

Howl*for Carl Solomon***I**

I saw the best minds of my generation destroyed by madness, starving hysterical
naked,
dragging themselves through the negro streets at dawn looking for an angry fix,
angelheaded hipsters burning for the ancient heavenly connection to the starry
dynamo in the machinery of night,
who poverty and tatters and hollow-eyed and high sat up smoking in the
supernatural darkness of cold-water flats floating across the tops of cities
contemplating jazz,
who bared their brains to Heaven under the El and saw Mohammedan angels
staggering on tenement roofs illuminated,
who passed through universities with radiant cool eyes hallucinating Arkansas and
Blake-light tragedy among the scholars of war,
who were expelled from the academies for crazy & publishing obscene odes on the
windows of the skull,
who cowered in unshaven rooms in underwear, burning their money in
wastebaskets and listening to the Terror through the wall,
who got busted in their pubic beards returning through Laredo with a belt of
marijuana for New York,
who ate fire in paint hotels or drank turpentine in Paradise Alley, death, or
purgatoried their torsos night after night
with dreams, with drugs, with waking nightmares, alcohol and cock and endless
balls,
incomparable blind streets of shuddering cloud and lightning in the mind leaping
toward poles of Canada & Paterson, illuminating all the motionless world of
Time between,
Peyote solidities of halls, backyard green tree cemetery dawns, wine drunkenness
over the rooftops, storefront boroughs of teahead joyride neon blinking traffic
light, sun and moon and tree vibrations in the roaring winter dusks of Brooklyn,
ashcan rantings and kind king light of mind,
who chained themselves to subways for the endless ride from Battery to holy
Bronx on benzedrine until the noise of wheels and children brought them down
shuddering mouth-wracked and battered bleak of brain all drained of brilliance in
the drear light of Zoo,

who sank all night in submarine light of Bickford's floated out and sat through the stale beer afternoon in desolate Fugazzi's, listening to the crack of doom on the hydrogen jukebox,
who talked continuously seventy hours from park to pad to bar to Bellevue to museum to the Brooklyn Bridge,
a lost battalion of platonic conversationalists jumping down the stoops off fire escapes off windowsills off Empire State out of the moon,
yacketayakking screaming vomiting whispering facts and memories and anecdotes and eyeball kicks and shocks of hospitals and jails and wars,
whole intellects disgorged in total recall for seven days and nights with brilliant eyes, meat for the Synagogue cast on the pavement,
who vanished into nowhere Zen New Jersey leaving a trail of ambiguous picture postcards of Atlantic City Hall,
suffering Eastern sweats and Tangerian bone-grindings and migraines of China under junk-withdrawal in Newark's bleak furnished room,
who wandered around and around at midnight in the railroad yard wondering where to go, and went, leaving no broken hearts,
who lit cigarettes in boxcars boxcars boxcars racketing through snow toward lonesome farms in grandfather night,
who studied Plotinus Poe St. John of the Cross telepathy and bop kabbalah because the cosmos instinctively vibrated at their feet in Kansas,
who loned it through the streets of Idaho seeking visionary indian angels who were visionary indian angels,
who thought they were only mad when Baltimore gleamed in supernatural ecstasy,
who jumped in limousines with the Chinaman of Oklahoma on the impulse of winter midnight streetlight smalltown rain,
who lounged hungry and lonesome through Houston seeking jazz or sex or soup, and followed the brilliant Spaniard to converse about America and Eternity, a hopeless task, and so took ship to Africa,
who disappeared into the volcanoes of Mexico leaving behind nothing but the shadow of dungarees and the lava and ash of poetry scattered in fireplace Chicago,
who reappeared on the West Coast investigating the FBI in beards and shorts with big pacifist eyes sexy in their dark skin passing out incomprehensible leaflets, who burned cigarette holes in their arms protesting the narcotic tobacco haze of Capitalism,
who distributed Supercommunist pamphlets in Union Square weeping and undressing while the sirens of Los Alamos wailed them down, and wailed down Wall, and the Staten Island ferry also wailed,

who broke down crying in white gymnasiums naked and trembling before the
machinery of other skeletons,
who bit detectives in the neck and shrieked with delight in policecars for
committing no crime but their own wild cooking pederasty and intoxication,
who howled on their knees in the subway and were dragged off the roof waving
genitals and manuscripts,
who let themselves be fucked in the ass by saintly motorcyclists, and screamed
with joy,
who blew and were blown by those human seraphim, the sailors, caresses of
Atlantic and Caribbean love,
who balled in the morning in the evenings in rosegardens and the grass of public
parks and cemeteries scattering their semen freely to whomever come who may,
who hiccuped endlessly trying to giggle but wound up with a sob behind a partition
in a Turkish Bath when the blond & naked angel came to pierce them with a
sword,
who lost their loveboys to the three old shrews of fate the one eyed shrew of the
heterosexual dollar the one eyed shrew that winks out of the womb and the one
eyed shrew that does nothing but sit on her ass and snip the intellectual golden
threads of the craftsman's loom,
who copulated ecstatic and insatiate with a bottle of beer a sweetheart a package of
cigarettes a candle and fell off the bed, and continued along the floor and down
the hall and ended fainting on the wall with a vision of ultimate cunt and come
eluding the last gyzym of consciousness,
who sweetened the snatches of a million girls trembling in the sunset, and were red
eyed in the morning but prepared to sweeten the snatch of the sunrise, flashing
buttocks under barns and naked in the lake,
who went out whoring through Colorado in myriad stolen night-cars, N.C., secret
hero of these poems, cocksman and Adonis of Denver—joy to the memory of his
innumerable lays of girls in empty lots & diner backyards, moviehouses' rickety
rows, on mountaintops in caves or with gaunt waitresses in familiar roadside
lonely petticoat upliftings & especially secret gas-station solipsisms of johns, &
hometown alleys too,
who faded out in vast sordid movies, were shifted in dreams, woke on a sudden
Manhattan, and picked themselves up out of basements hung-over with heartless
Tokay and horrors of Third Avenue iron dreams & stumbled to unemployment
offices,
who walked all night with their shoes full of blood on the snowbank docks waiting
for a door in the East River to open to a room full of steam-heat and opium,

who created great suicidal dramas on the apartment cliff-banks of the Hudson
under the wartime blue floodlight of the moon & their heads shall be crowned
with laurel in oblivion,
who ate the lamb stew of the imagination or digested the crab at the muddy bottom
of the rivers of Bowery,
who wept at the romance of the streets with their pushcarts full of onions and bad
music,
who sat in boxes breathing in the darkness under the bridge, and rose up to build
harpsichords in their lofts,
who coughed on the sixth floor of Harlem crowned with flame under the tubercular
sky surrounded by orange crates of theology,
who scribbled all night rocking and rolling over lofty incantations which in the
yellow morning were stanzas of gibberish,
who cooked rotten animals lung heart feet tail borsht & tortillas dreaming of the
pure vegetable kingdom,
who plunged themselves under meat trucks looking for an egg,
who threw their watches off the roof to cast their ballot for Eternity outside of
Time, & alarm clocks fell on their heads every day for the next decade,
who cut their wrists three times successively unsuccessfully, gave up and were
forced to open antique stores where they thought they were growing old and
cried,
who were burned alive in their innocent flannel suits on Madison Avenue amid
blasts of leaden verse & the tanked-up clatter of the iron regiments of fashion &
the nitroglycerine shrieks of the fairies of advertising & the mustard gas of
sinister intelligent editors, or were run down by the drunken taxicabs of Absolute
Reality,
who jumped off the Brooklyn Bridge this actually happened and walked away
unknown and forgotten into the ghostly daze of Chinatown soup alleyways &
firetrucks, not even one free beer,
who sang out of their windows in despair, fell out of the subway window, jumped
in the filthy Passaic, leaped on negroes, cried all over the street, danced on
broken wineglasses barefoot smashed phonograph records of nostalgic European
1930s German jazz finished the whiskey and threw up groaning into the bloody
toilet, moans in their ears and the blast of colossal steamwhistles,
who barreled down the highways of the past journeying to each other's hotrod-
Golgotha jail-solitude watch or Birmingham jazz incarnation,
who drove crosscountry seventytwo hours to find out if I had a vision or you had a
vision or he had a vision to find out Eternity,
who journeyed to Denver, who died in Denver, who came back to Denver &
waited in vain, who watched over Denver & brooded & loned in Denver and

finally went away to find out the Time, & now Denver is lonesome for her
heroes,
who fell on their knees in hopeless cathedrals praying for each other's salvation
and light and breasts, until the soul illuminated its hair for a second,
who crashed through their minds in jail waiting for impossible criminals with
golden heads and the charm of reality in their hearts who sang sweet blues to
Alcatraz,
who retired to Mexico to cultivate a habit, or Rocky Mount to tender Buddha or
Tangiers to boys or Southern Pacific to the black locomotive or Harvard to
Narcissus to Woodlawn to the daisychain or grave,
who demanded sanity trials accusing the radio of hypnotism & were left with their
insanity & their hands & a hung jury,
who threw potato salad at CCNY lecturers on Dadaism and subsequently presented
themselves on the granite steps of the madhouse with shaven heads and harlequin
speech of suicide, demanding instantaneous lobotomy,
and who were given instead the concrete void of insulin Metrazol electricity
hydrotherapy psychotherapy occupational therapy pingpong & amnesia,
who in humorless protest overturned only one symbolic pingpong table, resting
briefly in catatonia,
returning years later truly bald except for a wig of blood, and tears and fingers, to
the visible madman doom of the wards of the madtowns of the East,
Pilgrim State's Rockland's and Greystone's foetid halls, bickering with the echoes
of the soul, rocking and rolling in the midnight solitude-bench dolmen-realms of
love, dream of life a nightmare, bodies turned to stone as heavy as the moon,
with mother finally *****, and the last fantastic book flung out of the tenement
window, and the last door closed at 4 A.M. and the last telephone slammed at the
wall in reply and the last furnished room emptied down to the last piece of
mental furniture, a yellow paper rose twisted on a wire hanger in the closet, and
even that imaginary, nothing but a hopeful little bit of hallucination—
ah, Carl, while you are not safe I am not safe, and now you're really in the total
animal soup of time—
and who therefore ran through the icy streets obsessed with a sudden flash of the
alchemy of the use of the ellipsis catalogue a variable measure and the vibrating
plane,
who dreamt and made incarnate gaps in Time & Space through images juxtaposed,
and trapped the archangel of the soul between 2 visual images and joined the
elemental verbs and set the noun and dash of consciousness together jumping
with sensation of Pater Omnipotens Aeterna Deus

to recreate the syntax and measure of poor human prose and stand before you
speechless and intelligent and shaking with shame, rejected yet confessing out
the soul to conform to the rhythm of thought in his naked and endless head,
the madman bum and angel beat in Time, unknown, yet putting down here what
might be left to say in time come after death,
and rose reincarnate in the ghostly clothes of jazz in the goldhorn shadow of the
band and blew the suffering of America's naked mind for love into an eli eli
lamma lamma sabacthani saxophone cry that shivered the cities down to the last
radio
with the absolute heart of the poem of life butchered out of their own bodies good
to eat a thousand years.

Allen Ginsberg, 1956

Mid-August at Sourdough Mountain Lookout

Down valley a smoke haze
Three days heat, after five days rain
Pitch glows on the fir-cones
Across rocks and meadows
Swarms of new flies.

I cannot remember things I once read
A few friends, but they are in cities.
Drinking cold snow-water from a tin cup
Looking down for miles
Through high still air.

Gary Snyder, 1959

Riprap

*a cobble of stone laid on steep,
slick rock to make a trail for horses
in the mountains*

Lay down these words
Before your mind like rocks.
 placed solid, by hands
In choice of place, set
Before the body of the mind
 in space and time:
Solidity of bark, leaf, or wall
 riprap of things:
Cobble of milky way,
 straying planets,
These poems, people,
 lost ponies with
Dragging saddles —
 and rocky sure-foot trails.
The worlds like an endless
 four-dimensional
Game of *Go*.
 ants and pebbles
In the thin loam, each rock a word
 a creek-washed stone
Granite: ingrained
 with torment of fire and weight
Crystal and sediment linked hot
 all change, in thoughts,
As well as things.

Gary Snyder, 1959

Mr. Tambourine Man

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Though I know that evenin's empire has returned into sand,
Vanished from my hand,
Left me blindly here to stand but still not sleeping.
My weariness amazes me, I'm branded on my feet,
I have no one to meet
And the ancient empty street's too dead for dreaming.

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Take me on a trip upon your magic swirlin' ship,
My senses have been stripped, my hands can't feel to grip,
My toes too numb to step, wait only for my boot heels
To be wanderin'.
I'm ready to go anywhere, I'm ready for to fade
Into my own parade, cast your dancing spell my way,
I promise to go under it.

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Though you might hear laughin', spinnin', swingin' madly across the sun,
It's not aimed at anyone, it's just escapin' on the run
And but for the sky there are no fences facin'.
And if you hear vague traces of skippin' reels of rhyme
To your tambourine in time, it's just a ragged clown behind,
I wouldn't pay it any mind, it's just a shadow you're
Seein' that he's chasing.

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Then take me disappearin' through the smoke rings of my mind,
Down the foggy ruins of time, far past the frozen leaves,
The haunted, frightened trees, out to the windy beach,
Far from the twisted reach of crazy sorrow.
Yes, to dance beneath the diamond sky with one hand waving free,
Silhouetted by the sea, circled by the circus sands,
With all memory and fate driven deep beneath the waves,
Let me forget about today until tomorrow.

Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
I'm not sleepy and there is no place I'm going to.
Hey! Mr. Tambourine Man, play a song for me,
In the jingle jangle morning I'll come followin' you.

Bob Dylan, 1964

Dream Song 4

Filling her compact & delicious body
with chicken páprika, she glanced at me
twice.
Fainting with interest, I hungered back
and only the fact of her husband & four other people
kept me from springing on her

or falling at her little feet and crying
'You are the hottest one for years of night
Henry's dazed eyes
have enjoyed, Brilliance.' I advanced upon
(despairing) my spumoni.—Sir Bones: is stuffed,
de world, wif feeding girls.

—Black hair, complexion Latin, jewelled eyes
downcast . . . The slob beside her feasts . . . What wonders is
she sitting on, over there?
The restaurant buzzes. She might as well be on Mars.
Where did it all go wrong? There ought to be a law against Henry.
—Mr. Bones: there is.

Dream Song 29

There sat down, once, a thing on Henry's heart
só heavy, if he had a hundred years
& more, & weeping, sleepless, in all them time
Henry could not make good.
Starts again always in Henry's ears
the little cough somewhere, an odour, a chime.

And there is another thing he has in mind
like a grave Sienese face a thousand years
would fail to blur the still profiled reproach of. Ghastly,
with open eyes, he attends, blind.
All the bells say: too late. This is not for tears;
thinking.

But never did Henry, as he thought he did,
end anyone and hacks her body up
and hide the pieces, where they may be found.
He knows: he went over everyone, & nobody's missing.
Often he reckons, in the dawn, them up.
Nobody is ever missing.

John Berryman, 1964

Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds

Picture yourself in a boat on a river
With tangerine trees and marmalade skies
Somebody calls you, you answer quite slowly
A girl with kaleidoscope eyes

Cellophane flowers of yellow and green
Towering over your head
Look for the girl with the sun in her eyes
And she's gone

Follow her down to a bridge by a fountain
Where rocking horse people eat marshmallow pies
Everyone smiles as you drift past the flowers
That grow so incredibly high

Newspaper taxis appear on the shore
Waiting to take you away
Climb in the back with your head in the clouds
And you're gone

Picture yourself on a train in a station
With plasticine porters with looking-glass ties
Suddenly someone is there at the turnstile
The girl with kaleidoscope eyes

John Lennon & Paul McCartney, 1967

The Spark in the Tinder of Knowing

Profound stillness in the greystone
Romanesque chapel, the rush
Of wheels beyond the door only
Underlines the silence. The wheels
Of life turn ceaselessly.
Their hiss and clank is
The noiseless turning of the Wheel
Of the Law, that turns without

Moving, from zenith to nadir,
From plus to minus, from black to white.
Love turns the uncountable
Interlocking wheels of the stars.
The earth tums. The sun sets.
A bolt of iron all on fire
Falls into the turning city.
Love turns the heart to an unknown
Substance, fire on its fire.
Not by flesh, but by love, man
Comes into the world, lost in
The illimitable ocean
Of which there is no shore,
The sea of circumstance where
The heart drowns, the sea of love.
The heart drinks it and it drinks
The heart—transubstantiation
In which the One drinks the Other
And the Other drinks the One.
The sea of fire that lights all being
Becomes the human heart.

Kenneth Rexroth, 1968

Thyme Flowering among Rocks

This, if Japanese,
Would represent grey boulders
Walloped by rough seas

So that, here or there,
The balked water tossed its froth
Straight into the air.

Here, where things are what
They are, it is thyme blooming,
Rocks, and nothing but –

Having, nonetheless,
Many small leaves implicit,
A green countlessness.

Crouching down, peering
Into perplexed recesses,
You find a clearing

Occupied by sun
Where, along prone, rachitic
Branches, one by one,

Pale stems arise, squared
In the manner of Mentha,
The oblong leaves paired.

One branch, in ending,
Lifts a little and begets
A straight-ascending

Spike, whorled with fine blue
Or purple trumpets, banked in
The leaf-axils. You

Are lost now in dense
Fact, fact which one might have thought
Hidden from the sense,

Blinking at detail
Peppery as this fragrance,
Lost to proper scale

As, in the motion
Of striped fins, a bathysphere
Forgets the ocean.

It makes the craned head
Spin. Unfathomed thyme! The world's
A dream, Basho said,

Not because that dream's
A falsehood, but because it's
Truer than it seems.

Richard Wilbur, 1969

Waist Deep in the Big Muddy

It was back in nineteen forty-two,
I was a member of a good platoon.
We were on maneuvers in-a Loozianna,
One night by the light of the moon.
The captain told us to ford a river,
That's how it all begun.
We were — knee deep in the Big Muddy,
But the big fool said to push on.

The Sergeant said, "Sir, are you sure,
This is the best way back to the base?"
"Sergeant, go on! I forded this river
'Bout a mile above this place.
It'll be a little soggy but just keep slogging.
We'll soon be on dry ground."
We were — waist deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool said to push on.

The Sergeant said, "Sir, with all this equipment
No man will be able to swim."
"Sergeant, don't be a Nervous Nellie,"
The Captain said to him.
"All we need is a little determination;
Men, follow me, I'll lead on."
We were — neck deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool said to push on.

All at once, the moon clouded over,
We heard a gurgling cry.
A few seconds later, the captain's helmet
Was all that floated by.
The Sergeant said, "Turn around men!
I'm in charge from now on."
And we just made it out of the Big Muddy
With the captain dead and gone.

We stripped and dived and found his body
Stuck in the old quicksand.
I guess he didn't know that the water was deeper

Than the place he'd once before been.
Another stream had joined the Big Muddy
'Bout a half mile from where we'd gone.
We were lucky to escape from the Big Muddy
When the big fool said to push on.

Well, I'm not going to point any moral;
I'll leave that for yourself
Maybe you're still walking, you're still talking
You'd like to keep your health.
But every time I read the papers
That old feeling comes on;
We're — waist deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool says to push on.

Waist deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool says to push on.
Waist deep in the Big Muddy
And the big fool says to push on.
Waist deep! Neck deep! Soon even a
Tall man'll be over his head, we're
Waist deep in the Big Muddy!
And the big fool says to push on!

Pete Seeger, 1967

Me and Bobby McGee

Busted flat in Baton Rouge
Waitin' for the train
Feelin' nearly faded as my jeans
Bobby thumbed a diesel down
Just before it rained
Rode us all the way to New Orleans
I pulled my harpoon out of my dirty red bandanna
And was playing soft
While Bobby sang the blues
With them windshield wipers slappin' time
I was holdin' Bobby's hand in mine
We sang every song that driver knew

Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
Nothin' ain't worth nothin' but it's free
Feelin' good was easy, Lord,
When he sang the blues
And feelin' good was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee
From Kentucky coal mines
To the California sun
Bobby shared the secrets of my soul
Through all kinds of weather, Lord
Through everything I done
Bobby baby kept me from the cold
Then somewhere near Salinas, Lord
I let him slip away
Lookin' for the home I hope he'll find it
And I'd trade all of my tomorrows
For one single yesterday
Holdin' Bobby's body next to mine
Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose
Nothin' left is all that Bobby left me
Feelin' good was easy, Lord
When he sang the blues
And buddy, that was good enough for me
Good enough for me and Bobby McGee

Kris Kristofferson & Fred Foster, 1969

Prisoners

Usually at the helipad
I see them stumble-dance
across the hot asphalt
with crokersacks over their heads,
moving toward the interrogation huts,
thin-framed as box kites
of sticks & black silk
anticipating a hard wind
that'll tug & snatch them
out into space. I think

some must be laughing
under their dust-colored hoods,
knowing rockets are aimed
at Chu Lai—that the water's
evaporating & soon the nail
will make contact with metal.
How can anyone anywhere love
these half-broken figures
bent under the sky's brightness?
The weight they carry
is the soil we tread night & day.
Who can cry for them?
I've heard the old ones
are the hardest to break.
An arm twist, a combat boot
against the skull, a .45
jabbed into the mouth, nothing
works. When they start talking
with ancestors faint as camphor
smoke in pagodas, you know
you'll have to kill them
to get an answer.
Sunlight throws
scythes against the afternoon.
Everything's a heat mirage; a river
tugs at their slow feet.
I stand alone & amazed,
with a pill-happy door gunner
signaling for me to board the Cobra.
I remember how one day
I almost bowed to such figures
walking toward me, under
a corporal's ironclad stare.
I can't say why.
From a half-mile away
trees huddle together,
& the prisoners look like
marionettes hooked to strings of light

Yusef Komunyakaa, 1988

Facing It

My black face fades,
hiding inside the black granite.
I said I wouldn't,
dammit: No tears.
I'm stone. I'm flesh.
My clouded reflection eyes me
like a bird of prey, the profile of night
slanted against morning. I turn
this way—the stone lets me go.
I turn that way—I'm inside
the Vietnam Veterans Memorial
again, depending on the light
to make a difference.
I go down the 58,022 names,
half-expecting to find
my own in letters like smoke.
I touch the name Andrew Johnson;
I see the booby trap's white flash.
Names shimmer on a woman's blouse
but when she walks away
the names stay on the wall.
Brushstrokes flash, a red bird's
wings cutting across my stare.
The sky. A plane in the sky.
A white vet's image floats
closer to me, then his pale eyes
look through mine. I'm a window.
He's lost his right arm
inside the stone. In the black mirror
a woman's trying to erase names:
No, she's brushing a boy's hair.

Yusef Komunyakaa, 1988