

Look at Ginsberg's
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Look at Ginsberg's "Howl." How would you characterize the world that Ginsberg describes? Is he being accurate or is he using hyperbole (exaggeration)? How does he demonstrate the postmodern beliefs of combining fiction and non-fiction, multiculturalism, and the experimentation of new forms? The three part poem "Howl" by Alan Ginsberg describes a nightmarish world of madness, drinking, drugs and weird religious imagery. He seems to be describing the kind of lifestyle that drop-outs and hippies experimented with in the 1950s as a reaction to conservative American lifestyles. The characters he mentions are called "angelheaded hipsters" (Part 1 Section 3) which makes me think of films about flower power and Woodstock. Many of the incidents he mentions such as being "expelled from academies" (Part 1 Section 7) or going "whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars" may well refer to actual incidents which occurred. I found the details of drug use and car stealing quite shocking. The structure of the first section of the poem in a long single sentence means that the reader experiences it all as a rushed and jumbled stream of consciousness. Piling one image upon another makes it into hyperbole. In the second section the repetition of the name "Moloch" gives the catalogue of "visions! omens! hallucinations! miracles! "ecstacies!" a sinister connotation, suggesting that some evil god is influencing American society for the worst. This is a Judeo-Christian concept, and it contrasts with other multi-cultural references such as "negro streets at dawn" (Part I, Section 2), "Mohammedan angels" (Part 1, Section 5), "the Chinaman of Oklahoma" (Part 1 Section 28). Section three was a very sad lament for Carl Solomon where the poet leaves aside all the flourishes and just repeats his solidarity. This part was quite moving.

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References Ginsberg, A. (1955) " Howl". [Poem] Available online at:

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