

Brian Sonia-Wallace

State of the Nation

a collage of poems written outside of the polls and during election night, 2017, for strangers.

X-ray up on the wall
bare bones of the nation
broken from the fall.
All
of us
inoperable survivors
living with disease.

Choosing to fight,
fight or flight,
Amelia Earhart, women on wing,
Declarations of Independence and the capacity for choice
free will or free coffee with an "I Voted" sticker –
Pilgrimage to the graves of the suffragettes,
LAY HANDS ON ME.
Shed the invisibility of neglect
from a system built on our backs,
STAND Atlas,
stand fast, fist raised,
SCORTCH the earth,
Phoenix, ashes rise!

*(At least do it for the photo op, why don't you,
he says cynically,
pretending
his beating heart isn't leaking
from between his fingertips.)*

Our resolution clarion call
becomes a cleaner cancer.
Blackhearted
hearts backlit,
blown up –
Coming home and here there is no home
but I
make a bed of the earth
every time I rest my head on the stones.
The unburied ancestors
are dancing,
yours, mine,
the war dance of always
on our heels, things we hoped dead

EVEN KOWNING
nothing ever really dies,
skeletons on the X ray –

change the slide!

You a survivor or a skinhead?
Funeral or victory lap?
Hard to tell these days
if we're malignant or benign.

Pale kings on pale horses –
The master's tools in the master's house –

High fliers rotting away on the inside,
freedom riders assassinated
like little girls in South Carolina.

BEAT BACK THE DEVIL! –

The X ray shatters.

Catch a shard of rose glass for your neighbor.
Are we building a mosaic?

Can we build a mosaic
from all the broken pieces?

Plant it high in our cathedral, look up,
no Rome,
no ruin,
not
yet.