"HOWL"

“Howl” is a poem written by Allen Ginsberg in 1955, published as part of his 1956 collection of poetry titled Howl and Other Poems, and dedicated to Carl Solomon.

Ginsberg began work on “Howl” as early as 1954. In the Paul Blackburn Tape Archive at the University of California, San Diego, Ginsberg can be heard reading early drafts of his poem to his fellow writing associates. “Howl” is considered to be one of the great works of American literature. It came to be associated with the group of writers known as the Beat Generation.

There is no foundation to the myth that “Howl” was written as a

BACKGROUND

Allen Ginsberg wrote drafts of the poem “Howl” in mid-1954 to 1955, purportedly at a coffeehouse known today as the Caffe Mediterraneum in Berkeley, California. Many factors went into the creation of the poem. A short time before the composition of “Howl,” Ginsberg's therapist, Dr. Philip Hicks, encouraged him to quit his job and pursue poetry full-time. He experimented with a syntactic subversion of meaning called parataxis in the poem “Dream Record: June 8, 1955” about the death of Joan Vollmer, a technique that would become central in “Howl.”

Ginsberg showed this poem to