

ALICIA SUSKIN OSTRIKER

## Ghazal: America

My grandfather's pipe tobacco fragrance, moss-green cardigan, his Yiddish lullaby  
when I woke crying: three of my earliest memories in America

Arriving on time for the first big war, remaining for the second, sad grandpa  
who walked across Europe to get to America

When the babies starved, when the village burned, when you were flogged  
log out, ship out, there was a dream, the green breast of America

One thing that makes me happy about my country  
is that Allen Ginsberg could fearlessly write the comic poem "America"

My grandfather said no President including Roosevelt would save the Jews in Europe  
I adore superhighways but money is the route of all evil in America

Curse the mines curse the sweatshops curse the factory curse the boss  
May devils in hell torment the makers of cluster bombs in Corporate America

When I photograph your flooding rivers and meadows and public sculpture Rockies,  
when I walk in your filthy cities I love you so much I bless you so much America

People people look there: Liberty the Shekhina herself  
Welcoming you like a queen, like a mother, to America

Take the fluteplayer from the mesa, take the raven from his tree  
Now that the buffalo is gone from America

White man the blacks are snarling the yellows swarming the umber terrorists  
Are tunneling through and breathing your air of fear in America

## Banquet

I am making a banquet of death  
I am chewing up the six million plus

gypsies homosexuals the feeble  
or the sixty million and more

as Toni Morrison says in the dedication  
to *Beloved* all the wounds in my century

my body takes them in  
Vilna Dresden Nanjing Nagasaki

Palestine Memphis  
The former Yugoslavia

And the Americas  
still bleeding

and I am sucking that blood  
buddy we all are

in the land of the free  
in the country of money

all of us voters all of us holy innocents  
all of us readers and writers of righteous blogs

all of us vampires

## What the Butterfly is Thinking

Not a narcissist like me, it is not thinking about extending its brief life  
Or the serenade of iridescent blue patches on its fluttering wings

Or the war. Or any of the other wars. Or the moon afloat on winter water.  
I am putting money on this. I am confident.

The motions of many creatures appear random  
But are not? My husband says cows and bees—

Cows and bees are swimming in his mouth  
Cows browsing around in two sluttish dimensions, bees in three or four

Among the savage perfumes, scavenging for the tastiest weeds strewn here and there  
He says. The biggest nourishment bang for a bite, or sweet for a single suck

Is why they never ever  
Form straight lines.

Really? In the lavender bush fifty seething bees, a dressy graduating class, lifting  
Hovering descending & flitting to another flower entirely. Orderly? Please come

Back, every iridescent blue-winged thing. Girls just want to have fun,  
We want to be pistil packing mamas one more time again.