



**REVOLUTIONARY
LETTERS**

Diane di Prima

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Revolutionary Letters
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*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.

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #5

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
 nembotal, 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
a 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 stampe 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.

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #9

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.

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #11

drove across
 San Joaquin Valley
 with Kirby Doyle
 grooving
 getting free Digger meat
 for Free City Convention
 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.

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #22

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

O 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
O 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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #29

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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #32

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, austere 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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #41

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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #42

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.

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 madnesses
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 #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?

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #62

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*
 went 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.

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
 coal 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

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
fine 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
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, highschoools 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

Eyes of the children

Managua
New York
Matalgalpa
Houston
Soweto
Manila
Teheran
Bogota
Oakland

eyes & hands

Knives & guns

of the children

Peru
Zimbabwe
Mexico

eyes & hands

knives & guns

of the children.

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;

perverse 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
 tonight 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

every 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

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?
Peru. Where? Paris. Where? in Bonn
& 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,
not in London. Not in the Mission.
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 & unsuspecting 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
 door nail
 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 *pious 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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #84

FEBRUARY 14, 2001

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 #88

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

the long finger of

impermanence

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

11.

lost Montségur, we did
 lost Prague, the German
 peasant uprisings lost
 Andalusia (twice)
 the Paris Commune

lost @ Haymarket

lost

Paul Robeson Spain
 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

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #89

INDEPENDENCE DAY 2002

bald eagle
making a come-back

so am I

REVOLUTIONARY LETTER #90

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 christ's 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

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.
 O 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.

O 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
O 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