

دراسة لقصيدة الين غينسبيرقالمسماة "هاول": الرؤية, الثورية, والثقافة المضادة

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**A Study of Allen Ginsberg's *Howl*: Vision, Defiance, and Counterculture**

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### **Abstract**

Allen Ginsberg's poem *Howl* is widely perceived to have initiated not only Ginsberg's career as a poet, but also a new literary movement in the United States. The current research paper is going to investigate the key role Ginsberg played in this poem, in particular, and throughout his literary journey in general in changing the American literary scene. *Howl* is without a doubt Ginsberg's greatest and most influential poem. It is an inspirational poem that prefigured the rise of the American Beat Movement, the movement of counterculture, and envisioned much of the future of America.

This poem by Ginsberg is said to have gained its unmatched status due to both its artistic uniqueness as well as its socio-political engagement. In terms of its artistic formation, the poem exhibits individually typical narrative and story-telling standards and material. In its socio-political context, the poem richly offers unequivocal accounts of the conditions of man—more particularly the American man—and his quest for concord and contentment via addiction to drugs, desire and search for sexual choices.

**Keywords:** Allen Ginsberg's Poetry, *Howl*, Vision, Defiance, Counterculture

### **الملخص**

يعتبر الكثير قصيدة "هاول" ل الين قينسبيرق بمثابة العمل الذي لم يكن وراء تقديم الين قينسبيرق الى الوسط الادبي الامريكي كشاعر مرموق فحسب, بل كانت العمل الذي قاد الى تأسيس حركة ادبية جديدة في امريكا. وبالتالي تعمل هذه الورقة البحثية الحالية على دراسة وتحقيق الدور الذي لعبه الين قينسبيرق من خلال شعرة اجمالاً ومن خلال هذه القصيدة على وجه الخصوص في تغيير المشهد الادبي الامريكي. ولذا فان هذه القصيدة تعتبر افضل واشهر اعمال قينسبيرق الادبية كونها قصيده ملهمة وتنبأت بصعود حركة البيت والثقافة المضادة والكثير من مظاهر واشكال المستقبل في امريكا. ومن ناحية اخرى فان هذه القصيدة اكتسبت مكانتها التي لا تضاهى بسبب تفردا الفني واهتماماتها الاجتماعية والسياسية. فمن ناحية تكوينها الفني فان القصيدة تتمتع بمزايا ادبية سردية نموذجية ومتفردة سواء في المعايير او في المحتوى. اما في سياقها السياسي والاجتماعي فان القصيدة تعرض وبشكل ثري وصف دقيق وقاطع ومفصل لوضع وظروف الانسان عموماً والانسان الامريكي خصوصاً, وبحثة الدائم للوفاق والطمأنينة من خلال البحث عن وسائل تنفيس مثل ادمان الحشيش والمحظورات والرغبة في تحقيق واختيار طرق شذوذ غير شائعه اجتماعياً لاشباع الرغبة الجنسية.

### **1. Introduction**

Literature in general, and poetry in particular, is assumed to have the potential to make us better human beings. Mathew Arnold, for example, supports this assumption in his belief that poetry could do that. It expresses genuine undistorted feelings. William Wordsworth in his definition for poetry asserts that poetry is 'emotion recollected in tranquility.' Besides, the art of writing poetry is always believed to be an art of creativity and self-creation. Creativity is said to be of two types: primary and secondary creativity. Primary creativity is defined, according to Samuel Taylor Coleridge, as 'the living power and prime agent of all human perception.' The secondary

creativity is defined as having the capability to re-create the world of sense through its power to fuse and shape experience. Creativity, Coleridge states, dissolves, diffuses, and dissipates in order to recreate.

As self-creation, poetry is deemed to be of a prophetic and visionary nature, to have the potential to envision and foretell. The poet in his poetry thus self-creates, and foresees a world that is different and yet to come. The poet in his prolonged effort self-reveals and self-creates, yet in a way that prophesies and foreshadows. However, such transcendent prophecy generated in the poem does not denote the personal attitude of the poet, nor does it communicate a common reality. In contrast, the poet while writing a poem transcends above our deceptively constructed reality to a state of reality that is universal and expressive of all human beings across space, time, and other boundaries. Allen Ginsberg's poetry, more particularly his poem *Howl*, does demonstrate that prophetic element.

The American poet Allen Ginsberg is widely recognized as a very renowned and eminent poet both at home and abroad. His first and major poem *Howl*, later published with other poems in a collection called *Howl and Other Poems* (1956), initiated his literary career as a prominent American poet whose poetry from the very start has been characterized as insubordinately defiant, visionary, and countercultural. His poetry has sustained its defiant, nonconformist as well as visionary prospect throughout his literary career. Ginsberg out of his poetry is deemed a visionary founding father for both American Beat Movement, and the movement of American counterculture. Moreover, for most of his life, Ginsberg has maintained a defiant and rebellious position towards authority, a misconception of his poetry, a distorted public image for him, and even literary critics and circles who would not appreciate him and his poetry until later in his career. During that long time, Ginsberg and his poetry were "buried beneath an accumulation of academic condensation and popular misunderstanding," (Tucker 43).

## 2. *Howl* and Vision

It is usually difficult to decide a starting point of a poet's visionary journey; yet, in the case of Allen Ginsberg, he himself spoke of this moment, which happened when he was reading a poem he had read several times before. Nevertheless, at this last time, he sensed that his "body suddenly felt *light* and a sense of cosmic consciousness, vibrations, understanding, awe, and wonder and surprise. And it was a sudden awakening into a totally deeper real universe," the universal universe of all of us, (Plimpton 304).

Throughout his poetry career, Allen Ginsberg amazes his readers by how eloquent and prevailing in vision and insight his poetry is. Almost all his poems demonstrate a visionary perspective. Still, his poem *Howl* could be deemed the most visionary. The poem was composed during the years of 1955 and 1956. It was recited for the first time at the Six Gallery. In this poem, Ginsberg has manifested all his poetic skills and literary finesse. It is so subtle, delicate, and all inclusive that it employed and exhibited all formal, prosodic as well as social features available in all other poems written by him. The poem not only foresaw the birth and rise of the American Beat Movement and an American counterculture, but also could foreshadow the new America beyond the 50s and 60s in a remarkably astounding prophecy that later became a reality. In addition, the answers *Howl* offers in its verses to the prevailing variant aspects of the time provide more evidence to the prophetic quality of this poem and Ginsberg's poetry as a whole.

From the very beginning, *Howl* introduces its readers to its prophetic potential. At the opening lines of the poem, the poet dramatizes the unfortunate fate of the great American minds of his time. With no elaboration or introductory euphemism, the poet takes his readers instantly to where he wants them to go, to the focal point of his poem:

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, (A. Ginsberg, *Collected Poems 1947-1980* 126).

In these verses, Ginsberg describes the ill-fated journey of those great Americans. The poem collectively and indiscriminately addresses all the people who have been abused, maltreated, and neglected, all the people who have been disaffected and distanced in their own country. The attitude of the poem is all inclusive in both human terms and geography as well. The scope of the poem's geography stretches through tens of American towns, cities, and localities. In a panoramic vision and view, the poem's locales range from the streets typically occupied by black Americans, poor sheltering places, all the way up to New York glamor.

In those verses, Ginsberg illustrates the bad deeds and wrongdoings the system inflicted on him, his friends, and for that matter, his generation. What Ginsberg directly states in those verses of his poem is that the system with his ideology targets all people of intellect. It makes no distinction between men and women, between young and old, or between recently settled or long-mingled citizens as long as they think differently. The poem in a moving and unique artistic style recounts the heartbreaking calamities perpetrated by such a system on almost all Americans. The poem delineates with vivid details how the madness of the system has transformed the lives of Americans especially young ones into an agonizingly unbearable abyss. This life generated by the system is a life of fear, abuse, a life of loss and purposelessness. It is also a life of hunger, loneliness, of misery and hopelessness. It is a life of perversity and desolation; it is simply a living hell sort of life that Americans were unwillingly made to lead. This life, according to George Lyon, is even worse and more frightening than hell itself, (Lyon).

The verses quoted above and the coming ones demonstrate the dynamically visionary quality of Ginsberg's poetry. Those verses actually transcend across space and time. They do not relate the state of the American people of the 50s and 60s or of the people of New York locality; rather, the poem with its verses provide self-evidence to its divinatory content that corresponds to a state of America and Americans yet to come in time and space. The grammatical as well as artistic structure of the poem consolidates the assumption that the poem is a unified whole not only in composition, but also in content and time as each verse smoothly runs into the next one, and its insights stretch beyond its era.

The poem keeps producing and refashioning itself in space and time. The poem does that by prophetically reporting the state of Americans who in the 50s and 60s "chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy Bronx on benzedrine," (A. Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*). Those people of the 50s and 60s who lost themselves to subways are further exemplified by other people in different times who: "lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars racketing through snow, toward lonesome farms in grandfather night," are in their turn followed by other people in space and time who: "distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square, weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos," (A. Ginsberg, *Howl and Other Poems*).

In a further affirmation of the visionary quality of Ginsberg's poetry, he in a separate section of the poem prefigures that the real relationship of the authority and its system with the people is going to be in a sort of one-sided sacrifice. For the perfection of his visionary revelation, the poet brings in and symbolically employs the image of Moloch. Moloch is an ancient deity that used to be worshipped with sacrificing children with nothing in return, and thus was denounced and rejected in Christianity. Likewise, Ginsberg could in his poem predict that the state with its capitalist ideology and system of governing is another Moloch. Moloch, the capitalist ideology, demonstrates no sympathy, no caring, and no compassion; it is built upon "pure machinery," (131). It is all material and its "blood is running money." This Moloch is more brutally appalling than people might think; it is a beast, a man-eating entity; it is "a cannibal." While Moloch's blood is running money and mind is pure machinery; as a ferocious monster, its love can only be demonstrated in "endless oil and stone!" The soul of Moloch, which is unlike any familiar soul, is thus "electricity and banks!"

At the time of writing the poem, it was both difficult and unexpectedly unforeseen to anticipate what ideology would prevail later in time. Both the capitalist and communist ideologies were at their prime. It was a time in which even the fascist and Nazi ideologies were still thriving. However, the poem could astonishingly predict at such an early time that the authority with its capitalist ideology is going to triumph. In addition, the poem further projects that such an ideology is going to determine how people live, and even how and what to think. It is, represented by Moloch, not only going to be receiving sacrifices from people while offering nothing, but is also going to be 'the mind' by and according to which people are deemed to think. Moreover, the poem forewarns the people against such an ideology stating that its effects will not be confined to the public sphere. On the contrary, such an ideology would even encroach upon individuals' lives in such a way that even people's privacy would not be spared. The poet thus counterattacks such an incursion and calls the people to do the same.

Furthermore, the poem directly charges Moloch—the capitalist ideology of the system—with all evil-doings imposed on the people. In a statement of prediction, the poem also represents an open invitation to the people to decline, resist, and desert such god; a call and a prophecy that has come true. Time and events have come to prove that people have grown repugnantly distasteful and repulsive of such an ideology, and of such a god. The solution the poem offers for times and people who had not come yet at the time it was published is that people would have to resort to "Heaven which exists and is everywhere about us," (Ginsberg, Collected Poems 131).

### 3. *Howl and Defiance*

Ginsberg's poetry in general and his poem *Howl* in particular is deemed rebellious. Readers can sense the attitude of non-conformity and rebellion in Ginsberg's poetry. His poetry does not call for compliance with the status quo; on the contrary, it stands against the current hegemony in its different shapes, forms, and names. The best example of Ginsberg's poetry is his poem *Howl*. It resists and repels against the different forms of control and domination, whether they may be social, individual, or ideological. The poem does as well stand against and resist the numbing traditional norms of the common American. It, besides, recognizes the multiplicity and assortment of the American society, and thus offers a disillusioning counter response to the officially adopted culture of uniformity and deceptive enticement.

The poem compares and likens the official American attempt to misleadingly form a single unified conforming nation to worshipping the single dominant deity Moloch of *Howl*. The poem depicts Moloch as an epitome of European and American constructed cultures. It indicates a lack of critically thinking and creative minds. It also denotes the need and inspiration for progression, growth, and development, irrespective of the undesirable concerns and magnitudes:

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!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows! Moloch

whose skyscrapers stand in the long streets like endless

Jehovahs! Moloch whose factories dream and croak in

the fog! Moloch whose smokestacks and antennae

crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul

is electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty is the

specter of genius!(A. Ginsberg, Collected Poems 1947-1980 131).

In this section of the poem, Ginsberg attacks and strongly disapproves of the different aspects and features of modern America as they, according to him, destroy, spoil, and terminate all what is good and worthy about the inherent goodness of man, and what is decent and respectable

about America as well. The aspects that the poet intensely vilifies are greed and the attachment to materialistic gains, the celebration of a devious sensibility and horrible automation, and the state of subjugation and conventionality.

The poet compares this unpleasant system to the traditionally spiteful and horrid deity of Moloch. For Ginsberg, both are mean, callous, and vile, both are despicably abhorrent and revolting, and both spare no heed for whatever sacrifices made for them. Therefore, just like Moloch, all the ills, vices, and tribulations of the society are caused by this dominant system. All that the society grumbles about and suffers from is effected and perpetrated by this system. Not only that, but the system has also distorted people's consciousness and thus their reality, too.

The materialistic aspect of capitalism, and thus of the American society, is denigrated in the poem. It is through Moloch, too, that the poem also depreciates authority. Moloch in the poem is symbolically made to stand for money and greed, for power and authority, and for repression, cruelty, and tyranny. Moloch does also symbolically stand for the harsh, cruel, and unforgiving nature of industry and machines. It is a killing beast, a grave, and a cold-blooded war monger. Moreover, Moloch is not just an external undesirable vicious force with exterior consequences, it is also a damaging force that has the potential to impair the self and the soul from within. Moloch is death as opposed to life, is despair as opposed to hope, and it is repression and tyranny as opposed to freedom and choice. Moloch is a stark contrast to life and to all its affirmatively encouraging and constructive aspects; Moloch is an all-encompassing, immediate and ubiquitous evil.

The poem explicitly expresses strong doubts of long-held beliefs, and deeply-rooted traditions of the West. According to the poem, the Western society has blindly and categorically long been leading a life that has brought about dire consequences. Those unwelcome and unsolicited outcomes have been generated by that same way of life; the capitalist ideology adopted by the West, which the poem describes as callous, cruel, and petrifying. Therefore, the poem not only disparages this way of life as vicious and damaging, but also invites the attention of the people to perceive and think of it as such. *Howl* isso untraditional and defiant in its approach that it brings to light and touches upon the untouchable. It makes visible the unseen, and it deliberates on the sidelined and the downgraded. The excessive and disordered is celebrated and favored by the poem as opposed to the controlled, reasonable, and moderate. The banished and relegated is celebrated as opposed to the promoted and dominant. The poem even goes further to passionately rejoice over experiences and practices of all sorts that are considered off-limits and deemed to be at a stark contrast to the acceptable and common:

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and  
cock and endless balls,

incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in  
the mind leaping towards poles of Canada & Paterson,  
illuminating all the

motionless world of Time between, (A. Ginsberg, Collected Poems 1947-1980 126).

Ginsberg and his poem had to go through challenging and adversely undesirable circumstances. Their society was an obtusely indifferent and antagonistic. Nonetheless, Ginsberg and his poem stood in defiance to the society, to its norms, standards, and to its conforming concords. Yet, along with its defiance, the poem is accompanied with an atmosphere of celebration, which is a parallelingly and equally insubordinate aspect. Therefore, the poem encouragingly boosts the counter deeds performed by the people. The poem rejoices in support and praises any sort of deed that exemplifies revolt and defiance to the established system and its traditionally immoral and shady values. And that is why the act of scorching money, for example, is celebrated and the people doing that are acclaimed in the poem. The poem revels, and emboldens all sorts of activities that people of the time do in an act of protest and resistance to authority and its system. Despite the fact that the system indoctrinates and programs people to disapprove of and condemn 'drugs,' 'sex,' and

'excess,' 'alcohol,' and 'cock,' the poem perceptibly obviously, in an act of rebelliousness, rejoices over such activities and admires the people doing them. The main task Ginsberg has set for his poetry, according to him, is to "return to nature," and "revolt against the machine," (Hodgson 325).

#### 4. *Howl* and Counterculture

The publication of *Howl* in 1956 brought about unseen changes, to the poet's life, his literary career, and to America as a whole. The poem initiated Ginsberg's career as a major American poet who had to be noticed. In addition, the poem heralded a new literary scenario in America. It signaled the establishment of the American Beat Movement, and swayed tremendous influence to the counterculture movement in America. As a main strategy for Ginsberg to promote a countercultural attitude in the 50s American society, he had the belief "to just write," to "let [his] imagination go, open secrecy, and scribble the magic lines from [his] real head," (Roszak 149). Against all odds, the role played by Ginsberg and his poetry in America has long outlived its times and continued for several decades following the 50s and 60s.

Allen Ginsberg has enjoyed an admirable standing in the American literary scene. Due to the popularity and power of his poetry, as it outreached in influence to other fields rather than literature such as American social and cultural domains. When Ginsberg first recited his poem *Howl* at the Six Gallery in 1955, he invited a group of San Francisco bohemians to its recitation. Besides, the poem adopted and spoke for the unusual and socially unacceptable. It has also denounced most of the long-held traditional beliefs of its society of the time. That is why this particular poem, just like most of Ginsberg's poetry, came to be regarded as a bohemian and obscene. It was also subjected to a trial on those grounds. Yet, the poem not only got acquitted, it also established a name for Ginsberg that will be long remembered. It has remarkably become his greatest and most widely read poem as it truly spoke of "what few felt then, and so many felt so soon," (Hodgson 322).

The poem calls for rebellion against poverty, and the traditionally set standards of competition that would render the majority of people as incapable and powerless. Therefore, for those who suppose that *Howl* is a manifesto of "destruction or rebellion," he emphatically clarifies that the poem seems so only to "people who have accepted standard American values as permanent," (A. Ginsberg, *Family Business: Selected Letters Between a Father and Son* 81).

Ginsberg's *Howl* objected to the technocracy of the American society of the time through the symbol of Moloch as will be discussed later. Moloch is a repulsively repelled deity to which children were offered as sacrifice. In his poem, he deems the American technocracy with its capitalist ideology as another Moloch, with the American people being sacrificed to it. In *Howl*, the poet howls against such cruel and wicked god who cares merely about money, and is pure machinery. The conventional American culture of the 60s was materialistic in style, capitalist in ideology, and alienating in strategy. Objecting to such culture, Ginsberg's poetry, on top of which is *Howl*, indorsed the aspects of a counterculture towards people as well as community; aspects such as affection, amity, kindness, and reverence.

The counterculture stimulated by Ginsberg invited to its realm other artists like the Beat and Jazz artists who, too, protested against mechanism, social traditions, and conformity. While the traditional culture adopted the traditional American values like tireless work, valuing the totality of society, and enjoying materialistic consumption, the counterculture advocated novelty, originality, defiance, unconventionality, and experimentation. This novel and strange culture posed a serious challenge to the conventional one. It snubbed the socially accepted and prevalent models of the society. Plus, the counterculture debated and brought to light the topics, then considered taboo, such as homosexuality, drugs, and even adapting a different religion rather than Christianity. The followers of the new counterculture have adamantly committed to their philosophy with "an emphasis on spontaneity and a desire to dismantle control and conformity," (Charters xiv).

It is without a doubt assumed that the prevalent form of music in America during the 50s and 60s was jazz, even for the Beats. Jazz was not only their favorite music at the time, it also

motivated the Beats in ways that pushed up their creative writing. After jazz, rock and roll music gained more currency as a novel form of music. Yet, just as sex and drugs were, both jazz and rock and roll were deemed part and parcel of the popular counterculture trend. As the newest form of music, rock and roll has reached out in effect and influence to the body and souls of almost all Americans at the time. It was so swaying to the extent that most people, especially the hippies "lived and breathed it and believed that it was the most important new musical form to come along in centuries," (Miller 8).

Allen Ginsberg in his poetry and his generation of jazz and rock and roll music have pronounced their correspondingly common concern for an unconventionally different America. Consequently, the strong combination exemplified by the poetry of Ginsberg—along with other similar poets—and the prevalent forms of music such as jazz and rock and roll provided a solid ground for the counterculture movement, and signified its essentially indispensable components. Throughout Ginsberg's whole body of poetry, *Howl*, Bob Dylan and Patti Smith as representatives of counterculture assert, stands more significantly and individually as the most influential poem of the 50s and the 60s and of the counterculture movement. From literature to society and from culture to politics, readers of the poem could trace its echoes and unmistakably perceptible touches in the entire panoramic life scene of the 50s and 60s America. *Howl* has made Ginsberg himself into a prophet of counterculture. Even the hippies in their hippy counterculture considered Ginsberg their god-father or divine leader. He provided many writers of his and later generations with a push and a moral support that facilitated publishing and disseminating their works. The influence of Ginsberg's poetry has extended to a succession of later generations including the movements of anti-wars and sexual liberties.

However, despite the fact that the Beats Movement had already started before *Howl*, it was the poem that has truly breathed life and established fame and popularity for such movement. Both Ginsberg's *Howl* and the Beats writers advocated freedom of speech, and held clear and common objections to traditions, uniformity, and other officially celebrated values. Therefore, people with unusual and progressive attitudes to life and authority were equally celebrated by the Beats and Ginsberg's poetry, especially *Howl*. The poem, for instance, clearly celebrates solitude, satisfying insatiable sexual desires, the craving hunger for music and drugs, and the unquenchable thirst for knowledge and familiarity.

*Howl* has been deemed to have a social value because it is thought to have condemned the evil aspects of the society. The poem can be observed to hold human values high in its essence. It as well lays bare the human greed and fierce rivalry for power and material affluence. And indicates how that attitude is a key factor of humans' misery, conflicts, and wars. Before *Howl*'s trial, neither the American literary circle, nor the poet himself have expected Ginsberg to become so famous. Nonetheless, the poem has introduced Ginsberg to a wider range of audience, especially the young, who felt that the poem spoke to them and expressed their minds. Indeed, *Howl* has introduced itself as an anti-establishment poem that exposes how much hypocrisy is buried beneath the pursuit of power and interests, which eventually brings about undesirable and unnecessary encounters.

*Howl* is apparently observed to be celebrating life in its totality. It emboldens people inviting them to love, experiment, break up traditions, and even go absurd and mystic, so to speak. The poem is a living example itself of such call as it departs from the traditional rules of poem writing. For instance, in form it is different in rhythm from its contemporary poems as it, according to Ginsberg, rises and falls, and waxes and wanes in its rhythmic patterns. In content, the poem not only inspires its readers to question and examine the values and beliefs of the status quo, but also encourages them to test the confines and edges of truth through knowledge, awareness, love, research, and literature. The poem basically does not intend to surprise; rather, it aims to incite actions, induces emotions, and rouses people out of their unexcitingly monotonous life. Therefore, the effects and influence of the poem has gone beyond the American generation of the 50s into later generations.

Moreover, the poem highly values instinctual drives and intuition as it boosts and goes in favor of the foolish, ridiculous, and animal-like aspects of living enjoyed by:  
 the best minds of my generation...  
 who drove crosscountryseventytwo hours,  
 to find out if I had a vision or you had a vision or he had a vision,  
 to find out Eternity,  
 who journeyed to Denver,  
 who died in Denver,  
 who came back to Denver and waited in vain,  
 who watched over Denver & brooded andlone in Denver and finally went away,  
 to find out the Time, and now Denver is lonesome for her heroes. (A. Ginsberg, *Howl* and Other Poems 60-61).

Furthermore, *Howl* urges its readers to celebrate life through practicing spirituality. In the poem, Ginsberg through the symbol of 'Moloch' clearly depicts the life of the society then and there as a spiritless life; a life in which spirituality is overlooked and industrialism is cherished:  
 Moloch the incomprehensible prison!  
 Moloch the crossbones soulless jailhouse and Congress of sorrows!  
 Moloch whose buildings are judgment!  
 Moloch the vast stone of war!  
 Moloch the stunned governments! (*ibid* 83).

Since the people have substituted God for promptly materialistic gains, the poem thus laments the absence of spirituality and hence the lack of illumination as well. The poem, therefore, pursues with wildness in order that it may construct its own spiritual world; a world of spirituality that would encounter such a harshly world of materialistic, industrialist, and capitalist reality.

In terms of further counterculture perspectives, Allen Ginsberg has once said that the main intention of his poem *Howl* was to provide the future generations of America with "an emotional time bomb that will continue exploding in US consciousness," (A. Ginsberg xii).

In a similar vein, the seizure and then trial of *Howl* has even yielded more significance and popularity to the poem. This move has drawn more attention to the poem and its real worth by a wide circle of audience, even people outside the field of literature. People began looking for the poem, read it, and observed its merits and value. The poem has thus reached out to further limits beyond expectations and even "rallied a group of First Amendment lawyers, established academics, and media people to discuss the merits of counterculture literature," (Black 49). There advanced forward numerous reasons by the then authority for trying the poem. Yet, some like MacPhee assert that *Howl* had to go through trial for the reason that, assumingly, "The words and the sense of the writing is obscene. You wouldn't want your children to come across it," (Theado 245). Still, whatever the reasons might have been, there has lived a basic theory that the trial of *Howl* contributed to its spread, popularity, and everlasting influence in different respects, the rise of counterculture included.

## Conclusion

On the whole, Ginsberg's *Howl* is undeniably deemed one of the best and most widely read and recognized literary works. This status is granted to the poem due to its uniqueness and prominence in artistic, political, as well as social value. The poem investigates and attacks the traditions and common beliefs and practices of the American society of the 50s and 60s. It highlights and invites the people's attention to the negative consequences of such an industrial society with its capitalist ideology. In a different respect, the poem celebrates and encourages the human values, spontaneity of perception and living, and the familiarity of strange and new



knowledge. Likewise, the poem adopts the cause of those who refuse to conform to and comply with traditions and authority. In addition, *Howl* demonstrates its defiance and boldness not only by departing from the traditional form of poem writing, but also by touching upon sensitive topics and promoting aspects of a general countercultural movement. However, the purpose of the poem is not actually to establish antagonism between a heedlessly uniformed society and a disobedient individual; rather, it embraces a positive philosophy of cheering up and encouraging such individuals to enjoy their life as such.

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