

WITHOUT

Also by Maxine Chernoff

Poetry

The Turning (2008)

Among the Names (2005)

Evolution of the Bridge: Selected Prose Poems (2005)

World: Poems 1991–2001 (2001)

Leap Year Day: New & Selected Poems (1990; 2nd ed. 1999)

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Editor

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(co-translated with Paul Hoover, 2008)

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Plain Grief (1991)

Short Stories

Some of Her Friends That Year: New & Selected Stories (2002)

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Bop (1986)

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Maxine Chernoff

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Without

[without resolution]

consider our planet
woeful cauldron
far-fetched utopia
oiled by power
bargain away
all but mirrors
even if sunlight
stands in gleaming
nothing but jasmine's
March-night scent
which slightly reeks
with all the deaths
are we counting
titanic excess
the volume of dust
an eyelash holds

[without coherence]

under the moon's ledger
the page unattended
hardly a snail
on a white leaf
or a bone
to call meadow
light she thinks
no longer itself
or the weather
or nodding
this instance
of meaning
inexact skeptical
hesitates
in the wings

[without erasure]

worlds collide
solid as candles
stiff as wood
what to forget
when knowing
leeches out like
oil buried
in sandy ground
in multiples
of green
ignorance is brilliant
colored tattooed
over-committed
to its opinions
laments unmute
their billowing song
their edges
taut with recognition

[without a listener]

a voice speaks
to rheumy stars
deadpan witness
no call and response
or supplicant's hope
all this hurts
the ocean suggests
as if waves
could privilege
ear's dumb gestures
or a ghost
of a sentence learn
to read its
own dried ink

[without memory]

peach crate summers
ruby-throated nights
the blanching stars
in winter's house
the past as license
limit or ligature
a dozing soprano
beginning her aria
based on tax code
and municipal bonds
let meadows lie fallow
and windows darken
with snowstorm's static
maybe you'll freeze
trying to forget
how things were
before they weren't

[without principle]

under the moon
everything happens
no one left
to agree
on the possible
while nature offers
its sharp-edged
peaks its holy
sites blessed
by artful killers
its torch-lit
regattas of
listing ships
angled in
no direction

[without shadow]

death stutters
in the voice
of a judge
ostrich-headed
predilections
blatant and grave
the body asks
for frost
the mind frontal
watching the avalanche
on bone's white page
opaque wide space
filled with zeroes
and feathers
limit abetting
abstraction
gone with only
one breath

[without a body]

mechanical arms
brass libido
tattooed intention
clear as the image
of Jesus she sees
on the underpass wall
including song
requires a voice
makes bone offer up
sinew and rib
incompletion challenged
without Mrs. Lear
he wanders a ghost
the seasons enacting
their neutrality