

HOWL

BY ALLEN GINSBERG

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, 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 motionless 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 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 off Empire State out of the moon,
yacketayacking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes
and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and **jai** s 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** wondering
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 incomprehensible 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 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 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 **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 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 Hudson
under the wartime blur 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 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 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 whiskey **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 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 **T**ime, & 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 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 instantaneous lobotomy,
and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity
hydrotherapy psychotherapy 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 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 ellipsis catalogue a variable measure and 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.

II

What **sphinx** of cement and aluminum **bashed open** their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?

Moloch! **Solitude**! Filth! Ugliness! Ashcans and unobtainable 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 **stunned** 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 factories dream and croak in the fog! Moloch whose smoke-stacks and antennae crown the cities!

Moloch whose love is endless oil and stone! Moloch whose soul is electricity and banks! Moloch whose poverty **i**s 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 madhouses! granite cocks! monstrous bombs!

They broke their backs lifting Moloch to Heaven! Pavements, 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! Despairs! 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 twentyfive thousand mad comrades 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 collapse 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, 1955–1956