“**Howl**” by Allen Ginsberg

*For Carl Solomon*

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving

hysterical naked,

dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry

fix,

angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the

starry dynamo in the machinery of night,

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,

who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels

staggering on tenement roofs illuminated,

who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkan-

sas and Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war,

who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes

on the windows of the skull,

who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in

wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,

who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt

of marijuana for New York,

who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or

purgatoried their torsos night after night

with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and

endless balls,

incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind

leaping toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the mo-

tionless world of Time between,

Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunk-

enness over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon

blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring

winter dusks of Brooklyn, ashcan rantings and kind king light of

mind,

who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy

Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought

them down shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain

all drained of brilliance in the drear light of Zoo,

who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford's floated out and sat

through the stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi's, listening to the

crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,

who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue

to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,

a lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire

escapes off windowsills of Empire State out of the moon,

yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and

anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars,

whole intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with

brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement,

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a trail of ambiguous

picture postcards of Atlantic City Hall,

suffering Eastern sweats and Tangerian bone-grindings and migraines of

China under junk-withdrawal in Newark's bleak furnished room,

who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wonder-

ing where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts,

who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward

lonesome farms in grandfather night,

who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telepathy and bop kabbalah

because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas,

who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary indian angels

who were visionary indian angels,

who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural

ecstasy,

who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of Oklahoma on the impulse

of winter midnight streetlight smalltown rain,

who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or

soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America

and Eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to Africa,

who disappeared into the volcanoes of Mexico leaving behind nothing but

the shadow of dungarees and the lava and ash of poetry scattered in

fireplace Chicago,

who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the FBI in beards and shorts

with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incompre-

hensible leaflets,

who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze

of Capitalism,

who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and

undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and

wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed,

who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before

the machinery of other skeletons,

who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for

committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and

intoxication,

who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof

waving genitals and manuscripts,

who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and

screamed with joy,

who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of

Atlantic and Caribbean love,

who balled in the morning in the evenings in rosegardens and the grass of

public parks and cemeteries scattering their semen freely to whom-

ever come who may,

who hiccuped endlessly trying to giggle but wound up with a sob behind

a partition in a Turkish Bath when the blond & naked angel came to

pierce them with a sword,

who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew

of the heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the

womb and the one eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass

and snip the intellectual golden threads of the craftsman's loom.

who copulated ecstatic and insatiate with a bottle of beer a sweetheart a

package of cigarettes a candle and fell off the bed, and continued

along the floor and down the hall and ended fainting on the wall with

a vision of ultimate cunt and come eluding the last gyzym of con-

sciousness,

who sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset, and

were red eyed in the morning but prepared to sweeten the snatch of

the sunrise, flashing buttocks under barns and naked in the lake,

who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C.,

secret hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver--joy to

the memory of his innumerable lays of girls in empty lots & diner

backyards, moviehouses' rickety rows, on mountaintops in caves or

with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside lonely petticoat upliftings

& especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, & hometown alleys

too,

who faded out in vast sordid movies, were shifted in dreams, woke on a

sudden Manhattan, and picked themselves up out of basements hung-

over with heartless Tokay and horrors of Third Avenue iron dreams

& stumbled to unemployment offices,

who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks

waiting for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steam-

heat and opium,

who created great suicidal dramas on the apartment cliff-banks of the Hud-

son under the wartime blue floodlight of the moon & their heads shall

be crowned with laurel in oblivion,

who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy

bottom of the rivers of Bowery,

who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions

and bad music,

who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to

build harpsichords in their lofts,

who coughed on the sixth floor of Harlem crowned with flame under the

tubercular sky surrounded by orange crates of theology,

who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in

the yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish,

who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming

of the pure vegetable kingdom,

who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg,

who threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for Eternity outside

of Time, & alarm clocks fell on their heads every day for the next

decade,

who cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and

were forced to open antique stores where they thought they were

growing old and cried,

who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue

amid blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regi-

ments of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertis-

ing & the mustard gas of sinister intelligent editors, or were run down

by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute Reality,

who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked

away unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown

soup alleyways & firetrucks, not even one free beer,

who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of the subway window,

jumped in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the

street, danced on broken wineglasses barefoot smashed phonograph

records of nostalgic European 1930s German jazz finished the whis-

key and threw up groaning into the bloody toilet, moans in their ears

and the blast of colossal steamwhistles,

who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to the each other's

hotrod-Golgotha jail-solitude watch or Birmingham jazz incarnation,

who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out if I had a vision or you

had a vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity,

who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver

& waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in

Denver and finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver

is lonesome for her heroes,

who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salva-

tion and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a

second,

who crashed through their minds in jail waiting for impossible criminals

with golden heads and the charm of reality in their hearts who sang

sweet blues to Alcatraz,

who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to tender Buddha

or Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to the black locomotive or

Harvard to Narcissus to Woodlawn to the daisychain or grave,

who demanded sanity trials accusing the radio of hypnotism & were left with

their insanity & their hands & a hung jury,

who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently

presented themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with

shaven heads and harlequin speech of suicide, demanding instanta-

neous lobotomy,

and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity

hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong & am-

nesia,

who in humorless protest overturned only one symbolic pingpong table,

resting briefly in catatonia,

returning years later truly bald except for a wig of blood, and tears and

fingers, to the visible madman doom of the wards of the madtowns

of the East,

Pilgrim State's Rockland's and Greystone's foetid halls, bickering with the

echoes of the soul, rocking and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench

dolmen-realms of love, dream of life a nightmare, bodies turned to

stone as heavy as the moon,

with mother finally \*\*\*\*\*\*, and the last fantastic book flung out of the

tenement window, and the last door closed at 4 a.m. and the last

telephone slammed at the wall in reply and the last furnished room

emptied down to the last piece of mental furniture, a yellow paper

rose twisted on a wire hanger in the closet, and even that imaginary,

nothing but a hopeful little bit of hallucination--

ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you're really in the

total animal soup of time--

and who therefore ran through the icy streets obsessed with a sudden flash

of the alchemy of the use of the ellipse the catalog the meter & the

vibrating plane,

who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images

juxtaposed, and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual

images and joined the elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of

consciousness together jumping with sensation of Pater Omnipotens

Aeterna Deus

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before

you speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet

confessing out the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his

naked and endless head,

the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here

what might be left to say in time come after death,

and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn shadow

of the band and blew the suffering of America's naked mind for love

into an eli eli lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered

the cities down to the last radio

with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies

good to eat a thousand years.