

Mr. Allen Ginsberg,

In my early teenage years I was desperate for inspiration, praying for something to come along to spark a passion inside of me and fuel the fire for years to come. I then was introduced to your poem, "Howl," and my wishes were answered. I thought it best if I expressed my gratitude for your work in the poetic style you would best understand.

I read the best beatnik-era poem I've ever encountered: descriptive, mind-blowing, affecting me on a subconscious level,

Tempting me to continue reading further, and yet simultaneously compelling me to reread previously swallowed stanzas that were not yet digested in my stomach,

Descriptions so sharp that it gave me paper cuts to read, Ideas so initially surreal to a thirteen year old, that it would take years to fully comprehend, A style so unique and profound to its time, serving as the strongest representation of a generation commonly unappreciated,

Did you know an eight-page poem could take hours to read, years to fully understand its effects, and seconds to appreciate?

I sat reading, asking myself, "Who is Carl Solomon?" as I entered the labyrinth that is "Howl" and its many harshly joined clauses,

Sitting on my bed, curled in the corner for hours, taking time to feel every emotion, every word, every modifying "who" that led me to a new character, a piece of the puzzle that slowly formed a cityscape spectacular,

Existing before "Howl" were only mediocre descriptions and an almost-but-not-quite reality outside of my rural, moderately populated town. Naively, I thought New York City as nothing but Times Square, Rockefeller Center, FAO Schwartz, and museums,

The stories read in the school curriculum were always cooked well done, leaving an uneventful but satisfying taste in my mouth afterwards. Rare and raw and intense, your poem challenged all those with a pen and paper in hand to step up to a new level of portrayal,

Your words were ugly, unclean, and uncensored, but in their grotesqueness and pessimistic accuracy it transformed into something beautiful.

Drowning in the immensely deep substance of your work, I screamed for a life vest in order to stay afloat, kicking in the black and cold abyss I was unfamiliar with,

In descriptions, depictions, fairy-tales, repetition, run-ons, you portrayed the destruction of your companions as they succumbed to the deeper-rooted evils that live in the dirty and dusty corners of cement alleys,

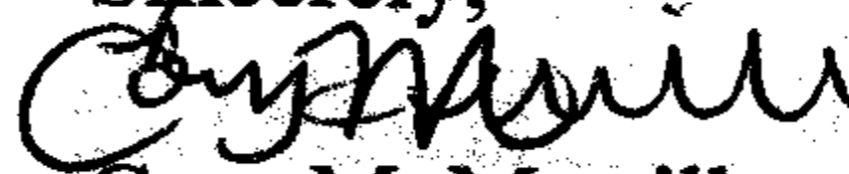
I bridged over into a new level of writing and a new level of life, where descriptions were not written to be decorative; they were written to be real,

Finishing your poem was like jumping off of a city tenement roof and landing belly down upon the cold concrete ground. The hard reality I lay sprawled upon was

reawakening, like an alarm clock that not only roused me from sleep, but also fell repeatedly on my head, as you quite aptly worded. I emerged on the other side of the poem in an altered state, inspired and yet sobered by the startling images you created.

You made me want to be a better writer. You dared me to test the limits of my abilities, and a set a new standard for what I read in the future. "Howl" has made me more mature in my thinking, more descriptive in my words, and ironically, more idealistic towards the worlds and those inhabiting it. I could never accurately express how grateful I am to have encountered such a significant piece of poetry. It was an experience that was dramatically eye opening and influential upon my impressionable thirteen-year-old mind. Allen Ginsberg, "I'm with you in Rockland." Thank you.

Sincerely,



Cory M. Merrill