

SLEEPWALKERS, WAKE UP!

I have sixty years of political memory. When I was in third grade I was already a committed Democrat and wore a "Stevenson" button to school (even though my parents were Republican). My candidate didn't win either of his runs for the White House, but Eisenhower didn't turn out to be as bad as I thought he'd be. Can you imagine any current Republican with the guts to send in the National Guard to desegregate the Little Rock public schools? Or to warn the nation about the danger of the "military-industrial complex"? I was ecstatic when JFK won, but was devastated by the string of assassinations in the 60s, taking the reformers, the champions of justice and equality, out of action. There were forces of evil at work, but much of the country refused to acknowledge them. I had a first-hand glimpse of those forces when my friends and I attended a Young Americans for Freedom rally in New York City, 1961. We went because we couldn't believe that there was an ultra-right wing movement for teenagers. What could possibly be the attraction? After hearing speaker after speaker praise Sen. Joseph McCarthy and watching in horror as John Dos Passos recanted his leftist past and his passion for justice, we knew the ugliness was real. Then there was LBJ's betrayal of everyone during the Vietnam War, the evil that would overshadow every good thing he did. That was followed by Nixon's grim era, ending in Watergate. Jimmy Carter, with



every good intention, stumbled badly. Then there was Ronald Reagan, the man who as Governor of California unleashed hordes of Alameda Sheriff's Deputies armed with shotguns on protestors in Berkeley in 1969, who opened his campaign for the presidency in Philadelphia, Mississippi, where civil rights activists Chaney, Goodman, and Schwerner were tortured and killed by the local KKK. It was an ominous show of contempt for the Civil Rights Act of 1965 that has become even more strident today. Reagan was also the beginning of "supply-side economics" and the deliberate dismantling of American unions. He was followed by Daddy Bush, the first Gulf War, Clinton (who stumbled even more badly than Carter when taking on medical reform and the ban against gays in the military). Then there was a stolen presidential election, followed by another that was most likely stolen in Ohio by the manipulation of electronic voting machines that had no paper record. All of this sounds horrible. There was a lot of darkness during those years, but I have recounted this history in order to suggest that what would ensue if Mitt

Romney won the presidency would make all those preceding years look like a picnic. These are not the old Republicans, who actually had a liberal wing as well as moderates and conservatives. Through massive schemes of voter suppression, state laws intended to nullify *Roe vs. Wade*, even an attack on the legality of birth control, and plans to destroy Medicare, Medicaid, Social Security, the EPA, and bank regulation, the current radical Republican party has promised to undo every progressive act of the last 100 hundred years. And yet the media, the great American center, and even many progressives, do not seem concerned. We are talking about a political coup that would turn on its head virtually everything we accept as modern American society. Have Americans been anesthetized? Hypnotized? This ultra-right incarnation of the Republican party constitutes a shrinking minority. If they win in 2012, they will try to re-engineer everything, so that free and fair elections at the national level might never happen again. This is what Tom DeLay used to call the "permanent Republican majority."

There are people who are attracted to right wing authoritarian rule. The excitement these people have in this election cycle is understandable. If you are not one of those people and you are not working to re-elect Barack Obama (a man who has achieved significant success in his first term) and stave off this disaster, I'm afraid you will wake up from your walking sleep only after it's too late to do anything.



NEW FEATURE AT CALIBANONLINE

A current index of all the 142 different writers and artists who have appeared through issue #8 is now available on the home page as **CONTRIBUTORS INDEX**. The first two years of *Calibanonline* have been indexed by author/artist, issue, title of individual works, and the relevant page numbers. This new index will allow readers, writers, artists, and teachers more efficient access to these works. We are particularly hopeful that teachers of classes in creative writing or poetics (or any other course dealing with modern poetry) will use the index as a resource this fall, either to assign specific works in their syllabi or to offer *Calibanonline* as suggested

reading. If you are a teacher please consider doing this and please pass the word along to your colleagues as well. The pieces that have appeared in the first eight issues are an outstanding representation of contemporary poetry, fiction, and art. What has appeared is all innovative work, but it also comes from different schools and different generations. The fact that these issues can be accessed without cost would make them even more attractive to students.

Since a number of people have asked me about this lately, let me say a few words about why *Caliban* has never run page numbers in its table of contents. I know that there is a

tendency for readers to skip around, turning to pages with names they recognize. I have always tried to make each issue function as an organic whole, as a book rather than a random collection of writing and artwork. Of course, I would prefer that people read it that way, from cover to cover. Many outstanding writers have appeared for the first time in the pages of *Caliban*. Their names were not recognizable at the time. What a loss if they had not been read because of that. I should also confess that I delight in using various non-readable hieroglyphics, symbols, and images to replace the usual table of contents numbers.