

For A 2017 Better World



POEMS & DRAWINGS ON
PEACE & JUSTICE BY
Greater Cincinnati Artists

**“For a Better World”
2017**

Poems and Drawings
on
Peace and Justice

by
Greater Cincinnati Artists

Editor:
Saad Ghosn

“It is not our diversity which divides us; it is not our ethnicity, or religion or culture that divides us. Since we have achieved our freedom, there can only be one division amongst us: between those who cherish democracy and those who do not.”

Nelson Mandela

“The opposite of poverty is not wealth. In too many places, the opposite of poverty is justice.”

Bryan Stevenson

“If you tremble with indignation at every injustice then you are a comrade of mine.”

Ernesto Che Guevara

Foreword

“But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams/his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream/
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied/so he opens his throat to sing/...for the caged bird/
sings of freedom,”

writes Maya Angelou in her poem “Caged Bird” reminding us all that, in times of oppression
and of lack of liberty, we each have a voice that we need to use to sing, and to sing loud.

In this 14th edition of “For a Better World” sixty two poets and thirty six visual artists, all like
Angelou’s caged bird, use their voice and their artistic power to sing loud, to combat darkness,
violence and evil, and to spread instead love, peace and justice that they would like to see
prevail. They speak for a world after their heart and values, a world of hope, of fraternity and
unity. Of all ages and backgrounds, their art and talent state their concerns and affirm their
beliefs and values. By doing so, they also strengthen each other’s diverse voices and give life
to their hopes and dreams.

In a world still prey to injustice and wars, these artists weep for the dead, revolt for the
oppressed, denounce unjust societal wrongs, advocate for the poor, the homeless, and the
neglected, reject violence and its consequences, fight for the battered environment. They also
challenge the prevailing societal values of materialism, consumerism and domination and
speak for a change in values towards love, compassion and forgiveness. They paint a beautiful
world, a world of diversity and equality, where peace is based on truth, justice, and kindness.
With their lucid song, these artists also confront the evil in this world and promise to stand up
for the fight. Their song is an appeal to each of us to join in and make a change; it seeks to
eliminate our isolation and loneliness and invites us to hold hands and share in the same well
of strength and energy for a better world.

To every participating poet and visual artist, and to everyone who directly or indirectly joined
in the making of this book and in the spread of its message, my heartfelt thanks and gratitude.
My appreciation also goes to Rita Coleman, John Cruze, Jerry Judge and Susan Scardina,
who kindly reviewed all the submitted poems and provided their editorial advice.

For a better world, always, a world of love, peace and justice.

Saad Ghosn
Book editor and organizer

May 2017

“For a Better World” 2017

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POEMS:

ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

Ellen Austin-Li is a poet and freelance writer who lives in Cincinnati, Ohio. A long-time devotee of the power of words, Ellen is an active member of Women Writing for (a) Change. Ellen has had poetry published in *L.A. Writers Tribe Review*, *the Maine Review*, *Mothers Always Write* and “*For a Better World.*”

Contact: eva4ab@gmail.com

SAMANTHA BROCKFIELD

Samantha Brockfield is an award-winning writer and activist from Cincinnati, Ohio. She has written creatively and professionally in a variety of contexts, including freelance journalism, grant proposals, corporate ghostwriting, blogging and poetry. She holds a Bachelor’s of Urban Planning from University of Cincinnati DAAP, and is completing her MBA at Miami University.

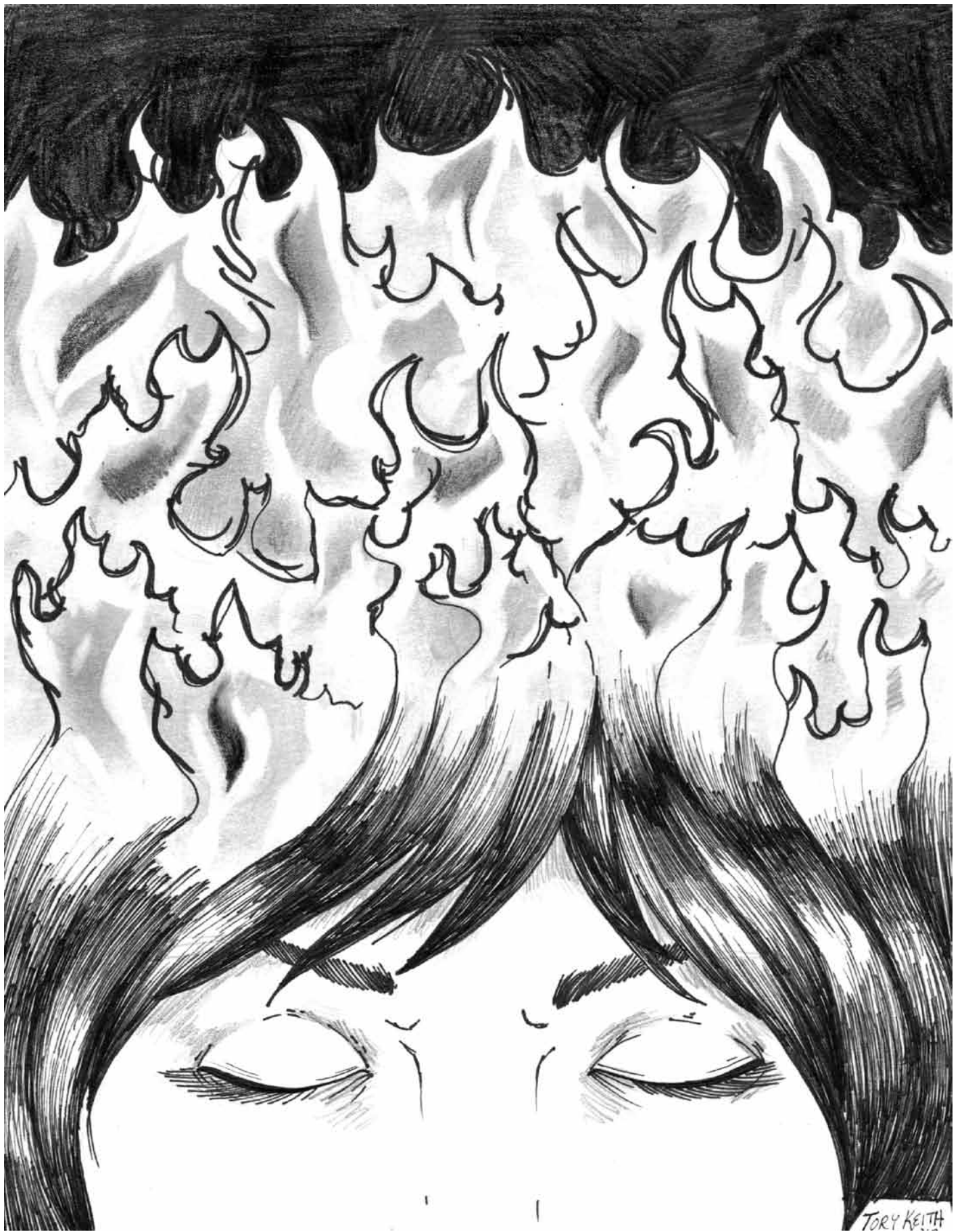
Contact: samantha.brockfield@gmail.com

DRAWING:

TORY KEITH

Tory Keith is a printmaker and illustrator currently based in Cincinnati, OH. Originally from rural upstate NY, she earned her BFA from Alfred University in 2011. Tory works primarily out of Tiger Lily Press in Cincinnati’s Price Hill neighborhood, and also at the Northside studio of local nonprofit Visionaries and Voices.

Contact: tory.keith@gmail.com; www.cargocollective.com/torykeith



TORY KEITH

Trumping Creativity

(by *Ellen Austin-Li*)

Every morning I wake with a vow
to return to creating with words,
to studying the life-giving stories of
the human condition. But

Every morning I begin again
to slip down into the rabbit hole
of news and chatter, the
stratosphere newly aflame

with the latest incendiary
tweet from the carrion of depravity,
igniting a fresh firestorm
just as another has begun

slowly smoldering. I am drawn
before the embers, watching
for the inevitable fanning of
the fire, waiting for the flare-up

from gasoline sprayed from
the left, or the right - it doesn't matter
anymore, as my gut churns
with bitter bile either way.

Another morning when
creativity is trumped by dissecting
multiple news sources, hijacked by
gnawing debates about our country.

Another morning when
I rise brightly like the sun,
only to remember November's tragedy -
my lids close like shades, sighing.

In My Country (a Ghazal)

(by *Ellen Austin-Li*)

Rivers sweep silty through checkerboard brown and green farms,
steel skyscrapers rise, reclaimed from the seas' arms, in my country.

Bury our sacred hearts in spirit with the Standing Rock Sioux,
Pipeline to isolation, we still tunnel through, in my country.

Blue collar men casting for the past as their work drifts offshore,
Women slip as they climb up the equal of more, in my country.

Some whites drumming doom against the skin color of others
The rest chant the Golden Rule's torn asunder, in my country.

The center of America is smoldering hot-coal red,
While map edges burn hot-flame blue instead, in my country.

Protecting the unborn wallpapers-over disparaging lies,
Separation of church and state is the life which will die, in my country.

The strength of one woman's iron reviled by so many
Trump's one man's cruelty, more than any, in my country.

Cities alight with incendiary youth torching flammable fear,
hands folding in prayer, hearts shedding silent tears, in my country.

We must come together, hold hands, insist those progressing forward
No, we must fight against those who chose to ignore words, in my country.

Be careful, Ellen - unleashed demons of hate line up at the gate,
While love struggles for purchase in vitriol's wake, in my country.

1 Step Forward, 2 Steps Back

(by **Samantha Brockfield**)

One step forward
Two steps back
The pendulum - uncaring as the ocean -
Takes its full swing.
Why does it insist upon swinging so mercilessly?
How does it appear so steady, unchanging?
Yet circuitously knock down pins?

The broad sweep of History -
An invisible hand,
The winds of change,
Moon's pull on the waters,
We are ebbing and flowing,
Carving out canyons of time,
- Imperceptibly
Moving us forward,
As we seem to fall back.

Sleeping Giant

(by **Samantha Brockfield**)

I've just been awakened
From a deep sleep
I was dreaming of a peaceful future,
Prosperity shared by all
And restoration of Mother Earth.

I arise from this beautiful dream into a world I'd forgotten -
A world full of anger, "Us vs. them"
"Alternative facts"
Orwellian double think
Distortion of the English language

I find myself transported -
Backwards in time nearly 13 years -
To my first president as a new adult
Embarking upon what would become
a dark chapter in our nation's history.

I am marching with thousands of others -
All races, ages and classes -
At Cincinnati's Union Terminal.
My homemade sign dripped with red paint and used Valvoline:
"NO BLOOD FOR OIL"

It was during this time,
I would confront my Evangelical upbringing, head-on.
Specifically, the paradox that is abstinence-only education
When I would be faced the most difficult decision a woman makes,
And choose college over teenage Motherhood.

It was during this time,
I traveled to El Salvador.
A delegation of students learning
Of armed conflict, trade policy and immigration
As CAFTA flew in the face of democracy.

As I prepare to march with millions of my brothers and sisters,
Post-inauguration of Donald Trump,
I can't shake the surreal feeling
Like the past 8 years of President Obama
Were but a dream.

Now we emerge out of dormancy,
A fire in the belly reignited,
Together as one.
The giant is wide awake.

POEMS:

TERRI BELFORD

Terri Belford is a working artist who teaches artists, crafts people and aspiring entrepreneurs how to turn their passions into profits and make a difference in the world. Terri divides her time between the central coast of California and Cincinnati. When in Cincinnati, she writes on Wednesday nights at Women Writing for a Change.

Contact: terri@inspiredlivelihood.com; www.inspiredlivelihood.com

A. BRITTANY HUMMONS

A. Brittany Hummons, a senior at McAuley High School, plans on receiving her doctorate at the University of Cincinnati in Forensic Psychology. She is 18 years old and enjoys all things involved in the criminal justice field and the youth having the opportunities for their voices to be heard.

Contact: hummonsab@live.mcauleyhs.net

DRAWING:

ALEXA HAMILTON

Alexa Hamilton, an artist from Cincinnati, Ohio, is currently attending The DAAP school of Art at the University of Cincinnati. Her work consists of Painting, Printmaking and Installation Art that focuses on themes relating to identity, black culture and pop culture.

Contact: lexorluvisuals@gmail.com



AM

Alexa Hamilton

America Unravelled

(by *Terri Belford*)

The names Syed Rizwan Farook
and Tashfeen Malik
flash across the screen.
My heart plunges into my stomach

again.

Senseless loss, this week's massacre.
Did you hear me say that?
"This Week's Massacre."
No, please God. Adonai, Allah.
If only they'd been white men
we could debate mental illness vs. gun control.

We don't need more reason
for misinformed Americans
to fear all Muslims
or one more round of ammunition
to fuel the blanket hatred.

My heart pangs for Shamsi and Najji
and for Saeedah, the quiet one
called "sand nigger" at school

by white children whose
ignorant parents denigrate all "others".

This week's massacre,
one more justification to round up
all who worship the prophet Mohammed
as Hitler did my people in eastern Europe,
tattoo numbers on their biceps
like branding only the bad cattle.

This most recent heinous event
someone's mother, son, sister
gone in a flash, forgotten by all but those closest
while the rest of us see it as one more vindication
one more reason to hate, to segregate
to turn away those who need refuge.

Let my grandparents, your great grandparents in
then close the gate.

Will the tapestry that is our country unravel,
the pot un-melt, separating
those who are un-white, un-like?

Who Am I

(by *Adrian (Brittany) Hummons*)

I am an individual who refuses to become another educated, innocent, young black victim to these
lonely dark streets, another victim for the "man" to beat.

I wonder when my family won't have to scrape up (barely) enough money to feed ourselves for one
long cold night while the cops are out there cruising in their brand new whips. Why do we have to
fight for what we and y'all know ain't right? Please.

I hear the media constantly re-playing another story about the black man's history, but y'all don't
even know his story. So quit repeatin' the same old facts that y'all know gone get the black man to
react, initiating physical contact.

I hear the bangs, the screams, and the shots fired when all I want to do is sleep peacefully to a
soft, melancholy melody while my sister rolls around in her sleep next to me, probably dreamin'
about the same thing that I am hearin' and I know she fearin'. Should I wake her? Please.

I see myself being one of them folks that makes a change, but first I must rearrange the strange exchange between my people and a stranger.

I want to see my people succeed in being freed from a white man's greed, who would rather mislead a jury, not seeing his misdeed that's constantly on repeat. Please.

I am an individual who refuses to become another educated, innocent, young black victim to these lonely dark streets, another victim for the "man" to beat.

I pretend like, "yeah, I'm cool and yeah, I'm fine," only to go behind a closed door and do nothin' but think about the sadness displayed on all the TV screens, later viewed in my dreams.

I feel I have to prove my place on this earth to protect myself from being dragged constantly back and forth and forth then back through this dirt but y'all claimin' I don't have to, right? Please.

I touch my face with my shakin' hands only to find the dampness from tears I failed to feel rolling down my cheeks.

I worry my little brother and sister will not be given fair chances, will be looked at with suspicious glances from a cop with a badge. Like this world is stuck in an hourglass but the time keeps crashin' back to the days where my kind was tased.

I cry when I see my kind being gassed and lashed like some animals up in Baltimore, MD, (Freddie Gray RIP), Ferguson, MO, (Mike Brown lying on the ground), Los Angeles, Cali, (Rodney King, he had a dream), even in my city that's Cincy, (Sam Dubose was a daddy). Why the animosity, hostility, acrimony, enmity? Yeah, I can use big words, too, because.....

I am an individual who refuses to become another educated, innocent, young black victim to these lonely dark streets, another victim for the "man" to beat.

I understand we gotta obey and respect, but my kind ain't even being obeyed or respected; y'all gotta give to get. No that's not a threat, so don't get upset when y'all see us protest all on TV sets or the internet.

I say that "#blacklivesmatter" but y'all coming back with that "#alllivesmatter". Like yeah, that's true, but right now this injustice ain't towards you. It never was, and it looks like it'll never be, so I repeat to the beat of my footsteps as I walk these streets that #BLACKLIVESMATTER.

I dream the dreams of the greatest: Martin Luther King Jr, Malcolm X, Rosa Parks, Sojourner Truth, Harriet Tubman, W.E.B DuBois, and even Abraham Lincoln when he proclaimed his Emancipation Proclamation to unite the nation. That's my inspiration.

I try to be hopeful and say that it'll get better, but the way this world's moving, I don't see it ever getting better, only getting worse. So free my kind from this sick, obscene curse. Help me free my mind before my eyes go blind from the hatred that's been created. Please.

POEMS:

TIFFANY BENNETT

Tiffany Bennett is an artist and writer. She is a Northern Kentucky native who has moved throughout the Midwest and resettled in Cincinnati... for now. Her favorite place to be is in the woods or water.

Contact: tfnrob@hotmail.com

LAUREL CHAMBERS

Laurel Chambers, born in Cleveland, OH, is a retired English teacher. She has taught English and journalism at various institutions in Cincinnati including McAuley High School, University of Cincinnati, and Xavier University. She also worked on a newspaper in Minnesota as a reporter and feature writer. Laurel believes that writing, reading, and listening to poetry can create a peaceful place both in our lives and in our world.

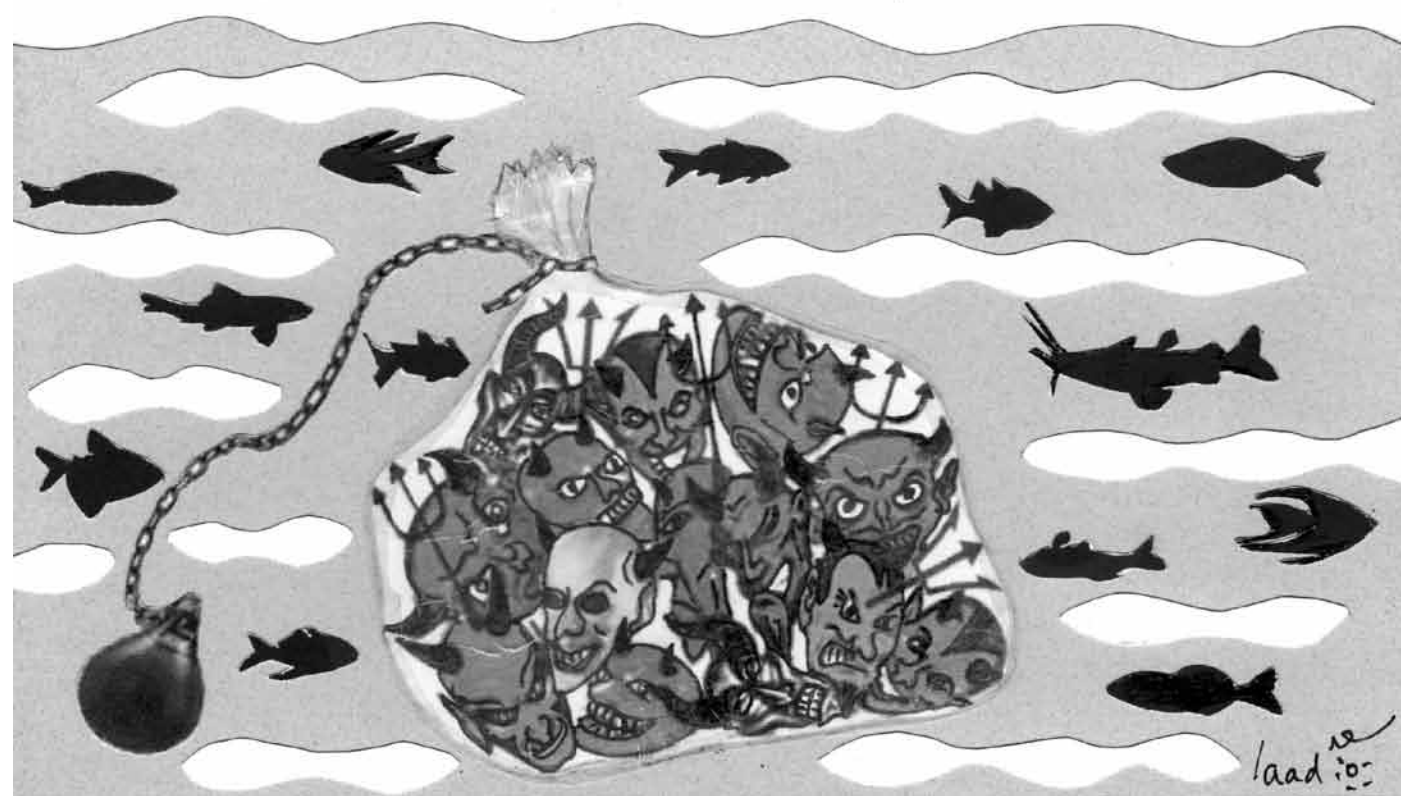
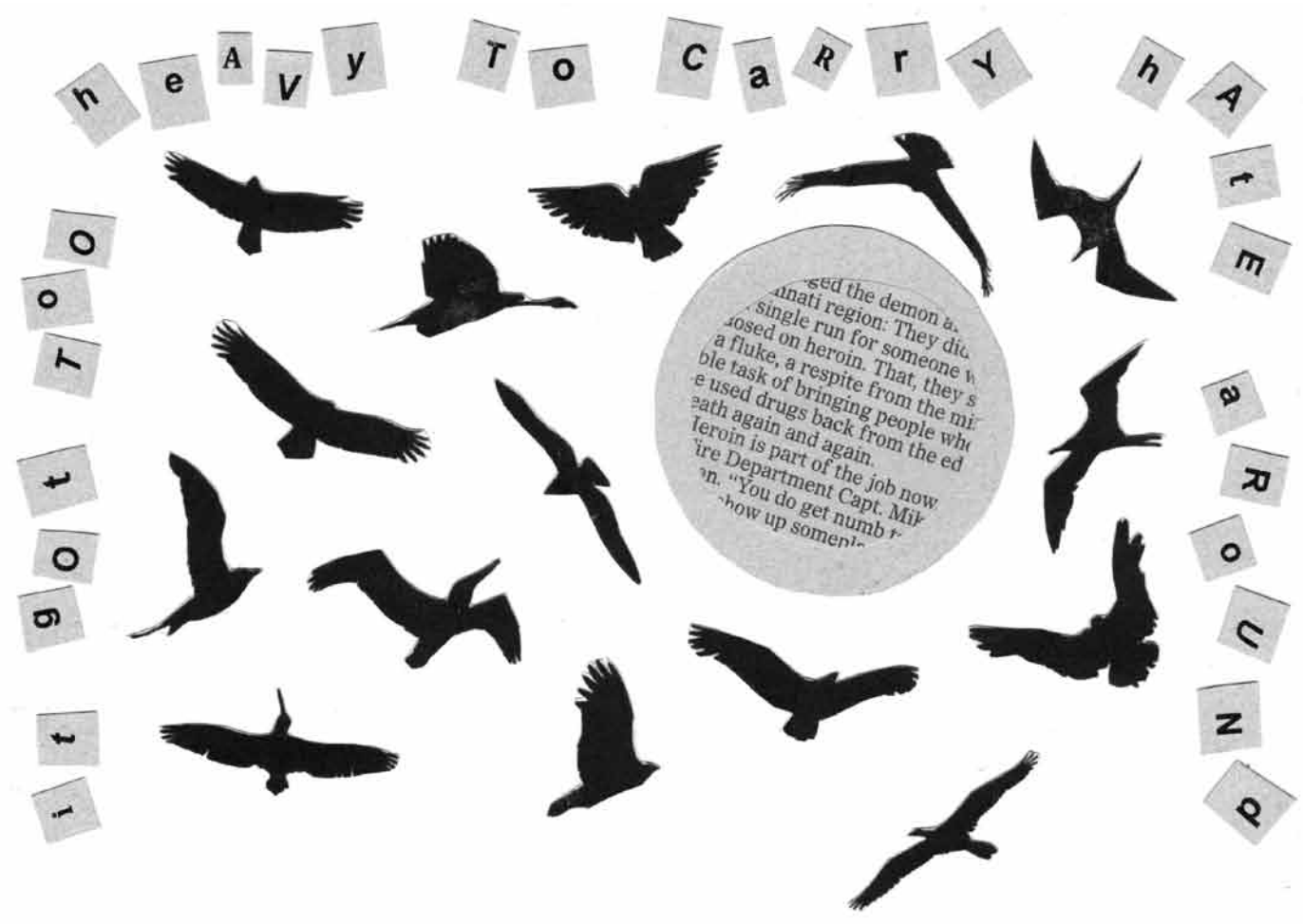
Contact: ljmchambers@hotmail.com

DRAWING:

SAAD GHOSN

Saad Ghosn, a native of Lebanon, has been living in Cincinnati since 1985. A recently retired medical professional and educator, he resorts to visual and spoken art to express himself and his socio-political views. Saad believes that activism is at the heart of art expression. He is the founder of 'SOS ART', an organization that promotes the use of arts as vehicles for peace and justice; and the editor/publisher of the yearly 'For a Better World', now in its 14th year. Saad's art medium lately has been primarily woodcuts.

Contact: saad.ghosn@uc.edu



For Anyone

(by *Tiffany Bennett*)

You give me the gift of your hand
So that we both can fly

Let's unwrap each other forever
Till our cores magnetize
Like they've always wanted to
And we are one, Again

To Carry Hate Around

(by *Laurel Chambers*)

I.
Doesn't it get lonely to carry hate around?
You have to force those smiles to cover up your lies.
You swaddle your angry words in cotton,
so they do not make a frightening sound.
You pray at night for your enemy
to be shot down on the dark, cold ground.
Hate paints the world a deadly, ugly color.
It stains your pink and yellow flowers
a foul and nasty shade of brown.
You can never rest in the light of someone's eyes.
You are always on guard, ready for the fight.
Oh, doesn't it get lonely to carry hate around?

Doesn't it get heavy to carry hate around?
You must throw out many things to haul hate into town.
You cannot skip down the garden path
or keep the rhythm at a Latin dance
when your dark soul is weighted down.
Birds cannot fly up into the aqua sky
when hard stones to their wings are tied.
How heavy was your back pack where the bombs were
found?
It must have weighed a thousand million pounds!
Those pockets you stuffed with clips and magazines
were like a tank, you dragged to the dancing scene.
Oh, doesn't it get heavy to carry hate around?

II.
I held hatred in my heart for one.
I heaved it on my bed each night.
I lugged it with me on the road each day.

My legs ached and my back swayed,
but I kept it close, like a fiery flame.
It was so hot, it scared the stars away.

Then one night I walked down to the lake,
with all that hate wrapped 'round my legs.
I choked, I gasped, I almost drowned.
It got too heavy to carry hate around.

Come Watch Manuel Dance: In Memory of the Pulse Nightclub Massacre

(by Laurel Chambers)

Come watch Manuel dance.
Uno dos, uno dos
uno, dos, tres.
His feet, like angels, fly around
hardly ever touching ground.
His soul floats free, his heart unbound.
His fingers popping to the sound.

Come watch Manuel dance.
Uno dos, uno dos.
Uno, dos, tres.
His hips are like the ocean wide
with one big wave rising high.
The other side slides down to dive.
Those hips are where I want to ride.

Come watch Manuel dance.
Uno dos, uno dos.
Uno, dos, tres.
His dark, shiny hair is piled so high.
His smile so bright like a Jamaican sky.
Sweet sweat drips above his lips.
a glistening mist I long to kiss.

Come watch Manuel dance.
Uno dos, uno dos.
Uno, dos, tres.

His arms move in circles like a spinning wheel
with a ponding, pulsing, magic feel.
Tonight, Manuel will shake his heat around
one last time .
Then all the dancers will fall down
murdered in the night.

POEMS:

MATT BIRKENHAUER

Matt Birkenhauer teaches English at Northern Kentucky University, with an emphasis on Composition and Rhetoric, in addition to teaching dual credit classes and developmental reading and writing. He lives in Ludlow, KY, with his wife and two sons, Matthew and Benjamin. In his free time, Matt likes to read, write poetry and articles about pedagogy, and spend time with his family. He also enjoys spoofing politics and religion (both endless sources of satire), at Spoof.com.

Contact: birkenhauerm@nku.edu

DRAWING:

GILLEAN DUBLOW

Gillean Dublow is an artist located in Cincinnati completing her undergraduate studies majoring in Fine Arts at the University of Cincinnati's College of Design, Architecture, Art and Planning. Blending her intense admiration for Japanese ukiyo-e prints with her proclivity for horror, the macabre, and screen-printing, Gillean creates outlandish scenes featuring bizarre details and grotesque, usually mutilated characters in lurid color.

Contact: dublowgl@gmail.com; www.gilleandublow.squarespace.com



Gillian L. Dublow

The Sound of Smartphones

(After Simon and Garfunkel)

Hello Smartphone, my old friend
I've come to talk with you again
Because I'm sitting here almost sleeping
Until I hear my iPhone loudly beeping
And the train of thought that was forming in my brain
No longer remains
Within the screen of silence

In restless sleep I hear its drone
My ever-present new Smartphone
'Neath the halo of my bedside lamp
I turned my covers from the cold and damp
When my eyes were stabbed by the sight of an Instagram
Just sent by Pam
As I tap the keys of silence

On subway cars I saw
Ten thousand people, maybe more
People tapping without speaking
People texting without thinking
People writing texts that voices never share
And no one dared
Disturb the null of silence.

"Fools" said I
"You do not know, Smartphones like a cancer grow
Put your phones down now and try to converse
Face each other now before this gets worse
But my words like silent emojis fell
And echoed
From the cells of silence

And the people bowed and prayed
To the Silicon God they made
And the phone rang out its warning
In the text that it was forming

And the phone said
"The wrds of the callers
R txted on the bathroom stalls
In pointless scrawls"
Deleted from the screen of silence

POEMS:

STEPHANIE MAW BOOHER

Stephanie Maw Booher began writing poetry in 1985 following the sudden death of her father. She was fortunate to have poems published at a relatively early age. Trained in Political Science, Philosophy and The Law, she now works in e-Discovery and Ligation Support.

Contact: stephmaw2000@gmail.com

GARY WALTON

Gary Walton has published seven books of poetry. His latest is *Waiting For Insanity Clause* (Finishing Line Press, 2016). His novel about Newport, Kentucky in its heyday as a gambling Mecca: *Prince of Sin City* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2009. He has been nominated for the Pushcart prize twice and in 2010, he was voted Third Place: "Best Local Author" Best of Cincinnati 2010 issue in *City Beat* magazine.

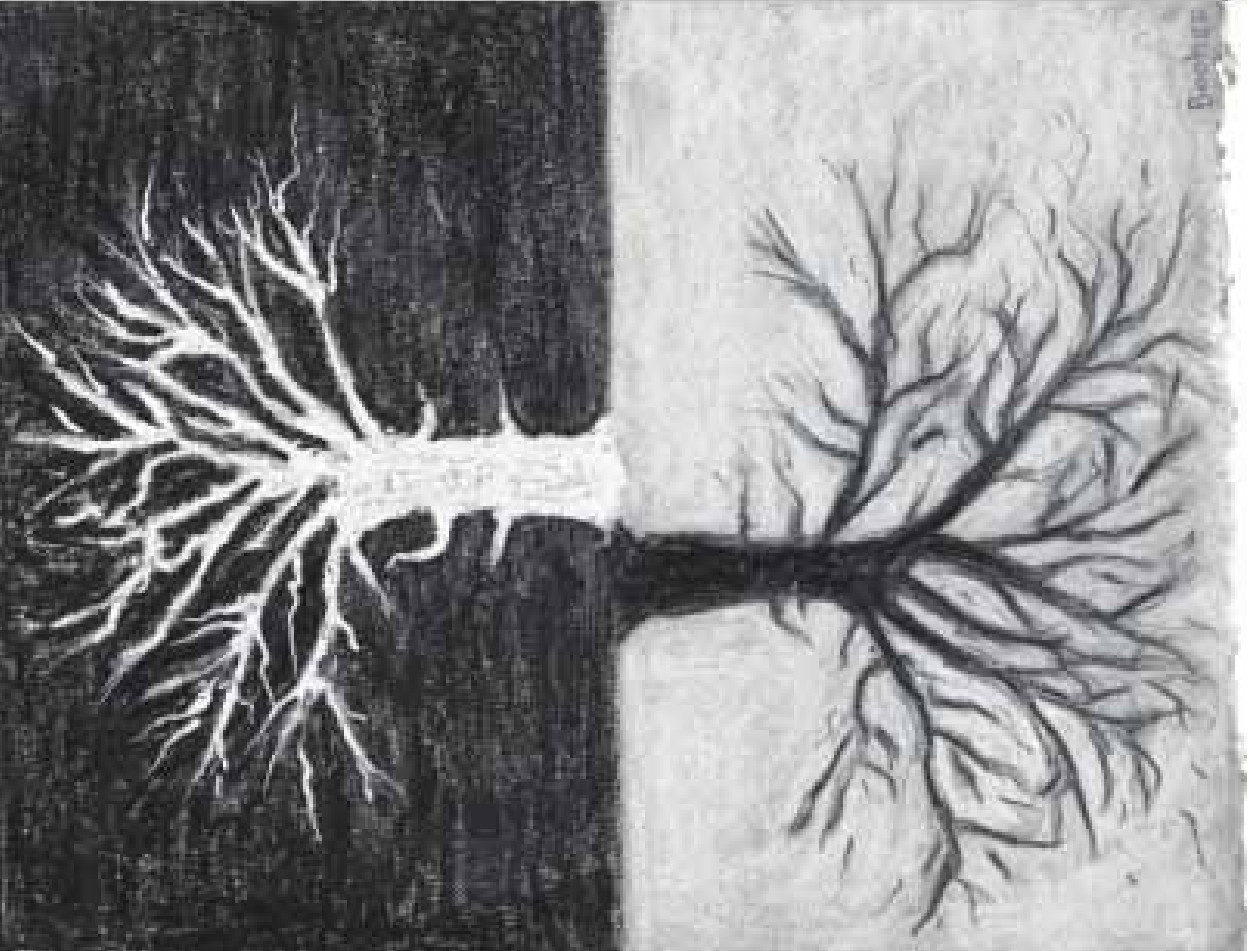
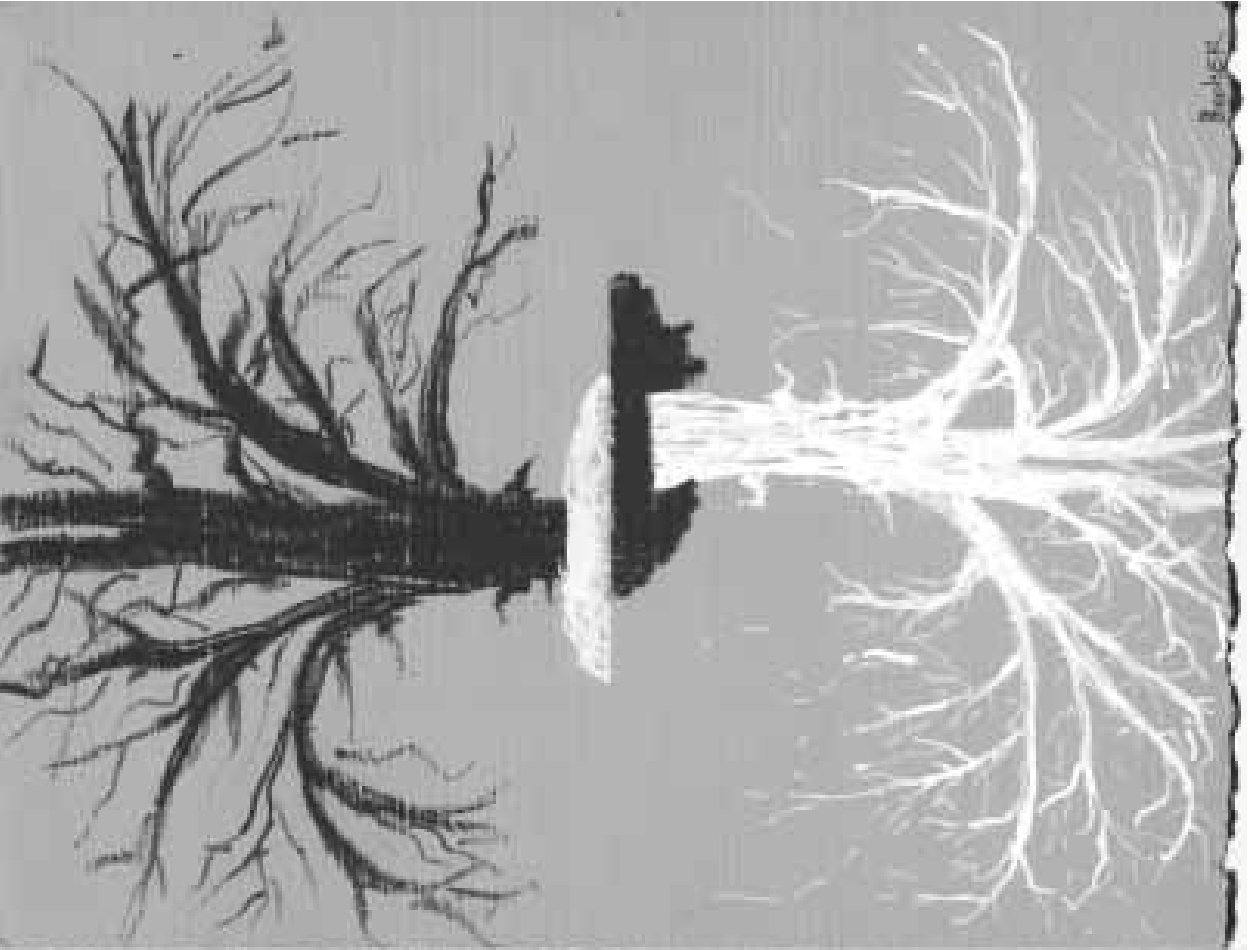
Contact: waltong@nku.edu; www.nku.edu/~waltong/

DRAWING:

W. KEVIN BOOHER

To W. Kevin Booher, a well established local artist, history's horrible density sticks to his soul like the residue on the sides of a mixing bowl never washed. He ponders over the number of those killed in various wars, violent regimes, and in America today, and questions what he did about it. Both of his sons graduated from the US Naval Academy. His oldest flew the F-18 in the Iraq War; his youngest, deployed in Iraq, commanded 196 Marines first into Hellman Providence, Afghanistan. Thankfully, both survived.

Contact: williamkevin.booyer@gmail.com



america

(by *Stephanie Maw Booher*)

a picture
is worth
a thousand words
but is it worth
a thousand faces
a thousand gasps
of final breath

one man's vision
is the everyman's folly
the heroic everyman
bought and paid for
by the American government
subsidized, actually
a dirty word, you say?
beaten into believing
the only way out the only way
to make a name is
by being an American soldier
"you got the right idea, boy"
"we need more young men like you, son"

black, mexican, puerto rican
vietnamese, hmong, chinese
american indian, somalian
and a hand full of impoverished
white boys
will carry out
one frightened, greed-inspired
white man's
vision
for a return of the American Empire

and all
that lie
in it's wake

we are no longer
the world citizen
we once
stretched our limbs
to reach

we're doin' it
"the old fashioned way"
"Texas-style now, baby"
unleashing perhaps
an unimaginable
mire of suffering

our bebe guns
may not beat
this new world's arrows
poised at our hearts, souls, minds

cowboys and indians
forever vanquished
from our American memory
once we pull this trigger, jigger
welcome world, to a new Vietnam
a new form of the unspeakable Atom Bomb

the war America cannot win
the freedoms America cannot provide
this picture of the new world
a stone black day, this day our dignity died

*(for all those who will be hurt by the American
Invasion of Iraq – February, 2003)*

The Apotheosis of America's Id (or Let's Make America Grate Again)

(by *Gary Walton*)

"When I consider the weakness, the folly, the pride, the vanity, the selfishness, the artifice, the low craft and mean cunning, the want of principle, the avarice, the unbounded ambition, the unfair cruelty of the majority of those (in all nations) who are allowed an aristocratical influence, and, on the other hand the stupidity with which the more numerous multitude not only become their dupes, but even love to be taken by their tricks, I feel a stronger disposition to weep at their destiny, than to laugh at their folly."

—John Adams, 1813

Ah, this is the America® I remember:

As a child, viewing that old gray and white Zenith®,
Fire hoses shooting full force into Black faces,

Police dogs straining at leashes, aching

To go for the throat at the slightest provocation—
Watching, wide-eyed, as Ruby lurched out of the

Dallas crowd and filled Oswald full of lead, just

Like the gangsters or the cowboys in the B movies,
But this was live, just two days after Walter Cronkite

Tearfully announced Kennedy's own extermination;

In a blink of an eye, or so it seemed, on the tv screen
Dr. King and Bobby were both snuffed out, lying in

Dull viscous pools too real to not be believed—

Then, the wild images of the beatings in Chicago and
The mangled bodies from Vietnam swirled into our kitchen

Like clouds of lethal gas, as we tried to force down our family

Dinner, too transfixed to wait to watch till after dessert—
Soon Nixon sweated his way into our sight with

The slush funds, CREEP, and the nefarious midnight

Plumbers, much less the secret wars in Laos and Cambodia—
What ever happened to those 18 minutes of audio tape, anyway?

Did I mention Kent State? Four dead in "Oh-high-oh" (oh, my)—

Skip to the first season of the Reagan show,
"Morning in America," the "Gipper" drinking beer with the

Union boys while his staff destroyed the Air Traffic Controllers,

"Trickle Down" that siphoned up, up, up and then Ollie North and
Iran/Contra and wasn't it "Dubbya's" aide who first said to

Ron Suskind that while "you reporters" are busy

Studying facts, "We create our own reality...."
So, welcome to the postmodern, the simulacrum, the signifier

Without an existential signified—now as the millions march

In the streets, placards high, defiant in 16:9 aspect ratio, full 3-D
Color, the new orange tinted Coo-coo tweets "alt-facts" and

The truth is bought and sold like so much virtual bird seed. Yet,

I can't help feeling that I've seen this show before and
I'm reminded of the man who said that the airplane can claim

That there is no such thing as gravity, but sooner or later
The ground and it are bound to meet and, sadly, the
Result will end up more painful for one than the other.

The Orange Headed “Twit” (formerly known as the Yellow Bellied Breast Beater)

(by *Gary Walton*)

There is a great foolish fowl
That has moved into our neighborhood
And nested in one of the oldest houses

In town, the white one, near the monuments;
This bird is a “twit,” with a huge head and
Curiously tiny “hands” and, when it opens

Its mouth to sing, it sounds more like a
Jackass than an eagle, filling the air with
A hot, fetid expostulation. Early in the morning

The twit likes to tweet, tweet, tweet—an
Alarming sound that disturbs our tranquility
Instantly jangling all of our nerves—and

Our women have complained that its
Pale blue eyes insist on following them
Salaciously, more so than even the

Infamous Ogling Grackle, worse still,
When they pass by, it likes to
Reach out with its stubby appendages

And insinuate itself in, well, the
Most inappropriate places—alas,
Its scat is spewing all over town,

Stinking to high heaven and
Ruining everything it touches,
All we hold dear, until we cannot sleep

At night and we lie awake weeping,
Wondering what we can do to make it
Finally go away and leave us in peace.

POEMS:

KRISTINA BRODBECK

Kristina Nichole Brodbeck's poetry has been published with *The Odville Press*; she has a poem forthcoming in *The Pennsylvania Literary Journal*. Her undergraduate degree in English is from The U. of Mount St. Joseph, and her Master's degree from Northern Kentucky U. She teaches at both universities English Composition and Literature as an adjunct instructor. Kristina's yet unpublished collection *Play*, was written in response to her mother's deterioration with Early-Onset Alzheimer's.

contact: Kristina.Brodbeck@gmail.com

RHONDA PETTIT

Rhonda Pettit teaches creative writing and literature at the U. of Cincinnati Blue Ash College, where she is editor of the Blue Ash Review. Her second collection of poems, *Riding the Wave Train*, is forthcoming from Dos Madres Press.

Contact: rhonda.pettit@uc.edu

DRAWING:

MICHELLE E. McCRACKEN

Michelle E. McCracken, from Irvine California, lives in Cincinnati Ohio. Michelle is an inspiring painting/drawing professor.

Contact: colourmymccracken@gmail.com



Michelle E. McCracken

Bad Mother

(by *Kristina Brodbeck*)

Someone named Gail is on the news.
She carried baby Molly through the hospital.
Security asked her if she needed help.
My baby's dead, she told him. And Molly was dead.
The coroner stopped counting the cigarette burns, the bruises too.
That night I dreamt I found Molly under the creek rocks. I nursed her.
When I woke, sixteen articles had appeared. I read them all.
Gail was home with three of her eight children, the other five in foster care, number nine on the way.
I want number nine. How can I steal number nine?
I still look for Gail. I know her street. I know Molly lived in a bathtub.
Molly sometimes left through the drain to wait for me by the creek.

The Recipe

(by *Rhonda Pettit*)

For those who eat cake,
Cake is a happy ending.

For those who make cake,
The end of cake is a happy ending.

For those who clean up after cake,
There is no cake.

The Gift Child

(by *Rhonda Pettit*)

*"I give and devise to my son William and to my
grandsons . . . each a negro boy not exceeding
ten years old . . ."*

– The Last Will and Testament of William Cain,
written 1827, executed 1834.

(Andrea Tuttle Kornbluh, "William Cain's Will")

I come to you on this day,
the year of your Lord 1834,
not of my own free will
or yours.

I am the given.
You will receive. What we have in common:
orders we obey without question,
the keeping of others, the dead
father's wish kept alive.

What does this make me?

I will know your nakedness,
help you bathe, help you dress,
cover the shame to which you were born.

I will know your waste and stench,
empty and scour your pots, scrub
the indelicate breach of your body
left on your linens and silks.

I will see your joys but know your tempers,
the fear behind them every moment
rules require I look away,
look away, look away.

What does this make you?

When I look down in your presence,
your legs become the white columns,
your feet their base, your mind
the mansion held up,
held down by them.

Who between us is free?

I will continue to brush the lint
from the shoulders of your gray serge,
though you won't know how to move.

I will continue to fan your sweat to cooling
those August afternoons while you read,
though you won't know how to see.

It is true
I know a lot for my age.
I am only ten, but I have been
here, bought and sold, given and giving
for two-hundred-and fourteen years.

POEMS:

MARY PIERCE BROSMER

Mary Pierce Brosmer is a poet, teacher and social entrepreneur. She founded Women Writing for (a) Change in 1991 and transitioned the organization to a new generation of leadership in 2009.

Contact: mpierce@womenwriting.org

CHARLES STRINGER

Chuck Stringer is grateful to have spent another year writing in the Thomas More College Creative Writing Vision Program. He received a BA in English from Carson-Newman College, and has pursued further study at Northern Kentucky University and the University of Cincinnati. Chuck's work has been published in *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *The Licking River Review*, and *Words*. He lives with his wife Susan in Union, Kentucky.

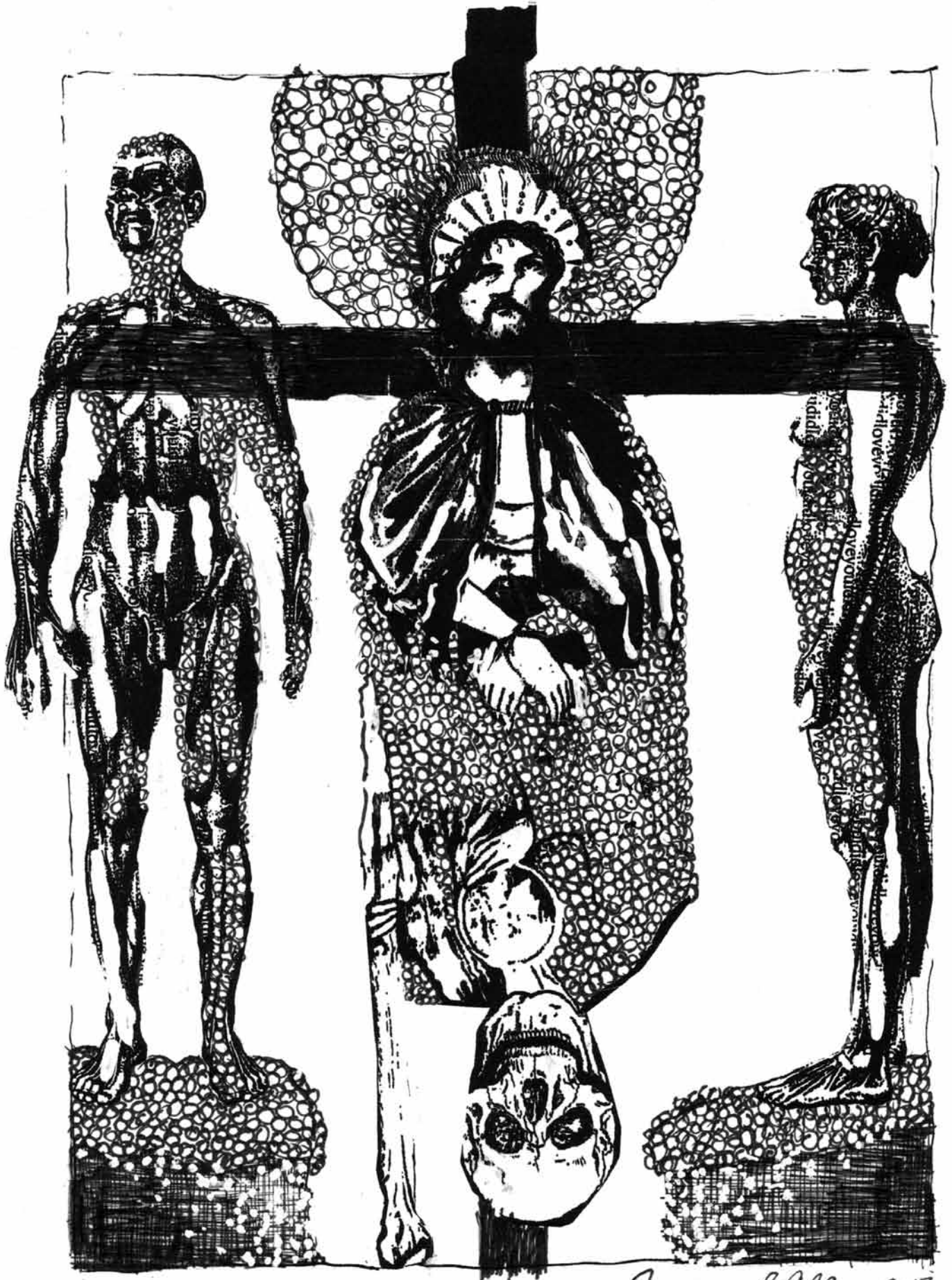
Contact: hchuck.stringer1@gmail.com

DRAWING:

FARRON ALLEN

Farron Allen grew up in the mountains of West Virginia, the product of three generations of coal miners. He has degrees in Social Work and Fine Arts. Farron currently teaches sculpture foundry at the University of Cincinnati.

Contact: farron.allen@uc.edu



Jarrod Allen 2017

Stones

(by *Mary Pierce Brosmer*)

He scoops a handful from the dirty street and,
watching us the while, places them in his mouth.

We are four Gringos in a Lexus and he
a four, maybe five, year old beggar.

He spits the stones back into his hand and offers
in English, *I wash* (though he means *watch*) *your car*,
It was not a question, rather a statement of
someone needs to wash (watch) *that fancy car*
Implying—maybe—*here on the mean streets of*
San Juan Cosala you can't have too many friends.

(*Maybe* is the operative word here on
the narrow streets where expat and native,
moneyed and scrounging, old and young, intersect.)

He extends his empty hand toward us
for an advance on his proffered service.
In the other hand he still holds the stones.

Tom and I are fishing pocket and purse for pesos
when our more experienced-at-living-in-Mexico
friends shake their heads “no”.

Inside the restaurant where we will eat
and precious, beautiful, innocent *car washer*
will not eat unless (has he implied?) he is to eat stones,

our less green Gringo friends tell us that to
give children handouts is to teach them to beg
rather than go to school. “We made the same
mistake,” they say and we say “We understand.”

But the only thing I understand is my own ignorance
which I hold alongside my compassion, my anger,
my shame, a mouthful of stones I must spit
into my empty hand before the waiter brings our food.

Mexico Fragment: Young Man With Straw Hat at a Rakish Tilt

(by *Mary Pierce Brosmer*)

You sail into the setting sun atop a garbage truck,
standing in the muck and mess, face into the wind
face alight with light.

Why not I? Old woman with a soft life?
Daughter of parents who turned their hands
to coal and cotton, hard, hot, dirty work
so their children could do other?

Why I Follow Christ

(by *Charles Stringer*)

It's not my fault I was born
a poor, Black, schizophrenic,
woman-in-a-man's-body
man, but these are my crosses.
“One fucked-up dude,” I've heard them
say; but, not you, Jesus, if
you were to come back today.

Howdy, Partners

(by *Charles Stringer*)

Tip your white hat
When your black-hearted
Shadow rides up
On a galloping
Line.

Line
On a galloping
Shadow rides up
When you're black-hearted.
Tip your white hat.

Neighbor, Is It This Simple?

(by Charles Stringer)

Every
second of
the day

just live
into
the giving

that's always
showing up
right

in front of
your longing
eyes;

then not yet
filled, go,
share with

friend
and stranger
till
all that's

not been
given
has been
found.

POEMS:

ELLA CATHER-DAVIS

Ella Cather-Davis, retired with her husband of 48 years, writes poetry, essays and children's stories. She holds an Associates of Arts degree in English Literature from the U. of Cincinnati. She is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Writer's League, Ohio Poetry Association, and loves classical choral music. She has sung for 15 years with the May Festival Chorus, and now Northern Kentucky Symphony Chorus, and Musica Sacra. Ella's work has been widely published.

Contact: mikenella45@gmail.com

KEVIN C. McHUGH

Kevin C. McHugh, a retired English teacher, is a part-time freelance writer, editor and proofreader. He is the author of professional and historical articles, and editor of/contributor to poetry collections, literature and writing texts. He and his wife, Chris, have two grown children and two grandchildren.

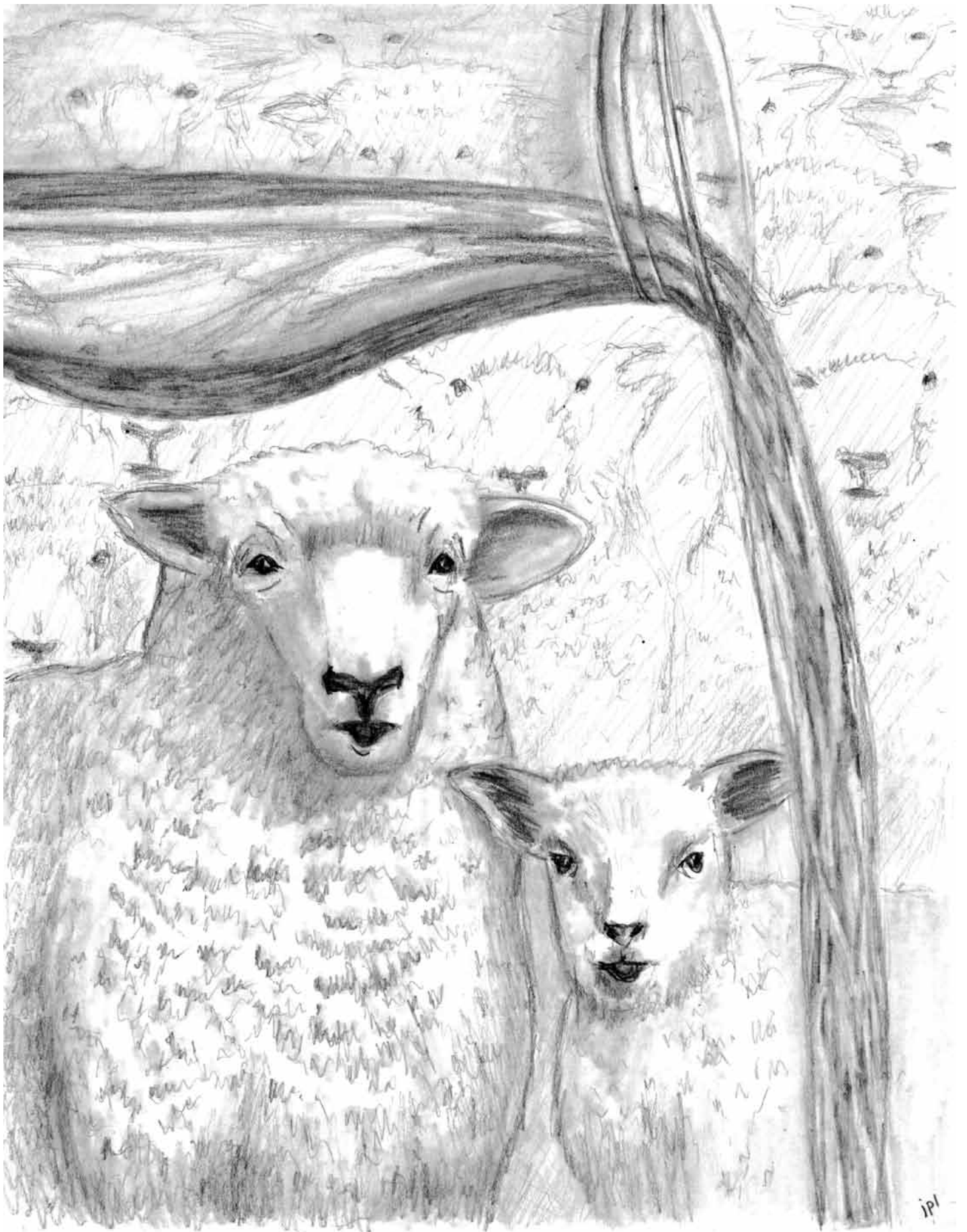
Contact: kclader@hotmail.com

DRAWING:

JANNICE LARKIN

Jannice Larkin is currently working towards a BFA in Illustration at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. She lives in Dayton, Ohio, in a turn-of-the-last-century cottage, with her partner Josh, and their many feline friends.

Contact: jannice.larkin@artacademy.edu



ipl

Jannice Larkin

Of Herds

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

One day my Grandmother and I took a walk
as this was her custom to get to town, and we saw
a crowd gathering at the home of our neighbor.

We stopped and stood on the periphery where
we saw the Harpers, pour water and break eggs
upon the head of Miss Dorothy, a God-fearing woman.

She lay prostrate on the ground, hands outstretched.
Her sin – she had forbidden her children to play at the Harpers.
They taunted, threatened her pouring more water on her head.

She looked up dazed behind her supplicating hands, lying
prone and alone in her ordeal. She did not cry out.
Silently she bore the humiliation. She did not look at us.

I stood bewildered at all these neighbors, and my Grandmother,
wondering why no one did anything to stop this savage act.
But we in the crowd stood mute.

No one dared speak, no one came with a reasoning gesture,
no one intervened in any way, we simply shrank back and
allowed it to happen, relieved it was not us.

Just to Be Safe

(by *Kevin C. McHugh*)

By now you know me—by name.
And so you greet me as I, knowing yours, do you.
A matter-of-fact, service-desk exchange.
But in fact and over three years of auto care
we've realized—not a friendship—but an ease
in this intercourse that feels as if it is.
And even though you service my car, I trust you.
A slow faith which started as a vestige, perhaps,
like goose bumps of the mind, a flashback or
an archetype that conjures up parleys upon
the ringing plain of Troy where warriors armed
reached out first unsure to touch the other's hand
outstretched and naked—all taking the measure,
then making a joining despite the risk,

the flesh frail and exposed, thin-skinned
above the fragile bones, the flow of blood below.

It has ever been like this. The dark stranger easing in
from out the shadows of the frightening night,
a shade less fearing the promise of campfire betrayal
than the certainty of the beasts that prowl beyond
the flickering verge. Meek and seeking slender safety
in the light-drawn circle, the humanity of shivering fears
that threaten all the while to collapse upon themselves
but, buttressed across the many shoulders shared,
become instead a skyward uplifting of us all.

With me, embedded deep within the neural familiar
linger still the embered memories of small-town youth—
good mornings, hellos and goodbyes that daily marked
the passages, remarks repeated ever in reverence aloud
as if an unthought invocation of light against the night,
against the spectral threats that lurk in the dark “out there.”
And so when now you promise, “We’ll take care of you!”
I believe. And you do take care—even though you’re busy
this holiday and though I’m without warning here
with my car which, like any other machine, parses us,
that should therefore distance you from me and part us all
from one another. But here within the warmth of this fire
we meet again. As persons, not people, with greetings and
with names, like *Yahweh*’s*, and in that nomenclature, souls.

You fix my car. Make true the alloy wheel bent
aweather in the dark last night and leaving me here,
this day, patient and alee but in the circle we form
when first I hand you my key-ring, you then saying
later in return, “You’re set to go. No charge.”
And yet you add a caution, face to face:
“Keep an eye on it. Just to be safe.”

Keep an eye on it. Just to be safe.

**Yahweh*—In the Bible, the name of God revealed to Moses. It derives from the Hebrew *YHWH* and most likely the Hebrew verb “to be.” It’s typically pronounced with the added vowel sounds in English and taken to mean, “I am who am,” or simply, “I am.” It may also be onomatopoeic, mimicking the sound of breathing and therefore of life itself.

POEMS:

VICKIE CIMPRICH

Vickie Cimprich's poetry collection *Pretty Mother's Home - A Shakeress Daybook* (Broadstone Books, 2007,) was researched at The Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill, KY with grants from The Kentucky Foundation For Women. Her essay "Free and Freed Shakers and Affiliates of African Descent at the Shaker Village of Pleasant Hill" appeared in *The Register of the Kentucky Historical Society*.

Contact: vjc1@zoomtown.com

MEREDITH MEYER

Meredith Meyer came back to writing as an adult through Women Writing for (a) Change. She recently started a consulting practice helping organizations put their people first and create positive work environments. Meredith lives in Mt. Washington with her husband Steve and their two small children.

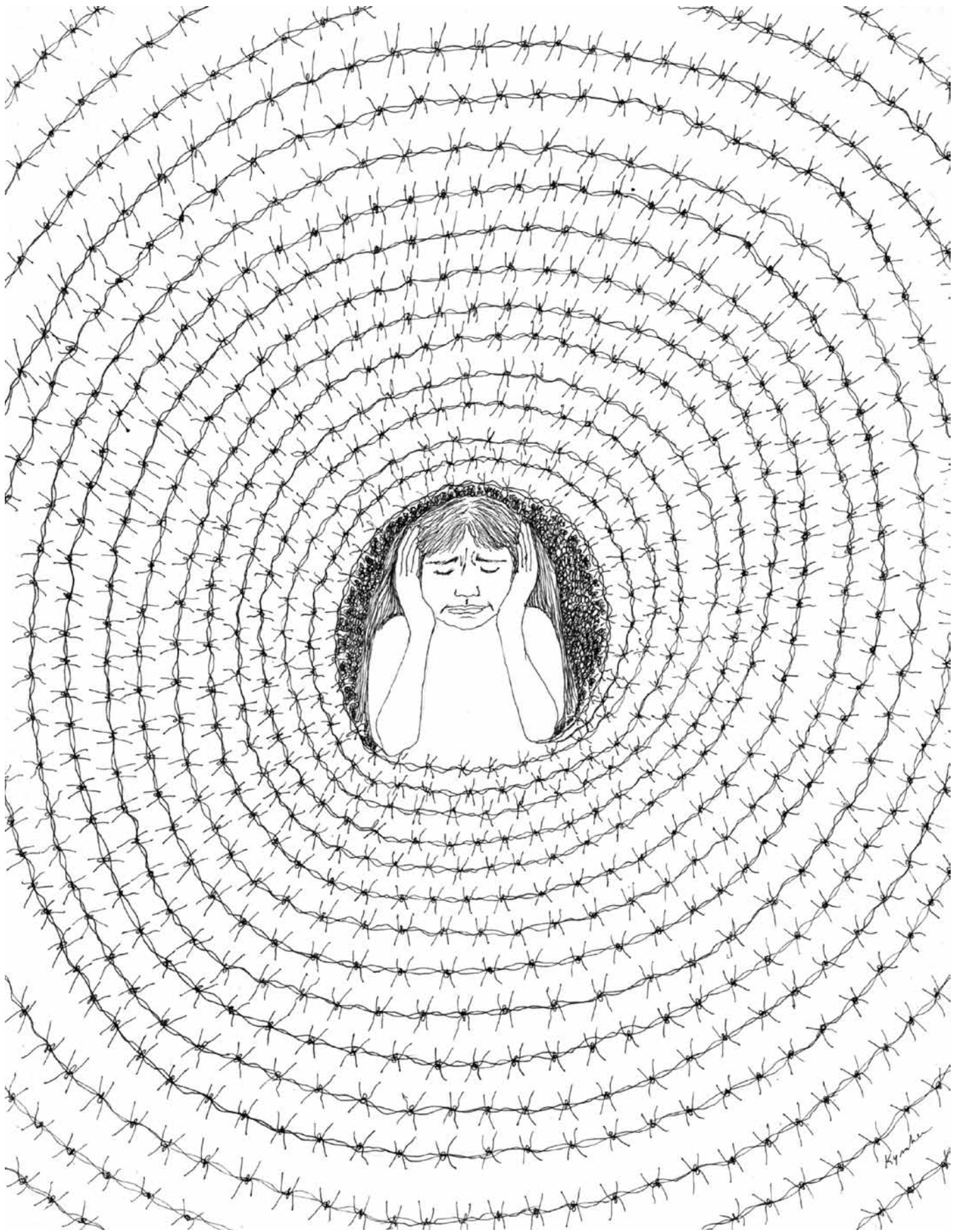
Contact: meredithmeyer11@gmail.com

DRAWING:

KYMBERLY HENSON

After graduating with an art degree from Edgecliff College, Kymberly Henson owned/operated a wearable art studio, producing one of a kind hand-painted shibori clothing. Recently she has been working in mosaic, small sculptures and painting. In her work one finds narratives from her life and from lives that have touched her, also stories giving voice to the abused, the powerless and the invisible. Kymberly's work has been exhibited throughout the U. She lives in Cincinnati with her husband, daughter, dog, cat and passion flowers.

Contact: kymber.henson@gmail.com



Kymerly Henson

Alternative Facts

(by **Vickie Cimprich**)

The pope and the Dali Lama *certainly*
leaked hearty support for the surprise leanings
of our latest electors.

Vladimir Putin as well as
all hacking Russian cool cats
demonstrated *impeccable* taste and tact.

My far right dog *invariably* barks
up the right tree.

Who says you can't get blood from a turnip?
As statistics will demonstrate,
all my turnips bleed.

Something there is that *loves* a wall.
Perch four years of overcombed egg
on its rampart and calculate
who cracks and who pays.

No one ever died for lack of bread
or naloxone. *Any* health care
is a suspendible frippery.

Whatever I grab
makes your destiny manifest.

Superheroes

(by **Meredith Meyer**)

All tucked in and wearing a pair of big boy underpants
He's ready to "talk about some things" before he falls asleep.
I start our conversation with a question about superheroes
What would he do if he met his favorite in real life?

Superheroes aren't real, he says.
Neither are bad guys, I respond, but in the pause that follows
We both know he has caught me in a lie.
The president of our country is a bad guy, he says, finally.

November Tallies

(by **Vickie Cimprich**)

The straw and dead root hair gave up the zinnia
ghosts' grip on the dirt so easily after that frost.
Manila tombs labeled with our late professional
addresses could hold whatsoever colored
promises, each a shredded skin nimbus, a dead
head.

What came home finally to me that night by the
dregs of a votive candle's light would have to
be exhumed by tools now stored away in cellar
cobwebs behind the bicycles, lawn chairs, iron
rakes and grass whip.

So the next morning it all drove me to the
monastery where I helped the nuns peeling and
coring Arkansas Black apples for the seasonal
pies, where I could join them cutting and gouging
out the few bad places, talking of our lives and
friends who since the last election had been
threatened or excluded from the local Dollar
Stores.

When we spoke of Santa Claus this year, he was skeptical.
This small boy who wants, more than anything, to know precisely how the earth was formed.
He turned four just before that election and I assumed
He was too small to get caught in the tsunami.

Our president is not like the bad guys in your books, I say carefully
Not wanting to say something I don't believe.
If our president does something bad, we tell him, we can stop him.
I repeat this twice, once for him and once for me.

But even a tiny boy recognizes a grown-up truth:
There are villains in our world and no superheroes to save us.
Just ordinary people paying attention organizing speaking out
I tell my son, these are our super powers.

POEMS:

RITA COLEMAN

Rita Coleman is a Wright State University with a B.A. and an M.A. in English Literature, Creative Writing. Her first volume of poetry is *Mystic Connections*, and a second, *And Yet*, will be published this year by Finishing Line Press. Rita's writing appears in anthologies, journals, magazines, and online sites. She is active in regional poetry readings and on Conrad's Corner WYSO-FM 91.3.

Contact: kree8v@aol.com; www.ritacoleman.com

ANDREW HARRIS

Andrew Harris is a Cincinnati native and high school English and theatre teacher. He received a BA in English from Northeastern University and is currently an MA candidate at Northern Kentucky University. Andrew strives to infuse his curriculum with the ideals of social justice and encourage his students to become tomorrow's activist leaders.

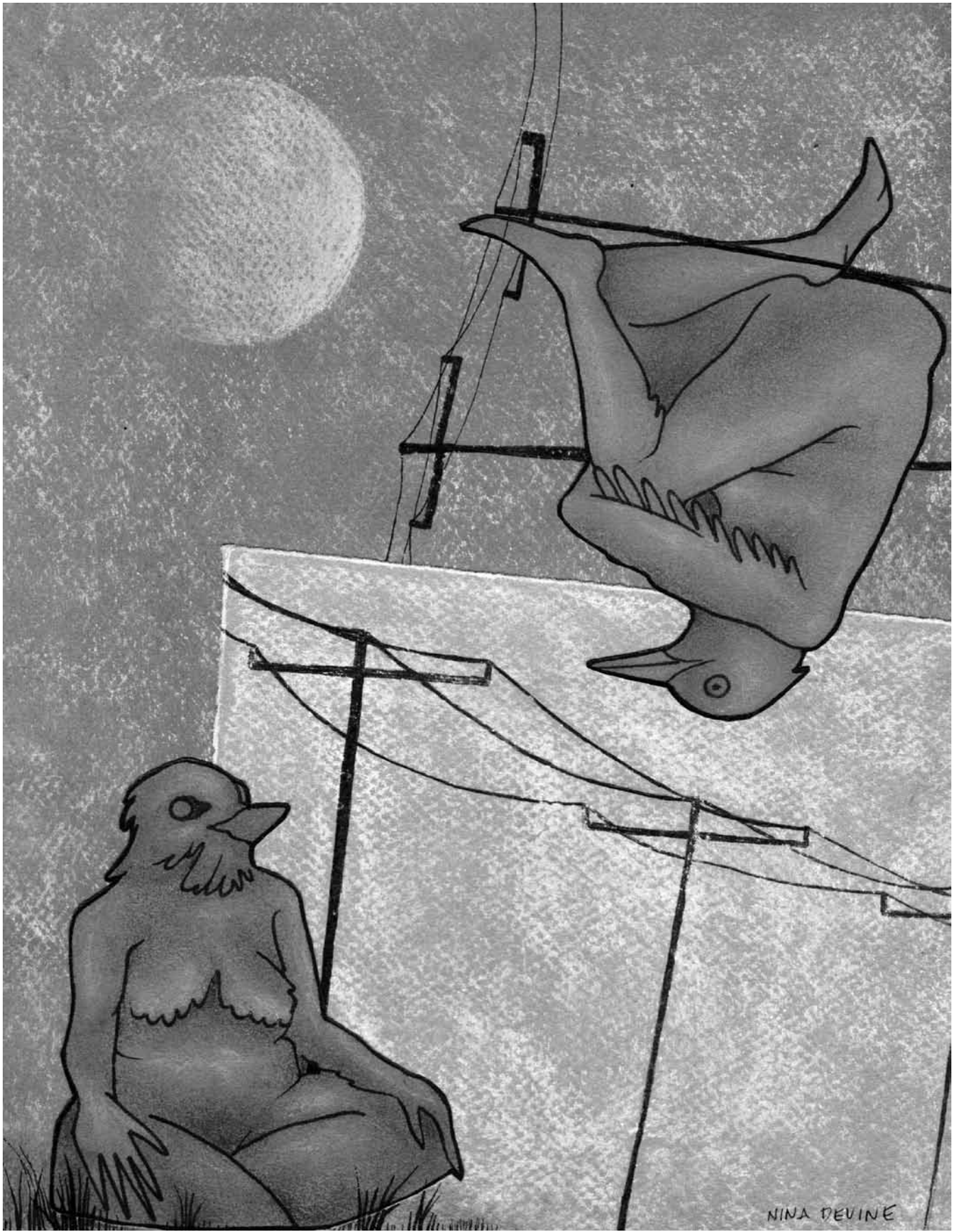
Contact: harrisandrewr@gmail.com

DRAWING:

NINA DEVINE

Nina Devine is a queer multimedia artist with a focus in experimental activism. She features sculpture, performance, and poetry to explore her curiosities and those of her viewers. Nina's practice penetrates comfortable societal norms with honest reflections in the personal and the political.

Contact: nina-devine@hotmail.com



Winged

(by *Rita Coleman*)

All birds want to perch on a wire, electric, telephone, cable,
strung between tall crosses of right-sized poles.

When each season's breezes blow, tiny claws
grip tighter, a subtle movement with each sway of wire.

Wire-perching for the vulnerable and brave, is akin
to night walking with a waxing gibbous moon on a rural bike trail,

Alive to contrapuntal calls of cicadas in dark tree tops,
Alert to lumpy shapes along the shoulders: mowed shags of grass.

A flicker of fear, a new one, being muscled from behind
by he-man arms, courses through this woman shadow walker.

The white moon, cool in her simplicity, able to take on all lunacy
draws the thought up with silver ribbons,

Just as skycurrent draws all birds toward her zenith
toward her circling arms, even those unable to fly.

Like birds on a wire, we winged women must fly higher
than martyr crosses, to escape sacrifice, to soar.

Post-Election 2016

(by *Rita Coleman*)

I told her I subscribed to *Ms.* Magazine when it first came out—
her father putting that down with a smirk and a stink-eye.

I told her I swore off bras for seven years,
support for the women's movement.

I did not tell her I had an abortion while still gasping
in a breathless marriage to her father.

I did not tell her that abortion was not legal
when I was pregnant with her.

A few years ago she told me she wanted to stomp on the necks
of all the feminists responsible for the working mother.

She was a working mother, two babies in two and a half years,
the second a hard one—she was teetering.

Stunned and speechless, I would have said,
if I had found my tongue:

“We would still be a silent race of women replete
with kitchen wisdom yet unable to move up or out with it.

We would still stand by with the gift of practical certainty
and sigh while men governed the world in their male way.”

Time has eased her and we align like so many others,
men joining women, husbands and wives of all genders.

Nearly fifty years ago, a *Virginia Slims* cigarette commercial
claimed, “You’ve come a long way, baby.”

But have we really,
when a woman cannot become president?

My Girls

(by **Andrew Harris**)

We teachers have this annoying habit
of viewing students as “our kids.”
Even those shit heads
who I can’t stand,
who make my life a living hell,
inevitably become my pseudo-progeny.

Yet of all the faces who pass through my door,
my mind traces the frown lines
of my favorites:
My girls.
There are a few in every class
whose sass and attitude claw their way
into my heart
and refuse to let go.
My girls, whose “bad attitudes”
and short tempers
make them the bane of most teachers’ existence,
have become the very purpose
of mine.

The other day in class we were talking about
“Theories of gender relationships and the oppression
of patriarchy on modern American women”
and one of my girls says,
“I can’t remember the last time I hung out with a boy
and he didn’t want to get with me.”
And my heart
broke.

One of my girls wears so much make up
it looks like war paint.
Though perhaps that is appropriate,
since daily she does verbal battle
with an abusive boyfriend

Another of my girls
is dating a man 7 years her senior.
When I point out that he is nearly my age,
she just laughs
and says it’s ok because he loves her.
And I don’t know whether to smile
or to weep
at her foolishness.

One of my girls came to me in tears
because her boyfriend asked for naked selfies,
And when she declined this “request”
he called her a bitch
and a whore.
But the next day he apologized,
and said he’d never do it again,
so she forgave this vile atrocity.

My girls have been taught
to hate each other,
to compete in gladiatorial combat
in order to please the boys
who play at being
Men.

These boys watch this “sport” ,
salivating over the spoils
they see as their birthright.
And my girls surrender themselves,
not realizing that sisterhood
can liberate
in a way that being a boy’s play thing
never will.

My girls are victims
of abuse
of objectification
of oppression.
My girls are survivors
of low self esteem
of eating disorders
of sexual assault.
My girls live in a hostile environment
that constantly screams
"No matter how hard you try,
you are not good enough"

My heart aches for my girls.
I want to protect them,
to keep them safe.
I want them to see in themselves
what I see,
Infinite
Possibility.

And so I protect them
the only way I know how:
I teach.

I give them my knowledge
and help them discover
their own wisdom.
I teach them that they are strong
that they are fierce
that they mean something,
even when a boy is not giving them attention.
I teach them
that they are important,
and valued,
and Loved.

Some will take my lessons
and grow.
They will realize their potential
And free themselves of these chains.
Others will stay trapped,
oppressed by those who fear
their
Power.

To those who would deny them
their right to become strong women,
know this:
I will protect them,
I will fight for them,
I will help them find their voice
Until you can hurt them
no longer.

I am a teacher.
And these are My Girls.

POEMS:

JOHN CRUZE

John Cruze is a mediator, teacher, trainer, hiker, photographer and poet, among other more familial things. He is a proud member of the Greater Cincinnati Writers League. His work has appeared in *Waypoints Online Literature and Art Journal*, *WORDS 2014* (Thomas More College Anthology), *Express Cincinnati*, and previous editions of *For A Better World*.

Contact: cruzelegal@comcast.net

ANGELA DERRICK

Angela Derrick is a poet/writer and activist who wholeheartedly believes in the power of words. When not writing and reading, she most often can be found in her gardens playing in the dirt or in her kitchen whipping up something delicious to eat.

Contact: angela@angeladerrick.net

DRAWING:

MICHAEL EVERETT

Michael Everett is a local maker of things, sometimes drawings and paintings, other times bronze castings and occasionally photographs.

Contact: infiniteverticality@gmail.com



Michael Everett

The Likes of Them

(by *John Cruze*)

in our capitols
in our name
against all the reasons
we give our children
for why we honor
the Golden Rule
our leaders take
votes as license
to jerry rig anxiety
into false choices
between us and them
and fairness
and leave us
only soundbite
justifications
for why we shouldn't
be confused
by our children
with the likes of them

Thanksgiving Release: November 26, 2015

(by *Angela Derrick*)

Today I was a witness to the release
of a man to his family-

mother, father, brother,
wife, daughter-

saw the daughter, like a colt
leap onto her daddy, her
long-legged graceful gawkiness
place her somewhere on the
cusp of both child and teen-

Suspended Disbelief

(by *John Cruze*)

*"Basho said: avoid adjectives of scale,
you will love the world more and desire it less."
From Robert Hass poem "Vintage".*

while the sun climbed
branch by branch
through the shadows
in the grove
near the garden
nearer to me
a single bee
working
or so I'm told
calls upon
one by light filled one
each pearled blossom
gathered into
a planet of impatiens
as if he has
the whole
live long day
to bring us
together

saw the tenderness her father
caught her with-

sheltered beneath the metal
canopy, with the other visitors,
we saw it all-

the waiting family, the two-guard
escort, the joyous daughter and
grateful wife, and we clapped
and cheered for him,

this stranger returning to
his loved ones.

On that Thanksgiving Day
we were thankful to be witnesses.

Playing the Race Card

(by Angela Derrick)

It's not about race...
except when it is.

It's not about race...
except when you are
driving a nice car
in a nice neighborhood -
following the speed limit -
and
minding your own business
and a cop stops you for
"driving while Black."

It's not about race...
except
when the suspect is Black
and
you are Black
and
you become the suspect
even though
you were miles away.

It's not about race...
except when it is
because you -
sat at the wrong counter -
drank from the wrong fountain -
refused to sit in the back of the bus.

It's about race because it's about race.

After Kelly

(by Angela Derrick)

*(In Memory of Kelly Gissendaner,
March 8, 1968 – September 30, 2015)*

The morning after Kelly was
executed, I went out to my garden,
sat on the ground and sifted the
dirt through my fingers, let it rain

down. I planted seeds- big showy
Zinnias and Bachelor Buttons,
totally wrong for the season, but
I didn't care. It was an autumn day,

gray and chilly that I wanted to fill
up with bright, feathery flower heads.
I planted seeds to feel alive.
I planted seeds to rebirth to the Earth
that which had been stolen from it.

POEMS:

ALYSSA FERRERI

Alyssa Ferreri, from Loveland, OH, attends the University of Cincinnati Blue Ash, where she studies to become a high school English teacher. Alyssa loves writing fiction stories, also poetry, and has some of her poems published on line and in the *Blue Ash Review*. She also likes to draw and sing.

Contact: alyfrancesferreri@gmail.com

KARA GALL

A native of small-town Nebraska and a graduate of San Francisco State University's Creative Writing MA program, Kara Gall moved to Cincinnati in August 2016. Kara's poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction have appeared among others in *Bared: An Anthology on Bras and Breasts* (2017) and *The Untidy Season: An Anthology of Nebraska Women Writers* (2013).

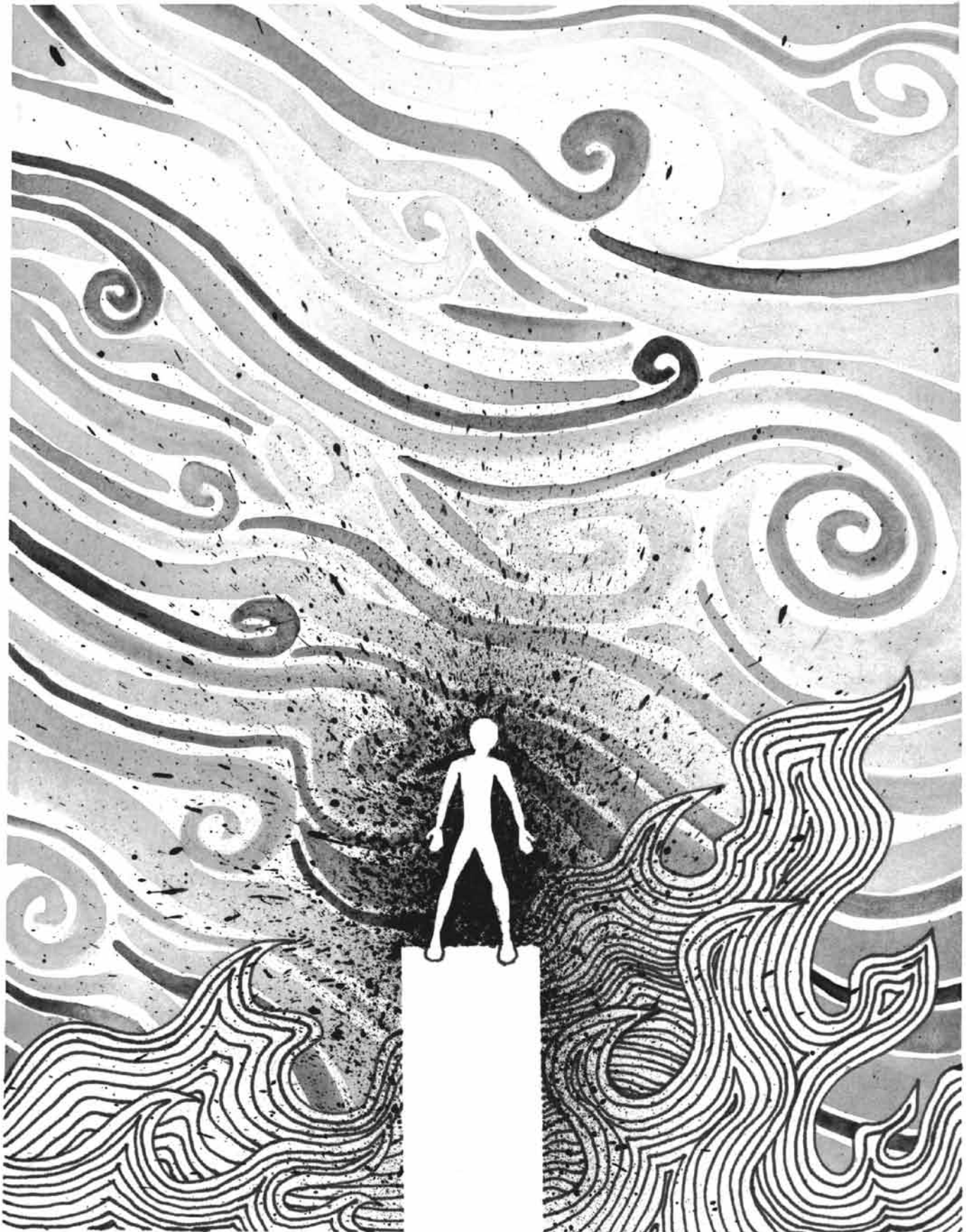
Contact: karagall@gmail.com; www.karagall.com

DRAWING:

MALLORY FELTZ

Mallory Feltz, born in Dayton, OH, the youngest of four creative siblings, was exposed to art from a very early age. She earned a BFA in Studio Art from UC DAAP (2006), and an MFA in Sculpture from Louisiana State U (2009). Mallory also dabbles in many art forms - including theatre, fashion, stop-motion animation, dance... She has exhibited in solo and group shows across the USA. She currently lives and works with her husband and dog in Cincinnati, OH.

Contact: mallory@kennedyarts.org



Mallow Feltz 2017

Eyes

(by *Alyssa Ferreri*)

I see your eyes.
I see what they show.
There is malice, and rage

It is familiar.
I see my own scarred soul.
I sense remnants of paths my own damning
fire has taken.

Your soul is injured, broken, and dangerous.
I stumble, for fear of the peril.

There is disharmony inside of you.
War rages,
Fighting storms of injustice,
An inferno of fury.

I take your hand anyway,
Against all of my judgement.

It's alright.
I stand beside you,
With your flames ablaze,

Something is different.
I pour acceptance I was hesitant to give,
It rains a healing understanding over your
beaten, bloodied hope.

I fight your fires,
Cool waters of calm,
Wash over the bloody flares.
Suffocate the embers
They no longer glow with resentment.
Tranquility lapping over wounds of bitterness

I no longer see streets of destruction,
But roads of passion.

A different fire burns now.
Not of devastation,
But of revival.
Rebirth.

People Mend People.
I know this because I mended you.

People Change People.
I know this because you changed me.

A Prayer for Massage Therapists

(by *Kara Gall*)

Foreheads furrowed with bills unpaid –
let it pass through me

words tucked unheard behind the ear
where cochlear implants can't reach –
let it pass through me

empty spaces where lymph nodes used to be,
a jar of lentils empty on the shelf –
let it pass through me

weight of backpacks measuring the pressure
of school, wrenching scapula from spine –
let it pass through me

ribs sticky with the loss of a child,
chest curled around the damp grief of murder –
let it pass through me

hands snagged in tremoring grip of Parkinson's –
let it pass through me

the hot, raging bursitis of a spouses' affair –
let it pass through me

thighs quilted with the soft scarred tapestry of a childhood fire –
let it pass through me.

Feet and toes short-circuited with chemotherapy,
let it pass through me.

Toenails painted with nuptial anticipation –
let it pass through me.

Calves sculpted with the Sierras on the Pacific Crest Trail –
let it pass through me.

Quadriceps chattering the chase of fireflies around a July 4th bonfire –
let it pass through me.

Stretch marks iridescent minnows swimming across the wellspring of motherhood –
let it pass through me.

scalene puppeteers pulling chest to sky, pride deep like a full breath –
Let it pass through me.

Memories twitching on the lips like smiles –
Let it pass through me.

I am only human, faced with body
but this table is an altar where they lay their offerings.

Let it pass through me. Let it pass through me.
Such things belong to the Gods.

Seeking Refuge

(by *Kara Gall*)

“I hereby proclaim that the entry of more than 50,000 refugees in fiscal year 2017 would be detrimental to the interests of the United States and thus suspend any such entry until such time as I determine that additional admissions would be in the national interest.”

-- from *President Donald J. Trump's Executive Order: Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States. January 27, 2017.*

Martha who is also called Nybol, Mawien, Akok
who pulls her grandfather's name onto her passport
last like the final finger on a glove
after so many other digits
so many other documents

Constance who is Congo (but not the DR)
whose delta mouth deposits Lingala, French, English
like the river between Kinshasa and Brazzaville
not a bridge between languages
but a ferry, carrying across

Neema who knows chickens, sometimes
calling them kitchens, whose smile is wide
as Kilimanjaro is tall, whose Tarabu hips
chatter Swahili while she stirs the pot and hums

Aisheh who first tasted avocado in
a dark gymnasium, whose tiny hands
pin head scarves, roll grape leaves, knead muscles

These ladies who are the true ladies,
these ladies pull themselves
into tiny parallel parking spaces,
navigate lines between Muslim and Christian,
Arabic and Dinka, pale and dark.

They sit together penciling the alphabet
under the drone of church basement lights
while a man scrawls his name in brash ink,
a man who cuts fingers from gloves,
a man who burns bridges, a man who
expects a woman to stumble over her words,
as long as she remains in the kitchen.

POEMS:

CHARLES FINNEY

Charles Finney spent his life in broadcasting as a radio and television journalist, also in advertising. He is now semi-retired, and although he enjoys writing, it's been only recently that he has taken up poetry. He and his wife Elizabeth have seven grown children.

Contact: chasfinney@gmail.com

DAVID NICHOLAS RIGEL

David Nicholas Rigel, an independent, first-generation college student from London, KY, will graduate with a B.A. from Northern Kentucky U. in English: Creative Writing. He is planning a career in professional writing, advocacy, and social change. In 2015, David published a Creative Non-Fiction piece within *the Bluegrass Accolade*. He is the current Fiction Editor for *Loch Norse Magazine* and has edited for *True NKU* and *Licking River Review*.

Contact: dnrigel11@gmail.com

DRAWING:

LEIGH WALTZ

Born in Dayton, Leigh Waltz has lived in Malaysia, Holland, Austria, Italy and Germany (and visited 29 other countries). He is an advocate of the Transition Movement and Permaculture. Leigh learned about art and printmaking and has shown his work nationally and internationally. He now lives in Tipp City, Ohio.

Contact: demang.waltz@gmail.com



LEIGH WALTZ 2017

Words

(by *Charles Finney*)

Point with pride to our American flag,
whether in war or at peace, and
respond to our nation's call.

Salute and honor those bright stars and stripes,
the banner of "liberty
and justice" for one and all.

Or is it "truth, justice....the American
way," like old Superman says?
(They sound pretty much the same.)

But then one must ask are these merely bold words,
for people to twist around,
are these ideals but a game?

What's really the truth, or the alternate truth?
And tell me please, if you can,
what's "The American Way?"

And does "justice for all," actually mean
the same for the rich and poor?
Tell me true, if you can say.

Our country's leaders, from time to time, have
rattled the sabers of war,
while claiming they're peaceful men.

If our founding fathers could hear them today
they'd want for nothing more than
to start out all over again.

Republicans and Baptists

(by *David Nicholas Rigel*)

Some people would like to know how it goes
Living below the Mason Dixon Line,
Well you should know that we've only got three things,
And we're barely above the poverty line
Republicans, Bitches, and Baptists
As far as the eye can see
Cause here in the South ain't *nothing* judgment free
Ole Johnny's got a backache,
He's been workin' in the mines since the dawn of time

It's quick fix
All he needs is some anointing oil and a crucifix
And if that don't do the trick,
He's prescribed some Percocet
And that's okay because Johnny draws a check
But he doesn't know, no, he doesn't know that the Governor is trying to cut his
Medicaid

And he's got no escape
He votes Republican cause it's how he was raised
That's what you do when you're pro-life, packin' heat, and anti-gay
Just close your eyes and don't check facts

Let the multi-billion dollar industries never pay a tax
Don't think, don't find sources,
Just count your food stamps, and raise your horses

Remember, that it's okay to be Republican
Because it's not Republi-Can't
Republi-Can't take care of the veterans returning from war
Can't stop fucking mistresses,
Just pull up your damn drawers
Can't think of anyone else, only their wealth
But let's defund Planned Parenthood for taking care of women's health
But let's not stop the rampant addictions to pain killers and meth
Let's just ignore the suffering and put the blacks and gays to death

Throw distraught people in jail, disposing of the key
Just ignore their needs
When they're in a crooked system, a giant monstrosity
These people do what they can to survive
May works three jobs, is a single mother, and doesn't have room to cry
Some people work twelve hours shifts to put food on the table
Some just aren't able,

So they depend on the State
But we shouldn't blame them, it's not everyone's mistake
We need jobs, recovery, and better communities
Not Republicans ignoring the drugs, disease, crime, and illiteracy
But I cross my heart and hope to die
Before I vote Democrat, they're the real bad guys

So that's the Republicans but the worst are the Baptists
They're rich, or old, in packs a plenty and always pissed
They're just so oppressed,
Oh, how hard it is to be a Caucasian creationist
Here in the South, though, we've got more cows than people
Here is the church and here is the steeple
Look inside and there are all of his hypocritical people
So let's pretend to see from their eyes, and speak from their demise
Evolution is a lie and so is Global Warming
The only real thing is the Bible and farming

It says right there that homosexuality's an abomination
But I won't read further down where it says the same about crustaceans
I know, I know Jesus said nothing about the gays
But if I keep my eyes closed, like my mind, and unlike my legs—just pray,
I can hear God say,
“When you walk on the streets of gold,
You are no longer sprinkled with arthritis
Or old.

Oh, how it must feel to finally dance within the Pearly Gates
Judging others was clearly *never* a mistake
But look beyond, at the Book of Life
Those sinners will never get in, look at how they dealt with strife

No, no it wasn't your job to reach out
You did it just right by resisting the urge to shout
I know how it must offend you to see others living their life by different rules
How can they just be so happy, so worldly—what fools
You were the real saints, sitting on your horse towering above
By scolding and belittling— you really showed them love
You acted like Jesus, you know all those times he condemned the poor
Just like those times you needed to settle the score

But you gave your tithes to the church
Even though you should realize they'll just pocket it first
But you don't do it out of humility, you want your reward
To be blessed by the hand of God, not cut down by his sword
While the pastor buys a new car with your money in a blink
On his way to meet his new Craigslist twink
He'll preach and preach about the fruits of the spirit
But he doesn't know right from wrong,
And the power of God? He doesn't fear it

POEMS:

MARK FLANIGAN

Mark Flanigan (Cincinnati, OH) is a poet, performer, columnist, fiction writer and a screenwriter. In January 2014, he co-founded an open/feature reading, Word of Mouth Cincinnati which takes place on the last Tuesday of each month at MOTR Pub.

Contact: mf@markflanigan.com; www.markflanigan.com

PREETI PARIKH

Preeti Parikh writes poems and essays in Cincinnati, Ohio. Born and raised in India, she has previously worked as a radiologist, and is presently a stay-at-home parent to her two young children. Preeti pursues online and in-person writing classes and workshops, and is a member of the Ohio Poetry Association and the Walnut Street Poetry Society.

Contact: preetisparikh@gmail.com; www.preetisparikh.wordpress.com

DRAWING:

KATE KERN

As a visual artist Kate Kern pays attention to her inner subversive voice; follows it and sees what happens. Her background is in drawing. While she does make drawings on paper Kate also uses this training as a way to access her imagination and allow it to move as freely as possible. The ephemeral materials (including paper and ink, as well as projected and animated images) in her work emphasize its conceptual focus on loss, fragility and renewal.

Contact: www.katekern.com



KATE KERN © 2017

The Bell Ringer's Song

by *Mark Flanigan*)

let it ring
the bell's yoke made from American elm
mixed with tears from the trail and let it ring
blood-sweat from the blackbird's migration
swept windward from the ivory coast
fastened
by history and an inequitable liberty
let it ring lest we forget our bell does
sit in the shadow of a shared house
let it ring if flight brings with it responsibility
if blessing we wish to refrain from becoming curse
all the more reason to take wing and let it ring
though the dancer's lithe shoulders move under heavy cloak
though our lips are cracked as imperfectly as our bell no matter
the late start in an uneven race nor the obstructed view from the back
of the bus still we must let it ring unto all the inhabitants the world over
no matter who may or may not be listening no matter how well fastened the
clapper be chained no matter how tired the hand that pulls the string let it ring
no matter how high the wall or cramped the hold no matter the distance from shore
to sea throw off the yoke of history shrug off the cloak of inequality and let it ring
until all the chains of injustice break free each of us born with song and thus we must sing
let it ring let it ring let it ring

Ode to a Wind Chime

(by *Preeti Parikh*)

Oh! To be present
and yet not act upon anything;
to just be and let be—
yourself, pliable, pervious
to breezes passing through
moving your parts;
to be adjusted and readjusted;
to be calibrated and recalibrated—
this configuration and that one,
each act of compliance and each possibility
ringing out its own novel melody,
each a disjunction and a coming together
to a newer sum.

Oh! To be a beacon of sound
announcing its songs—
this is me,
here I am,
come find me.

Prayer

(by *Preeti Parikh*)

A lighted cotton wick
sitting in a pool
of melting yellow ghee
inside a brass diya lamp—
its flame reaching upwards
as our voices rise and fall in pitch,
the familiar cadences
filling up the small room,
the flicker illuminating
the tiniest crevices,
the shadows expanding and contracting,
the thoughts casting beyond us,
beyond you and me,
beyond these walls—
what will unshackle us from false premises,
what will it take to love and be loved?

POEMS:

DIANE GERMAINE

Diane Germaine, writer/choreographer/photographer is an English Honors graduate from Performing Arts High School (NY). As Principal Soloist of the Paul Sanasardo Dance Company (NY) she received acclaim for many roles including as poet Anne Sexton in *A Consort for Dancers*. She was awarded fellowships and grants from NEA, City of Cincinnati, and Ohio Arts Council for choreography and spoken word/mixed media productions. Diane has participated in readings in many venues and her poetry and stories appeared in many publications including in *For a Better World (SOS)*, *Chronogram Magazine*, *A Few Good Words...* Her photographic work has been used in video projections for various dance productions.

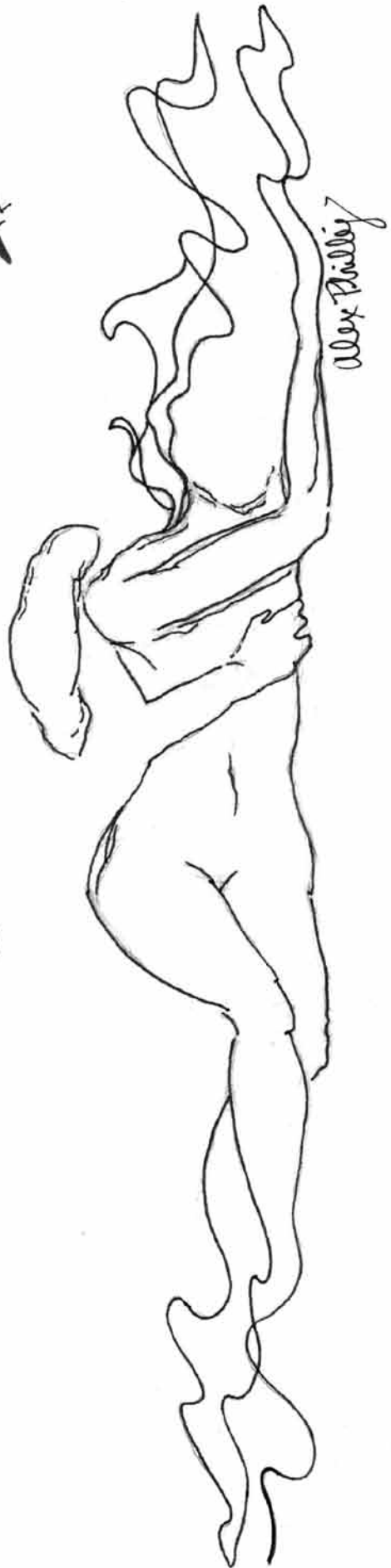
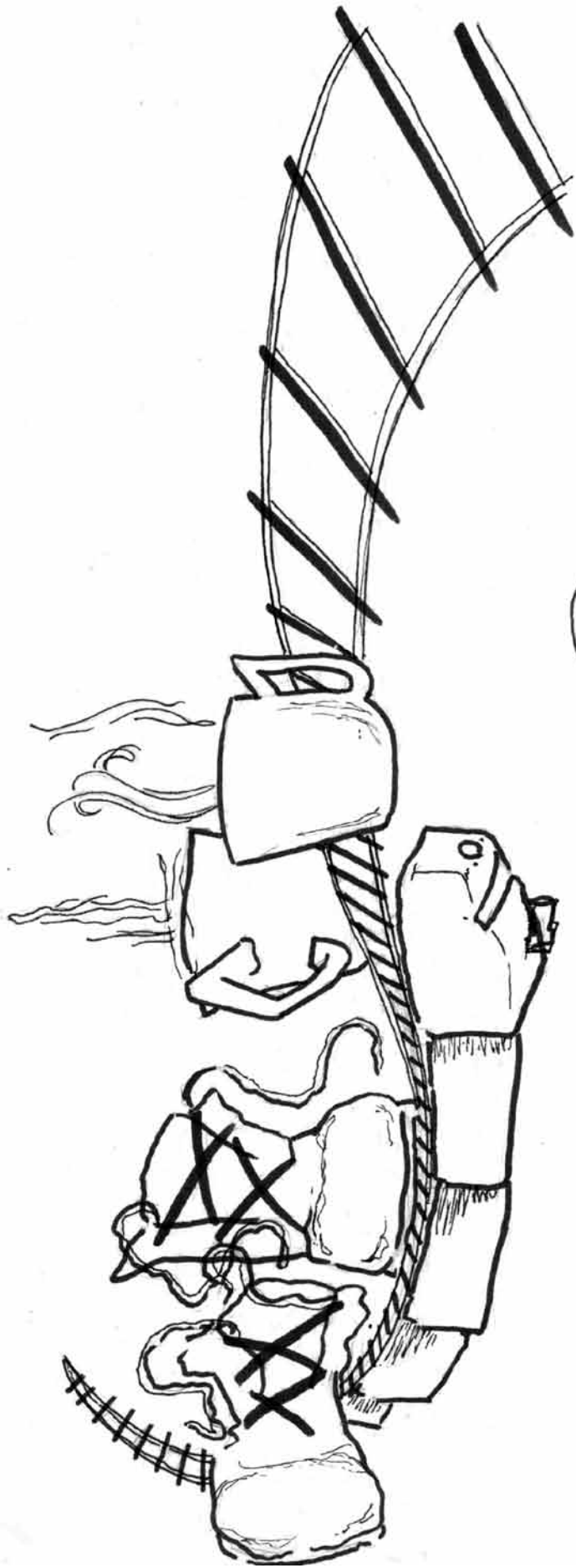
Contact: dgermaine.writer@gmail.com

DRAWING:

ALEXANDRA PHILLIPS

Alex Phillips is a visual artist from Cincinnati, Ohio with a sculpture concentration. She currently studies in the DAAP program at the University of Cincinnati, and is employed at UC's Preservation Lab. Alex's work, while focused on craftsmanship, also explores abstractions of home and saudade (a deep emotional state of nostalgic or profound melancholic longing). Her materials include ceramics, wood, metal, and fiber, utilized with a process-based mind-set that translates into artworks that are both creative and functional.

Contact: aphillipsart@gmail.com



Rite of Return

Prelude: The Casualties

We met inside the room
circling in moist air.

I followed you to the beach and
did not care who else was there.

We lay together
beside an obsidian sea

as two rowers pulled ashore
and bombed Geula Street.

Had we not been hasty
to taste each other's salt,

we would have strolled Geula
and together lined the fault.

1. One Body No You

You turn and your arm
slides over me as I turn
to spoon in closer –
one body from two.

An apartment door above
slams shut and I hear
breaks in footfalls
galloping down.

It tells me who might be
swinging 'round the landings.
Then comes silence.

Light begins to separate shadows
as chill air lingers, hovers
around edges as the blanket
slips from its moorings.

Diesel trucks chew garbage
on Allenby - it becomes a
cacophony of honking and yelling.

Then I hear you say,
*- I'm off to Haifa, Diane Chick.
I should have left an hour ago.
Will you make the Nescafes
while I shower? -*

I swing my legs over the side
and the stone floor is cold. Very cold.

How can Tel Aviv still exist
without your arm sliding over me
when I turn to spoon in closer...
one body but no you.

2. Haifa Waits

I go to the kitchen, ignite the gas
wait for water to stir the Nescafes -
two sugars each.

Water cascades, then ceases
and you reappear in the doorway
hair streaking - grey eyes on mine.

So I push you a little gently,
a little urgently back through
the doorway and across the hall.

You lift me on to you and forgotten
are the Nescafes - abandoned.

Haifa waits....
There is always the risk
of no return but I ignore it.

3. There Is Always the Risk

There is always the risk
in movie house, supermarket,
on Shabbat, in the Old City,
at Damascus Gate.

While you or I are sipping our Bots,
or our Nescafes or bargain in the Suk
a package, a person rigged.
Wired. Ready.

There's no difference in stone bits
raining down and flesh exploding
when the bell doesn't toll
its warning.

He who was buried who is so quiet
is the one chance man, the bearer
of weighty wood no more than
a man like you.

So come back. Live. I'll wait
for your arm. I'll slide over –
and one from two we'll make.

4. Or If...

IF...

I don't know whether
you'll return

or if...

I spend the day walking
along Dizengoff, heading
to Ibn Gvirol, hoping to
catch up with my dancers

or if...

I eat, laugh, chat with other
'Internationals' - none in
the army or reserves, none
worrying about deaths or returns –

I'll head back when light begins to go,
and I'll wait

as if...

And late at night you'll come in.
You'll tell me how chaotic it was,
how so many did not know
where anyone was

or if....

5. Still Not Free

Up in Gaaton rockets rained down
and I couldn't get there. Trains
were reserved for military.

I heard how Timna lay down
on the tracks and let a train
run over her - brakes screeching.

It was difficult to understand
why I'd never again see her fly
across space or curve her body
through air.

Where did she go while
the whistle would blow?

She was not tied nor drugged;
she looked like Ophelia floating
downriver in her white garment -
humming...

...In fields of gold, in autumn free,
the land of milk and honey
is still not free.

6. Indelible

There was chaos in Haifa.
No-one knew where anyone
was or when they'd arrive.

Regiments were mixed.
Everyone's gun was
no-one's gun.

There was no word on who'd return
when or how.

I woke up to strains of
Janis Ian singing and as I
walked into the day room

you were sitting chain smoking
Galoises and staring at a point
in the floor as if at a body.

It was a photo I did not take,
but in my brain remains indelible.

Our eyes locked, I pulled you up,
turned out lights one by one,
and our bodies, one, we slept.

Coda: Escaping Touch

Your death was a sudden flash
of light that plunged, descended,
went down crashing, spreading out

like a million drops of mercury
hard to catch or hold onto -
present, unchangeable, and
always escaping my touch.

My Dad on 9/11

What if he had been alive then,
and 90, walking the raucous
blocks from Fulton and Gold
to Fulton at Church Street,
smiling as he did, with his
fine Roman nose steady,
eyebrows a bit arched.

He would have had his chin
slightly raised, appraising
the tower set against
the sky, blue, the air
cool. He would have had
change in his pocket -
quarters - and he would
have been jingling them
anticipating coffee regular -
in NYC meaning with milk;
he might have ordered
a cheese danish brushed
with a few almonds,
lightly warmed, or maybe
a plain bagel with a spread
of cream cheese.

And he might have sat down
and opened The New York Times
and as he was reading - because
he was thorough/not a skimmer -
he would have rested in the
thrum of people walking briskly
to escalators and elevator banks
ready to swoop upwards to floor
60 and 110.

He might have finished the article,
then glanced about at all
the busy-ness...but on this
particular day he would have
been riveted to the asphalt,
frozen, unable to move,
stunned by the horror

of a plane hurtling into
the North Tower, at the noise
impact. And I don't know if

he would have backed up
or tried to run. But knowing
my dad I think he may have
tried to get to the building
to be of help if he could.
And there he would
have been, frantically
trying to go up.

In minutes he
would have been crushed,
smashed by imploding debris
of floors falling, spun out
windows crashing,
compression,
pulverized plaster,
skin, bone, flesh, blood
...and silence.

He Has Not the Grace....

That non-sentient body
seeming to loom larger
than it really is...
looming,..

has not the grace
of an elephant.
Not the sensitivity.
Nor the reverence.

That face - when not yelling,
declaiming, eyes beady,
closed in - is swallowed by
the mouth like Bacon's Pope.

But no, he is more like sickly
pudding - all florid skin with features
collapsing in like the crest of a
volcano becoming a caldera.

This man was once a boy
bright and smiling with crisp blue
eyes alive and light and flaxen
hair perfectly falling...

Where did that boy go
no longer in evidence
that has become the
man-demagogue of today?

This cobra-man with
side flanges to his head
like spit and spew is
ready to strike,

Has finger appendages
jabbing words - as if
they were spears flying
in all directions -

deadly venom flaying all
who might come before him -
even his daughter might
not remain immune.

He has won,
so he will not go away;
had he lost he would
not go away.

This man is a crash
looking for an accident
and we are the vehicles
for the demise.

POEMS:

ROBIN GRISHAM

Robin Grisham, a senior at Thomas More College, is finishing her degree in English with a Creative Writing focus. She enjoys editing, reading classic books, and spending time with her family, friends, dogs, and her two devoted lovebirds. She has a desperate desire to think critically and to create unknown manifestos. Robin is a bird among people and a person among the most colorful of birds.

Contact: robinsnest18@yahoo.com

TERRY PETERSEN

Terry Petersen is the author of *The curse under the freckles*, published in 2015 and *Stinky, rotten threats*, middle-grade fantasy, recently published through Post Mortem Press. She is a regular contributor to Piker Press, an online magazine, and maintains a blog on positive thinking at <http://terrypetersen.wordpress.com>.

Terry's aim is to dive through the muck of real life and come up with a gem.

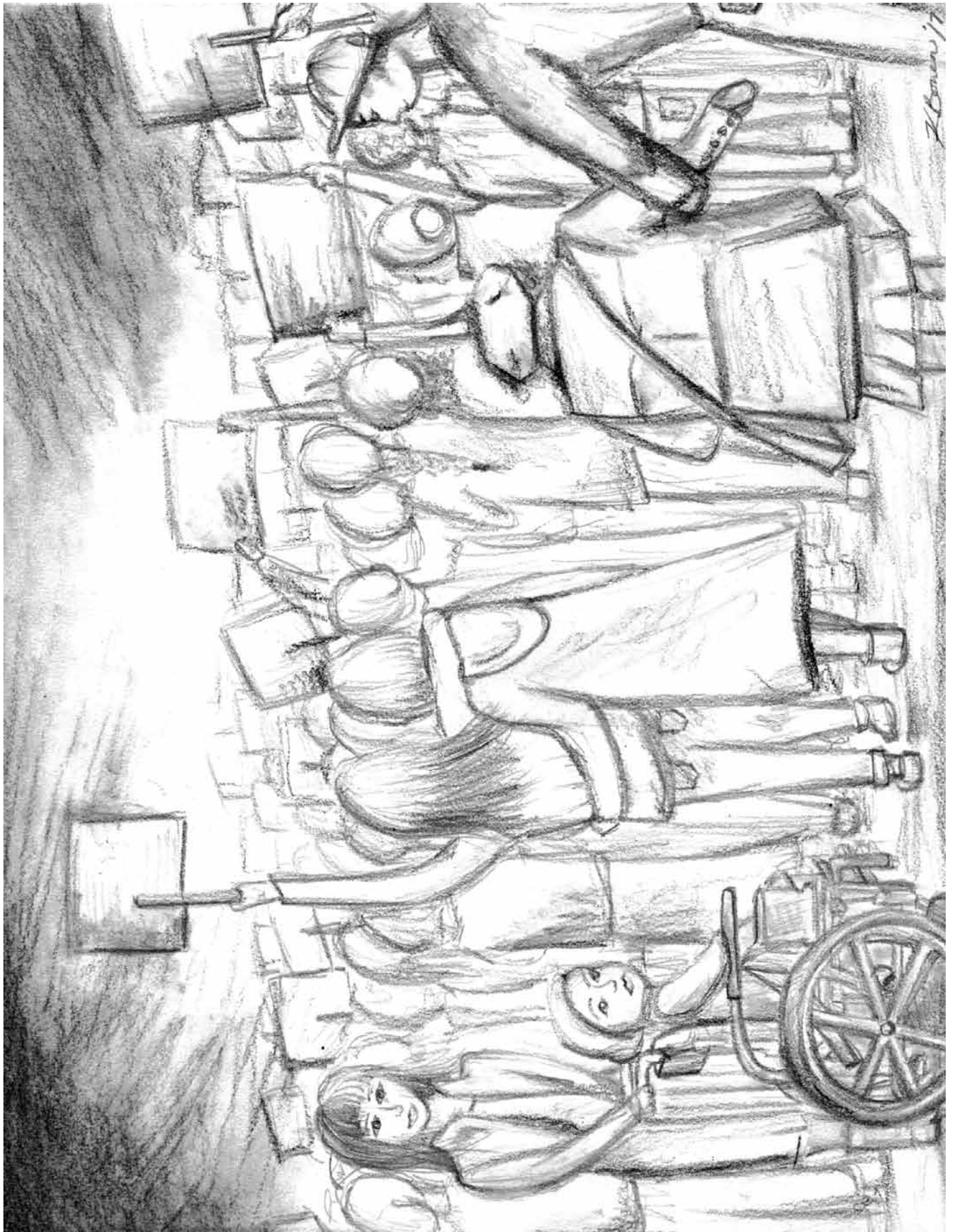
Contact: tpetersen@fuse.net

DRAWING:

KATHERINE BOWEN

Katherine Bowen; Miami University Undergraduate Program; Honors Program; Farmer School of Business; College of Creative Arts; Marketing Major; 2D Media Studies Minor.

Contact: bowenkg@miamioh.edu



A Comment

(by *Robin Grisham*)

A simple unintentional truth
Slipping from the lips of the madman
With bigger dreams in their eyes
Than a sparkle for a price.
Pointed glass cathedrals
Like Cinderella's slipper
Encompass the heart
Of one man.
Completely, idly,
And then transfixed
By a chemical power called
Love.
Four letters.
A comment.

Chosen carefully,
Delicately.
So as not to spook his beloved.
Precision
And detailed planning.
Lives that they
Shall live together.
Separated partially by unbeknownst
Terror.
Choices determining destiny
Or was it fate?

A comment.
Just a comment.
A collection of chosen letters.
Drastically change
The power of events.
For they are strong enough
To tame oceans
And wild beasts.
And to deliver the heart of the madman
On an ice-cold day
When all the woman wants
Is some warmth.

A comment.
Don't ever be afraid to speak it.

The January Women's March: From Caleb's Point of View

(by *Terry Petersen*)

My name is Caleb. I'm ten years old.
I wear a sign that says I march for my sister,
and my mom didn't make me do it.

Mom and my sister are ahead
of us in the crowd. Great-Grandma links
her left arm into my right. She holds a cane
and shuffles from one foot
to the other, an offbeat rhythm
reminding me of a scratched musical disc.

Dad helps Great-Grandma from the right.
The kind crowd gives us plenty of room.
Great-Grandma's parents died at Auschwitz.

Our family matriarch marches
in silence. I am only a child, yet
the pain of her story has leaked
into our lives. I know its depths.

A woman nods toward my sign.
*Perhaps your sister can become president
one day.* Dad and I look at one another
with the same tight-lipped understanding.

Mom pauses and waits for us to catch up.
My sister tries to rise from her wheelchair,
her legs weak enough to be made of paper.

She squeals with delight and flaps her arms
when she sees us. I don't march for my sister
to become great. I march for my sister
simply to be accepted for who she is.

Gene's Words—At His Own Funeral

(by *Terry Petersen*)

My death started in January
when bare branches caressed snow
cold as my body.

My friend, the gentle priest,
stood at one end of the casket
and asked if he blessed my head or feet.

He didn't know I laughed, hearing him
from the gnarled branches of a nearby tree,
where a bright, red cardinal and I

waited to fly together into new,
exciting places I would never be able
to explain to those left behind.

The priest had commented on my raucous
sense of humor. He paused, memory or imagination
filling in the blanks. Church space remained

reverent. Stifled laughs warmed my spirit, the chill
of my body left behind. My eulogist spoke
about schizophrenia, paranoia. I carried

the burden and pain. My friend said I
was not my diagnosis. He mentioned
common moments. Coffee, killer cigarettes, picnics,

my volatile, unstable movements
as if they had been claps of thunder
during a hymn. Something that happens,

and can be embraced as part of a larger whole.
A woman reached one arm around her husband.
Their son held his infant daughter. I carried

the baby's father as an infant. My cardinal
companion flew upward. I followed.
A voice came from a light breaking through

the winter gray. *Your fear has been buried.*
Come. I had never heard the voice.
Yet, I knew death had ended, a new life begun.

POEMS:

GERRY GRUBBS

Gerry Grubbs is an attorney practicing law in Cincinnati, Ohio. His most recent book, *The Palace of Flowers*, has just been published by Dos Madres Press. His previous collection, *The Hive Is A Book We Read For Its Honey*, also from Dos Madres, was a finalist for the Ohioana Library poetry book of the year in 2015.

contact: ggrubbs@fuse.net

VIVIAN KLINE

Vivian Kline has been an enamellist for 54 years before becoming a writer of several books. Her book *Let Freedom Sing: A 19th Century Novel Or Could It Be A Musical?* is currently becoming a musical.

Contact: viviankline@aol.com

DRAWING:

NATHANIEL J. BISCHOFF

Nathan Bischoff currently attends the University of Cincinnati DAAP for Fine arts for his bachelor's degree. He enjoys making things that are useful and solving problems. His work consists mostly of fabricated metal and wood sculpture and furniture. Nathan also occasionally paints abstract work concentrating on color and composition.

Contact: bischoj@gmail.com; www.bischoj.wixsite.com/nathanbischoff



The Soul

(by **Gerry Grubbs**)

The soul
Is like
A dark
Brewed tea
In the cup
Of the body
Longing for
A luminous
Drop
Of golden
Honey

The Heart

(by **Gerry Grubbs**)

To see the heart as hive
That must have its honey

To feel that sweet silence
Sanctuary of all

And those luminous bees
Whose music moves into
meaning
What remains unseen

The Tavern

(by **Gerry Grubbs**)

I stumbled into love's tavern
And immediately became
Entangled with those within
One taste of that inner wine
And I disappeared
And I knew
I would never
Find my way back

Age

(by **Vivian Kline**)

You are as old as you feel
Though all has a beginning and an end.
Some cultures respect old age; we try to deny it.
Body sculptors will tweak your shape
and earned wrinkles can be erased.
Yet houses very old are highly valued
And ancient trees are venerated.
Age used to be measured by rigid rules:
When boys should wear long pants
And girls put up their hair.
Now anything goes.. or comes.

How old is old? Do we need some markers?
Asians are one at birth.
Here: school at six; vote at eighteen;
Drink at twenty-one; Medicare at sixty-five.
Remember old wood burns best.
Old wine preferred.
Ripe age gives tone to old violins.
With added years a richer life begins.
The spirit mellows and old friends more valued.

We have played many parts along the way
And memories arise as time moves on.
A life well lived can be enjoyed again
And you can be as young as you feel.

POEMS:

RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague is author of sixteen collections of prose and poetry, most recently *Beasts, River Drunk Men, Garden, Burst, & Light: Sequences and Long Poems* (Dos Madres Press 2016) and *During The Recent Extinctions: New & Selected Poems 1984-2012* (Dos Madres Press, 2012) winner of The Weatherford Prize in Poetry. Richard has won several awards for his poetry. He edited two anthologies. He is Writer-in-Residence at Thomas More College.

Contact: haguekort@fuse.net

RICHARD SCHOEFF

Richard L Schoeff has dabbled in poetry most of his life agreeing with and paraphrasing the poet that 'it's difficult to get the news from poetry, but you can die for lack of what is found there.' He lives in Cincinnati in an old house on a hillside that is moving slowly down toward the river.

Contact: schoeffrl@gmail.com

DRAWING:

ANDREW YAKSCOE

Drew Yakscoe was born and raised in Columbus, Ohio. He moved to Cincinnati where he received, in the Spring of 2015, his Bachelor's of Fine Arts and Art Education Licensure from its University. Currently employed with the Cincinnati Art Museum's Division of Learning and Interpretation, Drew continues to develop as an educator while making two dimensional artworks that investigate his history with cancer and the development of his career as an artist.

Contact: drewyaks@icloud.com; www.lookwhatidrew.com

GREATEST SHOW ON EARTH



Andrew Yarkos '17

USA  FOREVER

Fare Thee Well

(by *Richard Hague*)

Goodbye *blushing rose*,
you besotted idiot, you;
goodbye to *cute puppies*,
may you die of flies;
goodbye to *he went to his reward*—
look, after the election,
Uncle Bloveld ate sixty headache pills
and washed them down with drain cleaner,
and a hole the size of a hubcap
burst open in his belly
and he was, briefly, better.

So goodbye to all niceties and euphemisms,
goodbye to *May it please you, sit down?*
in the Senate hall void of wills;
goodbye to *Honestly, what do you think?*
in the Cabinet echo chambers;
goodbye to *Excuse me and sorry and my fault*:

All such sincere niceties have henceforth
been trumped. Grace lies strangled
in a back room where immigrants huddle and crouch,
and Class is no longer, except as in a liars' kindergarten,
which has taken over
everything.

NOT A CLOWN

(by *Richard Schoeff*)

Be good to get a leader
Not a clown
do more things with simple wisdom
comin' down
Not the rule-less rule of a child's playground

Be good to get a leader
Not a clown

It be Good to see without the smoke
That Makes it feel more like a joke
The way they feed us all the crap
That's coming down

Outbreaks

(by *Richard Hague*)

The theater of the mind
has been closed: dumbed down
party-line textbooks
obscure the wild radiance of history;
Prezis trivialize the mysteries
of mitochondria, render You-Tube silly
the vast woes of *Moby-Dick*.

In the Renaissance,
outbreaks of Black Death (and Puritanism)
closed the Rose, the Globe,
The Theater, sending folk home
in fear of death and hasty burial.

Now, it's the New Death,
hip, blue-jeaned
zip-driven technophiles
and MOOCers
who infect us with machines
and software, filling schools
with false idols, wiring concentration
off the syllabus,
raking their gelt across
the mute, naked desks of teachers.

It be good to get a leader
Not a clown

Wave our banners as we walk
All proud and free
In our shorts and shirts
From way across the sea
Where they work and sweat
Without a pot to pee
Wishing they all could be like you and me

Waving banners wearing shorts
All proud and free

It be good to get a leader
Who could see
Do more things for all the people
you and me
some without the shorts and shirts
and pots to pee
and the banners we could wave
all proud and free

It be good to get a leader
who could see

It's good to go through days
not being sad
It's good to rest your head
not feeling bad
so some people look away
every day they look away
thinking what they don't see
won't be bad
thinking if they don't see
then they can't be can't be sad

It be good to get a leader
who could feel
the things the people need for real for real
a sense of hope not doom
of safety when you walk into a room
of fairness in the game
everybody just the same
health and food and shelter
looking out for one another
taking good care of the world
like it's the only one we got

It be good to get a leader
not a clown

so

Take a deep breath
Look up and look around
You're alive here in life
Don't let it down

They'll come to you and say
This is the way this is the way
They'll point and wave you on
Wave you on
But take a deep breath
Take a deep breath
Look up and look around

This is your song
So sing it strong
Oh sing it strong

Take a deep breath
Take a deep breath
Look up and look around

POEMS:

RICHARD HOSKIN

Author Richard Hoskin is from a family of journalists and historians in Cornwall, the Celtic tip of Britain. He has enjoyed a lifetime of writing for profit and pleasure, notably his major historical novel *The Miner & the Viscount*. He came to America with P&G and now lives in Kentucky with his wife Penny.

Contact: cornishchronicle@gmail.com; www.thecornishchronicle.com

MICHAEL MURPHY

Mike Murphy lives in Georgetown, Ohio, with his partner Birdie Fetterhoff. He gardens a bit, reads a lot, and thinks that religion is every person's opportunity to explore a greater reality.

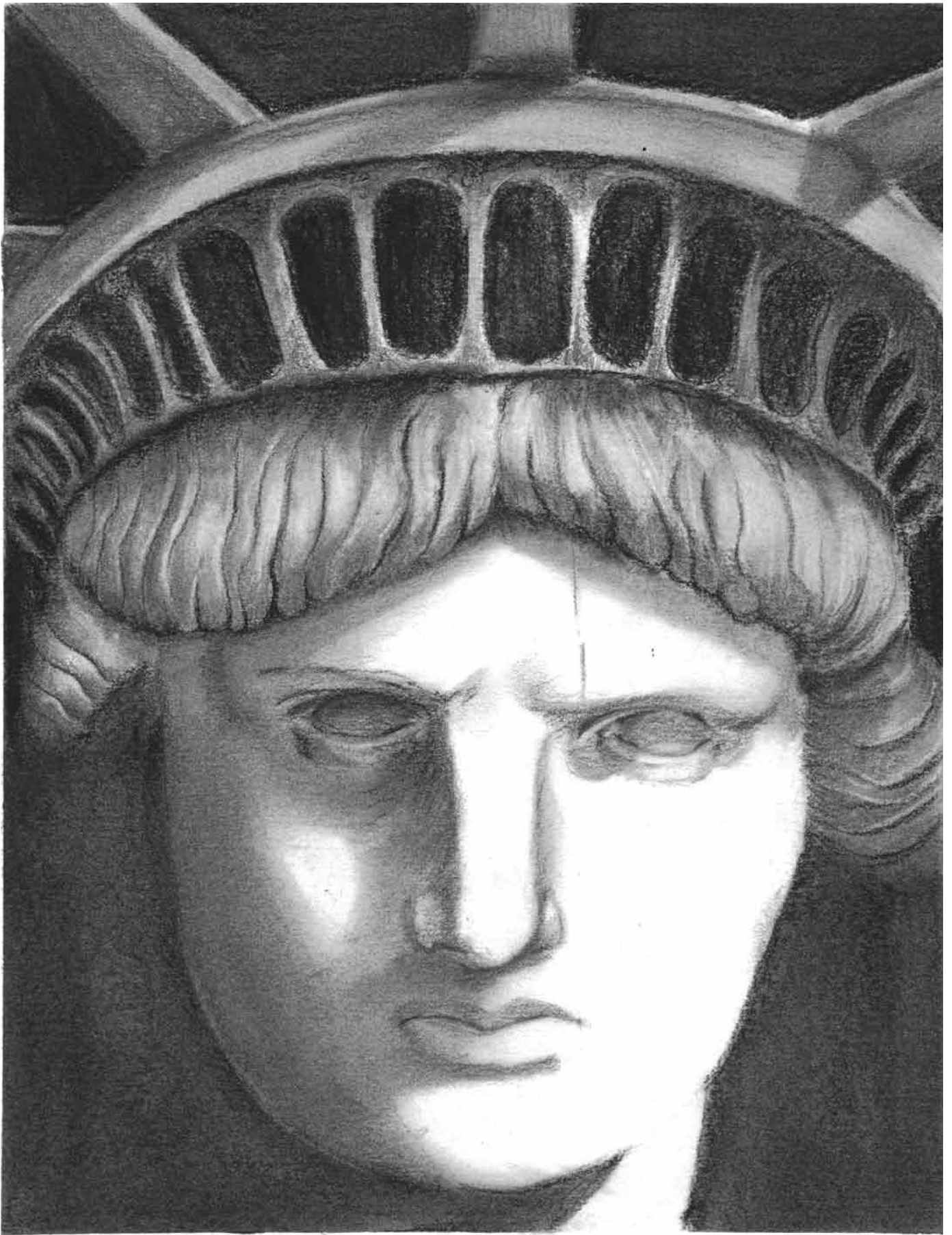
Contact: michael1938murphy@gmail.com

DRAWING:

MACARTNEY GREER

Macartney Greer is currently a Fine Arts undergraduate at the University of Cincinnati, DAAP. To further her work in Fine Arts, she is also pursuing a minor degree in Art History. Macartney's work is focused in printmaking and illustration; she also dabbles in fiber works.

Contact: macartneygreer@gmail.com



Macartney Greer

The New Colossus

(by **Emma Lazarus**, New York City, 1883)

Not like the brazen giant of Greek fame
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Here at our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty woman with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoned lightning, and her name
Mother of Exiles.
From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide welcome; her mild eyes
 command
The air-bridged harbor that twin cities frame,
"Keep, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With silent lips.
"Give me your tired, your poor,
Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
Wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Send these, the homeless, tempest-tossed to
 me,
I lift my lamp beside the golden door!"

The Newer Colossus

(by **Richard Hoskin**, Kentucky, 2017)

Just like the brazen giant of Greek fame
With conquering limbs astride from land to land;
Beyond our sea-washed, sunset gates shall stand
A mighty guardian with a torch, whose flame
Is the imprisoning taser, and her name
Mother of Patriots.
From her beacon-hand
Glow world-wide domain; her stern eyes
 command
The fortress harbor that twin cities frame,
"Yield, ancient lands, your storied pomp!" cries she
With snarling lips.
"Take back your ignorant, your poor,
Your huddled masses presuming to live for free,
Keep the wretched refuse of your teeming shore,
Take these, the homeless, feckless, idle back from
 me,
I clamp my lock upon the iron door!"

To Be a Caring & Sharing, Free-Will Human Society--Or Not

(by **Mike Murphy**)

Ages ago, we volunteered to
Come as souls from stars afar
To this Earth
To incarnate
In this Human Experiment,
Evolving as early hominids, *Homo erectus*.

Later, some visiting Advanced Annunaki Beings,
About 300,000 years ago,
Chose to genetically modify us into Homo sapiens,
"A slave species of the gods,"
As Telling aptly puts it.
We left some fossilized bones & tools in Tanzania's Olduvai Gorge.

Our tale is picked up in
The 6,000-year-old clay tablets of ancient Sumer,
Later greatly condensed in the Old Testament;
Still later re-told & expanded in Sitchen's modern interpretation.

Seems the Annunaki came from the distant planet Nibiru,
To mine gold in Africa,
To make a gold dust “atmospheric shield”
For the home planet, Nibiru,
Against deadly cosmic radiation,
Much as the windows of earth’s space capsules
Are now flecked with gold dust to shield astronauts.

We newly-created humans were short on instinct,
But long on curiosity
With a definite self-regulatory ability,
And were allowed to wander the planet, learning by experience,
Leaving tools & bones, & occasional markings here & there.

A number of bands of humans were encouraged--
Sometimes by the Annunaki “gods,”
Sometimes by other Advanced Visitors to Earth’s “experimental playground”--
To develop skills in agriculture, technology,
Mathematics, astronomy, architecture, even literacy.

And the watching Annunaki & Other Advanced Beings,
Offered varying recipes of self-administered guidelines,
Directly or through intermediaries, to guide their free-will progeny.

Akkadia’s King Hammurabi claims
The Annunaki gods Anu & Enlil urged him to
Create laws “for the well-being of the people.”
So, Hammurabi provided 282 rigid laws, chiseled in stone, c. 1750 BCE.

Yahweh, an all-powerful, solitary, but un-seen god of the Hebrews,
Frugally provided only Ten Commandments,
Thus requiring greater discrimination among his followers, for self-regulation, c. 1450 BCE.

Jesus, born a Jew, claimed his father was God, &
Even more prudently, provided only two commandments:
Love thy God; & Love thy neighbor, leaving still more to creative choice.
He also taught us to use “born again” forgiveness, of self & of others, c. 30 CE.

Deganawida, a stuttering, outcast, pacifist Huron,
Managed, with Hiawatha’s help,
To persuade the five warring Iroquois tribes to choose to accept
“The Great Law of Peace” & brotherhood; & thereby
Founded the powerful North American Iroquois League, c. 1480CE,
Which greatly influenced the shaping of the United States of America.

Still other guides offered other guidelines to other bands.

Various civilizations took root & grew & flourished on Earth:
In Sumer,
In Egypt,
In Hindu-land,
And China, &
The Americas.

And the Annunaki & Others kept a distant watch on
This still-evolving experiment....

The experiment's aim goes beyond Earth, to Mars,
Where hugely obvious remnant
Humanoid & geometric monuments
Can still be seen...
Clues apparently designedly left by the Annunaki or Others,,

These clues now fire human aspirations,
Now we are in our adolescence,
Now, in our "self-regulatory" stage of "choice" ...
Not in the stage of "obedience," but of "choice,"
Beckoning us to Mars & beyond....

To even go beyond the solar system,
Inspiring us humans to choose to become the
Cosmic Explorer Race, exploring the universe,
Reaching for the stars,
Returning to the stars....

All the turmoil & challenges
Now facing humanity on Earth--
Ideologically, politically, environmentally--
Are a great test,
Testing whether we can
Manage to survive,
Whether we can
Have the wisdom to choose to safely
Cross this uncertain adolescent threshold.
This will be no automatic graduation. No.
This must be our "conscious choice" graduation....

Will we consciously choose to steward the Earth?
And also consciously choose to create a
Sustainable, & not suicidal, civilization?
Will we choose to have a caring & sharing society?
And not an abusive society?

Will we also choose a civilization that encourages freedom of speech?
As well as a system that requires critical thought?
Plus the regular practice of a peaceful & critical & rational public dialog?
Will we choose to create a civilization based on a popular free-will democracy of choice?
But not a theocracy of obedience?
In short, will we choose to be
Civilized Free-will Earthlings, or not
Before we begin to roam the universe.....?

This is the contemporary question,
The question of the moment,
The key to the whole experiment,
And the question that will decide our future:

In short, can a caring & sharing, free-will human society survive, and flourish in the universe?

POEMS:

CAROL IGOE

Carol Igoe has been an advocate for justice and inclusion for people with disabilities for 50 years. Now that she is retired, she looks for community ties to continue that and to build a strong voice to speak out for peace and justice. It can be hard to find poetry when there is such turmoil and risk in our country. But there is a growing and successful effort among artists to display the human struggle and ways it succeeds in love.

Contact: ckigoe@gmail.com

LYNN ROBBINS

Lynn Robbins is the author of *Two Plus Two Is Fear: How anxiety stole a voice and poetry gave it back* (a memoir); *When You Sit To Write: Poems of support and inspiration for writers*; and a series of four inspirational gift books called *Wishes*. A water lover, Lynn lives near two small lakes in Cold Spring, KY.

Contact: lynnrobbins@zoomtown.com

DRAWING:

ZACH SAWAN

Zach Sawan's work deals with themes of secrecy, escape and otherwise mysterious happenings. Utilizing a wide range of media, his goal is to offer repose to viewers by creating images and experiences that are not completely resolved.

Contact: zachsawan@gmail.com; www.zachsawan.com



Zach Sawan

Watching the Oscar Shorts at Memorial Hall 2017

(by *Carol Igoe*)

Comfortable, the hall bedecked
with grandeur from our past,
We watch as films
Document
Human need and human care.

Extremis:

We watch
Lives dissolve,
Desire and hope intuited,
Eked out from the edge of death and life;
Talking/listening across silences
To the flickering breath of a dying body,
The will of the human spirit.
“Do you want the tube removed?”

Rescue at Lesbos:

We weep,
Watch sailors
Rescue and retrieve
Bodies, still living mothers, children,
In great peril, adrift,
Dark Ocean sweeping over and against
them.
They are pulled aboard against great odds.
Where is the world?
Where are the open doors?
Where are our welcoming hands?

Joe's Violin

Breath abated,
We watch the story unfold,
An elderly Jewish survivor of the death
camps
Hears again
The song his mother sang for him
Before the Holocaust,
Grieg's "Solveig's Song".
Now played by a school girl,
today's survivor,
Today's refugee, in the Bronx,
Playing for Joe on his old violin,
with love.

Dreams of Freedom

(by *Lynn Robbins*)

Tall, black, distinguished-looking
in his dark suit, the man steps
into the busy street, the gutter,
and stands there looking down,
rush-hour traffic slowing, channeling
itself around him. No horns honk,
but surely there's a curse or two,
wondering what the hell he's doing.

Then I see it: there, on the sidewalk,
near the curb, a little bird, a square
little bird with its shoulders hunched.
I can't tell if he's sick or hurt or has
lost his nest, but he's just met his new
mother, his big, new, black-man mother
who shields him from harm.

I drive on, smiling, and imagine
them now springing together from
the curb, soaring side by side in
a field of blue—this big black man,
this little hunched bird—as they lead
each other (and me) to freedom.

Cowboys and Indians Revisited

(by Lynn Robbins)

We played it as kids,
our misled childhood power trip.
Us always the cowboys.
Nobody wanted to be the indians,
their fate sealed by Westerns,
where whites circled their wagons
and waited for the cavalry to come
roust the Indians, wipe them out,
march off any survivors
to land deemed worthless.
We kids knew better than
to want to be an indian.

Time passes. Things change.
Kids grow up. But whites
again go after the indians,
the Natives, Americans, want
more of what little we gave them,
and this time the Natives circle
their wagons, their tipis and tents
and yurts and take a stand
for water and sacred land,
the same stand as before,
same land as before, and
they say *No* to the white man
and his oil, his guns, his police
and hosing of them in bitter cold.
Say *No* and stand firm, though
freezing, frozen, arrested, shaking,
the bugle call going out again,
but for the indians this time,
new cavalry marching in, the
white man's veterans fighting
again for our country, for the
Native Americans' country,
for *their* lives and land, the power-
breaking white men backing down,
millions of us grateful, cheering,
wanting to be Indians today.

Act of Peace

(by Lynn Robbins)

What if all the world's soldiers grew tired,
gave up their guns and war games,
dropped their weapons in the desert,
the jungle, on a mountain, on the plain,
and stood up tall and unafraid, shedding
helmets and bullets and grenades,
striding at ease from their bunkers
till they stood toe to toe, face to face
with the one they once called enemy,
looking into their eyes and shaking hands,
then sitting, knees touching, sharing
pictures of loved ones, telling stories
of the place each calls home.

What if they kept on trusting
and no one said *Stop*, if they broke
bread together, eating from the ends
toward the middle, no line drawn,
taking only what was needed,
needing only what they took. Or if
they built a fire warm between them,
one bringing tinder, the other the flint,
then slept on the bare ground unguarded,
as stars dripped a healing light on their lips,
prayers of peace unconsciously licked
then swallowed, fuel for sacred bodies
that might never again feed on war.

POEMS:

NANCY JENTSCH

Nancy Jentsch has taught German and Spanish at Northern Kentucky University for over 30 years. She has published numerous scholarly articles and her short fiction and poetry have appeared in journals such as *The Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *the Aureorean*, **82 Review* and *Eclectica*. She has two chapbooks forthcoming in spring 2017. Nancy believes in the power of the arts to heal and unite and she is grateful for the opportunity to participate in this project.

Contact: jentsch@nku.edu

MARY-JANE NEWBORN

Mary-Jane Newborn practices and promotes liberation veganism, materials and energy conservation, reuse and recycling, and finding humor wherever possible. Methane production by anaerobic digestion of all currently wasted organic matter excites her considerably.

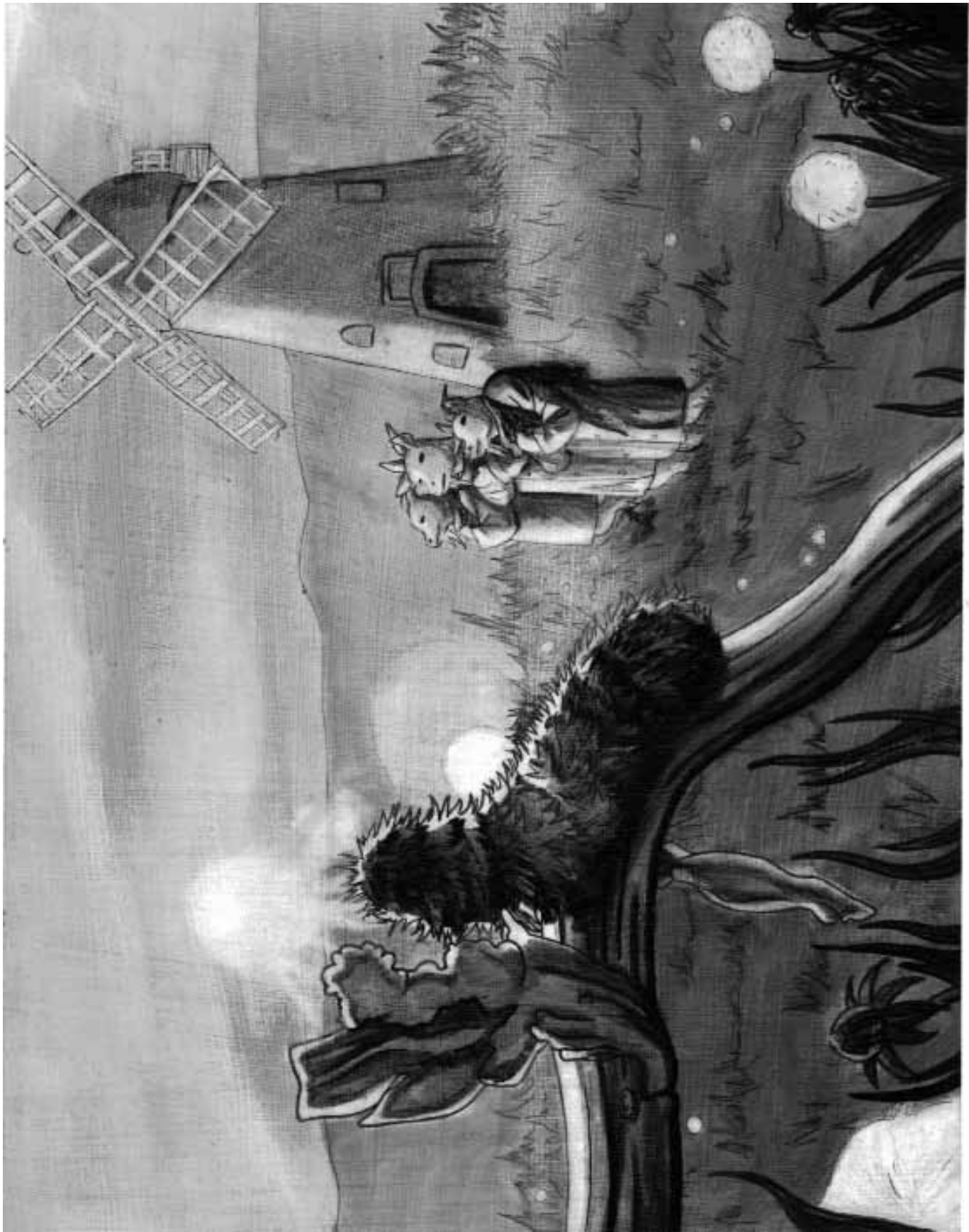
Contact: veganearth@roadrunner.com

DRAWING:

TIANA TADAKI

Tiana Tadaki was born in Hawaii and raised in Kentucky. Homeschooled from second grade until college, it allowed her to spend a lot of time studying and creating art. Ever since she was a child, art has been her passion. Tiana was always encouraged by her parents to follow her dreams.

Contact: tjtadaki@yahoo.com



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Spring 2016

(by *Nancy Jentsch*)

The wooly bear predicts the weather
goats grow coats according to the coming
 winter's cold
so too did this year's daffodils
bloom intent with flame and fragrance
answer the spring chill
cushion against bigotry's barbed spears
overshadow obscenity's putrid ooze
grow tall despite weeds of deceit
bow in welcome before the sobbing wall of words
rising to divide us from them

If spring vigor forewarns doom
let my garden sport a meager start
a blanket spread pristine
where rain and birdsong pool and ponder
a better season

Done

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

You brought me into being
first, by squatting inside a fake cow rump
on which you had seduced a bull to mount,
and you caught his deceived ejaculation;
second, you stuck your rubber gloved arms
up to the shoulders into my mother's rear,
one in her rectum for guiding,
one in her vagina, holding a sperm gun
to shoot my father's seed into her womb,
a double rape on both my houses.

You kept my mother pregnant constantly,
so she would go on producing milk,
and injected her with engineered steroids
until her swollen udder touched
the filthy concrete floor,
and her bones disintegrated from calcium loss.

A few hours after I was born,
you separated us, tearing both our hearts,

Astronomers' Silence

(by *Nancy Jentsch*)

The astronomers' silence is a lie.
They see it.
We feel it.
Our planet has escaped its orbit,
hurtles unbound by principles.

Videos of beheadings bleed from our screens.
Teddy Bears cheer in Valentine's Day S & M.
Pornography sears bestseller lists.
Neighbors extort life with toxic grains of opioids.

Our Styx-bound planet
convulses with jackhammered
waste water wells,
weeps as mountaintops are sacrificed

so the last shower ever can run hot.

and fed me blood so you could have her milk,
and chained me in a darkened stall
where I couldn't even turn around,
so my muscles would stay weak and tender
and my anemic flesh be palatably pale.

You drugged me with sex/growth hormones
to force adolescence on an infant,
the quicker to reach market weight.
You threw me into a truck
with many dazed others,
for the first and only brief time
part of a herd,
glimpsing the sky at last,
dead calves stumbling
into the slaughterhouse.

You shot a captive bolt into my brain,
hoisted me up by one leg,
slit my throat,
drained my blood,
skinned me,
dismembered me,
packed me,
sold me,
and now my body parts sizzle
on a grill.

I am so done.

Realities

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

Urban environmentalism is
sweeping up the broken glass
from a smashed whiskey bottle in the street.

Harvesting fallen leaves from the road
to build up soil in my backyard.

Composting the littered used condom.

Sweeping up rich topsoil from the gutter
back onto the Earth
before the big machine comes along
to whisk it up, up and away
(although there is no away)
while singing quietly to myself,
"This land was your land,
this land's now my land."

And picking up the little baggie
with the hole in the bottom,
from which its precious contents
were extracted,
and taking it to Kroger
for recycling.

POEMS:

NANCY JOHANSON

Nancy Johanson, artist and poet, lives in Clifton, Cincinnati, Ohio. Her book of poems, *Wild Grape Jelly Sky, White Stars* tracks the “ecstatically beautiful into its home in the ordinary hour...and shines the light of hope ‘for those who journey/ from anywhere/to here and back,’” writes poet, Annie Stapleton. Nancy’s earlier book, *Light Showings: Moments In Divine Presence* offers contemporary visions “...profound in their simplicity yet deeply spiritual,” says poet, Edwina Gateley.

Contact: nancyhjohanson@gmail.com; www.nancyhjohansonpoems.com

RICHARD WESTHEIMER

Dick Westheimer lives, gardens and writes with his wife, Debbie, with whom he raised five children, hundreds of chickens, and vegetables. When not playing bluegrass with his neighbors, Dick devotes his spare time to his day job and to working with local organizations that enrich the community as a whole.

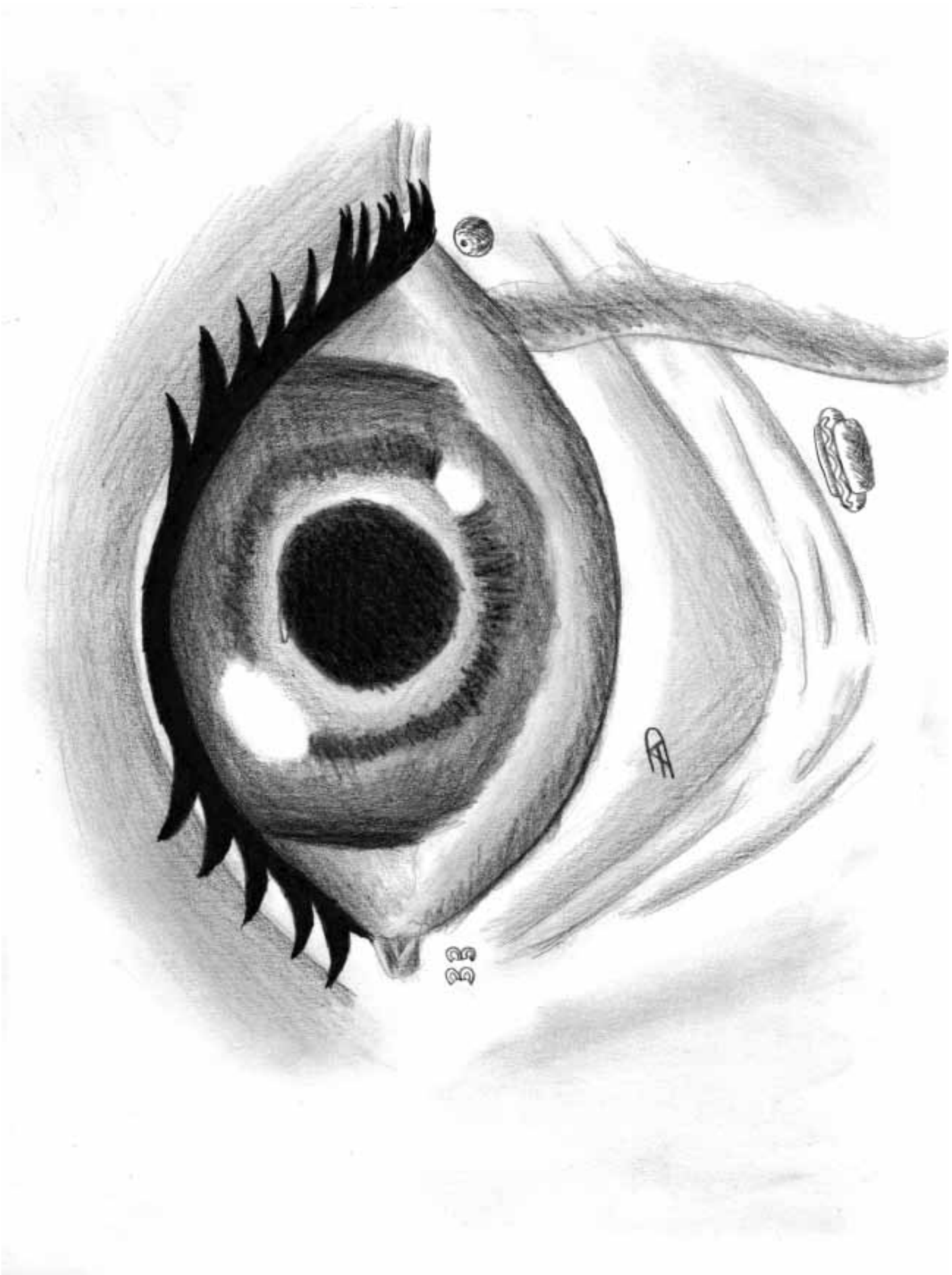
Contact: dick@westheimers.net

DRAWING:

ELIAS A. DEAN

Elias A. Dean is a born and raised Cincinnati native. His artwork is a blend of surrealism and Japanese manga. His goal is to use his artwork as a vessel to showcase the talents that he believes God has given him. Elias likes to describe himself as a Christ following, Japanese loving, European manga artist, trapped inside an American’s body!

Contact: heavenboundhobbit@gmail.com;
www.heavenboundhobbit.wixsite.com/eadean



Real Butter

(by *Nancy Johanson*)

“Who ordered hot dogs,” a woman below us shouts.
Hot dogs pass hand over hand
to folks packed on the top steps.
Roars rise from the half million pilgrims
on the Mall, half a block away.
Thrilled to be in this world community
we cheer with joy.

Earlier, on the jammed magic Metro,
room is found for five more folks at every stop.
We grab the pole by the door
brace ourselves against braking.
Eager to march, we disembark and stop;
a thousand of us packed underground, unable to move.
There is no room left on the ground.
I pray to counter claustrophobia.
Sweltering, we take baby steps for forty-five minutes
reach a broken escalator and climb toward sunlight.
Everyone is so kind and peaceful, I say to Ted,

“In *this* crowd, every stranger is a friend we haven’t met yet.”

Next day, fighting an awful cold
I hug our granddaughters goodbye and cry.
In western Maryland, we find a Family Dollar
search for vitamin C which they don’t have.
A kind, country woman points me to “our good store.”
Brightly lit, it has everything.
But peoples faces are shadowed by hardship.
Out of the gloom, a stout, eight year old boy
walks up to me. His face lit from within,
his voice innocence itself. “Mam,” he asks,
looking at me, his eyes filled with trust.
“Mam, is this real butter?”

At the check out, the woman behind me
stares at the one item in her cart—
a cake with red, blue and white frosting.
“Someone’s having a birthday?” I ask.
Her face brightens. “My husband.
I took my lunch break to get him a cake.
He’ll be so sprised.” She sighs.
“He’s at home all day now.
We been married thirty three years.

I told him when we got married,
It's till death do us part or I'll kill you!"
We laugh.

I tell her we went to Washington to visit our grandchildren.
"Did you get to go to th'inauguration?" she asks hopefully.
"No, we didn't."
She frowns. "That's too bad. But at least you got to see
your grandkids."
"That was the best part."
I lift a bag of oranges, juice, vitamin C out of the cart,
reach into my pocket and pull out the bills I stuffed in.
It's not enough.
"Here, I'll put back the oranges," I tell the clerk.
"Don't do that." The woman behind me says.
She reaches into her old black purse
pulls out two singles and the exact change.
"Take it," she says. "It's just two dollars."
I look into her eyes. "Thank you."

I climb back into the car
twist the lid off the vitamin C.
"You know what, Ted?
In that store, every stranger was a—"
I tear up.

February 13, 2017, Cincinnati, Ohio

(by *Richard Westheimer*)

On the corner of Fourth and Walnut
a street corner trumpeter
lets loose small bursts -
note following note in no
apparent pattern.

His rests between notes,
in intervals marking his own time
to some internal metronome -
its escapement impelled
by a long since sprung spring,
too tightly wound once,
and now - not relaxed but
wholly bereft of its former fettle
tick ticking time in erratic
pattern.

Blasts and bursts
some sustained
some faded
some purely pitched
some flaccid and flat:
all separated by
inhalation, sigh,
and inspired by
some distant voice.

The glint off the trumpet's bell
a reminder: The same sun shines
on the trumpeter and me.
The chaos rooting his desultory
melody is mine. He is
mine as much as I am his.*

* Thomas Merton wrote of his March 18,
1958 revelation in Louisville, Kentucky:
"*...at the corner of Fourth and Walnut...
I was suddenly overwhelmed with the
realization that I loved all those people,
that they were mine and I theirs, that we
could not be alien to one another even
though we were total strangers...There is
no way of telling people that they are all
walking around shining like the sun.*"

Headlines

(by *Richard Westheimer*)

"I have seen a lot of death
but not this thing," wept the headline,
citing what "a photographer saw
when a rescue vessel went into action
off the Libyan coast."

Directly
beneath that headline,
still above the fold,
another: "You Can Now Be Buried
Alongside Your Pet."

Yes,
In New York, at least,
you and your pooch
can cross the waters of the afterlife,
just as migrants
ply the depths
of the Syrian Sea.

Your dog,
who is much like a child to you,
"like having a kid" you say,
your dog and you can rest together
much as a Somali woman
and her child can lie
together,
"asphyxiated
from the crush aboard"
in the hold of a smuggler's boat.

May we all rest.
In peace.

All direct quotations from:
<http://www.nytimes.com/2016/10/06/world/europe/migrants-mediterranean.html>

The 100th Caller

(by *Richard Westheimer*)

What if your drive to the mall
and the carbon you send sailing
or your next cell phone charge
will be what tips the scales?

Today was that day.
Some super-storm surge took a boy -
a boy playing outside his lowland home
in some lowland country
far away

The sea rose to meet the boy
where he played
and he was swept to sea.

Tomorrow will be that day,
again - that day when my small
act of accumulation
or your humble draw
of a coal-fueled phone charge
will be the one, the tipping point,
the single straw that slides us
all into the sea.

POEMS:

JERRY JUDGE

Jerry Judge, a Cincinnati based social worker and writer, has had seven poetry chapbooks published and has published poems or fiction in over fifty journals. He volunteers at two no kill animal shelters (STAF & OAR) and is on the board for Mamluft & Co Dance and on the Advisory Board for The Council on Child Abuse.

Jerry is an active member of the Cincinnati Writers Project and The Greater Cincinnati Writers League

Contact: jerryj871@aol.com

CAROL FEISER LAQUE

Carol Feiser Laque's most recent collection of poetry is titled *Mother of Pearl* (Circumference Press, 2017). In Chicago she conducts workshops in the community and in the schools. She welcomes anyone to visit her in the Windy City.

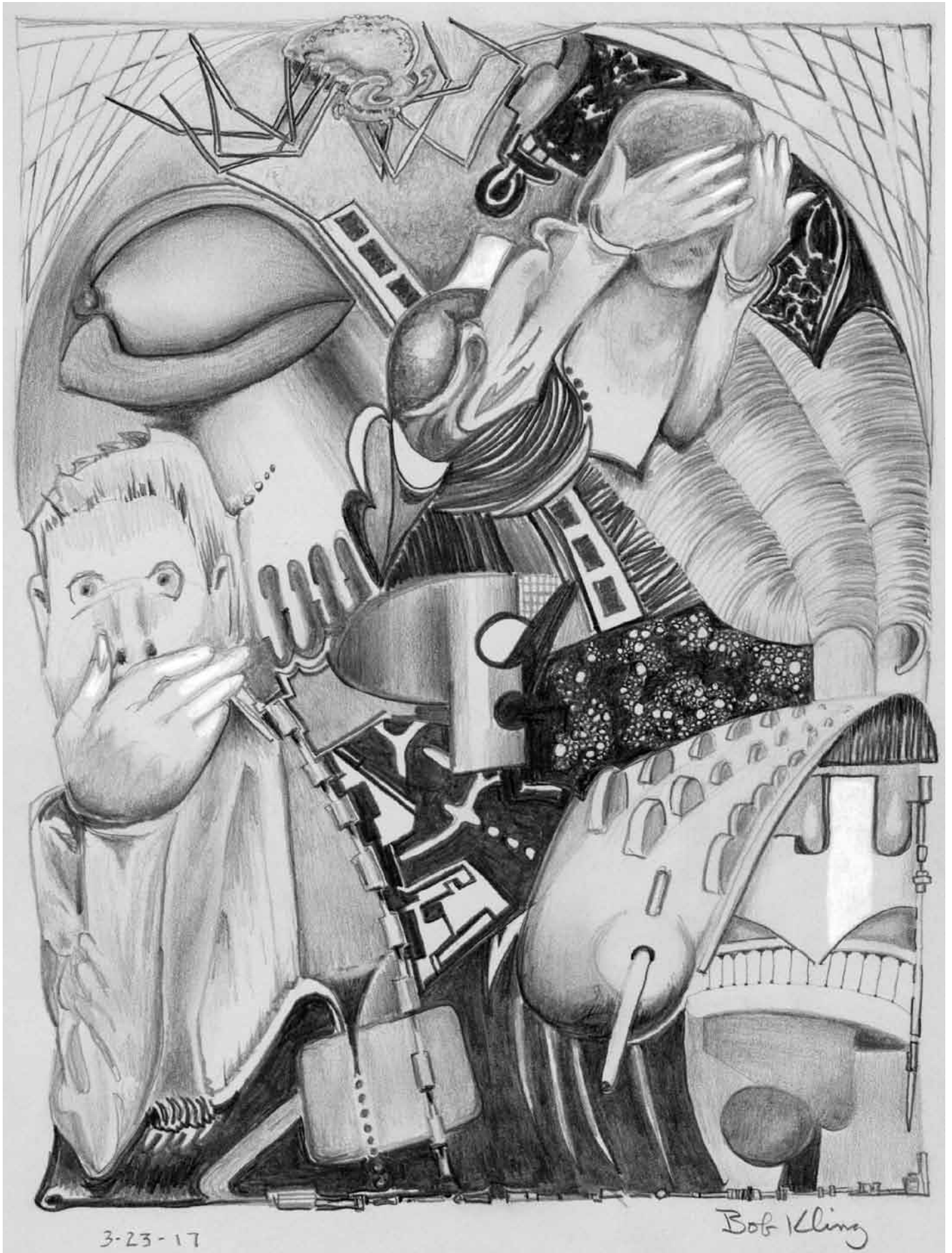
Contact: carolfeiserlaque@icloud.com

DRAWING:

ROBERT KLING

Bob Kling is always happy to indulge his urge to make and draw things that might provoke thought beyond the mere image depicted. He feels lucky to contribute to the always worthwhile projects of SOS ART on peace and justice.

Contact: rkling@cinci.rr.com



3-23-17

Bob Kling

Round One

(by *Jerry Judge*)

Yesterday I read that the wealth
of the nominated Cabinet Heads
exceeds the whole lower third of our nation.

I also read a fellow writer's essay in *The Sun*
about her ninety-four year old father
and ninety-one year old mother.

Her parents shared a vivid dream and couldn't
remember who actually had the dream.
The sun sparkled off the snow.

It was beautiful.
I saw it, too, as I got up this morning
to fight what must be fought.

Terror

(by *Jerry Judge*)

I am terrified of King Cobras and Republicans –
faster than they look with mammoth heads, huge
jaws which strike with an overload of poison.

I'm unnerved by prostitutes and Republicans
with tits of steel disguising heartless vaginas
that can give you VD in fifty ways.

I shudder when I think of the tortoise and Republicans.
Trickery and treachery always come into play
to grab victory despite the odds.

I run from black widow spiders and Republicans just because

Boiling water and Republicans are scary –
just one instant of inattention
gets you scorched.

Republicans and Ebola are horrifying –
can destroy you from within and give no hope
of survival, no more joy or even a last dance.

I fear I fear I fear Trump.

(Written during the Republican primaries 2016)

What I Needed

(by *Jerry Judge*)

I know. I know what Trump
tweeted today. Yes, I heard
what he called journalists.

I am aware of what Steve Bannon plans
and the real meaning of Alt Right.

Yet, last night the moon snuck into my dark
room
bringing light, solace and silent eloquence.
I joined the stars, felt peace for one night.

Tamara Jo Goldey

(by *Carol Feiser Laque*)

My little brother cannot
go to real school yet
"D G Baby D" is what
we call him.

He wants to be a fireman
like uncle Jazz Love.
We live in Chicago. My
hair is fixed in little braids.

My favorite day is
Halloween. I was
a ghost. This year I got
a pink, blue, green wig.

I collected rubber spiders
to be a witch. First
grade, Mrs. Sweet scared me.
I love to trick and treat.

Tomorrow I will be
watching cartoons. A
bullet shot through
the wall will kill me.

This poem never ends.

The Orphan

(by *Carol Feiser Laque*)

My family is buried alive
leaving me a grizzly orphan
whose hair stands up
in the wind.

Lay me down horizontally
falling into graves
so I can
rise again.

In this garden's tide
holding flowers to hide -
my blood red lips
chant.

Words fall like petals
watching, listening to the soul of my child.
My life
is an
unpaid tax.

Children Alive

(by *Carol Feiser Laque*)

The morning wears
All Souls' Day -
slant of season.

From a bridge of wishes
children circle
hand over hand.

Childbirth consumes
the moon's cycles -
the crescents' magic.

Over my bruised life,
flies buzz and drone
the size of dragons.

POEMS:

LONNA D. KINGSBURY

Lonna D. Kingsbury lives, writes and assists in Countering the Silence of injustice throughout the Greater Cincinnati area and far beyond. She reads yearly at her birthplace in Chicago and the beauty of her adopted home Ohio feeds her soul. Lonna remains the Second Congressional Poet Laureate of Ohio, authoring several bodies of work and is available for presentations and workshops.

Contact: lonna@kingsburyproductions.com

LISA PRANTL

Lisa Prantl, a Cincinnati native, was encouraged and inspired to write by her Pleasant Hill Elementary school teacher, Mrs. Beckman. She has a BA in English from the University of Cincinnati (1980), and is winner of that university's Elsie B. Westheimer Short Story Prize. Lisa began to focus on writing poetry again in 2016 after becoming active with Women Writing for (a) Change.

Contact: peace.lap@gmail.com

DRAWING:

SAMANTHA HAYES

Sammi Hayes is an artist hailing from Cincinnati, Ohio, who specializes in printmaking and illustration. Sammi likes to make work incorporating plants, natural history, pattern making, and the human figure.

Contact: hayes2sm@mail.uc.edu; hayesfineart.weebly.com



Sammi Hayes

Mixed Media Report

(by *Lonna Kingsbury*)

The poets and the visuals
metrically expand
expletives of massive bleatings
always in askance
while the videos roll . . .
rehearsed
prestaged
reflective
norms
ensuring dark contrasts
as shown
and soon the questions flow . . .
Who makes such calls?
What prompts assent?
When do kind souls acquiesce?
Where are those who stand up bravely?
Why are those defiant killed?
How can this happen?
Chilled!
The poet questions . . .
Why?

Who grants such manic heartless urges?
What fosters barbarous hatred spewed?
When are some reduced to bloodshed?
Where does progress cross the line?
How could this happen in our life-time?
The poet questions . . .

Why?

Alarms

(by *Lisa Prantl*)

The alarm sings
and I swing my legs
over the edge of the bed
in a careless arc
echoing the crescent of sunrise
my head lifts to dim, watery light
and life demands
how, how to proceed in calm

Greeting the day in solitude and silence
is easier than hearing words and meeting eyes
yet, I drive with NPR and talking heads
accelerating and braking in concert
with the ideas of the day
and dregs of the times
I gaze directly at the barista,
oncoming driver, gas station attendant,
across the table at a meeting
each blink a liquid wash
of fragile, transparent panes
windows to thought and emotion

Hours stack like cards on edge
a precarious foundation easily toppled
by the huff and puff society endures
tests of individual content and quality
rattling glass houses
endeavoring to disquiet my calm

Onward, hours wind
TV tickers breaking news
with a bloated arrogance and gloomy embrace
presuming sway over logic and rational thought
possible serious threats
deadly last minute warnings
named weather patterns to fear
sunlight and sensibility counter elegantly
in a tour de force I applaud

I set the alarm
and slide between
the chill calm of sheets
in a quest for tranquil repose
beneath moon's pale rays
my head settles to dream invitation
and day unwound
spooling into sleep

What's Lost

(by *Lisa Prantl*)

On January 28, 1986 we made our way
to an empty office where a TV was stored
watching the live launch
the first teacher in space
unaware our vocabulary would soon include O-ring
and when rocket and hope broke apart
the small band of co-workers
embraced and consoled.

On September 11, 2001 the corporate team
gathered in the library
before a tubed TV on wheeled metal cart
time shredded into the incomprehensible
and with cries too big for solitude
a community searched for comfort
clinging to each other in unspoken grief
and solidarity.

On December 14, 2012 employees walked past
breaking news accounts piled high with
20 elementary school bodies, small children
targeted, suffering violent death
and six teachers and staff who followed
the practiced drills and died anyway
a few workers stayed by the TV, a few left
eyes glazed over with cataracts of confusion
back to work, back to work.

2014 in Ferguson, L.A., NYC, Cleveland,
Bastrop County, Texas, black lives died
civil rights, civil suits on the rise
viewpoints debated on cable and network
while the network of democracy
failed the need, the cause
and the TVs at work were switched
to a game show or soap opera
buffers from the difficult.

News broke June 12, 2016 and
by Monday the devastation at Pulse was clear
in a city over 700 miles away
far from the epicenter of hate
far from Orlando

distance was irrelevant to the faces
haunting the big screens
49 dancing then dead
drinking then dead
breathing then dead
office workers watching, then walking away
arms crossed against the miseries of others
the ones on the screens.

Media says tragedy is everywhere, always
and to be afraid, always
showing and telling us over and over
in personal and public places
until every pore is saturated and misgivings
circulate like blood with insidious regularity.

More than ever before
more than any single event
a primary, critical component to humanity
is compromised
the instinct to find strength in numbers and
gather in compassion has faded
the soulless face of desensitization
and hollowness of disassociation
leave us mourning
in solitude.

POEMS:

NINA KNUEVEN

Nina Knueven grew up in Miami, FL, and Cincinnati, OH. She has an associate degree in English from San Antonio College and is finishing her bachelor's in English/creative writing at Wright State University. Her poetry and fiction, often marinated in feminine and political issues, has been published in *The Voices de la Luna*, *Acequia Arts Journal*, *Nexus*, and in *A Collection of Children's Stories*.

Contact: ninaknueven@gmail.com

ANNETTE JANUZZI WICK

Annette Januzzi Wick is a writer, teacher, community connector, and author of *I'll Be in the Car*. She facilitates writing workshops for those experiencing homelessness and dementia, and for adults with disabilities. She hosts a monthly Women Poets in the Courtyard blogs about the slow waltz with her mother's dementia and topics related to Cincinnati.

Contact: amjwick@gmail.com; www.annettejanuzziwick.com

DRAWING:

TAYLOR WELLMAN

Taylor Wellman is an artist and illustrator currently living in Cincinnati, Ohio. Her work includes paintings, drawings, comics, and embroidery work. When not producing fine art she enjoys creating quilts. Taylor is currently finishing up her Bachelors at the Art Academy of Cincinnati and hopes to continue on to earn her Masters.

Contact: taylor.wellman@ymail.com



Taylor W.

Veil

(by *Nina Knueven*)

*“Now behold, I have two daughters who have not had relations with man;
please let me bring them out to you, and do to them whatever you like...” Genesis 19:8*

The women are said to enter the church late at night.
No one has seen them, and no one knows who they are;
the women do not know one another,
for their heads and faces are draped with lace pierced with flowers.
The soundless crunch of their feet over fall leaves conceal their arrival
to the ancient building.
They float through the entrance
and down the aisle past all the wooden pews, where the
moonlight is choked by the stain glass.
The pile of prayers scribbled on paper scraps and cried over is waiting
in the center of the nave.
The seven women encircle the pile and extend their arms,
as if to take the pain away from each one.
One is a child that bathed in boiling water.
One is a nameless girl whose body was found broken in the desert.
One is an Albanian girl, who was promised a better life
out of poverty, but now she is a slave.
Mary watches them with cold marble eyes and outstretched hands;
their voices pour over the fractured lives.
The incense of their prayers ascends, trying to reach the heavens.

The broken Syrian mother's feet are heavy with emptiness.
She ran away from the enemy, but now lives with the devil –
a Turkish guard's baby grows in her womb
just weeks after her own baby starved to death in her old village,
a mile away from a market.
She left the village of chaos and rubble,
where the broken can only cry dust.
Now she is treated worse than an animal,
fed poorly and forced to watch the rape of her daughters.
The youngest one was even sold for \$100.
Her black niqab cannot cover her shame and despair,
and she knows if ever reunited with her family,
she will be purged from her uncleanness with their knives.
Her eyes stare at the horizon of the desert, looking for them,
crying fear and hope.

Three women sit in a dim room; darkness drapes over their heads,
as their needlework is illuminated only by the fireplace and candles.
Christmas is almost here, and they have hundreds of dolls to make.
Outside, the snow is filling their windows and doorstep,
but inside, the warm richness of their soup permeates the small room.

Their hands are tired, and their eyes are strained,
But they know these children have broken spirits.
They keep sewing.
They measure the paisley, checkered, floral, and colored fabric in precise squares to stuff into an owl, a kitten, a puppy – a friend.
The zigzag stitching outlines smiles, arms, and soft eyes.
Something a little girl can take with her to every foster home –
something she can squeeze at night in her lonely bed,
something to shut out all the monsters.

I see my daughter skipping across the yard,
curls springing away from her back at every leap.
I set down her unfinished homework, and meet her in the shady blue dusk;
we lay in the grass and make headbands of dandelions.
I crown her with the world.
She smiles showing her budding teeth and swollen gums.
Pulling her close, I try to inhale every strand of her hair.

Sleeping in My Bra

(by *Annette Januzzi Wick*)

Lately, the quilts have offered
deep cover
from even deeper state.
I slide beneath
tired from shouting to the world
wanting to shut the world out

My feet are trapped
below the weight of wool,
as if toes have been woven
in place, ensnared in the loom
between the yarns
of what is told to us
and the threads
of what we tell ourselves

I lay in wonder
as thoughts shuttle between

the others
the mothers
the ones without mothers
the ones who can't be mothers

and questions
throttle my throat
lace up my tongue
in these wee hours

Trapped still am I
from keeping anyone safe
from their own demons
their own diseases
their own direction forward
into a world that would easily
let them disappear

Finally, I wake
comforted by tangles
of a bra that serves
as a shield for my *shenness*
an armor for my soul

like a harness lifts a heddle
on a wooden weaving loom

my bra boosts
my femaleness
when I do not have the might.

POEMS:

JOSHUA KRUER

Joshua Kruer is a touring artist with a homebase in Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky. He tries to actualize art as activism, while advocating for more direct methods of resistance. Some of his projects include: Nature Was Here for art, music and writing, and Some Kinds Of Pie, a means of bringing people together with wholesome food.

Contact: naturewillbethere@naturewashere.com; www.naturewashere.com

DRAWING:

CASEY DRESSELL

Casey Dressell is a current MFA candidate at Miami University. She is interested in a diverse vocabulary of mark making and the intersection of painting and installation art. Casey lives in Cincinnati with her daughter and puppy.

Contact: caseydressell@gmail.com



Cafay Dressell

Nature Was Here

Nature Was Here
...like paper money
like a gold watch
or ivory piano keys

Nature Was Here
...like a brick wall
like a parking lot
or smog

Nature Was Here
...like a taxidermied leopard
like a glass fish as the oceans turn acidic
or a polar bear on a plastic beach

Nature Was Here
...like a climate change-denying, fascist
like a homophobic racist or a misogynist
or the same guy

Nature Was Here
...like a famine next to the supermarket
like a drought next to a golf course
or a bleeding heart next to a cold shoulder

Nature Was Here
...like remembering our idea of earth while we watch our mother
burned alive by her own children
like an entire generation of bleeding hearts, orphaned and left to die

still, Nature Was Here
...anonymous, like a random act of kindness
like you found a burning candle in the abyss
and, with this lil light you carry on
you have the power to defy darkness
for, it takes more than one drop of water to rain
we're going to need a lot of candles to create a firestorm
take back the night
rise with the tide
healers and warriors
water protectors and dissidents
let us burn like hearts on fire
we resist!

System Change Not Climate Change

let's talk about the weather, or not ...actually, yes
whether or not we see it, entropy increases
feeding media bacteria, cultures rot
let's talk about the riots
reflect on broken mirrors
illuminating shadows of giants
buildings are projections, casting metaphors
the higher the hubris, the further the fall
do you see it? ...destined to fall
META-FORECAST
compost is a matter of time
future monoculture
homogenized melange
where "it tastes like food"
and they're "down for whatever"
what is even sacred anymore?
NATURE WAS HERE
driving by corpses on the way to work
roadkill
self-immolating
nature
emulating us
rebellion is a natural response
black panthers paired with white doves
the eagle and the condor uniting rainbow warriors
to resist the fascists, the colonists, the tourists
in the man!pulated forest
they're learning the same lessons over and over;
trees can't grow back fast enough to counter growing molds of infectious concrete
oceans can't swallow and digest the acidity of our projected mental excrement
soil can't replenish the nutrients when we over-saturate the ground with caustic substances
...like, we're choking on our own vomit!
toxic psychotic businesses are spreading
preaching progress but regressing like congress
staring back at us, always watching...
national insecurity to pervert our reflection
nothing personal, every surface defaced
ashamed to face a faceless essence, reflecting their emptiness
CITY WALLS ARE BORING
"forever green" (washed) in theory, on paper
bleeding a tree for a dry postcard
for evergreen, ...wish you were here
message in a bottle as they mulch the jungle
making room for zero sum
hotel vacancy while the homeless wait in cues

walk two moons in their shoes
HOMES NOT JAILS
re-habilitation: restored not enforced
a habitat for humanity, for all people of the sun
we must resist the parasitic rich
killing our mother by buying time
...is money is credit is debt is an artificial construct
we're on a path to self-destruction
killing our mother, astral matricide
we're only buying time
...in debt, indentured servants
worshiping product masters, Gregorian mass-production
productive work compliments productive leisure
WORKASHOPAHOLIC
always on the clock... life career, born into extortion
hell is real ...nothingness
false ideology of infinite growth like a cancerous television cell
Ideocracy incarnate
presidential celebrity with status anxiety
Plasticized
trophy wife
show cars
shelf life
lawn wars (at home)
grow food not lawns
FOOD NOT BOMBS
machines of loving grace, opening up the ozone
bringing us closer to the source
moving into a vacuum to escape the choice
an existential ultimatum;
this is a garden or a tomb
casket womb
hush, little baby, don't you cry
elderly are wise like children in another life
THEY ARE US
and, we are one... Samsara
will we ever transcend?
buzzing around the brain stem
the song remains the same:
"praxis is living, 'fuck the system'"
yet, people are still having sex
Population Override
the politics of desire
global warming, selling fire
bubbles never not burst
hope lies in the rubble of empires
the past is a ghost and the future is a dream

I just want you to know... you're not alone in the feeling
to at least say we tried to change something
I'm not fit to live if there aren't things in my life fit for dying
I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE TO THE WORLD
see, I'm gonna sleep real, real well when I'm dead
"come together, right now... over me"(y dead body)
"give it away, give it away, giveitaway now"
"I found a dream... that I could speak to"
black, white, red, and yellow...
along the corridors of history, it's time we leave consumerism on the shelf
...everything for everyone and nothing for ourselves
everything for everyone and nothing for ourselves
Everything For Everyone And Nothing For Ourselves
EVERYTHING FOR EVERYONE AND NOTHING FOR OURSELVES

utopia.....

POEMS:

LAURIE LAMBERT

Laurie Lambert is the mother of adult triplets and a retired research scientist.

She is a V-Day activist and a facilitator at Women Writing for (a) Change in Cincinnati, Ohio. Laurie's first chapbook *What I Can Carry* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2016.

Contact: llambert@womenwriting.org

DRAWING:

CAROL FREID

An installation and conceptual artist, Carol Freid has lived, traveled and studied throughout the world and embraces in her work the cultures she has experienced. Her work spans several genres, including installation, paper, fiber and mixed media art often using a variety of objects and found materials. It is represented in regional and international museums and corporate collections. Carol holds graduate degrees in Art, Anthropology and Human Development. She has exhibited in and curated over 150 shows. She is inspired to work on art projects that speak to a multitude of prescient social, political, personal and environmental issues. Carol lives currently in Georgetown, KY.

Contact: carollig@gmail.com



Freej 2017

Stone in My Pocket

Maybe Kahlil Gibran and
Naomi Shihab Nye are right.

Maybe it's true that
we all need to be gouged out,
dug into by sadness before
we really can see and
appreciate the goodness
in the world.

I know, we all know,
there is evil out there,
there are people that are
driven to do harm,
who knows why,
but they do
they do harm.

Sometimes the whole world notices,
and sometimes there's just
one person there
to recognize and respond
to the damage that was done.

One person
standing there
with a tissue
and a bandaid
so we know we're not alone
in seeing and understanding
what we see and understand
about the world.

One person, reminding us
that we can carry
the kindness of a friend
around with us
like a stone in our pocket
to help us to remember
there is good in the world.

Redemption

What will redeem
our poor mother
forests burning
oceans teeming with plastic
oil spilling
the ground quaking

What redeems the world of men
not books or buildings
priests or politicians
not nations, might
commerce, gold

What can redeem
people exploding
bombs and bones
storms of gunfire
schools churches hospitals
no sanctuary

Who will redeem us?

the wounded, the survivors
healers, hospice workers
teachers, builders
inventors, activists

the doulas birthing new life
protestors tying themselves to trees
farmers tilling the soil
feeding us
with dirt on their hands
and shit on their boots

the tribe rising up
with fists shaking
not for power
but for justice

a small act
then again then more
living with kindness
and mercy in the world

We must be the tribe
redeem ourselves
and each other

a shouting poem

I have decided to stop tip-toeing
and to never whisper again.

No more screaming in my car where
no one can hear me and
I don't bother anybody with
my pain
my anguish
my breaking
heart

I have decided to stop silently
weeping blubbering
into a little paper tissue
held squashed into a ball
in my hands

I am going to howl now
and scream
and carry a large towel
to loudly blow my nose in as
tears wash down my face

I am done with hiding
with discretion
with wondering if
this or that is okay
and asking permission
and forgiveness

I am so done with all that
Fuck all that shit

I am ready to be naked
in the streets my naked
feelings on display along
with my sagging breasts
my flat ass
and my slouching
tired shoulders

I am going to light a candle
and another and another
and not be afraid anymore
that my house will burn

down god help me
if it's going to burn
I want to know
how it happened
I can be the one
that sparked the flame

During the last game of the world
series I yelled at the television
THEY ARE NOT GOING TO GIVE IT TO YOU
YOU ARE GOING TO HAVE TO TAKE IT!

On election night I shouted
I raised my arms and
shook my fists and shouted
GIVE IT TO US!

You see my error here yes?
I misunderstood something
I get it now

I too
am going to have to take it
because it was not given
it will not be
given to us
we are going to have to take it

because the damn universe
slapped the hands
of every
of all
the women reaching up
with a hammer
to break that damn ceiling

instead a big ugly hating hand came
down from above
and poured cement
on that ceiling

Well
I still have my hammer

Let's get started

POEMS:

REBECCA S. LINDSAY

Rebecca S. Lindsay is editor of *Pegasus*, the poetry journal of the Kentucky State Poetry Society and a member of the [Monday](#) Morning Writers Group in Cincinnati, OH. Besides having poems published in a variety of journals, she had two short stories published in *A Few Good Words* (Cincinnati Writers Project, 2012). Her novel, *The Peacemakers*, a story of the struggle of Mennonite pacifists and Unionists in the South during the Civil War, is ready to be published.

Contact: loisterms@fuse.net; www.loisterms.com

MEGAN MOORE

Megan Moore is currently working towards her MFA in poetry at Miami University. She coaches dance at Mount St. Joseph University. As long as she's writing and dancing, Megan is happy.

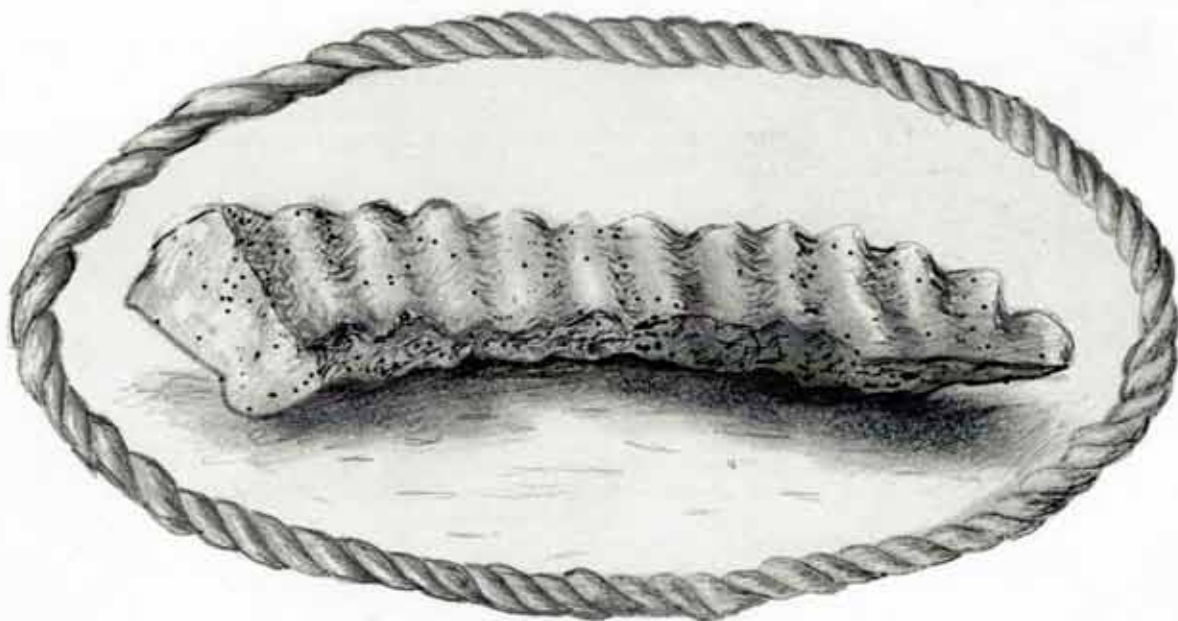
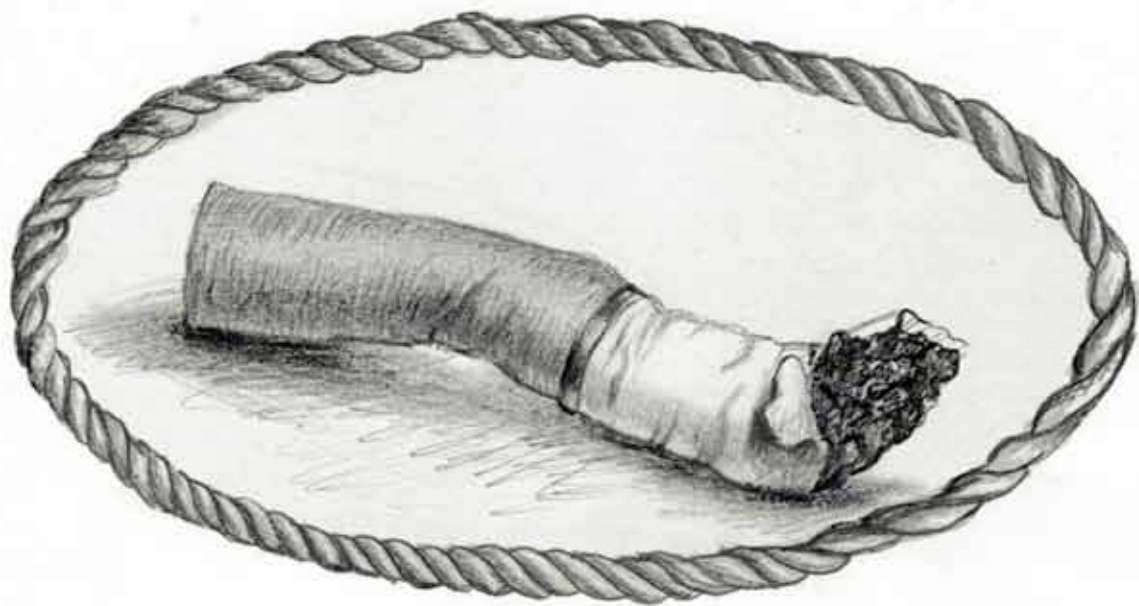
Contact: mooremarymegan@gmail.com

DRAWING:

DENISE BURGE

Denise Burge works in a variety of media: drawing, film, quilting... Her quilt work is widely commissioned and collected. Denise has been awarded multiple Ohio Arts Council grants, multiple residencies and a Joan Mitchell Foundation award. In 2006 she formed a collaborative animation group with work premiered at the Fringe Festival in Edinboro, Scotland, and featured in several national and international film festivals. She also has created video installations. Denise recently returned to the quilt medium in her solo work.

Contact: dburge3@gmail.com; www.myoriginaldirt.com



D. Burge 2017

Street Scenes: Portland – 2016

(by *Rebecca S. Lindsay*)

I.
His jeans are muddy brown
below the knees,
faded blue above.
(You can wash your pants
only if you have two pairs.)
He spies a cigarette butt,
leans over to inspect,
decides the quarter-inch
unsmoked tip is worth the risk.

Stooping, he pinches
the discovered treasure
between thumb and third,
raises it to his lips
and flips his BIC,
draws a few puffs of relief
from his mean existence.

II.
Bedrolls spread across the
sidewalk
in a single long row,
they sleep elbow to elbow,
dormitory style.
As the city closes down,
as out-of-towners shudder past
them
headed for hotel comforts,
it's lights out on the streets.

The next morning, they are gone.
Bedrolls rolled and stowed
in backpacks and trash bags,
they've crept back to
corners and crevices.
Someone—perhaps the police
—must have served as
their alarm clock, rousing them
at dawn to clear the street.

They never get to sleep in.

III.
Eduardo comes running down
the street, clutching behind
the waistband of his pants
that slip well below his too lean
hips
exposing his underwear.

He pulls up short at a trashcan,
wrenches the metal frame open,
and inspects its contents.
He sniffs an almost empty
soft drink can, finds it
not to his liking.
A styro-box of half-eaten fries
suits him better.

He runs on, still clutching
his waistband to keep his pants
from gracing the ground.

Walking Past the Homeless After Spending \$275 on a Pair of Shoes

(by *Megan Moore*)

These shoes: every thread perfectly pulled into lines and lines of color and there are no cheap rhinestones, but still they manage to glitter, and these threads, they quiver, in the Cincinnati sun. The heel, just high enough so my calves feel closer to the clouds – out of this smog.

A torn woolen sock in front of me, solid as if full of flesh, sweating under the same yellow day, it tripped this shoe and I stumbled out of them, the two, slippers that cradled my pink toes. I stepped out of them, heavier, still, with guilt that I hadn't seen, oh what? hadn't I seen? I know, even though, I can step out of every pair I've ever owned, I can make and spend, and spend again.

And the shame of those shoes is sewn like a thread to tendon.

I shake and shake and plié down the street, this thread, this iridescent, leaden thread is stitched to me. A brown cap lunges toward me with teeth, two teeth, but the string is too strong, *take it, please*, and it does, the shoe between teeth and I feel fat, with a long line of color behind me. I walk backwards to face dozens of eyes – who are these eyes? –

I turn, to walk away and I'm tangled,
my ankles, in the sky,
big blue, I fall
and unravel.

POEMS:

JUANITA MAYS

Juanita Mays, an Appalachian and a native of Scioto County, Ohio, now resides in Milford. She belongs to the Ohio Poetry Association (OPA) and holds an office in the Phoenix Writers' Group. Juanita has won numerous awards and has been published in a variety of literary journals. She has self published two chapbooks: *Dog Dreams by the Fire* and *Layers*. With her daughter, Lillie Teeters, she also wrote *Pickles, Prozac and Watermelon Ice Cream*.

Contact: juanpoet1939@yahoo.com

DRAWING:

ANNE LEADER

Anne Leader apprenticed and worked as a studio potter in southern Africa. She has a BFA from the University of Tennessee with a concentration in printmaking and clay, and a Masters degree in Counseling and Art Therapy; she worked with individuals with developmental disabilities and their staff for 2 decades. Now absorbed by image making whatever media, Anne incorporates clay, book arts, photographs and drawing. Her Quaker education and experiences during her travels and advocacy work underpin her commitment to social justice in which art is both solace and tool. She lives in Kentucky and sells and exhibits her work regionally.

Contact: theannex49@gmail.com



A LEADER 2017

Syrian Father from Aleppo, the Nightly News

Please, I beg you
not to stand inside
my TV set.
Do not show me
your dried eye sockets.
Please. Oh please,
do not show
the slow drop
of one bomb
then two
pushed from a helicopter,
gift from Russia,
drop, drop, dropping
upon your city,
upon your houses.

And why did you bring
your four sweet children,
filmed when they were alive,
into my house,
their lovely dark eyes
dropping fear?

And I do not want to hear
the sound of your hollow voice
nor watch as you try
to find words to comfort your little boy,
trembling, daddy hands
cupped around his weeping face,
even as jets
drop, drop, drop the bombs
then double-tap back
to drop more.

And most of all,
father of the haunted ones,
do not bring this shell,
this specter
of what you have become.
Do not drop your agony,
like the rubble
of your house
down around my head,
telling me *now*,
your four children
lie dead beneath it all.
Your pain drops here, inside,
like a fist full
of hot marbles
and there is nothing I can do.

Haiku

- I. When irises bloom
And sun warms the human heart...
Sisters, wear your scarves.
- II. When cornfields rise high
And fireworks spark red, white and blue,
You, too, are American.
- III. When orange pumpkins glow
And brown leaves drift slowly down...
My land is your land.
- IV. When your children play
Knee-deep in snow-filled glee
Muslim Mothers, stay.

little rich man who wants to be a king

From the *Golden Tower*
he shouts contempt,
vile words, at the people.
No room for the *Golden Rule*.

The grimace of his mouth
mocks the crippled,
whose each *brave step*
is slow with pain.
We, their mothers,
cry at this cruelty
piled upon
the frail.

Build a Wall around the City,
is his anthem,
his mission:
Keep the brown people out!

How soon might his contempt
attempt to round up:
Blacks,
Gays,
Muslims,
Mormons,
Jews?

Perhaps
eventually,
find contempt
for you,
Evangelicals,
Catholics,
maybe next year.

His smallness
befriends
the bomber
of little children.
He spews ignorance
of world affairs,
it gushes
from his orifice
like a lusty waterfall.

He surrounds himself
with the counsel of
his own voice.
and directs poison
toward opposition
like a viper
residing
in a pit.

The little rich man
who wants to be a king.

POEMS:

BILL Mc CORMICK

Bill Mc Cormick taught high school German and English for 25 years. Even at age 85, he cannot believe how cruel humans can be and how destructive of their space in the cosmos.

Contact: mccormick1931@gmail.com

DRAWING:

NICK PADDOCK

Nick Paddock studied drawing and art education at the University of Cincinnati DAAP. He supports and participates with local non-profit arts organizations such as SOS ART Cincinnati, Pones, and Visionaries + Voices. Nick's free time is spent connecting with friends and family at local events that support artists/ community, traveling near and far, and simply enjoying life.

Contact: nickmpaddock@gmail.com



Nick Paddock

Pale-faced Lies (Apologies to Dylan Thomas)

Recall the native peoples we've maligned,
Since those, our forebears, stepped upon these shores;
Rage, rage against the deceit of our kind.

The injustices those pilgrims left behind
Had, seemingly, left imprint on their pores;
Recall the native peoples we've maligned.

So many treaties with them have been signed,
Whose terms the white man, in all haste, ignores;
Rage, rage against the deceit of our kind.

Wherever titled lands had been defined,
Our settlers overran them like wild boars;
Recall the native peoples we've maligned.

We put the claim to all that we could find,
Defiled their hallowed sites with bloody wars;
Rage, rage against the deceit of our kind.

Oh, what abuse the pale-face had in mind,
When promises were spouted by the scores!
Recall the native peoples we've maligned.
Rage, rage against the deceit of our kind.

That Pale Blue Orb

That pale blue orb that we call earth,
looks so serene from space,
with streaks of mottled modeling
white gauze across its face,
and greens and blues like promises
of milieus apt for growth,
whatever need for food or breath,
it would provide for both.

A closer view reveals a world
of fading greens and blues,
of atmosphere that's poisoned
by the products people use,
a surface on which gluttons
play to win monopoly
and armies like insects in rage
make dark earth's destiny.

The ball of fire we call our sun
our source of warmth and light -
may in its redness symbolize
an ire entire and bright
toward the creatures who have turned
a body meant for life
to near a waste of energy
through ravage, greed and strife.

suffer the children

his name is Joseph, Serge,
Padmesh, Santiago, Ishmael...
eight years of age, maybe older
member of the small boys' military unit
already seasoned in gunplay and dealing death

he was escaping a life of poverty
or was abducted from home or school
they fitted his small hands to a weapon
bled away his childhood

favorable by the revolutionary fronts
and various of the world's republics
because kids do what they're told
and are expendable

don't say you're afraid
they'll beat you
be as brutal as they are
learn how cruelty works

he can't go back
if they would even let him go
his village does not want boys
who only know the killing arts

she's called Emmanuele, Sophia, Rashi,
Sarah,
pawn of terrorists at age 11
lured by \$15, food and a uniform
now a mother at 13

she knows how to handle weapons
knows she must shoot or be punished
knows she must submit to rape
and even to wrapping herself as a bomb

she's one of one hundred thousand
just girls in fifteen world locations
prizes in the wars of spoilers
collateral to grownups of evil intent

childhood cannot be returned
nor returned to
and the girl without virginity
cannot be an acceptable wife

only her kin will remember her
not her abusers, nor any god
no time to mourn ciphers
in so many wars

POEMS:

ALI MRAMOR

Ali Mramor currently lives in Los Angeles and keep a space in her heart for Cincinnati. She is an herbalist, a dreamer, an activist, and an artist constantly seeking ways to further expand consciousness as a means to heal our communities and our planet.

Contact: alimramor@yahoo.com

DONNA S. ZUDELL

Donna S. Zudell grew up in Westlake, Ohio and relocated to the Cincinnati area after graduating from Miami University in the field of education. She holds a Master's from Xavier University in reading and has been an educator for 30 years. Donna has two married daughters living in the Columbus area. She writes poetry and short stories, often about nature and her family. She recently connected with classes at Women Writing for (a) Change, an inspiration to her.

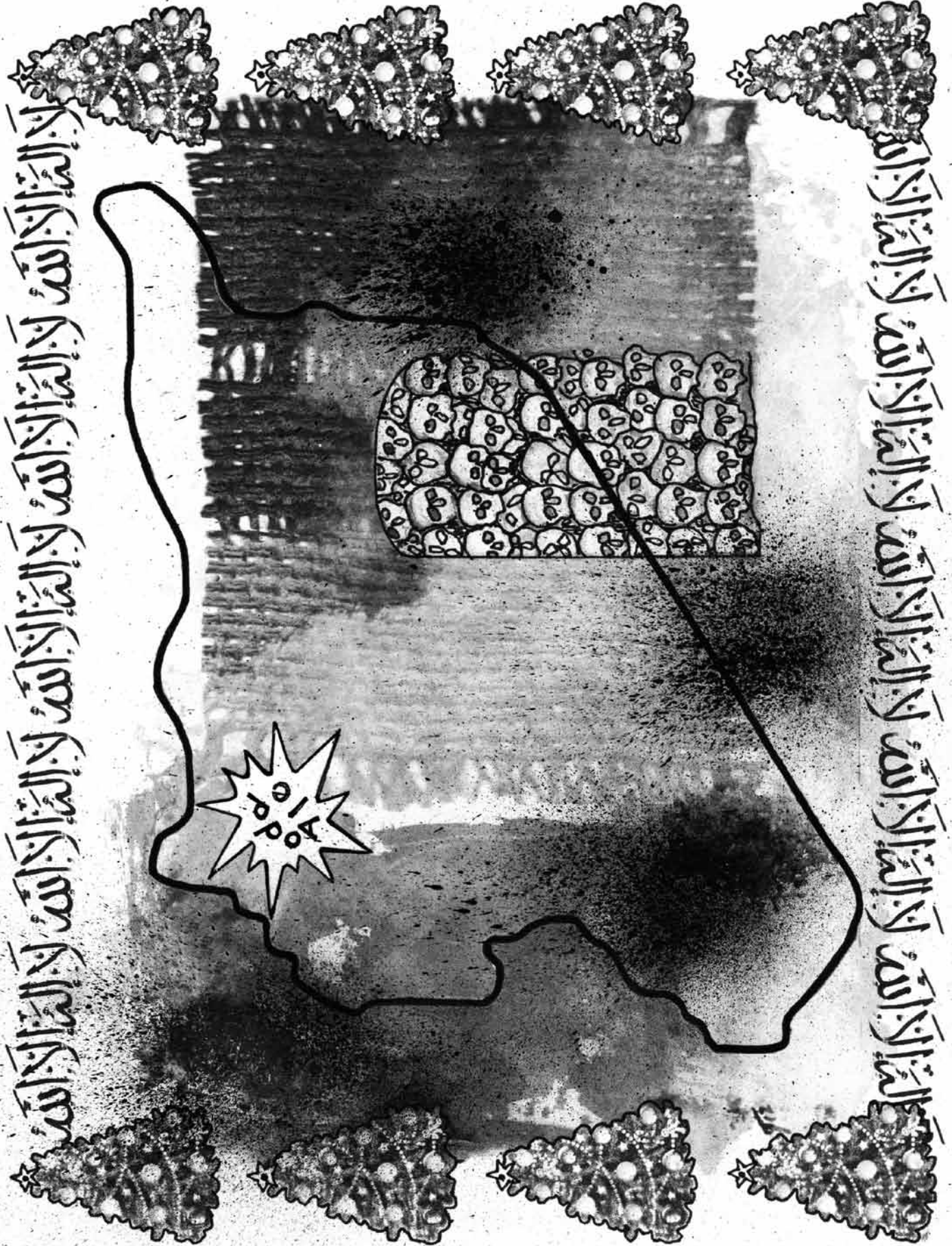
Contact: dschuler1@cinci.rr.com

DRAWING:

RAFAEL KATANO

Rafael Katano, born in Mexico, has been living in Cincinnati, OH, since 1997. He has a degree in fine arts from the University of Monterrey, Mexico, and works as a commercial photographer capturing social events (weddings, birthdays, graduations, etc.). Rafael's artwork, most often in mixed media, deals in general with social and political issues.

Contact: rafael.katano@gmail.com



Because I Am White

(by *Ali Mramor*)

Because I am white
I slept in this morning
Because I am white
I had a choice to eat my breakfast amidst small talk
Because I am white
I had a choice this morning
What information was going to color my mood today
Because I am white
I could have chosen to ignore the news today
Because I am white
I can choose a reality where there is no racism
There is no hate
There is no oppression
Because I am white
I can turn the other way
When another black boy is murdered by tax dollars
Bloody hands washed clean
Because they are white

But because I am human
I cry
Because I am human
I swallow the bitter fruit that is the history
And the today of this country
Because I am human
I feel the pain of another
Suffering
Because I am human
I stand up
Because I am human
I choose to walk with my brothers and sisters
In solidarity
Because I am human
I hope
Because I am human
I pray my children
Your children
Will know a different reality
Because I am human
My heart breaks

Two Cities, One Breath

(by *D. S. Zudell*)

Two Cities, One Breath

The People of Aleppo-
a ten second blurb
on the nightly news,
a fanfare, a title-
"The Meltdown of Humanity."

I can hardly listen
or take in the sight-
families trapped by war,
walking the city,
needing but a tiny space of safety.

Mothers in flux; desperate
to lay children in gentle sleep,
trusting they won't awaken
to bomb blasts
and reality-filled nightmares.

Conversely...

The People of Cincinnati-
aglow with Christmas,
as holiday tales
drum peace into their lives
through the nightly news.

I drive the city streets
to view rooftops looped by colors
that surround us all,
while notes of timeless carols
seep into consciousness.

Mothers gifting traditions, will safely
lay children in gentle sleep,
while walnut cookies bake,
greeting cards are sent to friends,
and the treasured family gathers.

Supreme countries avow their right
to blow up an ancient city,
killing people like flies,
drawing new boundary lines,
destroying the life of generations.

I decry that false "right"
in truth, the mighty over the weak
the haves over the have-nots,
a choice to wage war
against those who have no choice.

The festivities of winter
showcase our twinkle-lighted
Christmas trees
and I wonder at our blessings
and peaceful place on earth.

My puzzle/ yet a puzzle of olden times-
a need to reconcile
two cities on this great earth;
dual realities of fate that
coexist together.

Listen.

Listen with your whole body.

see the color in people's words.

notice their humanity.

listen with your soul.

listen to the breath that flows in two cities.

Two cities that share one breath.

POEMS:

LARRY C. SIMPSON

Larry C. Simpson: 1978, *Notes from an Emergency Ward*, later published on line; 1980, *The Cave with No Name*, a story poem with music, aired on WAIF & WGUC; 1983, Produced *Writer's for Radio* with local poets & musicians with a grant from OAC; 2007, self -published, *The Lost Cave of the Jaguar Prophets*, a novel. Larry is married, with four daughters, sixteen grandkids and one wife.

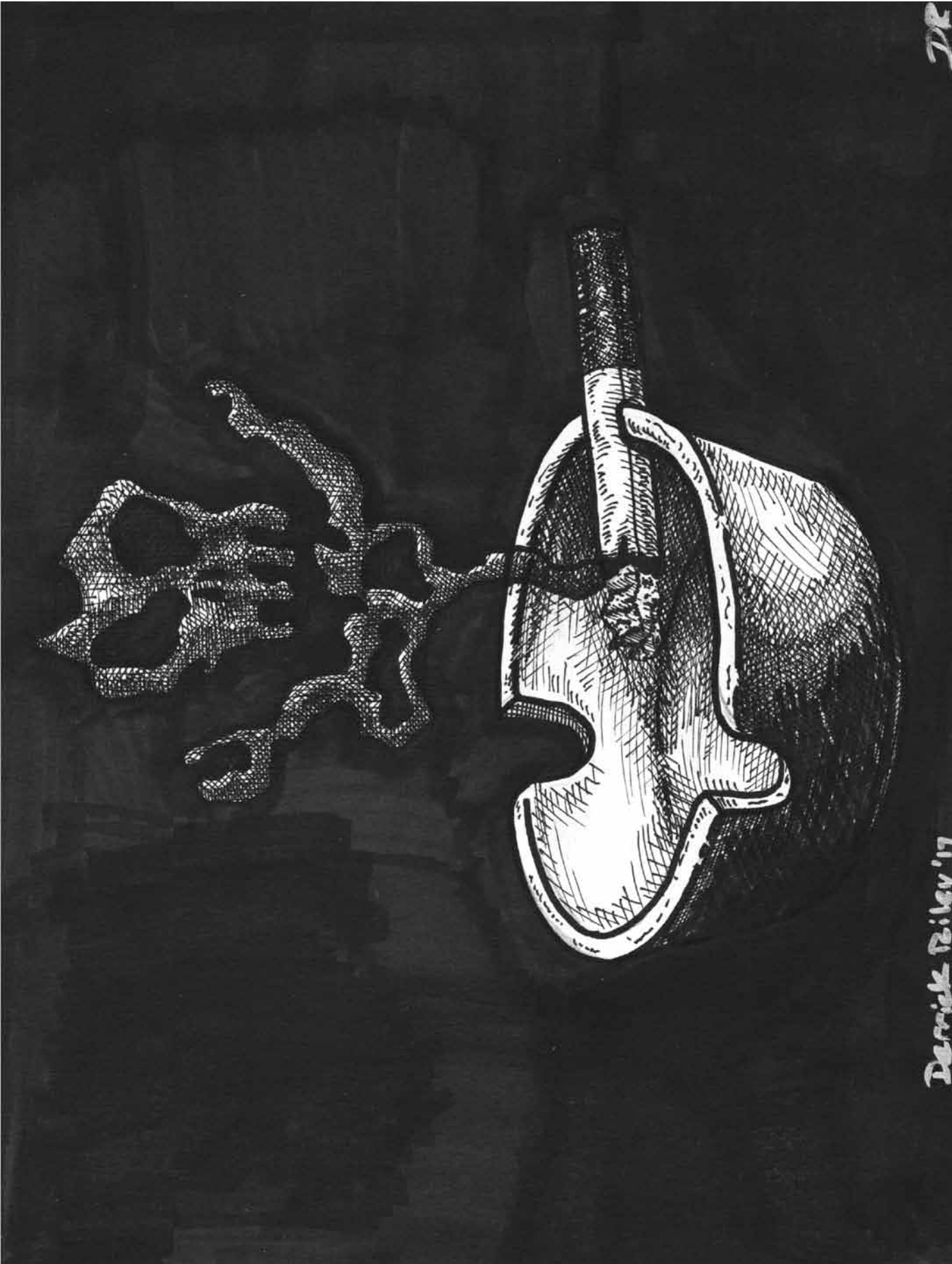
Contact: larrycsimpson@gmail.com; www.sites.google.com/site/larrycsimpson/

DRAWING:

DERRICK RILEY

Derrick Riley, born in 1980, is a printmaker from Lexington, Kentucky, who operates dRock Press and is the Kentucky Division of the Outlaw Printmakers. Derrick holds an MFA degree with emphasis in Printmaking. He tends to work in a highly detailed graphic style, drawing on heavy influences from his printmaking idols: Durer, Hogarth, Dore, Posada, and Zirkle. The inspiration of his work often comes from true stories, urban legends, and folklore usually centered around his adopted home state of Kentucky. His work has been called “a humorous take on the bizarre.”

Contact: drockpress@hotmail.com; www.drockpress.com



DR

Derrick Riley '17

Ghosts of My Uncle

I remember his khakis in the closet,
still freshly pressed ten years after the war.
Maybe they were kept in memory of the Italian woman
he met and loved and left waiting, as if he might finally
leave his mother again, as a sergeant obeying orders.
Uncle Bud told us ghost stories on the front porch in the dimming dusk,
his whispered Kentucky drawl emphasized by tobacco smoke.
Uncle Bud was kept from battle by his mother's prayers
and his father's name which was Frei, the German word for free.
Not trusted to carry a gun, he fed the supply line,
a quartermaster dispensing boots, k-rations and entrenching tools for the troops.
When he returned home, he took a job at the High Street Baptist Church
cleaning toilets and mopping floors to support his widowed mother.
I followed him to work along with my brother William who was named for him.
Uncle Bud mopped the floors of seemingly endless halls
haunted by a Messiah missing from the modest glow of the stained-glass window.
That splash of the mop was like the swish of an artist's brush across canvas,
an act of penance or remembrance of moments passed away.
We banged on the piano until he made us quit, caught between our innocent
sacrilege and the wish to give permission for any request of his sister's kids.
He may have thought of the family he could have had
with that Catholic beauty of the Mediterranean
who in his mind might have still been praying for his return
beneath the tolling bell of some shell-shocked Cathedral.
I remember following my Uncle down to the coal cellar,
to fill a bucket for my grandma's stove.
In winter staring at embers through the isinglass window,
I came to associate the smell of bituminous with brimstone.
I once held the ladder while Uncle Bud burnt out a nest of wasps
under an eave of my Grandma's house
although too small to do much if the ladder had collapsed.
It was a matter of trust like standing at a guard post.
He once took me for a walk at night, to watch
a building in flames across the street.
To me, it was like enormous orange fingers tickling the sky.
He would not let me stay more than a few minutes,
just enough for a taste of beauty and chaos
and perhaps something else I was not ready to learn.
After my Grandmother passed, Uncle Bud didn't last long.
There was no more duty to accept, no one to guard.
Work was just toil, so he left this world, gone to glory,
his heart defeated by genetics, cigarettes and maybe regret.
As a memorial, the pastor bought a new piano
with a brass plaque dedicated to his service and his love
for the hymns, he once hummed in the empty sanctuary.

Junior High

I got sick in the sixth grade and had to watch spring
pass by from my bedroom window.

My brother and friends talked through the screen when they had time from their games,
but I got to watch the astronauts launch on TV,
their black and white explosions of flame
pushing them into space.

I filled a scrapbook with rockets and splash downs in cutouts from magazines,
photos of Shepherd, Grissom and Glen and others of the Friendship Seven.

Doctor Pack made house calls once a month for blood tests
and weekly for injections of penicillin.

I would try not to flinch when the needle went in,
staring at the blood flowing into the glass syringe just to prove I could.

It was called Rheumatic fever, and a report on TV called it a deadly childhood disease.

Freed the following fall, I returned to school

but had to sit out gym class watching football practice for two more years,
daydreaming on the sidelines

about floating in space or a touchdown on mars.

I had not yet seen that nature show where the young wildebeest,

unable to keep up with the herd because of injury or disease,
was taken down by hyenas,

nor did I realize, that soon enough, I would play the wildebeest in that ancient game.

I had two teachers that year that I'll never forget.

One was Mr. Miracle who liked to teach science so much
he got in trouble over it.

He once borrowed a fluoroscope so we could see
the bones in our hands as if through a green TV.

He warned us not to fool around since it had radioactive rays.

It had once been used for fitting shoes but was no longer considered safe.

Mr. Miracle taught us about magnetic attraction and scientific method,
something about hypotheses needing to be tested.

He displayed various elements of the periodic table.

Some were inert, some were unstable, kind of like people.

When he passed around samples, he told us not to open the bottles,
but the mercury hit the floor splashing into a hundred balls of shiny metal.

The stink of burning tiles revealed another problem.

A bit of sodium had been taken from vile of oil
that kept it from exploding by reacting with water.

The fire alarm sounded, followed by the siren of a hook and ladder
and soon there were even TV reporters

and the whole school had to go outdoors.

Mr. Miracle was the best teacher ever.

Reynolds thought he was the king of the beasts in the classroom.

He was our social studies teacher, just out of college,

all the way from Texas, but not much taller than the rest of us.

He once came into class flipping over desks, demanding our respect.

He once threw a paddle the length of the classroom
breaking it against the wall because a girlfriend dumped him.
Most teachers had paddles back then, some drilled holes to make them sting more,
some made a notch for every kid they hit like the pistols of gunslingers.
Reynolds once entered our noisy class and sent four of us to the four corners
telling us not to move or we would get our asses swatted,
but when he turned his back something happened.
I might have been talking but I didn't hit Reynolds with the spit ball
while my face was up against the cinder block wall.
The four of us were taken to a cloak room to get our butts busted.
We waited while Reynolds got a witness he trusted.
The witness was Mr. Miracle, and he pretended not to know me.
They told me to bend over, hands on the wall.
Mr. Miracle held my shoulder
warning me not to jerk or I might get hurt worse.
When the first hit connected, I cried like hurt puppy.
By the second or third or fourth, my knees buckled,
broken down from the force.
It was not just the pain or even the shame that hurt most.
I never told anyone; I just wanted to forget,
but my Dad saw the bruises and was really upset.
He was standing up for me, although I didn't see it that way.
First he showed my bruised ass to the dad of my friend who had also got swats.
Then he took me to school and showed it to the principal,
and Reynolds and Miracle.
I had to face Reynolds for another year,
but he didn't touch me or even say much.
He taught us about a small country in current events
called Viet Nam where troops had been sent to put out a wild fire.
I learned a lot from Reynolds about justice, and use of force to keep the peace,
and how hyenas prey on wildebeests.

POEMS:

AUBREY STANFORTH

Aubrey Stanforth, a home-schooled eighth grader, enjoys creative writing, the arts, literature, photography & astronomy; she also loves singing, playing soccer, and being outside. She lives in Cincinnati with her 3 siblings and her parents.

Contact: astanfo6@gmail.com

SHERRY COOK STANFORTH

Sherry Cook Stanforth, founder and director of Thomas More College's Creative Writing Vision Program, teaches fiction, poetry, environmental and ethnic literatures, and is co-editor for *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, the literary journal of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative. Sherry performs regionally in a 3-generation Appalachian family band, Tellico. Her mountain heritage inspired her poetry collection *Drone String* (Bottom Dog Press) and many of her recordings. With her husband, David, she raises 4 children, 2 hound dogs, bees & a garden.

Contact: stanfos@thomasmore.edu

DRAWING:

HALENA V. CLINE

Halena V. Cline is a Cincinnati studio artist who has exhibited her work locally, nationally and internationally, including in Ohio, Kentucky, Alabama and Germany. In her work Halena expresses concepts of her experiences or perceptions. Her paintings reflect her response to social and/or intrinsic circumstances with ideas woven into them from personal points of view and current or historical events.

Contact: halenacline@gmail.com; www.halenacline.com



Halena Cline

Walls

(by **Aubrey Stanforth**)

yesterday we told stories
now we just tell rumors

one man could ruin
one country
two countries
three countries
four

their fates counted off
like toes
on a baby
instead of nursery rhymes
screams
triggers

and a distant laugh of a man
tucked safely away in a pale box

whispers go around about change,
but the only change will be
the amount of blood spilled
and smog in the air

one man could change
one person
two people
three
people we love
snapped and reshapen
to fit in the machine
shredding what we had
into what will be

one man could hurt
one ocean
two
but that's just a myth...

one man could kill
one person
or
he could kill more

New

(by **Aubrey Stanforth**)

Feet dangle off the river wall.
Barges drift by
carrying coal,
black debt.

With backs to our town,
we watch the currents change—
pulling in, pushing out
river's breath,
rippling the town's reflection,
our reflections.

Things change as the water does—
buildings crumble to rock yards,
chimneys expel smog
instead of smoke.

Cigarettes served
on dinner trays
never find ash trays.

Cars speed up,
don't stop.

People leave,
people die.

Playgrounds are dug up—
gravestones replace them.
The children resort to
"Smoke 'n Saves,"
puffing whatever falls
in their hands.

Glass bottles litter the grasses
as the river floods their homes.
Driftwood snatched up to rot
like the town itself.

When the currents slow down
we turn toward home
then back to the passing barges
stained and wishing
we could float away
with them.

Hunger

(by **Sherry Cook Stanforth**)

When they abolished
gardens on the grounds
that such projects yielded
nothing for market
economies, I hid seeds
in the seams of my robe,
deafened my ears to *bigger
is better*, then spat right
into the dirt—grew
something that
would feed me

Thirst

(by **Sherry Cook Stanforth**)

I saw my children
dry up, gasp
for a drink
of inquiry,
ache for
a dipper
overflowing.
They sat
in rows,
waiting for one
wet drop
inside that sea
of box tops,
chicken labels,
sealed test packets.

They just wilted,
filling in blank
after blank—
kept on crying
and thirsting
for real circles,
so I crossed
through two
security scanners,
plucked them out
of school.

Blur

(by *Sherry Cook Stanforth*)

Tickertape escaped
the televised news
conference, sprang right
out of the flat screen,
snaking its way around
the throats of my
brothers and sisters.
Then a reality TV god
wearing a suit took
an oath, spat cobra venom
in our eyes, blinding us.
He waved his fat wallet,
hissing a bigger is better
bellow, so I sang Oh
Beautiful for Spacious
Skies until I could no
longer hear anything
except the harmonics
of a spider's web
holding the tensile
strength of steel,
spanning from
twig to flower.

POEMS:

JEAN SYED

Jean Syed has been published in *“For A Better World”* before. She continues to write poetry and some of it is being published such as in *“The Rotary Dial”* an e-magazine out of Toronto and soon in *“Lighten Up Online.”*

Contact: jsyed@cinci.rr.com

KATHLEEN WADE

Kathleen Wade, a fourth-generation Cincinnati, is fascinated with writing; it led her to spend 29 years as a teacher of English, journalism, speech and drama at the high-school and college levels. She also served as Executive Director at Women Writing for (a) Change. Her poems and essays have been published in a variety of anthologies. She currently directs a collaborative leadership-development program for women religious.

Contact: kwade42@gmail.com

DRAWING:

KELLY MURRAY FRIGARD

Kelly Murray Frigard received her Master of Fine Arts degree in Inter media art from the University of Iowa in 1996. She has traveled widely to northern climates pursuing her interest in traditional art forms including weaving, knitting, spinning wool, and felting. Kelly is Professor of Fine Art Co-Coordinator of her area at the University of Cincinnati, Clermont College. She exhibits her work nationally and had a recent installation of her work in Olofstrom, Sweden.

Contact: kelly.frigard@gmail.com



I Eat That Anyway

(by *Jean Syed*)

I have a pottery turkey
On Thanksgiving Day,
As turkey's almost like chicken
And I eat that anyway.

I give thank-you for the potter,
The pottery-painter as well,
It glints on the table top
Without the chicken smell,

For I prefer a joint of lamb,
Black Friday - shepherd's pie
With cheesy mashed potatoes on it,
Anything left - I fry.

I don't pardon the lamb so cute
As presidents with a turkey,
But like the fowl, I gobble, gobble,
With veggies, meat and gravy.

On this day of thanks in this plenteous
land
Are Americans fat and lean,
But children in Aleppo would
Cry for one French bean.

Was It for That Deed*

(by *Jean Syed*)

Snugly at home, I heard the wind outside
Sounding a desolate and cyclic swell,
The sad unseen sobbed at my Eastertide

A shouting lament for those who had died,
Flags flapped, half-up the staffs, round where I dwell.
Snugly at home, I heard the wind outside

Heaving naked branches, which snapped or plied,
Howl, "Murderers, murderers, go to hell."
The sad unseen sobbed at my Eastertide,

Although within the gusts a damned who cried,
"We don't fit in; why should we not rebel?"
Snugly at home, I heard the wind outside,

It yelled to me, "Ostracism's worldwide,
Knelling invisibly like a tolled bell,"
The sad unseen sobbed at my Eastertide.

Was it for that deed Christ hung, crucified
By discrimination none can dispel?
Snugly at home, I heard the wind outside
The sad unseen sobbed at my Eastertide.

**This commemorates the Brussel's bombings 2016*

Ridge and Highland

(by *Kathleen Wade*)

At the corner of Ridge and Highland
a man hunches at the side of the road.
Leathery skin, unshaven
he juggles a homemade sign
that says: *homeless, hungry, God bless you.*

A woman approaches him from behind,
surprising him with a can of pop
and a Wendy's meal in a plastic bag.
She says a few words as she bends over him,
smiling shyly. What she says is not what matters.

What matters is that he looks into her face,
only inches from his. Then, like a child
with a toy on Christmas morning,
he peels back the bag,
gently flips open the Styrofoam lid,
wonders at the sandwich,
the fruit, the fries, turns to say more to the woman
who has vanished through the bushes behind him.

Ahead of me in the line of traffic,
a man holds onto landscaping tools
in the back of a pick up truck.
Together we watch the homeless man lift the food
to his mouth, watch his eyes register pleasure.
Slowly first, then with more speed, with urgency
he chews, organizes, maps out the bites,
swallows, unaware of his audience.

Embarrassed at invading the little privacy he has,
I cannot look away. I am witnessing
kindness and must not look away.

Crossing

(by *Kathleen Wade*)

A toddler floating face down at ocean's edge,
a bloodied boy, ashen and dazed,
throng of families in rickety boats,
sinking in a foreign ocean, while others
stretch out their arms at the shoreline...

land-locked and not knowing how to swim,
they still climb into lifeboats
without preservers – or worse,
with life jackets sure to pull them under.
Hope for her unborn child cannot save
a pregnant woman overcome with toxic fumes.

Crossing is dangerous.
Danger is relative.
Risk is the pilgrim's silent partner.

I chart my daily steps, mark my calories,
track my sleep. Mine is a safe and risk-free
journey.
I watch the peril of flimsy wooden floats,

twenty feet square, packed with thousands of bodies,
pilgrims forced to stand for days without food or
water.

I do not want to forget the disturbing sight
of a thousand hands in the air reaching for
somewhere safe.

Surely those images must be the reason
I had to pull over and weep
at mile marker 101,
driving I-64 to St. Louis –
weep at the sight of a land turtle, spinning,
upside down near the edge of the highway,
crossing in search of a swamp on the other side.

Crossing. Risking it all to answer a primal call
for safety and the promise of new life:
isn't that what we're all doing?

So I must weep for the floating toddler,
the desperate parents, the pregnant mother,
my ancient brother the tortoise
who represents us all,
spinning, upside down,
spinning, spinning
at the edge of the road.

POEMS:

CHRISTINE WILSON

Christine Wilson is an artist, writer, mentor, wife and mother of five teenagers.
She lives and works in Northside, Cincinnati, OH.

Contact: c7wilsons@gmail.com

DRAWING:

JENNIFER ACUS-SMITH

Jennifer Acus-Smith is an artist and community arts leader in Hamilton, Ohio.

She received her training at Miami University (Oxford, Ohio) studying art education, painting and printmaking. A collector by nature, she creates paintings, murals, jewelry and mixed media assemblages. Her work brings together elements of loss, rebirth and surrealism, often incorporating found and reclaimed materials. Jennifer is also the Program Manager for the StreetSpark Mural Program, working to add dynamic public art to the downtown Hamilton area.

Contact: jennacus.art@gmail.com; www.jennacusart.com



Edges, Girls, Breasts, Youth, Hurt, Do

Kalamkari fabric with threadbare edges.
This sea of color and underdeveloped breasts.
The meat of chai colored cheeks thick with youth,
the dark of their eyes biased and sore; hurt
we cannot, will not fathom, but I still do.

Solya shields her mouth, but her teeth do
not stay under wraps, skimming the edges
of her lips and protection of her hand. Hurt
lingers like a cement block at the corner of a girl's
resolve, at the curve of her upturned mouth. Youth
loiters, and supposes itself, and develops breasts

Upon a girl, overstepping age, when breasts
are the last thing she needs. I ask, does
she even need the pubescent mark, when youth
breaches familiar boundaries? Edges
its way elsewhere, down the street, where girls
Stand clothed in saris, yet stripped. Hurt

crouched on their psyche, hurt
cowering on their arms, hurt stamped on her breast.
Blank-stare girls. Gentle girls, once gentle girls.
When worth equals do, one does. Do. Do. Do.
Until, Solya wears so thin. See through her edges
Through the tattered fringes of her youth.

The red lights do not, cannot tint their youth.
The yoga, the nuns, the beads won't erase hurt.
She can be rescued, plucked from the edge,
But when she looks down her unwelcome breasts
Still suspend. When I change, where do
I go where I'm not still naked and girl?

Damned if she wants to be a man, but a girl?
This plague: being a girl, thirteen, her limp youth.
Stop the questions. What will I be or do?
How will I afford myself? Deaf to all but hurt,
Her stomach-ache thighs, the grief on her breasts
won't wash off, even when the washcloth edges

have pilled, it won't erase her breasts.
What does a girl even look like, a girl
That has not hurt? What is wholeness and youth?

White Dragon

Can you hear the footsteps,
Heavy and porous,
Wreaking havoc on the ground?
Can you hear the whisper
Of the dragon curling its long
Tail to sweep across the south?
To curl up and cover over
The sinister secrets of white privilege
When the sound of perched words
Curls over white teeth
And smiles oval sunrises
With squinty eyes radiating
Quiet hatred. Can you feel the
Longing for authoritarianism
Breathing like smoldering breath
For someone to make safe
From countless enemies or others?
Can we recover from the devious whispering
Demons, and the apocalypse of
Separation? Can we revive what is
Good like the hospitality of an outreached
Hand, instead of a withered promise of
Segregation and hate? The sadness settles
Deep across the lines of separation, across
The boundaries of groups, can you hear the
dukes
Deep voice like the principality of grief
Echoing even from the circles of influence
And decay? The white, white anger of family
Division. The departure of one generation
from the last
We see you now white dragon, you are in the
light
Can we slay you with the wisdom of our
words?
The uprising of youth, and education.
Let the courage of a new generation rise
Like hope out of the sinister and
Into the wind, up into the atmosphere of
change

Unbound

I. In Mumbai

She waits in dirty bedding
Stained with shame and scents
Of bodies separate from hers,
Bound and waiting for a blessing

Waiting in Hindu patterns of deities,
Tainted and dressing her wounds
With spiced myrrh and coverings,
Bound and waiting for a blessing

He comes to her in secret
With sweaty money that lessens only
Her owner's empty pocket burden
Bound and waiting for a blessing

The bed board rhythm taps
A song in her mind as she drifts off
To a disconnected dance,
Bounding and waiting for a blessing

II. In Chennai

He hears the drumming from
Across his country and lifts
A brick to reluctantly mandate God,
"I'm bound and waiting for a blessing"

Twenty-five pounds will push on his
Spine, another brick added next month
Who will remove them? While he is
Bound and waiting for a blessing

Nine and never imagined a book
Four generations of family without
But his mind is waiting to be
Unbound, waiting for a blessing

He feels the rhythm of his day
And the rhythm of a beat
That goes: step, brick, drop, step
Bound, and waiting for a blessing

III. In Uganda

The dry air will whip and tear
Like bullets from this cold steel

They pound and beat
Bound, doubting there are blessings

He wonders what is right
And what is real, as he inhales
One more smoke that fogs the pain
Bound and waiting for a blessing

He hears a beat that chants
A song he heard his father tap
When someone still recognized his age
Bound and waiting for a blessing

But now just the man
Who pushes at his back with an elbow
And firearms, an unrelenting rhythm
Bound and waiting for a blessing

IV. In Haiti

He waits in a quiet niche of a plain
Block house for a harsh Haitian word
And the corner walls cling
Bound and waiting for a blessing

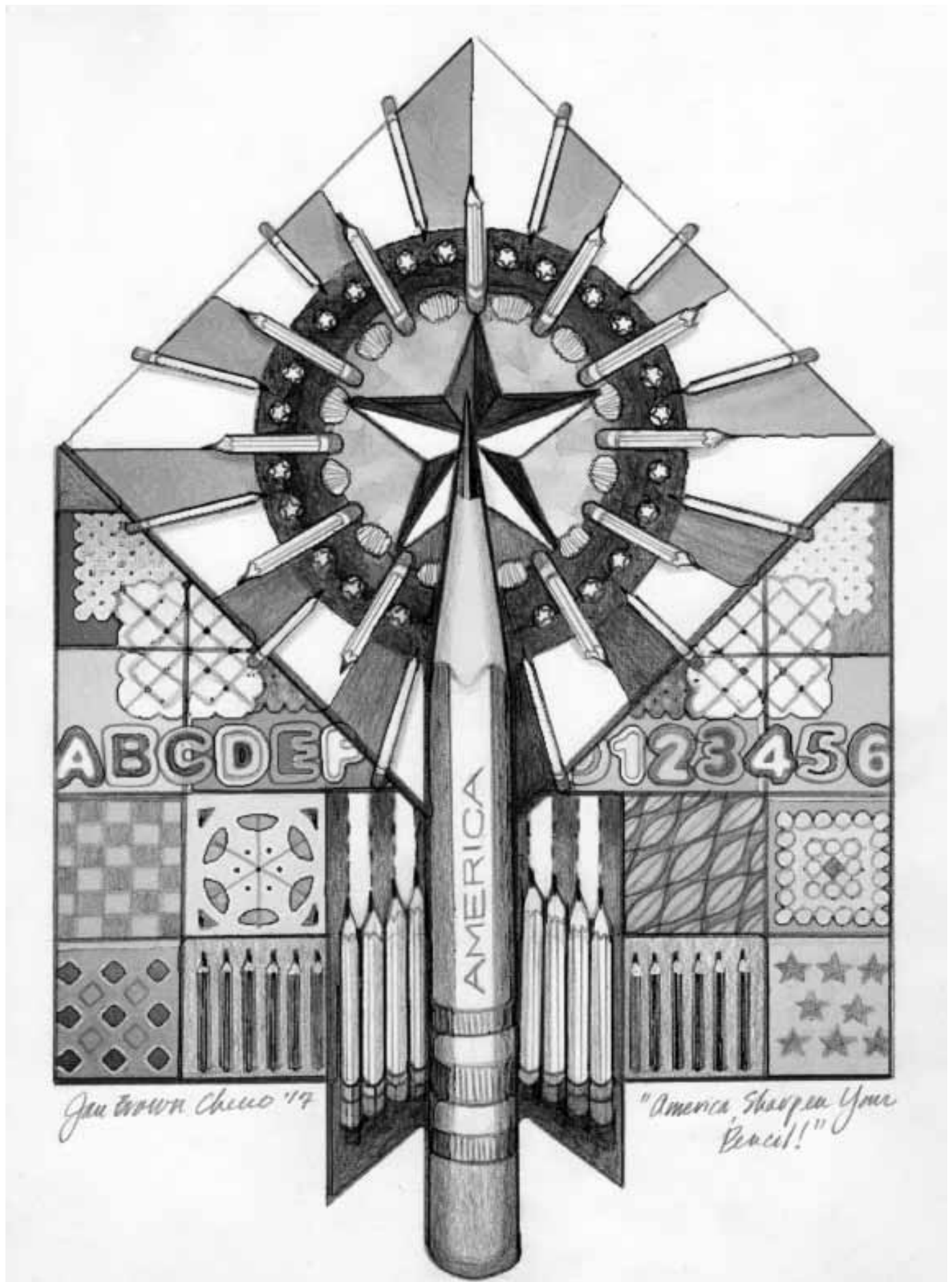
He is demanded yet unseen
He moves behind in outline
Abandoned and commanded
Bound and waiting for a blessing

The water jugs unyielding need
Empty he walks away
Heavy toward home
Bound and waiting for a blessing

He dances a step and
Taps the jugs; an empty rhythm
A heal click of hope
Bound and waiting for a blessing

Unbind yourself.
Bound, unbind, unbound
You are bound to be a blessing

Bound to their blessing
Loosed to be a blessing
You are freedom.
Unbind and be a blessing.



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