

# The Impact of Allen Ginsberg's Howl on American Counterculture Representatives: Bob Dylan and Patti Smith

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UNIVERSITY OF RIJEKA

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**The Impact of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* on American Counterculture**

**Representatives: Bob Dylan and Patti Smith**

*Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirement for the M.A. in English Language  
and Literature and Italian language and literature at the University of Rijeka*

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## ABSTRACT

This thesis sets out to explore the influence exerted by Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* on the poetics of Bob Dylan and Patti Smith. In particular, it will elaborate how some elements of *Howl*, be it the form or the theme, can be found in lyrics of Bob Dylan's and Patti Smith's songs. Along with Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and William Seward Burroughs' *Naked Lunch*, Ginsberg's poem is considered as one of the seminal texts of the Beat generation. Their works exemplify the same traits, such as the rejection of the standard narrative values and materialism, explicit descriptions of the human condition, the pursuit of happiness and peace through the use of drugs, sexual liberation and the study of Eastern religions. All the aforementioned works were clearly ahead of their time which got them labeled as inappropriate. Moreover, after their publications, *Naked Lunch* and *Howl* had to stand trials because they were deemed obscene. Like most of the works written by the beat writers, with its descriptions *Howl* was pushing the boundaries of freedom of expression and paved the path to its successors who continued to explore the themes elaborated in *Howl*. The thesis contends that the trials and the victories achieved by Ginsberg and Burroughs were major influences on the counterculture representatives: Dylan and Smith, who became constituent personas of the popular culture. Ginsberg's notorious verses tackle numerous topics and ideas which clearly depict his conflicting feelings towards the society he lives in. As the paper's analysis will show, the same critique can be found in Bob Dylan's and Patti Smith's songs. By using the elements of *Howl*: formal features, ideas and context, Dylan and Smith popularized Ginsberg's most prominent poem and made the Beat generation ideas accessible to larger masses while promoting the formation of an anti-establishment culture.

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## **Introduction**

The movement which would become known as the Beat generation was formed in the streets of New York. The main protagonists of the movement were intellectuals and artists who lived in stark contrast with the norms of the society of that time. Due to their nonconformist beliefs and their fight for the freedom of expression, as opposed to the conventional academic traditions, they were considered as bohemians and outsiders. They did not have some kind of a "manifesto" to guide them while writing their works. The writers were simply living their lives in a constant quest for new experiences and were writing about it, bluntly and without censorship. They were a "uniquely intimate and isolated circle bound together by multiple marginalizations" (Harris, 2000, 180) living in postwar America. What was common to all of them were their tendencies to experiment with drugs, to study the philosophy of Zen Buddhism and to seek adventures. They were rebels who invented new ways of writing, who were influenced by the rhythm of jazz and bebop and incorporated it in their works and who were dreaming of a better world while criticizing the situation in which they found themselves (Bevilacqua, 1996, VII-VIII).

What we call today the Beat generation was an informal movement of writers and artists that started in New York at the end of the 1940's. The peak of the movement was in the 1950's, but it gained its popularity at the beginning of the 1960's. Due to its anarchist, antifascist, pacifistic and anti-racist beliefs, it started to mingle with the counterculture of the period influencing younger generations of artists such as Bob Dylan and Patti Smith (Šindolić,2).

It was Jack Kerouac, a prominent member of the group, who coined the term "beat generation". The term "beat" has several connotations. "In a musical sense, the word "beat" suggests keeping the beat, being in the groove or harmony with others. More specifically, it

implies the jazz beat: beat poetry is, as one of the group has termed it, "typewriter-jazz", aimed at catching the abrupt, syncopated rhythms, the improvisational dash and bravura of jazz, bebop and swing. In a social, psychological and vaguely political sense, "beat" connotes the "beaten" condition of the outsider, who is down perhaps, but certainly not out. Like so many Romantic and American writers, the beats cherished the stance of the alienated, the dispossessed and even the nominally insane: those who look at normal, "square" society from the periphery and reject its discipline and codes. In a spiritual sense, "beat" is related to "beatitude" and describes the innocence, blessedness, and raptness of what Ginsberg called "angel-headed hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection": the pursuit of "visionary consciousness" through music or meditation, drugs, mantras or poems" (Gray, 1989, 299).

A considerable number of youngsters started to follow this lifestyle which became quite popular. They were called beatniks, a term coined from the fusion of the word beat and the name of the Russian satellite *Sputnik*. However, the beatniks did not reflect the lifestyle of the Beat writers. In his *The Origins*, Kerouac provided an in-depth explanation of both terms. According to him, by 1948 there existed two different styles of hipsterism.

Hipsters or beatsters were divided into cool and hot. He goes on specifying that, "the cool today is your bearded laconic sage...before a hardly touched beer in a Beatnik dive, whose speech is low and unfriendly, whose girls say nothing and wear black," while "the hot today is the crazy talkative shining-eyed (often innocent and open-hearted) nut who runs from bar to bar, pad to pad, looking for everybody, shouting, restless, lushy, trying to "make it" with subterranean Beatniks who ignore him" (Kerouac, *The Origins*, 73, cited in Van Elteren, 85).

The Beat generation writers belonged to the hot school but cooled down after studying the Eastern philosophies, especially Buddhism. In his view, "spontaneous writing was similar to good jazz improvisation; it was not coincidental that he called it "jazz writing." For

Kerouac, jazz was the model for complete spontaneity. The actions of "blowing" by the jazz musician and conscious thinking were incompatible. In fact, Kerouac described the ideal mental state for blowing/writing as "without consciousness in semi-trance" (Kerouac, *Essentials*, 67, cited in Van Elteren, 87). In his opinion, the best writing and the best jazz solo performance would be realized without the artist thinking about his piece. It had to be spontaneous.

Artistically, the Beats "identified with the romantic ideology expressed by Blake, Shelley, Whitman and D.H.Lawrence, as well as with the romantic components of American Transcendentalism of Emerson and Thoreau" (Van Elteren, 1999, 79).

William Blake was rebelling against classicism and the Enlightenment (Age of Reason) just like the Beat writers were rebelling against the society of their time and the hypocrisy on which it was based upon. Ginsberg's prophetic visions and the element of prophecy in general can be drawn to Blake (Solar, 2015, 195) which can be seen from Ginsberg's *Footnote to Howl* in which he develops Blake's statement that "every living thing is holy" (from *The Song of Liberty*). In his *Song of Liberty*, Blake celebrates the belief in creative intelligence and anti-institutionalism while criticizing the repression which hinders imagination, expression and overall capabilities of man. He invites people to fight for their freedom from the authorities which cannot see that every living being sacred.

Percy Bysshe Shelley was considered an immoral atheist who opposed everything decent in the English society. Shelley, just like the Beat writers, dedicated his life to fighting injustice and oppression. His poems are known for their abundance of images, a unique rhythm (Paljetak, 199, 7) and powerful emotions. The unique rhythm and abundance of images are prominent elements of Ginsberg's poetry. Moreover, Shelley's powerful emotions can be linked to the intense moodiness of the Beats. Ginsberg was drawn to Shelly because of his use of time and breath in his poems. Shelley's *Hymn To Intellectual Beauty* and *Ode To*

*The West Wind* were of particular importance to Ginsberg since the first exemplified the use of the short breath, while the latter the use of the long breath that became Ginsberg's essential poetic feature (<http://ginsbergblog.blogspot.hr/2013/03/spontaneous-poetics-47-shelley-and-hart.html>).

Walt Whitman, who ignored tabooed topics, poetic conventions and metric verse, wrote a poetry collection *Leaves of Grass* which contained the *Song to Myself* (Riggs, 2000, 907). In *Leaves of Grass* Whitman tackled the topics regarding equality, heterosexual and homosexual affection which were later on employed by the beat writers. His poems were written in *vers libre*, their themes and motives were frequently taken from nature while his chief structural device was parallelism - a repetition of sound, syntax and idea. (Riggs, 2000, 908) Whitman's voice was a voice which did not believe that it humiliated itself "by taking as its own the voice of the poor, by tearing out from his soul the shout of his own spirit and his own tormented flesh" (Ungaretti and Romano, 1970, 562). Whitman exerted a huge influence on Ginsberg's *Howl* which can be traced to the devices Whitman used in his poems that were later on appropriated by Ginsberg. In the *Leaves of Grass*, Whitman used initial reiteration which is also an important poetic constituent in Ginsberg's *Howl*. Other instances of parallelism found in *both Leaves of Grass* and *Howl* are the repetition of sound, rhythm and idea, as well as the extensive usage of the first person singular (Riggs, 2000, 908). Ginsberg's rejection of traditional metrics can be traced to Walt Whitman, who was one of his most appreciated role models. This "affinity for a Whitmanesque rhapsodic (sometimes "frantic") style, is best seen in the ululating long lines of Ginsberg's *Howl*" (Sutton, 1965, 189).

As far as David Herbert Lawrence's influence on Beat generation writers is considered, he maintained that modernity and industrial civilization are the main culprits of the dehumanization of man (Beker, 1997,243). His novel *Women in Love* tackles the topic of crisis of modernism while *Lady Chatterley's Lover* celebrates sexual spontaneity and uses



colloquial expressions for the sexual act and genitals (Detoni-Dujmić, 2004, 333, 717). They were drawn to his work because his boundary-pushing novels were appealing to their thoughts on freedom of speech and expression. All of these notions were further developed in Kerouac's and Burrough's novels and Ginsberg's poems.

However, the Beat writers did not merely adopt romanticism, but qualified and questioned it by the modernism so prevalent at the time in the literature of Gertrude Stein, Ezra Pound, T.S. Eliot, William Carlos Williams, William Faulkner, Hart Crane, Thomas Wolfe, and Henry Miller; the surrealism of Apollinaire, Prévert, Eluard, Reverdy and Lorca; and the existentialism of Hemingway, Céline, Artaud, Sartre and Camus. What was innovative about Beat literature was precisely this interrogation of romanticism by specific characteristics of modernism, which also explains the energy, tensions and volatility of the best Beat writing (Wisker, 84, cited in Van Eleteren, 1999, 91).

The most important writers who influenced the Beat generation were the American poets Ezra Pound, T.S.Eliot and William Carlos Williams.

Ezra Pound was one of the fathers of modernism; the leader of Imagism, a poetic movement he invented in 1912. In his poem *Cantos*, Pound tackled the notions of beauty, ancient Chinese history, contemporary economic theory, basically anything that fascinated him (Riggs, 2000, 699) and clearly wrote against capitalism (Detoni-Dujmić, 2004, 66). He experimented with words and styles (Solar, 2005, 310) which was a fundamental element of the Beat generation writers. *In Cantos* "the beat writers saw a brilliant anticipation of a new poetic language" (Detoni-Dujmić, 2004, 66). Allen Ginsberg was so infatuated with Pound that in 1967 he even came to Italy to visit him and interview him on his poetry.

Thomas Stearns Eliot, together with Pound, is considered as the founder of modernist Anglo-American poetry, who in his lyric-dramatic poem *The Love Song of J. Alfred Prufrock* treated the intricacies of modern reality (Detoni-Dujmić, 2004, 219). The poem's "free verse, irregular rhyming and changeable metrical system make it stand apart from all traditional patterns" (Mlikotin, 1986, 222). However, the style is never decorated and thus the images in the poem are "of the plainest possible nature" (Mlikotin, 1986, 222). The awareness of the crisis of the contemporary culture, the loss of the humanity due to the modern civilization and the human condition in the industrial society make the notions that permeate Eliot's poetry. Apart from the sense of disillusionment, another element that connects both Eliot and Ginsberg is the fact that Eliot's poetry uses different types of speech and thus the poetry itself becomes very close to speech (Solar, 2015, 291). In his poem *The Waste Land* Eliot expressed his anxiety provoked by the cultural landscape of his time maintaining that the humanity is bound to collapse while in *Howl* Ginsberg treated the topic of madness in America which took over "the best minds of his generation" (Ginsberg, 1956, 9).

William Carlos Williams makes one of the most important figures of American modernist poetry that emerged after the World War 2. He wrote "in a mode based on the rhythms of the speaking voice, complete with idiomatic language and colloquial in word choice" (Riggs, 2000, 927). He also experimented with structure and line that allowed him more flexibility and fluidity. He wrote a five-book epic poem called *Paterson* as a response to Eliot's *The Waste Land* and Pound's *Cantos*. As far as the impact of William Carlos Williams on the writers of the Beat generation is concerned, in their writings there can be found "the same sense of a past lost and a present wasted that can also be felt in his works" (Van Elteren, 1999, 91). Williams' imagist techniques, collage and free verse that can be found in beat writings (Detoni-Dujmić, 2004, 450).

Moreover, the Beat writers put great emphasis on expressions of creativity in various art forms, most notably through the celebration of improvisation in modern jazz, poetry and spontaneous novel-writing (Van Elteren, 1999, 79-80). The notion of spontaneity was among the most important expressive principles recognized by the beat writers. Allen Ginsberg explained it "when he paraphrased an old Buddhist saying: "First taught the best taught" (Šindolić, 214). Because of this technique their work was most outspoken (Šindolić, 214).

Another element which formed the beat culture was, as already noted, jazz music. The Beats found their heroes in the musicians Charlie Parker and Lester Young. They used to spend their free time in New York jazz clubs chatting, drinking and enjoying live music. "According to Allen Ginsberg's testimony - Charlie Parker, Dizzy Gillespie, and Miles Davis soon became the "secret heroes" of the beat writers" (Šindolić, 211).

An aspect connecting jazz musicians and beat writers consisted in the use of drugs. It was a very common thing since the main representatives considered it as a means to get deeper into their consciousness and depict their visions, feelings, prophecies more effectively. Even though Burroughs and Kerouac used drugs of all sorts, the drugs Ginsberg used were never those derived from opium but rather those derived from cannabis, along with the Mexican mushrooms, peyote, LSD and the like (Pivano, 1971, 42).

Despite the fact that the main representatives of the beat generation Jack Kerouac, Allen Ginsberg, William S. Burroughs and Neal Cassady were very close friends, each of them chose his own lifestyle and, as a consequence, writing style. When Kerouac, Ginsberg and Burroughs met Neal Cassady, they were captivated by his energy and intelligence. Cassady's letters, which he wrote to all of them, were frantic and deconstructed. It is this style which influenced the works of Kerouac and Burroughs (Bevilacqua, 1996, 5). What united them was this "new consciousness" or a "new vision". The "new vision" rejected dominant spiritual norms because, according to Kerouac, Burroughs and Ginsberg, God's exodus from

the world was obvious and tangible. This is why Oswald Spengler's *The Decline of the West* resonated in their minds and in their writings. Inspired by his apocalypticism they announced the death of American god of materialism and mechanization (Prothero, 1991, 209). Throughout history, Spengler saw nothing but the process of decay (Spengler, 2000, 502) which is treated in the emblematic works of the Beat generation: *On the Road*, *Naked Lunch* and *Howl*. In his work, *The Decline of the West*, Spengler criticized the Western humanity's achievements while analyzing the pointlessness of civilized existence in all eras. He came to the conclusion that, although periods always differ due to logical and inevitable time passage, all civilizations replicate some of the previous patterns through the subtly altered but actually unchanged arrangements of societal function (Spengler, 2000, 503-511). The beat writers also saw the imminent danger of what Spangler perceived as the fall of the civilization. They saw it in the mechanization, fake morals and in the war.

This is why they rejected capitalism, consumerism, materialism, middle-class family life, modern life and modern progress and satirized modern society values while celebrating freedom, individualism, resistance to the social norms and "the explicit treatment of homosexuality as against the formalists' more usual practice of writing the same subject as if it were a common heterosexual affair" (Garret, 1965, 230). There was an ongoing tendency among them of celebrating the criminal, especially the violence without a clear motive or reason (Garret, 1965, 230-231). Another common trait was their interest in the Eastern religions, mainly Buddhism and "their attempt to reach *satori*, an "enlightened" state of wisdom, understanding, reconciliation", tranquility and harmony (Van Elteren, 1999, 80). The infatuation with Rimbaud, Dostoyevsky, Blake and Lautréamont came from their study of Nietzsche's relativism and nihilism. They adopted the view on life according to which "activity is more important than adaptation to one's social-historical environment" (Van Elteren, 1999, 81).

A quintessential characteristic of their attitude and lifestyle was "the insistence on the expression of authentic inner feelings" manifested in an 'intense moodiness' (Van Elteren, 1999, 85). What bothered the critics most about the beats was this moodiness and negativity. *Life* claimed they were at war with everything sacred in Eisenhower's America "Mom, Dad, Politics, Marriage, the Savings Bank, Organized Religion, Literary Elegance, Law, the Ivy League Suit and Higher Education, to say nothing of the Automatic Dishwasher, the Cellophane-wrapped Soda Cracker, the Split-Level House and the clean or peace-provoking H-bomb" (Prothero, 1991, 206).

In other words, the Beats were at war with everything connected with the "common man" and the "working man" or, as they called them, "the square". Because they are "square", the common man and the working man hardly ever appeared in the works of the beat generation. This is because the Beats completely deny the world of the "square" and try to create a new reality, the one in which the living experience is put before everything (Feldman and Gartemberg, 1961, xviii).

Beat writers popularized avant-garde writing styles like free-form "spontaneous writing" and the cut-up technique, i.e. the idea of putting random words together. It was the leader of the beat generation group, William S. Burroughs, who brought this writing technique previously used by Dadaists, to its logical extreme. For them, the word "dada" signified everything and nothing at the same time and they chose it "to express the need for total rebellion against the arts, bourgeois society and the human condition itself" (Preminger and Brogan, 1993, 268). They opposed the cliché in imagery and had a clear vision of how a poem should be composed. According to them, one had to cut a text from the newspapers, shake the words one had chosen in a bag and write them one after another (in the same order one had taken them out). The founder of the movement, Tristan Tzara, said that "Dadaism doubts everything" and that he "destroys the drawers of the brain" (Preminger and Brogan,

1993, 269). Burroughs did a very similar thing, but he went even further, arranging his texts in a rather random order. Along with the "cut up technique, Burroughs also used the fold in technique and other types of dislocations" (Riggs, 2000, 131).

"According to Burroughs the cut-up amplifies the freedom of expression because it unlocks the words and the images from the traditional paths" (Bevilacqua, 1996, 104). His first four books: *Junkie*, *Queer*, *Naked Lunch* and *Yage Letters* document the horrors of addiction to drugs, sex and power. His most famous work *Naked Lunch* is a chaotic novel depicting his drug addiction and his apocalyptic vision of the world. It was Burroughs's fourteen-year-long heroin addiction mixed with his experimentation with drugs that led to this internationally recognized novel which was written in a surrealistic technique, as some kind of a collage. Because of its vivid images of drug addiction and homosexuality, it stood several obscenity trials.

The same tendency to write about the people who "remained on the margins of postwar prosperity" (Prothero, 1991, 210) can also be found in Jack Kerouac's novels - *On the Road*, *Maggie Cassidy*, *The Subterraneans*, *Tristessa* and *Big Sur*. The first one is characterized by the sense of loss and sorrow, the other three are odes to lost loves while the last one "depicts his own alcohol-induced breakdown" (Prothero, 1991, 210). Kerouac, born on March 12, 1922 as Jean-Louis Lebris de K  rouac came to know Allen Ginsberg and William Burroughs through their friend Lucien Carr who was a key figure for the Beat movement during the 1940's. Kerouac idealized a return to a more essential and authentic life and underlined the importance of living in the present moment (Riggs, 2000, 479).

He claimed that he had written his most famous novel *On the Road*, in a matter of weeks. This novel is loose in form, episodic and improvised. As already noted, the element of improvisation was taken over from the jazz musicians. Because of its content and its style

which was pure narrative experimentation called "spontaneous prose" or "bop prosody" by Kerouac himself, the novel provoked different public reactions.

But, Burroughs and Kerouac were not the only ones who encountered harsh criticism for their works. Lawrence Ferlinghetti, editor and publisher of the City Lights Books, poet, playwright, painter and the author of a famous poetry book *A Coney Island of the Mind*, was an emblematic figure for the Beat movement because he helped to launch it on a massive scale, publishing the works of Allen Ginsberg, Jack Kerouac, Gary Snyder and Gregory Corso. In the censorship trial that followed the publication of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*, "Ferlinghetti and his press stood as a voice for freedom of artistic expression" (Riggs, 2000, 285).

Ferlinghetti also demanded for engaged writing. This trait of writing engagement can be found in his works and in his public life. He was a supporter of issues concerning human rights and social justice, protesting against the Vietnam War. Not only was he criticized by the public and the media, but also by other writers. Throughout his career, he used different writing techniques and forms among which, stand out his visual poetry and oral poetry form (Riggs, 2000, 285). According to Ferlinghetti written word made poetry silent, while the new poetry was conceived as an oral message (Ivanišević, 1984, 14). He maintained that the poetry should be accessible to all and was a regular participant in coffee-house poetry readings organized by The San Francisco Renaissance literary community. Thanks to his City Lights Bookstore and his Publishing House, the works of Kenneth Rexroth, William Carlos Williams, Jack Kerouac, Gregory Corso, Charles Bukowski, Allen Ginsberg and many others, were published and read by the American audiences (Šindolić, 33).

In his essay *The Origins of Joy in Poetry* Jack Kerouac profounds the distinctive features of the beat poetry, clarifying the elements and techniques which are used by the beat poets. He explains that it is a "type of new-old foolish Zen poetry, writing about anything that

comes to one's mind, the poetry brought back to its source, it is the child of the bards, and it really is oral as Ferlinghetti says" (Šindolić, 272). According to Kerouac, the beat poets are children, but also childish Homers who sing in the streets. Another constituent of this new poetry was the discipline of haiku which they cherished because it presented the world most directly, clearly, without explanations and abstractions (Šindolić, 272). In brief, beat poetry used everyday speech while rejecting conventional organization, traditional syntax, orthography and fixed content. It was "characterized by rapid changes and exposure to personal feelings" (Ivanišević, 1984, 14).

Through the public reading performances in local jazz clubs which were frequently accompanied by jazz music, the poetry became alive, it was performed and shared. They borrowed this habit of "toasting", "a form of talking over the music, of being a witness, talking about what one sees, feels, and experiences" (Van Elteren, 1999, 92) from the African-American society. The notion of "toasting" derived from the blues tradition and is connected to "an older African practice of music making, dancing, singing and storytelling, but is to a degree part of a common stock of folk and popular music among whites and blacks, particularly in the South of the United States" (Van Elteren, 1999, 92-93). Their main guiding principle was to take poetry out of the classrooms and bring it back to the streets. Jazz poetry readings announced an original way of perceiving literature "for a new and unsophisticated audience" (Theado, 2004, 748-749).

Another member of the Beat generation who was attending the coffee-house poetry readings was Allen Ginsberg. His reading of *Howl* in 1955 was a major milestone for the Beat generation writers as well as the San Francisco Renaissance poets. Irwin Allen Ginsberg, born in Newark, New Jersey on the 3<sup>rd</sup> of June 1926, decided to be a poet relatively young. His father was a teacher and a poet, while his mother was suffering from a rare psychological condition. During his years at the Columbia University where he studied literature, he met



Neal Cassady, Jack Kerouac and William S. Burroughs. However, due to his rebellious nature, he was expelled from University. His prolific period started after he moved to San Francisco, in 1954. A year later he organized the first public poetry reading which resembled some kind of a Beat generation convention (Bevilacqua, 1996, 61).

At the beginning, Ginsberg was an academic poet who used formal poetic structures and whose poems were predictable in theme and diction. The shift from the academic to more original poetry for which he became famous can be linked to his friendship with Jack Kerouac, William Burroughs, Herbert Huncke and Carl Solomon to whom he dedicated his poem *Howl* (Wallenstein, 1997, 548). Another important figure in Ginsberg's younger days was William Carlos Williams who provided him a huge support concerning his poetic language telling him to stick to the everyday speech and its rhythm (Šindolić, 112). "His passage from a prosody based on accent to a prosody based on speech, rhythm and breathtaking, marked the shift from this academic poetry with classical ambitions to modern poetry" (Pivano, 1971,79).

Beat poetry, with Ginsberg as its main representative, in general had "a disordered conventional syntax and its lineation was based on the breath" (Davidson 80, cited in Van Elteren, 91-92). His poetry was mainly influenced by Blake's poems, varied rhythms in Walt Whitman's poetry, Hebrew prayers, dadaist rhythms, blues tunes of Ma Rainey and Leadbelly. After his stay in India at the beginning of the 1960's, he started to sing his songs while playing on his Indian harmonium thus influencing The Beatles, The Rolling Stones and other rock artists who started to use Indian musical instruments (Šindolić, 5).

Allen Ginsberg's poetry arises from a tragic personal experience. The techniques which are recurring in his writing are open rhythm, following the example of cold jazz (bop), the verse registered as a unit of breath, and the immediate transcription of the free flow of associations and thoughts, are used to express his utmost personal thoughts, fears and loves.

They are chaotic, but the existence he depicts in his poems is even more so. The word in Ginsberg's poems is simply a recording tool and the techniques he uses, serve to better express the rush of the sentiments and emotions (Amoruso, 1980, 142-144). His musical-rhythmic obsession taken from jazz pieces of Charlie Parker is constituent to most of his poems. He models his poetry around "the musical concept of storytelling, and the musical time of effective jazz playing" (Van Elteren, 1999, 87).

All of Ginsberg's poems were inspired by "the same thoughts and passions - horror of violence and hypocrisy, war and inhibitions, the desire to see men freed from them, and above all, the horror of the monopoly of the human communication practiced by the governments and technocracies"(Pivano, 1971, 72). Allen Ginsberg's word is atrocious like no other, and it becomes always more angry and ardent as he proceeds in showing the reality of the human suffering, reflected in the body and in the mind (Ungaretti and Romano, 1970, 563).

Among all the beat writers, Ginsberg was particularly ambiguous towards the literary canon. He wanted to be respected as a poet and to be accepted by the literary academia. He succeeded in becoming a part of it and used his position as a means of bringing "where he came from with him, both the writers he hung out with and the radical attitudes he began with, and did his best to change the mainstream that had finally accepted him" (Sukenick, "Out and In", cited in Van Elteren, 1999, 91).

In the introduction to William Burroughs' novel *Junky*, Allen Ginsberg talks about their friendship and about the way he perceived Burroughs. Since Burroughs was twelve years older than him, Ginsberg showed great respect considering him more intelligent and more experienced than himself. They wrote to each other and supported each other's literary work. At one point, Allen Ginsberg took on the role of a publishing agent and tried to publish Burroughs' and Kerouac's earliest works going from one publishing house to another and trying to convince the editors that these literary works are of great value (Ginsberg, in

Burroughs, 2002, 5-6). He eventually succeeded in that venture and continued doing that throughout his whole life.

On the other hand, Burroughs and Ginsberg were both influenced by Jack Kerouac and his writing techniques taken from the rhythm of bebop jazz. Ginsberg even "cited him as his principal teacher of poetics." (Wallenstein, 1977, 547). To fully understand the reality of their friendship, one should also take into account the fact that it was Jack Kerouac who came up with the title for Burroughs' best novel, thanks to him called *Naked Lunch*. He even came (along with Ginsberg) to Tangier to help Burroughs assemble his manuscript and finish the novel. Another curiosity showing their close friendship is the fact that novel *And the Hippos Were Boiled in Their Tanks* was written as a collaboration between Burroughs and Kerouac, but due to its problematic content, it was not published until 2008 (Kerouac, 2004, 7-17).

## 1. Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*

The poem *Howl* was published in 1956 when Ginsberg was 30 years old, and it was read for the first time in public in the Six Galleries San Francisco, the same year (Bevilacqua, 1996, 61). Upon its publication, *Howl* and other poems were charged for being obscene and Lawrence Ferlingetti, the editor of the City Lights Books Publishing House, was imprisoned. Even before the charges were dropped, the poem became famous. As a consequence, *Howl and other poems* was printed in more than a fifty thousand copies in the first couple of years after its publication.

According to the judge presiding over *Howl's* trial, *Howl* was a denunciation against the evil in American society and because of that it was of social importance. It was established that *Howl's* aim is to praise the humanity and expose the greed for power and money which leads to conflicts. During the trial, Ginsberg was in Tangier helping Burroughs organize the pages of what would later become his most famous novel, *Naked Lunch*. Ginsberg did not expect to become so famous, but it became a reality and young people used to crowd the places where he was reading *Howl*. They could recite its verses by heart, the poem talked to them and they listened to what it has to say (Pivano, 1971, 10).

*Howl* is dedicated to Carl Solomon whom Ginsberg met during his stay in the Bellevue psychiatry. Solomon was suffering from obsessions and used to identify himself as the character of Kafka, K. This is why he decided to go to psychiatry and get cured (Bevilacqua, 1996, 116).

Influenced by the jazz and bebop artists, Ginsberg adapted the length of his verse to his breath. As a result, *Howl's* "rhythm, structure and the length of each line are very similar to jazz music than the traditional European literary styles". During his poetry readings, Ginsberg used to inhale at the beginning of the line, "sometimes even starting with the same word with which he ended the previous line" (Šindolić, 214). While in Western music there is

the tendency to accentuate the first and the third beat, in jazz music, they accentuate the second and the fourth beat. Since the rhythm of the beat poetry is rather free, it is similar to musical syncopé and very close to jazz music. This technique is very well observed in *Howl*.

In an essay about his approach to poetry, Ginsberg explained that he depended on the word "who" in order to keep the rhythm and that by using the same meter he was able to come back and start a new inspiring verse. "The technique of using verbs in *Howl* can be compared to any Charlie Parker's tune in which he plays a sequence of improvised phrases on the same topic, pausing for a moment only to inhale and to continue playing" (Šindolić, 214). However, Ginsberg said that it was actually Lester Young the saxophonist who inspired him and that "*Howl* is based on a melodic structure of the tune *Lester Leaps In*" (Šindolić, 214).

Lester Young was a brilliant tenor saxophonist whose playing was innovative and bop in style, and abundant with his laid back yet "thoughtful improvisations, which seemed to float over bar lines" (Yanov, 2000, 175). It is Lester Young's style and his tackling of melody and rhythm that designates the transition from swing to bebop (Morton, 2010, 86 and Shipton, 2002, 414).

As far as the role of Lester Young in the tune *Lester Leaps In* is concerned, his music can be described as light and swinging (Shipton, 2002, 313). Even though he tends to simplify by using a series of riffs, it gives him an opportunity to develop his ideas, "with occasional breaks or stops from the rhythm beneath the inexorable flow of his inspired playing" (Shipton, 2002, 313). In his improvisations Young develops melodic line and rhythmic patterns.

According to jazz historians, bebop was another step in the evolution of jazz characterized by "a smaller band, more improvisation, less emphasis on dance rhythms, highly intricate melodies and chord transitions, and less commercial appeal" (Bindas, 2001, 147), in simple words, it was more frantic, wild and broken and it was a genre which allowed musicians to display their skills. It was an answer to swing, a way of rebelling against the

norms and against the traditionalism in jazz, i.e. swing. The musicians who embraced bebop were playing for themselves and that is why traditionalists stood up against bebop. On the other side, the followers of bebop taught that traditionalists are "square", meaning that they did not have the feeling for the fluidity of the beat in jazz. This new kind of music appealed to musicians because of its musical innovation and freedom of expression, which are also fundamental elements of Ginsberg's poetry.

Ginsberg disliked capitalism in all of its facets and especially the fact that everybody became its slaves. According to him, "The United States is the cause of the paranoia and the United States has become paranoid in return...the United States is as responsible as anybody else." Society embraced money as the only and primary source of happiness while the media was constantly suggesting to its members that they needed it even more in order to live a happy and fulfilled life. The Beat writers disaffiliated from the organizations of the orthodox society because they could not accept society's fake morals and its hypocrisy. They were searching liberation, freedom of thinking and expression as well as personal realization (Pivano, 1971, 11-29).

Apart from *Howl and other poems*, Ginsberg also published more than a dozen poetry collections among which *Kaddish and Other Poems*, *The Fall of America* and *Mind Breaths* are the most famous ones. With *Kaddish* Ginsberg displayed the most intimate facets of his personality while tackling the memory of his deceased mother who spent her last days in a psychiatric institution. As its name suggests, *Kaddish* was inspired by the traditional Jewish mourning prayer. In *The Fall of America*, Ginsberg applied a more traditional and a more classic sense of the verse. Written at the turn of the 60s into the 70s, this collection contains a strong accusation of the Vietnam War while other poems tend to be more sentimental. It is during this period that Ginsberg started to write musical accompaniment for his poems and even sing them at his performances. In "*Mind Breaths*" which includes his poetry written

during the 70's, apart from the already established topics, Ginsberg attempted to find a balance between the Buddhist principle and his earlier influences and attitudes. (Ginzberg, 1983, 187-191) Throughout his life, Ginsberg continued to fight against any type of authority and various taboos, advocating free love (such as the rights of homosexuals), human rights, ecology and peace (Bevilacqua, 1996, 62). Ginsberg died in New York on the 5<sup>th</sup> of April 1997.

Kenneth Rexroth, a poet, translator and critical essayist, regarded as a central figure in the San Francisco Renaissance, said that *Howl* is probably "the most important poem published by a young poet after the Second World War" (Feldman and Gartemberg, 1961, 176).

The poem itself is divided into 3 parts and a footnote. It is written in free verse and in it we encounter two principles of repetition - on phonological level and rhythmical repetition. As previously mentioned, Ginsberg rejected traditional versification, i.e. the rhyme, in favour of the free verse which thematizes a proximity to lived experience by replicating or representing "perceptual, cognitive, emotional and imaginative processes" (Preminger, 1993, 427). Instead of counting syllables or using rhyme, free verse employs grammatical and other means such as equivalence, symmetry, and repetition. Despite the fact that the poem lacks metrical structuring, heavily relies on grammatical breaks and the regular endrhyme is absent, thanks to the power the poet gave to certain words which serve as the starting points, (such as *who* in the first part of the poem), it retains its coherence (Amoruso, 1980, 154). The poem's coherence is also maintained through the repetitive use of noun phrases, syntactic variation and the principle of verblessness. This proves Lotman's belief that the creation without rules and without structural relationship is indeed impossible (Lotman, 2001, 389-390).

Like other Beat poets, Ginsberg often used contrasts and inserted concepts of the opposite meaning with the intention to show the world in all its beauty and horror. He was a

poet with great power and energy of thought which can be observed in the images he had woven into *Howl*. The experience of a mental hospital brought him "the terrible sense of terror that dominated his entire poetry" (Ivanišević, 1954, 15- 32). This terror is best described in the images of dramatic social and personal realities and in the sense of tragedy of the modern alienation.

It is clear that Ginsberg was committed to poetry and justice and that is why in his works personal and political intertwine. This reemergence of political activism is a logical step further from his critical stances towards the society and the establishment. *Howl* is not only a poem denouncing evil, but also offering a solution and a way of salvation through love. It is also an ode to existence, a search for the divine while at the same time being the journey to hell. It is inspired from life, especially suffering and is made up of a series of data and prophetic statements and a wide range of thoughts, experiences and feelings (Ivanišević, 1984, 36-37).

The poem is rooted in William Blake, Walt Whitman and William Carlos Williams. Whitman's long lines and Blake's prophetic stance and apocalyptic sense concerning the end of the world are mixed with liberational and intense imagery and jargon characteristic of William Carlos Williams (Wallenstein, 1977, 550). It portrays the imperialism in the United States, the gap between *the best minds* and the Establishment and criticizes a society of consumerism. The tone of the poem ranges from pessimistic notes, irony, images of suffering and pain, to joyful tones of humour (Ivanišević, 1984, 36-37). With *Howl*, Ginsberg attempted to illustrate his disappointment with modern society, expressing anger and pain while longing for acceptance and love. By juxtaposing contrasting images, Ginsberg describes life in all its splendour and poorness.



According to Duke Ellington, a pianist, composer and a leader of a jazz orchestra "jazz is a good barometer of freedom...the music is so free that many people say it is the only unhampered, unhindered expression of complete freedom yet produced" (Ward, 2000, vii). A jazz musician, trumpet player and composer, Wynton Marsalis said that "Jazz music celebrates life – human life. The range of it. The absurdity of it. The ignorance of it. The greatness of it. The intelligence of it. The sexuality of it. The profundity of it." (Ward, 2000, xii). If one compares jazz described by both Duke Ellington and Wynton Marsalis to Ginsberg's literary work and especially *Howl*, the same notions of artistic freedom and celebration of life in all its forms emerge. Free verse is just the basis of it, but the real freedom comes from improvisations and from spontaneity. However, one has to be very much aware of the rules underpinning the art in order to break them and to use them in one's favour. This is what Ginsberg did when taking the elements which appealed to him from other writers and poets and combined them together while introducing the jazz-like rhythm and his own inventions. All of these elements work together in order to support the rhythm and the pace of the poem which then transmits certain emotions to its audience. Because of the repetitions, some parts of the poem resemble a Buddhist chant or even a Biblical passage, while at the same time maintaining the rhythm of the bebop jazz.

According to the choice of the poetic device, the rhythm of the poem varies from very slow and tiring to rather fast and frantic. His main expressive devices are making adjectives out of nouns and connecting unrelated images by verbs, or actions (Fabiano, 1971, 85). As far as the meaning is concerned, Terror, Absolute Reality, Supercommunist, Capitalism, Eternity, Time, Time & Space are all written with a capital letter. Those are the main ideas around which the entire poem revolves.

The first part of the poem is loaded with surrealist images that illustrate some kind of a living nightmare. In the opening lines of *Howl*, Ginsberg introduces the reader to the theme

that he is going to elaborate in detail throughout the first section of the poem. He immediately puts himself in a position of a testimony of *the Absolute Reality*.

*"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,"*

Ginsberg used to read *Howl* in a rhythmic pattern, accentuating lines on the second and fourth beat. When there was a longer word he would also emphasize it on the second and fourth syllable. By appropriating jazz rhythm and especially the rhythm of *Lester Leaps In*, Ginsberg's poem became even closer to the reality and to the time of its writing. The opening line of the poem is a short sentence which is an equivalent to the approach to a solo in music. It functions as a building of a theme before the solo. In jazz language, the second line can be observed as a long phrase, as the first of numerous long phrases in which he develops his theme. In the second line Ginsberg used consonance in order to build his rhythm: *dragging/ through/ negro/ streets/ angry*. Since these instances of phonological repetition retard the rhythm, the line sounds rather tiring and when hearing Ginsberg performing *Howl*, it seems as if it was difficult for him to read it, as if he did not have the energy to proceed with his reading. With a metonymy *the best minds* Ginsberg accentuated the fact that he was not going to talk about common members of the society, and links them with madness. This madness is perceived as holy madness, thus, the best minds are holy lunatics.

In the following lines he explains who the best minds are and what they did. He calls them *angelheaded hipsters* and even *madman bum and angel beat in Time*, descriptions that can be fully understood from the way he portrays them. Even though he idolizes them because

they are *burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo*, in simple words – nature, he clearly describes their mad and angelic lives.

*"who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley,  
death, or purgatoried their torsos night after night  
with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and  
cock and endless balls,"*

*The best minds* are, essentially, outcasts who cannot conform to the restraining norms of the society; they are most probably artists and thinkers belonging to the Beat generation. With surrealistic images we get the impression that those best minds are living in a hell of their own drug and alcohol addictions, hallucinations and junk-withdrawals. They eat fire meaning highly suspicious substances and even cleanse their bodies by taking more alcohol and drugs. In the previous two lines Ginsberg opted for the repetition of adjuncts as his rhythm-building device. The metaphor, which is realized through this repetition, does not end in one line but it extends throughout both of them. Since the metaphoric meaning is carried by the verb, the meaning is private making the metaphor a bold one. With the use of parenthesis: *death*, which is in the form of apposition, Ginsberg breaks the established syntactic pattern improvising as he proceeds.

*"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  
drear light of Zoo,"*

To achieve an even more jazz-like rhythm in *Howl*, Ginsberg employed syntactic parallelism in different positions throughout the poem. The most prominent parallelism is the use of *who* at the beginning of the lines which can be linked to the musical motives and patterns in jazz. A motive can be rhythmic, melodic and a combination providing musicians with an endless spectrum of choices for improvisation. As far as the tune *Lester Leaps In* is concerned, Lester Young used the same melodic pattern in different rhythmic situations such as by beginning "his solo with a paraphrase of the simple riff that had formed the melodic statement of the piece" (Shipron, 2002, 19) or repeating a four-note pattern and a simple three-note motif. He even had a "habit of repeating a single note, played with alternating fingering patterns to alter its timbre" (Shipron, 2002, 19). The same usage of "fragments of melodic material" can be seen throughout this section (Shipron, 2002, 19). Ginsberg used this type of syntactic parallelism in order to substitute anaphora from a metric verse, and, more importantly, to modulate the rhythm according to bebop jazz. The use of newly-made compounds (neologisms, coinages) such as *mouth-wracked* and later on *hotrod-Golgotha* or even *jail-solitude watch* can be seen as improvisation at its best. Apart from using syntactic parallelism to construct the rhythm, in the previous line Ginsberg also used alliteration: *Battery/ Bronx/ Benzadrine/ brought/ battered/ bleak/ brain/ brilliance/ drained/ drear*, and thus accelerated the pace.

*"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"*

Apart from the rhythm, the notion of jazz is also very much present in the section, starting from the beginning until the very last lines of the section. In the second line they

*wander through the negro streets* (an obvious allusion to the African American culture), in the fourth they *contemplate jazz*, in *twenty eight they are seeking it*, while in the last line jazz is connected with reincarnation. In this line, the author combined both alliteration and consonance and gained a balanced rhythm which works in accordance with the main theme and the metaphors which portray a blissful state of being high and *floating across the tops of cities*. Despite their madness, *the best minds* are educated because they go to universities even if they just *pass through (...) with radiant cool eyes hallucinating (...) Blake-light tragedy*. In this line just like in the following one, Ginsberg made allusions to his own life. He considered Blake's poetry important for its prophecies, and traces of Blake's influence can be found even in *Howl*. In the line after Ginsberg confesses how he got suspended from Columbia University because he wrote *obscene odes on the windows* of his dorm.

*"who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telepathy and bop  
kaballa because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their  
feet in Kansas,"*

The pace of the previous line is slow-moving which is sustained by the use of zeugma which permits several objects with one verb. This type of syntactic repetition is distinctive for the repetition of nouns which give the whole line a heavy tone. The rhythm is also built through the use of consonance: *Plotinus/ Poe/ telepathy/ bop* which helps to slow down the pace even more. As far as the allusions are concerned, in line 66 *the best minds* even *threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism*. These allusions can be divided into religious and literary ones. Plotinus being a Greek philosopher and the father of Neoplatonism whose works appealed to mystics of different denominations. St. John of the Cross was a saint from the middle ages who had mystical visions and Kabbala is a Jewish mystical tradition. These

allusions demonstrate Ginsberg's fascination with mysticism and his search for the divine and the spiritual. With regards to Poe and Dadaism, Ginsberg considered them just as important as Blake, Whitman and Williams.

*"who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw  
Mohammedan angels staggering on tenement roofs  
illuminated"*

Throughout the first section Ginsberg employed many religious allusions, not only Christian and Judaist but also Islamic, Buddhist and mystic ones. In the 5th line he makes an image connecting *Heaven, El* and *Mohammedan angels*. After an obvious Christian allusion, he mentions *El* – the old name for God used by the Jews and later on Islamic angels. In line 25 *the best minds are seeking visionary Indian angels*, while further on they pray for one another's salvation in hopeless cathedrals. The particularity of this line is in the inversion which stands as a final chord and completes the rhythmic unit. It shows that Ginsberg did not always follow his own poetic devices but was able to improvise. By means of inversion, Ginsberg highlighted a particular element of the line while applying a genuine poetic language and the word order which is not used in everyday speech. In jazz terms, inversion can be seen as a small-scale improvisation.

*"who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors,  
caresses of Atlantic and Caribbean love,"*

Aside from the controversial or unusual language, in this line Ginsberg paired two, at first glance, contradictory ideas. The metaphor in question associates men with Christian

angels, alluding to their purity. In Christian ideology, seraphims have three pairs of wings, one pair to cover their faces, one pair to hide their legs, i.e. crotch and one pair to fly. However, Ginsberg did not find anything impure in love making and by connecting those words he alluded to its religiosity and holiness. He amplified this image with a parenthesis unifying the north with the south of America. As already noted, the first section is replete with graphic descriptions of heterosexual and homosexual intercourse. The tendency to write about sexuality was a common thing in the Beat writers' milieu and a way of fighting against sexual conformity. They considered it as important as their works. The heterodoxy of Ginsberg's, just like that of Kerouac and Burroughs can be linked to an overall refusal of the gender expectations of the mainstream culture and to the fluidity of their personas. Ginsberg's explicitness on sexual matters was important because it showed that different preferences like homosexuality existed and that it was a common thing and a reality for many people across the world. These kinds of descriptions appear from line 36 to line 43 and are outstanding because of the slang used in them which was something innovative, such as:

*"who balled in the morning in the evenings in the rosegardens and the  
grass of public parks and cemeteries scattering their semen  
freely to whomever come who may,"*

This line is another good example of Ginsberg's use of syntactic repetitions, or, in this case the repetitions of adjuncts after the verb, known as zeugma. In jazz terms, this kind of iteration can be linked to the repetition of the same musical motives which support the already established rhythm of the tune. By using consonance: *morning/ evenings/ rosegardens/ grass/ scattering*, together with zeugma, the author harmoniously slowed down the pace in the line.

*"who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salvation and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second,"*

After an oxymoron the poet connects the church with sexuality by mentioning breasts. Even if he used this word as a metaphor for heart and soul, he made a strong statement by connecting church, soul – spiritual notions with breasts – material notions. This line presents a fine example of consonance: *knees/ hopeless/ cathedrals/ other's, salvation/ breasts/ soul/ its/ second* which retards the rhythm.

*"Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops, 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 kind king light of mind,"*

Another very frequent poetic device used by the poet are catalogues of nouns or, as Ginsberg himself called it, "chains of images". These images represent the cutting-edge experience of *the best minds*. The fact that in the entire line there are no verbs automatically slows down the pace and makes a syncopated rhythm. The line abounds in metaphors and metonymies connected with drugs: *drunkenness over the rooftops*, hallucinations: *cemetery dawns, winter dusks*, and the sensation of lightness described by Ginsberg as *kind king light of mind*.



*"and who were given instead the concrete void of metrasol  
electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy  
pingpong & amnesia,"*

The apparent asyndetic sequence serves as a means to maintain slow speed and the syncopated rhythm. Since no conjunctions are present in the line, another catalogue of nouns emerges. However, in this sequence of nouns Ginsberg used the repetition on phonological level making the line melodic and syncopated at the same time. This line also reveals that some of *the best minds* are mentally ill and in a madhouse. They are *demanding instantaneous lobotomy*, but are given various therapies: *"insulin metrasol electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy..."*.

*"who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow  
toward lonesome farms in grandfather night,"*

Such a thoughtful use of gemination, i.e. the syntactic repetition of identical words in a row, is seen in line 23. By means of gemination Ginsberg created a strong onomatopoeia which imitates the sound of boxcars rattling as their move along the railway. Another type of syntactic repetition or syntactic parallelism is found in line 40:

*"who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed  
shrew of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that  
winks out of the womb and the one eyed shrew that does  
nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden*

*threads of the craftman's loom,"*

The poet mentions the three old shrews of fate, an allusion to mythological goddesses who decide about the length of human lives. In Greek mythology there were three Moires, or goddesses of fate. The first was the spinster of the thread of life, the second assigned the fate, while the last one was the one to cut the thread of life. (Holzapfel, 2008, 248). The fates can be seen as three challenges connected to material, physical and intellectual notions in one's life. This question is directly linked to the artist himself as he is the *craftsman*. Besides the personification of the shrews of fate, this line reveals a parallelism which provides the rhythm and supports the theme of the passage. Parallelism created through verb clauses is found in line 58:

*"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,"*

The abundance of verb clauses generates erratic, staccato rhythm. Punctuation also had major importance in *Howl*. Since the line is based on breath, Ginsberg delineated the end of each with a comma. Hence, comma serves as a sign to take another breath and to start "blowing" like the saxophonists in jazz do. Moreover, the lines are very close to the journalistic way of writing because of the use of independent sentences. Each line is a

sentence with its own theme, thus, each new sentence-line carries another idea. This literary technique, known as parataxis, is the reason why *Howl* sounds instantaneous and rugged. This line also illustrates the holy madness of *the best minds* and the omnipresent notion of jazz in their lives.

*"who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality,"*

In line 6, the author connects war with university calling the academics *scholars of war*, while in the line 56 depicts Madison Avenue as a battlefield. He even inserts a metapoetic reference *leaden verse* which alludes to the over-convincing, profit-making jingles of the advertising companies. The use of "&" gives an impression that he had to transmit his frustration on paper as fast as possible, additionally confirming his attitude towards the usage of everyday speech in literature, and particularly in poetry. One can find other metapoetic references throughout the poem which describe poetic life and its anguishes. This notion is portrayed in 51<sup>st</sup> line where the best minds *scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish*. In the last five lines of the first section one can find numerous references to poetry, especially those employed by the poet himself. The *ellipsis* is a poetic device used in haiku, while the *catalogue* is characteristic of Whitman's poetic style which Ginsberg adapted to his own needs.

*"who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through  
images juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul  
between 2 visual images and joined the elemental verbs  
and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping  
with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus"*

Ginsberg indicates how he "composes" his poetry using juxtaposed images, and more importantly, how he not only uses two visual images but also joins verbs and sets the noun and dash together in order to make new compounds. By juxtaposing of contraries, Ginsberg managed to connect opposing images making a new meaning out of them. A good example of this method is the title of his poetry collection, *Hydrogen Jukebox*. When one reads or hears the word hydrogen, one connects it with the hydrogen bomb which is something negative. On the other side, when thinking about jukebox, one links it to music and amusement, which are all positive notions. Thus, hydrogen jukebox can be understood as a device playing horrifying music. The use of polysyndeton, in this and in other lines, is not as conspicuous as in the metric verse, since Ginsberg modified its use implementing it in the line sequence without following a rigid pattern.

*"with mother finally \*\*\*\*\*, and the last fantastic book flung out  
of the tenement window, and the last door closed at 4 AM  
and the last telephone slammed at the wall in reply and the  
last furnished room emptied down to the last piece of  
mental furniture, a yellow paper rose twisted on a wire  
hanger in the closet, and even that imaginary, nothing but  
a hopeful little bit of hallucination – "*

Ginsberg wanted each line to be read in one breath, and if one attempts to read the previous one according to the poet's idea, he will realize very soon that it is extremely difficult to read such a long line in just one breath. When reading the lines one feels emotionally and mentally exhausted which is how *the best minds* felt. With regards to jazz, this line can be compared to any long saxophone solo. When improvising, the saxophone player is blowing a long phrase until he runs out of breath. Hence, in musical terms, this line can be seen as a challenge demonstrating the player's ability to "blow". In this line the poet employed various metapoetic references which are not elaborated, creating a picture of an exhausted writer who, because of his madness, had lost his capacities to write. However, he still finds a refuge in his imagination. The use of ellipsis: \*\*\*\*\* is connected to Ginsberg's heterodoxy and his detachment from traditionalism in poetry. Instead of writing fucked as he intended, the poet used asterisks and used to read the part as: asterisked. With this self-censorship Ginsberg played with irony and directed the listener's attention to the missing word. With the repetition of the catenative phrase *and the last*, Ginsberg built a rhythmical climax which ceases at the dash.

*"who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism,"*

The discourse on angelic insanity affirms itself through the metaphor from the line 31. Ginsberg associated capitalism with *narcotic tobacco haze* alluding that one can become dependent on capitalism just like a drug addict can get dependent on a drug. By destroying one own's body - material destruction, *the best minds* negate capitalism itself and even try to destroy it.

*"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,"*

Ginsberg envisions another ironic situation in which *the best minds* attempt to escape time but do not succeed and have to live the consequences the entire decade. Even though in some other lines they try to end their lives, this line hides the opposite ambition which they cannot fulfil: the desire to live. By *casting their ballot for Eternity outside of Time*, they want to transcend time and live extraordinary lives needing no afterlife or other lives.

*"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, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt  
waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat uplifting  
& especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, &  
hometown alleys too,"*

In line 43 Ginsberg mentions his former lover and a member of the Beat generation, Neal Cassady, calling him *the secret hero of these poems* and *Adonis of Denver* (allusion to his youth and beauty). The author remains faithful to himself by using verbless sequences which promote already syncopated rhythm. Unlike some other chains of images, such as the catalogue from line 64, this sequence of places is not difficult to deconstruct. With regards to

line 64, the enumeration used by the poet generates a saturated sequence of places and experiences:

*"who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to  
tender Buddha or Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to  
the black locomotive or Harvard to Narcissus to Woodlawn  
to the daisychain or grave,"*

Allusions and metaphors woven into this sequence of references can be separated in common or general ones and personal or peculiar ones. By fusing them together, Ginsberg managed to unite the material world with the spiritual. Members of the Beat generation used to go to Mexico where it was much easier to get in the possession of drugs and cultivate a drug habit, Rocky Mountains are a peaceful place where one can meditate and cultivate one's own spirituality. Apart from these allusions, other ones are rather difficult to decipher. By connecting Harvard to Narcissus, the author alludes to the egotism which rules the academia. As far as Woodlawn is concerned, one has to research it in order to understand its meaning for Ginsberg. Apparently his mother used to live close to the Woodlawn Cemetery which he linked to group sexual activity and a grave. With euphemism *to boys* he makes another allusion to homosexuality. A metaphor whose meaning will remain hidden is: *Southern Pacific to the black locomotive* which is by all means an utterly personal one. This line is also a proof of Ginsberg's approach to writing poetry by using the same poetic devices which are linked to the rhythm, a constituent element of *Howl*. By means of syntactic parallelism and different types of iteration which are traditional poetic devices in free verse poetry, Ginsberg achieved the rhythm of bebop jazz. Syntactic parallelism in this line is built on repetition of prepositions and noun phrases. Iteration on phonological level is employed retard the rhythm:

*"Pilgrim State's Rockland's and Greystone's foetid halls, bickering  
with the echoes of the soul, rocking and rolling in the  
midnight solitude-bench dolmen-realms of love, dream of life  
a nightmare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon,"*

Through the use of consonance: *Pilgrim/ Rockland's/ Greystone's/ bickering/ rocking/ rolling*, Ginsberg emphasized the theme of weariness and the lack of positive life energy. He closed the picture with a parenthesis which gives an insight into the soul and mind of patients in a psychiatric hospital. They have lost all hope in a new tomorrow and their bodies have become *heavy as the moon*. If in previous lines, *the best minds* were high and light, in this line they are anything but that. The simile employed suggests that they can never become light again, as if their state can only deteriorate. It also supports previously used metaphor: *echoes of the soul* which claims that they are fighting with something which does not exist anymore. Through an apostrophe in line 72 the poet addresses his compatriot and friend Carl Solomon whom he met in a mental institution:

*"ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you're  
really in the total animal soup of time –"*

For Ginsberg, Solomon was the best representative of his generation; he was mentally unstable but genius, the traits shared by the Beat generation members. Ginsberg's statement of solidarity reveals poet's fixation with Carl Solomon's fate. The line reports that all living beings are subjected to the continuous passage of time, and that humans, just like animals cannot transcend time. A longer dash at the end of line serves as a signal to make a longer pause when reading the poem. Unlike in the rest of the poem which is abundant with



information, in this line the meaning is concealed thus making it more personal and ambivalent. The poet used this dash as a syntactic ellipsis to validate his open-ended line. By dedicating the poem to Carl Solomon and making him the representative of *the best minds*, Ginsberg pinpointed the importance of their relationship. In the last two lines of the first section, Ginsberg concludes that despite their madness, they are able to save the world:

*"and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn  
shadow of the band and blew the suffering of America's  
naked mind for love into an eli eli lamma lamma sabachtani  
saxophone cry that shievered the cities down to the last radio"*

Through a metaphor: *reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz*, the poet associates jazz with a highly elaborated religious concept of reincarnation alluding to its divinity and demonstrating his own idolization of black jazz musicians. Later on *the best minds* play saxophones and manage to end the suffering of *America's naked mind* which can be understood as America's collective subconsciousness. Another image connecting both spiritual and material worlds: *eli eli lamma lamma sabachtani saxophone cry*, uses an Armaic phrase pronounced by Jesus when he was crucified on the cross meaning *My God, My God, Why have You forsaken Me?* Jesus' final words demonstrate his despair and his wailing due to being abandoned by God and helpless in his suffering. Nevertheless, he died for the spiritual salvation of the mankind. With the saxophone cry, *the best minds* take part in the intellectual salvation of *America's naked mind*.

*"with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their  
own bodies good to eat a thousand years."*

The last line of the first section ends with a point, resolving a theme which was elaborated in the first 78 lines of the poem. Through the metaphor: *the poem of life* the line reveals Ginsberg's poetic mission statement. According to him, a poet should describe reality. In line 75 he points out his main ideal when writing: *confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought*. This line continues with the theme of salvation which in the previous line is linked to jazz. The first thing that comes to mind when reading the last few words is the Holy Eucharist. Since it contains the Lord Christ, when consuming it we eat his body. The same can be said for this poem. It will save the world and continue to do so for the next thousand years.

The second section of the poem is a strong accusation of modern society, its greedy appetite and hypocrisy. It is a denunciation of everything that led to the imminent destruction of the best qualities of human nature. According to the poet we are dealing with materialism, conformism and mechanization (Pivano, 1971, 71-72). It answers the question what destroyed the best minds? The culprit he names throughout the section is *Moloch* – a false god from the Old Testament to whom children were sacrificed by putting them in the fire. *Moloch* is associated with war, destruction, government, capitalism and popular culture and with everything negative and bad. It is a cause of all the suffering and troubles in the world and the imminent alienation of society (Ivanišević, 1984, 37). In modern times, *Moloch* became a symbol of an autocratic and dictatorial state, or, as Ginsberg put it, contemporary America.

According to Ginsberg, modernity and conformism are the personification of *Moloch* and they are the main influences which made the American youth victims of the merciless system. Ginsberg constantly uses exclamation marks which give the whole section a rather aggressive tone infused with anger and pain. Just by taking a closer look to allusions in *Howl*, one can separate them into two groups, personal and public. By mixing those two facets,

Ginsberg's words seem stronger and more relevant. Instead of muses, he invokes his colleagues, friends and other poets making the full meaning deeply hidden. Because of the way Ginsberg used repetitions and syntactic parallelisms, when reading this section we get an impression that the person who wrote it was a prophet. This is the section in which Blake's prophetic and visionary stance is prevalent more than anywhere else in the poem.

Ginsberg starts this section with an interrogative sentence using the allusion of sphinx which was deemed a guardian of the souls, i.e. a guardian of the necropolis from evil. The sphinx was said to watch over everything that happened and that will happen thus representing an omniscient being. By associating sphinx with cement and aluminum, Ginsberg creates an image of a contraption-like creature. In this section he uses the same rhythm building devices as he used previously, meaning that he builds his theme or a solo on the first sentence.

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

After the first line which serves as a basis for the rhythm, Ginsberg continues with his fourteen-line-long solo. He repeats the word *Moloch* in almost every line, somewhere once while in other places up to six times. The repetition of the name *Moloch* can be connected to the repetition of the word *who* in the first section of *Howl*. In the language of jazz, these are called musical motives or musical patterns which are frequently repeated. In the tune *Lester Leaps In*, Lester Young repeats the same melodic pattern by paraphrasing it and placing it in different rhythmic situations. Both Young and Ginsberg knew why they were using the same technique. They wanted to make a point by repeating certain pattern while at the same time

avoid the effect of iterativeness. With the use of alliteration: *sphinx/ cement/ skulls*, Ginsberg accelerated the rhythm and made it more syncopated.

*"Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the loveless!  
Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy judger of men!"*

Although the solos are meant to be long, and Ginsberg's lines tend to be much longer than the one above, this particular line shows how he breaks his previously established pattern and embraces improvisation. Even if he comes back to the theme and repeats it throughout the line, it varies and this particular variation makes the poem fresh and dynamic. As far as the use of allusion is concerned, the equivalence in jazz would be when a musician improvises a phrase from somebody else which can be seen as a direct quotation. The notions of repetition and parallelism are also very prominent in the line.

*"Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose blood is  
running money! Moloch whose fingers are ten armies!  
Moloch whose breast is a cannibal dynamo! Moloch whose  
ear is a smoking tomb!"*

After taking a look at this line, one can note the obvious parallelism, or, in jazz language, the repetition of musical phrases. By using exclamatory sentences he makes the poem much more personal, it gives an impression that Ginsberg is screaming while composing these lines. This type of punctuation also makes a change in the rhythm which becomes agogic. Such rhythm also known as staccato is built by separated and distinct sentences. The repetition of the word *Moloch* reveals that it was of extreme importance to

Ginsberg to emphasize who was the main culprit for the madness of *the best minds*. With metaphors he linked particular body parts with negative notions and objects, basically the evil in the society which is represented by *Moloch*. He depicts people who lost their humanity for machinery, capitalists, and people who live for war. Two lines later he even mentions the hydrogen bomb, stating: *Moloch whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen!*

*"They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pavements,  
trees, radios, tons! Lifting the city to Heaven which exists  
and is everywhere about us!"*

In this line Ginsberg tries to explain the importance of poets and the objective of poetic endeavour. According to him, poets do their best to see beauty even in very dark and negative places such as the city which is a representation of everything unfavourable for a free soul to bloom and develop its full potential. The word repeated here is *Heaven* with a capital letter. For Ginsberg, *Heaven* means everything contrary to the reality of *the best minds*. *Heaven* holds the divine power, and an overall beatitude which is hardly reached in the material world.

*"Real holy laughter in the river! They saw it all! The wild eyes!  
the holy yells! They bade farewell! They jumped off the  
roof! to solitude! Waving carrying flowers! Down to  
the river! Into the street!"*

The last line of the second section of the poem has a rather syncopated rhythm because the sentence is segmented in smaller sections by the exclamation marks. In bebop this was

considered as innovative and desirable. The tune needed fluidity with some syncopated parts, but it all went down to the technique of improvisation and spontaneity. Since there were no strict rules, musicians could try new things. Ginsberg did the same, just in the field of poetry. By means of a metaphor *in the river* which he established in the third preceding line, Ginsberg emphasizes the passing of time and even people through psychiatric institutions. As a result of their testimony of the troublesome reality, they decide to *bade farewell*, some of them escape to eternity, others return in the same old routines and the poet to solitude. This specific metaphor *to solitude* makes a reference to poetic freedom, and to the nature of creative process, as well as to the solitude ensuing poetic commitment.

What Ginsberg wanted to transmit in this section is that people should emancipate and stop following Moloch, a force which becomes stronger because "we willingly, if blindly, participate in its authority" (Davidson, San Francisco 82, cited in Harris, 182).

*"Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland  
where you're madder than I am"*

The third section is a monologue intended for his friend Carl Solomon, a victim of general conditions of this new way of life (Ivanišević, 1984, 37). It answers the question, where? The author emphasizes his solidarity and brotherhood with Carl Solomon who is in Rockland, which is a New York mental institution. The entire section is written in the same syntactic pattern and by repeating the phrase: *I'm with you in Rockland*, Ginsberg builds the climax of the poem at an accelerating pace. This repetition can be compared to the theme of *Lester Leaps In*, in which the first motif is repeated and the endings of the phrases are different. The composition of a solo in bebop is usually monotonous – after a theme the tune includes the stringing of solos after which the theme is repeated one more time. That is why

the gradation is made in solos by starting the solo with simpler, shorter motifs and phrases and then developing the melody and the rhythm in order to enrich the solo. The same technique is found in this section which starts with very short lines which he gradually extends.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where you imitate the shade of my mother"*

In line 96 Ginsberg throws an allusion of his deceased mother who was also mentally ill and presents her as a shade. The repetition used in this section is: *I'm with you in Rockland* and is used as a basis for development of "the solos". This parallelism is used for both building the rhythm as well as emphasizing Ginsberg's brotherhood with Carl Solomon. By listening to the tune *Lester Leaps In*, one can notice that (1:30-1:38) the last four tacts in Lester Yung's solo are a rhythmic motif which he repeats at the end of the tune. This can be seen as some kind of analogy with *I'm with you in Rockland*. Similarly to second parts of Ginsberg's lines, Young implemented the same technique by ending his solos with a melodic phrase as if he was finishing a thought. At his point Count Basie enters with his solo on the piano, after which they alternate every two tacts, as if they are having a conversation which develops in a particular direction: it has a culmination and then goes down and after that it enters the same theme (2:32). A part of the rhythmic aspect of the section is also Ginsberg's omission of punctuation. By omitting it, Ginsberg suggests that Solomon is living in a parallel, unfamiliar world and that his line of thought is at odds with the convention.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where we are great writers on the same dreadful typewriter"*

The contradiction of this line is connected with poetry and their abilities to overcome difficulties when writing their works. Through this metapoetic notion Solomon and Ginsberg are depicted as creative and gifted no matter the condition they found themselves in. As mentioned in previous sections, the repetition of certain words or phrases can be linked to the repetition of the same rhythmic and melodic patterns or both in jazz music.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where the faculties of the skull no longer admit the worms  
of the senses"*

With a vivid metaphor Ginsberg delivers one of the most dreadful images since the beginning of the poem. Because of their madness, their poetic capacities are reduced and they became even more deranged. The metaphor: *worms of the senses* suggests that their obsessions debilitated their poetic abilities.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where you accuse your doctors of insanity and plot the  
Hebrew socialist revolution against the fascist national  
Golgotha"*

Through allusions: *Hebrew socialist revolution* and *fascist national Golgotha*, the poem generates an image of *the best minds* fighting against the "squares" or the conservative, i.e. bourgeois mentality. Since Ginsberg was a leftist and a Jew, he built an image of opposing meanings amplifying the notion of fascism by connecting it to Golgotha, a place of Jesus' crucifixion. Concerning the rhythm, Ginsberg builds it with the use of consonance:



*socialist/ revolution/ fascist/ national* which works in accordance with verbless phrases of the second part of the line slowing down the pace.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where there are twentyfive-thousand mad comrades all  
together singing the final stanzas of the Internationale"*

In line 109 *the best minds* sing the Internationale, a revolutionary song composed in France in the late 19th century tackling the notion of equality which *needs other laws* and asserting that *the world is about to change its foundation* and that *the State oppresses and the law cheats* (Pottier, 1871). Because of its themes and its symbol of a revolution led by the workers, it became an anthem of the Communist movement. By employing this allusion in this particular context, Ginsberg created an image of madmen enclosed in a psychiatric institution longing for freedom. They are convinced that freedom is near and by participating in this belief they place themselves in their own mental prison.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*Where we hug and kiss the United States, under our  
bedsheets the United States that coughs all night and won't  
let us sleep"*

Under an explicit image of love-making, line 110 reveals a more symbolic meaning. The United States is not only personified because it *coughs and won't let us sleep* but it is used as a basis for the metaphor. Alluding to the troublesome and egoistic nature of the United States it asserts that the United States seeks attention of both Solomon and the author.

As far as the repetition of *the United States* is concerned, it maintains the fleeting rhythm established in the first line of the section.

*"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"*

The omission of conjunctions accelerates the rhythm of the poem as if it were to reach a peak. The image portrays Solomon as a free-spirited individual who does not stop playing the piano although it does not sound pleasing. Regardless his absent-mindedness, the line states that Solomon should not be barred in such a horrid place which is *said to be an armed madhouse*. According to Ginsberg it restricts free-spirited and ingenuous people, such as Solomon, to live happy and fulfilled lives.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*where we wake up electrified out of the coma by our own*

*souls' airplanes roaring over the roof they've come to drop*

*angelic bombs the hospital illuminates itself imaginary*

*walls collapse O skinny legions run outside O starry-*

*spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is here O victory*

*forget your underwear we're free"*

By continuing with the omission of conjunctions and punctuation, Ginsberg builds his rhythm which always works in accordance with the theme of the line. Indeed, it is this line

that delineates the climax of the poem which in jazz terms is a concrete, striking motif that the soloist plays when the solo is already developed to some extent. It is built through short to lengthier phrases, which is exactly what Ginsberg did in this section. The repetition of the exclamatory *O*, can be connected to the invocations of poetic inspirations. According to the author, the real life lies in the mind and the oxymoron *angelic bombs* supports this opinion. *Angelic bombs* can be seen as a flash of reality which frees the person who is imprisoned in his own illusions, i.e. a flash of the perception of a wider reality. *Imaginary walls*, or in simpler terms, walls of illusions and obstacles, collapse while they gain the insight into the real state of things. The *shock of mercy* is what liberates them. It is a merciful shock that brings knowledge which is not so enjoyable in the beginning but becomes liberating and implies the spreading of awareness which gives the feeling of relief and freedom. Since they gained their victory and are finally free, they do not need their underwear because freedom is more important than to hide their most delicate parts and to be ashamed because of their nudity.

*"I'm with you in Rockland*

*in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-journey on the*

*highway across America in tears to the door of my cottage*

*in the Western night"*

The poem ends with a picture from Ginsberg's dream in which Solomon walks across America to find Ginsberg's cottage where they will meet again. This image is among the most important because it stresses their brotherhood and shows us a different world, the world in which love and solidarity are the main codes of conduct. In the last line Ginsberg omits the word *where* which he used in all the previous lines. Thus, he makes a completely new solo

without any repetition from the previous ones. Although he concludes the section with some kind of resolution, he does not use period implying that this is not the poem's ending and that another section is coming.

While the first three parts of the poem seem to be a mixture of public and political events on one side and Ginsberg's personal experiences on the other, the *Footnote to Howl* is strikingly personal.

The fourth part or the *Footnote to Howl* is a comment saying that *the best minds* can overcome their defeats and sufferings through love for things which are holy to men. The author stresses that everything is holy, from a madman to the soul, implying that existence itself is sacred. The poem as a whole expresses a genuine faith in life. Although these anxious exclamations from *Rockland* are a howl of the belief in the sacredness of life, the form of this section is similar to the exclamations of the second section in which he elaborated the theme of *Moloch*.

*"Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!  
Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!"*

The author implemented a Blakean theme from "*The Song of Liberty*" which states that "*every living thing is holy*" and used it as a basis for his improvisations (Bloom, 1971, 33-44). Since the improvisation in music is a mixture of a repetition of something that you already know while inserting something of your own, this elaboration of a theme is very much associated to music. The repetition of a single word through exclamatory units in the opening line of the *Footnote to Howl* serves as a fine example of Ginsberg's breaking of his previously established patterns and of him embracing improvisation. Throughout the entire section he repeats the motif of the theme: *Holy* and continues to elaborate it in his own way. It should

also be noted that although the poet was inspired by the tune *Lester Leaps in*, just like he was inspired by *The Song of Liberty*, he took certain concepts from those work and played with them as he wanted. Hence, he did not follow strictly the tune or the poem but employed their ideas within the context of his poem. With regards to jazz, he used the concepts associated to the rhythm and phrasing in bebop.

*"Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is holy!  
everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an angel!"*

In the third line of the *Footnote to Howl*, Ginsberg states that everything is holy, promoting his statement from the previous line in which he asserts that the soul and the nose are as holy as cock and asshole. He even associates men with Angels, implying their purity and their divine nature. The poet continues with the use of syntactic parallelism and extends his solos from verbless into five independent clauses.

*"The bum's as holy as the seraphim! the madman is holy as you my  
soul are holy!"*

After the first implementation of the Blakean theme from *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, Ginsberg uses another allusion from the same work by the English poet. This time he makes an allusion to one of the *Proverbs of Hell* in which Blake states that *"The road of excess leads to the place of wisdom"* placing once again experience and passion hand in hand with spirituality and divinity (Bloom, 1971, 33-44).

According to Ginsberg, *the bum* and *the madman* are wise and holy because by living in some kind of excess, they managed to manifest their desires, overcome them and realize

that all that exists is the manifestation of holiness. By connecting two contradictory things such as *bum* which is linked to the material and *seraphim* which is linked to the spiritual with the notion of holiness, Ginsberg enhanced his statement that everything in the world is holy. In the following line he employs two metapoetic references: *typewriter* and *poem* which, according to him, are as holy as the *voice* and the *hearers*.

*"Holy Peter holy Allen holy Solomon holy Lucie holy Kerouac  
holy Huncke holy Burroughs holy Cassady holy the unknown  
buggered and suffering beggars holy the hideous human  
angels!"*

In line 6 of the *Footnote to Howl*, the poet balances the syncopated rhythm by means of a consonance: *buggered/ suffering/ beggars* and alliteration: *hideous/ human*. By revealing names of his friends and members of the Beat generation, Ginsberg continued to reveal his most intimate aspects of his life. Peter Orlovsky who was his lifelong partner, Allen as himself, Carl Solomon his friend from the psychiatric hospital, Lucien Karr, Jack Kerouac, Herbert Huncke, William Burroughs and Neal Cassady who were all the members of the Beat generation. Through an oxymoron he associates *hideous humans* to *angels* implying that even the most hideous members of the society are as pure and holy as the angels in Heaven. In the following line he reveals that his *mother is in the insane asylum*, as if the poem could not get any more personal.

*"Holy the groaning saxophone! Holy the bop apocalypse! Holy the  
jazzbands marijuana hipsters peace & junk & drums!"*

Although the author is aware of the fact that the era of bebop has already passed, according to him *the bop apocalypse* is holy because it implies that bebop existed. Hence, he is not sad but is celebrating the fact that bebop occurred. He proves his infatuation with saxophone players and jazzbands as well as drugs, peace and hipsters. Apart from the syntactic parallelism created by means of verbless phrases present throughout most of the section, the poet opted for consonance: *holy/ hipsters/ jazzbands/ junk* to develop saturated rhythm in accordance with the cumulative style of the line.

*"Holy the lone juggernaut! Holy the vast lamb of the middle-class! Holy the crazy shepherds of rebellion! Who digs Los Angeles IS Los Angeles!"*

In this line the author used two Christian allusions, the allusion of *lamb* which can be associated with Jesus, and the allusion of the *shepherd* which draws upon strong religious symbolism. The shepherd is God himself, as he is the shepherd of his flock, the shepherd of the people of Israel. Since Jesus was also a martyr, *the vast lamb of the middle-class* can be understood as image of "the squares", or the common people who are ruining their minds and souls for their God of capitalism and conformism – *Moloch*. They do it for the superficial comfort brought on by the suppression of the individualism and one's identity. After this image he glorifies the necessity of rebellion in life by portraying the rebels as crazy guides who watch over their flock.

*"Holy New York Holy San Francisco Holy Peoria & Seattle Holy Paris Holy Tangiers Holy Moscow Holy Istanbul!"*

Another verbless line in which he enumerates things is rather peculiar because some of the allusions he throws are extremely personal. Subsequently, the meaning of the line remains ambiguous. However, some of the meaning can be understood. For example, Ginsberg used to live in New York, he performed *Howl* for the very first time in San Francisco and was a member of San Francisco Renaissance, and William Burroughs moved to Tangiers where he was able to develop his drug habit.

*"Holy time in eternity holy eternity in time holy the clocks in space  
holy the fourth dimension holy the fifth International holy  
the Angel in Moloch!"*

In the first section *the best minds* were fighting time. They wanted to transcend it but did not succeed. Nevertheless, with contrasting images: *time in eternity*, *eternity in time* and *clocks in space*, Ginsberg deduces that time is holy because it is relative. With the oxymoron: *Angel in Moloch*, Ginsberg celebrates *the best minds* because they are living in the world ruled by *Moloch*. The use of the word *Moloch* which he previously mentioned and elaborated in the second section of the poem can be linked to jazz, in particular when the player elaborates a theme but comes back to a certain motif that he played before and inserts it in his solo.

*"Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Ours! bodies!  
suffering! magnanimity!"*

This line is like some kind of a prayer. By the use of short exclamatory units he is praying for forgiveness, faith and charity invoking magnanimity in his life. On the other hand,



it can be interpreted as the best minds are suffering in the psychiatric institution, but have faith and believe in mercy, charity and magnanimity. As far as the rhythm is concerned, he built it through verbless phrases, syntactic parallelism and consonance: *forgiveness/ faith/ mercy/ magnanimity* which promote that irregular, uneven cadence.

*"Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent kindness of the soul!"*

The last line of the *Footnote to Howl* is the essence of the entire poem. This verbless sentence asserts that the soul is kind, dear and loving. Such a soul shelters love, and because love is a supreme intelligence it overcomes the power of *Moloch*, psychiatry, mental jail, time, basically everything which brings any kind of hardship to a person.

With the employment of a vast array of allusions and symbols: religious, mythological and those from the popular culture, he managed to merge private with public.

## 2. Bob Dylan's poetics

The poets of the Beat generation valued equally the written as well as the spoken word due to the fact that Ginsberg, along with other poets of the movement, used to read their poems. When reading *Howl*, Ginsberg concentrated on the rhythm, reading it in a complex rhythmic pattern. Such an approach suggested that he wanted his poem to be listened to, rather than read. Later on, the Beat generation poets started to perform with jazz accompaniment. The interplay of high and popular culture can be noted in Ginsberg's and Dylan's poetics and performance. Ginsberg's "haunting mix of surreal vision and social comment finds its equivalent in the songs of Bob Dylan. Ginsberg even invokes '*Angelic Dylan singing across the airwaves*' in *Wichita Vortex Sutra*, as the prophet of a redemptive language, needed to subvert the dominant vocabulary of war and waste" (Gray, 1989, 315). Jazz, poetry and rock music were all constituent elements of the counterculture of the 40's, the 50's and the 60's which is why their members shared the same ideas of an alternative America.

What attracted Dylan in the early 1960s to the Beat poetry was their appropriation of the improvisation which inspired him to fully express himself. Dylan's friendship with Allen Ginsberg started at a Boxing Day party in 1963 (Frank, 2011, 215). Since Dylan was 22 and Ginsberg was 37 years old at the time, they immediately established a father-son relationship. They were very close friends and their works show how much they influenced each other. Dylan considered Ginsberg as "holy" and Ginsberg considered Dylan as "an angel". While Ginsberg wove Dylan's name in his *Wichita Vortex Sutra*, Dylan cited Ginsberg's name in his song "Every Time I Go To Town". Moreover, Ginsberg's photo can be found on the back cover of Dylan's album "Bringing It All Back Home" from 1965 as well as in the video for "Subterranean Homesick Blues" from the same year. The title of the song was an allusion to Jack Kerouac's prose work entitled *The Subterraneans* from 1958. Dylan also collaborated

with Ginsberg on a couple of songs in his poem and song collection "Holy Soul Jelly Roll" among which "Vomit Express" from 1971 gained particular recognition (Axelrod, 2007, 17 and Donnelly, 2011, 132). In late 1965, Bob Dylan gave Ginsberg money with which he purchased a tape recorder on which he composed his *Wichita Vortex Sutra*. Three weeks after Bob Dylan had his motorcycle accident Allen Ginsberg visited him and brought him a couple of books: Rimbaud, Blake, Dickinson and Shelley (Sanders, 2009, 69-73). Ginsberg was a part of the Rolling Thunder Revue, a concert tour in the fall of 1975 and in the spring of 1976, during which they visited Jack Kerouac's tomb, where they sang and read his poetry. The tour resulted in the film "Renaldo and Clara" in which Ginsberg acted alongside Bob Dylan, Joann Baez and other members of the band.

Bob Dylan always acknowledged the works of the Beat generation as inspiring in their content and form which he borrowed for his songs. He also continues to emphasize that Ginsberg was: "Probably the biggest singular influence on American poetry after Walt Whitman" (Šindolić, 113). Dylan's lyrics are influenced by the poetry and by the recurring themes of Ginsberg's poems and by the Kerouac's 242 stanzas long poem *Mexico City Blues*. By taking the energy of the Beat generation poetry, and putting it in rock music, Dylan managed to have a greater impact on the masses. He continued where beatniks started, influencing the 1960's youth by spreading the idea of freedom, pacifism and by denouncing society's rigid norms and fallacious values (Bevilacqua, 1996, 43).

In this protest song "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall", written in 1962, the Beat generation and especially Ginsberg's poetics resonate to the point that when Ginsberg heard it for the first time he wept because "it seemed that the torch had been passed to another generation" (Scorsese, 2005). According to Bob Dylan, he wrote the song during the Cuban Missile Crisis and since he did not know how long he might live, he used all the titles of the songs he wanted to write and made a song out of them. This is why each line could be the

start of a whole new song (Goldberg, 2002, 26). However, in an interview from 1963, he stated that the song does not talk about the atomic rain and that "it's just a hard rain. It isn't the fallout rain. I mean some sort of end that's just gotta happen" (Cott, 2006, 7). The apocalyptic, symbolic question and answer technique evokes both political and poetic images.

Each of five stanzas starts with a rhetorical question addressed to "*my blue-eyed son*" and "*my darling young one*" after which follows the answer in the first person singular and the refrain. The song's question and answer form is similar to *Lord Randall*, the traditional Anglo-Scottish ballad from the seventeenth century, but the themes, the message and other syntactic devices are that of *Howl*.

*"Oh, where have you been, my blue-eyed son?*

*Oh, where have you been, my darling young one?*

*I've stumbled on the side of twelve misty mountains*

*I've walked and I've crawled on six crooked highways*

*I've stepped in the middle of seven sad forests*

*I've been out in front of a dozen dead oceans*

*I've been ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard*

*And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, and it's a hard*

*And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall."*

In the first stanza Dylan sets the tone of the song which is gloomy and apocalyptic. In *Howl* Ginsberg confesses that he "*saw the best minds of my generation starving hysterical naked...*" while in "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall" the lyric voice of the song admits of being a testimony to the bitter and sorrowful reality of the world. While Ginsberg's apostrophe in *Howl* with which he addresses his dear friend Carl Solomon is quite personal, Dylan's

apostrophe is even more so because it is the father who is addressing his son, his dearest one. From the images of *"seven sad forests"* and *"dozen dead oceans"* one can conclude that even nature is suffering because of the greedy individuals who show no respect for what they consider to be obstacles in their way. *"Ten thousand miles"* could be an approximation of Earth's equatorial diameter which is almost eight thousand miles but the author rounded the number for practical reasons. The metaphor *"ten thousand miles in the mouth of a graveyard"* can thus be interpreted as the entire Earth being a cemetery. Another recurring element which can also be found in *Howl* is syntactic parallelism and repetitions which emphasize the theme and the atmosphere of the song. The most prominent repetition is the one at the beginning of the line which emulates Ginsberg's *"who"*. As far as the title and the refrain are considered, the ungrammaticality can be linked to the jargon used in *Howl*. Although Dylan uses rhyme at the end of the lines, the number of lines in the stanzas is not fixed and as the song proceeds, the use of the rhyme is less and less evident.

*"Oh, what did you see, my blue-eyed son?"*

*Oh, what did you see, my darling young one?*

*I saw a newborn baby with wild wolves all around it*

*I saw a highway of diamonds with nobody on it*

*I saw a black branch with blood that kept drippin'*

*I saw a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin'*

*I saw a white ladder all covered with water*

*I saw ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken*

*I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children*

*And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard*

*And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall"*

The second stanza is such a clear reference to *Howl* which can be seen from the repetitive use of anaphora: *I saw* which invokes the rhythm of the Psalms of the Old Testament. With regard to metaphors: "*A newborn baby with wild wolves all around it*" is an image of a naive child surrounded by predators. Because the child is single and helpless the wolves can do whatever they want to, and we can only imagine what will happen to the child. Moreover, it symbolizes Christ against the sins of the world. With a metaphor "*a highway of diamonds with nobody on it*" Dylan alluded to a truth concerning salvation brought by the newborn baby Jesus. A striking image of "*a black branch with blood that kept drippin*" can be connected with lynchings which were recorded into the 1960s, nature's suffering caused by the reign of men or a territory affected by war. Neither of the interpretations is a positive one but rather dark and fatalistic. Dylan continues with another image in which the lyric subject bore witness to a scene of "*a room full of men with their hammers a-bleedin*". Behind the image which evokes men who won a war and are proudly exhibiting their hammers, lies another critique of violence and warfare which throughout the entire human history never ceased. "*White ladder all covered in water*" can be interpreted as a ladder of hope, peace and progress. However, because the ladder is wet, it disables the climber to get out of mud or to reach certain goals or ideals in life. With the image of "*ten thousand talkers whose tongues were all broken*" he alludes to their crushed spirits. They used to talk and to transmit their knowledge or to criticize but they cannot do it anymore because they have lost all their hopes. "*I saw guns and sharp swords in the hands of young children*" states that it is not the adults or the old people who go to wars but rather young ones and that there are even children among them. Dylan asserts that children are supposed to play and to live in serene environment and war is at the opposite spectrum of that notion.

*"And what did you hear, my blue-eyed son?  
And what did you hear, my darling young one?  
I heard the sound of a thunder that roared out a warnin'  
I heard the roar of a wave that could drown the whole world  
I heard one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazin'  
I heard ten thousand whisperin' and nobody listenin'  
I heard one person starve, I heard many people laughin'  
Heard the song of a poet who died in the gutter  
Heard the sound of a clown who cried in the alley  
And it's a hard, and it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall."*

The third stanza makes an overall critique of the world. In the second and third line of the stanza, Dylan has woven apocalyptic images connected to natural disasters which could end the world. However, *"one hundred drummers whose hands were a-blazin'"* does come back to the previous stanza and can be interpreted as drummers who are announcing the war. Their hands are blazing because they are trying to maintain the intensity of the war which spread across the Globe. After a striking image of a person starving while others do not care and are even laughing, Dylan makes a direct reference to Ginsberg's *Howl* and *the best minds of his generation* who are artists and thinkers belonging to the Beat generation. *"The song of a poet who died in the gutter"* is thus a song by one of *the best minds* of the Beat generation. Dylan develops his "chain of images" with that of *"the sound a clown who cried in the alley"*. These contrasting images demonstrate the hopelessness of the common people and the cruelty of the reality ruled by the corrupted and soulless individuals. The refrain *"And it's a hard, and*

*it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard/ And it's a hard rain's a-gonna fall.*" can be associated to Ginsberg's repetition of the word "*Moloch*" in the second section of the poem.

*"Oh, what did you meet, my blue-eyed son?*

*And who did you meet, my darling young one?*

*I met a young child beside a dead pony*

*I met a white man who walked a black dog*

*I met a young woman whose body was burning*

*I met a young girl, she gave me a rainbow*

*I met one man who was wounded in love*

*I met another man who was wounded with hatred*

*And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard*

*It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall."*

The fourth stanza is full of images of disoriented people under the burden of hopelessness. Each line strikes the listener because of the way Dylan used the juxtaposition of images that he found in *Howl*. "*A young child beside a dead pony*" is the first image of the stanza in which Dylan used both symbols of innocence and youth and connected them to death. Thus, the little child is faced with death and depravity from an early age and cannot live the early years in happiness and calm. "*A white man who walked a black dog*" can be associated with the racism which was still happening in the 1960's America. According to Dylan, there are people who treat African-Americans as animals, which is another image of violence and injustice. With the metaphor "*a young woman whose body was burning*" Dylan depicted a woman who is being oppressed and is trying to fight for a better life but she does not know how to focus her energy. This is why she is burning with passion but burns out



without any accomplishment. The only image which brings some light into the song is that of *a young girl who gave him a rainbow*. However, the two following lines break that idyllic picture by depicting people wounded in love and in hatred, continuing with images of suffering and hopelessness.

*"And what'll you do now, my blue-eyed son?  
And what'll you do now, my darling young one?  
I'm a-goin' back out 'fore the rain starts a-fallin'  
I'll walk to the depths of the deepest dark forest  
Where the people are many and their hands are all empty  
Where the pellets of poison are flooding their waters  
Where the home in the valley meets the damp dirty prison  
And the executioner's face is always well-hidden  
Where hunger is ugly, where souls are forgotten  
Where black is the color, where none is the number  
And I'll tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it  
And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it  
Then I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'  
But I'll know my song well before I start singin'  
And it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard, it's a hard  
It's a hard rain's a-gonna fall."*

It is the last line in which Dylan offers a possible solution and because of its final statement, it can be associated to the *Footnote to Howl*. It goes back to the metaphors and allusions elaborated in the first four stanzas which illustrate deprivation, be it material or spiritual. He says that he will go back before the rain starts to fall and share his knowledge

with everyone: he will go to the forest which he previously connected with blood and sadness and he will go to the people who are hungry, hopeless and in suffering. In 1963 Dylan said: "In the last verse, when I say the pellets of poison are flooding their waters that means all the lies that people get told on their radios and in their newspapers." (Cott, 2006, 7-9). In the second following line he develops the argument on the media even further by saying: *And the executioner's face is always well-hidden*. The executioners are the politicians, the bankers, the generals, i.e. those having the power. Thus, Dylan takes the position of a prophet who will transmit the wisdom and the experience to the world. He states that he will *tell it and think it and speak it and breathe it/ And reflect it from the mountain so all souls can see it*, so that people become free of all the lies. Some admirers of Dylan's poetry claim that the line: *I'll stand on the ocean until I start sinkin'* is an allusion to the Bible and that it means that he will speak about it and share his knowledge until he loses all of his faith and hope. This Biblical allusion is yet another proof of the connection between the song and Ginsberg's poem which is replete with Biblical imagery and symbolism: *Heaven, angels, seraphim, Moloch*.

Although the first three stanzas tend to rhyme, the last two are not invariably rhymic. The lines in the stanzas also vary without any particular pattern: the first being nine lines long, the second and the third eleven lines, the fourth ten while the last one extends to sixteen lines. It demonstrates Dylan's freedom of expression and the tendency to not limit himself with rules, something he could have noticed in the works of the Beat generation. Along with the numbers linked to dispirited images emphasizing the extent of the despair, which make the song even more depressing, Dylan (just like Ginsberg) used heavy adjectives which support the tone of suffering and hopelessness.

Another Dylan song which is considered a beat poem is *Masters of War* (Ungaretti and Romano, 1970, 561). Just like Ginsberg's *Howl*, this protest song, written in the winter of 1962, strongly criticizes society and the power-wielders. Although the song was written

during the political situation known as ‘The Bay of Pigs’, the title of the song could be seen as a reference to line 6 of Ginsberg’s poem in which the poet mentions *scholars of war*. The poem’s eight stanzas share the same rhyme pattern: ABCB which is never broken. The way Dylan performs his song is more similar to a recitation than to singing and can be linked to coffee house poetry readings which he used to attend during those years, and subsequently to Ginsberg’s performances.

*"Come you masters of war*

*You that build the big guns*

*You that build the death planes*

*You that build all the bombs*

*You that hide behind walls*

*You that hide behind desks*

*I just want you to know*

*I can see through your masks"*

Dylan starts his song by addressing *the masters of war*, and then describing who they are in the five following lines, just like Ginsberg did in the first section of *Howl* when he portrayed *the best minds of his generation*. With the anaphora and syntactic parallelism woven into the stanza, he once more demonstrates Ginsberg’s influence regarding the form of his song. The theme of the common man, i.e. the square against *the best minds* and the denunciation of the mechanization are also amply elaborated in *Howl*, especially in the second section of the poem. He continues where Ginsberg started and takes a stance on hypocrisy of the war-making individuals. Moreover, throughout the song he makes it clear that he is right and they are wrong and this is why he wants *the masters of war* to hear his voice of discord.

*"You that never done nothin'*

*But build to destroy*

*You play with my world*

*Like it's your little toy*

*You put a gun in my hand*

*And you hide from my eyes*

*And you turn and run farther*

*When the fast bullets fly"*

The entire second stanza describes what *the masters of war* do and how they embody the hypocrisy in warfare. While they are the ones to put guns in people's hands, they are not the ones to fight alongside but are hiding when the war actually starts. Dylan objectifies any type of engagement in war, but here he also alludes to the forced participation in it. As previously said, in *Howl* the denunciation of war, machinery and warfare is found in the second section. While Ginsberg associates *Moloch* with all the injustice in the world, Dylan focuses on just one theme and expands it throughout the song. Although to a lesser extent than in "A Hard Rain's A-Gonna Fall", Dylan uses the agrammatical structures such as: *you that never done nothin'* which can be linked to Ginsberg's employment of jargon.

*"Like Judas of old*

*You lie and deceive*

*A world war can be won*

*You want me to believe*

*But I see through your eyes*

*And I see through your brain*

*Like I see through the water*

*That runs down my drain”*

With a Biblical allusion of Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus by a kiss, Dylan reinforces the theme of the deceitfulness and treachery because of a personal interest and profit. The same use of allusions which emphasize the meaning or add another layer to it can be found in *Howl*. Although *the masters of war* are trying to persuade him that you can win a war, he states that he can see through their eyes and their minds just like he can see through a clear water. According to Dylan, it is highly questionable whether any war can be won. Can we celebrate victory after destructing the nature and losing human lives? And, is that victory plausible? Strong dualism is employed in order to show his disdain for the politicians and weapon manufacturers who see profit in warfare and do not care about the devastating consequences of it.

*”You fasten all the triggers*

*For the others to fire*

*Then you set back and watch*

*When the death count gets higher*

*You hide in your mansion’*

*While the young people’s blood*

*Flows out of their bodies*

*And is buried in the mud”*

The strength of the images in the fourth stanza can be associated to the frankness and directness of Ginsberg's style of writing. Both the poet and the songwriter do not try to depict the reality in a more likable or milder way, but exert a greater impact on the audience by portraying it as it is, harsh and violent. Continuing with his denouncing of the hypocrisy, Dylan uses the contrasting imagery of *the masters of war* living their easygoing lives in their comfortable mansions while the young people in war are constantly dying. He also stresses the fact that it is not the adults or the old ones who are fighting in wars but young people who should be carrying the country in a new direction.

*"You've thrown the worst fear*

*That can ever be hurled*

*Fear to bring children*

*Into the world*

*For threatening my baby*

*Unborn and unnamed*

*You ain't worth the blood*

*That runs in your veins"*

In this stanza, Dylan verbalizes his fear of bringing children into the world. He is concerned that the world will become dehumanized and unpleasant to live on due to the warmongers who do not care about anything except their profit. Dylan asserts that because he is rethinking having children, those people should not be living, but should be dead. As regards the form, he continues to use agrammatical structures such as: *"you ain't worth the blood/ that runs in your veins"*. In the following stanza he goes back to the use of repetition which he employs as a means to emphasize his stance.

*"How much do I know  
To talk out of turn  
You might say that I'm young  
You might say I'm unlearned  
But there's one thing I know  
Though I'm younger than you  
Even Jesus would never  
Forgive what you do"*

This stanza supports his previous images stating that although he is younger than the warmongers, he knows that even Jesus who died for the sins of the entire humanity, could not forgive them even if they repented. Not only does he use iteration at the beginning of the third and fourth line by repeating the phrase "You might say", but he also repeats certain words throughout the stanza: *I know, young*. By repeating these words he makes his statement even stronger.

*"Let me ask you one question  
Is your money that good  
Will it buy you forgiveness  
Do you think that it could  
I think you will find  
When your death takes its toll  
All the money you made  
Will never buy back your soul"*

The previous stanza connects the warfare with capitalism, another notion criticized in Ginsberg's *Howl*. He is aware that they do have money and asks them whether they think that it could erase their sins. In a stream of consciousness manner, he asserts that it could not happen because of the severity of their actions. Dylan draws to the last two lines of the *Footnote to Howl* in which Ginsberg glorifies the holiness of forgiveness, mercy, charity, faith and kindness of the soul. However, although Dylan agrees with Ginsberg, he makes his stance using harsher imagery and words.

*"And I hope that you die*

*And your death'll come soon*

*I will follow your casket*

*In the pale afternoon*

*And I'll watch while you're lowered*

*Down to your deathbed*

*And I'll stand over your grave*

*'Til I'm sure that you're dead"*

The last stanza illustrates the ending of the warmongers and a new hope which can be attained only after all of them have died. When they die, he will be there to make sure that hypocrisy and greed do not continue to live after their death.

Just like *Howl* did in the previous decade, "Masters of War" was denouncing the values of the power-wielders. This anti-establishment song reveals the hypocrisy hiding behind money, power and profit, which are the real reasons why the wars take place.



### 3. Patti Smith's poetics

Before becoming a rock musician in 1974, Patti Smith was only a poet who used to read her poems at a Poetry Project in New York. It is there that she met the members of the Beat Generation who have guided and inspired her work (Kane, 2012, 107-108). From 1970 until 1972 Smith was exclusively writing poetry while learning from her teacher William S. Burroughs and other Beat writers. The transition from reading poetry to a rock performance happened when she started to read her poetry to an electric guitar accompaniment which is how she entered the music scene. She admired Rimbaud and the Beat writers as well as Bob Dylan, Jim Morrison and Mick Jagger. Not only was she fascinated by their work but also with their personas of earthly but saintly outcasts (Smith, 2000, 176-178). She too decided to take that persona and develop it in a more poetic direction. After entering the music scene she had to explain that although she was singing her pieces, she did not consider them songs but poems. She was determined to bring poetry to rock and roll as well as rock and roll to poetry (Kane, 2012, 117-118 and Smith, 2000, 175).

Smith and Ginsberg met in 1969 and although Smith was twenty years younger than Ginsberg they immediately became very close friends who shared the same passion for poetry, especially Blake, Whitman and Rimbaud. In an interview from 2013 Patti Smith confessed that she was lucky because the Beat writers liked her: *"they all took me in hand and taught me things about poetry and we did many readings together. I read with William in Amsterdam and in a lot of other places, and Allen and I did a lot of anti-war work right up to the end of his life"*

[http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts\\_ents/13116733.Allen\\_Ginsberg\\_and\\_me\\_punk\\_legend\\_Patti\\_Smith\\_talks\\_to\\_Barry\\_Didcock/](http://www.heraldscotland.com/arts_ents/13116733.Allen_Ginsberg_and_me_punk_legend_Patti_Smith_talks_to_Barry_Didcock/)).

As far as Bob Dylan's relationship with Patti Smith is concerned, they met before Smith became a famous rock musician and she joined him on "Paradise Lost Tour" in 1995.

One of the finest examples of Ginsberg's legacy in Patti Smith's opus is the single "Piss Factory" which is an autobiographical poem from Smith's first album. The poem discusses Smith's experience in a factory producing children's buggies which she considered as a kind of a prison. Because of her family situation she had to work in the factory for two consequent summers even though the paycheck was very low and the conditions poor (<http://www.oceanstar.com/patti/intervus/960622g.htm>). The poem is divided in two stanzas, first being fifteen lines while second being sixty-five lines long. The opening lines place the listener in the situation which is going to be elaborated throughout the poem.

*"Sixteen and time to pay off  
I got this job in a piss factory inspecting pipe  
Forty hours thirty-six dollars a week  
But it's a paycheck, Jack.  
It's so hot in here, hot like Sahara  
You could faint in the heat  
But these bitches are just too lame to understand  
Too goddamned grateful to get this job  
To know they're getting screwed up the ass  
All these women they got no teeth or gum or cranium  
And the way they suck hot sausage  
But me well I wasn't sayin' too much neither  
I was moral school girl hard-working asshole  
I figured I was speedo motorcycle  
I had to earn my dough, had to earn my dough"*

Although the salary is small, Smith has to convince her friend that at least she has a job. She continues on to describe the conditions which the workers have to face on a daily basis. With a simile she compares the heat in the factory to the Sahara desert, a hot, dry place which is unwelcoming to men. She does not consider herself as being a part of the common people, i.e. "the squares" placing herself on the opposite side of the spectrum, something she could have seen in Ginsberg's *Howl*. She criticizes the capitalist system which oppresses the workers and treats them like animals because of the profit. Another notion taken from *Howl* is the language which is rough and replete with dirty words which intensify her anger and dissatisfaction with the system. Although she needs money, and is working hard for it, she cannot relate with her co-workers. Apart from the sexual allusion which she uses with a pejorative connotation in order to show her repulsion towards the women in the factory, Smith also describes herself as a *"hard-working asshole"*. Just like Ginsberg and Dylan, she too uses the jargon and the street language. While Dylan is more drawn to rhyme, Smith embraces the free verse form which does not limit her. As a consequence, she builds her rhythm with the use of the repetitions and consonance, just like Ginsberg did when writing his poem.

*"But no you gotta, you gotta (relate, babe,)*

*You gotta find the rhythm within*

*Floor boss slides up to me and he says*

*"Hey sister, you just movin' too fast,*

*You screwin' up the quota,*

*You doin' your piece work too fast,*

*Now you get off your Mustang, Sally*

*You ain't goin' nowhere, you ain't goin' nowhere."*

*I lay back. I get my nerve up. I take a swig of Romilar*

*And walk up to hot shit Dot Hook and I say*

*"Hey, hey sister it don't matter whether I do labor fast or slow,*

*There's always more labor after."*

*She's real Catholic, see. She fingers her cross and she says*

*"There's one reason. There's one reason.*

*You do it my way or I push your face in.*

*We knee you in the john if you don't get off your get off your Mustang, Sally,*

*If you don't shake it up baby." Shake it up, baby. Twist & shout"*

In the second stanza Smith enters a conflict because she is hard-working and is doing her work too fast. After her boss tells her that she should slow down, Smith takes Romilar, a cough syrup containing codeine (a type of narcotics), in order to relax, and comes back saying that it makes no difference whether she does her work fast or slow because she will still have work to do after it. Along with the use of vernacular, Smith places allusions to pop culture such as "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" which is a Bob Dylan's song from 1971. Her boss is a "square" and cannot tolerate anyone who is not thinking like her which is why she threatens Smith that she has to obey the rules if she does not want to be tortured. Another allusion from the pop culture is the song "Twist and Shout" from 1961 by Top Notes but which became popular after the Beatles released their cover version in 1963.

*Oh that I could will a radio here. James Brown singing*

*"I Lost someone" or the Jesters and the Paragons*

*And Georgie Woods the guy with the goods and Guided Missiles ...*

*But no, I got nothin', no diversion, no window,*

*Nothing here but a porthole in the plaster, in the plaster,*

*Where I look down, look at sweet Theresa's convent  
All those nurses, all those nuns scattin' 'round  
With their bloom hoods like cats in mourning.  
Oh to me they, you know, to me they look pretty damn free down there  
Down there not having crystal smooth  
Not having to smooth those hands against hot steel  
Not having to worry about the (inspeed) the dogma the (inspeed) of labor  
They look pretty damn free down there,  
And the way they smell, the way they smell  
And here I gotta be up here smellin' Dot Hook's midwife sweat  
I would rather smell the way boys smell--  
Oh those schoolboys the way their legs flap under the desks in study hall  
That odor rising roses and ammonia  
And way their dicks droop like lilacs  
Or the way they smell that forbidden acrid smell  
But no I got, I got pink clammy lady in my nostril  
Her against the wheel me against the wheel  
Oh slow motion inspection is drivin' me insane  
In steel next to Dot Hook -- oh we may look the same--  
Shoulder to shoulder sweatin' 110 degrees"*

She fantasises about listening to music at work and yet another time places even more allusions to pop culture: James Brown and his song "I Lost Someone" from 1963, a 1950's group the Jesters, the Paragons: a 1960's group from Jamaica, Georgie Woods: a radio speaker and "Guided Missiles", a doo-wop song from 1956. However, she has to face the reality and the fact that she has to go back to work. Through a porthole she can see the nuns

who, according to Smith, look *"pretty damn free down there"* because they do not have to think about the pace of their work and manual labor. Although she is not mentally unstable like Carl Solomon from Ginsberg's poem, she does feel enclosed and trapped in the situation. She thinks about the way nuns smell as opposed to women working at the factory. This brings her to the smell of *schoolboys* which she likes and misses. The way Smith illustrates schoolboys is very erotic and alludes to her desire for love-making and her rebellious nature. However, the smell of a woman beside her makes her come back to reality and become angry and furious. Although the women in the factory want her to faint and to lose her job, she is determined in her goal of reaching New York and becoming someone important.

*"But I will never faint, I will never faint*

*They laugh and they expect me to faint but I will never faint*

*I refuse to lose, I refuse to fall down*

*Because you see it's the monotony that's got to me*

*Every afternoon like the last one*

*Every afternoon like a rerun next to Dot Hook*

*And yeah we look the same*

*Both pumpin' steel, both sweatin'*

*But you know she got nothin' to hide*

*And I got something to hide here called desire*

*I got something to hide here called desire*

*And I will get out of here--*

*You know the fiery potion is just about to come*

*In my nose is the taste of sugar*

*And I got nothin' to hide here save desire*

*And I'm gonna go, I'm gonna get out of here*  
*I'm gonna get out of here, I'm gonna get on that train,*  
*I'm gonna go on that train and go to New York City*  
*I'm gonna be somebody, I'm gonna get on that train, go to New York City,*  
*I'm gonna be so bad I'm gonna be a big star and I will never return,*  
*Never return, no, never return, to burn out in this piss factory*  
*And I will travel light.*  
*Oh, watch me now."*

The last third of the second stanza is the climax of the song illustrating her desire to overcome the monotony of her work and to pursue a better and a more meaningful future. The anti-establishment idea of the song, the description of the everyday reality as well as the distinction between the common people and the poet is found in both *Howl* and "Piss Factory". This part of the poem draws on to the ideas from *Howl's* third section and the *Footnote to Howl* because they assert that although life might be difficult at the moment, it is sacred and is thus worth living and fighting for a better future. In an interview for *The Guardian* in 1996, Smith explained that she "wrote that because (she) was concerned about the common man, and (she) was trying to remind them they had a choice" (<http://www.oceanstar.com/patti/intervus/960622g.htm>).

The reverberation of Ginsberg's *Howl* is also found in Patti Smith's song "Spell" which is actually her interpretation of the *Footnote to Howl*. She quotes it and brings it to the poetry of performance and by singing it she highlights all the instances of it. The synchrony between the band and Smith leads to a trance-like state and with the added music, it gives a whole new dimension to the poem. The musicians follow the words of the poem, especially

the word *holy* and repeat the riff with minimal variations. The dynamic grows and at the end it reaches its climax and at that point Smith starts to freestyle on the clarinet.

The repetition of the same riff all over again originates from African traditional music. It is a technique to fall into a trance and it is used in order to get in contact with ghosts, gods, or as Ginsberg put it in *Howl: hallucinations, omens, visions, incantations*. The part with the clarinet is an obvious influence from the free jazz scene which is used to create a certain atmosphere with the sounds leading to some kind of ecstasy. The freestyle playing on the clarinet is substantial to the song because it musically echoes the words and the interpretation of the *Footnote to Howl* and encloses the whole performance making a complete statement. Furthermore, the jazz-like component in the musical arrangement of the song can be linked to Ginsberg's infatuation with jazz musicians, jazz rhythm and his allusions to jazz which can be found throughout the poem.

There are a couple of versions of the song, and one is particularly interesting because on stage with Smith are Buddhist monks who are chanting during the entire song which adds another layer of Ginsberg's personality to the piece.



## CONCLUSION

The literary movement that gained its popularity in the 1950's, also known as the Beat generation, produced many groundbreaking works such as Jack Kerouac's *On the Road* and William S. Burroughs *Naked Lunch*. While the aforementioned works are novels, Allen Ginsberg's *Howl* is a poem. Because Ginsberg did not have the intention to publish it, he was able to write it without thinking about the authorities or the media. However, once it got published, due to being replete with homosexual allusions to love-making, *Howl* was deemed obscene and had to stand trial. After it was acquitted marking an important point for the freedom of expression, through the next five decades after this victory, the poem did not cease to inspire new generations of writers, musicians and visual artists.

The in-depth analysis of Ginsberg's *Howl* suggests that apart from the use of *vers libre*, jargon, the provocative imagery, symbols and allusions, the poem's distinctiveness lies in its rhythmical structure taken from the bebop jazz. This is achieved by a thoughtful use of structural devices: syntactic repetitions, alliterations, consonances and verbless phrases.

Moreover, the analysis of Bob Dylan's and Patti Smith's songs demonstrates the extent of *Howl*'s reverberation in their poetics. The representatives of the counterculture identified as prophets on their mission to reveal the hypocrisy in society, a notion which they had taken from Ginsberg. Their songs share the ideas and the anti-establishment stance found in *Howl*.

Dylan's poetics is that of a protest which he uses to expose the lies of those in power, be it mass media or the warmongers, while Smith's poetics can be linked to performance and a desire to share the poetic knowledge and enlighten her audience.

Both left a considerable mark on the society, which might not be possible without the freedom of expression Ginsberg paved for them.

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