



Corso, Gregory.

**Gregory Corso letters and poems
1956–1975**

Abstract: Poems and letters from American poet Gregory Corso.

Descriptive Summary

Identification: MSS 99, F748
Creator: Corso, Gregory.
Title: Gregory Corso letters and poems
Inclusive Dates: 1956–1975
Extent: 19 items
Language: Materials entirely in English.

Administrative Information

Citation: MSS 99, F748, Gregory Corso letters and poems, Special Collections, University of Delaware Library, Newark, Delaware.

Shelving Summary: Shelved in SPEC MSS 099

Location: Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library Newark, Delaware 19717-5267 Phone: 302-831-2229 Fax: 302-831-6003 URL: <http://www.lib.udel.edu/ud/spec/>

Source: Purchase, August 2005.

Processing: Processed by Karalee Kopreski, October 2005. Encoded by Jaime Margalotti, November 2006.

Access Restrictions: The collection is open for research.

Terms Governing Use and Reproduction: Use of materials from this collection beyond the exceptions provided for in the Fair Use and Educational Use clauses of the U.S. Copyright Law may violate federal law. Permission to publish or reproduce is required from the copyright holder. Please contact Special Collections Department, University of Delaware Library, <http://www.lib.udel.edu/cgi-bin/askspec.cgi>

Biographical Note

Born in New York City, American poet Gregory Corso (1930–2001) was a young associate of the Beat poets.

Corso spent his early years in and out of prison. During his five year sentence for robbery at Dannemora prison in upstate New York, he learned to read and developed a passion for Percy Bysshe Shelley and Homer. When he was released from prison in 1950, he moved to Greenwich Village and developed close friendships with Allen Ginsburg, William Burroughs, and Jack Kerouac. In 1954, Corso moved to Cambridge, Massachusetts, and became a fixture of the literary underground. A group of Harvard students and intellectuals were so impressed with his poetry that they paid for the publication of his first collection, *The Vestal Lady on Brattle*. Corso's literary reputation was established in 1960 when he was included in the Grove Press Anthology *The New American Poetry 1945–1960*. By 1963, however, Corso's career was beginning to falter because of his addiction to heroin and alcohol. Although he published two more collections of poetry (*Elegiac Feelings American* in 1970 and *Herald of the Autochthonic Spirit* in 1981), his career never regained the momentum of his great period in the 1950s.

Corso's personal life was never as successful as his literary career. He abandoned and eventually divorced four wives and several children. From 1992 until his death, Corso was supported financially by a wealthy Japanese artist, Hiro Yamagata. After being diagnosed with prostate cancer in 1999, Corso died in 2001 and his ashes were buried next to the grave of Percy Bysshe Shelley in Rome.

Sources:

American National Biography. 24 vols. New York: Oxford University Press, 1999.

Scope and Content

The Gregory Corso Letters and Poems comprise nineteen items spanning the dates 1958–1964 (with one poetry manuscript possibly signed in the 1970s). The collection includes letters from Corso to Ted Wilentz, Anselm Hollo, and the bookseller U. Grant Roman. A typescript letter accompanies a contract for Corso from Donald Allen regarding Corso's inclusion in his *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* from 1948 to 1958–59. The collection also contains a typescript, signed copies of "Hedgeville," "For Ignorance," and an untitled poem about Lawrence Ferlinghetti with handwritten additions and corrections. Additionally, five short untitled poems and a small notebook with the beginnings of a poem entitled "A Gift" are included.

Selected Search Terms

Personal Names

Ferlinghetti, Lawrence.

Hollo, Anselm.

Roman, U. Grant.

Wilentz, Ted.

Topical Terms

Poets, American--20th century--Correspondence.

Form/Genre Terms

Letters (correspondence).

Poems.

Personal Contributors

Allen, Donald Merriam, 1912-

Detailed Description of the Collection

Series I. Letters, 1958–1964

"As you know, I am compiling ..." , 1958 October 6 [F748]

2 pp.

Typescript letter and contract from Donald M. Allen, New York, for Corso's inclusion in his *Anthology of Modern American Poetry* (1948 to 1958–59), signed and dated by Corso.

"Dear Otto", [1959] April 27 [F748]

2 pp.

Typescript letter signed, Gregory Corso to Otto. With holograph postscript by Irving Rosenthal, "editor of Big Table." Corso advises 17-year old Otto to "stick Mulenberg [sic] out" and spend the time reading; Rosenthal counters Corso and advises the youth to leave.

"Dear Anselm - I am in Paris ..." , 1962 August 25 [F748]

Postcard signed, Gregory Corso, Paris, to Anselm Hollo, London.

"Dear Sir - I would like the fare home ..." , 1962 October 14 [F748]

2 pp. with envelope

Autograph letter signed, Gregory Corso, Paris, to U. Grant Roman, Roman Books, Inc., Ft. Lauderdale, Florida. Letter to the bookseller requesting fare home to the States in exchange for sale of his manuscripts; verso of the letter includes Corso's recollection of "these two poems," "On Mozart's Unmarked Grave" and "Sea Chanty."

Letters to Theodore (Ted) Wilentz, 1962-1964

Typed letter signed , 1962 November 26 [F748]

1 p. with envelope

Corso, Paris, to Wilentz, New York.

Autograph letter signed, 1962 December 12 [F748]

2 pp. with envelope

Corso, Paris, to Wilentz, New York.

Autograph letter signed, 1963 January 5 [F748]

1 p. with envelope

Corso, London, to Wilentz, New York. Written while recovering at Cromwell Nursing Home.

Postcard signed, 1963 June 20 [F748]

Corso, Capoke Falls, New York, to Wilentz, New York.

Typed letter signed, 1964 January 8 [F748]

1 p. with envelope

Corso, New York, to Wilentz, New York.

Birth announcement of Miranda November Corso, 1964 March 13 [F748]

Printed announcement with envelope.

Mrs. Sally Corso, New York, to Wilentz, New York.

Series II. Poems, circa 1956-1975, undated

"For Ignorance", [1975?] [F748]

1 p.

Typescript (copy) with autograph notes, signed "G. C.," Note in corner reads "from G. C. 8/20/75."

"Hedgeville", undated [F748]

1 p.

Typescript manuscript signed. From *Elegiac Feelings American*, the early version of his "Last Night I Drove a Car" from *Gasoline*. First appeared in "Combustion" in 1956. Probably from the broken-up typescript of *Elegiac*.

"The Sons of Italy / like Ferlingetti ...", undated [F748]

1 p.

Typescript and holograph draft of poem.

"When that which is not / results in a dot ..." , undated [F748]

1 p.

Holograph draft of poem.

"Before me where I'm sitting ..." , undated [F748]

1 p.

Typescript manuscript poem.

"Seated in a Georgetown house ..." , undated [F748]

1 p.

Holograph manuscript of poem.

"The poet in man ..." , undated [F748]

1 p.

Holograph draft of poem.

"The poet in man ..." , undated [F748]

1 p.

Typescript poem with holograph corrections, undated. Bears stamp "New Directions / 333 Sixth Ave. / New York 14, N.Y."

Small notebook with short holograph drafts: "A Gift," "You don't know my life ... ," and "Poetry like psychiatry ... " [fragment], undated [F748]
