

## Winter in America (Again) (An Exercise)

The news on November 6, 2024, was not good to anyone paying attention; anyone with a sense of history; anyone holding any hope that the experiment of US American democracy could be saved. Neoliberals let the oligarchy take over.<sup>1</sup> The new regime is poised to finish the job. (“In four years, you don't have to vote again. We'll have it fixed so good, you're not gonna have to vote.”<sup>2</sup>)

Your job, should you accept it, is to write a poem in response to the November 5, 2024, US American presidential election. The debate over the depth and efficacy of political poetry will rage on and surely *avoiding* politics in your poetry is a political statement. Maybe it's the *rhetorical* that stifles gestures deeper than belief systems. One could argue it is belief systems that got us here.

Of course it's the ego that classifies and separates. The ego that spends time worrying about future threats rather than allowing us to experience the present moment. Michael McClure loved Alfred North Whitehead's quote: “It is the business of the future to be dangerous.”<sup>3</sup> Stéphane Mallarmé noted that “poetry is the language for a state of crisis.” Two late Bay Area poets left some clues as to how to respond to moments such as these.

In this poem from the Gulf War, Kyger simply quotes the President:

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.bbc.com/news/blogs-echochambers-27074746>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.reuters.com/world/us/trump-tells-christians-they-wont-have-vote-after-this-election-2024-07-27/>

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.whatshouldireadnext.com/quotes/authors/alfred-north-whitehead>

## The Psychopathic Personality

“I am the commander  
I do not need to explain why I do things.  
That’s the interesting thing about being  
President.  
Maybe someone needs to explain to me  
why they say something, but I don’t feel  
I owe anyone an explanation.”

USA Today 11/25/2002  
Direct Quote

Michael McClure chimed in to a previous administration’s cabinet to  
respond to their atrocities:

Madame Secretary

IN THE BEDROOM,  
THEIR STARVING FACES AND BIG SOULED EYES  
SLIDE AT THE EDGES OF TELEVISION.  
- WHAT MIRACLES OF FIREARMS AND MACHETES  
ALLOW CHILDREN TO MORPH  
INTO VEIN-BURSTING, BULGE-CHESTED HEROES  
PUTTING BARE FEET  
ON LAND MINES?

Now,  
a fat woman,  
the Secretary of Deceit,  
cuddles a child amputee  
to her breast and croons  
of the need  
for democracy to flourish.

I AM AWED  
by her demon face  
as it leans out,  
falling from the glass-fronted box,  
and crashes with a squeak  
on the floor  
spreading a scarlet pool.

*grahhr*

Diane di Prima's *Revolutionary Letters* were political poems aimed at a wide audience. Sam Hamill said, "The poem as letter allows a privacy of speech, and a certain confidentiality of tone that other genres tend to repel!"

#### **Revolutionary Letter #4**

Left to themselves people  
grow their hair.  
Left to themselves they  
take off their shoe's.  
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.

When the energy of dissent is so strong, the urge to lapse into rhetoric  
must be avoided. Rhetoric is not what we need right now.

peN  
10:03am, N.12.2024  
Casa del Colibrí  
dx<sup>w</sup>wuq<sup>w</sup>əb watershed  
Cascadia Bioregion

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