



## First Draft: Fall 2023 (A Poetry Exercise after Diane di Prima)

Upon becoming San Francisco Poet Laureate in 2009 Diane di Prima wrote:

### FIRST DRAFT: POET LAUREATE OATH OF OFFICE

*for all poets everywhere*

It is the poem I serve  
luminous, through time  
that celebration  
of human breath, of *melos*

it is and always has been  
the muse androgynous and ruthless  
as any angel scattering words that need no  
radio frequency no broadband

it is the light on the ocean here and  
the sky in all its moods  
luminous fog that wakes me up  
to write, and something I call the  
"Imp of the Short Poem"

it is the people of San Francisco  
in their beauty  
Bright luminous eyes looking out  
from homeless faces

looking up  
from gardening skateboarding singing  
playing cards playing ball  
barbecuing in their backyards

the folks in the Mission  
the Excelsior in Bayview  
Hunters Point  
Japantown  
North Beach  
folks in the Sunset  
working & idle

---

passionate angry silent  
powerful in their silence

my friends and neighbors  
parked at Ocean Beach, at Twin Peaks  
in their cars  
watching the sun go  
down

my vow is:

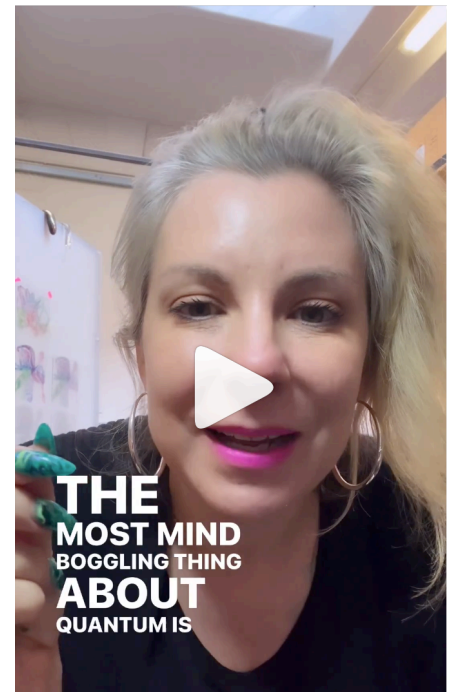
to remind us all  
to celebrate  
*there is no time  
too desperate*  
no season  
that is not  
a Season of Song

Notice how the poem is a quintessential laureate-type poem, mentioning actual places and actual actions she has witnessed around her city.

Luminous details help the poet earn the rhetorical flourish at the end in

which her conclusion is that we can, no matter the level of desperation, sing. It is evocative of her *Revolutionary Letters*, which were designed to read in public to average people, and not just to those who study poetry, or even read it. This poem has a softness (wisdom) gained through the struggles she encountered during the period those Revolutionary Letters were written. The Digger Era. She has mellowed with age.

Your task is to imagine the domain for which you are unofficial poet laureate and write your first draft that could potentially outline your priorities for the coming term. (Maybe it's just Fall/Winter/Spring 2023/2024. Maybe you are just Poet Laureate of Your Backyard. That should have a name anyway and you get to name it.) Place names, activities of the beings in your jurisdiction can meld with the realization that we are now in the Anthropocene and the critters and plants you see today may not be here in ten years. Maybe your field work experience informs this poem. & of course it will, if Quantum Physics as described in [this IG video is true](#), and it appears that way to me.



Maybe even start your poem with the same line:

“It is the poem I serve...” and graft from there. *Poetry is news that stays news* and poets whose work has scraped the edge of eternity allow us a window to explore just where that is. That Diane wrote a First Draft means you can too, but don't be an organic method fundamentalist. Find the sweet spot between first draft and minor intelligent tweakings. Thank you Diane.

peN

4-OCT-2023

Casa del Colibrí

