence of his father Louis Ginsberg, who was a reasonably well-known local poet in Paterson, New Jersey, and taught English at Central High School and at Rutgers University at night. According to Tytell, "he valued culture as a vehicle to inculcate traditional values which would support existing institutions." (*Naked Angels* 81) So Louis probably wrote poems in the conventional style. As a result, Allen "was imitating Renaissance forms with an ornate, overstylized language that was often woodenly lifeless." (82) Under such a conservative father, Allen is said to have always

reproved when he went out of the fixed form and tried an experimentation; "unless the shell hold, the kernel is not sweet." (82)

In this time, Allen seems to have had an internal conflict as to whether he should keep the fixed traditional form as his father guided or open up his new experimental form for his intellectual pursuit. In "The Shrouded Stranger," we see that the poetical form was fitted tightly to a traditional form. His later poems, however, noticeably changed their forms. Here is a poem titled "Song."

The weight of the world

is love.

Under the burden

of solitude,

under the burden

of dissatisfaction

the weight,

the weight we carry

is love.

Who can deny?

In dreams

it touches

the body,

in thought
 constructs
a miracle,
 in imagination
anguishes
 till born
in human-- . . . (39)

"Song" was written in 1954 and collected in *The Green Automobile*. In this quotation, we can see a considerable change was made in its form. Ginsberg seems to concentrate on creating a new structural arrangement of words in this poem. He consistently ignores the traditional verse forms. There are no stanzas, rhymes and alliterations in "Song." The poet intends to express "love" with a minimum of means. There are not adjectival and adverbial modifiers in this poem. "Song" is much simpler than "The Shrouded Stranger." Ginsberg attains a simplification of expression and gives importance to the word arrangement. The way he separates short phrases, such as "The weight of the world . . . /is love," and "the weight we carry . . . /is love," can bring to the reader unexpected effects with the stress on the key word "love." Ginsberg has finally broken down the wall of the classical and traditional form by adopting the way the imagists invented and the language poets later invent. In fact, William C. Williams had a great influence on shaping Ginsberg's form, as Ginsberg himself

admitted on the word arrangements of William's famous poem "The Red Wheelbarrow," of his journal in 1955. It is clear that Ginsberg's idea about composing poems heads to how to use and arrange words.

In August 1955, he began to compose a poem, eventually to become "Howl"; he states about that moments in "Notes Written on Finally Recording 'Howl'," quoted in *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*, edited by Lewis Hyde.

By 1955, I wrote poetry adapted from prose seeds, journals, scratchings, arranged by phrasing or breath groups into little short-line patterns according to ideas of measure of American speech I'd picked up from W. C. Williams's imagist preoccupations. I suddenly turned aside in San Francisco, unemployment compensation leisure, to follow my romantic inspiration--Hebraic-Melvillian bardic breath, I thought I wouldn't write a *poem*, but just write what I wanted to without fear, let my imagination go open secrecy, and scribe magic lines from my real mind--sum up my life--something I wouldn't be able to show anybody, write for my own soul's ear and a few other golden ears. So the first line of "Howl," "I saw the best minds etc. ," the whole first section typed out madly in one afternoon . . .

(80)

Here, Ginsberg seems to find another way of the poetic composition, as the quotation "thought I wouldn't write a *poem*" indicates. And he seems to direct his attention to the word "breath." Until this time, the poet seems to have struggled hard to "write" and have been in great trouble in using words in composing a poem. First, he was distressed by the traditional verse forms and by his father's teaching, as the poem "The Shrouded Stranger" indicates. And after this, he tried to invent his own way of composing poems, groping for words for his ideas as the poem "Song" shows. He seems to have discovered his own "breath" at last. And "Hebraic-Melvillian bardic breath" can "let my [his] imagination go," and let him "scribble magic lines from my [his] real mind" and "sum up life." He found at last his own way to write poems as he truly wants in this moment. For Ginsberg, the concept of free speech "breath" becomes to play an essential role in composing poems.

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by
madness, starving hysterical naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at
dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heaven-
ly connection to the starry dynamo in the
machinery of night, (49)

Each line fits exactly to the poet's breath. Ginsberg reads

one line, for example, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked," in one breath. He calls this poetical method "one speech-breath thought" in his letter to Richard Eberhart in 1956. (*Howl* ed. Barry Miles 153) In "Howl," each of his uniquely long line represents just one breath. Clearly, Ginsberg composed "Howl" for the purpose of reading or performing it. He does not seem to have written this poem by arranging words. We see in their poetical structures a crucial difference between his early poems and "Howl." There is seen an important change progressing in "The Shrouded Stranger," "Song" and "Howl." Ginsberg's attitude toward composing poem turns obviously from the outward form to expressing or revealing his inner self, inner rhythm of life. For him, the surface or the outward form of poetry, in other words, the word arrangement, has now turned out to be quite a meaningless thing. He reveals his inner soul as it is, without any artistic ornament or decoration.

John Tytell applies to this way of composition the phrase "complete self-revelation" in his book. (18) As a result, the poem "Howl" has plainly reflected Ginsberg's raw and naked inward self, so afterwards he presumably "thought I [he] wouldn't write a *poem*." This idea, that the poet accepts his inward reality as it is, with enhancing his sensitivity, is linked to his central idea of "nakedness" as he put it. He

accounts with clarity for "self-revelation" in composing poems in his *Paris Review* interview.

. . . what happens if you make a distinction between what you tell your friends and what you tell your Muse? The problem is to break down that distinction: when you approach the Muse to talk as frankly as you would talk with yourself or with your friends. So I began finding, in conversations with Burroughs and Kerouac and Gregory Corso, in conversations with people whom I knew well, whose souls I respected, that the things we were telling each other for real were different from what was already in literature. And that was Kerouac's great discovery in *On The Road*. The kind of things that he and Neal Cassady were talking about, he finally discovered were *the* subject matter for what he wanted to write down. That meant, at that minute, a complete revision of what literature was supposed to be, in *his* mind, and actually in the minds of the people that first read the book. . . . In other words, there's no distinction, there should be no distinction between what we write down, and what we really know to begin with. As we know it every day, with each other. And the hypocrisy of literature has been--you know like there's supposed to be a formal literature, which is

supposed to be different from . . . in subject, in diction and even in organization, from our quotidian inspired lives. (*Naked Angels* 17-18)

In this statement, we can see Ginsberg's new idea. He must break down all the obstructions in composing poems. It is essential for him to do as "when you approach the Muse to talk as frankly as you would talk with yourself or with friends." In this way, he was able to take away the "distinction" between the poetic form and himself, when he wrote "Howl." He "just write [wrote] what I [he] wanted to without fear, let my [his] imagination go, open secrecy, and scribble magic lines from my [his] real mind."

In "Howl," there are expressed true aspects of reality in which the "hipster" occupies the position of a "secret hero" fighting with the evil influence of "Moloch." The poet projects forcefully his true internal mind as it is in concrete images on his poem. So it is natural that each line corresponds to Ginsberg's natural breath. For him, the poem "Howl" is a physical or physiological expression rather than a mere verbal activity, as John Tytell says, "Relying on natural speech and spontaneous transcription, Ginsberg sought a nonliterary poetry based on the facts of daily existence . . . his development of a new measure that corresponded more closely to the body's breath than to the artifice of iambics." (*Naked Angels* 214)

In "Howl," the poet makes an attempt to come close "to the body's breath" by repetition. There are various repetitions throughout the poem.

who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking
visionary indian angels who were visionary
indian angels,
who thought they were only mad when Baltimore
gleamed in supernatural ecstasy,
who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of
Oklahoma on the impulse of winter midnight
streetlight smalltown rain, . . . (50)

These lines are from the part I of "Howl." In the part I, the "hipster" is depicted realistically and starkly in "one speech-breath thought" by a continuous repetitions of "who . . . / who . . . " lines. The energy of these long lines fascinates not only the poet but also the reader-audience into the inner world of "Howl," expressed in concrete but disarranged images enumerated in the endless repetition of long lines. The repetition can increase the power to pull the reader-audience more deeply into the inner world of the poem, as Glen Burns states, in his book *Great Poets Howl*, "Karl Malkoff says about the micro-structure, 'The long verse line reaches out to embrace all of experience, finding the spiritual in the sensual, wiping out distinctions between the temporal and the eternal'." (333) Ginsberg's verse, frees its manifold sense,

takes the reader-audience to the eternal which he pursues in "Howl." These repetitious lines are followed by:

Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland
 where you're madder than I am
I'm with you in Rockland
 where you must feel very strange
I'm with you in Rockland
 where you imitate the shade of my mother
I'm with you in Rockland
 where you've murdered your twelve secretaries
 . . . (55)

This is from the part III of "Howl." Here, the poet seems to make an appeal to the reader-audience for Carl Solomon and to show the reader the significance of true "madness" with repeated expression "I'm with you in Rockland." Furthermore, the beginning of "Footnote to Howl" goes as follows:

Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!
 Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! (57)

This line has a fascinating effect, and it shows that in "Howl" the enchanting atmosphere of the Bible, especially of the Book of Revelation, generally prevails. The line, "Holy! Holy! Holy! . . ." implying that everything is holy, echoes lines in Revelation 4. 8:

Holy, holy, holy,
Lord God Almighty,

Which was, and is, and is to come

The number "seven" is also used with effect several times as in "who talked continuously seventy hours." (50) Tytell says that ". . . torrential quality . . . dependent on parallelism and the repetition of initial sounds, that biblical in origin." (19) This is one of the reasons that "Howl" is recognized as prophetic when Glen Burns calls it being in a "prohetic style" in *Great Poets Howl*. The biblical atmosphere allows the reader-audience to come nearer to Ginsberg's breath-thought with magic effect.

There is another way to impress his breath forcibly on the reader-audience in the poem.

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree
cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the roof-
tops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride
neon blinking traffic light, sun and moon and
tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of
Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and king king light
mind, (49)

These ranges of nouns and adjectives placed at random probably mean to bring the images spontaneously as Ginsberg visualized them when he was composing the poem. This structure is similar to William S. Burroughs' use of the "cut-up" method; it is well-known that Ginsberg and Burroughs had influenced each other in their works. The "cut-up" method is "an

arbitrary juxtaposition of randomly selected words and phrases" (*Naked Angels* 14,) as is practised in Burroughs' novel *The Naked Lunch* (1959). Glen Burns calls this "juxtaposition of randomly selected words and phrases" in "Howl" a "paratactic style." (*Great Poets Howl* 339) According to Burns, there is a "dependency of Western thought on the subject-predecate-object relationship" (339) in Indo-European Language structures, and it means the concept of "syntax." The energy of lines in this poem breaks down the "syntax," sets assault on the restriction of the language, and furthermore, fascinates the reader-audience into Ginsberg's breath-thought, which he restructures to his own new value and which is, at the same time, possessed by nature deep down in his inside. Thus, it has such an influence on the reader-audience as to arouse his instinctive, that is, not intellectual or emotional, but intuitive and sensational, impulses in their deep inside covered under his self-consciousness. All restrictions or inhibitions in his consciousness cleared away by the poet, as Ginsberg tried to do, in composing "Howl," by confessing himself, by showing nakedly, as he was.

So, in "Howl," there is the "breath" which every man shares by nature and which antecedes all of "syntax" and grammar human intellect has brought to us. The discontinuity of language not only destroys the "syntax," but also creates a new rhythm of "syncopation." The poet awakens the reader's

sense by the rhythm of "syncopation" as follows:

yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts
and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks
and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars,

(50)

Here, we find that each word is disconnected completely both in rhythm and meaning such as "yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering." The "syncopation" is one of most basic jazz rhythms, and Ginsberg emphasizes "breath stops, line stops and end stops" in his later discussion in *Improvised Poetics*. (*Composed on the Tongue* 19) For Ginsberg, these lines with the jazz rhythm, "syncopation" and "improvisational rhythm" (*Great Poets Howl* 342) seems to be most essential to express his natural speech, that is his real "breath." And these rhythms recall impulsively the "breath" from ancient times to mind or rather to the intuitive sense of the reader-audience. The "breath" is aboriginal, pre-cultural and immortal. Ginsberg has used sometimes drugs in order to sharpen his senses in composing poems, because he has regarded the drugs as "ancient heavenly connection" as is expressed at the opening of "Howl." (49) In this poem, the poet has successfully found ways to communicate and share his "breath" with the reader-audience through this poetical structure of his own. The "breath" is native to all men, and is based or timed to their heart-beat. Through this natural and

physiological beat, the poet seeks to develop his concept "nakedness" as follows:

Howl is an "affirmation" of individual experience of God, sex, drugs, absurdity etc. . . . It is therefore clearly and consciously built on a *liberation* of basic human virtues.

(*Howl* ed. Barry Miles 154)

Ginsberg further approaches to his "nakedness" in his later works, such as "Kaddish" and "Fall of America."

Conclusion

Allen Ginsberg makes up his own revelation in "Howl." There, he characterizes people called "hipster" and makes them act vigorously and aggressively against the circumstances, which is controlled under the influence of "Moloch." For Ginsberg, the conservative ideas or values in the fifties in America were all wrong, as other Beats also felt instinctively, although the surface of the world looked to be rich and affluence.

The poet sets up an impersonal all-seeing subject "I" at the most beginning in this poem, exposes daringly the actual state of things that is hidden behind the "affluence," and carries out an objective exposition of the inside of people at that time. The circumstances which "I," the poet, sees; "I saw the best mind of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical naked, . . ." (49) were common between the reader and the poet. That is, it was possible for Ginsberg's private experiences, the knowledge and some taboo-destroying expressions in this poem brings about, to draw widespread sympathy from readers. There are the circumstances that people are severely beaten in "Howl." Then he poses a brief yet

complicated question to the reader as to what "madness" or "saneness" really is, by laying the "hipster" as a "secret hero" (51) in "Howl." This question organizes ironical paradoxical ideas and finally acquires a power to destroy the conservative and traditional ideas, by the power of his poetical techniques and taboo-breaking expressions.

The poet breaks down restraints and limitations of the environment in this poem. And he seeks for "eternal and holy," though he is beaten by the circumstances controlled by "Moloch." He pursues the beatific ways. Moreover, Ginsberg begin to look for an unknown world in a new poetic form.

Ginsberg creates his own form of free verse such as "one speech-breath thought." His long lines seems to be new and original, but in fact, it is based on a man's "breath." The energy of these lines can draw the reader-audience into the poem with the rhythms of jazz, and as a result, the poet and the reader-audience share its "breath." In "Howl," the "breath," the heart beat, is eternal as well as original. We can see the significance of the poem, that is, "liberation of basic human virtues" in "Howl," as Ginsberg asserts in the title page quoting Whitman's line, "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!." Ginsberg's "Howl" is actually just the "breath," that is aboriginal and natural for every man. John Clellon Holmes accounts for the breathing of the man in his essay *The Beat*

Poets:

Charles Olson wrote, dismantling Eliot's "classicism" in a sentence, "Verse now, 1950, if it is to go ahead, if it is to be of *essential* use, must, I take it, catch up and put into itself certain laws and possibilities of the breath, of the breathing of the man who writes as well as of his listening." To go ahead. To be of essential use. The breathing of the man. One perception leading directly to a further perception. Spontaneous prose. First thought, best thought. Literature made by whole man, writing. Rather remain silent than chant the language. (224)

Ginsberg composes "Howl" not to write but to read or perform it. It is said that Ginsberg hated himself and was troubled with his homosexuality, until he wrote this poem. He had denied himself as a homosexual because it was not normal at that time, and struggled to break down its trouble. When he accepted himself by meeting his lover Peter Orlovsky, he seems to be freed from restraints that had tied him down for a long time. It is said that Ginsberg could write "Howl" by letting himself free from obsessions. That is, Ginsberg himself got released absolutely in his mind and body. He, in such a freedom, describes the "breath," as "it is to be of *essential* use," in the poem. The "breath" can be his concept of

"nakedness." Such "nakedness" has a infinite possibility as Tytell says "Nakedness signified rebirth, the regenerative recovery of identity." (27) Ginsberg improvised such "nakedness," in other words, "breath," in "Howl" and search for new sense with his sharp sensibility. John Clellon Holmes recalls the moment, when Ginsberg read "Howl" for the first time, in his essay *The Beat Poet: A Primer* 1975.

At the Six Gallery, in 1955, Allen Ginsberg got up, after others, and began, "I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed . . ." raising his *Howl* against the cautious murmur of the times, and despite the bewilderment and outrage, it was clear (even to the *New York Times*) that something was happening: the first audible rumble of an immense underground river that had been building in volume and force for years. Whitman had said: "Unscrew the locks from the doors! Unscrew the doors themselves from their jambs!" and suddenly through the literature's doorless jambs the breath of whole men, blew like a prairie wind. (226)

Here, we can see the great emotional impact that "Howl" made at the moment. His voice is apparently new, vulgar and barbarous, but it played the role of recalling "the breath," it is in a man by nature, as the lines "the breath of whole men, blew like a prairie wind" implies.

Works Consulted

Primary Sources

- Ginsberg, Allen. *Selected Poems 1947-1995*. New York: Harper Collins, 1996.
- . *Howl and Other Poems*. San Francisco: City Lights Books, 1971.
- . *Howl*. Ed. Miles, Barry. New York: Harper Perennial, 1995.
- . *Journals Mid-Fifties*. Ed. Ball, Gordon. New York: Viking, 1995.
- . *Composed on the Tongue, A Book of Literary Conversations 1967-1977*. Ed. Allen, Donald. San Francisco: Grey Fox Press, 1994.

Secondary Sources

- Burns, Glen. *Great Poets Howl: A Study of Allen Ginsberg's Poetry, 1943-1955*. Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1983.
- Burroughs, William S. *Naked Lunch*. Paris: The Olympia Press, 1990.
- . et al. "Friendly Legend." *Rolling Stone*, 761 (May 29, 1997), 40-45.
- Davidson, Michael. *The San Francisco Renaissance: poetics and community at mid-century*. New York: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Dickstein, Morris. *Gates of Eden--American Culture in the*

- Sixties*. New York: Basic Books, 1977.
- Foster, Edward H. *Understanding The Beats*. Columbia: U of South Carolina P, 1992.
- Gilmore, Mikal. "Allen Ginsberg, 1926-1997." *Rolling Stone*, 761 (May 29, 1997), 34-38 & 59-61.
- Greil, Marcus. "Touching America." *Rolling Stone*, 761 (May 29, 1997), 39.
- Gitlin, Todd. *The Sixties, Years of Hope, Years of Rage*. Trans. Hikita Mitsuo and Mukai Syunji. Tokyo: Sairyusha, 1993.
- Holmes, John C. *Passionate Opinions: The Cultural Essays*. Fayetteville, Arkansas: U of Arkansas P, 1988.
- Hyde, Lewis, ed. *On the Poetry of Allen Ginsberg*. Ann Arbor: U of Michigan P, 1984.
- Kerouac, Jack. *On the Road*. London: Penguin Books, 1976.
- Kesey, Ken. *Kakko no Su no Ue de*. Trans. Iwamoto Iwao. Tokyo: Fuzanbo, 1996.
- Lee, Edward. *Jazz Nyumon*. Trans. Ogiso Toshio. Tokyo: Ongakunotomosha, 1991.
- Lee, Robert, ed. *The Beat Generation Writers*. London: Pluto Press, 1996.
- McNally, Dennis. *Desolate Angel, Jack Kerouac, the Beat Generation, and America*. New York: Random House, 1979.
- Merrill, Thomas F. *Allen Ginsberg*. New York: Twayne, 1988.
- Suwa Yu. *Ginsberg Sishu*. Tokyo: Sichosha, 1991.

Tytell, John. *Naked Angels, the lives & literature of the Beat Generation*. New York: McGraw Hill, 1976.

Waldman, Ann, ed. *The Beat Book, Poems and Fictions of the Beat Generation*. Boston: Shambhala, 1996.

Wolf, Tom. *The Electric Kool-Aid Acid Test*. New York: Bantam Books, 1996.