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The Poem That Changed America: "Howl" Fifty Years Later

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A tribute to Ginsberg's signature work, which stirred a generation of angel-headed hipsters to cultural rebellion.

In 1956, City Lights, a small San Francisco bookstore, published Allen Ginsberg's *Howl and Other Poems* with its trademark black-and-white cover. The original edition cost seventy-five cents, but there was something priceless about its eponymous piece. Although it gave a voice to the new generation that came of age in the conservative years following World War II, the poem also conferred a strange, subversive power that continues to exert its influence to this day. Ginsberg went on to become one of the most eminent and celebrated writers of the second half of the twentieth century, and "Howl" became the critical axis of the worldwide literary, cultural, and political movement that would be known as the Beat generation.

The year 2006 marks the fiftieth anniversary of the publication of "Howl," and *The Poem That Changed America* will celebrate and shed new light on this profound cultural work. With new essays by many of today's most distinguished writers, including Frank Bidart, Andrei Codrescu, Vivian Gornick, Phillip Lopate, Daphne Merkin, Rick Moody, Robert Pinsky, and Luc Sante, *The Poem That Changed America* reveals the pioneering influence of "Howl" down through the decades and its powerful resonance today.

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