

Aullido: A Technical and Historical Analysis of Allen Ginsberg's Masterpiece and the Beat Generation

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Introduction to the Revolutionary Scope of 'Aullido'

Allen Ginsberg's "**Aullido**" (originally published as *Howl* in 1956) represents a seismic shift in American and global literature. As a cornerstone of the **Beat Generation**, the poem serves as both a visceral critique of mid-century materialist culture and a technical innovation in poetic form. The work emerged during a period of intense social conformity in the United States, providing a voice for the marginalized, the mentally ill, and the counter-cultural movements that would eventually define the 1960s. To understand "Aullido" is to understand the intersection of **spontaneous bop prosody**, political activism, and the liberation of the poetic line from traditional academic constraints.

This technical analysis explores the structural mechanics, historical context, and the sociopolitical impact of the poem. We will examine how Ginsberg utilized his own lived experiences—navigating what the JSON data refers to as "horribles experiencias"—to construct a narrative that transcends individual suffering to reach a universal level of spiritual and social outcry. By deconstructing the poem's unique linguistic patterns and its historical trajectory from the Six Gallery reading to the landmark obscenity trial, we gain a comprehensive understanding of why "Aullido" remains a vital study for literary scholars and cultural historians alike.

The Theoretical Framework of Beat Poetics

The technical foundation of "Aullido" is built upon the concept of the "**Breath**," a theory heavily influenced by the work of Charles Olson and the projective verse movement. Unlike the metered structures of Victorian or early Modernist poetry, Ginsberg's lines are determined by the physical capacity of the human lungs. Each line is designed to be read in a single exhalation, creating a rhythmic, incantatory effect that mirrors the improvisational nature of jazz music.

Spontaneous Bop Prosody

Ginsberg, alongside Jack Kerouac, developed what they termed "**Spontaneous Bop Prosody**." This technical approach involves several core principles:

- Non-Revision:** The belief that the first thought is the best thought, aiming to capture the raw state of consciousness.
- Syncopation:** Mimicking the rhythmic shifts of bebop jazz, particularly the saxophone solos of Charlie Parker and Lester Young.
- The Comma as Musical Notation:** In "Aullido," the comma does not merely serve a grammatical function; it acts as a visual and rhythmic cue for the reader to take a micro-breath, maintaining the momentum of the long line.

The Role of 'Hysteria' and the Tone

As noted in historical records and reflected in the study data, Ginsberg himself suggested that the term "**histeria**" (hysteria) was central to the tone of the poem. This was not meant in a clinical or derogatory sense, but rather as an expression of an overwhelming emotional and spiritual state that conventional language could no longer contain. This "hysterical" tone allows for the high-intensity delivery required to navigate the poem's three distinct sections.

Technical Analysis of the Poem's Structure

"Aullido" is structured into three primary parts, followed by the "Footnote to Howl." Each section employs a different rhetorical strategy and technical focus.

Part I: The Catalog of the 'Best Minds'

Part I is a sprawling, encyclopedic journey through the lives of the Beat Generation's fringe figures. It begins with the iconic line: *"He visto las mejores mentes de mi generación destruidas por la locura..."*. Technically, this section relies on **anaphora**—the repetition of the word "who" (or "que" in Spanish translations) to link disparate images and experiences into a single, massive rhythmic unit. This creates a cumulative effect, overwhelming the reader with a sense of collective tragedy and frantic energy.

Part II: The Moloch Industrial Machine

In Part II, the focus shifts from the victims to the victimizer. Ginsberg identifies **Moloch**—a Canaanite god associated with child sacrifice—as the symbol of modern industrial capitalism, war, and the suppression of the human spirit. The technical execution here changes to a repetitive, percussive rhythm. The word "Moloch" is used as a rhythmic anchor, grounding the section's horrific imagery of "basements," "machinery," and "oil and stone."

Part III: The Rockland Mental Hospital

Part III is a direct address to **Carl Solomon** (referenced in some contexts and the JSON as a dedication to Solomon), whom Ginsberg met in a psychiatric institution. The section utilizes a call-and-response structure: *"I'm with you in Rockland / Where you're madder than I am."* This structure serves to humanize the abstraction of the previous sections, grounding the poem in a specific, painful friendship and providing a sense of solidarity amidst institutional confinement.

Comparison of Literary Movements: Beat vs. Formalism

To appreciate the technical deviation of "Aullido," it is necessary to compare it with the prevailing **New Criticism** and **Formalist** approaches of the 1950s. The following table highlights the core differences in methodology and aesthetics.

Feature	Academic/Formalist Poetry (1950s)	Beat Poetics ("Aullido")
Rhythm	Strict iambic pentameter or set meters.	The "Breath" unit and jazz-inspired syncopation.
Subject Matter	Universal themes, classical mythology, refined language.	Street life, drug use, mental illness, radical politics.
Structure	Closed forms (sonnets, villanelles).	Open field, long lines, repetitive anaphora.
Tone	Objective, detached, ironic.	Subjective, ecstatic, "hysterical," visceral.
Goal	Aesthetic perfection and intellectual puzzle-solving.	Direct communication of consciousness and social change.

The Significance of Herbert Huncke and the Beat Archetype

One of the critical figures mentioned in the study of "Aullido" is **Herbert Huncke**. Huncke was a street-wise character who introduced Ginsberg, Kerouac, and Burroughs to the term "beat" (originally meaning exhausted or beaten down). Technically, Huncke serves as the archetype for the characters described in Part I of the poem. He represents the link between the high-intellectualism of the Columbia University circle and the gritty reality of the New York City underworld.

Huncke's influence ensured that "Aullido" was not merely an academic exercise in rebellion but was rooted in the actual vernacular and experiences of those living on the margins. This authenticity is what gave the poem its lasting power and what made it a target for censors who found its realism offensive.

The 1957 Obscenity Trial: A Legal and Technical Turning Point

The publication of "Aullido and Other Poems" by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Bookstore led to one of the most important legal battles for free speech in the 20th century. The 1957 obscenity trial (*People v. Ferlinghetti*) centered on whether the poem had "redeeming social importance."

Legal Challenges and Solutions

1. The Charge: The use of explicit language and descriptions of prohibited activities was deemed "lewd" by authorities.
2. The Defense: Defense attorneys and literary experts argued that the poem's technical merit and sincere social critique outweighed its controversial language.
3. The Ruling: Judge Clayton Horn ruled that the poem was not obscene because it had social significance. This established a precedent that protected works of literature from being banned based solely on individual words or themes.

The trial served as a massive publicity boost for the Beat Generation, transforming Ginsberg into a national figure and "Aullido" into a manifesto for a generation seeking liberation from the perceived sterility of the Eisenhower era.

Step-by-Step Guide to Analyzing 'Aullido'

For students and researchers looking to perform a technical breakdown of the poem, the following steps are

recommended:

- Step 1: Oral Recitation. Read the poem aloud to identify where the natural breath breaks occur. Mark these in the text to understand the rhythm.
- Step 2: Identifying Anaphora. Map out the repetitive triggers (e.g., "who," "Moloch," "I'm with you") to see how Ginsberg builds tension and maintains structural cohesion.
- Step 3: Allusion Mapping. Cross-reference the mentions of historical and personal figures (Carl Solomon, Neal Cassady, Herbert Huncke) to understand the biographical layer.
- Step 4: Semantic Analysis. Examine the juxtaposition of sacred and profane imagery, particularly in the "Footnote to Howl," where the repetition of "Holy!" recontextualizes the suffering seen in Part I.

Common Misinterpretations and Troubleshooting

When studying "Aullido," several common errors can lead to a misunderstanding of the work's technical goals:

Misunderstanding the 'Chaos'

Common Error: Viewing the poem as a structureless rant or a drug-fueled rambling. **Technical Solution:**

Recognize that the poem follows a strict, albeit non-traditional, architecture. The use of *parallelism* and *cataloging* is a highly disciplined technique derived from biblical psalms and Walt Whitman's *Leaves of Grass*. The "chaos" is a controlled aesthetic choice meant to mirror the subject matter.

The 'Harold' vs. 'Carl' Solomon Distinction

Observation: Some references (as seen in the JSON) may mention "Harold Solomon." **Clarification:** The primary figure and the person to whom the poem is dedicated is **Carl Solomon**. It is essential in a technical analysis to distinguish between the actual historical figure—a dadaist and writer Ginsberg met at the New York State Psychiatric Institute—and any typographical or secondary references that might appear in regional translations or notes.

Broader Implications and Literary Legacy

The legacy of "Aullido" extends far beyond the 1950s. It paved the way for the **Confessional Poetry** movement (represented by Sylvia Plath and Robert Lowell) by proving that deeply personal and "shameful" experiences could be legitimate subjects for high art. Furthermore, its technical focus on the spoken word and performance influenced the modern **Slam Poetry** and **Spoken Word** scenes.

In a global context, translations of "Aullido" into Spanish, French, and other languages have allowed it to serve as a template for political resistance and artistic freedom worldwide. The poem does not merely describe a "howl"; it provides the technical and emotional framework for an entire generation to find its voice against the silencing forces of modern life. By synthesizing the sacred and the profane, the rhythmic and the dissonant, Ginsberg created a work that remains technically fascinating and emotionally resonant decades after its initial performance at the Six Gallery.

Ultimately, "Aullido" is more than a poem; it is a technical blueprint for the liberation of the human spirit. Its lines continue to breathe, its Molochs continue to threaten, and its call for holiness in the face of suffering continues to offer a path forward for those who see "the best minds of their generation" still struggling to navigate the complexities of the modern world.

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