

Cultural Daily

Independent Voices, New Perspectives

Maxine Chernoff: Two Diaries

Maxine Chernoff · Friday, October 24th, 2025

*Both of these prose poems by Maxine Chernoff are from her upcoming book, **Diary** (Quale Press, 2026).*

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Diary

She lies about her beagle and its pedigree. No one really cares, least of all the beagle. A friend's former husband claims he played basketball in Europe: he is tall but has never been to Europe. A man tells his wife he is going to work but sits in his Audi shooting up all day. The cat lies about being fed—isn't she getting plump? —the owners ask each other as she continues to swindle double servings. It's odd how intense and convincing liars can be, even a cat—when there is so much at stake. A writer lies about why he didn't get a tenured job— claiming discrimination but having no book for 14 years. But these are small transgressions next to government lies about weapons of mass destruction, police brutality against black citizens, zealots' cant about an embryo being a child and a woman an incubator. Russia lies about Ukraine, claiming they are merely policing the Nazis. If there were a god looking down on this mess, he might resign or kill himself. Maybe he already has. We would understand.

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Diary

It's hard to believe one can write a poem, paint a canvas, cultivate a garden with all the ugliness out there. Bombs torture the skies over Ukraine. Mothers and babies perish of hunger. You'd think this boiling brew of chaos and capitulation could yield no more than millions of replicants of "Guernica" or "The Scream." You might imagine there is a reversal coming, that I will say poems will flourish, paintings glitter, roses bloom anew —but no. It is the scene at the watering hole when the herd of wildebeest meet their doom. We Nowhere to hide, no miniature oases of peace except in our minds several moments a day: the denial, the necessary denial.

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