The REVOLUTIONARY LETTERS
are dedicated to Bob Dylan;
and to my grandfather, Domenico Mallozzi,
friend of the great anarchist dreamers of his time,
who read me Dante at the age of four
& named my mother after Emma Goldman.
APRIL FOOL BIRTHDAY POEM FOR GRANDPA

Today is your birthday and I have tried writing these things before, but now in the gathering madness, I want to thank you for telling me what to expect for pulling no punches, back there in that scrubbed Bronx parlor thank you for honestly weeping in time to innumerable heartbreaking italian operas for pulling my hair when I pulled the leaves off the trees so I’d know how it feels, we are involved in it now, revolution, up to our knees and the tide is rising, I embrace strangers on the street, filled with their love and mine, the love you told us had to come or we die, told them all in that Bronx park, me listening in spring Bronx dusk, breathing stars, so glorious to me your white hair, your height your fierce blue eyes, rare among italians, I stood a ways off looking up at you, my grandpa people listened to, I stand a ways off listening as I pour out soup young men with light in their faces at my table, talking love, talking revolution which is love, spelled backwards, how you would love us all, would thunder your anarchist wisdom at us, would thunder Dante, and Giordano Bruno, orderly men bent to your ends, well I want you to know we do it for you, and your ilk, for Carlo Tresca, for Sacco and Vanzetti, without knowing
it, or thinking about it, as we do it for Aubrey Beardsley
Oscar Wilde (all street lights
shall be purple), do it
for Trotsky and Shelley and big/dumb
Kropotkin
Eisenstein’s Strike people, Jean Cocteau’s ennui, we do it for
the stars over the Bronx
that they may look on earth
and not be ashamed.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #1

I have just realized that the stakes are myself
I have no other
ransom money, nothing to break or barter but my life
my spirit measured out, in bits, spread over
the roulette table, I recoup what I can
nothing else to shove under the nose of the *maître de jeu*
nothing to thrust out the window, no white flag
this flesh all I have to offer, to make the play with
this immediate head, what it comes up with, my move
as we slither over this go board, stepping always
(we hope) between the lines
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #2

The value of an individual life a credo they taught us
to instill fear, and inaction, ‘you only live once’
a fog in our eyes, we are
endless as the sea, not separate, we die
a million times a day, we are born
a million times, each breath life and death :
get up, put on your shoes, get
started, someone will finish

Tribe
an organism, one flesh, breathing joy as the stars
breathe destiny down on us, get
going, join hands, see to business, thousands of sons
will see to it when you fall, you will grow
a thousand times in the bellies of your sisters
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #3

store water; make a point of filling your bathtub at the first news of trouble: they turned off the water in the 4th ward for a whole day during the Newark riots; or better yet make a habit of keeping the tub clean and full when not in use change this once a day, it should be good enough for washing, flushing toilets when necessary and cooking, in a pinch, but it’s a good idea to keep some bottled water handy too get a couple of five gallon jugs and keep them full for cooking

store food — dry stuff like rice and beans stores best goes farthest. SALT VERY IMPORTANT: it’s health and energy healing too, keep a couple pounds sea salt around, and, because we’re spoiled, some tins tuna, etc. to keep up morale — keep up the sense of ‘balanced diet’ ‘protein intake’ remember the stores may be closed for quite some time, the trucks may not enter your section of the city for weeks, you can cool it indefinitely with 20 lb brown rice
  20 lb whole wheat flour
  10 lb cornmeal
  10 lb good beans — kidney or soy
  5 lb sea salt
  2 qts good oil
dried fruit and nuts add nutrients and a sense of luxury to this diet, a squash or coconut in a cool place in your pad will keep six months
remember we are all used to eating less than the ‘average American’ and take it easy before we ever notice we’re hungry the rest of the folk will be starving used as they are to meat and fresh milk daily and help will arrive, until the day no help arrives and then you’re on your own.

hoard matches, we aren’t good at rubbing sticks together any more a tinder box is useful, if you can work it don’t count on gas stove, gas heater electric light keep hibachi and charcoal, CHARCOAL STARTER a help kerosene lamp and candles, learn to keep warm with breathing remember the blessed American habit of bundling
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #4

Left to themselves people
grow their hair.
Left to themselves they
take off their shoes.
Left to themselves they make love
sleep easily
share blankets, dope & children
they are not lazy or afraid
they plant seeds, they smile, they
speak to one another. The word
coming into its own : touch of love
on the brain, the ear.

We return with the sea, the tides
we return as often as leaves, as numerous
as grass, gentle, insistent, we remember
the way,
our babes toddle barefoot thru the cities of the universe.
at some point
you may be called upon
to keep going for several days without sleep;
keep some ups around. to be
clearheaded, avoid ‘comedown’ as much as possible,
take vitamin B along with amphetamines, try
powdered guarana root, available
at herb drugstores, it is an up
used by Peruvian mountainfolk, tastes
like mocha (bitter) can be put in tea
will clear your head, increase oxygen supply
keep you going past amphetamine wooziness

at some point
you may have to crash, under tension, keep some downs
on hand, you may have to cool out
sickness, or freak-out, or sorrow, keep some downs
on hand, I don’t mean
tranquilizers, ye olde fashioned SLEEPING PILL
(sleep heals heads, heals souls) chloryll hydrate
(Mickey Finn) one of the best, but
nembutal, etc. OK in a pinch, remember
no liquor with barbiturates
at some point
you will need painkillers, darvon
is glorified shit, stash some codeine & remember
it’s about five times more effective
if taken with aspirin

ups, downs & painkillers are
the essence: antibiotics
for extreme infections, any good
wide-spectrum one will do, avoid penicillin
too many allergies, speaking of which
cortisone is good for really bad attacks
(someone who freaks out asthma-style, or with hives)

USE ALL THESE AS LITTLE
as possible, side effects multifarious
and they cloud the brain
tend to weaken the body and obscure
judgment

ginseng tea, ginger compresses, sea salt,
prayer and love
are better healers, easier come by, save the others
for life and death trips, you will know
when you see one
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #6

avoid the folk
who find Bonnie and Clyde too violent
who see the blood but not the energy form
they love us and want us to practice birth control
they love us and want the Hindus to kill their cows
they love us and have a colorless tasteless powder
   which is the perfect synthetic food . . .
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #7

there are those who can tell you
how to make molotov cocktails, flamethrowers,
bombs whatever
you might be needing
find them and learn, define
your aim clearly, choose your ammo
with that in mind

it is not a good idea to tote a gun
or knife
unless you are proficient in its use
all swords are two-edged, can be used against you
by anyone who can get ’em away from you

it is
possible even on the east coast
to find an isolated place for target practice
success
will depend mostly on your state of mind:
meditate, pray, make love, be prepared
at any time, to die
but don’t get uptight: the guns
will not win this one, they are
an incidental part of the action
which we better damn well be good at,
what will win
is mantras, the sustenance we give each other,
the energy we plug into
   (the fact that we touch
      share food)
the buddha nature
of everyone, friend and foe, like a million earthworms
tunnelling under this structure
till it falls
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #8

Everytime you pick the spot for a be-in
da demonstration, a march, a rally, you are choosing the ground
for a potential battle.
You are still calling these shots.
Pick your terrain with that in mind.
Remember the old gang rules:
stick to your neighborhood, don’t let them lure you
to Central Park everytime, I would hate
to stumble bloody out of that park to find help:
Central Park West, or Fifth Avenue, which would you
choose?

go to love-ins
with incense, flowers, food, and a plastic bag
with a damp cloth in it, for tear gas, wear no jewelry
wear clothes you can move in easily, wear no glasses
contact lenses
earrings for pierced ears are especially hazardous

try to be clear
in front, what you will do if it comes
to trouble
if you’re going to try to split stay out of the center
don’t stampede or panic others
don’t waver between active and passive resistance
know your limitations, bear contempt
neither for yourself, nor any of your brothers

NO ONE WAY WORKS, it will take all of us
shoving at the thing from all sides
to bring it down.
advocating
the overthrow of government is a crime
overthrowing it is something else
altogether. it is sometimes called revolution
but don’t kid yourself: government
is not where it’s at: it’s only
a good place to start:
   1. kill head of Dow Chemical
   2. destroy plant
   3. MAKE IT UNPROFITABLE FOR THEM
to build again.
i.e., destroy the concept of money
as we know it, get rid of interest,
savings, inheritance
(Pound’s money, as dated coupons that come in the mail
to everyone, and are void in 30 days
is still a good idea)
or, let’s start with no money at all and invent it
   if we need it
or, mimeograph it and everyone
   print as much as they want
   and see what happens

declare a moratorium on debt
the Continental Congress did
‘on all debts public and private’

& no one ‘owns’ the land
it can be held
for use, no man holding more
than he can work, himself and family working
let no one work for another
except for love, and what you make
above your needs be given to the tribe
a Common-Wealth

None of us knows the answers, think about
these things.
The day will come when we will have to know
the answers.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #10

These are transitional years and the dues will be heavy. Change is quick but revolution will take a while. America has not even begun as yet. This continent is seed.
drove across
San Joaquin Valley
with Kirby Doyle
grooving
grooving
behind talk of Kirby’s family
been here a long time
grooving
friendship renewed, neat pickup truck, we stopped
at a gas station
man uptight at the
sight of us, sight of Kirby’s hair, his friendly
loose face, my hair, our dress
man surly, uptight, we drove
away brought down
(across fields of insecticide and migrant workers)
and
‘Man’ I said ‘that cat
so uptight, what’s he
so uptight about, it’s not
your hair, not really, it’s just
what the TV tells him about hippies
got him scared, what he reads in
his magazines
got him scared, we got to
come out from behind the image
sit down with him, if he
sat down to a beer with you he’d find
a helluva lot more to say than he’ll find
with the man who makes your image
he’s got nothing in common
with the men who run his mind, who tell him
what to think of us'

SMASH THE MEDIA, I said,
AND BURN THE SCHOOLS
so people can meet, can sit
and talk to each other, warm and close
no TV image flickering
between them.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #12

the vortex of creation is the vortex of destruction
the vortex of artistic creation is the vortex of self destruction
the vortex of political creation is the vortex of flesh destruction
  flesh is in the fire, it curls and terribly warps
  fat is in the fire, it drips and sizzling sings
  bones are in the fire
      they crack tellingly in
      subtle hieroglyphs of oracle
  charcoal singed
      the smell of your burning hair
for every revolutionary must at last will his own destruction
rooted as he is in the past he sets out to destroy
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #13

now let me tell you
what is a Brahmasastra
Brahmasastra, hindu weapon of war
near as I can make out
a flying wedge of mind energy
hurled at the foe by god or hero
or many heroes
hurled at a problem or enemy
cracking it

Brahmasastra can be made
by any or all
can be made by all of us
straight or tripping, thinking together
like : all of us stop the war
at nine o’clock tomorrow, each take one soldier
see him clearly, love him, take the gun
out of his hand, lead him to a quiet spot
sit him down, sit with him as he takes a joint
of viet cong grass from his pocket . . .

Brahmasastra can be made
by all of us, tripping together
winter solstice
at home, or in park, or wandering
sitting with friends
blinds closed, or on porch, no be-in
no need
to gather publicly
just gather spirit, see the forest growing
put back the big trees
put back the buffalo
the grasslands of the midwest with their herds
    of elk and deer
put fish in clean Great Lakes
desire that all surface water on the planet
be clean again. Kneel down and drink
from whatever brook or lake you conjure up.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #14

are you prepared
to hide someone in your home indefinitely
say, two to six weeks, you going out
for food, etc., so he never
hits the street, to keep your friends away
coolly, so they ask no questions, to nurse
him, or her, as necessary, to know
‘first aid’ and healing (not to freak out
at the sight of torn or half-cooked flesh)
to pass him on at the right time to the next
station, to cross the canadian border, with a child
so that the three of you
look like one family, no questions asked
or fewer, to stash letters, guns, or bombs
forget about them
till they are called for, to KEEP YOUR MOUTH SHUT
not to ‘trust’
even your truelove, that is,
lay no more knowledge on him than he needs
to do his part of it, a kindness
we all must extend to each other in this game
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #15

When you seize Columbia, when you seize Paris, take the media, tell the people what you’re doing what you’re up to and why and how you mean to do it, how they can help, keep the news coming, steady, you have 70 years of media conditioning to combat, it is a wall you must get through, somehow, to reach the instinctive man, who is struggling like a plant for light, for air

when you seize a town, a campus, get hold of the power stations, the water, the transportation, forget to negotiate, forget how to negotiate, don’t wait for De Gaulle or Kirk to abdicate, they won’t, you are not ‘demonstrating’ you are fighting a war, fight to win, don’t wait for Johnson or Humphrey or Rockefeller, to agree to your terms take what you need, ‘it’s free because it’s yours’
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #16

we are eating up the planet, the New York Times
takes a forest, every Sunday, Los Angeles
draws its water from the Sacramento Valley
the rivers of British Columbia are ours
on lease for 99 years

every large factory is an infringement
of our god-given right to light and air
to clean and flowing rivers stocked with fish
to the very possibility of life
for our children’s children, we will have to
look carefully, i.e., do we really want/need
electricity and at what cost in natural resource
human resource
do we need cars, when petroleum
pumped from the earth poisons the land around
for 100 years, pumped from the car
poisons the hard-pressed cities, or try this
statistic, the USA
has 5% of the world’s people uses over
50% of the world’s goods, our garbage
holds matter for survival for uncounted
‘underdeveloped’ nations
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #17

we will all feel the pinch
there will not be
a cadillac and a 40,000 dollar home
for everyone
simply
the planet will not bear it.

What there will be is enough
food, enough
of the ‘necessities’, luxuries
will have to go by the board

even the poorest of us
will have to give up something
to live free
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #18

let’s talk about splitting, splitting is an art
frequently called upon in revolution
retreat, says the I Ching, must not be confused
with flight, and furthermore, frequently, it furthers
ONE TO HAVE SOMEWHERE TO GO

i.e., know in advance
the persons/place you can go to
means to get there
keep money (cash) in house for travelling
an extra set of i.d., Robert Williams
was warned by his own TV set when the Man
was coming for him,
he had his loot at home, his wife and kids
all crossed the country with him, into CANADA
and on to CUBA

it’s a good idea
to have good, working transportation ‘wheels’, one friend
has two weeks stashed in his VW bus
food, water, matches, clothing, blankets, gas, he can go
at least that long, before he hits a town, can leave
at any time
something to think about . . .
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #19

(for The Poor People’s Campaign)

if what you want is jobs
for everyone, you are still the enemy,
you have not thought thru, clearly
what that means

if what you want is housing,
industry
    (GE on the Navaho
     reservation)
a car for everyone, garage, refrigerator,
TV, more plumbing, scientific
freeways, you are still
the enemy, you have chosen
to sacrifice the planet for a few years of some
science fiction utopia, if what you want

still is, or can be, schools
where all our kids are pushed into one shape, are taught
it’s better to be ‘American’ than Black
or Indian, or Jap, or PR, where Dick
and Jane become and are the dream, do you
look like Dick’s father, don’t you think your kid
secretly wishes you did

if what you want
is clinics where the AMA
can feed you pills to keep you weak, or sterile
shoot germs into your kids, while Merck & Co
grows richer
if you want
free psychiatric help for everyone
so that the shrinks
pimps for this decadence, can make
it flower for us, if you want
if you still want a piece
a small piece of suburbia, green lawn
laid down by the square foot
color TV, whose radiant energy
kills brain cells, whose subliminal ads
brainwash your children, have taken over
your dreams

degrees from universities which are nothing
more than slum landlords, festering sinks
of lies, so you too can go forth
and lie to others on some greeny campus

THEN YOU ARE STILL
THE ENEMY, you are selling
yourself short, remember
you can have what you ask for, ask for
everything
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #20

(for Huey Newton)

I will not rest
till men walk free & fearless on the earth
each doing in the manner of his blood
& tribe, peaceful in the free air

till all can seek, unhindered
the shape of their thought
no black cloud fear or guilt
between them & the sun, no babies burning
young men locked away, no paper world
to come between flesh & flesh in human
encounter

till the young women
come into their own, honored & fearless
birthing strong babes
loving & dancing

till we can at last
lose some of our sternness, return
to our own thoughts, till laughter
bounces off our hills & fills
our plains
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #21

Can you
own land, can you
own house, own rights
to other's labor, (stocks, or factories
or money, loaned at interest)
what about
the yield of same, crops, autos
airplanes dropping bombs, can you
own real estate, so others
pay you rent? to whom
does the water belong, to whom
will the air belong, as it gets rarer?
the american indians say that a man
can own no more than he can carry away
on his horse.
what do you want
your kids to learn, do you care
if they know factoring, chemical formulae, theory
of numbers, equations, philosophy, semantics
symbolic logic, latin, history, socalled, which is
merely history of mind of western man, least interesting
of numberless manifestations on this planet?

do you care
if he learns to eat off the woods, to set
a broken arm, to mend
his own clothes, cook simple food, deliver
a calf or baby? if there are cars should he not
be able to keep his running?
how will he learn these things, will he learn them
cut off in a plaster box, encased
in a larger cement box called ‘school’ dealing with paper
from morning till night, grinding no clay or mortar, no
pigment, setting no seedlings in black earth
come spring, how will he
know to trap a rabbit, build a raft,
to navigate by stars, or find safe ground
to sleep on? what is he doing all his learning years
inside, as if the planet were no more than a vehicle
for carrying our plastic constructs around the sun
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #23

A lack of faith is simply a lack of courage
one who says ‘I wish I could believe that’ means simply that he
is coward, is pleased
to be spectator, on this scene where there are no spectators
where all hands not actually working are working against
as they lie idle, folded in lap, or holding up newspapers
full of lies, or wrapped around steering wheel, on one more
pleasure trip
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #24

Have you thought about the American aborigines who will inhabit this continent? Cave dwellers, tent people, tree dwellers, will your great-grandchildren be among them? Will they sell artifacts — abalone or wool — to the affluent highly civilized Africans who come here in the summer, will they wear buckskin, or cotton, loincloth, run down deer, catch fish barehanded, build teepees, hogans, remember to use the wheel, to write, to speak, or simply drum & pipe, smiling, will your great-grandchildren be among them?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #25

Know every way
out of your house, where it goes, every alley
on the block, which back yards connect, which walls
are scalable, which bushes
will hold a man.
Construct at least one man-sized hiding place
in your walls, know for sure which neighbors
will let you sneak in the back door & saunter out the front
while the Man is parked in your driveway, or tearing
your pad apart, which neighbors won’t be home, which cellar doors
are open — whom you can summon in your neighborhood
to do your errands, check the block, set up
a getaway while you sit tight inside & your house
is watched . . .
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #26

‘DOES THE END JUSTIFY THE MEANS?’ this is process, there is no end, there are only means, each one had better justify itself. To whom?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #27

How much can we afford to lose, before we win, can we cut hair, or give up drugs, take job, join Minute Men, marry, wear their clothes, play bingo, what can we stomach, how soon does it leave its mark, can we living straight in a straight part of town still see our people, can we live if we don’t see our people? ‘It is better to lose & win, than win & be defeated’ sd Gertrude Stein, which wd you choose?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #28

0 my brothers
busted for pot, for looting, for loving
young beautiful brothers & sisters, for holding out hope
in both hands to the Man, enraging him
0 my sisters, freaking out this moment
this beautiful summer evening
in all the cages of America
while the sun goes down on this fabled & holy land :

know that we have this land, we are filling its crevices
its caves and forests, its coastlines and holy places
with our mating flesh, with the fierce play of our children
our numbers increasing
we are approaching your cells, to cut you loose
to march triumphant with you, crying out
to Maitreya, across the Pacific
beware of those
who say we are the beautiful losers
who stand in their long hair and wait to be punished
who weep on beaches for our isolation

we are not alone: we have brothers in all the hills
we have sisters in the jungles and in the ozarks
we even have brothers on the frozen tundra
they sit by their fires, they sing, they gather arms
they multiply: they will reclaim the earth

nowhere we can go but they are waiting for us
no exile where we will not hear welcome home
‘ good morning brother, let me work with you
goodmorning sister, let me
fight by your side ’
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #30

(To Those Who Sold the Revolution Summer of ’68)

remember to wear a hat, if you have a hat
and stick your hair inside it, if it’s long hair
or don’t, wear shoes if it’s snowing and you have shoes
remember they buyout all the leaders, be a leader
if you want to be bought out, but remember to
tell the truth, just before they buy you, tell the truth
loud, and the kids will hear you, not hear your money
as it falls on the liquorstore counter, day after day
not hear your dreams of nightmare betrayal and torture
not hear your mercedes, they’ll hear the truth you spoke
they’ll believe you and honor you after you die, brought down
by that cia bullet you can’t avoid just by taking their money
they’ll believe you and DO WHAT YOU SAY
NOT WHAT YOU DO
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #31

(for LeRoi, at long last)

not all the works of Mozart worth one human life
not all the brocades of the Potala palace
better we should wear homespun, than some in orlon
some in Thailand silk
the children of Bengal weave gold thread in silk saris
six years old, eight years old, for export, they don’t sing
the singers are for export, Folkways records
better we should all have homemade flutes
and practice excruciatingly upon them, one hundred years
till we learn to
make our own music
not western civilization, but civilization itself
is the disease which is eating us
not the last five thousand years, but the last twenty thousand
are the cancer
not modern cities, but the city, not
capitalism, but ism, art, religion, once they are
separate enough to be seen and named, named art named
religion, once they are not
simply the daily acts of life which bring the rain, bring bread,
heal, bring
the herds close enough to hunt, birth the children
simply the acts of song, the acts of power, now lost
to us these many years, not killing a few white men will bring
back power, not killing all the white men, but killing
the white man in each of us, killing the desire
for brocade, for gold, for champagne brandy, which sends
people out of the sun and out of their lives to create
COMMODITY for our pleasure, what claim
do we have, can we make, on another’s time, another’s
life blood, show me
a city which does not consume the air and water
for miles around it, mohenjo-daro was a blot
on the village culture of India, the cities of Egypt sucked
the life of millions, show me
an artifact of city which has the power
as flesh has power, as spirit of man
has power
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #33

how far back
are we willing to go? that seems to be
the question. the more we give up
the more we will be blessed, the more
we give up, the further back we go, can we
make it under the sky again, in moving tribes
that settle, build, move on and build again
owning only what we carry, do we need
the village, division of labor, a friendly potlatch
a couple of times a year, or must it be
merely a 'cybernetic civilization'
which may or may not save the water, but will not
show us our root, or our original face, return
us to the source, how far
(forward is back) are we willing to go
after all?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #34

hey man let’s make a revolution, let’s give
every man a thunderbird
color TV, a refrigerator, free
antibiotics, let’s build
apartments with a separate bedroom for every child
inflatable plastic sofas, vitamin pills
with all our daily requirements that come in the mail
free gas & electric & telephone &
no rent. why not?

hey man, let’s make a revolution, let’s
turn off the power, turn on the
stars at night, put metal
back in the earth, or at least not take it out
anymore, make lots of guitars and flutes, teach the chicks
how to heal with herbs, let’s learn
to live with each other in a smaller space, and build
hogans, and domes and teepees all over the place
BLOW UP THE PETROLEUM LINES, make the cars
into flower pots or sculptures or live
in the bigger ones, why not?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #35

rise up, my
brothers, do not
bow your heads any longer, or pray
except to the spirit you waken, the
spirit you bring to birth, it
never was on earth, rise up, do not
droop, smoking hash or opium, dreaming sweetness, perhaps
there will be time for that, on the long beaches
lying in love with the few of us who are left, but now
the earth cries out for aid, our brothers
and sisters set aside their childhoods, prepare
to fight, what choice have we but join them, in their hands
rests the survival of the very planet, the health
of the solar system, for we are one
with the stars, and the spirit we forge
they wait for, Christ, Buddha, Krishna
Paracelsus, had but a taste, we must reclaim
the planet, re-occupy
this ground
the peace we seek was never seen before, the earth
BELONGS, at last, TO THE LIVING
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #36

who is the we, who is
the they in this thing, did
we or they kill the indians, not me
my people brought here, cheap labor to exploit
a continent for them, did we
or they exploit it? do you
admit complicity, say ‘we
have to get out of Vietnam, we really should
stop poisoning the water, etc.’ look closer, look again,
secede, declare your independence, don’t accept
a share of the guilt they want to lay on us
MAN IS INNOCENT & BEAUTIFUL & born
to perfect bliss they envy, heavy deeds
make heavy hearts and to them
life is suffering. stand clear.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #37

GEOGRAPHY, U.S.A.

the east edge is
megalopolis, is
Washington, D.C., spread out
800 miles, ecology
totally fucked up, even
the brothers there do not completely believe
that they can win; the west edge
is langorous w/wealth, there venison
is brought down from the hills & figs & wine
from abandoned orchards, the sisters
raise their bastard young on welfare checks & rotten
sprayed vegetables, talk ‘free’, talk end of money, for them
the war is over, all the wars; the middle
is hardly heard from yet, it is
stirring, stretching muscles, bare bones of continent, eternal
progression of young barbarians
huge boiling meat-fed hordes who can’t be taught
there’s anything to lose, angelic herds whose unholy yell
is gonna shake us all
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #38

NOT PEOPLE’S PARK
PEOPLE’S PLANET, CAN THEY
FENCE THAT ONE IN, BULLDOZE IT
4 A.M.?
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #39

let me tell you, sisters, that on May 30th I went to one of our life festivals
dropped acid in Tompkins Square Park with my brothers & sisters
danced in the sun, till the stars
came out & the pigs
drove around us in a circle, where we stood
touching each other & loving, then I
went home & made love like a flower, like two flowers opening
to each other, we were
the jewel in the lotus, next morning still high wandered uptown
to Natural History Museum & there
in a room of Peruvian fauna, birds
of paradise I saw as a past, like the dinosaurs
saw birds pass from the earth &
flowers, most trees & small creatures :
chipmunks & rabbits & squirrels & delicate wildflowers
saw the earth bare & smooth, austerely plastic & efficient
men feeding hydroponically, working like ants
thought flatly, without regret (I have unlearned regret)

‘WHAT BEAUTIFUL CREATURES
USED TO LIVE ON THE EARTH’
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #40

(for Emmet Grogan)

if the power of the word is anything, America, your oil fields
burning
your cities in ruins, smouldering, pillaged by children
your cars broken down, at a standstill, choking the roads
your citizens standing beside them, bewildered, or choosing
a packload of objects (what they can carry away) if the
power of the word lives, America, your power lines down
eagle-eyed lines of electric, of telephone, towers
of radio transmission
toppled & rankling in the fields, setting the hay ablaze
your newspapers useless, your populace illiterate
wiping their asses with them,
IF THE WORD HAS POWER YOU SHALL NOT STAND
AMERICA, the wilderness is spreading from the parks
you have fenced it into, already
desert blows through Las Vegas, the sea licks its chops
at the oily edges of Los Angeles,
the camels are breeding, the bears, the elk are increasing
so are the indians and the very poor
do you stir in your sleep, America, do you dream of your power
pastel colored oil tanks from sea to shining sea?
sleep well, America, we stand by your bedside,
the word has power, the chant is going up
Revolution : a turning, as the earth turns, among planets, as the sun turns round some (darker) star, the galaxy describes a yin-yang spiral in the aether, we turn from dark to light, turn faces of pain & fear, the dawn awash among them
what is this
‘overpopulation’ problem, have you
looked at it, clearly, do you know
ten times as much land needed if we eat
hamburger, instead of grain; we can
all fit, not hungry, if we minimize
our needs, RIP OFF LARGE, EMPTY RANCHES, make the food

nutritious: chemical fertilizers
have to go, nitrates
poison the water; large scale machine farming
has to go, the soil
is blowing away (300 years
to make one inch of topsoil), do you know

40% of the women of Puerto Rico
already sterilized, transistor radios
the ‘sterilization bonus’ in India; all propaganda
aimed at the ‘non-white’ and ‘poor white’ populations

something like 90% of the land of USA
belongs to 5% of the population:
how can they hold on
when the hordes of the infants of the very poor
grow up, grow strong
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #43

the map: first goal is health
strong bodies make strong spirit, Venceremos Brigade
coming back from Cuba discover they know how to breathe
they can get up with the sun; first thing:
to zap the sugar habit, get rid of meat
& heavy drugs, to eat no chemicals, no processed food
first step:
to find out what health feels like: even keel
tireless energy pouring steady through

then, prana (vital energy) moving smooth
thru all yr flesh: next goal release
sexual force — strong flesh becomes bright flesh
anger becomes ‘Buddha’s anger’ a steady roar
righteous, behind yr action, not spasmodic, threatens
no self-destruction; loose touch on
brothers & sisters, loose force (& contain it)
Holy Power
to build up, or pull down
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #44

(for my sisters)

As we know that blood
is birth, agony
breaks open doors, as we
can bend, graciously, beneath burdens, undermine
like rain, or earthworms, as our cries
yield to the cries of the newborn, as we hear
the plea in the voices around us, not words
of passion or cunning, discount
anger or pride, grow strong
in our own strength, women's alchemy, quick arms
to pull down walls, we liberate
out of our knowledge, labor, sucking babes, we
liberate, and nourish, as the earth
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #45

And it seems to me the struggle has to be waged on a number of different levels:

they have computers to cast the *I Ching* for them but we have yarrow stalks and the stars it is a battle of energies, of force-fields, what the newspapers call a battle of ideas

to take hold of the magic any way we can and use it in total faith to seek help in realms we have been taught to think of as ‘mythological’

to contact ALL LEVELS of one’s own being & loose the forces therein always seeking in this to remain psychically inconspicuous on the not so unlikely chance that those we have thought of as ‘instigators’ are just the front men for a gang of black magicians based ‘somewhere else’ in space to whom the WHOLE of earth is a colony to exploit (the ‘Nova Mob’ not so far out as you think)

Best not to place bodies in the line of fire but to seek other means: study the Sioux learn not to fuck up as they did — another ghost dance started on Haight Street in 1967 We ain’t seen the end of it yet
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #46

And as you learn the magic, learn to believe it
Don’t be ‘surprised’ when it works, you undercut your power.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #47

TO BE FREE we’ve got to be free of any idea of freedom. Today the State Dept lifted the ban on travel to China; and closed Merritt College.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #48

Be careful.
With what relief do we fall back on
the tale, so often told in revolutions
that now we must
organize, obey the rules, so that later
we can be free. It is the point
at which the revolution stops. To be carried forward
later & in another country, this is
the pattern, but we can
break the pattern

learn now we see
with all our skin, smell with our eyes too
sense & sex are boundless & the call
is to be boundless in them, make the joy
now, that we want, no shape
for space & time now but the shapes we will
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #49

Free Julian Beck
Free Timothy Leary
Free seven million starving in Pakistan
Free all political prisoners
Free Angela Davis
Free Soledad brothers
Free Martin Sobel
Free Sacco & Vanzetti
Free Big Bill Hayward
Free Sitting Bull
Free Crazy Horse
Free all political prisoners
Free Billy the Kid
Free Jesse James
Free all political prisoners
Free Nathan Hale
Free Joan of Arc
Free Galileo & Bruno & Eckhart
Free Jesus Christ
Free Socrates
Free all political prisoners
Free all political prisoners
All prisoners are political prisoners
Every pot smoker a political prisoner
Every holdup man a political prisoner
Every forger a political prisoner
Every angry kid who smashed a window a political prisoner
Every whore, pimp, murderer, a political prisoner
Every pederast, dealer, drunk driver, burglar
poacher, striker, strike breaker, rapist
Polar bear at San Francisco zoo, political prisoner
Ancient wise turtle at Detroit Aquarium, political prisoner
Flamingoes dying in Phoenix tourist park, political prisoners
Otters in Tucson Desert Museum, political prisoners
Elk in Wyoming grazing behind barbed wire, political prisoners
Prairie dogs poisoned in New Mexico, war casualties
(Mass grave of Wyoming gold eagles, a battlefield)
Every kid in school a political prisoner
Every lawyer in his cubicle a political prisoner
Every doctor brainwashed by AMA a political prisoner
Every housewife a political prisoner
Every teacher lying thru sad teeth a political prisoner
Every indian on reservation a political prisoner
Every black man a political prisoner
Every faggot hiding in bar a political prisoner
Every junkie shooting up in john a political prisoner
Every woman a political prisoner
Every woman a political prisoner
You are political prisoner locked in tense body
You are political prisoner locked in stiff mind
You are political prisoner locked to your parents
You are political prisoner locked to your past
Free yourself
Free yourself
I am political prisoner locked in anger habit
I am political prisoner locked in greed habit
I am political prisoner locked in fear habit
I am political prisoner locked in dull senses
I am political prisoner locked in numb flesh
Free me
Free me
Help to free me
Free yourself
Help to free me
Free yourself
Help to free me
Free Barry Goldwater
Help to free me
Free Governor Wallace
Free President Nixon
Free J Edgar Hoover
Free them
Free yourself
Free them
Free yourself
Free yourself
Free them
Free yourself
Help to free me
Free us
DANCE
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #50

Machinery: extended hands of man doing man’s work. Diverted rivers washing my clothes, diverted fire dancing in wires, making light and heat. To see it thus is to see it, even diverted rivers must resume their course, and fire consume, whatever name you call it.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #51

As soon as we submit
to a system based on causality, linear time
we submit, again, to the old values, plunge again
into slavery. Be strong. We have the right to make
the universe we dream. No need to fear ‘science’
grovelling
apology for things as they are, ALL POWER
TO JOY, which will remake the world.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #52

Don’t give up the eleven o’clock news for Chairman Mao, don’t switch from one ‘programming’ to another hang loose, Mao was young fifty years ago, & in China.
SAN FRANCISCO NOTE

I think I’ll stay on this
earthquake fault near this
still-active volcano in this
armed fortress facing a
dying ocean &
covered w/dirt

while the
streets burn up & the
rocks fly & pepper gas
lays us out

cause
that’s where my friends are,
you bastards, not that
you know that that means

Ain’t gonna cop to it, ain’t gonna
be scared no more, we all
know the same songs, mushrooms, butterflies

we all

have the same babies, dig it
the woods are big.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #54

HOW TO BECOME A WALKING ALCHEMICAL EXPERIMENT

eat mercury (in wheat & fish)
breathe sulphur fumes (everywhere)
take plenty of (macrobiotic) salt
& cook the mixture in the heat
of an atomic explosion
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #55

*It takes courage to say no*

No to canned corn & instant mashed potatoes. No to rice krispies. No to special K. No to margarine mono- & di-glycerides, NSDA for coloring, causing cancer. No to white bread, bleached w/nerve gas (wonder bread). No to everything fried in hardened oil w/silicates. No to once-so-delicious salami, now red w/sodium nitrate.

No to processed cheeses. No no again to irradiated bacon, pink phosphorescent ham, dead plastic pasteurized milk. No to chocolate pudding like grandma never made. No thanx to coca-cola. No to freshness preservers, dough conditioners, no potassium sorbate, no aluminum silicate, NO BHA, BHT, NO di-ethyl-propyl-glycerate.
No more ice cream? not w/embalming fluid. Goodbye potato chips, peanut butter, jelly, jolly white sugar! No more DES all-American steaks or hamburgers either! Goodbye, frozen fish! (dipped & coated w/ aureomycin) Fried eggs over easy w/ hormones, penicillin & speed. Carnation Instant Breakfast, Nestle’s Quik. Fritos, goodbye! your labels are very confusing.

All I can say is what my daughter age six once said to me: ‘if I can’t pronounce it maybe I shouldn’t eat it.’

or, Dick Gregory coming out of a 20-day fast: ‘the people of America are controlled by the food they eat’
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #56

All thru Amerika
all I see & find is
Indian America
the forms & shapes of
Great-Turtle-Island
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #57

The forms proliferate.
As we spin (further) from the light
our bodies sprout new madneses
congenital pale disease, like new plants
on the edge of (radioactive) craters
we sprout new richness of design
baroque apologies for Kaliyuga
till Kether calls us home
hauls in the galaxies like some
big fish.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #58

NOTES TOWARD AN AMERICAN HISTORY

Over & over we look for
the picture in the cloth: man
standing idle & tall against
horizon: 'savage' landscape
we stare, poverty-struck
at New England pewter in
farmhouse window: quote
Adams, Jefferson, hew
map of the sacred meadow

this was the
land we were promised,
wasn't it? is Fresno
new Jerusalem? where
is Dallas? how wd Olson/
Pound/Tom Paine explain
Petaluma. Over & over Kirby Doyle
mad
tells tale of his grandfather walking out
of the desert
his wife & two sons waiting in a wagon
(he had the mule)
& the boats
in Gloucester, Newfoundland & Greece
(the same)
the wood
carved in Alaska & New Guinea
(the same) . . .
Over & over we seek that savage man
sufficient & generous; we find
Rockefeller, Nixon;
sad letters of Jefferson
mourning the ravaging of moundbuilders’ land
requesting his daughter not to neglect her French.
We; over & over; seeking line & form
gold-leaf as in Sienna
‘outline’ as Blake
we sit on shifting ground
at the edge of this ocean
‘as far from Europe as you can get’
& watch the hills flicker like dreamskin
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #59

What we need to know is laws of time & space
they never dream of. Seek out
the ancient texts: alchemy
homeopathy, secret charts
of early Rosicrucians (Giordanisti).
Grok synchronicity Jung barely
scratched the surface of.
LOOK TO THE ‘HERESIES’ OF EUROPE FOR
BLOODROOTS
(remnants of pre-colonized pre-Roman Europe): Insistent, hopeful resurgence of communards
free love & joy; ‘in god all things are common’
secret celebration of ancient season feasts & moons.
Rewrite the calendar.

Head-on war is the mistake we make
time after time
There is a way around it, way to outflank
technology, short circuit
‘energy crisis’: retreat & silence
cunning
courage & love
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #60

Look to the cities, see how ‘urban renewal’
tears out the slums from the heart of town
forces expendable poor to the edges, to some
remote & indefensible piece of ground:
Hunters Point, Lower East Side, Columbia Point
out of sight, out of mind, & when bread riots come
(conjured by cutting welfare, raising prices)
the man wont hesitate to raze those ghettos
& few will see, & fewer will object.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #61

First Observable Effects of So-Called ‘Energy Crisis’ (Fall 1973)

1. off-shore drilling renewed, Santa Barbara & elsewhere we can expect new off-shore wells to be opened regardless of consequences
2. price of crude oil shoots sky-high, making the extraction of shale oil feasible (profitable) which shale oil territory has been prepared for exploitation by forcing beef prices up, advocating beef boycotts, forcing smaller ranches toward bankruptcy
3. Peabody Coal plans to occupy Cheyenne land on legal grounds ‘natives’ are ‘incapable’ of exploiting its ‘natural resource,’ i.e. don’t want to extract minerals at the cost of the land
4. grim austerity consciousness empty shelves & stiff upper lip & plenty of hoarding, reminiscent of early 40s, conditioned reflex right psychological climate for WW III
5. of course, police & military will have enough gas & how will you like to be stationary populace in the grip of a mobile army?
Take a good look
at history (the American myth)
check sell out
of revolution by the founding fathers
‘Constitution written by a bunch of gangsters
to exploit a continent’ is what
Charles Olson told me.
Check Shay’s rebellion, Aaron Burr, Nathan Hale.
Who wrote the history books where you
gone to school?
Check Civil War: maybe industrial north
needed cheap labor, South had it, how many
sincere ‘movement’ people
writers & radicals played
into their hands?
Check Haymarket trial: it broke the back
of strong Wobblie movement: how many jailed, fined,
killed to stop that one? What’s happening to us
has happened a few times before
let’s change the script

What did it take to stop the Freedom Riders
What have we actually changed?
month I was born
they were killing onion pickers in Ohio

Month that I write this, nearly 40 years later
they’re killing UFW’s in the state
I’m trying somehow to live in. LET’S REWRITE
the history books.
History repeats itself
only if we let it.
check Science: whose interest does it serve? 
whose need to perpetrate mechanical dead (exploitable) universe instead of living cosmos?

whose dream those hierarchies: planets & stars blindly obeying fixed laws, as they desire us, too, to stay in place whose interest to postulate man’s recent blind ‘descent’ from ‘unthinking’ animals our pitiable geocentric isolation: lone voice in the stars

what point in this cosmology but to drain hope of contact or change /oppressing us w/ ‘reason’
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #64

(for Camilla Hall)

The holocaust
moves
towards its own
ends.

The rose will bloom
in the lotus pond.

The lotus will flower
on the rose tree.

In the enclosed garden
which is
the garden of mirrors
a temple of mist
rises.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #65

(For Tim Leary)

Let everything private be made public. — Chas. Olson

Let everything private be made public!
We have had enough of secrecy, paid assassins, radio controlled robots, mysterious disappearances, planted evidence, men’s doubles arrested in their stead in funky rooming houses whose landladies disappear, thinly-veiled race war, fake shortages, inflation, night raids, manipulated famine, transistors in brain, overdoses of tranqs, truth serum, interrogation.
It is very boring to spend the 1970’s in Nazi Germany, or Stalinist Russia, we have already seen this movie & it don’t look better / in color.
Even they must be tired of it, these latter-day Nazis, skulking & posing, plotting & counterplotting, each suspicious of the other
PROGRAM TO RELIEVE THEIR MURKY BRAIN-CELLS
& THE SOULS OF ALL SENTIENT BEINGS:
Out w/it, brothers! Let’s everybody tell everything they know We’ll have a press conference in the form of ancient confession where each can absolve his fellow. It may take a decade but in the end : No prisons, no schools, no madhouses, no IRS, no IBM, no ITT, no government!
A decade well-spent . . . .
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #66

TO THE PATRIARCHS

(For Inez Garcia)

‘That a man’s body is in itself a weapon in a way that a woman’s body is not.’ —Free Inez Garcia Committee

My body a weapon as yours is
MY CHILDREN WEAPONS ETERNALLY
My tits weapons against the immaterial

My strong thighs
  choking the black lie
My hips
  haven & fort
  place where I stand
  & from which I fight

My war is concentrated in the noise of my hair
My hands
  lethal to imprecision
My cunt a bomb exploding yr christian conscience

My teeth tear out the throat of yr despair
My jaws annihilate computer centuries
My arms/my knees embrace yr serpent yr sin becomes my song

The shock waves of my pleasure annihilate
all future shock
all future shock forever
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #67

ANOTHER WYOMING SONG

silk sari is famine.
prayer is famine.
stone idol washed by seawind
    also famine
song on crumbling streets
    is famine
moonstone necklace
sandalwood essence
perfect buddha caves — all famine
teddy bear in Macy’s window, famine
tobacco bursting from Virginia soil
ccoal mines famine; oil field famine
new car famine
I got the toe-nail, boot-sole, bootlegging wagon famine
    cracked lips & all.
yesterday famine
tomorrow famine
iron wind breaking up the sandy ground like famine
    like hunger to the heart.
got let’s-turn-these-stones-to-bread famine
burnt baby famine
    wish I knew
    & you do too
how to avert, turn aside
African famine
Egyptian famine
Sioux famine
Navaho famine
Mesopotamian famine
Easter Island famine
Tahitian famine
Sumerian famine
Sonoran famine
Hindu famine
mountain famine
woodland famine
desert famine
tundra famine
great plains famine
Papago famine
Evanston famine
Chicago famine
Casper famine
Bozeman-to-Billings famine
Minneapolis famine
Nevada sagebrush famine
Little Italy famine
Harlem famine
Chinatown famine
Tibetan famine
Third World famine
fourth dimension famine
fifth estate famine
hungry ghost famine
black panther famine
Oakland famine
Omaha famine
Amazon famine
Macchu Picchu famine
alcohol famine
opium famine
Bengali famine
Brooklyn famine
ALL THE BELLIES IS SWOLLEN
   some from too much
   some from too little
all like to burst — only the crows, no famine
hyenas not hungry
buzzards not hungry
jackal, coyote, eagle
    filling up
a feast before they die
    like we die
on dying land
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #68

LIFE CHANT

may it come that all the radiances
will be known as our own radiance
— Tibetan Book of the Dead

cacaphony of small birds at dawn
    may it continue
sticky monkey flowers on bare brown hills
    may it continue
bitter taste of early miner’s lettuce
    may it continue
music on city streets in the summer nights
    may it continue
kids laughing on roofs on stoops on the beach in the snow
    may it continue
triumphal shout of the newborn
    may it continue
deep silence of great rainforests
    may it continue
deepest austerity of jungle peoples
    may it continue
rolling fuck of great whales in turquoise ocean
    may it continue
clumsy splash of pelican in smooth bays
    may it continue
astonished human eyeball squinting thru aeons at astonished
    may it continue
    nebulae who squint back

    may it continue
clean snow on the mountain
    may it continue
fierce eyes, clear light of the aged
    may it continue
rite of birth & of naming
    may it continue
rite of instruction
  may it continue
rite of passage
  may it continue
love in the morning, love in the noon sun
love in the evening among crickets
  may it continue
long tales by fire, by window, in fog, in dusk on the mesa
  may it continue
love in thick midnight, fierce joy of old ones loving
  may it continue
the night music
  may it continue
grunt of mating hippo, giraffe, foreplay of snow leopard
  screeching of cats on the backyard fence
  may it continue
without police
  may it continue
without prisons
  may it continue
without hospitals, death medicine : flu & flu vaccine
  may it continue
without madhouses, marriage, highschools that are prisons
  may it continue
without empire
  may it continue
in sisterhood
  may it continue
thru the wars to come
  may it continue
in brotherhood
  may it continue
tho the earth seem lost
  may it continue
thru exile & silence
  may it continue
with cunning & love  
    may it continue
as woman continues  
    may it continue
as breath continues  
    may it continue
as stars continue  
    may it continue

may the wind deal kindly w/us
may the fire remember our names
may springs flow, rain fall again
may the land grow green, may it swallow our mistakes

we begin the work  
    may it continue
the great transmutation  
    may it continue
a new heaven & a new earth  
    may it continue
    may it continue
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #69

MATALGALPA, 1978

These eyes of children closer than fingernail set in my hand
these maimed villages closer than my heart beating pressing against my lungs.

A form of love all touch is and what does not touch something? at least the air, the ground.

These eyes of triumphant children the blood bursts thru as the gentle villages are strafed the blood bone muscle burning but the forests are full the deserts on the move the jungles
whisper RESIST.

The eyeballs of children burst w/blood & love

& the cities of America

of the killer tornado the cities yes

the cities of Amerika fill w/Resistance

the dream of old men & women stranded

on her sidewalks seeking food, seeking freedom

finding only insult

EVEN THESE CITIES ARE FULL of triumphant resistance & the dream of the old is echoed in the young.

‘All artists are warriors’

sez my son & he age eight is sure.
Eyes of the children
Managua
New York
Matagalpa
Houston
Soweto
Manila
Teheran
Bogota
Oakland

Knives & guns
of the children
Peru
Zimbabwe
Mexico

These eyes of children
windows
on our hope:
that
ALL RESISTANCE IS
TRIUMPHANT RESISTANCE.

All love
is revolution
& all touch
a form of love.

The moment of revolt is the moment of victory.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #70

FROM SAN FRANCISCO

out of the heaps of the bodies of ‘suicides,’ as we must call all suicides who have leaped to incarnation on this planet; out of the stench of jungle-exploded flesh, pall and haze of what we conceive as destruction; in the stunned and muted clamor of a city which has lost for whatever reason its mayor, and (unprecedented) a loved politician; as the solstice struggles, as every year, toward darkness, and the nights are longer than sleep and only the bright clangor of Orion’s wardrobe rings in the dusty sky; in the resurgence of fifties paranoia—thirties paranoia—sixties paranoia—which generation do you claim?—it comes clear this dark is the light we love by, and that we love at all a miracle in the cloned styrofoam wastes & desolations of our lives.

This dark a song of burgeoning difference, flesh at least, and loved and loving however blindly.—See the dance: we may disdain Castro Street, curse the baths, criticize the women’s movement, turn our backs on revolution, mock the growth awareness human potential bullshit, but it is song and passion when set against the worlds of middle America middle Russia hinduism islam tibet.

We spin out light in a dark time, grow it at cost out of the incandescence of flesh we still call living, and all the fingers of the night point home to us. Think: the cauldron of rebirth in which the robot dead return to life, from which they burst at dawn to the same hollow battle—this is the tale
spun out and spun again, the *only* tale the media tells your children;

that we reach out hand to hand or twine our ankles
in our chilly beds is breath of shame to a nation gone to death;
*rigor mortis* the grin of their pride, the stiff necks of 900 corpses
a metaphor they drink

hungry as Aztecs to still the movement
in the skies. Whose hand moves in Iran, who is choking the
Eskimo in his condominium, sets the Angolan in his compound,
drives the Masai sterile? But that is old news, and only the
pygmy flutes carry it to the stars.

That, and an occasional
eaglebone whistle of the Ute straggling thru the last sundance
in the high plains.

On whose world is the sun going down,
 sisters and brothers? Dare we claim it, dare we lose it again?
But that is old news, and it is whispered that *sol invictus* is only
*invictus* so far.

It is no longer relevant—who cares if the CIA was
disposing of plutonium thru People’s Temple, or Emmet
Grogan was offed on a subway train? The plots and subplots:
rauwolfia and DMSO, carcinoma 256, the discreetly revealed
and scattered dreams of the nouveau-Borgias

petty Napoleons

who’ve forgotten Egypt; emasculated robber barons sucking
their wives’ lovers’ cocks in the boiler room;

in the dark all
news is old news, the only glimmer the lambent marshlight of
our flesh as we gesture towards difference, a burgeoning race
of mutants,

gorging on drugs, come, California wine, richness
of fruit and meat on a planet spinning toward famine;

in the dark all

news is old news, the only glimmer the lambent marshlight of
our flesh as we gesture towards difference, a burgeoning race
of mutants,

gorging on drugs, come, California wine, richness
of fruit and meat on a planet spinning toward famine;

pervasive

and mushrooming cadence of phosphorescent loves, falling
to compost as the sun goes out.

We greet the dark.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #71

FOR BELLA AKHMADULINA

Note: In her great poem ‘I Swear’, written for her forerunner, the poet Marina Tsvetaeva, Bella Akhmadulina vows to ‘kill Yelabuga’, the town in which Tsvetaeva hanged herself in 1941. Akhmadulina addresses the town as if it were some kind of malevolent entity or demon.

A life for a life, a young black woman’s voice said to me on the phone the day George Jackson died in prison and I said even twenty, a hundred for that one would be cheap. Even a thousand. And if I claimed a million lives for each of my lost, like some superHitler out to depopulate the earth, and cd drink, somehow that blood: this one’s for you, Freddie, and this for you, Lee Probst, Genevieve, Gloria still alive but dead and you, Little One we called you & this immensity of gore I drink to you, Jimmy, teacher and friend. O lost mad Mike, killed brain of Timothy, palsy in Allen’s face, this one’s for Warren Miller, nobody knows they killed. Fred Hampton in his bed, asleep in blood. Emmett who told us it wdn’t be ‘overdose’ that got him,
a million lives for each,  
so what, it wd take four thousand only  
to finish us all then & I alone  
cd probably name four thousand.  
Listen.  
There’s got to be another way, we can’t  
just kill *yelabuga* or be killed. Or both.  
There’s  
anyway here, the ghost dance, or tin  
floating as gold in the vessel. I know it’s nonsense  
but is it worse nonsense than drinking yourself to death  	onight in some Russian suburb? Here  
we’ve got Black Elk’s four horses in the sky  
to replace the ones in Revelations. What  
have you got? You must have *something*  
I won’t be ‘translated’  
alone, or at least w/out female  
buddies, I know some of the men will ‘buy’ the ideal  
but they don’t count, they never carried their flesh  
grave as lead, there must be a peasant whisper  
the shape of a hill, or a sneaky look  
in the eyes of an ancient icon — give me a hint  
don’t hide  
& die,  
 there isn’t enough blood on earth  
to buy our losses. And blood is salt, it will never  
quench my thirst. Do we kill,  
or split  
 or kill & split  
 or translate this shit  
to a paradise omitting nothing taking nothing  
w/us. Gravid, full  
of the squirming seeds of our dead  

can we  
sow the wind?
can we
condense fury till it is
flame
    can we use this fuel
to move us out of here,

    a flying leap
to another ‘plane’ or ‘sphere’
& I don’t know into what, don’t ask, only
I know it won’t be worse.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #72

A SPELL FOR THE CHILDREN OF THE POOR

Here
is a camera for Obsidian
of Thunder Mountain, Nevada, tour guide
who cares for her mother & all
her brothers & sisters, whose eyes
turn always toward the highway; & a

lifetime supply of charcoal & pens
& brushes for Melissa, black girl who lives
next door to me in the Fillmore where the grocer
refuses to give her eggs if she’s 2¢ short & she’s always
2¢ short, her mom
spent the last five dollars on codeine
’cause she hurts &

notebooks by the dozen for Erlinda
Shakespeare, Shoshone, age 12 who was afraid to write more on her great
long poem ’cause the notebook we gave her (Poetry In The Schools, 1972) was running out &
notebooks
cost 35¢

There is enough paper
Erlinda, and paint, and a violin
for your brother
& all the leotards
anybody wants
on Webster St, in
Hunters’ Point.
Here's a drum set, another, take the whole damn music store, what are we holding onto when you guys are the only art that's News

August 2, 1984
Thunder Mountain, Nevada
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #73

DREAM POEM ABOUT REAGAN & CO
September 24, 1981

When we are dirt poor
and no longer have our mountains for shelter
when we are conquered
and cannot go to our forests for comfort
when we are hungry
and our valleys will no longer sustain us
then we will see these men
in their true light
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #74

JUNE 12, 1982
for Fulcanelli & John Lennon

There is always the fire. Downwind it blows our eyebrows off, blows holes in our dusty skin. In the crucible it melts our faces into knots & puddles. It melts our hearts. And they become rock or something more feeling than flesh. There is no way around it, it is there is always the fire. Is this alchemy? Must the process pass thru 10,000 suns? There has never been a way around the crucible. Can the heat of our love excel tangible flame? Only then can this crucible replace the old. There are even in alchemy ‘two ways’ and this our way can supplant habits of war. It is ‘the dry way’ (no blood, no tears) only substantial presence, my hand in yours. And you a stranger. There are no strangers. Now.
This transformation
by the Inward Fire
(our heat / our love)
no
charred limbs, blistered eyeballs, brain
turned to steam
only
the Inward Fire, slow
combustion / quick change / tomorrow
is already here.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #75

RANT

You cannot write a single line w/out a cosmology
a cosmogony
laid out, before all eyes

there is no part of yourself you can separate out
saying, this is memory, this is sensation
this is the work I care about, this is how I
make a living

it is whole, it is a whole, it always was whole
you do not ‘make’ it so
there is nothing to integrate, you are a presence
you are an appendage of the work, the work stems from
hangs from the heaven you create

ever man / every woman carries a firmament inside
& the stars in it are not the stars in the sky

w/out imagination there is no memory
w/out imagination there is no sensation
w/out imagination there is no will, desire

history is a living weapon in yr hand
& you have imagined it, it is thus that you
‘find out for yourself’
history is the dream of what can be, it is
the relation between things in a continuum

of imagination
what you find out for yourself is what you select
out of an infinite sea of possibility
no one can inhabit yr world
yet it is not lonely,  
the ground of imagination is fearlessness  
discourse is video tape of a movie of a shadow play  
but the puppets are in yr hand  
your counters in a multidimensional chess  
which is divination  
& strategy  

the war that matters is the war against the imagination  
all other wars are subsumed in it.

the ultimate famine is the starvation  
of the imagination  
it is death to be sure, but the undead  
seek to inhabit someone else’s world  

the ultimate claustrophobia is the syllogism  
the ultimate claustrophobia is ‘it all adds up’  
nothing adds up & nothing stands in for  
anything else  

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST  
THE IMAGINATION  

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST  
THE IMAGINATION  

THE ONLY WAR THAT MATTERS IS THE WAR AGAINST  
THE IMAGINATION  

ALL OTHER WARS ARE SUBSUMED IN IT  

There is no way out of the spiritual battle  
There is no way you can avoid taking sides  
There is no way you can not have a poetics  
no matter what you do: plumber, baker, teacher
you do it in the consciousness of making
or not making yr world
you have a poetics : you step into the world
like a suit of readymade clothes

or you etch in light
your firmament spills into the shape of your room
the shape of the poem, of yr body, of yr loves

A woman’s life / a man’s life is an allegory

Dig it

There is no way out of the spiritual battle
the war is the war against the imagination
you can’t sign up as a conscientious objector

the war of the worlds hangs here, right now, in the balance
it is a war for this world, to keep it
a vale of soul-making

the taste in all our mouths is the taste of our power
and it is bitter as death

bring yr self home to yrself, enter the garden
the guy at the gate w/the flaming sword is yrself

the war is the war for the human imagination
and no one can fight it but you / & no one can fight it for you

The imagination is not only holy, it is precise
it is not only fierce, it is practical
men die everyday for the lack of it,
it is vast & elegant
*intellectus* means ‘light of the mind’
it is not discourse it is not even language
the inner sun

the *polis* is constellated around the sun
the fire is central
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #76

ANOTHER REVOLUTIONARY LETTER, 1988
(Gestapo Poem)

Where is gestapo, where
does it end? Where
is it? Soweto, it is. Where
does it end? Not
Oakland, it doesn’t
not B’nai Brith.

Where
is it? Gaza, it is. Where
is it? San Quentin, it is. Where?
& Prague & Beijing, it is
in Yellow River Valley. Where
is it? Afghan, Guatemala, Rio,
Alaska, Tierra del Fuego, the
wasted taiga, it is
where is it?
& where
does it end.

Not in
Oakland, it doesn’t,
Don’t end in Brooklyn
or Rome. Atlanta. Where?
Morocco, gestapo is
Sudan (& death)
Where end? not Canada sold to
Nazi USA
not Mexico, Kenya, Australia
it don’t, not end
Jamaica, Haiti. Mozambique
not end. Maybe
someplace it isn’t maybe
someplace it ends
some hills maybe
still free
    but hungry
        (eyes

blaze

    over ancient guns
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #77

AWKWARD SONG ON THE EVE OF WAR

The center of my heart is Arab song.
It is woven around my heartstrings
I cannot uproot it.
It is the song of the Beloved as Other
The Other as God, it is all about Light
and we never stop singing it.

The root of my brain
(the actual stem and medulla)
is the Tree of Life.
It is the story we have all been telling
The story of the journey and return
It is all about Light
and we never stop telling it.

I cannot uproot this Tree from the back of my head
I cannot tear this Song out of my heart
I cannot allow the two to war in my cells.

This is a prose poem and it is didactic

It remembers the perfumes of Lebanon, lapis of Persia
The mountains, ziggurats, ladders of ascent
The hut in the field we entered as Her body.

The fabric of our seeing is dark & light
Ahriman / Ahura the two lobes
of the brain. Or yin and yang.
The paintings of Turkestan echo in caves
of North China. The Manichee’s eyes are carved
in Bone Oracles.
I cannot cut the light from my eyes
or the woven shadow from the curves of my brain.

The dance of the I Ching is the dance of the star tide
Mathematics of the Zend Avesta
Geometries of Ife
There is only one Sun and it is just rising

The golden ikon of the Black Virgin
stands at the stone gateway of Tashkent.
The flowering valleys of Shambhala
haunt our dreaming.
What skeletons stalk there?

Do you see?

If even the plants send out warnings to each other
If even the brine shrimp mourn each other’s passing . . .

My eyes stare from ten thousand Arab faces
A deer sniffs at the stiffening corpse of her yearling.

There is only one Sun and it is rising
It is much too strong in the desert of our minds.

Shield us from the desert of greed
The desert of hate
Shield us from the desert of chauvinism
Le désert désespéré
Desperate desert of no song, no image
Shield us from the desert of no return
That Arab song burst out of mountain cave
That fine-worked silver glisten in the sun

   Loving, yes, loving, woman, and
   digging on each other
   thousands of years,
   digging the differences. . . .’

Let the gold-clad men and women
dark skins gleaming
dance at the stone gates :
   Shiprock, New Grange, Tashkent
Let the goddess walk again on the African plains
   The Orisha brighten the air

There is only one Sun and it is rising.
May the peaches of Samarkand bloom in the Okanagan.

Reprise :
There is nothing we have been that we will be
None of the myths suffices.

Let us read each other’s maps at the foot of the Tree
Where the stream of Song moves out in all directions.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #78

BULLETIN

It is happening even as you read this page. By the time you finish reading this it will be over.

She will have left the hotel and disappeared. He will have eaten the pills. That one will slip and crack her skull on the floor. That one will go out in a driveby shooting.

*halfway around the world the bombs are dropping*

As you read these words it is already too late. 200,000 children will have starved. One of them held the Jewel in his brain, another could cure plagues with her breath.

As you read this line one thousand have died of AIDS. They die alone hidden in furnished rooms. They die on the earth all over Africa.

*halfway around the world the bombs are falling*

Do not think to correct this by refusing to read. It happens as you put down the paper, head for the door. The ozone reaches the point of no-return

the butterflies bellyflop, the last firefly, etc. Do not think to correct this by reading.

The bombs burst the small skull of an Arab infant the silky black hair is stuck to your hands with brains. W/bits of blood. There is less shrieking than you would expect
a soft silence. The silence of the poor, those who could not afford to leave. Drop flowers on them from yr mind, why don’t you? ‘I guess we’ll have to stay and take our chances.’

They die so silently even as we speak

Black eyes of children seek eyes of the dying mother bricks fall dirt spurts like fountains in the streets. In the time you fill a cup they die of thirst.

In the time it takes to turn off the radio. Not past, not future

The huts are blazing now. South of Market a woman OD’s with an elegant sigh. No more no less than is needed.

*halfway around the world the bombs are dropping*
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #79

ONE OF THE JOBS OF CRONEDOM
(written on the eve of the first Gulf War)

Some of us have to mourn while the rest of you organize.

Some of us have to dance in the time of grief.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #80

GOOD CLEAN FUN

It’s terrorism, isn’t it, when you’re afraid to answer the door for lack of a Green Card
afraid to look for work, walk into the hospital when yr child is sick,
and what else than terrorism cd you call those smallpox blankets we gave the Indians
the trail of tears, the raids on Ghost Dancing tribes
It’s terrorism when you’re forbidden to speak yr language
paddled for it, made to run a hundred laps in the snow
in your thin & holey sneakers. What do you call it
when you’re locked in yr high school classroom, armed policemen
manning the halls? Isn’t it terrorism to force a young woman
to talk to her parents abt her clandestine love
the child she will or will not carry? Is it terrorism
to shoot striking onion workers (1934), pick off AIM members
one by one?

What happened to the Hampton family in Chicago — Fred Hampton
blown away in his bed —
would you call that terrorism? Or the MOVE kids in Philadelphia
bombed in their home. Or all the stories we don’t know
buried in throats stuffed w/socks, or pierced w/bullets.
Wd you call it terrorism, what happened at Wounded Knee
or the Drug Wars picking off
the youth of our cities — as they already picked off
twenty years ago — or terrified into silence — the ones who shd be
leading us now —

you know the names.
What was COINTELPRO if not terrorism? What new initials are they
calling it today?

Is Leonard Peltier a victim of terrorism?
Is Mumia Abu-Jamal?
Is it terrorism if you are terrified
of the INS, the IRS, the landlord, yr boss, the man
who might do yr job for less?
if you’re scared of yr health insurance
no health insurance
scared of yr street, yr hallway, scared every month
you might not get to the 1st and the next measly check?

Is it terrorism to take food from hungry school-kids?
To threaten teenagers who still have hope enough
have joy enough to bring babies into this mess?

How has terrorism touched you, shaped your life?
Are you afraid to go out, to walk in yr city, yr suburb, yr countryside?
To read, to speak yr own language, wear yr tribe’s clothes?
Afraid of the thin-shelled birds w/twisted necks
poisoned by nitrates, by selenium?
Afraid that the dawn will be silent, the forests grey?

Is it terrorism to fill the Dnieper River w/radiation?
or heat the ionosphere w/magnetism ‘to see what will happen’?

A wonderful weapon, they say, it will perturb
the weather pattern, disrupt communications

Who are the terrorists in the lumber wars?
(the water wars are coming)
And we haven’t even talked about AIDS and cancer.

IS THE ASSAULT ON NATIVE INTELLIGENCE & GOOD WILL
THAT WE CALL THE EVENING NEWS
ANYTHING OTHER THAN AN ACT OF TERROR?

What was the Gulf War but terrorism
wearing the death mask of order? — one big car bomb it was
the guys who drove it dying now
one by one — ignored
Is acid rain a form of terrorism? (Think for yourself.)
Is GATT or NAFTA anything but a pact among brigands —
   the World Bank, the IMF their back-up men?
How long before they fight over the spoils? Who’ll do their
   fighting for them?

Is Alan Greenspan perhaps the biggest *known & named*
of our terrorist leaders, *here*, nurtured *here*,
trained *here*

the dark design of whose hearts makes
Hutu & Tutsi
Croat & Muslim & Serb
mere diversionary tactics before the onslaught

— 1992
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #81

ON THE WAY HOME
(A Prayer for the Road)

On the way home
all the restaurants will serve miso soup

On the way home
exotic notebook stores will blossom in small towns in Nevada

On the way home
Utah will be festooned w/mirth
Mormons will be dancing in the streets in gauzy chatchkas

On the way home
Everyone will leave the casinos and the slot machines & go outside
to stare at the beauty of the mountains, of the sky, of each other

On the way home
All the boys & girls in the secret desert bordellos
will have set up temples of free love festooned with mimosa
they will teach karma-mudra to joyful redneck ranchers
who have set all their cows free and now drink only amrita

On the way home
every cafe in Wyoming will be holding a potlatch
poverty will thus be abolished

On the way home
everyone we meet will try to read us a poem
invite us in for a story there being no news
but what travellers bring, all TV having died
On the way home
it will be easy to find pure water, organic tomatoes, friendly conversation
We’ll give & receive delightful music & blessings at every gas station
(all the gas will be free)

On the way home
all the truck drivers will drive politely
the traveling summer tourists will beam at their kids

our old Toyota will love going up mountain passes
openhearted & unsuspicious people & lizards
prairie dogs, wolves & magpies will sing together & picnic
at sunset beside the road

Everyone will get where they’re going
Everyone will be peaceful
Everyone will like it when they get there

All obstacles smoothed
auspiciousness & pleasure
will sit like a raven dakini
on every roof
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #82

Avenging angels

sticks of dynamite wrapped in baby blankets baby blue like their eyes not human elemental eyes spewing fire carbines shot guns it doesn’t matter pale pixie faces elfin smiles laughing I’ve always wanted to do this wanted to see you dead o comrade see me dead
o beautiful
    long-legged maiden
o sour-faced
teacher of wood-shop
of home
economics
always
wanted
to see you
dead as a
doornail
    as this bomb
full of nails
    blasting
so beautiful
    into the wood
the glass
    the plaster
into
    flesh
red
    as tampons
or lipstick

    o beautiful
black-eyed maiden
dark
    skin like
madrone
    blood like
rivers
river canyons
which echo
  only echo
  only  repeat
nothing
  is added
the ground
  is  dead
the air
  you  see?
dead  also
  these shots
awaken
  ghosts
or spirits
  in the arms
of bare
  trees  marked
for death
  the  scream
of the saws
  scream  of
the logging trucks
  subway
scream
  out of all yr
throats
  ivory
    brown
or golden
  young or old
air dead
  the rivers
marked for death
  this scream
spatter
  of bullets brings
air
  alive
for a moment
something
  alive

I stand w/ my friends
this gallant
force
  young / dead
long  / lost
condemned
to a pittance
  of hope
we stand proud
  give back
the legacy

dead  ground
dead
mother  dead
rivers & empty
plains

    O the full lips
hard thighs  beloved
comrades  whose black
daring  cuts a path
for rivers of blood

buys red life for a moment w/ death yours mine my

it doesn’t matter not really

I avenge the babies beaten the mother w/ dead sex dead eyes I avenge myself violated spitted on ancient rotted cocks avenge the planet torn & bloody

This charnel ground we were born into dancing ground
O beautiful lads & lasses
we mourn
we buy
life
fountains of fire
light
Roman candles of blood
bits of flesh moving
IN MOTION for once
this trajectory is vast not simple
pain dead grey prairie grey skies
become instead a shower of sparks fountain
O beautiful fountains & rivers of blood.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #83

IN THE WINK OF AN EYE:
Millennial Notes

If Iliad & Odyssey encompass two sides of the great divide —
great break w/ the mythic & rise of the wily
Then *polymetis* Odysseus — still a sacred king tho living in
the west (*zophos*) & with shards (shades) of the old time clinging
to his robes
degenerates into *pius Aeneas* — the careful old fart, practical
family man & we are lost to ourselves for 1,000 or more years
till the aching DULLNESS is too much to bear & we emerge
into Tantra
the way of *ecstasis*: Rumi to Vidal & the Dull Party gets
freaked & burns up Provence
and old Dante arises to put a cap on the fire, impose some
order on ecstasy
and Willie the Shake tries to see: cd they co-exist? : ecstasy
& order — harmony & godseeking freak-out
& he doesn’t solve it but he makes some kind of Trembling
Equation —

And Blake sez, fuck all this, fuck coexistence, we need, we do
need a new spiritual order — & proceeds to make one, sweeping
the Romantics along in his wake
And Baudelaire agrees, but won’t come out to play, tries to
make a new order inside the shell of the old
But Rimbaud *sees* w/ his seer’s eyes that we are already in it,
the spirit, & stark raving naked — we’ll have to leave everything
behind
& at first he is thrilled but then cops out — it’s too chilly in
outer space w/ no clothes he’d rather die a sleaze-butt but *human*
for God’s sake
There is only one place to go from there, Thelema — The new spiritual order for real, a western *terma*, complete with crazy wisdom, the Holy Books.

And sometimes, just sometimes the American cats move in on it they don’t know from order they don’t know from clothes — naked in space is OK w/ Melville,

Whitman don’t know from leave behind, blasted with vastness & forlorn w/ blood sickness

this is more than existential crisis

‘*just SPACE*’

& Pound & Olson bring history along for the ride, the ocean currents & how we followed them

so that Troy falls again, or doesn’t this time — doesn’t this whole thing happen cause Troy fell

men stopped wearing perfume & silk

brightness fell from the air

the Lady of Heaven got bored, went underground

it is

a crisis of spirit — &

the leap out of it beyond it

our most recent shot

‘*just SPACE*’ = Thelema

Hermetic

Definition

a different color
different light in the mind
someone
put out a flag
for Valentine’s Day, as if
the domain of the heart
could belong
to this heartbroken nation—
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #85

HEBRON

Shall we
gentlemen
go home now
for the night the

very long night?
The Shekinah sent word
she won't be coming.

October 5, 2001
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #86

SHORT POEMS ON THE AFGHAN WAR

1.
small bones of
mountain children
in the snow

2.
bags of rice burst open
burlap flaps in the wind
even the label ‘USA’ is fading

3.
We Air-drop Transistor Radios

can you eat them?
will they
keep you warm?

October 5, 2001
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #87

LES AMÉRICAINS

we are feral rare
as mountain wolves
our hearts are pure
& stupid we go down

pitted against our own

October 5, 2001
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #8

NOTES TOWARD A POEM OF REVOLUTION

*It is better to lose and win than win and be defeated.*
—Gertrude Stein

1. What did we in all honesty expect?
That fascist architecture flaunting
@ the sky
converted now to fluid
  toxic
smoke,  ASH
touches us all & nobody
can hog the marbles & expect
the others to play

2. While we mourn & rant for years
over our 3000 how many
  starve
thanks to our greed
  our unappeasable
hunger
3. WATER is rising
   WIND is blowing

   gonna strip the last of our cheap & awkward cities

   only the music
   some of the music remains

4. voice of my daughter quivering on the phone
   as she watches the towers burn

   from her new apartment the one w/ the view . . .
5.
Gulf War, ’91, my son
    @ the demonstration
stops by
to eat

Well, we took out
a recruiting station
he tells me
while the cops
followed the crowd downtown
a group of us
split off.

    I nod &
bite my tongue. Why talk about
what happened the year he was born?

6.
Wanted a northwest passage
& you’ve got it, Magellan!
Henry Hudson, A-mer-eee-go,
Da Gama, are you proud
all of you
it took us
only 500 years to melt
that Polar ice

7.
And is it suicide when penguins
give up? Lie down
8.
Children sold in Africa
in India
child labor laws held barely
eighty years, now
eight-year-olds in brothels dead
eyes
who invented
this hell?

9.
Black holes in our hearts
ground zero
our minds hands
that won’t open let
        go

10.
Tell me again how many janitors
died in the Towers
how many
sandwich makers’
toilet cleaners’
families will get that
two-million-per-victim
in aid?
11.
lost Montségur, we did
lost Prague, the German
peasant uprisings lost
Andalusia (twice)
the Paris Commune

lost @ Haymarket
lost
Paul Robeson Spain
ev even lost Dashiell Hammett

lost San Francisco fairly
recently

12.
Chuck in his shorts
watering his garden

gunned down in the Mill Valley dawn

13.
we hole up
enclaves who speak
(again) in whispers

as they did
when I first came
to these cities
14.
don’t mourn
don’t organize

strike & move on

*November 2001*
bald eagle
making a come-back

so am I
ANCIENT HISTORY

The women are lying down
in front of the bulldozers
sent to destroy
the last of the olive groves.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #91

(for Gerrit Lansing)

‘I’ vanish
as the witness
always vanishes.
After the fact.

The Buddha is
the ‘thus come’
but the mark
of the Magus
is ‘to go’

same word.
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #92

WIND tears at the city like the nervous fingers of an invalid unraveling an afghan like the choppy waves of a small New Jersey lake leaving oil scum along the shore Wind picks up plastic bags rolls syringes around in the gutter ruffles feathers of hungry pigeons chomping on Street Sheet BRING OUR WAR HOME it says & a skinny girl waves her small fist at the heavens Now you read it, hear? said the guy when I gave him my dollar We gotta he says bring the war home like it says Oh I’ll read it all right I tell him, it’s not me you gotta convince I continue under my breath Wind turns a corner rips the camellias off a kind of hedge behind which an american flag hangs discreetly azaleas come apart ranunculus and iceland poppies hold their own Windows rattle pipes bang a tea kettle screeches just so we know inside is no safer than out a breeze moves circumspectly thru the loft and the ficus prepares to drop its leaves

DON’T read the paper listen to the news the names I’m trying to remember were never written not even in cuneiform never written not spoke so’s you cd pronounce them consonants so different the ear cannot distinguish — anguish or laughter is that? — flute tabor what kind of drum no point in learning that alphabet now it’s dust the WIND rules particulate matter from pyres from burning oil wells crushed clay tablets older than the names we know it wd be a mistake to confuse these gods with Ceres with Demeter even Isis

THEY go are gone with their own riding lions carrying emblems we can’t decipher Charm smiling at good mouth that was Kirby Doyle cremated a mere 36 hours ago Missing In Action more poets than you imagine more street urchins teen hustlers with sores that haven’t healed since the Gulf War only the mothers are NOT missing mostly they can’t
afford that luxury STAY why don’t you and rip your chador into bandages STAY and distill pure water from sweat or tears *Quick eyes gone under earth’s lid* that wd be Brakhage now ten days gone stop we need look no further the most brutal wars are fought on this our own dead soil the WIND carries as dust to our nostrils / hearts

*for two gross of broken statues
a few thousand battered books*

*April 6, 2003*
REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #93

MEMORIAL DAY, 2003

Today is Memorial Day. Take time to remember those brave souls who gave their lives for freedom.
— Dear Abby
S.F. Chronicle

Remember Sacco & Vanzetti
Remember Haymarket
Remember John Brown
Remember the slave revolts
Remember Malcolm
Remember Paracelsus
Remember Huey & Little Bobby Hutton
Remember Crazy Horse & Chief Joseph
Remember the Modoc & the Algonquin Nation
Remember Patrice Lumumba
Remember the dream of Africa
Remember Tina Modotti
Remember Makhnov & Tsvetaeva & Mayakovski
yes, goddammit, even remember Trotsky

Hey, do you remember Hypatia?
   Socrates? Giordano Bruno?
Remember my buddy, Esclarmonde de Foix
Remember Seton the Cosmopolite
Remember Edward Kelly, alchemist murdered in prison

Remember to take yr life back into yr hands
It’s Memorial Day, remember what you love
& do it — don’t wait.
Remember life hangs by a thread —
  anybody’s life
& then remember the poets:
Shelley & Bob Kaufman

Remember Van Gogh & Pollock
Remember Amelia Earhart
Remember it’s not a safe time & all the more reason
To do whole-heartedly what you have to do
Remember the women & men of Wounded Knee,
Kent State, remember where you stand:
in the midst of empire, & the Huns
are coming.

Remember Vercingetorix, Max Jacob
Apollinaire & Suhrawardi, remember

that all you need to remember is what you love
Remember to Marry the World
GOODBYE NKRUMAH

And yet, where would we be without the American culture
Bye bye blackbird, as Miles plays it, in the ’50s
Those coffee malteds?
When the radio told me there was dancing in the streets,
I knew we had engineered another coup;
Bought off another army. And I wondered
what the boys at the Black Arts Theatre were saying
and sent them my love, and my help, which they would not accept
Why should they? It’s their war, all I can do is wait
Is not put detergents in the washingmachine, so the soil will still be productive
when the black men, or the Chinese, come to cultivate it.

I remember a news photo of you stepping off a plane somewhere, so cool, so straight a look, and so black.
There was nothing we could do but do you in.
You understand, of course. There is nothing we can do
but shoot students
buy armies
like the British before us killing the Zulus —
now they are fat and placid
their country a shambles.
Well, for us it won’t end like that
not quite so simply:
when the Nevele Country Club, the Hotel Americana
when Beverly Hills and the Cliff House
come crashing down, it will be Shiva who dances,
the sky behind him orange (saffron) a great black mushroom
painted on it somewhere
(it was a mushroom killed Buddha)
will kill him again, compassion has to go

a few of us tried it, we tried to stop it with printing
we tried to protect you with mimeograph machines
green posters LUMUMBA LIVES flooded Harlem in those days
well, the best thing to do with a mimeograph is to drop it
from a five story window, on the head of a cop

we buy the arms and the armed men, we have placed them
on all the thrones of South America
we are burning the jungles, the beasts will rise up against us
even now those small jungle people with black eyes
look calmly at us out of their photographs
and it is their calm that will finish us, it is the calm
of the earth itself.

March 1966
TO THE UNNAMED BUDDHIST NUN, WHO BURNED HERSELF TO DEATH ON THE NIGHT OF JUNE 3, 1966

Outside your temple wall. Stone or wood, I can’t quite see the detail; under this last full moon which I did see. Moon of this June, unearthly light heavy with potency, the air filled with the smells and buzzing of springtime

you with your shaved head and can of kerosene. Under what driving form of ecstasy? I pray to taste it once

your soaked robe chilly in the spring night wind

‘Oh nun, is it hot in there?’
‘Only a stupid person like yourself would ask such a question.’
RANT, FROM A COOL PLACE

‘I see no end of it, but the turning upside down of the entire world.’
— Erasmus

We are in the middle of a bloody, heartrending revolution
Called America, called the Protestant reformation, called Western man,
Called individual consciousness, meaning I need a refrigerator and a car
And milk and meat for the kids so I can discover that I don’t need a car
Or a refrigerator, or meat, or even milk, just rice and a place with no wind to sleep next to someone
Two someones keeping warm in the winter learning to weave
To pot and to putter, learning to steal honey from bees, wearing the bedclothes by day, sleeping under (or in) them at night; hoarding bits of glass, colored stones, and stringing beads
How long before we come to that blessed definable state Known as buddhahood, primitive man, people in a landscape together like trees, the second childhood of man

I don’t know if I will make it somehow nearer by saying all this out loud, for christs sake, that Stevenson was killed, that Shastri was killed both having dined with Marietta Tree the wife of a higher-up in the CIA both out of their own countries mysteriously dead, as how many others
as Marilyn Monroe, wept over in so many tabloids
done in for sleeping with Jack Kennedy — this isn’t a poem —
full of cold prosaic fact
thirteen done in in the Oswald plot : Jack Ruby’s cancer that
disappeared in autopsy
the last of a long line — and they’re waiting to get Tim Leary
Bob Dylan
Allen Ginsberg
LeRoi Jones — as, who killed Malcolm X? They give themselves
away
with TV programs on the Third Reich, and I wonder if I’ll live
to sit in Peking or Hanoi
see TV programs of LBJ’s Reich : our great SS analysed, our
money exposed, the plot to keep Africa
genocide in Southeast Asia now in progress Laos Vietnam
Thailand Cambodia O soft-spoken Sukarno
O great stone Buddhas with sad negroid lips torn down by us by
the red guard all one force
one levelling mad mechanism, grinding it down to earth and
swamp to sea to powder
till Mozart is something a few men can whistle
or play on a homemade flute and we bow to each other
telling old tales half remembered gathereing shells
learning again ‘all beings are from the very beginning Buddhas’
or glowing and dying radiation and plague we come to that final
great love illumination
‘FROM THE VERY FIRST NOTHING IS.’

January 1967
NEW MEXICO POEM

NEW MEXICO — I

Even the sunsets here haven’t won me over
Haven’t convinced me
Simply, this isn’t to me familiar land
Pink ears of jackrabbits high among the sagebrush
Don’t tell me any different

I suppose we all learn; there is in Herodotus
the tale of Greek soldiers settling near Thebes
each given a woman and land, one woman
so like another, one field . . .
But they at least moved from glitter into gold:
As we step backwards even the clay becomes coarser
my thoughts echo big against the high, flat valley
they roll back, bigger than life, to devour my dreams
II — CORN DANCE, TAOS PUEBLO

Red people in blankets wait for returning woodchucks.
(I know it, though they don’t say it)
and beavers
and chipmunks, and possums, and otters, gophers, white people poison the prairie dogs, if a dog find a dead one & eat it he dies — what kind of game
is that?

Red people in blankets stand on their high flat roofs outlined against the sky
they chant — they sing and pray and it could be Morocco except the houses aren’t white the women sell jewelry, giggling, the little boys catch fish with their bare hands, in the sacred river
III — THE JOURNEY

The city I want to visit is made of porcelain
The dead are gathered there, they are at their best:
Bob Thompson
in his checkered jacket & little hat, his grin
full of cocaine, spinning down the street; Frank drunk
spitting out tales of Roussel, of Mayakovsky
brief anecdotes over bacon and eggs on a roll,
his keenness against the wind; Freddie in pointed shoes
drinking an egg cream, his leotard over his shoulder
in a little bag, waving amphetamine hands at the sky

The porcelain city glitters, I feel my friends
hastening to join it & to join me there:
Bob Creeley tearing through Buffalo streets seeking entry
John Wieners holding still, mumbling and waiting
tears under his eyelids; I walk in that brittle city
still sleepy and arrogant and desperately in love . . .
IV — EVENING, TAOS VALLEY

How did we come here? my bones keep asking me.
They see themselves lying bleached on the sand floor of the valley
they don’t like it
don’t like it at all

the moon like a bleached skull
sits behind an abandoned house
the house is melting, it is becoming
part of the field

Which ones are weeds? the garden teeters on the edge of success
We live in a mud cave, with a stone floor
a rather luxurious cave, with running water.
V — FAREWELL, NEW MEXICO

One thing they never mention in Western movies or those ballads they’re always writing about wide open spaces:
Sagebrush has a smell
And there are hills, distinctly flesh-colored, lying down in front of the purple ones.
O wondrous wide open spaces!
O dust on the roads!
O Rio Grande Gorge!
Green Taos Valley full of thunderstorms and mosquitoes
Mountain with two peaks, sacred to Taos indians
Great ceremonial lake, fought over in congress
O Taos indians, with your braids wrapped in leather
may you keep your sacred lake and whatever else you would like to keep
may you drink with brother buffalo on its edge when no one at all remembers the US Congress

As for me I have just changed from the D to the A train in a dark tunnel you Indians wouldn’t believe;
a metal tube is shrieking as it carries me to an island with four million people on it, eating supper.
The newspaper tells me that there is a war in Newark.
My hope is small but constant: black men shall tear down the thing they cannot name.
They will make room again for the great sea birds the woods
will spring up thicker than even you remember

Where you are, it is two hours earlier the breeze is cold, the sun is very hot the horses are standing around, wishing for trees
It is possible I shall see you dance again on your hills, in your beads, if the gods are very kind
DEE’S SONG

Velvet lady, lay on velvet pillows
   in a house where the rain came in
Eucalyptus trees outside the velvet windows
   long silver fingers talking in the wind
Her eyes on the TV, her hair on a pillow
   horse in her arm, making gold
The lady was smiling, her thoughts ebbed and billowed
   her smokedreams were tapestry old

   The wooden house stood in a madrone grove
   Inside it were mirrors of glass
   And candlestick niches, and storybook dishes
   And vases of pewter and brass

California lady, slim and stylish as a leopard
   her tie-dye velvets lying on a shelf
Walking to her mailbox, airy hearted as a shepherd-
   ess to find the smack she shoots into herself
Old man’s gone south again in search of bread and glory powder
   eating percodan in all that canyon sun
The lady wears blue rhinestones and her magic doesn’t flounder:
   target practice with a tin can and a gun

   The wooden house stood in a madrone grove
   Inside it were mirrors of glass
   And candlestick niches, and storybook dishes
   And vases of pewter and brass

Iridescent lady talking horoscopes and witches
   cooking oatmeal porridge in the morning cold
Reading dirty tarot cards and washing painted dishes
   while the ferns at your door fall to mold
And mushrooms are growing as big as your fist
   and the skyscrapers teeter and sway
And the wraiths in your woodswamp all tell you to cool it
but then, that was never your way

O lady I hope you have ice in your heart
And the steel in your eyes is at rest
They’ve locked you away for five years and a day
For the judge and the jury know best

There’s dust on your candles, and wind in your bedroom
eats perfume you used in your hair
Your filched Goodwill wardrobe is scattered thru crash pads
where younger girls look for their share
You longed for a baby, a green-eyed madonna
whose swaddling clothes bundle the night
The stars drew your circle, like marshlights they mock you
my sister in a cage, sleep tight

May 1968
CANTICLE OF ST. JOAN

for Robert Duncan

1. It is in God’s hands. How can I decide
France shall be free? And yet, with the clear song
of thrush, of starling, comes the word, decide
For human agency is freely chosen. I embrace
the iron crown, the nettle shirt, as I
embraced our lord god in the darkling wood
He of the silver hooves and flashing mane
Who shall be nameless.
Nameless as spruce and holly, which endure.
Holy St. Michael, but the ace of swords
is bitter! And the grail
not to be drunk, but carried into shelter.
The dragon, my naga, purrs, it lays its claws
about the bars which will soon close around me.
I stand in its breath, that fire, and read love
in its eyes like crystal balls which mirror gore
of the burning, pillaged cities I set free.
0 brew me mistletoe, unveil the well
I shall lie down again with him who must be nameless
and sink my strong teeth into unhuman flesh.
2.
Blessed be the holy saints, now and forever.
Blessed be Margaret & Bridget
Blessed be spruce & fir.
The sacred waterfall, Diana’s bath, the wind
which brings iron clouds.
They fly out of the sea to the north, they recommend
that I wear woman’s dress, they do not see
that I am Luci-fer, light bearer, lead & I follow
Mother, Sara-la-Kali, sacred Diana, I could have borne
a babe to our sovereign god but would not
in this captivity, this blood
on my hands and no other
BUT SAINT GEORGE I WILL CONQUER
dragonslayer
who seeks to destroy the light in this holy forest
the yellow men call Europe
3. Where is my helmet? Battle is what I crave, shock of lance, death cry, the air filled with the jostling spirits of the dead, meat & drink, the earth enriched with brain & entrail horses’ hooves sliding, the newly fallen finding soft soggy bed on the fallen leaves, tears are too light for this, GRAIL IS BLOOD IS HOLLY red with our sorrow as we reclaim the ground free to lie again with the horned man, the overlords must build their edifices elsewhere, here we stomp in our wooden shoes on the bare earth, take in our arms boughs of the great trees, the misty fabrics of wee folk flesh of our brethren soon to grow cold, the children half imp who live on earth as it were hell, I hear the Voice, it bids me seek no forgiveness for none is my share, my blessing is leaden sky, the sacred blood of the children of forest shines like jewels upon it.
4.
0 am I salamander, do I dance or leap
with pain, can I indeed fall & falling
fall out of this fire? half charred to smolder
black under blackening sky, the god is good
who made the stake strong, made the chains strong, I laugh
I think I laugh I hear peals of unholy laughter
like bells. The cross was ours before you holy men, its secret
there, where the two sticks meet, you cannot fathom.
I hear the cart creak home that brought me, the driver
won't even stay for this end — leap, pirouette.
Inside the grail is fire, the deep draught
melted rubies, blood of the most high god
whose name is Satan, and whose planet earth
I reclaim for the Bundschuh, sons of men.
My hair is burning and the mist is blue
which cracks my brain, I am not in the flame, I am the flame
the sun pours down, the Voice is a mighty roar
0 little children’s bones! the sword & cup
are shivered into stars.
Books by Diane di Prima

This Kind of Bird Flies Backward
Dinners and Nightmares
The New Handbook of Heaven
Poets' Vaudeville
Seven Love Poems from the Middle Latin
Haiku
New Mexico Poem
Earthsong : Poems 1957-1959
Hotel Albert
Memoirs of a Beatnik
L.A. Odyssey
The Book of Hours
Kerhonksen Journal
Revolutionary Letters
The Calculus of Variation
Freddie Poems
Selected Poems : 1956-1976
Loba : Book One
Wyoming Series
The Mysteries of Vision
Pieces of a Song
Seminary Poems
The Mask is the Path of the Star
Loba : Books I & II
Recollections of My Life as a Woman
Towers Down
The Ones I Used To Laugh With