

Ginsberg

by Julia Vinograd

No blame. Anyone who wrote Howl and Kaddish
earned the right to make any possible mistake
for the rest of his life.

I just wish I hadn't made this mistake with him.

It was during the Vietnam war
and he was giving a great protest reading
in Washington Square Park
and nobody wanted to leave.

So Ginsberg got the idea, "I'm going to shout
'the war is over' as loud as I can," he said
"and all of you run over the city

in different directions
yelling the war is over, shout it in offices,
shops, everywhere and when enough people
believe the war is over

why, not even the politicians
will be able to keep it going."

I thought it was a great idea at the time,
a truly poetic idea.

So when Ginsberg yelled I ran down the street
and leaned in the doorway
of the sort of respectable down on its luck cafeteria
where librarians and minor clerks have lunch
and I yelled "the war is over."

And a little old lady looked up
from her cottage cheese and fruit salad.

She was so ordinary she would have been invisible
except for the terrible light
filling her face as she whispered

"My son. My son is coming home."

I got myself out of there and was sick in some bushes.
That was the first time I believed there was a war.