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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

muscled 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 10<sup>th</sup> 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-foot-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 muddied 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.cnn.com/id/100685958>

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

[http://www.wired.com/magazine/2010/12/ff\\_ai\\_flashtrading/](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.



## 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 outbreak

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](mailto: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](http://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](mailto:tamer_s_mostafa@hotmail.com)

**Amy Narneelooop** 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](http://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

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**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 100<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.fabiosassi.foliohd.com)

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**Laura Lee Washburn** is the Director of Creative Writing at Pittsburg State University in Kansas, and the author of *This Good Warm Place: 10<sup>th</sup> 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

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**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/>