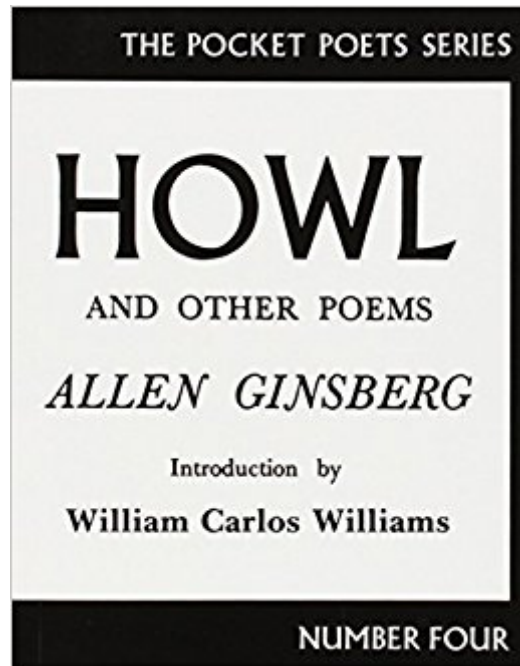


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Howl And Other Poems (City Lights Pocket Poets, No. 4)



Synopsis

"Allen Ginsberg's *Howl & Other Poems* was originally published by City Lights Books in the fall of 1956. Subsequently seized by U.S. Customs and the San Francisco police, it was the subject of a long court trial at which a series of poets and professors persuaded the court that the book was not obscene. Allen Ginsberg was born June 3, 1926, the son of Naomi Ginsberg, Russian émigré, and Louis Ginsberg, lyric poet and schoolteacher, in Paterson, New Jersey. To these facts Ginsberg adds: "High school in Paterson till 17, Columbia College, merchant marine, Texas and Denver copyboy, Times Square, amigos in jail, dishwashing, book reviews, Mexico City, market research, Satori in Harlem, Yucatan and Chiapas 1954, West Coast 3 years. Later Arctic Sea trip, Tangier, Venice, Amsterdam, Paris, read at Oxford Harvard Columbia Chicago, quit, wrote Kaddish 1959, made tape to leave behind & fade in Orient awhile. Carl Solomon to whom *Howl* is addressed, is a intuitive Bronx dadaist and prose-poet."

Book Information

Series: The Pocket Poet Series, Number Four (Book 4)

Paperback: 57 pages

Publisher: City Lights Publishers; Reissue edition (January 1, 2001)

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Customer Reviews

Unfortunately, there seems to be a lot of self-appointed critics who, in order to try to convince others of their own individuality and intellectual honesty, feel the need to let everyone know that they consider Ginsberg (and every other so-called "Beat" for that matter) to be an overrated hack and more of a celebrity than a poet and blah, blah, blah, blah. It is true that Ginsberg's style has been imitated by far too many lesser poets who, obviously, don't possess anything close to the man's talent and it is also true that there's an equal number of people who claim to love Ginsberg but have

never actually bothered to sit down and really read anything beyond the first page of "Howl." Inevitably, one wishes that all of these presumed literary critics (regardless of where they stand) would just shut up, read the poems for themselves, and form their own opinions regardless of what the current trend is. For if they did, they would discover a very talented poet who, even if he occasionally seemed to be repeating and parodying himself as he got older, still created some of the strongest American poetry of the latter 20th Century. While Kaddish remains his strongest work of poetry, his much more famous poem "Howl" still carries more of a raw, exhilarating anger. Written to be read aloud, Howl is basically a cry against the conformity of 1950s America but the anger found within still reverberates almost half a century later. Certainly, his vision of a drug-abusing community of outcasts wandering along darkened city streets remains as relevant as ever. Like any apocalyptic poem, it can be credibly charged that at times, Howl is superficial and there's not much beyond shocking images.

(This is a review for the critique of the book "Howl: Original Draft Facsimile, Transcript, and Variant Versions, Fully Annotated by Author, with Contemporaneous Correspondence, Account of First Public...etc.", not about the book itself.) This book, at a whopping 208 pages, portrays the author, Allen Ginsberg in a cultural and artistic flux as both poet and as creator whose process is also in flux as well. It is also not for the faint of heart except for those who are true fans of the 4 page typewritten epic poem, Allen's first real foray at attempting what can only now be called true free-form poetry from 1956. The poem itself is full of life and is a ripped-open from the heart - and even his soul - portrayal of his own life; his view of his life from a mirror. This book breaks it down by the entire process - from the original typewritten version to the crossed-out edited parts, the many revisions, the "final" copies of different versions sent to friends who kept them for over 50 years (and luckily some of them, not all of them, reprinted here for the first time ever), to even letters corresponding back and forth from those same friends about its then-impact, his subsequent secret agony in having opened up a Supreme Court type firestorm over the readings, and much much more ephemera concerning it. It's a lot to take in, and it can't be done in one sitting. Almost everyone from that time period chimes in - Neal Cassidy, ex-lovers, Ferlinghetti, the publishers, and writings and thoughts by Ginsberg himself, who contributed unlimited access to his own personal papers among his other "scraps of paper," as he called them. (Sadly, Allen would never see this publication in its final form as he died right before it was published.

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