

ORALITY AS THE REPRESENTATION OF MADNESS IN THE POEM *HOWL* BY ALLEN GINSBERG

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ABSTRAK

Tulisan ini meneliti karakteristik kelisanan sebagai representasi dari kegilaan dari Beat Generation dalam puisi Howl karya Allen Ginsberg. Kelisanan dan kegilaan merupakan dua aspek utama dalam tradisi sastra Beat. Karakteristik modus berpikir dan berujar berbasis lisan yang ditemukan dalam puisi Howl membangun struktur puisinya dan memiliki signifikansi terhadap tema kegilaan dalam puisi tersebut. Kegilaan termanifestasi tidak hanya pada tataran isi, tetapi juga pada tataran struktur puisi tersebut. Ditemukan bahwa kelisanan tekstual dalam puisi Howl berfungsi untuk menampilkan efek alterasi benak dan tubuh yang diakibatkan oleh kegilaan yang diinduksi oleh narkotika terhadap persepsi akan kenyataan. Kegilaan yang diinduksi oleh narkotika mempercepat dan memperlambat persepsi penutur dalam puisi yang terlihat pada pola tutur narasinya. Persepsi-persepsi yang ditangkap oleh benak dan sensasi yang dirasakan oleh pancaindera berlangsung pada saat yang hampir bersamaan dan mengejauantah secara verbal sebagaimana adanya ke dalam bahasa tulis. Hal ini menyebabkan kalimat-kalimat dalam puisinya menjadi tidak koheren dan menyalahi tata bahasa sehingga menciptakan kekacauan, sebuah bentuk kegilaan bahasa.

Kata Kunci: Allen Ginsberg, Beat Generation, Howl, kegilaan, kelisanan, narkotika

ABSTRACT

This paper examines the characteristics of orality as the representation of madness in the poem *Howl* by Allen Ginsberg. Orality and madness are two major aspects of Beat literary tradition. The characteristics of orally based thought and expressions as proposed by Ong are found in the poem and have significance to the theme of madness in the poem. Madness is manifested not only in content, but also in the form of poetic structure of the poem.

It was found that textual orality in *Howl* serves to represent the effect of mind and body alteration caused by drug-induced madness on the perception of reality. Drug-induced madness both accelerates and decelerates the speaker's perception in the poem, which is shown in the speech pattern of the narrative. All the perceptions captured by the mind and all the sensations felt by the senses take place almost simultaneously and are verbally manifested as they are into written language. This results in incoherent and ungrammatical sentences creating chaos, a form of language madness.

Keywords: Allen Ginsberg, Beat Generation, drugs, *Howl*, madness, orality

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INTRODUCTION

Since its first public reading until its first publication, the poem *Howl* by one of the Beat writers, Allen Ginsberg, has not only gained the attention of many literary critics, but also of the authorities. *Howl* was initially composed to be performed on stage at the event known as The Six Gallery Reading in 1955. The success of the event drew the interest of Lawrence Ferlinghetti, the owner of City Lights Publishing, to publish the poem. However, a problem occurred in its inaugural publication in 1957. Ferlinghetti was taken to court because the poem was regarded as obscene material.

Two main factors that made *Howl* considered as obscene material are the use of vulgar language and the content of the poem itself. The poem portrays what is considered as forms of social deviance in American society: drugs abuse, homosexuality, and other conducts and remarks that were considered inappropriate for public consumption. For that reason, *Howl and Other Poems* was demanded to be withdrawn from circulation (Raskin, 2004:211).

However, after going through the trial process, which brought in nine expert witnesses—among whom were notable writers and scholars such as Mark Schorer and Kenneth Rexroth—despite the inappropriate content of the book, the judge of the trial, Clayton W. Horn, decided that *Howl* is not obscene material. The poem is considered to have literary merit as well as social merit instead. As a matter of fact, the obscenity trial made *Howl* and Ginsberg even more popular. (Raskin, 2004:211).

Poet and critic William Everson said that *Howl* is like “a scream from a paddy wagon,” but he also noted that even a scream has structure (Raskin, 2004: xxiv). The poem is a 112-lined poem narrated in first person. It is an attempt at taking up T.S. Eliot’s idea that poets need to find the verbal equivalent of states of mind and feeling (ibid, 159). This attempt resulted in a long poem in three parts with fragmented narrative structure. The first part portrays the lives of people whom the speaker call as “the best minds,” a generation whose minds

are destroyed by madness. Among them are drug addicts, homosexuals, and other social outcasts. The second part describes the figure of Moloch, a false god that has destroyed the minds of the people portrayed in the first part. Moloch is associated with government agencies, authorities and the society in which “the best minds” live in. As for the third part, it describes the condition of the people living at a mental hospital called Rockland.

My argument in this paper is that *Howl* has characteristics of orality that represent the central theme of the poem that is, madness. However, as part of a larger discourse, it should be noted that *Howl* cannot be considered as a mere reflection of reality since “[d]iscourse analysis emphasizes the study of how social reality is constructed through language and other symbols in particular ways and that is understood as a systematic attempt to create certain effects” (Manuaba, 2003:278). Therefore, this paper aims at identifying how the poetic devices in the poem correlate with the characteristics of orally-based thought and expression and to analyse how they work in representing the experience of madness, particularly in the ethos of the Beat Generation.

Grounded on Jakobson’s communication theory mentioned by Scholes (1974), the first step in doing this research is to identify the poetic devices in the poem such as diction, figures of speech, imageries, sound devices (rhyme, alliteration), as well as the syntactic structure of the sentences. The result of this analysis is then connected to the characteristic of oral mode of thought and expression put forward by Ong (2001) as well as the eight characteristics of textual orality proposed by Oesterreicher (1997). The next step is to analyze how madness is represented in the poem in light of the discourse of madness in language and literature.

ORALITY IN THE POETRY OF ALLEN GINSBERG

From the beginning of his career as a poet until the last years of his life, Ginsberg frequently performed his poems on stage. Ginsberg had to

perform because, firstly, there was an economic demand. He could not live only relying on royalties from his publisher. Most of his income came from the performances. Secondly, Ginsberg's poetry expresses a classic idea that art should come from within the body. His poetry is a transfer of energy through the breath (Dunn, 2007:1). This fact alone shows the oral nature of his poetry since oral language is closely related to articulation the body. In addition, according to Kirsch (2001), Ginsberg tended not to use "academic language" usually found in poetry. His writing is more like a kind of speech, which is not specifically addressed only to "poetry readers," but also to everyone. Ginsberg tended to use colloquial language in his poetry, which he considered as the more "natural" kind of language.

Ginsberg's writing style emphasizes personal expression and spontaneity. He mentioned that, "[t] he first thoughts are the best thoughts. Recycled thoughts deny freshness" (Raskin, 2004:xvi). Spontaneity is viewed as a form of "honesty" in his works. But, of course, since we are talking about written poems, it should be noted that the spontaneity in Ginsberg's poetry is not real spontaneity, but rather the impression of spontaneity, textual spontaneity which is carefully planned and arranged. This kind of writing style falls into the category of "writing according to plain style rhetoric." In this kind of writing, the author deliberately uses colloquial language to create the impression or effect of spontaneity, which is opposed to linguistic mannerism or bombastic rhetoric. In general, this kind of writing style in literature is considered as a reaction to excessive artificiality (Oesterreiche, 1997:205).

In light of orality theory, Ginsberg's poetry is a form of art called "verbal art form," which is a form of art in oral cultures where writing has developed and therefore it includes all forms of art that use the medium of spoken and written language and the fusion between the two (Ong, 2001:13). *Howl*, to some extent, can be viewed as an oral poem or, to be more precise, a written poem with oral characteristics.

Not only does oral and written communication involve the idea of language as sounds and visual codes, oral and written communications are also understood as two different styles or modes of expression (Oesterreicher, 1997:191). In other words, oral and written language are two different modes of perception of experience. A message can be delivered through two different modes of thought and expression, namely oral mode and written mode. It is the way one manifest the perceptions captured by the mind into language from his or her interaction with the world, with what we call as "reality." Particularly, the message conveyed in oral mode of thought and expression manifests in particular patterns that allow it to be easily uttered and memorized. The message is rhythmically arranged in a balanced pattern; in repetition; in antithesis; in alliteration; in assonance; in epithets, or in other expressions which are specifically formulated (Ong, 2002:34-36).

The first characteristic of oral mode of thought and expression is *additive*, as opposed to *analytic* (Ong, 2001:36). Orally-based narratives avoid using subordinate clause preceded by conjunctions such as *but*, *because*, *while*, *therefore*, *although*, etc. Instead of using subordinate relationships that construct logic of contention, condition, or cause and effect, oral narratives tend to be more coordinative by using conjunction *and*. In *Howl*, this characteristic can be seen in the narrative flow that are not constructed based on the linear relationship between one event with another in each stanza.

The second characteristic is *aggregative*, or the tendency to be through. In contrast to writing, there is no way to literally take back what have been uttered. The only way to revise is to add a new statement. There is no turning back. On the other hand, writing allows us to construct a message as effectively as possible to avoid, which is the third characteristic, *redundancy*. Redundancy is understood as the use of uneffective words that make a message too lengthy? Linear narrative is hardly possible in original speech because the mind itself does not work in a linear fashion. In speech, one does not have long enough time to

verbally express his or her ideas in linear fashion (Ong, 2001:38-39). In orally-based writings, such as *Howl*, *redundancy* is manifested in the use of repetition of narrative elements, deictic construction, and other syntactic phenomena such as anacoluthon, ellipsis, and parataxis construction (Oesterreiche, 1997:211).

The fourth characteristic is *close to the human lifeworld*. Writing creates distance between the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer, thus separating the knower from the known, or "... in a way denature even the human" (Ong, 2001:42). On the other hand, people in oral culture live in an intimate relationship with their surroundings and with each other. It can be said that oral language is more social than writing, which is related to the next two other oral characteristics i.e., *situational and empathic and participatory*. Since there is hardly distance between the speaker, the hearer, and the subject of narration, people in oral culture tend to use concepts that are situational in operational frames that remain close with the world of human life, which is concrete rather than abstract (ibid, 42).

This characteristic is manifested in writing in the use of ego-based deictic relation (e.g., the personal pronoun I), use of direct sentences, present tense and exclamations. Additionally, the empathic characteristic is also manifested in the use of "emotional expression" such as metaphor, simile, and other figures of speech as well as diction (Oesterreiche, 1997:211).

The meaning of a word in an oral culture is determined by situational relevance when recalled or, in other words, it is *homeostatic*. In *Howl*, particularly, this characteristic is manifested in the use of *hip* language terms. *Hip* language is originated from the language of urban black Americans, who "... tested and shaped by an intense experience and therefore different in kind from white slang" (Mailer, 1957:3). This characteristic is closely related to the last characteristics of oral language, which is *agonistically toned*. "[M] any, if not all, oral or residually oral cultures strike literates as extraordinarily agonistic in their verbal performance and indeed in their lifestyle" (Ong,

2001:43). The word *agonistic* itself is derived from the Greek word *agon*, which means "to resist" or "to counter." *Hip* language therefore can be viewed as black American resistance against the dominant language of American white middle class.

MADNESS, LANGUAGE, AND LITERATURE

Madness, at the same time, is also part of the ethos of Beat Generation, and is reflected in their works. As for Ginsberg, madness is major part of his life. When Ginsberg was young, his mother, Naomi Ginsberg, suffered from some sort of mental paranoia and had to spend the rest of her life in and out of mental hospitals until she passed away. Ginsberg himself spent six months of his life in the New York State Psychiatric Institute as a patient after getting involved in a stolen car accident in 1952. At the mental hospital he met Carl Solomon, to whom *Howl* is dedicated (Raskin, 2004:96). If Ginsberg had never met Solomon, he would probably never write *Howl*.

Madness, in contemporary perspective, is no longer viewed as a natural phenomenon and is distinguished from mental illness. Madness is understood as a cultural construction that constantly changes. The conception of madness is influenced by shifting in power relations, social pressures, and ideological interests. Even so, there are two common denominators associated with the idea of madness, i.e., deviation and mental functioning (Bernaerts et al., 2009:284).

In its relation to literature, madness inevitably always involves language (Wilce, 2004:414). Mental symptoms associated with madness are often manifested in language. Madness is therefore related to the behavior deviations from what is generally considered as "normal," including deviations in speech. "[On] language are based all the cycles in which madness articulates its nature... "Language is the first and last structure of madness" (Foucault, 2001:97). In a broader sense, language is a measure of the social, ideological, and psychological phenomena in an attempt to understand madness. Thus, to some extent, madness can also be viewed as a linguistic phenomenon.

In its development, madness has always closely interacted with language (Ingram, 2005:6).

While madness is exiled from society within the walls of asylum, literature has always shared a room with madness and formed a synergistic relationship (Felman, 1985:5). Literature, though does not provide an definition of madness, provides the representation of madness as human experience through the medium of language. Story, either written or oral, is the most ancient and yet the most effective tool in representing human experiences. Archives of individual stories and representations of madness in literature play an important role in understanding, mapping, and in discussing the phenomenon of madness (Baker et al., 2010:2).

In general, there are two main functions of the representation of madness in literature. First, there is a type of literary works in which madness is only used as a device, a rhetorical or dramatic motif. Second, there is a type of literary works that adopt the theme of madness with provocative, informative and/or political motives. In this type of works, the author seeks to actively involve him/herself with madness and, at the same time, subvert the construction of madness created and preserved by the dominant culture. In this kind of works, "... the literary texts destabilize the boundary line between the "inside" and the "outside," or in other words, this kind of texts blur the distinction between what is considered mad and not mad (Baker et al., 2010:5).

Howl is a piece of literature of the post-World War II America. This period provides a socio-cultural atmosphere where madness can be discussed through a variety of discourses. In many of post-World War II American literature, madness is represented not only through the depiction of mental disorders of certain individuals, but also in a basic condition of a culture. The literary works of the period are generally concerned about the lack of a definitive boundary between what is called mad and not mad while questioning the ability of language, as the medium of literature, in representing the experience of madness itself (Baker et al., 2010:159).

MADNESS AND ORALITY IN THE TRADITION OF THE BEAT GENERATION

In relation to the first denominator, deviation, madness of Beat Generation manifested in the form of rejection of anything considered "normal" in the 1950's American society (Indulal, 2008:5). Until now, Beat writers are generally associated with anti-establishment movement or counter-culture movement because of their bold criticism expressed in their works and lifestyles against the well-established ideas and values in the culture of American society dominated by white middle class. They deliberately deviated from what was generally considered "normal." Although most of them were white, they voluntarily marginalized themselves by involving themselves in anything illegal or *taboo* in their society, such as narcotics, free sex, and racial integration (ibid,11).

Drugs, in particular, is an integral part of the lives and work of many Beat writers, including Allen Ginsberg. But, what are drugs? First, drugs is a term that refers to a group of illegal substances. Second, "[d]rugs is a material agent, either a mythical or not, which is able to exert psychoactive effects" (Boon, 2002:5). Drug use, in this context, is viewed as a form of madness: the kind voluntary madness induced by chemical substances (Mortenson, 2004:55). The experimentation that many of Beat writers did with drugs led to a kind of mental instability and a never-ending search of sensations.

For the Beats, drugs has two different dimensions. Firstly, they used different types of drugs to achieve some sort of "spiritual enlightenment" (Lawlor, 2005:86). Drugs become a vehicle to expand their consciousness, to widen the perception of aesthetic experience in order to get inspiration in their creative process (Mortenson, 2004:54). In one interview with Allen Ginsberg (1966), he admitted that he wrote many of his poems under the influence of drugs, including *Howl*. Ginsberg stated that "... drugs were obviously a technique for experimenting with consciousness, to get different areas and different levels and

different similarities and different reverberations of the same vision” (35).

The second dimension is that, despite the racial bias, Beat writers’ openness to drugs experimentation is originated from their interest in *hipster* and jazz culture of black people. The popular use of drugs among jazz musicians such as Charlie Parker, whose technique of playing saxophone became the source of inspiration for Jack Kerouac’s writing style, *spontaneous prose* (Rasmussen, 2008:92). Like bebop jazz saxophone, spontaneous prose is free, explosive, spontaneous, and is based on the articulation of breath.

Jack Kerouac’s *spontaneous prose* then largely influenced Allen Ginsberg’s writing style. According to Ginsberg, each line of the poem *Howl* is ideally read in one breath. It creates the sensation of fatigue and restlessness on the reader after reading it, which is related to the drug-induced madness depicted in the poem. Therefore, besides being used as a source of aesthetic inspiration, drug use for the Beats is also a form of black culture appropriation.

In relation to language, madness in the literary tradition of Beat writers is also manifested in the experiments they did with the language they used in their works. Beat writers resisted the generally accepted language by damaging its shape, forging, and re-shaping it as they need it to be (Indulal, 2008:5). As for Allen Ginsberg, the experimentation that he did with drugs and the fact that he communicated that experience into a form of literature offers a discourse on subjectivity in the experience of voluntary madness induced by chemical substances.

In addition, drug use also involves alteration in body chemistry that resulted in the acceleration and/or deceleration of perception that allows the user to see and feel what was previously invisible and imperceptible (Mortenson, 2004:59). Therefore, in order to communicate the experience of “the drugged Other” through written language in an authentic manner, the writing is made as “natural” as as possible. To write naturally is to write “from

the body.” The act of writing is therefore made as close as possible to the act of speaking. (ibid, 55-56). As a form of communication, writing works more slowly than speech and serves as a “filter” for the real experience. It creates distance between the speaker and the hearer and between the writer himself and the reality.

Thoughts and feelings conveyed through writing can never be fully perceived by the reader. The absence of the speaker also means the absence of gestures, facial expressions, tone, and other non-linguistic elements in the communication process that construct the overall meaning of the message. Therefore, in contrast to writing, not only does original speech communicate a set of facts and information from the speaker to the hearer, but it also conveys “a style of being” from one body to another (Mortenson, 2004:56).

In *Howl*, the bodily experience modified by chemical substance is more effectively delivered through oral language. The body, thus, becomes the basis of poetic in describing the experience. In other words, the poem is written through the body. “[T]he body becomes a privileged site for poetics. Breath is tied to the body, so “... by breathing life into the poem, the poet breathes a part of himself into the poem” (Mortenson, 2004:56). Then, if the body is the basis for his poetic, by altering the body through the use of drugs, it will change the writing as well. Therefore, the experience of madness is not only manifested in the content of the poem, but also in its form (ibid, 57)

Orality and madness are two significant aspects in Beat literary tradition. Drug-induced madness, particularly, is part of the ethos of Beat Generation. Orality, at the same time, serves as an important aspect in the work of the Beat, as in Allen Ginsberg’s *Howl*. However, it is not possible, of course, to discuss the whole poem in this paper. Therefore, the discussion below only focuses on several lines taken from the three parts of the poem which is considered as the most significant in relation to orality and madness.

THE BEST THINKERS ARE CRAZY PEOPLE

THE ADDICTS

"I saw the best mind of my generation destroyed by madness starving hysterical naked, dragging through the negro Themselves street at dawn looking for an angry fix." (Ginsberg, 1987:126)

Howl begins with the sentence "I saw the best mind of my generation destroyed by madness." The first part of the poem describes the people whose minds are destroyed by madness. The use of "ego-based deictic relation," i.e., the first person pronoun I, makes the poem as a personal expression of the speaker. The use of past tense indicates that the speaker recounts what he has seen before the time of speaking. However, what actually happens when a person's mind destroyed? Can the mind be destroyed? Then how can one see other people's minds (which is destroyed). The statement in line above is of course a hyperbole. The word "mind(s)" is used to replace, for example, "the people of my generation." It can also be interpreted that the speaker has the ability to "see" or "read" what is in the mind of people.

It should be noted that the speaker in this poem is under the influence of drugs, which is the state that allows him to see and feel what was previously invisible or imperceptible (Mortenson, 2004:59). In this regard, the word "see" therefore has a deeper meaning than its literal sense. The speaker is able to see the madness in the mind of the people, while madness itself is an abstract concept. The condition of the best minds is described by three adjectives in a row, i.e., "starving," "hysterical," "naked," which intensify the depiction of the devastated state of mind by providing a visual imagery of madness, which is so strong that it seems to be corporeal. This is related to a characteristic of oral mode of thought and expression, *situational rather than abstract*. In order to convey the "authentic" experience of madness, the speaker describes madness as something concrete and visible rather than abstract.

Because they are starving, the madmen are so weak that they cannot walk, as if their bodies are

very heavy or weighed down by something heavy. They are dragging themselves along the "negro streets." Here, "negro streets" can be interpreted both literally and figuratively. Literally, the phrase can be interpreted as the street or the areas where black people reside. Figuratively, it can also be interpreted that "the best minds" are dragging themselves in the dark because the line also includes the word "dawn," which means that at the time of the event the sky was still dark. The word "negro" is therefore associated with the night, dark shades or darkness.

The madmen are in the negro streets looking for an "angry fix." The word *fix*, on the one hand, can be understood as a quick solution to problem, to suppress their anger. On the other hand, *fix* is also a *slang* term which refers to drugs. They need drugs to relieve their anger because they are addicted to it. If they cannot get the *fix* immediately, they would get more and more angry. So, the whole scene in the line above is about the state of drug withdrawal. These people who are addicted to drugs are called *junkie(s)*, or "... an outsider, a no-man in flight from society and its rules. At the same time narcotic use becomes an identity, with a new set of rules for behavior and action that exerts its own discipline" (Boon, 2002:79). They are social outcasts roaming at night.

ANGELHEADED HIPSTER: MADNESS AND SENSATION INDUCED DRUGS SPIRITUAL EXPERIENCE

"Angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry dynamo in the machinery of night" (Ginsberg, 1987:126)

Drugs also appear as a vehicle to get the sensation of a spiritual experience, such as in the portrayal of the of madmen as *angel-headed hipsters* who are burning for ancient heavenly connection. Madness here is associated with spiritualism. It should be noted that before the emergence of psychiatry, the phenomenon of madness is associated with being possessed by otherworldly forces (Porter, 2010:12). Not only

being possessed by demon or evil spirit, madness in this context also manifests in a “holy” form, i.e., the prophets or ascetics are believed to be possessed by supernatural power. Such madness is viewed as a state in which a person is possessed by a divine force that makes him lose his consciousness, like a prophet receiving revelations from God.

In the Sufi tradition of medieval Islamic societies, such phenomenon is called as *majnun*. The word *majnun* itself means “being possessed,” or “mad.” A person who is in the state of *majnun* behaves and speak out of his control. A *majnun* utters words that he himself cannot understand. This linguistic phenomenon is also called “speaking in tongues.” Interestingly, the word *oral* in English is derived from the Latin word *oro*, which means “to utter” or “to pray.” In this regard, madness or *majnun* in this perspective is viewed as a spiritual, mental, and linguistic phenomenon caused by the divine one or, at least, by the divine delegates i.e., the angels (Newell, 2007:202).

In many religious and mythological discourses, angels are described as supernatural beings that influence humans with goodness, but still, angel is a spiritual conception. They are not from the mundane world and therefore the conception is not *close to the human lifeworld*. While *hipster*, in the other hand, is a very worldly and profane figure. Therefore it can be said that the phrase “angel-headed hipster” is a form of oxymoron; a pairing between two opposite concepts; abstract and concrete; the sacred and the mundane. But what is *hipster* anyway? In the context of post-World War II America, the so-called *hipster* refers to those who are aware that “... if [their] collective condition is to live with instant death by atomic war ... or with a slow death by conformity with every creative and rebellious instinct stifled” (Mailer, 1957:1). Most of them are middle class whites who refused to compromise on the domestic life of white middle-class Americans in general. They chose to separate themselves from society and they voluntarily marginalized themselves by appropriating black culture: jazz; drugs, and all that were generally considered bad by white middle-class.

Their appropriation of black culture is not a coincidence. To marginalize themselves, the hipsters appropriated the culture of black people, who had been living for more than two centuries in the margin between totalitarianism and democracy (Mailer, 1957:2). To live as a black man in America is to be ready to live in insecurity. Steady job, comfortable home, financial security, and all the luxuries of the post-World War II America had to offer were almost impossible to earn by most of black people at that time. There was not even a black man who can walk in the streets with a sense of security that he would not encounter any danger.

In this regard, the phrase “negro street” in the line above can therefore also be understood differently. The phrase can also be understood figuratively as “road” or the way of life of black people. That is, the madmen mentioned in the first line are those who live the lifestyle of black people, the *hipsters*.

DRUGS AS A MEANS OF EXPANDING THE REACH OF PERCEPTION

A pairing of two opposite or contradictory ideas in a single phrase for ironic effect is also found in another line. The natural and the artificial are put together in the phrases like “the strarry dynamo” and “the machinery of night.” The juxtaposition creates a visual imagery that describes the atmosphere of the night as a mechanical system with a gigantic dynamo generating electric propulsion that gives light to the stars, or at least that’s what the speaker in the poem pervives.

Being induced by drugs—which is “an invaluable means of expanding their [drug users] range of experience beyond the accepted channels” (Mortenson, 2005:54)—the speaker’s expanded conciousness causes him to perceive the world in a different manner from what people in general would normally see. In this case, his perception of the world around him is not constrained by binary opposition. From the point of view of the speaker, the natural (*night, stars*) and the artificial or the man-made (*dynamo, machinery*) seem to blend into

one and form what “normal” people would most likely perceive as confusion; as a kind madness. This representation drug-induced madness also occurs in the line below:

“*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 ...*” (Ginsberg, 1987:126)

In the line above, the pronoun *who*, which is normally followed by a verb, is followed by nouns *poverty* and the *tatters*. The nouns *poverty* and *tatters* produce more concrete visual imagery. The speaker also uses the word /pəvərti/ or (pov-er-tee) is in tune with the word that comes after it ‘tatters’ /tæt ə / (tat-er). The sound /ti/ in the word *poverty* in tune with the sound /tae/ on the word *tatters* so sooner uttered in one breath. The same pattern of alliteration also appears in the phrase *hollow-eyed* and *high*. Fourth word is also associated with the three conjunction and, which shows the oral characteristic of additive.

The speaker in this poem saw the madmen in a high place, or it could also mean that they are *high*, which means they behave in an excited way because of the effect of drugs. They live in a small, dark and cold apartment. Since it is mentioned that they *smoke*, it can be assumed that what they are smoking marijuana, that they are high on *weeds*. People under the influence of marijuana experience “the expansion of the present,” which creates a sensation that the time around him is decelerating (Mortenson, 2004:60). This sensation is depicted through the speaker’s point of view in the scene where he hallucinates seeing the madmen floating slowly in the sky across the city while contemplating jazz. “Contemplating” here could possibly mean that they were calmly listening to some jazz music while smoking marijuana. The expansion of the present that marijuana produce allows their minds to work more slowly to delve deeper into their mind, feelings, and emotions, so deep that they were lost in contemplation.

Alliteration of the sound /s/ in the sequence of the words *supernatural*, *sat*, and *smoking* creates

the auditory imagery of slow flowing motion, which helps build the psychedelic atmosphere of the scene in which the madmen flowing across the city. However, the sound of the word “jazz” (/dʒæz/) at the end of the line is not rhythmic with the three words that come before it. In a way, it creates a stopping effect interrupting the madmen’s silent contemplation. In addition, the sound /dʒæz/ also functions as a sound marker that marks out the end of the fourth line of the poem and the leap of perception to the next event.

MOLOCH

“What sphinx of cement and aluminium bashed open their [the best minds] skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?” (Ginsberg, 1987:131)

Moloch in *Howl* is compared to the mythological lion-headed being, sphinx. But Moloch is described as a sphinx made of cement and aluminum, like skyscrapers. Moloch is accused of “eating” the brains of the people mentioned in the first part so that they become mad. The condition of the madmen in this poem is metonymically described as a result of the false god called Moloch. Although Moloch is not a real figure of god, it is associated with bad traits. The use of exclamations and direct sentences are mainly used in this part of the poem to represent the feeling of anger in the poem, as if the speaker is pointing out his finger at the face of Moloch. Like the word “who” in the first section, the repetition of the word *Moloch* at the beginning of each line in this section serves as the basis of the poem’s rhythm.

Moloch is described as very judgmental and it does not have love for humans. Moloch is a living nightmare in the minds of men. It is associated with traits such as solitude, filth, ugliness, loveless, and nightmare that haunt the mind (Ginsberg, 1987:131). Nonetheless, Moloch is not exactly a god, but is rather a society as a whole where the mad live in. It is associated with anything that requires sacrifice. In this case, “the best minds” are the victims of their society.

The society portrayed through the figure of Moloch is called technocratic society, which is a form of society where the industry has reached the peak of its organizational integration (Roszak, 1969:5). Referring to the context of the poem, the post-World War II America, on the one hand, the progress of science and technology in America has improved welfare. On the other hand, these advances also led to the attempt to “rationalize” almost all areas of public life. Systemization extremely complex mechanical industry has extended its hand to almost all areas of public life, from the public sphere to the private sphere (ibid, 5).

Technological progress and prosperity in the United States has created a very materialistic society. By using the metaphor “river” and “cargo ship,” the materialistic attitude portrayed in this poem has eroded aspects of spirituality in their lives. Beliefs in spiritual things have “gone down the American river” (Ginsberg, 1987:132). Such as industrial waste being dumped into the river, or in other words the things that are considered useless crap. Illustrated that the river ends in a waterfall that separates the present from the past.

Things like epiphany and love carried swift river currents and crashed landed right on “rocks of time.” They have no place in the modern era. End of part two poems *Howl* provide a reference to the first part. Values of spiritualism as “dreams, adorations, illuminations, religions, ephipany, love” is what is meant by “ancient heavenly connection” (Ginsberg, 1987:126) mentioned in the first part this poem. Spiritual values that have no place in the modern era as a legacy from the days of yore are slowly moderinitas away with the tide. These values, with “mad generation,” (ibid, 132) described metaphorically fell into the falls and hit the reef destroyed.

I'M WITH YOU IN ROCKLAND

The third part of *Howl* describes the condition of people in a mental hospital called Rockland. In this third section, the use of pronoun I is associated

with the use of direct speech, exclamations, and the use present tense. Each line in this part begins with the sentence “I’m with you in Rockland!” which like the word “who” in the first part and “Moloch” in second part, serves as the basis of the poem’s rhythm.

Although the speaker is talking about events that took place in the past, he uses the present tense, which indicates closeness and sense of involvement with the subject of his narattion. This is associated with one characteristic of orally-based narrative, that is *empathetic and participatory rather than objectively distanced* in the sense that the speaker identifies with the madmen, as if he is one of them. As the narration goes along, the speaker shows empathy between himself and the patients.

The madmen in the hospital are given various therapies and drugs in order to cure their mental illness, such as “the concrete void of insulin metrasol electricity hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong and amnesia.” They “scream in a straightjacket that [they are] losing the game of actual pingpong of the abyss” and “bang on the catatonic piano” (Ginsberg, 1987:130-133). The fact that the patients are tied in a straightjacket—a piece of clothing like a jacket with long arms which are tied to prevent the person wearing it from behaving violently—means that they may go wild and cause harm to people around them and to themsleves. To others, these people are dangerous people, which is why they need to be locked up, divorced from the life of “normal” people outside the psychiatry.

They also “laugh at invisible humor.” Here, “laughing at invisible humor” can be understood that the madmen are actually laughing themselves. It could mean that there is something funny that only the madmen can understand.

Their minds are totally screwed-up because “fifty more shocks will never return [their] soul to [their] body again from its pilgrimage to a cross in the void” (ibid, 133). Although they are given electric shock fifty times, they can never be cured because their souls have wandered to the empty

space. The word "pilgrimage" is used to portray the mental state of the madmen who lose their minds, as if they were pilgrims who go on a spiritual journey to a holy place. The madmen are compared with pilgrims traveling to the holy places. From the speaker's point of view, those madmen are like saints, the people of great holiness, virtue, or benevolence.

In the speaker's imagination, the madmen manage to escape from the psychiatry. He imagines them waking up electrified out of the coma by [their] own souls" and "airplanes roaring over the roof they've come to drop angelic bombs the hospital illuminates itself imaginary walls collapse." The speaker shouts, "O skinny legions run outside O starry -spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is here O victory forget your underwear we're free." He envisions this scene (which is not really happening) to show empathy towards the madmen. He believes that one day they will wake up out of coma on their own souls out of their own desire, followed by the sound of airplanes that drop the "angelic bombs" that will illuminate the darkness of the mental hospital (Ginsberg, 1987:133).

CONCLUSION

Orality in *Howl* serves to represent the experience of madness, which in the context of Beat Generation, involves psychoactive substance use. This voluntary drug-induced madness leads to acceleration and deceleration of the perception of reality, which have a significant impact on the way of the experience of madness itself manifested in text. The poem's narrative works through the framework of orally based thought and expression to represent the "authentic" experience of drug-induced madness.

The mad speaker in the poem attempts to simultaneously convey all the perceptions and sensations he has experienced during the drugged state, resulting in deviations in the speech pattern. The linguistic symptoms are resulted from drug-induced madness and are represented in the poem through, e.g. incoherent narrative,

inconsistent syntactic structure, aggregative phrases, and redundancy, which are closely related to the characteristics of orally-based thought and expression. Acceptable grammar is deliberately violated to make room for the sound devices such as rhyme and alliteration to work. In addition, figures of speech mainly dominated by metaphor, hyperbole, and exclamation are used to express emotional expressions that indicate sense of involvement or closeness between the speaker and the subject of his narration in the poem.

Strictly speaking, however, there is no orality in *Howl*. *Howl* is in fact a deliberately structured piece of writing attempting at representing the experience of madness, particularly drug-induced madness, through the oral qualities of language, i.e. additivity, aggregativity, redundancy, nonlinearity, spontaneity, immediacy, and intimacy. Thus, inasmuch as the mimetic nature of literature itself, it is not real orality but rather, textual or mimetic orality. In this regard, the oral characteristics in the poem serve to narrow the distance between the writer/speaker and the reader/hearer that exist in written communication, as well as the distance between the author himself and the real world. The madness of the poem, thus, lies at the attempt at capturing the experience during the drugged state as authentically as possible and at communicating it through written language within the framework of oral language, creating chaos; a form of language madness.

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