

HOWL FOR CARL SOLOMON

When he was younger, and I was younger, I used to know Allen Ginsberg, a young poet living in Paterson, New Jersey, where he, son of a well-known poet, had been born and grew up. He was physically slight of build and mentally much disturbed by the life which he had encountered about him during those first years after the First World War as it was exhibited to him in and about New York City. He was always on the point of 'going away', where it didn't seem to matter; he disturbed me, I never thought he'd live to grow up and write a book of poems. His ability to survive, travel, and go on writing astonishes me. That he has gone on developing and perfecting his art is no less amazing to me.

Now he turns up fifteen or twenty years later with an arresting poem. Literally he has, from all the evidence, been through hell. On the way he met a man named Carl Solomon with whom he shared among the teeth and excrement of this life something that cannot be described but in the words he has used to describe it. It is a howl of defeat. Not defeat at all for he has gone through defeat as if it were an ordinary experience, a trivial experience. Everyone in this life is defeated but a man, if he be a man, is not defeated.

It is the poet, Allen Ginsberg, who has gone, in his own body, through the horrifying experiences described from life in these pages. The wonder of the thing is not that he has survived but that he, from the very depths, has found a fellow whom he can love, a love he celebrates without looking aside in these poems. Say what you will, he proves to us, in spite of the most debasing experiences that life can offer a man, the spirit of love survives to ennoble our lives if we have the wit and the courage and the faith—and the art! to persist.

It is the belief in the art of poetry that has gone hand in hand with this man into his Golgotha, from that charnel house, similar in every way, to that of the Jews in the past war. But this is in our own country, our own fondest purlieus. We are blind and live our blind lives out in blindness. Poets are damned but they are not blind, they see with the eyes of the angels. This poet sees through and all around the horrors he partakes of in the very intimate details of his poem. He avoids nothing but experiences it to the hilt. He contains it. Claims it as his own—and, we believe, laughs at it and has the time and affrontery to love a fellow of his choice and record that love in a well-made poem. Hold back the edges of your gowns, Ladies, we are going through hell.

William Carlos Williams

HOWL

For
Carl Solomon

I

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 Arkansas 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, al-
 cohol 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 drunkenness over the rooftops,
 storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon
 blinking traffic light, sun and moon and tree
 vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brook-
 lyn, 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 after-
 noon 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 Brook-
 lyn Bridge,
 a lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping
 down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills
 off 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-grind-
 ings and migraines of China under junk-with-
 drawal in Newark's bleak furnished room,
 who wandered around and around at midnight in the
 railroad yard wondering where to go, and went,
 leaving no broken hearts,

who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing
 through snow toward lonesome farms in grand-
 father night,
 who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telep-
 athy and bop kabbalah because the cosmos in-
 stinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas,
 who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking vis-
 ionary 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 Okla-
 homa on the impulse of winter midnight street-
 light 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 fire-
 place Chicago,
 who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the
 F.B.I. in beards and shorts with big pacifist
 eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incom-
 prehensible 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 manu-
 scripts,
 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 rose-
 gardens and the grass of public parks and
 cemeteries scattering their semen freely to
 whomever 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 can-
 dle 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 gyzyrn of consciousness,
 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 sun-
 rise, 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 pet-
 ticoat 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 unemploy-
 ment 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 steamheat
 and opium,
 who created great suicidal dramas on the apartment
 cliff-banks of the Hudson 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 borsh
 & 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 unsuccessful-
 fully, 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 regiments
 of fashion & the nitroglycerine shrieks of the
 fairies of advertising & 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 hap-
 pened and walked away unknown and forgotten
 into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alley-
 ways & firetrucks, not even one free beer,
 who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of
 the subway window, jumped in the filthy Pas-
 saic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the street,
 danced on broken wineglasses barefoot smashed
 phonograph records of nostalgic European
 1930s German jazz finished the whiskey and
 threw up groaning into the bloody toilet, moans
 in their ears and the blast of colossal steam-
 whistles,
 who barreled down the highways of the past journeying
 to 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 salvation 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 hyp-
 notism & 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 in-
 stantaneous lobotomy,
 and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin
 Metrazol electricity hydrotherapy psycho-
 therapy occupational therapy pingpong &
 amnesia,
 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 mad-
 man 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, rock-
 ing and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench
 dolmen-realms of love, dream of life a night-
 mare, 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 fur-
 nished 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 vibrat-
 ing 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 intel-
 ligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet con-
 fessing 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.

II

What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open
 their skulls and ate up their brains and imagi-
 nation?

Moloch! Solitude! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unob-
 tainable dollars! Children screaming under the
 stairways! Boys sobbing in armies! Old men
 weeping in the parks!

Moloch! Moloch! Nightmare of Moloch! Moloch the
 loveless! Mental Moloch! Moloch the heavy
 judger of men!

Moloch the incomprehensible prison! Moloch the
 crossbone soulless jailhouse and Congress of
 sorrows! Moloch whose buildings are judgment!
 Moloch the vast stone of war! Moloch the stun-
 ned governments!

Moloch whose mind is pure machinery! Moloch whose
 blood is running money! Moloch whose fingers
 are ten armies! Moloch whose breast is a cannibal
 dynamo! Moloch whose ear is a smoking
 tomb!

Moloch whose eyes are a thousand blind windows!
 Moloch whose skyscrapers stand in the long
 streets like endless Jehovahs! Moloch whose fac-
 tories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose
 smokestacks and antennae crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch
 whose soul is electricity and banks! Moloch
 whose poverty is the specter of genius! Moloch
 whose fate is a cloud of sexless hydrogen!
 Moloch whose name is the Mind!

Moloch in whom I sit lonely! Moloch in whom I dream
 Angels! Crazy in Moloch! Cocksucker in
 Moloch! Lacklove and manless in Moloch!

Moloch who entered my soul early! Moloch in whom
 I am a consciousness without a body! Moloch
 who frightened me out of my natural ecstasy!
 Moloch whom I abandon! Wake up in Moloch!
 Light streaming out of the sky!

Moloch! Moloch! Robot apartments! invisible suburbs!
 skeleton treasuries! blind capitals! demonic
 industries! spectral nations! invincible mad
 houses! granite cocks! monstrous bombs!

They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pave-
 ments, trees, radios, tons! lifting the city to
 Heaven which exists and is everywhere about
 us!

Visions! omens! hallucinations! miracles! ecstasies!
 gone down the American river!

Dreams! adorations! illuminations! religions! the whole
 boatload of sensitive bullshit!

Breakthroughs! over the river! flips and crucifixions!
 gone down the flood! Highs! Epiphanies! De-
 spairs! Ten years' animal screams and suicides!
 Minds! New loves! Mad generation! down on
 the rocks of Time!

Real holy laughter in the river! They saw it all! the
 wild eyes! the holy yells! They bade farewell!
 They jumped off the roof! to solitude! waving!
 carrying flowers! Down to the river! into the
 street!

III

Carl Solomon! I'm with you in Rockland
 where you're madder than I am
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you must feel very strange
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you imitate the shade of my mother
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you've murdered your twelve secretaries
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you laugh at this invisible humor
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where we are great writers on the same dreadful
 typewriter
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where your condition has become serious and
 is reported on the radio
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where the faculties of the skull no longer admit
 the worms of the senses
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you drink the tea of the breasts of the
 spinsters of Utica
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you pun on the bodies of your nurses the
 harpies of the Bronx

I'm with you in Rockland
 where you scream in a straightjacket that you're
 losing the game of the actual pingpong of the
 abyss
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you bang on the catatonic piano the soul
 is innocent and immortal it should never die
 ungodly in an armed madhouse
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where fifty more shocks will never return your
 soul to its body again from its pilgrimage to a
 cross in the void
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you accuse your doctors of insanity and
 plot the Hebrew socialist revolution against the
 fascist national Golgotha
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where you will split the heavens of Long Island
 and resurrect your living human Jesus from the
 superhuman tomb
 I'm with you in Rockland
 where there are twenty-five-thousand mad com-
 rades all together singing the final stanzas of
 the Internationale

I'm with you in Rockland

where we hug and kiss the United States under
our bedsheets the United States that coughs all
night and won't let us sleep

I'm with you in Rockland

where we wake up electrified out of the coma
by our own souls' airplanes roaring over the
roof they've come to drop angelic bombs the
hospital illuminates itself imaginary walls col-
lapse O skinny legions run outside O starry-
spangled shock of mercy the eternal war is
here O victory forget your underwear we're
free

I'm with you in Rockland

in my dreams you walk dripping from a sea-
journey on the highway across America in tears
to the door of my cottage in the Western night

San Francisco 1955-56

FOOTNOTE TO HOWL

Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!
Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy! Holy!

The world is holy! The soul is holy! The skin is holy!
The nose is holy! The tongue and cock and hand
and asshole holy!

Everything is holy! everybody's holy! everywhere is
holy! everyday is in eternity! Everyman's an
angel!

The bum's as holy as the seraphim! the madman is
holy as you my soul are holy!

The typewriter is holy the poem is holy the voice is
holy the hearers are holy the ecstasy is holy!

Holy Peter holy Allen holy Solomon holy Lucien holy
Kerouac holy Huncke holy Burroughs holy Cas-
sady holy the unknown buggered and suffering
beggars holy the hideous human angels!

Holy my mother in the insane asylum! Holy the cocks
of the grandfathers of Kansas!

Holy the groaning saxophone! Holy the bop
apocalypse! Holy the jazzbands marijuana
hipsters peace & junk & drums!

Holy the solitudes of skyscrapers and pavements! Holy
the cafeterias filled with the millions! Holy the
mysterious rivers of tears under the streets!

Holy the lone juggernaut! Holy the vast lamb of the
 middle class! Holy the crazy shepherds of rebellion!
 Who digs Los Angeles IS Los Angeles!
 Holy New York Holy San Francisco Holy Peoria &
 Seattle Holy Paris Holy Tangiers Holy Moscow
 Holy Istanbul!
 Holy time in eternity holy eternity in time holy the
 clocks in space holy the fourth dimension holy
 the fifth International holy the Angel in Moloch!
 Holy the sea holy the desert holy the railroad holy the
 locomotive holy the visions holy the hallucina-
 tions holy the miracles holy the eyeball holy the
 abyss!
 Holy forgiveness! mercy! charity! faith! Holy! Ours!
 bodies! suffering! magnanimity!
 Holy the supernatural extra brilliant intelligent
 kindness of the soul!

Berkeley, 1955

A SUPERMARKET IN CALIFORNIA

What thoughts I have of you tonight, Walt Whitman,
 for I walked down the sidestreets under the trees
 with a headache self-conscious looking at the full moon.

In my hungry fatigue, and shopping for images,
 I went into the neon fruit supermarket, dreaming of
 your enumerations!

What peaches and what penumbras! Whole families
 shopping at night! Aisles full of husbands! Wives
 in the avocados, babies in the tomatoes!—and you,
 García Lorca, what were you doing down by the
 watermelons?

I saw you, Walt Whitman, childless, lonely old
 grubber, poking among the meats in the refrigerator
 and eyeing the grocery boys.

I heard you asking questions of each: Who killed
 the pork chops? What price bananas? Are you my
 Angel?

I wandered in and out of the brilliant stacks of
 cans following you, and followed in my imagination
 by the store detective.

We strode down the open corridors together in
 our solitary fancy tasting artichokes, possessing every
 frozen delicacy, and never passing the cashier.