

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed
ness, starving, hysterical, naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at
looking for an angry fix,

angry-headed hipsters burning for the ancient hearth
connection to the starry dynamo in the ma
of night,

who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high
smoking in the supernatural darkness of c

water flats floating across the tops of c

brian cassidy
bookseller

presents...



HOWL

A PREVIOUSLY UNKNOWN

TYPESCRIPT

Allen Ginsberg

HOWL
for
Carl Solomon

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by mad-
ness, 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 crouched in unshaven rooms in underwear burning
their money in wastebaskets amid the rubbish
of memorable Berkeley manifestoes listening to
the Terror through the wall,
who got busted in their beards returning through Laredo
with a belt of marijuana for New York,

1.

*"I saw the best minds of my generation
destroyed by madness . . ."*

GINSBERG, ALLEN
[ORIGINAL CARBON TYPESCRIPT FOR PART I OF "HOWL"]
[SAN FRANCISCO], [CA. EARLY 1956]

Previously unknown original carbon typescript of the most important postwar American poem: Allen Ginsberg's "Howl." Almost certainly the only surviving draft version of this iconic poem remaining in private hands, and the only one to ever be separately offered for sale, this copy was struck from what has become known as the fifth draft (so identified in HOWL: Original Draft Facsimiles and Variant Versions [etc.]. Barry Miles, Editor. New York: Harper & Row, 1986) and most likely dates from early 1956. It is this draft that Ginsberg read in what is the earliest known recording of the poem at Oregon's Reed College from February 1956 (indeed you can hear him turning the pages at precisely the right time on the recording), performed just three months after the legendary Six Gallery reading where the poem debuted.

PROVENANCE

This copy of "Howl" was discovered among the papers of bohemian and arts benefactor Annie Ruff. Ruff is perhaps best known for her close friendship with Kenneth Patchen and his wife (a large collection of their letters to Ruff recently appeared at auction). Patchen wrote several of his books at her Mt. Pleasant, NY estate, and Miriam Patchen would later write: "Out of nowhere came this little fairy godmother (to many) for us. She [Ruff] provided us with a magical retreat from city [sic] and our inability to pay rent with her treasured summer abode. There, in Mt. Pleasant were the peace, freedom, opportunity for an artist to work. After the first meeting our friendship was indestructible. Through the years it continued (continues) unabated" (Introduction to "The Journal of Albion Moonlight," reprinted in GEGENSCHWEIN 161718 [nos. 16, 17, and 18], edited by Phil Demise and Phil Smith. New York, 1969).

Ruff hosted, however, not just the Patchens, but many poets, painters, writers, and other creatives — Ginsberg among them — her home serving over the years as a sort of informal artists' colony. Acclaimed novelist Norman Rush — who in fact moved east in 1955 after a Ginsberg recommendation offered at a party thrown by Patchen — described Ruff's "art commune" during this period as "a crumbling mansion generously given over to deserving writers and artists," and praised Ruff as "a humanitarian patron of the arts [...] of sainted memory" ("Labors," THE NEW YORKER, October 7th, 2013).

Additionally, Ruff was the aunt of noted artist and printer David Ruff (1925-2007). David co-founded the Jargon Society with Jonathan Williams, who had famously rejected Ginsberg's epochal poem. In a 1976 interview, Williams remarked: "If Jargon had published ["Howl"] [...] it would have sold 300 copies" (quoted in Lask, "Jargon, a Small Press, Is One Poet's Way of Helping Other Poets," THE NEW YORK TIMES, March 5th, 1976). And in 1955, David was the printer for Lawrence Ferlinghetti's first book, the debut title in the City Lights Pocket Poets Series (which published Patchen the following year, just before issuing Ginsberg's HOWL AND OTHER POEMS). In his BEAT GENERATION IN SAN FRANCISCO, Ginsberg biographer and bibliographer Bill Morgan notes: "The printer David Ruff and his wife poet Holly Beye lived in the little wooden house [...] up the hill from Alfred's Restaurant. Beye was a friend of Ferlinghetti's wife Kirby, who had gone to Swarthmore with her. The two couples got together when

the Ferlinghetti's first settled in San Francisco in the early fifties. David and Holly shared Lawrence's anarchist political sympathies and it was Ruff who set the type for Ferlinghetti's first book, *PICTURES OF THE GONE WORLD*" (86). In fact, their house (at 970 Broadway) was just a ten minute walk (in the direction of City Lights) from the apartment where Ginsberg composed the earliest drafts of "Howl" (1010 Montgomery St.).

AUTHENTICITY

This is the exact carbon struck on Ginsberg's own typewriter from the top ribbon copy now housed at Stanford among Ginsberg's papers, and later reproduced as the fifth draft (of five) in *HOWL: Original Draft Facsimiles and Variant Versions [etc.]* (Harper & Row, 1986), pages 44-54. A full digitization of the top copy from which this carbon derives is also available online the Stanford Digital Repository, along with the other drafts of the poem present among Ginsberg's papers.

Ginsberg was known to have created carbons of the poem (*ibid* xiv), and the peculiarities both of Ginsberg's typewriter (for example, both his lowercase "o" and "h" exhibit easily identifiable imperfections: an almost doubling effect in the former and a shortened ascender in the latter) and of this particular typing (i.e. matching orientations of the text vis-à-vis the page edges on the top copy vs. the carbon, parallel impressions evidencing matching strike timing and strength) — as well as revisions visible on both the top copy and this carbon — exactly match the original held at Stanford. It is not a fair copy, and we can also state definitively that it is not a later reproduction or duplication of any kind. A detailed PDF documenting the relationship between the known top copy at Stanford and this typescript is available on request. A small selection from that document appear to the right, with the original at top and the the present carbon below.

DRAFT FIVE

The version offered here can be dated fairly accurately to late January or early February 1956. Because Ginsberg was revising and tinkering with the poem right up until the time of publication (and even then an unexpurgated version would not appear for some time), there are often contradictory differences between the known manuscript and typescript drafts, the earliest recorded versions (Feb. and March 1956), the rare ditto edition of the poem (May 1956), and the City Lights edition from the fall of 1956. In these circumstances, the exact timing and sequence of the various drafts of "Howl" can be difficult to determine conclusively (even Ginsberg, in compiling the versions for the 1986 facsimile edition, noted the challenge). What follows is a short timeline that puts this draft in its proper context.

The earliest evidence of the poem is from early summer 1955 and is found in Ginsberg's journals. But the first true drafts, composed directly on the poet's typewriter in his Montgomery Street apartment, didn't come until approximately mid-late August. An early version was sent that same month to Kerouac — who suggested the eventual title of the poem (originally called "Strophes").

In September, Ginsberg moved to a cottage in Berkeley, where he soon began Part II of the poem and continued to revise the first part, which he read at the legendary October 7th Six Gallery reading. It's not known what version of the poem he read there (no recording exists), but it is clear that he read only the first part - the remaining section(s) being too unfinished to include: "[Howl] wasn't even finished except for Part I at 6 Gallery, that's all I read then" (*THE LETTERS OF ALLEN GINSBERG* 444).

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving
a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of
Atlantic Cryptic Hall,

who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving
a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of
Atlantic Cryptic Hall,

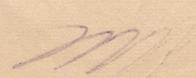
iron regiments of
shrieks of the

~~en~~ regiments of
shrieks of the

ness over the rooftops,
joyride neon blinking

ness over the rooftops,
neon green and blinking

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 and pub-
lishing obscene odes on the windows of the skull,
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 motion-
less world of time between,
Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetary
dawns, wine drunkenness over the rooftops,
boroughs of teahead neon green and 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-wrached and battered bleak of
brain all drained of brilliance in the drear
light of Zoo,



According to Ginsberg, the latest extant drafts of the final three sections date primarily from the end of 1955; and indeed in December of that year and January of the next he sent complete but still draft versions of "Howl" to both William Carlos Williams and Lucien Carr. Internal evidence suggests that those versions almost certainly predate the draft here offered. Therefore, this draft likely dates to the second half of January 1956 at the earliest and the first half of February 1956 at the latest when Ginsberg read this exact version at Reed College.

However, it is important to note that the later three sections of the poem remained very much in flux until at least March of 1956, when Ginsberg sent a second complete draft — now very close to both the ditto edition and the final City Lights version — to William Carlos Williams. But less than a month earlier, at the Reed College reading, Ginsberg could bear to read only a few lines of part two before stopping — and those lines were substantially different than the version he would shortly send to Williams — all suggesting these later sections were very much unfinished in Ginsberg's mind at the time of the Reed performance (ie. the latest possible date from which this draft could date), and certainly at the time of this draft's creation. Indeed, it is worth noting that this "fifth" draft does not contain the section numbering that the "fourth" draft does, strongly suggesting that (the last leaf aside here lacking) the carbon is complete as typed.

OTHER KNOWN OR LIKELY TYPESCRIPTS OF "HOWL."

This typescript represents what is almost certainly the only original draft version of the poem remaining in private hands. Ginsberg is known to have circulated just a small number of drafts in typescript before the poem's publication, and all of those are either already behind institutional walls, or are reasonably presumed perished. Further, the fact this carbon is on plain paper (and not, for example, onion skin) suggests that Ginsberg was likely only creating one, or perhaps two, carbons at a time - when and if he did at all. The other known drafts of the poem are as follows:

1. As would be expected, most - but not all - of the known drafts of "Howl" reside among the poet's papers at Stanford. This includes the earliest draft of the poem sent to Kerouac in mid-late August 1955 and which Kerouac soon passed along to John Clellon Holmes. This copy remained in Holmes' possession for many years before he returned it to the poet in the early 1980s.

2. Also among Ginsberg's papers is evidence that he sent a copy to William Burroughs, but this copy - almost certainly a carbon - appears to have perished. It has not appeared on the market, and was not among any of Burroughs' papers.

3. Ginsberg's correspondence also suggests he sent a copy to his father Louis Ginsberg. Such a draft, however, does not appear in either location of Louis' papers, and we suspect that his copy either was lost or more likely is now among the drafts in Allen's archive at Stanford (Allen stored his papers at his father's house from the late 1950s through the late 1960s).

4. The poet sent his old Columbia friend (and one of the initial dedicees of HOWL) Lucien Carr a complete draft of the poem in December of 1955. This version now resides among Carr's papers at Columbia. It's also worth noting that this version was not typed on Ginsberg's typewriter (although the letter conveying the poem was) and was likely one of the copies re-typed by Ginsberg's ex-girlfriend Sheila Boucher and referenced by Barry Miles in HOWL: Original Draft Facsimiles and Variant Versions (xiv).

5. According to Bill Morgan (*ibid*), Sheila Boucher received a typescript of the poem in thanks for her re-typing the poem (see above). However, again according to Morgan, this copy appears to have perished.

6. There are two different drafts of the poem among the William Carlos Williams papers at Yale: one dating from December of 1955 and the other from March of 1956. The March 6th version is close to the present draft five, but incorporates changes (handwritten by AG) that did not otherwise appear until the ditto edition (see Morgan A1) created by Ginsberg, Martha Rexroth (who ran off the copies), and Robert Creeley (who typed the masters). Which is to say: the March 6th Williams copy postdates the typescript here offered.

7. There is no known typescript that perfectly matches the ditto edition typed by Creeley (see above). But presumably one must have existed. However, no such version is present among either Ginsberg's or Creeley's papers - nor anywhere else we can determine. Presumed perished.

8. Finally on page 57 of *HOWL: Original Draft Facsimiles and Variant Versions*, Ginsberg refers to a City Lights printer's typescript (which like the Creeley draft above almost certainly had to exist); Ginsberg further suggests its presence among either Ferlinghetti's papers or those of City Lights (both now also at Stanford). However, we find no evidence of such a typescript among either archive. Further, as the initial printings of the City Lights *HOWL* were executed in the UK, any such typescript would have been sent there, where it likely remained. In either case, it now too appears also to have perished.

CONTENT OF DRAFT FIVE.

The typescript here offered differs significantly from both the later published versions (ditto and City Lights), and perhaps more importantly from even the known top-copy draft at Stanford. Words erased and retyped in the top copy are visible in the carbon, as are other changes evidenced in comparison to the published and the digitized versions (see accompanying comparison document for specific examples). But perhaps most importantly, page seven is here in the carbon as it was originally typed, before Ginsberg retyped the entire page, changing it significantly. This original version is lacking from Ginsberg's papers and had previously only been known by the recently discovered Reed College reading, which follows the text of the carbon here offered. As such, this typescript remains a rare window into Ginsberg's creative process, and an important document of this landmark poem. See accompanying PDF comparing the top copy to the carbon for more examples.

LEGACY

While the Six Gallery reading where "Howl" was debuted in an early form in October 1955, and the subsequent re-staging of this event in March of 1956 (the first time the poem was read in its entirety), made Ginsberg locally famous and even drew journalists like The New York Times' Richard Eberhart to document the nascent Beat Scene, no one was prepared for the effect the poem would have on both literature and the culture at large when it was published in the Fall of 1956 by Lawrence Ferlinghetti's City Lights Books. The book sold through its initial 1000-copy print run in just a few months, and a second printing of 1500 was ordered from the printer Villier's in London (who did handsome, inexpensive letterpress work). But when the books arrived in San Francisco from the UK, more than 500 copies were seized by US Customs authorities for obscenity, an event which (along with Ferlinghetti and City Lights employee Shig Murao's arrest later that year for selling *HOWL*), brought the poem — and its author — immediately to national attention, a position neither has relinquished. As the

who faded out in vast sordid movies and faded in again
on sudden Mannhattans, picked themselves up out
of basements hung-over with heartless Tokay and
horrors of dismantled 3rd Avenue iron dreams and
stumbled to unemployment offices,

who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested
the crab at the muddy bottom of the rivers of
Bowery,

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 under the
tubercular sky surrounded by orange crates of
theology,

who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht
& tortillas dreaming of the pure vegetable
kingdom,

who wept at the romance of the streets with their
pushcarts full of onions and bad music,

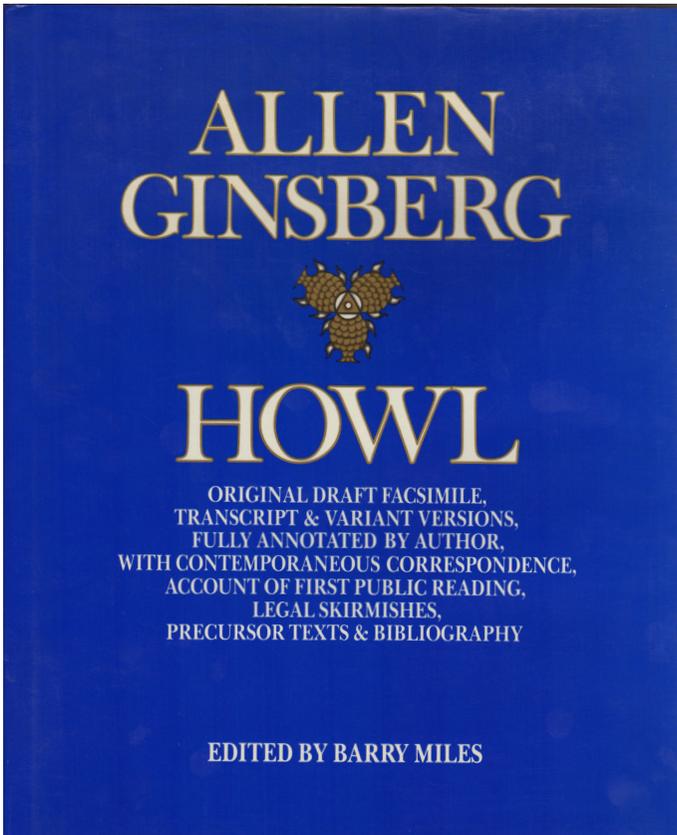
who sang out of their windows in despair, threw
themselves out of subway windows, jumped
in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes,
cried all over the street, finished the
whiskey & threw up groaning into the bloody
toilet, moans in their ears and the blast
of colossal steamwhistles,

title of the 2006 book in honor of the poem's fiftieth anniversary described "Howl," it was without exaggeration "the poem that changed America." The City Lights edition has never been out of print, having sold upwards of a million copies, and the poem pioneered not only a more confessional mode of American poetry, but helped launch numerous youth movements from beatniks to hippies, Situationists to punks. The poem is a landmark in the history of gay rights, free speech, protest, censorship, and the counterculture. Only Eliot's "The Wasteland" rivals it in modern American poetry in terms of influence, legacy, and importance. Along with Kerouac's ON THE ROAD and Burrough's NAKED LUNCH, it is a cornerstone of the Beat movement and remains Ginsberg's most enduring work.

A singular opportunity and monument of American literature.

-425,000-

Eleven carbon typescript leaves; 27.5 x 21.4 cm. Double-spaced, typed rectos only on plain paper. Folded in half, possibly for mailing. All pages evenly toned. Mild creasing and chipping to edges throughout. "By / Allen Ginsberg" penned to first page in an unknown hand (almost certainly not Ginsberg's). Page numbers penciled in unknown hand (but probably Ginsberg's) to upper right corner of each leaf. Several small, unobtrusive stains to first leaf. A faint ink scribble (possibly a letter "M") to lower edge of second page. One word crossed out in pencil ("iron," likely Ginsberg's) on page eight. Lacking last leaf — the twelfth — containing final nine lines of Part I. Very good overall. A first edition of HOWL: Original Draft Facsimiles and Variant Versions [etc.] edited by Barry Miles is provided (Harper & Row, 1986. Near fine in like jacket).



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