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Maxine Chernoff

Knowing

for Trayvon Martin

Small burden
to bear the truth
of others whose
harm is an object
real as any post.
You say words
to staunch
the flow on its
path to inflection.
Truth collapses
like a cloak
meant to mask
a death. While
life asks us
to pause and feel
the weight of sun,
the slant of grief,
the body of knowledge
betrayed the instant
the grass holds
the body left
for interment.

Monique Gagnon German

Crutches

Such a strain on the collective
conscience, all this talk of taxes,
bailouts, Ponzi schemes,
the infringement
of terrorists' rights,
the national
international debt.

The banks are building
sand castles with clouds
shaped like consciousness
featuring commercials
that crack us up, while more
and more folks find
themselves sleeping in,
drifting in and out of rooms
making plans to put
in ADT and
new laptop wallpaper.

The weight
of all the important
decisions rests
on the balls
of their feet,
constantly
pivoting.

A helicopter cuts
audio divots

in the night.
Somewhere
a candle flickers
then regains
its former height.
Do you wake
sometimes
in the dark
sense some
sort of war
coming on?
Or do you think
it is just one small
crime, one thug,
settle back to sleep
picturing the helicopter
above with its spotlight
on the bad guy,
threat all taken care of?

In theaters on street
after street, the audience
is empty, mostly home, watching
their own 70 inch screens.
By morning,
nobody remembers
the plot, the dialogue,
the cinematography
or the leads. Only a few
remember where,
in the flickering dark,
they set their drinks.

Ira Lightman

Capit*l Buildings

Exteriors of buildings
fry light in many griddles.

The UN in Manhattan's
pouts when the pedestrian

imagines the utilities
piping in the phone.

Neighborly
corporation presidents,

money magnetizes
threadbare angry staggering crowds

to queue,
vestibule to vestibule.

Ira Lightman

Heritage

What do the English mean by “cobbled
street”, or even “cobbled” (or even
“university”)
“towns”? They mean stone
walls and stone streets, bubbled
stones on stone roads, clumped
bricks around small windows. They mean

a belly of stone a womb but
it’s digesting them. Cobbled
Elm Hill, in Norwich, university
town,
leads on
to the river. Suddenly gone

my wish to sit down, when
I can stand and watch
the frictionless
hull of a duck
turfig
the water’s surface

with the water underneath, its
deep feet.
Thought I was a feeder
and had to
turn back. A mother,
her frail boy,

a tall cat,
must get these things
in. The cat's
head rubs a
child's calf where a
man's ankle

might be. Will one
fall over?
Will they have
meat? No,
bread. The cat's
now on my lap, as

muscle as
he's tall, his tail
thwacks my notebook
(it's not a notebook,
it's a xeroxed
article, it's

all the
paper I have, notebook's
the
word
to continue
this story). End

with the bread
on the water,
the flurry of ducks

from the other bank
flying, breaking
the water

where they land, plow,
slow to a

Miles

Davis' trumpet,
sad when it's hoarse. End
with

the plop,
and you look
at a ripple
from a point
where the bird went
under

for fishes, your
thinking of consequences. Enter
thought about
scavenging birds
crying for freedom
from scavenging.

Matt Pasca

Skinsuit

I was born in aisle 5 of suburbia, raised in air-conditioned
lawnmower gasoline-streaked streets. I sat one day atop

its one hill and cleared haze from the forests
the few uncut by settlers who felled pines for ship

masts, whose slaves heaved street stones, who swapped
brown for red after Lincoln. For my 10th birthday, I swung

for the fences, hit home runs, swallowed all of baseball's
history then fell asleep for years. O woe is the sensitive

white boy artist who will grow to be
six-feet-tall charming and articulate armored

in privilege, spikes pointed in. The world is kind
to a straight white man even when he loses

his way. The birds and waves hold no suspicion, call off
the hounds, the shiny baubles on uniforms, the wind-sored

necks of the powerful. When I lie to myself, I am rewarded.
This rich life I lead, the gift that came when I learned to nod

and say nothing.

Tamer Mostafa

Rite of Passage

They called me sandnigger,
the schoolyard bullies who
droned like mosquitoes do
on a swamp in summer's heat.

There was a beauty to it,
the bruised eye and cracked ribs
that echoed in the oak wood
mirror frame.

My father scraped the mudded blood
off with a washcloth he used for
changing oil. My face chafed,
matching his beaten leather jacket.

He took me outside, lit a cigar
and sent me back to school
with an extra set of keys
cusped between my knuckles.

It was my third week of 7th grade
in September of 2001.

Jacob Russell

5/19/2012 Saturday

A quiet war...

here in Philly no thunder, no bombs
(...not since MOVE in 85) a few shots
in the dark
another mother's child -- remembrance
is not required when only numbers count
ministers of war raid the kitchens of peacemakers
in Chicago, the arithmetic of death
tolls the bells of collective memory
for those who write it
before there was history, there were stories
before there were stories
the memory of stories that cannot be told

Chewy Cool Earl Cornbread

tagging

subway walls to remind us...
no light at the end of the tunnel

Fabio Sassi
Still Life



Maja Trochimczyk

A Mirage

A day after the elections
my garden was full of songbirds,
my roses blossomed and faded,
my dog was scared of the wind
playing the red porcelain bells on the patio.

A day after the elections
my lover was still in his cell
in seclusion of Central Valley.
My car would not start, engine smoking
like the mountains veiled by dark clouds
billowing towards the ocean.

A day after the elections
their houses burned, mine did not.
Again, I could not pay my bills,
I wondered, would the house be mine
for the holidays, what “hope” meant
to all those happy, rich people

who keep their cars, lovers, houses,
who have more than the low rumble
of the hummingbird’s wings mocking
the buzz of helicopters that fight fires
in the mirage of California bliss.
A day after the elections.

Amy Antongiovanni

My Mother Didn't Teach Us the Lord's Prayer

But she did buy a family membership to the health club
where I step to the beat of the Beastie Boys
while the Blue Ribbon Cupcake Lady
cries on the TV. Has she won?

The wizard behind the curtain says Yes,
says come & stand on the red velvet
carpet. He gives her a Thumbs Up,
and the expert tasters' tongues curl
thick, white frosting around their mouths.
I try to remember the Buddhist metta prayer

Why are we watching the Food Channel
as we try to burn calories?
Hollywood's latest film is Gravity
and I empathize with Sandra as I feel
my buttocks succumb.

Once in an English class, my teacher
offered me a freshman doughnut & I refused
the sugared O, but kept the gesture
in my heart for twenty years.

Our Mother of Poetry is so kind
she makes me cry. My own mother's voice
makes me cry when I'm tender or hurt.

The metta prayer sometimes works. Cupcake winner
or not, a pound of butter makes it better,
says the next celebrity chef.
I can feel my pounds hold on tight
like a cowboy kicked off his horse
clings to the edge
of a rocky cliff. Imagine John Wayne.
These are tough pounds.
They don't take no guff!
America's House has stalled
like an old Chevy truck
over the Affordable Care Act.
We want our Krispie Kreeme!
24 minutes seems like an hour.
Next up: a red-haired lady
wearing a tunic spreads mustard on white bread,
then adds cheddar cheese and bacon.
She hath no mercy for the vegans.
Hail Mary, full of grace.
Hail market, full of terror!
Hail country full of fat folks
over-eating to stave off loneliness.

Have mercy, give us this day to love
and appreciate ourselves,
to treat others with kindness and generosity,
and not, when it comes to dying,
discover that the Medicare system is broke. For ours
is the kingdom of plenty, and gratitude
is within our reach.
Chop, chop! says the knives-man. Chop-Chop! Hurry,
says the cross-fit trainer dude,

so muscled his arms can't hang
straight down, but extend outward, corpse like, at odd angle.
Sit down, say my muscles
take a goddamned break.

Monique Avakian

**Rhetorical Question #86: Vice
Versa**

why wouldn't I want to make love with a werewolf?

this is but one symptom of desire
and much less sinister
than automated algorithms running amok
behind the closed doors of Wall Street

<http://www.cnbc.com/id/100685958>

"Algorithms Replacing Wall Street Analysts, Investors," by John
Melloy

http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/12/ff_ai_flashtrading/

"Algorithms Take Control of Wall Street," by Felix Salmon and
Jon Stokes

Amy Narneeloop

The Tuskegee Experiment

We thank you for your sacrifice
We poured it your bad blood
in a dish and said the right words and the moon rose red and
you fell screaming and
your wives fell down seizing and
your babies fell out of their wombs with quiet chests and
black blank eyes and
the world's backbone was broken in the proper way and
somehow someway something
was better for all of it

April Sojourner Truth Walker Viewfinder

Red brick warehouse building with faded
language drafted on outer walls, bronze
plaques on street corners. Green and green

and glass. Orange dye of newspapers adds
light to shaded One Way streets. Broken
brown of buildings under reconstruction

wear holes dug from their sides by the dull
metal hand of a Grapple its yellow arm
creates a safe rift between what crumbles

and who applies the force. White steel
crooks silver strands flare from arch's peak
draw skeletal silhouettes in night sky.

William O'Daly

The Flag Is Burning

“Violence is the cadence of the country.”

Anthony Shaded

You, friend, are the body of the country,
we are the body, burning in the street,
blue thread unraveling, our eyes
opening against the sky.
Can you see the child, running,
the mother shrieking on her knees,
reaching for the soldier aiming
what is smoke, and what, this glory?

Whose village is burning there,
and today whose sword grieves?
Snow kisses the blistered arroyo
in an ashen dance, and a dervish inhabits
the green occupation, the shrapnel-littered ruins
and the hanging gardens
of Providence and Cheyenne.

In Pierre your stars surrender their white,
the stripes their parallel lives, curling
over Haditha and Homer, entwined. What
is the warm rain that penetrates
the prairie, the clothes and walls
and pillows spattered crimson,
the tundra melting in the heat?

You are burning in Harrisburg,
its steeples converging on a phosphorus sky.
At tombs of brothers and uncles, cowards
rush the lie and waive our rights,
send our daughters into battle.
What is the party, that lobotomy,
whose tears of recognition?

In the senate and the woodshed
ties smolder like oil slicks. The smoke,
toxic and grand, testifies to benevolence
and is believed, like press secretaries
of the self, like horses with wry smiles
are trusted by green riders.
The choosing flourishes like ivy.

When you rise in effigy
we resent the victims burning,
the flames fueled with every bitter breath.
White roads are cracking: the Apocalypse
ferries along the Avenue of Martyrs,
pining for an oedipal amendment,
for the illusion that gives and gives.

Whose flag is burning there,
with whose heart was it sewn?
The liberated ashes fill empty pockets
with an afterlife, and where we gather
on a dusty road, under dated palms
and the senseless sun unleashed,
we shall claim God's bidding.

You are burning inside us,
in every artery and on the moon,
as the swallows kyrie, kyrie eleison.
Who trades our distant, ragged names
in the bombed-out rotunda of forgetfulness?
The journalist or he who decides,
the decider, or the speechwriter?

You blaze in autumn,
in medals, in scripture, in no relief,
bereaved tongues licking at the knees
of he who places his faith in flames,
in fetch and ascent... What contrast!
Happiness and the inalienable right
to trade away our ability to speak.

You burn in the child's mind,
the people vanishing from their beds,
our humble seed grows, believes, lives.
Whose lives do we jeopardize when we take
in good faith? What we squander
coils in the blood,
survives in that child's eyes.

You rage, and the raptor is
turning to gold but desire
is what remains in the purple mountains,
without parades or stolen blood or embassies of cloth.
It kisses the dying and those being born,
in its shadow the living congregate,
salute the dead, wave goodbye.

Andres Castro

Our River

Blue's grandpa, a dark Paiute,
was sent to government
boarding schools, that took
him far from this reservation,
that cut his hair, took away
his mother's tongue, his ability
to resist. Now he smolders
in a corner, will not speak
when I visit, sees past me.

Or does he see me enough
to feel I am too white, a curse.
Will you tell me if I ask you
how Blue died? Resistance
takes forms I don't understand.
I was his teacher...more, more;
I need to understand more
than I do: how a quest took him
to the river to find ancestors,
that would take away his anger
and finally give him peace
and now we've all lost him.

How many days did he hang
from that tree near our river?
Did he see visions of ancestors?
Did he search for past or future

in the mirrors of those waters?
Old man, my blood is also red;
more of our young will follow him;
I refuse to believe our elders
will not be there to turn them.
I believe I see one standing
by your side, old man, his eyes
are ancient pools...and very kind.

David Blanding

However is a Term of Freedom

However is a term of freedom
used to distinguish the status quo
from what is hoped to come

One says:

America is a land of riches,
however even in this haven
poverty is norm to some

*

However is a term of freedom
used to clarify a single term
and reconcile competing notions

One says:

Black is the universal man
however, from that single seed
he is dispersed through the world

*

However is a term of freedom
used to broaden the mind
to expose that not heretofore known

One says:

Many inches have been tread nobly
however, in the course of changing time
ells remain in the journey

Charlie Weeks

Obsession's Regression

Can't stand the strand
Of straining thoughts
Slowly dripping
Important remains
Craving to be used
For illusion's satisfaction

Contradicted by constant
Obsessions of ample rejection
Regressing tragically
Towards self-enforced
Enslavement



John Garmon

A Time to Negotiate the Way Forward

People of property struggle in throes of ownership
I am sick but trying hard to come back to myself
People of real estate obey and can't get away
Are we heading in a direction of complete disaster
When I was young I ate cheerios for breakfast so tasty
My guts ache and I know I will have to pay the price
No money for the doctor so I practice being positive
I get up look out my window and think of where to go
For my destiny will be just as soon as I find myself
I wish I had a big new car and I knew how to drive
I walk to the bus stop and wait to see which bus
I take the one that arrives picks me up and I pay
The driver doesn't look he has seen so many like me
Bus drivers are unsung saviors of walkers of the world
I watch trees and houses go by as I sit and wonder
Where I will be when the bus stops and I get off
I am in a place with shops cafes hotels hard wares
No one notices me I am supremely happily anonymous
I am in the midst of people who are also searching
There is a place and a time we will find where we are
The missing persons' office is always closed
I avoid eye contact when people look at me why not
I veer away and aim for another direction eluding them
It is good to appear to have a destination to walk firmly
I would like to get a map to follow if it goes far away
People walking with me seem to know somehow where to go

I follow them and turn away when they look back excuse me
I am not a mugger trying to steal your money just following
Without money I order a sandwich but am denied so hungry
Those times when I sat down on a park bench and rested
I talked to squirrels or fed crumbs to audiences of pigeons
Once I felt my life was on a perfect tangent to another place
Now I'm in another day trying to make sense of it and hoping
Answers are available if I can track down who has them

Bill Kahn

May Day, 1914

No Ghost Welcome Here
We're Gonna Keep It Fresh
A Game Changer
Brothers And Sisters United
Rise Up Solid
Roll Out The Slogans

Timeless Throughout History
Trade Resolve For A Fresh Look
Collateral Damage
No Benefit To The Middle
Have Some Pride
Things Are Not Alright

The Magic Is Out Of Control
Fresh Ideas Are Put To The Side
"It's All Mine" Belief
That Will Get Us Nowhere
Force The Issue
Challenge The Wheel

There's A New Kid In Town
With A Fresh Big Tent Viewpoint
Time For Action
Oceans Trees Fish And Humans
Act Fair Now
Throw Back The Excess

Vicious Lying Useless Demigods
Slap Their Stupid Fresh Faces Silly
Intercourse Calamities
Frequently Explained Away
Renew The Charge
Opportunities Are Waiting

Paradise Will Not Be Big Enough
It's So Evident Fresh Food Is limited
"We Can Share" Belief
A Grand Task Put To The Test
Save Our Souls
Create The Momentum

Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis

Osama

St. Benedict I have a confession to make:

I sacrificed bin Laden for some yogurt today
You know that glummy, aspartame, nuctose clouded kind
They don't have in Quebec or Japan or the Czech Republic
I put the spoon to my mouth
Lips bowing at the steel edges
Genuflecting
As I paused mid-air and took a slurp
Tasting the additives bubbling on my tongue like planes landing
on an air craft carrier
I prayed to all those yogurt makers
Even the CEOs (especially them).
Who bequeathing alms to the Dow Jones
Solemnly sacrifice All the Rest
Sending them off, weeping like babes airborne into a hole in
the skies
To be blown into a million pieces on the other end.

And to make that gluey almost fluorescent stuff (indeed by night I
swear it glows under the lair of the refrigerator light)

Bin Laden, you know, he had to go
Too much at stake.

Needed to keep the yogurt machine hopping and crackling
Like the hydraulic fracturing test tube baby.
Oh, yeah. The new age commences and Osama's gotta go.

David Kerr

Functional Verse

“But what USE is poetry?”
my philistine friend growls.
I answer manically:

Entomology:

It fixes a dragonfly’s wings
hovering above the dawn mists

Linguistics:

It tabulates through honks and song
a traffic jam’s third declension

Astronomy:

It yokes a star’s convulsions
to corn rings and haunted pools

Engineering:

As lovers poke, groan and beg
it calibrates their minutest howls

Economics:

It pegs the betrayals that shrink
the skin of a kwashiorkor
child to the Dow Jones
glitter of a banker’s smile.

My companion grunts in disbelief.

Gray Tolhurst

Imperfect Machine

[illegible]

Diane Raptosh

from *Torchie's Book of Days*

xxxi

All right, I might be spying on you here and there,
but I won't go making a GIF out of it.

I often feel a little bit mismade
and so must zero in on your heat.

There's such a thing as metallized hoodies
meant to intercept such scenes, so feel free if you can

as our pet entomologist names us
the king-size meteorites of our age.

I can live small
enough to starve a fruit fly

yet vaunt a pair of lungs to match the marks I get each time
I take that eco-footprint quiz. Every time the jaw drops

a syllable is born. I'm trying figure the stage

of fruition we're going through,
and it makes my senses tense up

what with data exhaust on top
of language's oil spills an earth upon which

we're likely soon to be

the single lowly faunae around,
fungi questing in us
like the dead. Would you want to
have this rolling seaball wholly to yourself?
Mostly this all goes to show
I've nicked your light. What's more, I see that
earlier today you tried to
book a room at the Phoenix Inn and Suites
in Lake Oswego. I can feel you thinking

back into me : Digest || Digress

The system will have to call you back

xxxiii

The last guy I breeze-dated
wore a golf shirt tattooed
with a predator drone.

Silence grew so quiet
over chicken skewers you could hear
the hiss at the visible

edge of the universe.

I secretly hoped he'd lose all strength
along the left side of his body

That wasn't the half of it.

The wars within heart's mind:
to blame for all the wars outside.

Should I have ordered

the salmon with corn chorizo
ragu? Why bother to

look up at sky and find a gap?

Which force would you want to thrust

off-island first?

Circle one of these two:

a. Calm's mulekick

b. Mayhem's edict

American outbreath

smirches the line

between cop and soldier,
soldier and spy,
spy || citizen.

Therefore, riddle with me this lick: *vanishing*
caloric density.

Stranger yet the thought

that cells from others sometimes
come to dwell within us:

Grandmother cells

contest the place of infants'
in the mother; immortal

jellyfish the while age

forward only

to go back and start their lives
once more.

Before the drone attacks
it was as if everyone was young,
said one Pakistani mom.

I have two words for you,

the man's t-shirt intoned
above the aircraft: *Predator Drone*.

Believe anxiety; I reply

to warnings we shall slouch
toward its relief.

Pakistan didn't even know

what America was before the drones.

I have the ability to almost-hover,

my own inner Area 51

seared earth, chapped lake beds,

zaggy mountain ranges atop which only

glowing dung beetles

clump and roll and gallop.

Jalina Mhyana

ahh-lee-ooo

i.

if the man moved an inch
he'd be dead in the left
turret gunner's sights
safety off and cocked on his M240B
Afghanis are never alone
unless they plan to die;
it's suicide; a radio antenna rising
from his lap
like desire

ii.

from the 2nd Humvee in the convoy
a soldier eyes the man's radio
through cross-hairs
It could be a radio or
a detonation device,
bombs daisy-chained
along the dirt road;
if the soldier saves
this one man
he might be killing
his own troops
and himself

iii.

in the next village as in most
children run in mud slicks
yelling, “ahh-lee-ooo!”
and smiling, climbing
Humvees in the convoy
they’re kicked away
with babies swaddled to their backs;
they could be strapped
with grenades

iv.

children run barefoot
they keep pace
or fall in puddles between tanks;
drivers aren’t allowed to stop
there are bombs along
the road fused to the bodies
of children

v.

in the next village
as in most, as in all
children are barefoot in the mud
shouting, “aah-lee-ooo!”
to soldiers who throw candies
that Americans have sent
from back home
the children are bombs
with sweets
in their mouths

vi.
children run toward the convoy
fingers open wide
like dusty stars
Turret gunners
throw candy to the stars
with infants
swaddled to their backs;
this is how
nightmares start

vii.
the soldiers are on a parade float,
Main Street, Memorial day
waving machine guns
at children and throwing
candies at them.
They are Veteran's Day
war heroes,
cheerleaders and
a big brass band behind them

viii.
the villagers are used to caravans,
machine guns, soldiers.
Russians would roll through
shooting anyone they saw;
target practice

ix.

mothers push daughters
at the mouths of machineguns
take her with you, they gesture.
Girls emerge from the rocks;
even the clouds are granite.
They trip over the horizon
toward America
and yell, "Aah-lee-ooo!"

I love you

so they won't be shot,
so their fathers with antennas
in their laps won't be shot,
so that soldiers will gun
them down with
candies

Francisco X. Alarcón

La guerra es muerte

la guerra
la razón
sin razón

sin sentido
sin clave
sin cordura

la guerra as
una gran mentira
hecha verdad

un socavón
oscuro sin final
a la vista

la guerra es
la bestia atroz
de la avaricia

que justifica
hasta crímenes
contra la
humanidad

la guerra es
es el terror
a gran escala

sin leyes
inhumano
inmoral

la guerra es
un monstruo
devorador

que se alimenta
de la juventud
de las naciones

la guerra es
un río de lágrimas
y desesperación

banderas tendidas
enmascarando
fétreos como
excusas

la guerra es
es lo que el mal
es para el bien

cruel
desalmado
sin esperanza

la guerra as
una noche perenne
sin mediodía

nos ciega
nos aciaga
nos niega

la guerra es
lo que la muerte
es para la vida

siempre hecha
a nombre nuestro
contra todos
nosotros

Francisco X. Alarcón

War is death

war is
reason
gone mad

senseless
clueless
insane

war is
a big lie
posted as truth

a dark hole
with no end
in sight

war is
the atrocious
beast of greed

that justifies
even crimes
against humanity

war is
terror in
grand scale

lawless
immoral
inhumane

war is
a devouring
monster

feeding
on the youth
of nations

war is
a river of tears
and despair

extended flags
making caskets
as excuses

war is
what evil
is to good

ruthless
hearless
hopeless

war is
a perennial night
without midday

it blinds us
it pains us
it denies us

war is
what death
is to life

always waged
in our name
against us all

Howard J. Kogan

Food Pantry

The Federated Church runs our town food pantry
from a small room in the back of the social hall.
Local people donate food, an occasional check,
the pantry never lacks for clients.

Volunteers staff it for four hours on Saturdays,
mostly church ladies who welcome people
bringing donations or needing help.
There's no public transportation in town

and it's not easy to get there without a car,
but in the incongruous world of American
rural poverty some people have old cars
or bicycles towing a toy wagon or

neighbors or relatives who drive them.
Others come walking from miles away.
The church ladies coffee-klatch between
helping clients, young mothers with children

in arm and in tow, Methuselahs or more often
their wives arrive on canes and walkers,
each face the color of shame or defeat.
It's said the ones who need it most never come,

it's said there are deliveries left at doors
of worn-out shacks back in the hills.
It's said pride keeps some away but
that might be a dig at those who come.

I hear stories, but I don't know the truth.
The church ladies do their best to greet each
client with a smile, there's talk of the weather,
it's a small town, people know each other.

I think everyone wishes they were invisible,
I do. I've seen the pantry room, there are cans
of crushed pineapple, green beans, boxes of macaroni,
but this week there are no diapers, no soap, no coffee.

Isabelle Shepherd

The Day the Strikers Stole the Keys to the Train to Madrid

My mother tells the Spanish woman
waiting for the bus in the café
that we are in the same boat.

A girl eats a piece of cake;
the woman's eyes widen.
We board, and I rush to explain
unemployment levels, the economy.
I had warned her of their Great Depression.

The woman tells us she will move to New York in
October.

My mother sees fields of sunflowers
for the first time, though the sun is too bright
for her eyes, striking off of the yellow ground.
She closes the curtain.

The babies and bellies we left in Santander
now seem swollen and selfish.

No bread lines, just empty apartment buildings
on the Gran Via in Madrid.

My mother blows her nose, stuffs the dirtied napkin
in her bag.
“There’s just something in the air here.”

Here, the mountains are younger
than in West Virginia, still peaked
in narrow ridges, rocks.

My mother opens the curtain.
“The sun is behind us now.”

James C. Henderson

The Important Questions

The morning is too early for serious thought.
We must wait for evening when
the conscious mind goes off to brush his teeth for bed
worried about plaque build-up
muttering to himself about stock trades
the cost of health insurance, asking himself:
Are interest rates going up?
What are the ten most common mistakes promotion seekers
make, and do I make them?
That we can sit down on the veranda with the unconscious
and a cool drink and ask the important questions like:
Why do we always feel so bad?
Why aren't we spending more time on vacation?
And why does the buzz of semi tires on the highway
sound like the cries of children going to bed hungry?
Even though the enhanced red of the sunset
we so admire is caused by pollution
we should ask ourselves why we burn so many fossil fuels.
Instead of spending money on junk that we don't want or
need
and will break if we use it
we should be eating better and saving money
not asking ourselves again and again
the question the conscious mind is gargling now:
Which politician best represents God?
But why do they all keep taking us to war?
Can't we get off this freeway of despair

with its grinding wheels of doom?
Can't we pull over somewhere where we cannot only
ask the questions but find the answers?
Or, if not, then let's raise a ruckus, cause a riot
break up the place, pull out all the wires, so we can't go on.
But now we must be quiet because
the conscious mind has gone to bed and he has
a big business meeting tomorrow at which
he must impress someone he doesn't know, perpetuate
an economic system that is not only unsustainable
but in which he may or may not believe.
He doesn't know which.
He doesn't know much of anything except what he's told.
We watch him sleep like a mother and father
knowing he knows nothing, yet has to go out
into the world day after day.
It's as though he survives Monday - Friday by chance.
We're thinking we should pull him out of that school
he's been going to and keep him home safe with us.
If only we didn't depend on the bread he puts on the table.
If only we didn't like to eat the bacon he brings home.
If only we didn't live in the world he dreams.

Jeffrey Kingman

8/3/13

Russia Slavic peoples
large country the largest. A great power

propaganda of nontraditional relations to minors
has been banned (50,000 ruble fine). Prevents gays
from inviting hatred

the 2014 Olympics will be in Sochi, a subtropical
resort by the Black Sea. There will be Christians
and some Muslims, but no mosque. Maria Sharapova
is from there, a celebrity (tennis)

George Takei (Sulu from TV's *Star Trek*)
says to strip Russia

Boris Yeltsin, born in Butka, a rebel, resigned from
the Politburo, but could not leave the plane due to
ill health (vodka)

“water of life” Moskovskaya (rye) Stolichnaya (wheat)
It's a barbaric and fascist law — don't drink it

Edward Snowden: “The law is winning”
(escapes Moscow airport, whereabouts unknown)

*

DC The page's battery
was drained but
after the lightning
his phone was fully
charged

a car's metal shell
can protect a senator and his
page from a lightning
strike if they have
the windows closed

John Beaton

Length 50 ft.;
Skin Colour Silver

A mile down and fifty feet in length
the scale-less, silver body does not flex;
it filters plankton, gliding through shipwrecks
in ocean trenches, not by lateral strength,
but by a rippling wave that runs from head
to tail along a cardinal-red fin,
then starts to rise. It journeys up to win
one glimpse of light then beaches itself, dead.

Sea-serpents of the past, Leviathanic,
were likely giant oarfish, surface-skimming,
their heads like Chinese dragons', sighted swimming
by sailors on the grog and prone to panic.
When watchmen search for threats on lookout duty
they manufacture myths and monster beauty.

Laura Post

family reunion

They tell us the sea will swell
and cover the ground with a layer of water
that can never be pushed back.

What about the love of a stranger?

The kind of light that can reach around corners,
The ache at the end of a song.
The wriggling thing that otherwise would lie still
soaking in my quiet skin.

To be speechless.

I, half an earthworm,
cry for my brother.

Richard Downing

Flag It

At noon Jane's husband officially became a flag,
a properly folded, corners-correctly-tucked flag.

Before this transmogrification Jane and he
had shared a home, a bed, one child and two cats,
three major arguments and one near divorce,
a naked romp through his parents house while his parents
were in Virginia with their grandson, a restaurant with cloth
napkins
where food was thrown for fun, pet names you cannot know,
an embrace before he left
for overseas, and letters with certain scents and reservations.

On the day he became a flag
he also became a word: *hero*.

Jane could not be sure
who had defined the word
her husband had fallen into
or if he'd had a choice
in his defining moment
beyond being
folded and tucked into his new state.

So Jane just sat, holding the husband she had just been
handed
by a starched and stainless figure
and wondering what in the world
she was supposed to do
with him now.

Martin Fugitive

Salt

Flamed sky,
black skin run red,
the billy waiting to soothe
flesh wounds and body,
but no steam can mount
canyons of heart battled and bruised,
no steam can fill a dark open sack,
no steam can treat dignity
knocked on it's back.

Brown earth,
white skin run blue,
the flute raised to the lips,
and you encased in fine leather
distant, untouched;
you cannot relate to black skin,
you cannot relate to sweat,
you cannot relate to the pull of
the rope,
you cannot relate to tar pavement heat,
you cannot relate,
you cannot relate.

You're warmed by the radiator affixed
to the wall,
he's warmed by the mist and rains

starting to fall;
leper shadow
from islands of cardboard,
ripped and dislodged, the
pulsating street's womb,
but he doesn't see
'cept the flap of his shoes,
the whites of his eyes
have wilted and bled.

Gray dusk envelops and
drinks the bones dry
warming the carrion,
tomb light for the corpse,
the swamp city sucks
rays of hope thin
and disgorges vomit
from out of black skin,
and while you're bathed
between calm sheets of white,
diesel and tarmac
calls him to sleep.

The coffee morning light
dances across the pavement
its skin rubbed raw
by scuffed boot and heel,
and suited indifference
oozes from towers
plated and crumbed
owned by the hour,
while cigarette fingers

yellowed and cut,
drag through dumpsters
producing tin, bone and
yesterday's meat.

Turned down at doors
black dust bowl face,
sinew and bone
beneath a black hood;
street kids kick cans
embellished by knife,
singing the day,
cracked up by night;
black skin can't eat
black skin can't taste,
'cept the salt from his brow
which runs down his face.

Flamed sky,
black skin run red,
the billy waiting to soothe
flesh wounds and body,
but no steam can mount
canyons of heart battled and bruised,
no steam can fill a dark open sack,
no steam can treat dignity
knocked on it's back.

Laura Lee Washburn

Hibiscus Syriacus

pink stripes radiating from
the ovary, framing stigma,
looked at, seen close, not as
another one they bloom
a month but as the particular,
like the man running
who might have been you
twenty-odd years ago, air
and runner's endorphins
lifting him off pavement,
or the delicate paired truffles
boxed and tied with a bow
given without obligation,
or the cat waiting each night
staring at the stove which must
have a mouse underneath,
the dog with his cocked head
trying to understand, any
of these might keep you
distracted or even happy
on days when you looked
until you had to turn away.
At what? The ones for whom
you only imagine
the particulars: Syrians,
for instance, shrouded
after the chemical attacks;

the twelve year old girl
found days after she left for the park,
her identity confirmed
by DNA evidence; the veteran
beaten down on the sidewalk;
the hospiced paraplegic
whose wife lay her head
on his shoulder and listened
to the pauses between breath
after he'd arranged
for the breathing apparatus
to go. Go back to
the blue moon you walked
out to see between the leafed-
out branches. Go back
as you can to *hibiscus Syriacus*,
to the friend under the moon,
though beauty recalls the shroud.

Laura Lee Washburn

In the Longitudes of the Skin

I took my Kansas uterus on a walk.
We headed west because morning
and the sun. My Kansas uterus
wanted a steak, but I said, Hell
no, you're not going to Texas. Do

you know what shit they do to
uteruses in Texas. They make
laws on 'em, got probes going
up on them. Steak, she said,
Blood, she said. Bloody hell,

I said. Body hell, she said. She
shook on her leash, and we both
laughed at that, my Kansas
uterus. She parries words
like a newspaper columnist. Kid

you not. No more than three
blocks in, this guy rushes
out his side door. He's got his
uterus on a choke chain. Scared
the heck out of us. We picked

up the pace, but I could hear her
screaming at him about chores.
He wasn't hanging her pants
on the right hangers, needed
softener, wouldn't use the lavender

soap she'd bought. Like most
uteruses, she could handle herself,
we guessed. Watch out, dude,
said my uterus. No kidding, I said.
By now my wrist was tired.

She pulled on the leash when
we walked in the mornings.
I didn't have to say anything.
She just took the lead in her teeth
and clipped the end to my collar

instead of hers. We've got
communion like that, simpatico,
she says. I wish I could say the same
for my Kansas bladder which sasses
like a thirteen year old at the mall.

Louie Clay
Home this Was



Contributors

Francisco X. Alarcón, award winning Chicano poet and educator, was born in Los Angeles, grew up in Guadalajara, Mexico, and now lives in Davis, where he teaches at the University of California. He is the author of thirteen volumes of poetry, including, *Ce • Uno • One: Poems for the New Sun* (Swan Scythe Press 2010), *From the Other Side of Night: New and Selected Poems* (University of Arizona Press 2002). He has two books poems coming out this year, *Borderless Butterflies / Mariposas sin fronteras* will be published by Fall 2014 by Poetic Matrix Press, and *Canto hondo / Deep Song* will be published by the University of Arizona Press at the end of 2014.

Alarcón has received numerous literary awards and prizes for his works, like the American Book Award, the Pen Oakland Josephine Miles Award, the Chicano Literary Prize, the Fred Cody Lifetime Achievement Award, the Jane Adams Honor Book Award, and several Pura Belpré Honor Awards by the American Library Association. He is the creator of the Facebook page, POETS RESPONDING TO SB 1070.

Amy Antongiovanni teaches literature and Creative Writing at Butte Community College. She is a member of the Squaw Valley Community of Writers and the Napa Valley Community of Writers. She teaches yoga and writing workshops in Northern California. Her poems have been published in *Floodplane*, *r.e. home*, *Watershed*, *A Room of One's Own*, *Squaw Valley Review*, and *Wingbeats II*. She completed her M.F.A. in poetry at Saint Mary's College of CA. Currently, she focuses on raising her three boys,

spending time in nature with her family, writing and practicing yoga whenever she can.

Monique Avakian is a performing poet, arts educator, published author, video poem curator, musician and alter-ego of the Neo-Surrealist. Click on the links for examples of her work: [Jazz Review](#), [Jazz Blog](#), [Video Zine](#), [Video Poem](#), [Poetry Performance](#), [Book](#). Get in touch with Monique: monava9@gmail.com and [@monava9](#).

John Beaton was raised in the Highlands of Scotland and lives in Qualicum Beach on Vancouver Island. An actuary by profession, he is retired from a career in the pensions industry. For almost 4 years, John was a moderator of The Deep End online workshop at *Eratosphere*. His poetry has been widely published in literary and non-literary newspapers, magazines, journals, and anthologies, and has won poetry competitions. He is a regular spoken word performer at concerts for general audiences, Celtic events, and literary gatherings.

Originally from the South Bronx in New York City, **David Blanding** currently lives in Baltimore, MD. He teaches political science at a nearby university, and conducts research on race, politics, and law in the United States.

Andres Castro is a PEN member, listed in The Directory of Poets and Writers, and the founding editor of The Teacher's Voice, a small poetry project for those interested in education. Castro lives in Queens with his wife and has two grown children both teachers.

Maxine Chernoff chairs the Creative Writing Department at San Francisco State University. She edits *New American Writing* and is the author of 14 books of poetry, most recently *Here*. A 2013 NEA Fellow in Poetry, she also won the 2009 PEN USA Translation Prize.

Louie Clay is an emeritus professor at Rutgers and lives in East Orange, NJ. Editors have published 2,341 of his essays, poems and photographs.

Richard Downing is the winner of the Nuclear Age Peace Foundation's Barbara Mandigo Peace Poetry Award, Writecorner Press's Editor's Award, *New Delta Review*'s Matt Clark Prize, and *New Woman's* Grand Prize for Fiction. *Four Steps Off the Path* is a YellowJacket Press chapbook contest winner. Journal/anthology publications include *OccuPoetry*; *Dire Elegies*, *Composite Arts Magazine*, and *Prime Number Magazine*. Co-founded the Florida Peace Action Network and Save Our Naturecoast; PhD in English.

Martin Fugitive - "Originally from New Zealand, I spent time growing up in London where I lived in a park and in a 'squat' with a Jamaican street gang. I was the only 'white' kid around, and I was pushed down coal shutes and through metal gates so I could open the door for the gang. We stole only from companies (typically supermarkets), and we did so to survive. I saw how the gang members who had black skin were treated by the police. It was disgusting. It made a lasting impression on me. I have written poetry for years, but this is the first time I have submitted a poem. My poetry is real, and a lot is based on the street. 'Salt' is based on what I experienced in London and what I have seen around Tompkins Park in the East Village. People and their

relationships with each other are, for me, the most interesting dynamic on the planet. My poetry is an attempt to capture a very small part of this construct.”

John Garmon is a writing assistant at the College of Southern Nevada, Las Vegas. His poems have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Ploughshares*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Midwest Quarterly Review*, and other journals.

Monique Gagnon German is Copy Editor for *Ragazine* (www.ragazine.cc). Her poetry has appeared in the anthology, *e, the Emily Dickinson Award Anthology Best Poems of 2001*, and journals such as *Ellipsis*, *California Quarterly*, *Kalliope*, *High Grade*, *Borderlands: Texas Poetry Review*, *Calyx*, *The Ledge*, and *Rosebud*. In 2012-2013 her poetry appeared in *Assisi*, *Ragazine*, *The Sierra Nevada Review*, *Xenith*, *Atticus Review*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Canary*, *Tampa Review*, and in 0-Dark-Thirty's *The Report*. Her poetry appears in the January 2014 issue of *Glass: A Journal of Poetry*.

James C. Henderson lives with his lovely wife, Athena, in New Brighton, Minnesota. They are both members of Occupy Saint Paul because everything must change for the better. Poetry is a vital way to help make those positive changes.

Bill Kahn comes from a family of writers and activists. He wrote and performed his poetry as a teenager and young adult. In the early 1980's he was a member of "Artist Against Apartheid." After a 30 year hiatus and faced with an empty nest, he is writing again. His poetry was published in *The Greenwich Village Literary Review*, spring 2014. After completing his NYU Graduate School

degree, he went on to have a successful career in educational administration. Bill lives and works in the New York City area. He limits his use of gadgets and still reads three newspapers a day.

David Kerr, born in UK, has lived most of his life in Africa (working at Universities in Malawi, Zambia, and, at present, Botswana). He is a practitioner of theatre and media for transformation and human rights, about which he has written widely. His collection of verse, *Tangled Tongues*, was published by Flambard (Hexham) in 2003, and a novel, *Passages* (under the pseudonym Derrick Zgambo) by Brown Turtle Press in 2008.

Jeffrey Kingman lives by the Napa River in Vallejo, California. He is the winner of the 2012 Revolution House Flash Fiction Contest, a semifinalist in the 2013 Frost Place Chapbook Fellowship, and a finalist in the 2012 Midwest Writing Center contest. His novel, *Moto Girl*, was a semifinalist in the 2009 Dana Awards. His poetry has appeared in *PANK*, *lo-ball*, *Squaw Valley Review*, *Off Channel* and others. Jeff has a Master's degree in Music Composition and can be heard banging his drums in a large shed in his backyard.

Howard J Kogan is a psychotherapist and poet. His poems have appeared in *Still Crazy*, *OccuPoetry*, *Poetry Ark*, *Naugatuck River Review*, *Jewish Currents Anthology* (2014) *Writer's Haven*, *Farming Magazine*, *Literary Gazette*, *Pathways*, *Up the River*, *Point Mass Anthology*, *Misfit Magazine*. His book of poems, *Indian Summer*, published in 2011 is available at Amazon.

Nathalie Kuroiwa-Lewis is an Associate Professor of English and the Writing Center Director at Saint Martin's University, a

private, Benedictine liberal arts university in the Pacific Northwest. She is now revising a series of poems and other creative works to be completed 2015-2016.

Jalina Mhyana, poet and author of the memoir *The Architecture of Longing*, currently studies Renaissance Art at Oxford University and holds an MFA in Creative Writing from Bennington College. Jalina is the author of two chapbooks of poetry, the latest shortlisted by Pudding House Press. She has recently been awarded a Dr. Sue Holman History of Art Travel Grant from Oxford University. Her poetry and creative nonfiction has been published in many journals; most recently *Identity Theory* and *Eclectica*. Please visit her website and blog at <http://www.jalina.co.uk>.

Tamer Mostafa is a Stockton, California native influenced by the works of many, but affected by the teachings of Alan Williamson, Joe Wenderoth, and Joshua McKinney. He can be reached at tamer_s_mostafa@hotmail.com

Amy Narneeloop is an MFA student in the Creative Writing Program at San Francisco State University. Look for her first chapbook out from Ugly Duckling Presse in early 2015.

William O'Daly, a poet, translator, and editor, has published eight volumes of the late-career and posthumous poetry of Chilean Nobel laureate Pablo Neruda, and a chapbook of poems, with Copper Canyon Press. A finalist for the 2006 Quill Award in Poetry and a National Endowment for the Arts Fellow, his poems, translations, essays, interviews, and reviews have appeared in a wide range of domestic and international journals. O'Daly served

as a board member of the national Poets Against War and has long advocated, in action and print, for human rights. With co-author Han-ping Chin, he recently completed a historical novel, *This Earthly Life*, based in China's Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. *Narrative* magazine chose *This Earthly Life* as a Finalist in their 2009 Fall Story Contest.

Matt Pasca's poetry has appeared in over twenty journals, including *Paterson Literary Review*, *Georgetown Review*, *Oberon*, and *Pedestal Magazine*, and ten print anthologies. His first book, *A Thousand Doors*, was nominated for a Pushcart and his poem "Receiving Line" won the 2012 Great Neck Poetry Prize. After earning degrees from Cornell and Stony Brook Universities, Pasca signed on at Bay Shore High School, where he has been excavating literature and igniting creativity with students since 1997. A 2003 New York State Teacher of Excellence, Pasca also advises the award-winning literary-art magazine *The Writers' Block*. Matt maintains a steady performance itinerary and speaks/runs workshops at colleges, conferences and continuing Ed. programs. www.mattpasca.com

Laura Post is from New Jersey. She received her MFA from Sarah Lawrence College in spring of 2014. She is afraid of mannequins and email. Her favorite food is burritos, and honey makes her throat scratchy. When she was little she planned on becoming a harp player, a pirate, or a pet psychologist. This year, Laura saw the Pacific Ocean for the first time. It was pretty cool!

Diane Raptosh's fourth book of poems, *American Amnesiac* (Etruscan Press), was longlisted for the 2013 National Book Award for poetry. The 2013 Boise Poet Laureate and the current Idaho Writer-in-Residence (2013-2016), she teaches creative writing at

The College of Idaho, where she directs the criminal justice/prison studies program. She lives in Boise with her family. Her website is here: www.dianeraptosh.com .

Jacob Russell - "I'm a visual artist, poet and activist living in Philadelphia. My poetry and fiction has been published in print and on-line venues. I was part of Occupy Philadelphia from its inception and in the summer of 2012, I accompanied Occupy Guitarmy on their 99 mile walk from Philly to New York in honor of Woody Guthrie's 100th birthday."

Fabio Sassi makes photos and acrylics using logos, tiny objects and what is considered to have no worth by the mainstream. Fabio lives and works in Bologna, Italy. His work can be viewed at www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com

Isabelle Shepherd, a proud Appalachian from the eastern panhandle of West Virginia, is currently studying poetry at UNCW's MFA program. Her poems have been published in venues such as *Connotation Press* and *Plain Spoke*. She enjoys thrift shopping, self-referential comedy shows, and romping in the yard with her hound dog, Lavender.

Gray Tolhurst is an artist/writer currently based in San Francisco, CA. He is a graduate student in creative writing at San Francisco State University where he works on the staff of *Fourteen Hills Literary Review*. He also runs (with Rickey Lee Bauman) Harmonium Press which publishes a biannual magazine (www.harmoniumpress.com). His poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Transfer Magazine*, *The Writing Disorder*, *Mission at Tenth* and *The Wayfarer*.

Maja Trochimczyk, Ph.D., is a Californian poet, music historian, photographer, translator, and non-profit director: born in Poland, and educated in Poland and Canada (Ph.D. in music from McGill University). She published four books on music and four volumes of poetry; over 300 other poems and articles appeared in Poland, the U.S., the U.K., Canada, and in translation in Germany, China, Finland, France, Hungary, and Serbia. She served as Poet-Laureate of Sunland-Tujunga, President of Polish-American organizations, and is the Senior Director of Planning and Research for Phoenix Houses of California.

April Sojourner Truth Walker is currently working as a Project Manager for AT&T in Oklahoma City. A 2013 MFA graduate from Hollins University, she is currently working on a manuscript that interweaves the narrative of three slaves lynched in Dallas, Texas as the result of an 1860 fire, and how this piece of African American history has been preserved and disseminated in present day Dallas. Her work can be found in *The New Sound: A Journal of Interdisciplinary Art and Literature*, *Toe Good Poetry*, *Kalyani Magazine*, and the *Cave Canem Anthology XVI*.

Laura Lee Washburn is the Director of Creative Writing at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, and the author of *This Good Warm Place: 10th Anniversary Expanded Edition* (March Street) and *Watching the Contortionists* (Palanquin Chapbook Prize). Her poetry has appeared in such journals as *Cavalier Literary Couture*, *Carolina Quarterly*, *Ninth Letter*, *The Sun*, *Red Rock Review*, and *Valparaiso Review*. Born in Virginia Beach, Virginia, she has also lived and worked in Arizona and in Missouri. She is married to the writer Roland Sadowsky. She is an active member

of the Southeast Kansas Chapter of the National Organization for Women.

Charlie Weeks is a writer and consummate observer riding subways and walking the streets of New York City; believing we live in extraordinary times most are too busy staring at their smart phones to acknowledge. In the mean time, he's always working out how to express himself in ways our normal use of language can fail to express effectively. He has been a featured poet on The Morning Bell Journal blog, as well having been published in the Grey Sparrow Journal and the Doctor T.J. Eckleburg Review. You can keep up with his daily writings via <http://charliewykes.tumblr.com/>