

# HOWL

by Allen Ginsberg

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 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 Brooklyn Bridge,  
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 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 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 fireplace 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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 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,  
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.  
What sphinx of cement and aluminum bashed open  
their skulls and ate up their brains and imagination?  
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 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  
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! 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!  
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 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