

For A 2019 Better World



POEMS BY DRAWINGS ON
PEACE BY JUSTICE BY
Greater Cincinnati Artists

**“For a Better World”
2019**

Poems and Drawings
on
Peace and Justice

by
Greater Cincinnati Artists

Editor:
Saad Ghosn

“The ugliest thing in America is greed, the lust for power and domination, the lunatic ideology of perpetual Growth - with a capital G. ‘Progress’ in our nation has for too long been confused with ‘Growth’; I see the two as different, almost incompatible, since progress means, or should mean, change for the better - toward social justice, a livable and open world, equal opportunity and affirmative action for all forms of life. And I mean all forms, not merely the human. The grizzly, the wolf, the rattlesnake, the condor, the coyote, the crocodile, whatever, each and every species has as much right to be here as we do.”

Edward Abbey

“Throughout history, it has been the inaction of those who could have acted, the indifference of those who should have known better, the silence of the voice of justice when it mattered most, that has made it possible for evil to triumph.”

Haile Selassie I

Foreword

“Open your mouth for the mute, for the rights of all who are destitute. Open your mouth, judge righteously, defend the rights of the poor and needy,” says *Proverb 31:8-9*.

This call to speak up for those who have no voice in society is espoused in this 16th edition of “For a Better World” by seventy four poets and forty three visual artists, who use their poetic voice and their artistic power to contribute to social justice, fighting for everyone’s rights, for the oppressed, the weak and the poor; to combat darkness, violence and evil; and to spread love, peace and justice. They speak for a world after their heart and values, an equal world of hope, 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, champion human rights. 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 Joanne Greenway, Nancy Johanson and Jerry Judge, who kindly and generously 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 2019

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POEMS:

ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

Ellen Austin-Li is an award-winning poet published among others in *Artemis*, *Writers Tribe Review*, *The Maine Review*, *Mothers Always Write*, *Memoir Mixtapes*, *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*. Her first poetry chapbook, *Firefly*, is forthcoming from Finishing Line Press. Ellen is an active participant at Women Writing for a Change. She lives in Cincinnati, OH, with her husband and 2 sons.

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RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague's latest books are the prose collection *Earnest Occupations: Teaching Writing, Gardening, & Other Local Work* (Bottom Dog Press, 2018) and *Studied Days: Poems Early & Late in Appalachia* (Dos Madres Press 2017). He has work in *Appalachian Reckoning: A Region Responds to Hillbilly Elegy* (WVU Press, 2019) and forthcoming in *Universal Oneness: An Anthology of Magnum Opus Poems from Around the World*, to be published by Authorpress, New Delhi, India. He is artist-in-residence at Thomas More University.

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DRAWING:

MARK PATSFALL

Mark Patsfall is an artist, printmaker and publisher. He founded Clay Street Press, Inc. in 1981, a fine art print-shop and gallery where he has worked with many local, national and international artists in the creation of original prints and multiples. Mark's work is in many public and private collections, including a video sculpture at the American Broadcast Museum in Chicago.

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Fall '19

Butterflies Are Free*

(by *Ellen Austin-Li*)

Border crossings between the US and Mexico were up 144% this past year due to a crackdown on illegal

logging in the cloud forests south of the Rio Grande. The oyamel spruce, the sacred fir native to the mountains of central Mexico, grows thousands of meters above sea level; Monarchs winter in this cool canopy, orange and black wings spread like the vibrant palette of a Frida Kahlo. Hooping and clapping greeted these migrants at the peak of their record arrival, so why can we not do the same for those without wings? While a multitude of Americans cultivated milkweed to feed the breeding of the traveling butterflies, millions more cheer closing the door on families, women and children, who need the freedom to move towards a better life. Together, we improved the plight of the Monarch, lifted their flight to the sky—perhaps we can attend to the equally fragile movement on the ground, give them a safe, cage-free, place to reside.

*the title from a play by Leonard Gershe

Some Responses to Wendell Berry's "Questionnaire"

(by *Richard Hague*)

4. In the name of patriotism and the flag, how much of our beloved land are you willing to desecrate? List in the following spaces the mountains, rivers, farms you could most readily do without...

The answers, of course, are impossible. Simply hearing the questions and their inescapable judgments and directives, we feel how greedy, how inhospitable our ways are, how demented and unholy.

5. State briefly the ideas, ideals, or hopes, the energy sources, the kinds of security, for which you would kill a child. Name, please, the children whom you would be willing to kill.

Better to turn to his alliances to those things that are worthy—

*earth, air, water, light;
plants and animals;
the traditions of decent life, good work,
and responsible thought*

—their health and rightness,
the gaze they turn to our better selves.

Better to sow seeds
than plant bombs.
Better to swim swollen rivers
than ruin crops with science.
Better to tell the nursery rhyme
elaborately and cleverly
than to curse the day.

Better to spend hours
admiring the sleek grace of the minnow
than grim-mindedly voting for fools, or war.

Better to think hard
about what's good work,
its nature, its uses,
among whom and for whom it is done,
than bitch about bad work.
Better the shovel in the elder's garden
than the computer in Wall Street,
better the simple words of a song
than the bombast of the market.
Better to teach the wide-open alphabets of peace
than the tight-lipped grammars of deceit.

Better, after all,
to do as he says in
"Manifesto: The Mad Farmer's Liberation Front":

*Be joyful, though you have
considered all the facts.*

Better to hope—

not passively, abstractly hope, but better
to work, sweat, labor, even bitterly and brutally to travail—

for better.

POEMS:

ANDREA BECK

A Cincinnati native, Andrea Beck earned a PhD in English Rhetoric. When she isn't over-mothering her exceptional daughter, dog, and husband, or working in the family business, Andrea carves out time to write. Her favorite meal is soft boiled eggs with toast and tea.

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CHARLES STRINGER

Chuck Stringer is grateful to belong to the group of regional poets writing together in the Thomas More University Creative Writing Vision Program. His work has been published in *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *The Licking River Review*, *Words*, and the 2017 and 2018 editions of *For a Better World*. He lives near Fowlers Fork in Union, Kentucky.

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DRAWING:

GABRIELLE ROACH

Gabrielle Roach received her BFA in painting and printmaking from Indiana State University in 2014 and her MFA in 2017 from Miami University. Gabi has been included in various solo and group exhibitions including *The Future of Art*, 2016, Tate London and *Young Painters*, 2018. She currently works for PAR-Projects in Cincinnati, OH and teaches at Miami University.

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By Nick Perry and
Associated Press

CHRISTCHURCH
— At least 49
death at two in
day prayers for
all of them get
immigrant
acist who app
met-mounted
cast-live vide
on Facebook

One man w
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other armed su
into custody
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in the cold-bl
stunned New
try so peacefu
cers rarely car
"It is clear t
only be descri
attack," Prime
Ardern said, r
of the victims
or refugees.

She pronoun
Zealand's dark
The gunman
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he posted on so
the name Brent
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Europe perpet
He also lives
detail 17 mil
at Al Noor M
with at least

Sally Rents

The Boston Daily Globe.
1500 DIE
Survivors Mostly Women and Children.



TERROR IN NEW ZEALAND

...killed, dozens hurt
in shootings at two mosques.

Suspect charged with murder
after livestreamed slayings.

Sally Rents

I Must Explain

(by **Andrea Beck**)

When I was upset that a friend called me a JAP,
That was easy to explain.

When her friend said Santa doesn't visit us because we don't
believe in God,
That I could explain.

When a gunman killed three people outside a JCC,
That was very hard to explain.

When Jews in France were killed for looking like her teachers,
That I had to explain.

When a police officer parked in front of our temple when we
were in the building,
That I knew how to explain.

When White Supremacists yelled "Jews will not replace us!"
That I was ready to explain.

When the police officer started guarding the door of our temple,
That was harder to explain.

When eleven of us were murdered while praying,
How could I explain?

At the Western Wall We Pray for Peace

(by **Andrea Beck**)

Go quietly to the women's section--plan to meet back at the
plaza.
We pray

Yellow tape and soldiers block our return.
We wait

The bomb robot rolls up to a brown purse in the empty plaza.
We worry

A soldier in body armor marches slowly, lifts the purse, and
carries it away.
We cheer

This time it was just shoes.
We live

A Naming of Abominations

(by **Charles Stringer**)

When, where, how to put a name
on what we must resist
and detest?

Name it years ago

in those dragged from homes
in the camps
the eyes of Jews at Dachau
the Japanese faces behind wire
in a Christian America.

Name it this year

in a young girl's cries
a Guatemalan child
taken from her mother and held
in a South Texas cage.

Or name it today

the shadow
that crept from our bodies
in the pit of last night's dream
that follows us
a darkness walking
our light.

At Bedtime

(by *Charles Stringer*)

Daddy, you buy such silly books
And read their poems to me.
I wonder why when on the news
Such terrible things I see.

Like just tonight when Lester Holt
Said nine more people died.
I walked up to the TV screen.
I watched. I cringed. I cried.

And I try to understand a world
Where almost every day
Another white man loads a gun,
Shoots people while they pray.

Why did he shoot that grandma,
That mom, dad, grandpa, too?
That sister and that little brother,
And call each one a Jew?

They didn't seem to be that different
From the people at St. Anthony.
Why did he call them evil,
A Jew conspiracy?

Is that why he wanted to shoot them,
Wanted to watch them scream and bleed?
Daddy, I don't hear the answers
In those silly poems you read.

So Daddy, let's not read at bedtime,
But talk about reality:
All those terrible things on the evening news,
Will you explain them tonight to me?

POEMS:

ELIZABETH BECK

B. Elizabeth Beck, a University of Cincinnati and Xavier University alumnae, is a writer, artist and teacher who lives with her family on a pond in Lexington, Kentucky. Her forthcoming collection of ekphrastic poems, *Painted Daydreams*, will be published by Accents Publishing, June 2019.

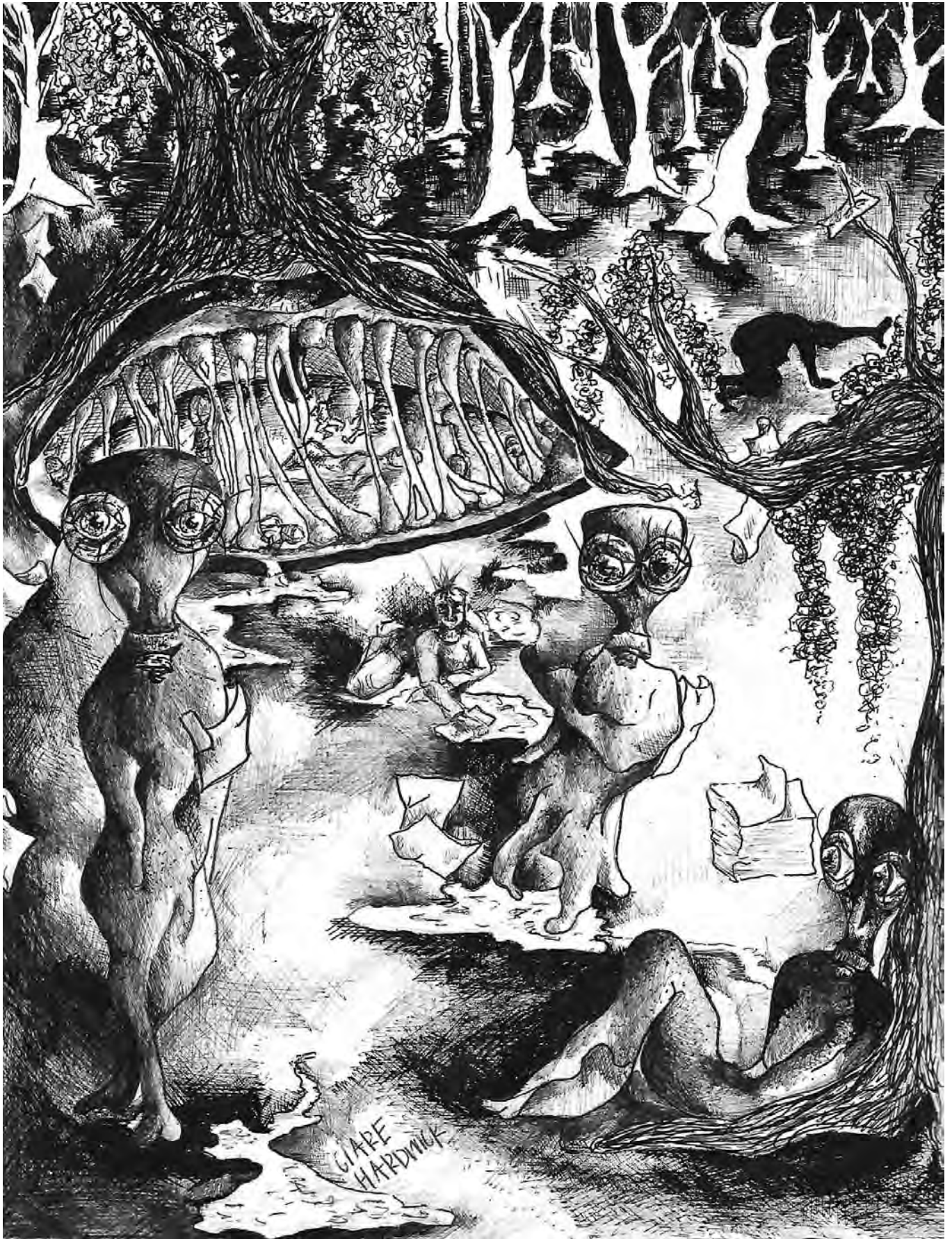
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DRAWING:

CLARE HARDWICK

Clare Hardwick is a second year sculpture student at the University of Cincinnati studying in the DAAP program. Through her drawings and sculptures, she creates surreal environments for her abstract, dream-like figures to exist. She challenges the viewer to imagine a world unlike their own and connects the viewer in a visual conversation.

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Planning Bell

If I do not write today, I will
never write another poem and if
I never think in verse, my window
will seal shut. So, although I should
be writing lessons and thinking about
institutionalized documents, what I want
to consider are my children. Lost casualties
of a public education that speaks about serving
but never actually does anything beyond talking
and talking and talking in meetings about meetings
that swirl around my head in a cloud of meaningless
clatter which reminds me of how my students must feel
loaded with words they maybe don't understand about
content that exists in a vacuum, much like the hum
of the machines their mamas run to suck debris
from carpets worn thread-barren in homes
that lack windows for the future when
it's enough to just survive today.

Is He Kidding

when he refers to Trump
as dictator? I gently
correct, *President*. His
panic is real. Believes
his father will be deported.
Understands reality better
than me. I'm too busy

remembering rushing
into classroom day after
election 2008 to use red
and blue markers on white
board. First patriotic
gesture of my life. Now
I feel deflated. Forget

to look at boy's eyes,
until he pulls on my sleeve
impatiently intent in seeking
asylum in school building.

I grant it with false reassurance
from the hours of eight to four,
he is safe. But, what about
his father? What happens

when he gets off the yellow
bus and arrives to an empty
home with a note from ICE
on the linoleum kitchen table?

That's not going to happen,
I can't say. Can't make promises.
Can only pretend I'm not worried
as I direct him to homeroom.

If there's a real lock down,

Ms. B-, where will you hide us?
seventh grader asks, looking
around my yellow classroom,
cheerful plants hanging in open
windows, blinds always pulled up.

I gaze at her solemn brown eyes
and gesture to corner where we
huddle for drills. But, that's not

where I will hide you if
it is real. I have a plan, dear.

No, we will not practice. It is a secret.
No one can know, but I will tell you.

~~We will quickly hurry into girls'
locker room. Yes, boys, too.
The outside door locks from within.
There is a second door. Look. I have
this thing I can slide to stop door.
I carry it in my purse at all times.
My husband bought it for me after...~~

~~Anyway, a shooter will have
to barge through two doors
and shoot me before he can get
to you, my students. I will stand
waiting while you huddle
in shower stalls, hidden.~~

And if it's ICE?

POEMS:

DIANA BECKET

Diana Becket was born in Manchester, England and lived for ten years in The Netherlands before moving to Cincinnati. She began writing poetry when she retired from teaching composition courses at the University of Cincinnati.

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JOANNE GREENWAY

Joanne Greenway holds a Master's Degree in French Literature from Indiana University. She retired from a 30-year civil service career with Hamilton County Job and Family Services in 2003 and is the author of the chapbook *Limited Engagement* (Finishing Line Press, 2016). She is the current president of Greater Cincinnati Writers League, possibly the oldest continuously meeting poetry group in the United States.

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DRAWING:

BILLY SIMMS

Billy Simms is an artist, educator, and board member of SOS ART. He lives in Hamilton, OH, with his wife and four cats.

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Oh, but
ain't that
AMERICA

for
YOU and
ME



2/16 192

Drug Victim

(by *Diana Becket*)

Sun carved slits in the porch boards pivot
on raised nails, half aligned with joists
that creak under their broken boots.
Water-warped panels on the door give way
to the force of the guns they wield;
the wood cracks before the latch yields.

They push into the room of cheap
worn seats and cooking smells,
and search for drug supplies. Hamburger
and bread mix with spilled water
where a boy eats dinner; he pushes
his chair away too fast. In the tension
and threats, a bullet silences the shouts
and crushes a child's life.

On the Streets

(by *Diana Becket*)

At fifteen, her parents said she had to leave,
because they feared the girl she loved.

She walked the streets and slept wrapped
under blankets in doorways.

A man told her she was beautiful, her voice
could earn her food and rent,

she would travel with friends, like a family,
they'd share needs and each other's company.

His room was warm and dry
but smelled of smoke and dirty sheets.

The bed heaved with her sickness,
bare bulbs seared her eyes,

drugs couldn't numb her pain and fear
of men who raped her at sixteen.

She vomits each day, but she's hungry
and searches for ways to survive.

The Last Straw

(by *Joanne Greenway*)

The crawler at the bottom of the screen
streams more bad news. Footage of throngs
of sign-toting, pussy-hatted women, and *men*.
How they love to fill the minds of young
people with their multi-cultural, #MeToo,
politically correct, left-wing bullshit.

Jim drains his Coors Lite. Time to pick up
the grandson from his last day in subsidized
day care. The feds have cut the program;
Grandpa will have to pick up the slack.
With his bum hip, how's he supposed
to keep up with a four year-old on speed?

At home, he nukes their dinner and takes
half his diabetes meds. In today's mail,
his son's tuition bill. It keeps going up.
On TV, he sees the working man's hero,
minstrel-faced from a golf sunburn
brushing aside his latest sex scandal.
On the way to making America great again,
the Orange Oracle has installed sycophants
as cabinet secretaries who will wreck
the environment and public education.
What he now proposes stops Jim cold:
higher tariffs on aluminum. He crushes
his beer can flat. This is—what's the
word he's groping for? Deplorable!

A Cell

(by *Diana Becket*)

The opioid withdrawal room is in a jail,
cell door slammed on uniforms, guns, and keys.
He lies on a narrow, metal bed, eyes glossed,
mouth bleeding with sores that crack his lips.

In his half-waking trance, this barred cage
is other traps in his life. He cringes in jeering
prisons of high school yards, caught between daily
mockery of peers and his need for their drugs.

His bones ache with chills that shake his skin
thin frame. The sheet doesn't warm his ribcage
and knobby knees. In dreams, he sees the metal
tray
where his cousin lay, face covered by a sheet.

Urban Lullaby

(by *Joanne Greenway*)

My backyard nap is bollixed by
bombardier birds and buzzing vectors.
I try jonesing on the smoky scent
of honeysuckle and new-mown grass—
when the air is suddenly shredded
by the roar of a riding mower.

The conspiracy of cacophony
builds. Squad cars peel out
from the precinct house,
sirens shrieking.
A brief, blessed silence. Until,
from two doors up, I hear the
pounding beat of rap music:
*Put your hands in the air
like you got the heat to your back
and shake your body like a baby
born addicted to crack.* I recall
such a baby on my caseload,
back in the Seventies. Chubby
little cub, he shuddered nonstop.

I retreat indoors, but there is no
escape from the percussive pulse
of the music, the volume now loud
enough to cause the windows to vibrate.
Neither the drone of the AC
nor the purr of NPR can mute it.

I want to know where my
drug-addicted baby is now.

If he still is.

(Rap lyrics courtesy of Immortal
Technique's *Leaving the Past*.)

POEMS:

MATT BIRKENHAUER

Matt Birkenhauer teaches English at Northern Kentucky University's Grant County Center, with an emphasis on Composition and Rhetoric. In addition to *For a Better World*, his poems have appeared in a number of venues, including *Trajectory: Writing That Illuminates*, *Words*, *The Licking River Review*, *Tobacco: A Literary Anthology*, *Parody Poetry*, and others.

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DRAWING:

ANDREW AU

Andrew Au was born in 1972 in Chicago, Illinois. His creative work is primarily in printmaking. Andy's work is highly influenced by growing up on science fiction movies and his interest in biology. Creating a conceptual narrative from which to work, he tackles social and political themes catered to the body of his work.

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The Great White Id

i

Daily watch the Great White Id
Huffing and puffing away.
He'll gladly tell you what he did
To madly disrupt your day.

He tweets his Id thoughts from his Throne—
His petty gripes and “So unfairs!”
Civility he now bemoans
And offers us instead hot air.

His Little Ids feed off his spew
And swallow every lie he tweets.
His policies the poor now screws—
(The same who sport their clean white sheets.)

He flares up like a burning cross.
His Little Ids chime in—
“Look her up! Pocahontas--“
He feeds their angry daimon.

He's certain that (he tells his base)
The “mainstream” media hates him.
And cynically he uses race
To stoke his base's venom.

To scapegoat is his special grift--
Aimed at the brown-skinned “infestation.”
He crows to set in stone our rift
And heighten confrontation.

Of children Trump can shed a tear
When gassed in time of war.
But let endangered children near--
He'll ban them from our shore.

Or put them in a new steel cage
And arrest their frightened parents,
To satisfy his base's rage
With policies abhorrent.

ii

L'état, c'est moi!” said one dead King
The Great White Id never heard of.
He *thinks* it might be Martin . . . *something?*
(Though it's a quote he *does* approve of.)

As for the other famous King,
He pays lip service to his dream,
While cheering on his far-right wing
Whose eyes with hate are all agleam.

The Old World Order he'll remake
To Make America Great Again.
And NATO now he'll relegate
To Putin's hegemonic plan.

About the realm of science,
He knows not what he knows.
But scientists he'll silence
Whom lobbyists oppose.

“Climate change is bunk!” he cries.
(His Little Ids fall right in line.)
For short-term profit, he'll devise
Our planet's dirty, hot decline.

Daily watch the Great White Id
Huffing and puffing away.
He'll gladly tell you what he did--
His ignorance on full display.

The Angry Little Snowflake

The angry little snowflake
Sits and tweets his day away.
He'll tell you he's no milkshake,
His lack of taste on full display.

The angry little snowflake
Takes no crap from enemies.
He gives as good as he can take,
Between his infidelities.

The angry little snowflake
Curses all the brown-skinned folks.
Our salad bowl he'll now unmake
As hate he cynically invokes.

The angry little snowflake
Lies with every exhalation.
And assures us news is fake
As he simmers in delusion.

With a Little Help from Putin

(With apologies to the Beatles, and with sympathy for Melania)

What would you do if I screwed a porn star?
Would you stand up and walk out on me?
Lend me your eyes and I'll tweet something wrong
And I'll try not to lie through my teeth.

Oh, I get by with a little help from Putin
Mmm, I can lie with a little help from my friends
Mmm, I'm going to try with a little help from Russians

What do I do when my love is away?
Can I find somebody else to bone?
How do I feel at the end of the day?
I feel sad if I can't find my phone.

Oh, I can lie with a little help from my friends
Mmm, I'm going to try with a little help from Russians
Mmm, I get by with a little help from Putin

Do you neeeeeeeed anybody?
I just need someone to bone
Could it beeeeeeee anybody?
As long as my wife doesn't know

Would you believe in a love at first sight?
Yes, I'm certain that it happened with Putin
What do you see when you turn out the light?
I see Mueller and I'm really frightinned.

Oh, I get by with a little help from Russians
Mmm, I can lie with a little help from my friends
Mmm, I get by with a little help from Putin

Do you neeeeeeeed anybody?
I just need someone to bone
Could it beeeeeeee anybody?
As long as my wife doesn't know

Oh, I get by with a little help from Russians
Mmm, I can lie with a little help from my friends
Yes, I get by with a little help from Putin
With a little help from Putin!

POEMS:

ANDREW BOETTCHER

Andrew Boettcher is an aspiring poet. He lives in Covington, KY with his partner, Bradley, and an ever-growing family of cats. He enjoys cashews, rocks, Shirley MacLaine, Bradley, traveling, flea markets, listening to the Universe... and books.

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LINDA KLEINSCHMIDT

Linda Kleinschmidt taught writing and history courses in colleges and public schools. For the past 17 + years she has edited key research, technical, academic and creative material worldwide. She also writes short stories, poetry, children's books, screenplays, longer fiction, and various educational articles.

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NOEL ZEISER

Noel Zeiser is the author of *The Pearl Street Flood* which tells the story of the 1937 Ohio River flood and *Salute the Moon*, a collection of poems, essays, and short stories. Noel is a member of the Monday Morning Writers Group.

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DRAWING:

ERICA SIEFRING

Erica Siefring is an interdisciplinary artist living and working in Cincinnati. She enjoys combining technology with traditional art making methods, and is interested in different ways of seeing and perception. She will graduate from UC with her BFA in Spring 2020.

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ERICA SIEFRING

Encounter

(by *Andrew Boettcher*)

The monk did not speak;
only smiled as he took my hands
and gently guided the mallet
around the lip of the bowl.
I was embarrassed by his kindness,
and his earnest touch,
until I heard the voice
of the universe singing.

Morning Dawn

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

This misnamed hulk of rock
Was meant to be a glowing mark,
A bright beacon showing sunrise
At the entrance to the bay.
But instead it stands here now
Alone and grey, somber yet,
Holding darkness in its twisted outcrop.

Attuned to where I am this dawn,
You may find me on that rock;
But I will not stay for long.
A coast nearby that's clear, not cloudy,
I seek this start of day.
It's a bit of a walk I know, and
I'll use that time for thought to
Find renewed direction for the soul.

Where and When

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

Do leave a determined image
Of the self you really are,
A touch of valid memory, a touch of love
That marks your presence and declares
You really were here and shone
In the vast ongoing where and when.

Pause for the Slow Dance

(by *Noel Zeiser*)

I cannot abide this place today.
The angry hiss and hustle
rip every ounce of calm.
Past time to push the pause.
My body, for goodness sake,
yearns for air.

Why do I linger here?
I cannot abide this place today
with its chicken scratch,
camouflage and busyness.
My mind, for goodness sake,
strains for rest.

I feel the green forest calling me
to wander along its paths,
hear the soft murmurings,
breathe slowly with the trees.
My heart, for goodness sake,
seeks serenity.

I accept the invitation when
a maple requests this dance.
As it extends its leafy arms,
we sway into a gentle waltz,
and my soul finally, finally
Finds the goodness of peace.

What Can I Do Today?

(by *Noel Zeiser*)

I study the parable
of the mustard seed,
so small to plant,
the tallest tree when grown,
and rich with leafy branches.
No wonder birds come to sing.

We appear unimpressive
in a world that is vast.
But our tiniest kindness
stretches wide as a branch,
cooling the angry rant
or warming a sadness away.

POEMS:

NANCY SUSANNA BREEN

Nancy Susanna Breen writes and lives in Loveland, OH. Her publication credits include *Encore*, *The Donut Book*, and *The Practicing Poet*. Her previous chapbooks are *Rites and Observances* (Finishing Line Press) and *How Time Got Away* (Pudding House Publications). Her newest chapbook, *Burying the Alleluia*, will be published in May 2019 by Finishing Line Press.

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ELLA CATHER-DAVIS

Ella Cather-Davis is retired and writes poetry, essays and children's stories to amuse her grandchildren. She holds an Associates of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of Cincinnati. Ella is a member of the Greater Cincinnati Writer's League, Ohio Poetry Association, and loves classical choral music, singing in a number of choruses about town. Her written work has been published in a number of books anthologies and newspapers.

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DRAWING:

FARRON ALLEN

Farron Allen grew up in the mountains of West Virginia, the product of three generations of coalminers. He currently teaches Sculpture Foundry at the University of Cincinnati.

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PRAYER

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Jarvis Allen 19

Absolving His Past

(by *Nancy Susanna Breen*)

Alcoholic amnesia wiped my father's memory
of his terrorist past: the drunken drive home
from the parish picnic when we thought
we wouldn't survive; the knife
held to my mother's throat;
the dragon-fire eyes and flying spittle
as he threatened to hang me
from the rafters of the garage.

Later in life, when sobriety
had doused some of the rage,
he made a show of affection,
and never understood my muted
reciprocation of his big-shouldered hugs.
He didn't remember his harrowing behavior,
but I did; and I appealed to my better angels
to restrain me from the urge to truth-tell.

So, when the old man embraced me
with near gratitude, his whispered
"I love you" touched with desperation,
I forgave him and said "I love you, too,"
because he was getting on in years,
because he was my father,
because age had given me wisdom
to understand what he could and could not
help.

We stood there, my head
buried in his neck, his head
buried in forgetfulness,
shielded by his incognizance
as if no-one else could see his past.

Addiction's Face*

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

I am the face of addiction.
Strewn behind me are all the many
unintended consequences of my pleasure.

I have backed my mother against a wall, my
fist in her face, then begged her for money
I have endlessly lied to her.

I have beaten my wife often to keep her in line
I have threatened her pregnant belly with a gun
I have strangled, punched and kicked my children.

Then I become charming - - ever so charming.
It will never happen again
I assure all these vulnerable victims of my lust.

I do not care about what or who I hurt
because my life is one big hurt.
It is all about me.

I will do anything when I am high
ANYTHING
I am empowered by fear.

How did I become this way,
evil personified?
I just wanted the pain to go away.

* (*of my Father*)

Epilogue

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

The Veterans placed you
in a Tupperware box
like a leftover.
You were interred
in someone else's grave
an afterthought.

I watched detached at the
short, awkward ceremony
and noted the obligatory flag,
the uncomfortable relatives.

Then I tarried until I was alone
I looked up and I remember
a sky of whirling clouds,
I forgive you, I said silently,
not for your journey now
but for my own.

You did not win. I am not your legacy.
I have no anger or hate for anyone.
I love and am loved. I am happy.
At last it is over, I am safe.

And So, She Stayed

(by *Nancy Susanna Breen*)

And so, she stayed despite the threat
of facing her worst beating yet.
The first time, when he blacked her eyes,
he groveled and apologized.
He seemed sincere in his regret.
The night she had her arm reset,
he warned she'd better not forget
she'd have it worse with other guys.
And so, she stayed.
She talked of leaving, but he let
her know how savage he could get.
He swore no one would sympathize
if she spread her outrageous lies.
Life offered her no safety net,
and so, she stayed.

In Santaland, 1978

(by *Nancy Susanna Breen*)

Jolly old St. Nick,
you were a nasty fart.
What fun to leer at us elves,
your maidservants, coaxing us
onto your lap even though
you knew it meant dismissal;
for us, not for you
of the rouged round cheeks,
the ringing ho-ho-ho's
and bottomless bin of candy canes.

One afternoon your florid twinkle,
your moist hand patting your ample thigh
were too much. Even my protests
you misread as encouragement.
They said they could hear me shouting
up by the cash registers
where your photos were sold,
counterpoint to "Here Comes Santa Claus"
piped into the labyrinth
of papier mâché gumdrops and fake snow.

Jolly Old Lech was more like it.
What a wretch you were,

cowering in chagrin and fear
behind a face full of cotton.
The sight of you, quivering jelly
in cheap red and fake fur,
was worth more than all the gold
and rare perfumes of the Magi.

I still believe in saints and elves,
but not in *you*, with your sack
of peppermint bribes for good little girls,
tainted pretender to the tufted throne.

Legacy

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

For most of my life I have been afraid.
or at least since I was 10 years old
when I could no longer block it
I have been afraid.

I am afraid in the middle of the night
when waking at 3:00 a.m. I pray for the ill,
for the world, for a myriad of things
but not for me.

I am strong, so I do not pray for me.
Waking into each morning and day
I am afraid if I dare to think about it,
I don't dare.

This fear is a phantom, a bitter memory
of waking torn from the warm bed,
strangled, kicked and thrown like a projectile
against a wall,

retrieved and it began again amidst
the roar of all his screaming rage
while the world was a cacophony of pain.
So very long ago.

Each morning as I assume me, I assure me
I am safe now. What is safe,
if I am still afraid when I let it in?

POEMS:

KRISTINA NICHOLE BRODBECK

Kristina Nichole Brodbeck's poetry has been published in *The Cape Rock*, *Calliope*, *The Oddville Press*, *Lions on Line*, and *For a Better World*, 2017 and 2018. Her first book of poems, *Play*, was recently published with Finishing Line Press. Kristina teaches English Composition and Literature at Mount St. Joseph University.

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SIDNEY TRASSER

Sidney Trasser is a Cincinnati-based graphic designer, photographer and poet. Her work aims to tackle social and societal stigmas in an effort to debunk the misinformed stereotypes and biases of today. Sidney uses her camera, design, and words to draw her audience in and challenge her viewers to think critically and deeply about the world around them, and their own tendencies to mislabel and judge minorities, mental health and injustices.

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DRAWING:

ISABEL GREGAN

Isabel Gregan is an Illustrator from North Little Rock, Arkansas and is currently going to school at the Art Academy of Cincinnati to pursue a BFA in Illustration. Isabel's artwork revolves around the importance of the self, repetition, and Femininity. She works in watercolor, gouache, and printmaking.

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A Massacre of Our Daughters

(by *Kristina Nichole Brodbeck*)

It begins with the smallest ones,
taught to offer up their bodies—
go give hugs—for payment to Grandpa's
ego.

When she's grown, it's time
to allow the smallest of pats
on her backside as the coworker
slips past in a dingy office
kitchenette.

When she is a mother,
her milk production equals worthiness.
If her breasts fail to produce enough,
she will stare at her hungry baby,
knowing the formula is death sentence
to her own value.

If she returns to work, the freshman coworkers
will have their turn, with their snickers and
comments
about her engorged body.

She is old now. Sagged. Loose.
Let her not turn to her own daughter, and say,
Get over there and give Grandpa a hug.

Girls

(by *Sidney Trasser*)

imagine if every little girl
felt empowered by her words
instead of discouraged by
judgement and disdain
because of her voice

Lessons for Your Daughter

(by *Sidney Trasser*)

my father sat me down
to tell me all the things
to fear

like wearing shorts in the summer
and walking home at night
never live on the first floor
and be sure to carry pepper spray or a
knife

don't say no alone
smile when they say hi
and when they brush against you
bite your tongue, don't cry.

POEMS:

LESLIE CLARK

Leslie Clark lives in Cincinnati, Ohio and graduated from its University. She holds an MFA in Writing from the Bennington Writing Seminars. Leslie's chapbook, *Driving in the Dark*, was published in 2017.

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DON FLEMING

Don Fleming is a retired research scientist who lives in Crescent Springs, KY. His poetry has been exhibited at Centre College in *EAT: A Literature + Photo Installation* at the Norton Center for the Arts. His poems have been published in *Parody Poetry* and in the anthology *These Summer Months: Stories from The Late Orphan Project*.

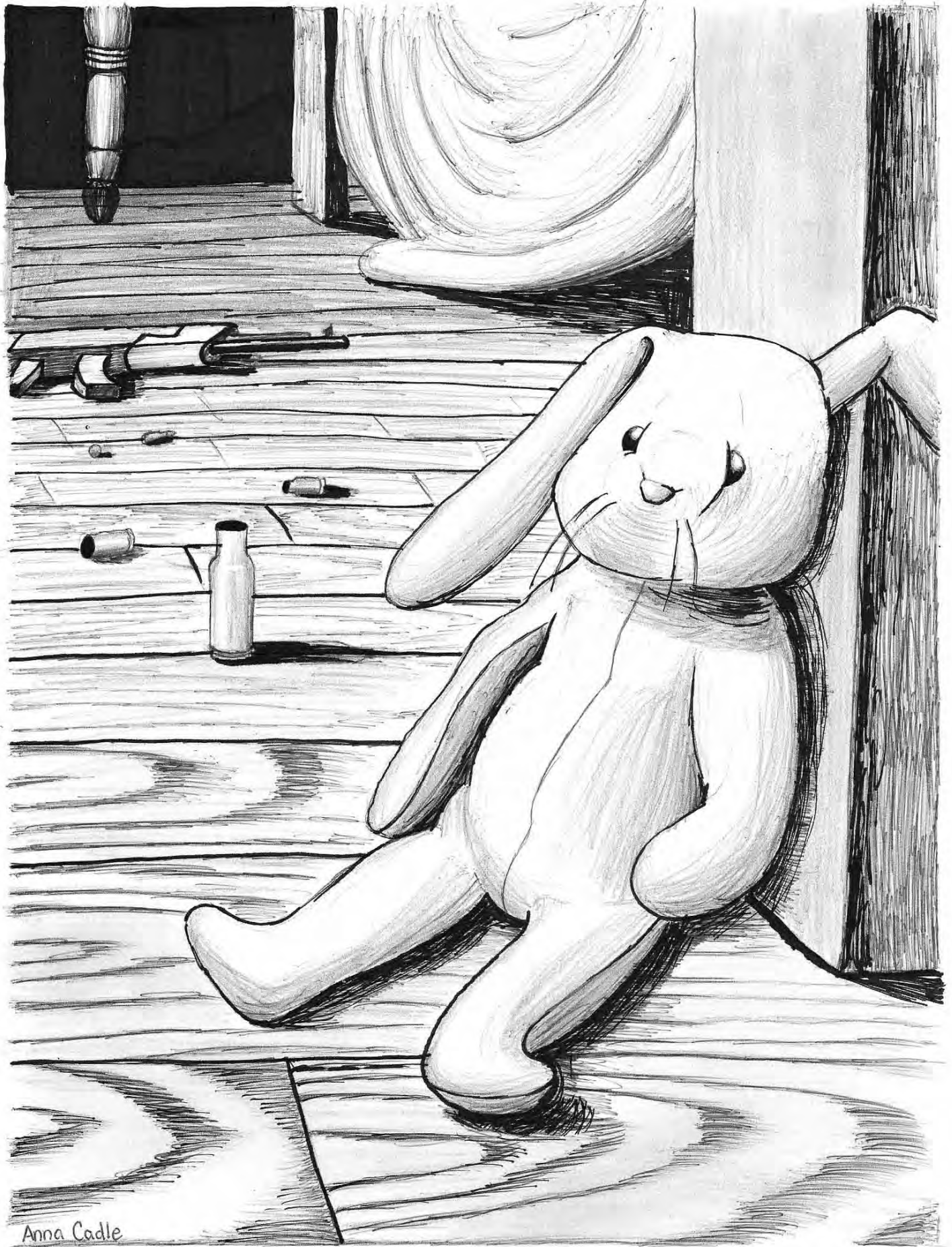
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DRAWING:

ANNA CADLE

Anna Cadle is a Studio Arts Major at Miami University with a concentration in Painting and Printmaking, minoring in Music, Graphic Design and Art/Architecture History. In addition to her academic work in art and music, Anna is active in volunteer work within her community, ranging from assisting nursing home residents to providing music lessons to children with special needs. Art, music, community, and an interest in the stories of others usually drive her work.

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Anna Cadle

Home Is, Then and Now

(by *Leslie Clark*)

Where the heart is.
 Where blood streams
 into sidewalk cracks.

Chocolate chips folded into cookie dough.
 Ammo rammed
 into chambered steel.

Picnics, celebrations and music.
 Hate crimes, fear-mongering,
 mass shootings every effing day.

Sweet lullabies.
 Moronic, electronic ranting.

Nurturing, building.
 Bullying, burning.

Slow, peaceful walks.
 Bullet train to Armageddon.

God Save Us

(by *Don Fleming*)

after: *Easter Vigil Litany & Proverbs 6:16-19*

 Libera nos, Domine
 From haughty eyes bereft of love
 Ora pro nobis;
 From tongues unused to telling truth
 Ora pro nobis;
 From hands that strike at innocents
 Ora pro nobis;
 From hearts that scheme obsessed with strength
 Ora pro nobis;
 From edicts without empathy
 Ora pro nobis;
 From pleas propped up by perjury
 Ora pro nobis;
 From discord born of demagogues
 Ora pro nobis;
 Libera nos, Domine.

The State of Our Union

(by *Leslie Clark*)

We got comfortable in the land of plenty.
 But now,
 our cornucopia spills over with isms:
 racism, sexism, classism,
 ableism, anti-Semitism,
 ageism, heterosexism.

We settled into the land of the free.
 And now,
 hopscotch grids on playgrounds
 give way to chalk outlines,
 gun violence invades our lives,
 drowns out the voices of the living.

The time for handwringing is past.
 We must skewer the claptrap
 that hijacks TV, radio, social media,
 muddies waters,
 stagnates lives.

Visualize the lotus
 pristine and pure,
 floating above the muck of
 entitlement, greed
 and discord perpetuated
 by, hmm, let's see...

What rhymes with lotus?

Advantage Sweet

(by Don Fleming)

Does His grand plan condone domination?
With darkest divisions history's replete.
We're capable of abomination!

Heroes empower imagination
But unworthy leaders deceive and cheat.
Does His grand plan condone domination?

Men skilled at public manipulation
Can sway their brothers by fear and deceit.
We're capable of abomination,

Of acts abhorrent and degradation
To achieve our ends and impose defeat.
Does His grand plan condone domination?

Yielding fairness to intimidation
We deny compassion its rightful seat.
We're capable of abomination!

Some overlook others' subjugation
Ever they perceive their advantage sweet.
Does His grand plan condone domination?

POEMS:

JOHN CRUZE

To paraphrase Frost and Socrates, now turning in their graves at such presumption, John Cruze is the sort of person who may resort to almost any device, including poetic, if necessary, in one last ditch attempt to hold up his end of a lover's quarrel with the mostly unexamined in his all-American drive by life.

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MELISSA CURRENCE

Melissa Currence is a poet living in Cincinnati. She is the founder of the Cincinnati East Poetry Meetup and works as managing director of communications at ArtWorks. As a volunteer, she serves on the board of the League of Women Voters of the United States and as the 91st president of the Cincinnati Association.

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DRAWING:

JEFF CASTO

Originally from West Virginia, Jeff Casto came to Cincinnati in 1982 and has been making art ever since. He has a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati (1987) and an MFA from the University of Cincinnati (1989). Jeff is a two time recipient of Cincinnati Artist Allocation grants. He has exhibited in the Mid-West and New York. His work is in several corporate and private collections.

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CASTO

Zip-a-Dee-Doo-Dah

(by *John Cruze*)

In case you've been wondering
whatever happened to Uncle Remus,
it turns out,
he happened to be in Charlottesville
at the wrong time, and
what with the soft eyes,
floppy hat,
rumpled appearance,
Bible story beard
and his enduring,
long suffering, infuriating
you-can't-make-me-hate-you-
black-folk-gospel-patience,
it came to pass,
in that moment of truth,
he had to be taken down.

If, for no other reason,
to show the uncommitted
the palpable risk,
that in the crosshairs
of flag and faith
there are no innocents
there are no bystanders,
anyone could be mistaken
for one more subversive,
wild-eyed radical do-gooder,
ungrateful, lo, unmoved
by the ones chosen
to defend the temple
of sound and fury
with sound and fury.

I Study Maps Like a Syllabus

(by *Melissa Currence*)

While I pass,
Lytle's eagle lifts its head
out of mourning, eager to fly.
Walking in this cemetery, I feel the truth
in my bones where love should be.
When bones turn against you
all you have is the city
to nurture those you leave behind--
in a world where the hopes of those buried
have built the connections mapped in typography.

I take the here with me
but I'm never walking far from these hills
which is the shape of us - a river less ambitious
than an ocean,
but devastating in its pace.

A white man taps his holstered gun
like a knock at the door.

I bought a can of pepper spray,
doubting I could ever use it
against a stranger.
Could the rage inside come pouring out
in the struggle for my next breath?

Such is war

How You Say – Depression?

(by *John Cruze*)

I can see you
rising before dawn
limping through darkness
in your upstairs quarters
quiet as a storehouse sentry

above the array of apple
asparagus and avocado
zucchini and ziti you sold
or gave in the guise of credit

on your way to the brokers
to pick light filled grapes
from cork filled barrels
rolled from the holds of steamers

like the one you travelled
a fifteen year old orphan
leaving your small village
among the Turks and Greeks

I wish I had known the smell
of sage storied on your hands
or seen you smile into laughter
as Mama returned from school

she shared a few old photos
your mustache worn so proud
the hardships only bruised fruit
pared to sweetness for a child

I learned through her
to see the need unspoken
standing in your doorway
I hear your voice
“Hello my friend”

POEMS:

ERIC EBLE

Eric Eble teaches English literature and language and coaches speech and debate at a local Catholic all-boys high school. Besides writing poems and grading essays, he enjoys trading loving barbs with his wife, chasing his two children, taking too long to cook overcomplicated meals, running to stay sane, gardening, and hoping that his students are learning something. Eric resides in Madisonville with his family, two cats, one dog, and five chickens.

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ROBERTA SCHULTZ

Roberta Schultz is a singer songwriter, teacher and poet originally from Grant's Lick, KY. Her poems have appeared in *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, *Still: the Journal*, *The Main Street Rag*, *Kudzu*, and other anthologies. *Outposts on the Border of Longing* (2014) and *Songs from the Shaper's Harp* (2017) are her chapbooks published by Finishing Line Press.

contact: robertaschultz@mac.com

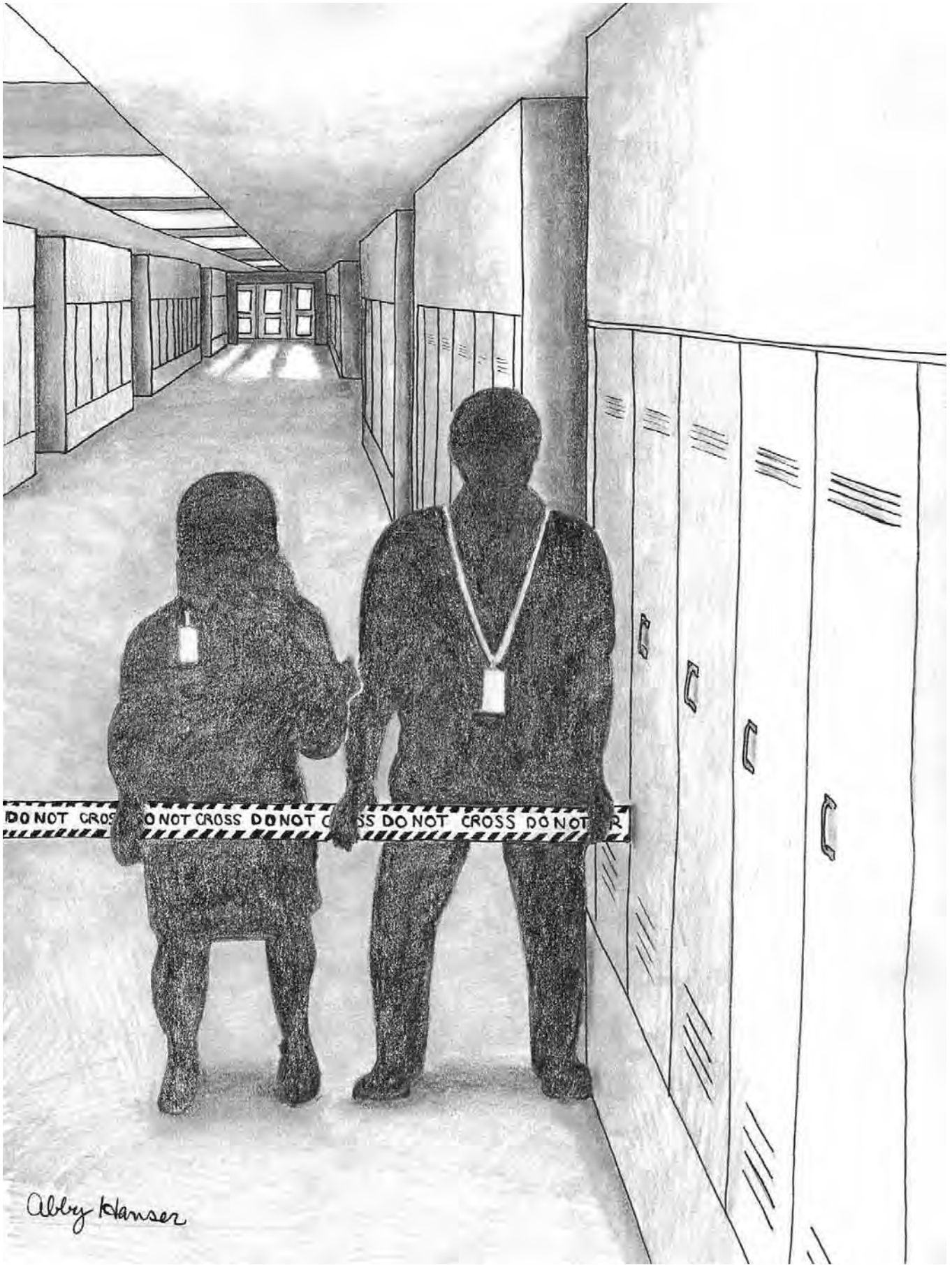
DRAWING:

ABIGAIL HANSER

Abby Hanser, a 5th and 6th grade art teacher at Berry Intermediate School in Lebanon, Ohio, has been teaching art for 21 years. She has a BFA from Bowling Green State University and an MA in Art Education from The Art Academy of Cincinnati.

Abby's artwork features shadow box-style paintings of abandoned houses.

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Abby Hanser

School Shooting Drill

(by *Eric Eble*)

Blanks empty
into the third floor
and my students stack desks
in front of our windowed closed door

like FEMA volunteers
piling up sandbags assembly-line
style before thunderheads arrive.
We wait in the dark; they opine

about best routes for escape:
“Jump out the window and scale
down the tree” a junior jokes. “Idiot,”
a senior responds, “that epic fail

will break your legs
and make you a sitting duck.”
I hiss at them to get down,
and I see the shooter untuck

his white T-shirt to pull
out another gun, a pistol
he turns on me and our door.
My doubt develops a crystal

clarity in that moment
when I catch his worried eye
down his trigger sight: to deny
this isn't an option; to ask why

would be to hide under desks
to drill for the bombs
falling and deny everything
we promised their moms

and dads the day they placed them
in our care and rooms; to pray
seems too easy, only another
after-the-fact way

to hope the tornado jumps
over our without-a-basement
school. He fires a single blank.
And the propped-open casement

suddenly seems a more realistic escape.
“He would have got you,” a sophomore
mutters. The shooter stalks away; nervous
laughter comes from the floor. “Better

me than you,” I manage.

Where Did the There Go?

(by *Roberta Schultz*)

Dennis Banks was born on the rez
where he might've learned to speak
Ojibwe once.

Someone sent him to Indian School
in Pennsylvania, cut his hair,
washed out his mouth if he dared to say “miigwech.”

Years later when his son was born
at St. Luke Hospital in Ft. Thomas, KY,
a Lakota elder came for the naming ceremony.

Sherman Alexie was born on the rez
where his mom was the last person to speak
their native tongue.

He walked for miles to go to public school,
because the native school did not expect
enough from him.

When he took those steps away,
his friends were white,
his world apart, then haunted by ghosts.

Tommy Orange was born in Oakland, CA,
the birthplace of Gertrude Stein.
She said when she went back,

“There is no there there.”
Orange shows us what is there—
urban NDNs with 3D-printed guns,

grandmas who once occupied Alcatraz,
recovery centers where drums
lead to healing, a powwow

staged in a large arena, backdrop
for a scalding climax where
dreams collide with despair.

The Banks Family set up a GoFundMe page
to purchase a memorial stone.
Activism doesn't pay.

"Hey, Victor!" Native Renaissance writers mock
the accent of Alexie's protagonist, remove
the accused harasser's blurbs from their work.

Tommy Orange's first book, *There There*,
sells big. I want that to mean
that the there is finally here.

The State of the Union

(by **Roberta Schultz**)

is broken,
snapped like a rock star's drumstick
discarded as souvenir to loud screams

like the Heywood Wakefield chair
I sit on to play guitar, it sags
and sways, then spits bitter chips
of shoddy repair across
the Navajo rug

it fractures like the wooden knob
on my music stand—
now wound so tight
a fissure reveals the aimless screw
spinning, spinning, never able
to connect music rest to pedestal again

it shatters like the well-crafted Cooper Stand
I tripped over during a concert
that sickening crack
sounding its last leg

Great Again!

(by **Eric Eble**)

The city green and tall beckons from the end
of the yellow road, engineered brick-by-brick
to usher unlikely coalitions—
gingham-dressed, corn-fed tornado survivors;
straw-colored, blue-collared ragamuffins;
hollow workmen, rusty in their obsolescence;
feckless former lions needing chest-puffing—
to reach the Great and Powerful talking head
of state to beg him to return us all
to an idyllic rural Kansas era of plenty.

His sweet-talking minions descend in filtered
bubbles
of beauty and words to convince us of his capacity
as the only one in the entire land who can carry us
home;
they sell us ruby slippers, family values, and
whispers
of our own magical ability to crush people with our
houses—

a power he commands us in smoke blown green
and voice sharpened metallic to harness to destroy
the witch branded everyone's enemy, the obstacle
in the way of our glory, crooked
in virtue and nose.

What an easy target
for halflings and halfwits
afraid of shadowy regimes
staffed by flying monkeys.

Even when we catch him behind the curtain
of his deception, orange-haired and disingenuous,
he'll twitter on about our greatness,
bestowing spurious degrees,
rickety heart-shaped timepieces,
makeshift Napoleonic medals before stealing
away in a gust of hot air, reducing us to munchkins
no closer to Kansas,
but led by brainless, heartless, craven surrogates
convinced of their own ability
to lead us somewhere
great again.

POEMS:

PENELOPE EPPL

Penelope Epple (pronouns: They/Them, E/Em, One/Ones) currently an English major at Mount St. Joseph University, grew up in Fort Wayne, Indiana. At school, they are treasurer for Rainbow Alliance (the LGBT+ group on campus), treasurer and vice president of Lions-on-Line (the school's literary magazine), trumpet player in band, and often readers at Mass in the chapel on campus. Besides writing, they often spend their free time knitting, walking, commonplace booking, tending to their plants. Penelope are trying to navigate life at the intersection of their various identities (Catholic, nonbinary, aromantic, asexual, ADHDer, etc.)

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MARY NEMETH

Mary Nemeth, a retired teacher, has been learning the art of writing poetry for the past three years, taking numerous classes at OLLI, University of Cincinnati, also studying with Pauletta Hansel. Mary's dream is to combine her passions, photography and poetry, into a chapbook.

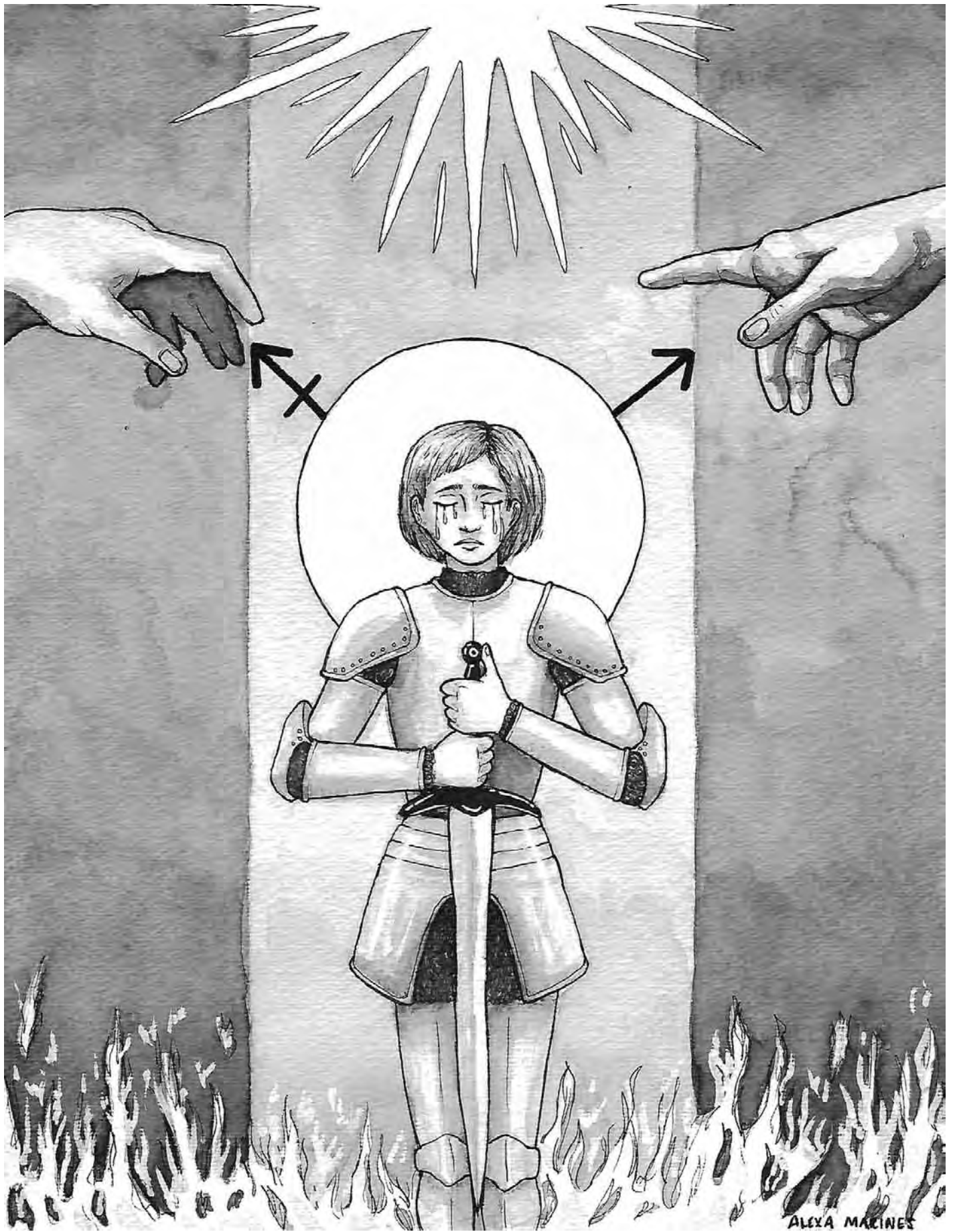
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DRAWING:

ALEXA MARINES

Alexa Marines grew up in the south suburbs of Chicago and is currently a junior at Miami University, studying studio art and art history. Her focus lies primarily in painting and printmaking. The majority of Alexa's personal work deals with social issues, often relating to gender and sexuality.

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ALEXA MARINES

Before the Bones of St. Jehanne d'Arc

(by *Penelope Epple*)

O my sibling Jehanne,
they are still killing us,
and they are still using
the Word of our God
to justify our deaths
saying, "It is His will."

They, of course, do not see
what they are doing there,
what they have done for a long time.
Our Church would even misgender our God,
simplify Them to fit this
false dichotomy of human creation.

Of course Jehanne, you know how far
our Church would go to preserve their flimsy boxes.
For the crime of wearing armour
and clothes which they say belong to a male,
the Church burned your body
and broke your bones.

They still do not respect our bodies,
our trans bodies,
our nonbinary bodies,
our queer bodies.
At best, we are a spectacle,
a puzzle to figure out.
At worst, well,
after defiling your body,
they hoped you'd be forgotten too.

Jehanne, I worry for our safety.
I know we often don't get to live long.
Please Jehanne, lend us your sword,
lend us your shield,
and pray
to our God that
(They
Xe
She
He
One
E
And all God's other wonderous pronouns)
might be with us.
Pray that we can go on with your words
on our lips,
"I am not afraid, I was born for this."

What Kind of Woman Are You?

(by *Mary Nemeth*)

*What kind of woman are you? I heard
them say to me.*

"I am a woman, whole, wholesome,
with a womb, but empty always,
my womb unused and wasted.

I am a woman unfulfilled
in the duty of women: childless,
alone in this world of
couples, children, families.

I've learned well the lesson:
The woman's place is in the home,
raising a family, never a mention
of the old maid, the childless.

Is my life less than the bountiful?
Am I selfish, as I have heard?
Motherhood is admired, rightfully.
But is there no room in this world for me?

Have I nothing to give to society?
Countless successful childless
women disprove that sentiment:
There are many ways to contribute.

So I answer, what kind of woman am I?
I am a friend, a mentor, a traveler,
a teacher, photographer and poet.
I am every woman and no woman.

*A woman-god, a god-woman
Whose days are numbered
With much to do before I sleep.
Hallelujah!"*

(After "What Kind of Person are You?"
by Yehuda Amichai)

POEMS:

MARK FLANIGAN

Mark Flanigan (Cincinnati, OH) is a poet, performer, columnist and writer of fiction. His volume of poetry, *Journeyman's Lament*, appeared in the Aurore Press publication, *Versus*, and his free e-book, *Minute Poems*, is available online from Three Fools Press. In 2015 one of his poems won the Cincinnati Symphony Orchestra's One City, One Symphony Poetry Contest. Mark is the editor of Aralee Strange's posthumous poetry collection, *The Road Itself* (Dos Madres Press). He is also the co-founder of the open/feature reading, Word of Mouth Cincinnati.

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NATASHA FRASCH

Natasha Fresch, a freelance human, cares for a miniature human in her spare time. Her daughter has galvanized her into a flurry of creative endeavors, mostly improvised vegetable-consumption songs. She lives in community in Norwood, OH and imbibes the cup of immortality at Christ the Savior Orthodox Church. Her children's book has been forthcoming for eight years.

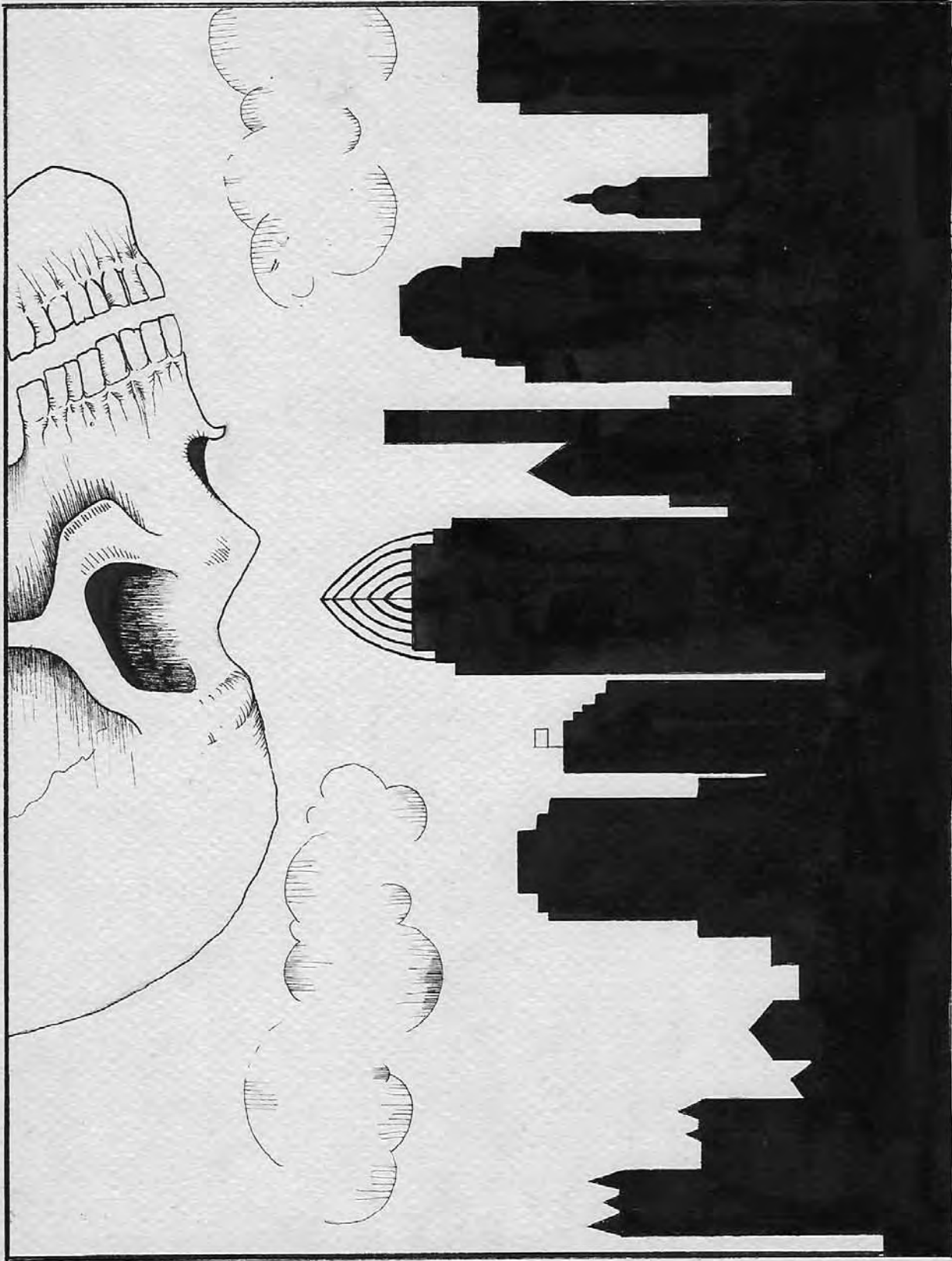
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DRAWING:

KATIE FLANAGAN

Katie Flanagan is a second year fine arts major at the University of Cincinnati. She grew up in Columbus, Ohio and moved to Cincinnati in 2017. Katie works predominantly in pen and black ink and enjoys exploring the relationship between reality and theory.

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Katie Flanagan 2019

View From My Balcony

(by *Mark Flanigan*)

looking down on the city
the houses and tenements
rise out of the ground
like so many dollhouses

dwarfed by church steeples
advertising their riches
alongside boarded up shells.

to my left stand the P & G towers,
or as I call them
Tweedledum and Tweedledee.

straight ahead
the jail squats wide
like a defensive lineman
in a three-point stance

the casino runs like a pipe
or a dream, maybe both,

and the proximity of the three—
church, jail, casino—
a one-stop convenience shop.

looking out at the city
I wonder,
does the height of each skyscraper
signal relative wealth?

by such logic, Macy's is lagging
behind Kroger's

Fifth Third eclipses
both US Bank and PNC,
thanks to all the late fees
they've collected from me.

the Carew Tower remains majestic,
if without purpose,
despite playing second fiddle to
Great American Insurance's headdress.

everybody knows they cheated,
who's to say
they won't cheat you?

I make a mental note
to buy some of their stock
as a single engine plane
sputters into view
flying above it all.

looking up into the sky
I marvel at its flight
when a banner slowly unfurls before me
with a printed green lizard
and the words

“Save Money.”

GEICO wins! I exclaim.
GEICO wins!

the American Poet
would roll in his grave,
if only he were dead.

The Empire Wears No Clothes

(by *Natasha Frasch*)

No no no pumpkins in June, plums in winter
'sparagus stay spring, Apples stay fall
Tomatoes be juicy on my face and fingers
Carrots be funny shapes—two legs like a doll!

No no no pigs inside out upside down
machines unzip bellies gloop gloop gloop
sad mommies sit push buttons and frown
Daddy Daddy It's so mean! Make them stop!

No no no stay in tiny room all day
nasty smells all alone cutting fishes
I want you have boat and splashy waves
and all your friends for help and for kisses!

Big people give me food say Share! Be kind!
But when walk away I laugh, I can see their behind!

The Cincinnati Arch toward Justice

(by *Natasha Frasch*)

*"The arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends towards justice."
-Martin Luther King Jr.*

We eat from plates so vast we cannot see
prepared by mastodons and trilobites
lapped with tropical Ordovician seas
carved by glaciers sparkling in starlight.
We drink from cups filled by rivers rushing waters
mixed with Cambrian rains and Shawnee tears.
From deep chalices of ancient aquifers
we drain draughts first pressed in Pleistocene years.
We eat at tables of limestone and shale
on weather weaved cloth of sand silt and clay
on trees unheard unmothered mothers' wails
the back breaking work of microbes to bring decay.
We eat on plates—on layers of colossal loss
moving slowly towards justice like a Giant Sloth.

POEMS:

GREG FLANNERY

Greg Flannery considers himself tall and funny, but no one else does. He used to be a reporter and editor, and then he got tired.

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NICASIO URBINA

Nicasio Urbina, a Nicaraguan writer, critic and professor, was born in Buenos Aires, Argentina, in 1958, to Nicaraguan parents. His most recent book is *Poesía reunida 1984-2015*, published in Madrid and México. Nicasio is currently Professor of Spanish American literature at the University of Cincinnati.

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DRAWING:

GABBY GAINES

Gabby Gaines is an artist originally from Columbus, Ohio, currently working on her BFA at Miami University. She works primarily in painting and printmaking, and often uses themes such as the human emotion and mental health.

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Galina Denis

Holy Writ

(by *Gregory Flannery*)

Do not beat your sword into a plowshare.
We have enough of plowshares,
Not enough of swords.
Wield your sword with a holy roar,
To sever the bindings of slaves,
To shred laws that oppress the poor,
To tear apart barriers that separate peoples.

Rejoice that there is a balm in Gilead.
Seize that balm. Use it to soothe the
wounds of religious cruelty, racial stupidity,
sexual atrocity, verbal violence.

The dead shall rise again. Don't wait.
Rise now. Wield your sword with a holy roar.
Rise now. Raise others. Give them swords.
Teach them to wield their swords with a
holy roar.

This is my body.
This is my blood.
This is your body.
This is your blood.
This is our body.
This is our blood.

It Started to Rain in April in Nicaragua

(by *Nicasio Urbina*)

In April in Nicaragua
we get the first rains of the season,
flowers start to bloom and everything
turns green.
This year the rains brought a group of students
that would not bow down to the dictator.
A group of students, like flowers in the fields
stood up and protested
while the bankers looted the reserves of the Social
Security.
One hundred students protested on the side of the
road
and the dictator sent his paramilitary police to silence
them.
Two hundred students then decided to protest
at the university campus,
and the dictator sent his paramilitary police to arrest
them. Then three hundred students and workers took
to the streets
to protest and remember the dead,
and the dictator sent his special forces, and more
people died.
On Sunday thousands of people showed up at the
Cathedral
to protest the killings,
and the dictator sent his snipers and his paramilitary
police.
More people died in April in Nicaragua,
than at any other time in history, during peace time.

May came and more demonstrations filled the streets.
Not only in Managua, but in other cities
around the country, people
protested and demanded justice for the dead.
People in Masaya took to the streets,
people in Granada raised their voices,
medical students in León were bitten because they
were tending to the wounded.
In Jinotepe and Jinotega barricades were erected,
in Matagalpa and Lóvago farmers blocked
the roads and declared themselves in civil
disobedience.
May is the month for planting corn and beans,

but the peasants of Nicaragua were planting seeds of freedom
on the fields and on the roads, their crops were bloody
and instead of plants, tall barricades were growing everywhere.

May is the month for mothers in Nicaragua as well.
On May 30th we celebrate mother's day in Nicaragua,
but 100 mothers were mourning their slayed sons,
so a national march was organized, and people
from all over Nicaragua came to the march.
It was in Managua, and people waved their
white and blue flags, and chanted the names of the fallen.
Three or four hundred thousand people came to the march,
the largest march ever recorded in the country's history.
And the dictator sent again his snipers and his military police,
and more students were assassinated,
young men and women shot in the head
because they were protesting against the dictator.
Angel Gahoma was a journalist covering the events,
he was shot to death in the back of the head.
Franco who liked rap was killed. And Alvaro Conrado
who was only fifteen years old, was also killed.
He was carrying water for the students protesting.
He was shot to death on the neck,
his last words were: "It hurts to breathe".

In June, the corn fields look beautiful, with their
shoots growing and their tender green leaves.
Countryman work around the fields pulling weeds.
But this year they are tending to the barricades,
"tranques" as they call them.
The entire country is paralyzed.
There is no commerce, the
factories are closed, there are no restaurants
and no markets, people are hurting.
There is no gas to cook and no gasoline to drive.
But the people of Nicaragua are determined to overthrow the tyrant.

It has been raining hard lately.
People in the barricades don't have a roof over their heads
but they will remain there, for as long as it takes,
until the dictator falls.
It was April in Nicaragua,
when it started to rain.

(Cincinnati, May 2018)

POEMS:

TERI FOLTZ

Teri Foltz taught high school English and drama for 32 years. In retirement, she has focused on poetry and playwriting. Her latest project is Pint-Sized Plays- 10 minute plays designed for the modern attention span and created as an entertainment package for bars. Teri lives in Fort Thomas, KY with her husband, Ken, who owns Swingtime Big Band. They both love retirement and spend their time in their specific fields of art- writing and music.

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DRAWING:

RACHEL PHILLIPS

Rachel Phillips is studying Industrial Design at the University of Cincinnati. She is most passionate about woodworking and metalworking and wants to become a more traditional craftsman.

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The Value of a Dollar

I was twelve.
My mother, a volunteer with the Girl Scouts,
was assigned the task of collecting cookie
money
past due.
She took me with her
into a neighborhood unlike our own.
Some houses had no curtains—
boards for windows.
Men smoking on their stoops
watched us get out of the car.

My mother knocked on a door,
with her arm
secure around my shoulders.
A woman opened the door
just enough for the image to be branded
on my twelve year old mind.

Two little children in only underpants
huddled close yet still
shivered on a soiled mattress
on the floor of a bare room.

They stared at me.
And I stared too, in a way my mother
always said was rude.
Their mother looked down
when she explained to my mother
in a tone a little too earnest
that she would have the money next week.
Could you come back then?
My mother lied. *Sure.*

In the car on the way home,
She told me we would not go back.

*They don't have the money.
They spent it on food or they ate the cookies.*

I was schooled in compassion by my mother.
I learned the value of money,
Not gained, but lost.

Senior English

Excuse me for assigning a book that made you think.
You didn't like the thoughts you had
and for that, I apologize.
But the thoughts were there
whether you had them or not.
Thoughts are like that.
They won't sit in a corner and be quiet
just because they're annoying.
They stand up and make a commotion
like Martin Luther King, Jr.—
a shout out to the dreams of this world
I hope you have.
Or they just stand silent and refuse
to go to the back of the bus
like a Rosa Parks.
Excuse me for telling you that
the caged bird sings
and asking you to find out why.
And I am sorry for Jack and the boys on the island
with the lord of the flies.
They did not behave themselves.
They were bad,
and so are we.
So are we.
But perhaps a little better
with the warning.
Perhaps we'll keep the fire burning
and find escape.
And excuse Lenny, the mouse, for being only what
he was.
And excuse us all for holding the gun
behind his head.
We thought we were protecting him
and you
from knowing truth.

Notes from a Playground Monitor

I watch them choose up teams for Red Rover.
The fastest runners elect themselves as captains.
Every freckle faced, ginger-haired boy
hopes to be picked quickly or at the very least,
before the awkward girl with the thick glasses
or the stutterer who has to leave the room for speech.
Since they had a lecture on bullying just this morning,
no one yells Fatty even when Tommy is left unchosen.
(They are watching me, watching them.)
Tommy hopes the inevitable taunts will land
on Metal Mouth instead, if Jonathon with the perfect teeth
feels defiant today and if I, the one with the whistle,
am otherwise engaged.

Tommy freezes in hesitation when his name is called.
Melvin, with the birthmark on his cheek, looks vulnerable
in the line of warriors on the other side. He should throw there.
His teammates stifle the urge to shout
until they are certain Pizza Face will prove
a good target which he would be if Tommy aimed for him.

But in an act of kindness to a fellow victim
of recess antics, Tommy stuffs the ball under his shirt,
makes a funny face and starts
his comical act,
impersonating me,
with my bulging belly, arthritic walk and crooked mouth.

(I am watching them now, watching me.)
I quickly look away toward the little ones
on the swings and let the laughter save him
from the hungry herd.

POEMS:

PRESTON FRASCH

Preston (Nicholas) Frasch farms and writes in Norwood, OH with Natasha and his little daughter, Magdalena. When he's not teaching English as a Second Language in Clifton, he loves baking, biking, and busking! His work has appeared most recently in *PCC Inscape Magazine*, *The Good Men Project*, and as a finalist in the *Pen 2 Paper Creative Writing Competition*.

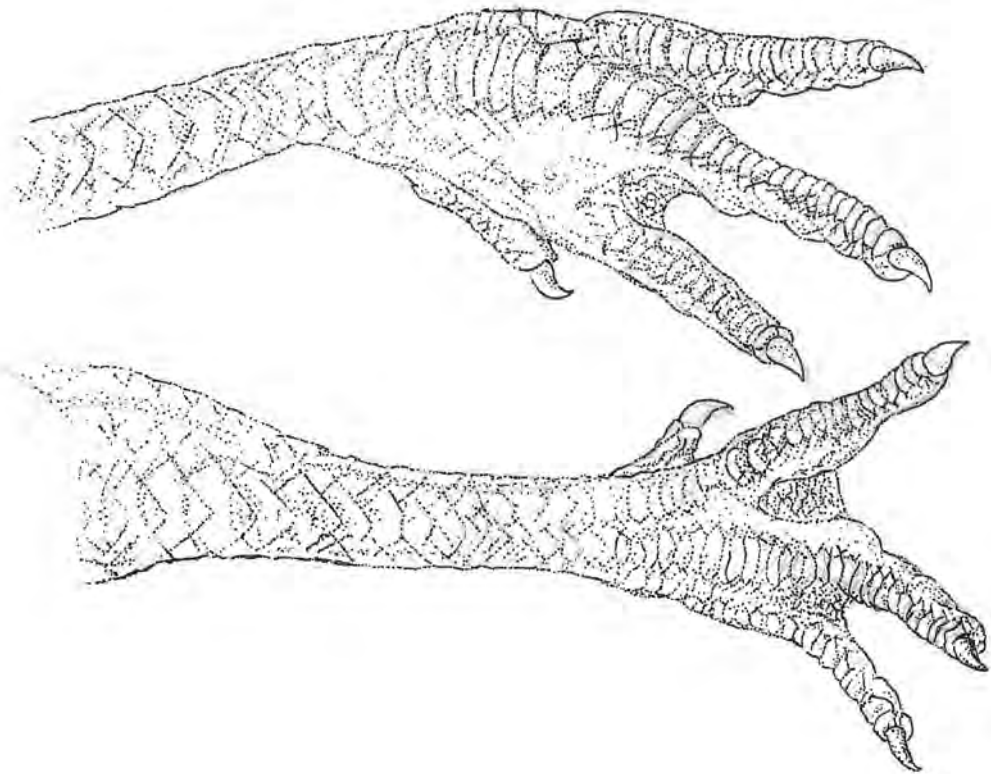
Contact: preston.frasch@gmail.com.

DRAWING:

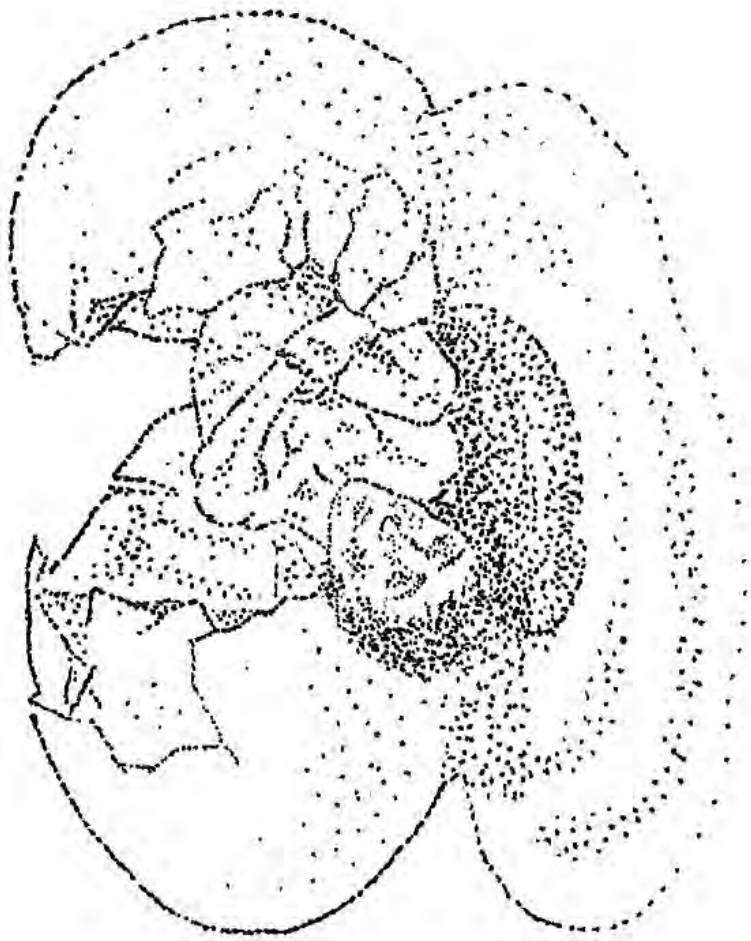
SAMANTHA NIEWIEROWSKI

Samantha Niewierowski is a Paleo Artist, and an aspiring paleontologist, studying Geology and Fine Arts at the University of Cincinnati. When she is not drawing or hiking, she is collecting rocks- fossils are her favorite, but lately she's started a mineral collection. Samantha is the president of UC's Geology club, and participates frequently in geology related events around the area. She has a passion for the Geosciences, and her dream is to make information about them more easily available, and more easily digestible for the average person. If she can teach even only one person about geology through her art, Samantha will then consider her mission a success.

Contact: niewiesm@mail.uc.edu; @ Nski_Paleo_Art



John Henry



Pilgrims

We saw the fire in Egypt

We saw the bridge in Mexico

The vagrants burning tires
the rich a toast of Ra with chalices

I told my daughter we would go
in a truck or lean into the dark

We found a house on streets caroused by dogs
the neighbors wearing night that shook the very walls with laughing

Burrowed in coyote's steerage under time the dark
"Pray the rosary"—her eyes like rabbits out of cover

Your second birthday spoke Egyptian Aramaic back and forth
we walked the hill so tall through the fog you opening your arms and song

He took our money let us in the sun
the arc of San Antonio the bark and soddered copper boys

I remember your stare when they came with myrrh
no shame to stand before their bows but leaning on your mother's leg

the red coil of the lights enfolding us, we're in the belly of the bars
a whisper of grandpa and the men in Guatemala with their guns

We read the cryptic papers and imagine helicopters in a whirl
dropping masked men to take the children 2 to 4 we beg

in our dreams to let us go we've only come to wait
until the wild leave our village peace. We only had the funds

to feel this place outcast from the beauty we grew up on
we sing songs of Jerusalem our souls alight free ground

On a Seven Year Old Girl Dying at the Border December 8th

Santa Maria
we had made it
across the border
as you drift up
the sky the lullaby you heard
the whine of paddles on your heart
the clatter of store shutters on the street
a dark hood swaying midnight toward you
standing with the virgin on the moon

City of Wonder

See her smoke
stained hands particulate
of beer that lingers on her doors

the garden full of fruit and pear and cherry saplings
men with Bengals shirts
Prayer-walk at the witching hour through black streets skirted gray

welcomed home down every avenue
the streets blanched bone
the strikes and winter violence of an age

Catch the whishing of a stray through winter wheat
rend hours with the leaves of oak
the green cold snapped but blood ahumming through

the city with its hidden friends
cicada killers praying mantises the catholic church and Spanish hymns
afloat amidst the church of stone and rotting wood

Christ in the prairie flowers
outposted on the railway once abuzz with work
the sky a yellow pink at dawn

above the lateral the orchard
by the highland road industrial
Feel the blood

meal in the soil underneath your bed
the dream of sheep in Milcrest Park
the catawba tree where she sits and combs her hair

encumbered by the bees
who gather unawares
ground cherry flower autumn olive pollen

Dream vineyards
serviceberries burnished buckeye seeds
a Midwestern Jerusalem with pawpaw trees

reaching their fingers three stories through Norwood Assembly Plant
Black Wednesday and the last Camaro rolling through the chalk
outline of Norwood

The Cooper's hawk eviscerates the pigeon deaf
to its flapping wings deaf to the mercy of it
half gorged and rasping from an open lung

the workers bindle up their bar
on every corner the city rasps
her soil down to clay

erects a steel frame mall a plaster
chef's smoke by the loading dock a hand of cloud
her nursing home the drug-dark wave

She walks it in her wedding shift and mourns the gold
and echoes of the laughter in the valley of the park
the ripple underneath car-carriers a requiem

the bridge above the lateral adrift in lines of scarlet cloud
She sings her old to bed their pate a moon
a plate of blue believes it is an egg and not a skull

POEMS:

PATRICIA GARRY

Patricia Garry is a consultant in community development, a psychic reader and healer, a writer, a mother, grandmother and great grandmother. She has used her life to build communities through physical development, also by bringing folk together to create the world they want to live in.

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CAITLIN SEILER

Caitlin Seiler is a junior at Mount St. Joseph University, majoring in Middle Childhood Education with a focus on Social Studies and Language Arts.

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DRAWING:

SARAH A PEREZ

Sarah A Perez is a photographer as well as an illustrator originally from Puerto Rico. She works with different kinds of paints, colored pencils, digital work and much more. Sarah enjoys portraiture the most.

Contact: sarahjustin09@yahoo.com



Laral Dugg

Where Is Justice for the Poor? And Where Is Peace? Blessings to Gabriel's Place

(by *Patricia Garry*)

The homeless cannot lay their heads down outside –
It is illegal in our county. Even if the landowner is willing.
There is no place to lay down those weary heads inside
much of the time. In a few days, a bed might be found.

In the cold of winter, a shelter is open from 7 p m to 6 a m –
No food on premises, and no free food trucks allowed outside.
Plus no place to stay during the cold day.

Luckily, Gabriel was paying attention,
And sent a message received in the hearts of his namesake group.
Justice from heaven was available, when none could be found
on the Cincinnati earth.

Hope

(by *Caitlin Seiler*)

He quietly listens to everyone speak.
He laughs along and puts a smile on his face.
His eyes tell a different story.
One of desperation and heartbreak.

They file into class.
One by one, they take their seat.
He lingers in the hall,
fighting back the lump in his throat.

Worried, his teacher approaches him.
“What’s wrong little buddy?”
He hesitates,
but he knows she won’t hurt him.

He describes his summer.
One full of screaming matches and slamming
doors,
police officers showing up at his front porch,
and not knowing what tomorrow would bring.

He watches her demeanor soften.
She gives him a hug so tight
that some of his broken pieces are put back in
place.
He waits for her to finally say something.

“School is a safe place.
We will always be here to help you,
and we all care about you.
We are so excited that you’re here!”

He smiles a genuine smile,
for the first time since school let out.
His teacher believes in him, and gives him the
greatest gift,
hope.

POEMS:

ROBIN GRISHAM

Robin Grisham, a graduate of English and History, enjoys putting pen to paper as much as breathing. She is a creative soul who likes to flap her wings and seek out all of life's adventures. Robin is currently tutoring students with learning differences at Thomas More University, plotting at the same time her next move into the ever-changing world of creative and semi-contemporary thought.

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JOY HAUPT

Joy Haupt is a retired social worker who has been creating poetry and fiction for over twenty years. Her other interests include walking, reading, and attending as much theater and music events as she can manage to fit in.

Joy has traveled extensively and is an active supporter of several progressive civic and human rights organizations.

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DRAWING:

SAM JAYNE

Sam Jayne is a 21 year old fourth year Fine Arts student in the University of Cincinnati's DAAP program. He is currently focused on creating multimedia sculpture that represents LGBT+ experiences through colorful and relatable figures.

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Economic Warfare or Just Another Wednesday

(by *Robin Grisham*)

Standing on the street corner in
The bad part of town
You don't see me

Hovering there like a nervous fly
I set my groceries down to rest my
Bone weary hands
Cut to the core by those
Plastic Kroger bags
You don't see me

Ache all over my face as I recall
Past tormentors to
Incite myself with enough rage to
Summon my strength for the walk home
You don't see me

My whole body one giant throbbing muscle of
Exhaustion and anger at
You who drives along while I
Trudge and hobble and walk
You don't see me
But I see you.

ANGRY

(by *Joy Haupt*)

Anger whirls around me
bubbles up inside me, follows me
wherever I am
whatever I am doing.

Sometimes, I want to drive out the people I love
push against the organizations I support
foresake the dreams I cherish
the change I spent a lifetime working for;

I could tear down the halls of congress
the damask drapes in the oval office
all the politicians vying for power
no matter their Party or personal belief.

I think all are ignorant fools
thrust onto the stage of power to play out
their bizarre fantasies, sow fear and mistrust
precipitate confusion, chaos, colossal ruin.

I am furious with the thoughtful and courageous...
reporters, economists, philosophers, thoughtful
citizens
who try to analyze, make sense of the nonsense,
search for sanity where only crazy exists.

How to accept
that the emperor has no clothes,
that there is no *there* there
no 'normal' to be suddenly uncovered?

Reality can be terrifying.

Almost Eden?

(by *Joy Haupt*)

Voted
happiest place
to live in America
50,000 residents
(university
population
excluded)
green, idyllic
small southern town
honeyed ease
sun-dappled afternoons
progressive values
good restaurants
tasteful living
sophistication
dignity
an air
of enlightened
blamelessness
that serves to conceal.

Note: a found poem derived from "Charlottesville and the Effort to Downplay Racism in America," by Jia Tolentino, The New Yorker, August 13, 2017

The Media Bubble

(by *Joy Haupt*)

More people, more access
more information than ever before
the illusion of knowledge
while drowning
in unexamined assertions.

Rumors, untruths lacking serious analysis,
crackpot speculation, outright propaganda...
citizens live in their own media worlds
consuming only views similar to their own.

Confronted with hard evidence
many double down on their beliefs
extreme views are amplified online
fake news and propaganda go viral.

A maelstrom of unreason
killing respect for expertise
undermining rational debate
spreading misinformation

weakening
the foundations
of our democracy.

Note: an erasure poem taken from “‘The Death of Expertise’ Explores How Ignorance Became a Virtue,” a review by Michiko Kautani of The Death of Expertise, by Tom Nichols, printed in Books of the Times, The New York Times, March 21, 2017

POEMS:

ANDRIA HENRY

Andria Henry, born in Cincinnati, OH is currently a student at UC Blue Ash, majoring in Pre-Middle Childhood Education. She is a poet and lover of all that is fiction. When not writing Andria is reading.

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GWENDOLYN C. PEERLESS

Classes in poetry under Cate O'Hara at OLLI, University of Cincinnati, have inspired Gwendolyn C. Peerless to treasure this labor of love for many years.

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DRAWING:

JAMIE SCHORSCH

Jamie Schorsch is a Visual Arts Teacher at Oak Hills High School where she also serves as the Art and Design Department Coordinator. When not teaching, Jamie

Schorsch can be found deconstructing concepts of the Identity through fairy tales and characters from literature. Psychology, mythology, religion, literature, history, and film inspire the conceptual and visual development for her artworks, in relation to modern societal standards and personal experiences.

Contact: jmeschorsch82@gmail.com



Jamie Schorsch 2019

Sleeping Curse

(by *Andria Henry*)

He touched her
Defenseless
Impregnating a corpse that lives a life
A life
That sees
And hears all
That won't wake
But still creates existence
A sleeping beauty
That will sleep
Forevermore
And a child
That will never meet her

(Poem created off the current event of a woman who gave birth to a child, while being in a coma for 14 years)

The Silver Cage

(by *Gwendolyn C. Peerless*)

within a cage of silver wire
a child is crying
men have pulled her away
torn from her mother

the child is crying
this is not her mother's chilaquiles
torn from her mother
scared by the soldiers

not her mother's chilaquiles
where had her mother gone
scared by the soldiers
full of apologies

where has her mother gone
under silver blanket and silver moon
mouths full of apologies
with pain she cannot name

under silver blanket and silver moon
it will last a lifetime
the pain she cannot name
her mother said she would return

it will last a lifetime
wrapped in a pain she cannot name
why hasn't her mother returned
the night is long and she is only three

wrapped in a pain she cannot name
within that cage of silver wire
the night is long and she is only three
men have torn her away

The Hero Is a Mundane

(by *Andria Henry*)

I saw her body first
Then the face
Then myself running
Toward
Not away
Pulling her into my arms
Rushing with all my might
To a safe place
Trying not to give away to fright
It's dark and cold
And I can't really see
How I found her
In the darkest alley

No one around
Not a caring soul awaits
I need to go faster before she sees the pearly gates
I pull her in tighter
Feeling her breath on my cheek
Thank god she's still responsive
Thank god for me

The door opens and I hand her away
I'm sorry lord but you are not allowed to see her today
She will live tonight
And the one after next
I am the one that has saved her
And I plan to keep her safe away from the rest

I don't know her
But that doesn't mean
That I don't want
Her wellbeing
I buy a card
And write my name inside
Also my phone number right on the side

I saw the abuse
I know it will leave scars
"I hope she lives on"
I think as I step into my car

She won't know me
That's why I don't stay
I don't want me a stranger
To be the first thing she sees as she awakes

POEMS:

CAROL IGOE

Carol Igoe is a mother of 6, an advocate for students with disabilities, a poet, a University English teacher, a psychologist... it all adds up to an obsession to work for peace and justice! Not done yet...

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DRAWING:

ALEXANDRA PHILLIPS

Alex Phillips is a visual artist based in Cincinnati, OH where she is finishing her Bachelor's in Fine Arts and minor in Art History from the University of Cincinnati's Design Art Architecture and Planning College (DAAP). Her work has been exhibited in group shows in Cincinnati at Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park, Victory Parkway, and several galleries associated with DAAP. Alex has worked for several artistic organizations including The Bright Angle in Asheville, NC; Cincinnati Art Museum; Cincinnati's Contemporary Arts Center; Rookwood Pottery (Cinci, OH), and UC's DAAP college.

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Alexandra Philly

Winter 2019 Weather Report for Our Nation

Solar Vortex swirls around,
not the Arctic this year,
but the Midwest, instead.

Lake Michigan shivers
Under its icy cover.

Death by freezing threatens,
8 deaths reported.
A woman alone
found dead in abandoned shack
In northern Michigan.

Homeless shelters fill up fast,
all their floor space covered,
open all night for stragglers,
Places to stay alive.

Neighbors push back,
Bag up used coats and boots,
Small offerings of caring,
Reminded by the deep freeze,
That we are all brothers,
In this grudging time of selfishness.

Early Morning Meeting at the Health Department

2019

At the curb, where the drive cuts below the entry way,
A car parked, behind the yellow crime scene tape.
The desk clerk says, young woman, dressed after she
died,
Posed seating in the passenger seat.
The corpse, bagged in a long white sheet,
Raised up, slipped into the coroner's van.
From the meeting windows, we all stare down,
Witness her leaving, then turn away at last.

Sidewalk emptied, tape gone, cars pass unaware.

How the Black Man Became a Piece of Real Estate: 3/5 a Man: 1787

3/5 a child

The black slave child,
Like a dog or cat,
No clothes, or just a shirt,
No shoes.
Age unknown,
Father Denied,
Forbidden to learn to read or write,
Sold away.
His mother grieves.

Oh, Freedom, oh, oh, freedom, oh freedom over me

3/5 a woman

Young woman,
Punished,
Dangling by her hands
From a ceiling hook,
Like a piece of butcher's meat,
Toes just brushing the ground,
Stripped bare to her waist,
Easier to whip,
Cut deep.
Her children watch, silent.

Somebody's knocking at the door...why don't you answer?

3/5 a man

No law protecting him,
No right to life,
Owned,
Used,
Bought and sold,
Branded, whipped,
His murder, no crime.
Black slave lost his body,
White master lost his soul.

Tell old Pharaoh, Let my people

POEMS:

ALICE-CATHERINE JENNINGS

Alice-Catherine Jennings has an MFA in Writing from Spalding University in Louisville, KY. She is the author of *Katherine of Aragon: A Collection of Poems* (Finishing Line Press, 2016) and *Notations: The Imagined Diary of Julian of Norwich* (Red Bird Chapbooks, 2017). Her poetry has appeared in various publications worldwide. Born and raised in Cincinnati, Alice-Catherine currently lives in Santa Fe, NM.

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LUCIE KNEIP

Lucie Kneip was born in Cincinnati and has lived there all her life. She is currently a senior at Mercy McAuley High School. When not running or playing soccer, Lucie enjoys reading and traveling. She draws her poetry inspiration from American and European history.

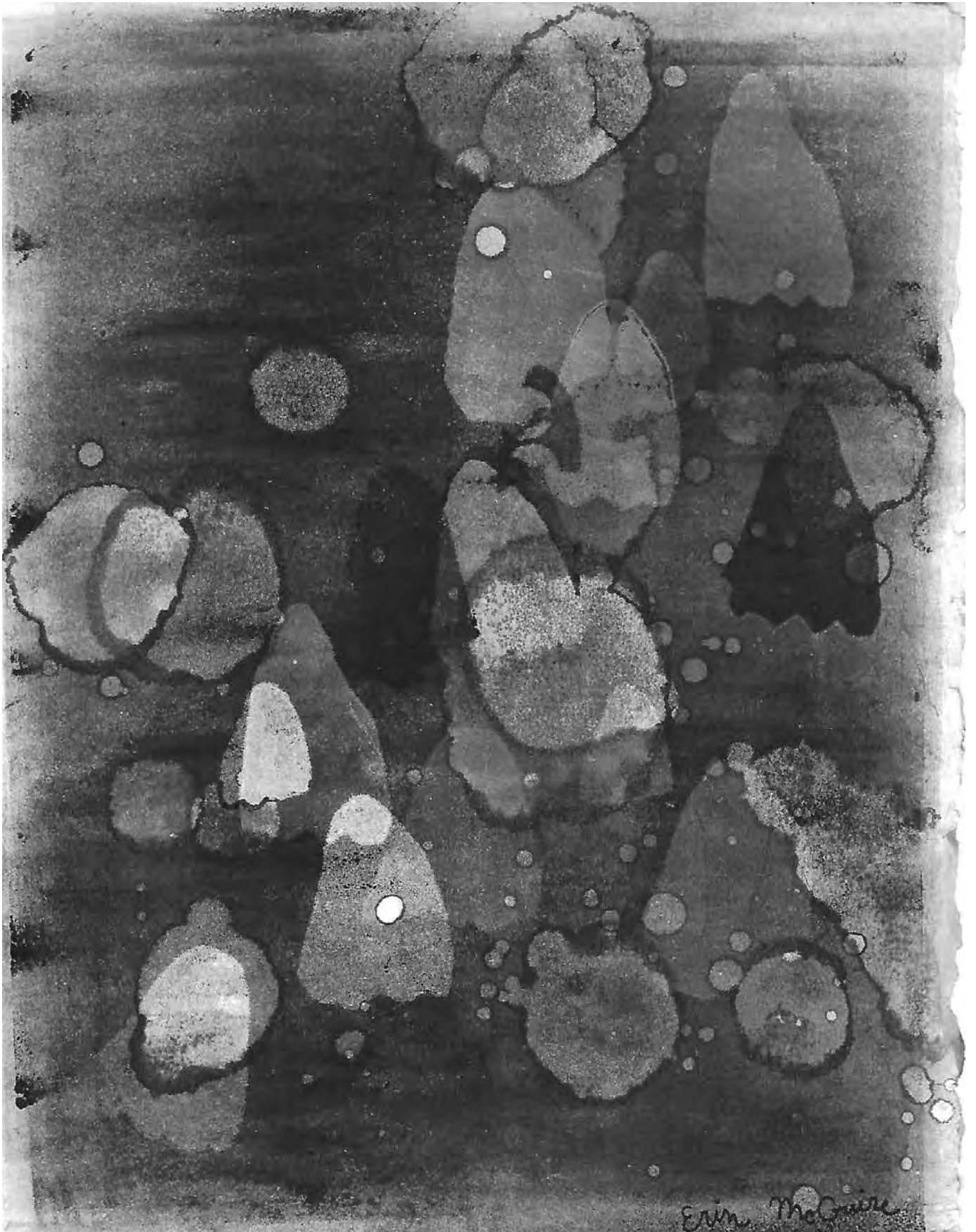
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DRAWING:

ERIN MCGUIRE

Erin McGuire is an artist/sewist living in Cincinnati, OH currently working towards a MFA in Printmaking at Miami University. Erin enjoys making weird prints on fabrics that she turns into clothing pieces.

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Erin McGuire

The Secret Is Laid Bare

(by *Alice-Catherine Jennings*)

—After *D.H. Lawrence*

You tell me I am wrong.
Would you like to lob a stone perchance
—or a sorb-apple, a black fig?
America has gone dry. The squash
blossoms hang heavy, unpicked. What
is it that makes all the grapes turn

to raisins? I am drunk with anger
and fight to stay awake. Look at them
standing there in authority—
pale-faced with tilted crowns.

(Source: Lawrence, D. H. *Birds, Beasts and Flowers*. Shearsman Books Ltd, 2011.)

The Union's Wake Up Call

(by *Lucie Kneip*)

My mother does not notice how gray we've all become.
A January beyond the lights holds no
Solace for the passers-by,
Whose shoes
Clack
On the eroded concrete
Nevermind.

The commuters still hidden in the unreality of the morning drive
Do not realize that this is the hundredth day in a row
They have complained about the traffic
And the roads, which are awful
The radio is terrible
But they do not
Turn it off
Perhaps in silence...
Ridiculous.

These people live as ghosts do; they shout at the television, at
Those who can suddenly be identified as ally or foe
Through a simplistic mask of red or blue
Superior to any color underneath

Or lack, thereof
Principles
Must be upheld at all costs
What were they?

And even in my heart I feel the slur of muddied thought as it
Desensitizes, restricts my breathing until the point when
I believe the air must always have been this thin.
Bullets rip through broadcast screens
Yet more concern is paid to
Our cereal
There was something there...
Later.

God, and patriotism, a nation, a lantern aloft in a belfry arch
We acknowledge, but we do not dare meet their eyes
How can we? Our own lies shatter within.
When did America evidently find
That progress was synonymous
With destruction?
It surrounds us even now
Relax.

And now, another day at the breakfast table, and I do not turn away
From the reporters, the school shooting, the politician under fire,
The hurricane, the mass destruction, the immigration crisis,
The chemical disaster, the federal investigations,
Or the economic upheaval. The flashing colors
Blur before my wide eyes, leaving only the
Interminable gray, that appears in the
Faces of my mother, the pedestrians,
And everyone, as slowly they
Relinquish their humanity.
Remember
When we were proud to be American?

POEMS:

NANCY JENTSCH

Nancy K. Jentsch has taught German and Spanish at Northern Kentucky University for over 35 years. She has published scholarly articles, short fiction and poetry in journals such as *Journal of Kentucky Studies*, *Eclectica*, *Aurorean*, and *Gyroscope Review*. Cherry Grove Collections has published her chapbook *Authorized Visitors* (2017), and seven of her ekphrastic poems appeared in the collaborative chapbook *Frame and Mount the Sky* (2017).

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Laurie Lambert

Laurie Lambert's poetry explores connections with nature, motherhood and the struggles of adapting to change. Laurie is a feminist, V-Day activist, and facilitator at Women Writing for (a) Change in Cincinnati. Finishing Line Press published her chapbook *What I Can Carry*, in 2016 and her first full-length collection, *What We Are Made Of*, in 2019.

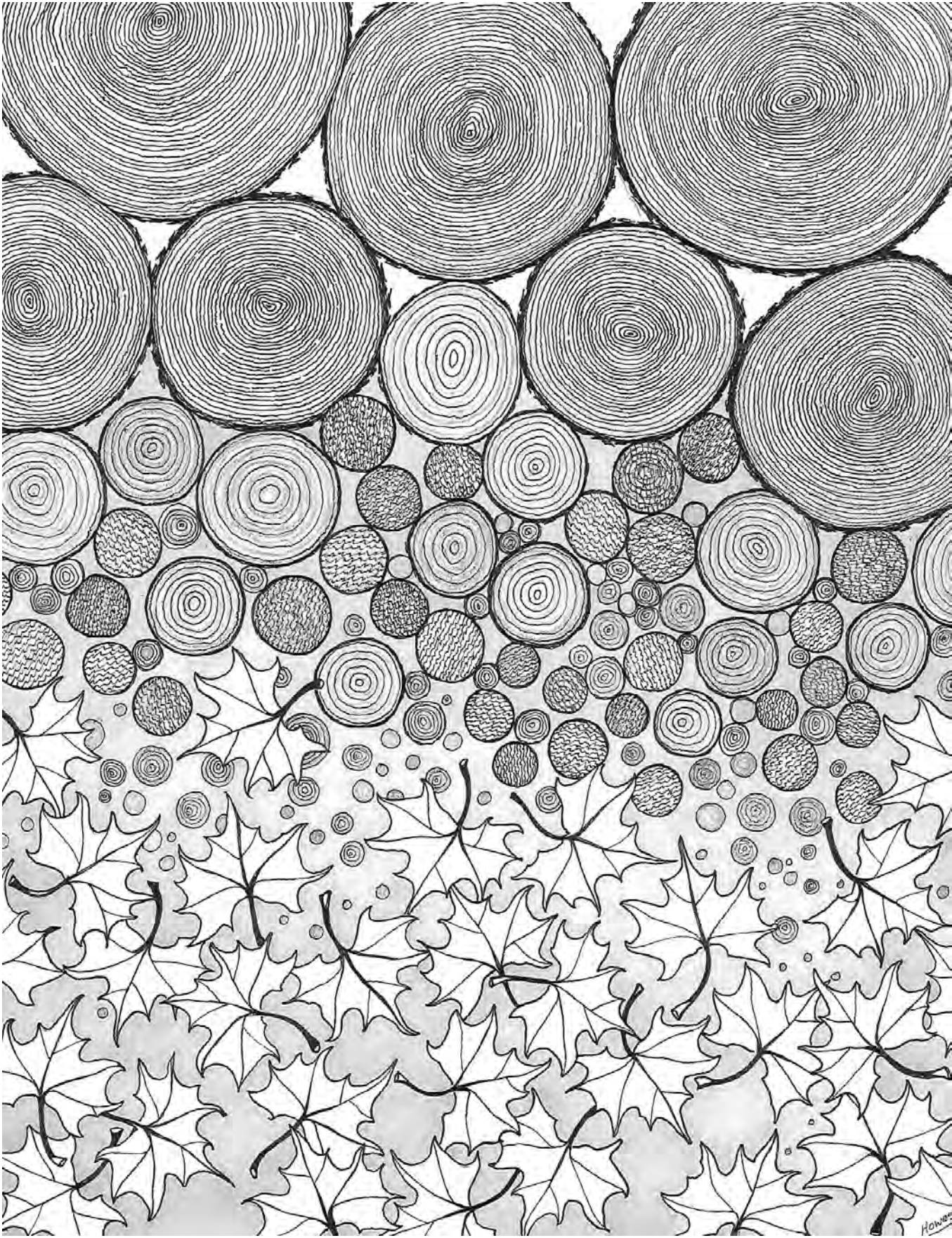
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DRAWING:

WILLIAM HOWES

William Howes, a native Cincinnati, graduated from the University of Cincinnati with a Bachelor's degree in Industrial Design. William is interested in architecture and photography. He is also an avid gardener.

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Howe

Skeptical Sky

(by *Nancy Jentsch*)

skeptical sky looks down
with furrowed clouds
sees

fires making patchwork of ancient forests
planting hands dropping seeds by rows
bullet blasts
moms wiping muddied cheeks
marching feet in fierce formation
sycamore roots spreading past state lines
spoils-laden convoys heading home
skaters slicing frozen pond with perfect 8s
strafing planes
irises rising beside oxeye daisies
schools battered down
phoebes frantic to feed young
hungry arms stretched thin from begging
cacti blooming magenta haloes

wind tsks a "seen it all before"
then heaven weeps

Blue Ox

(by *Laurie Lambert*)

Driving north along the highway toward home,
climbing up out of the river valley, I pass first
a big open truck, with piles of small branches
tossed into the back, then a second truck
full of green leafiness.

Now another, even larger truck with even bigger
pieces,
the size of tree trunks, a foot or more across.
It looks like a young forest has been cleared.
What prompts the chopping of all this vitality?

Are the leaves still breathing, talking to each other,
trying to root out what the hell has befallen?

And then I pass the giant flat bed, with a crane and
enormous sections of trunk, tall and wide, brown
and solid,
with rings upon rings upon rings.
The truck crawls up the hill with this burden.
A scream catches in my throat.

A behemoth has been cut down and is travelling
in pieces on the highway. Each slice as tall as two
men,
a whale's weight of wood.

It must have been such a magnificent creature,
living green and windblown, reaching for the sky,
enjoying centuries of growth.
Gifting us with oxygen.

Now chopped up carelessly
for this undignified transport on a metal carriage.
To be transformed into what, paper bags?

I want to stop the truck, climb up on the back,
spread my puny body against that gorgeous grain
of wood
and speak words of apology
for my cruel and stupid species.
What could be so important
that this giant had to fall.

My heart is leaking sap
as a few moments later
I pass the chipper.

this land

(by *Laurie Lambert*)

I may have reached
a place dark enough
that hope can't light a candle here

pulling at a stubborn weed in the garden
I find myself silently cursing
what the hell
goddammit

I grab on with two hands
and yank with all I've got
and as I pull I find my self
shouting
"because sometimes it's fucking hard!"

sometimes it's hard, honestly,
to get the hell out of bed
waking up to a fresh shitstorm
in a country I don't recognize
as my own

"zero tolerance"
is what I feel for this
I'm not being governed

I'm being gaslighted
deceived, robbed, shamed and twisted

when will we find the straw
that breaks this camel's back
when will love of power and money give way

will I ever get to live again
in a land that I love

POEMS:

AMARA JONES

Amara Jones is a 12 years old girl from Cincinnati, OH. She attends Covedale Elementary School and her poem was inspired by a class of creative writing led by Gifted Intervention Specialist Cynthia Tissue. Amara loves art and books.

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YANA KECK

Yana Keck enjoys writing poetry. She is a member of the Cincinnati Writer's Project and hopes when she retires to focus on publishing her poetry and becoming more active in the creative literary community of Cincinnati.

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DRAWING:

ELISE G. RENFROW

Elise G. Renfrow, an interdisciplinary artist, works in ceramics, silk-screen prints, and metal sculpture. She will receive her BFA in 2020 from UC/DAAP. Elise's artwork illustrates female nudes obscuring the identity, also dreamlike landscapes that question consciousness and control. It has been exhibited at Pyramid Hill Sculpture Park, Victory Parkway, the 840 Gallery. Elise has worked at the Cincinnati Art Museum and Manifest Gallery where she developed her skills as public speaker, program facilitator and art handler.

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Elise G. Renfrow

My Poem

(by *Amara Jones*)

Love is key, insurance is too,
Where ever you go it follows you,
The starlight shimmering so bright under the moon,
Everywhere you go the beatbox beats to a tune,
Life is pashnit, so that means you probably are too,
Give it a chance, after all everything is new,
Some people are peaceful others distraught,
It all comes back to love, distraught or not

The sun is so bright,
The time is just right,
Why not right now?, hopefully it will last until night,
Bring it on with a great big "BOOM",
It will all end very soon,
It all comes back to love,
In the night with the moon, or in the day at noon

Some things are unjust,
Some things are unfair,
Some things are unequal,
So to go to the real world you will have to beware,
When I say beware, I don't mean the type you
have to do when you are scared,
But after childhood is all over,
Love might not come to you either here or there,
Either way you try, either way you go,
You might not get to see,
Since Rivers always flow,

It all comes back to love, nice and easy,
nice and slow.

Pondering Peace

(by *Yana Keck*)

It's 6:30 p.m. and the T.V. is off.
I cannot handle the news these days;
Too much despair, anguish and pain.
Not to mention the political craziness.

I try to tell myself there is hope.
I try to tell myself that past generations
Have been through worse times.
I try to tell myself, "this too shall pass."

So, I take a walk and ponder:
What can I do to help?
What should I do to help?
My protesting seems to have done no
good.
My phone calls and letters have fallen
On deaf ears and blind eyes.

As I walk, I notice a nest holding
A baby bird and her mother.

The mother holds her baby
Warm and safe
High in the sturdy oak
She keeps the baby warm in
The cool, spring evening
With a blanket of soft feathers.

I smile and think to myself:
Perhaps protecting each other
Is the perfect first step.

POEMS:

JERRY JUDGE

Jerry Judge is a Cincinnati based social worker and writer who has had seven books of poetry published and poems in several journals and anthologies. Jerry is an active member of the Cincinnati Writers Project and Greater Cincinnati Writers League. He also volunteers at two no kill animal shelters.

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ANNETTE (TONI) LACKNER

Annette (Toni) Lackner, a native Cincinnati, wife, mother and grandmother, takes every opportunity to share her words. She enjoys writing fiction and has also written a one-act play, but finds poetry the best way to express her thoughts on peace and justice. She is a member of Women Writing for (a) Change.

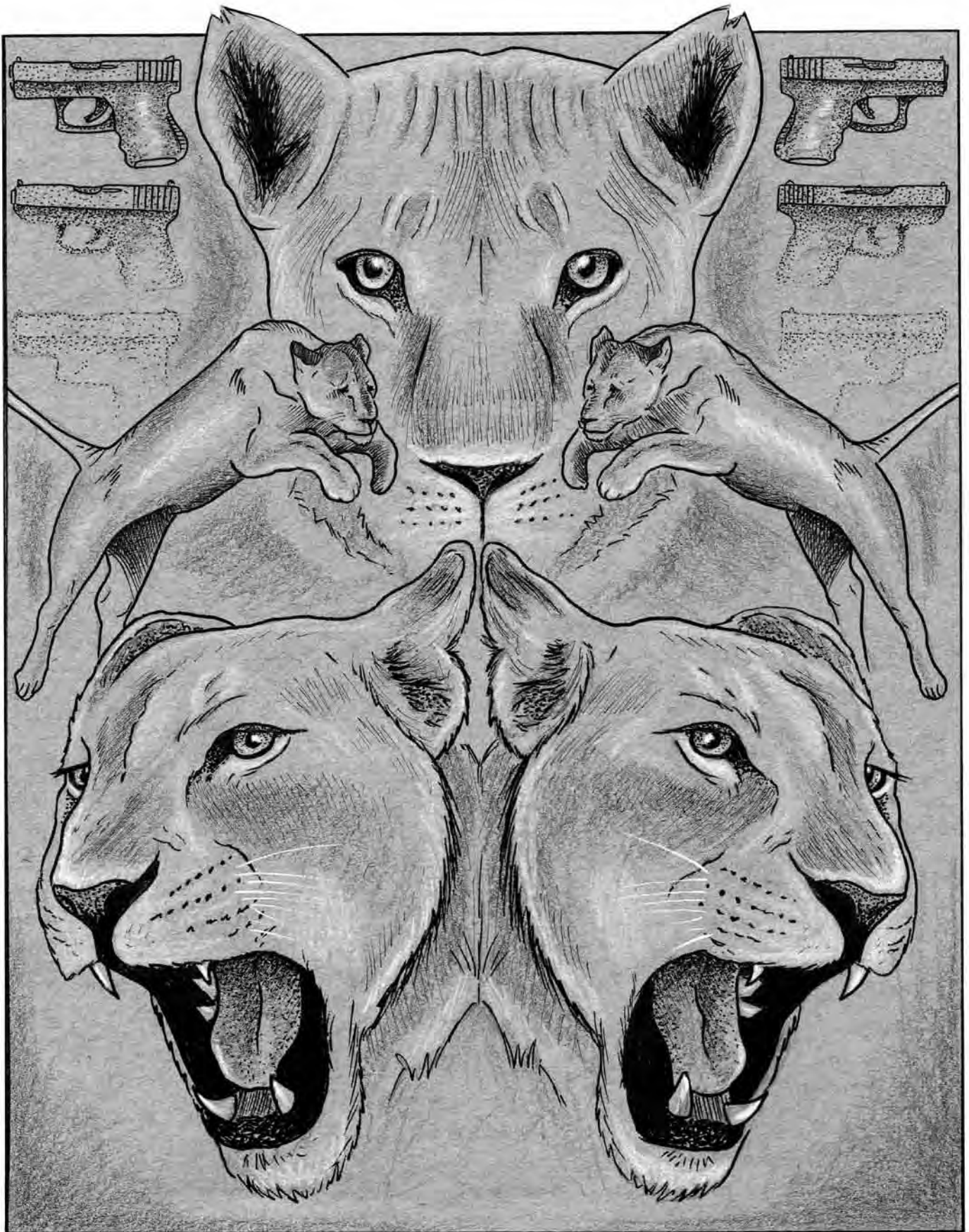
Contact: tonibell@fuse.net

DRAWING:

MATT REED

Matt Reed is an artist, educator, and radical leftist currently living in Cincinnati, OH. His work has appeared in galleries in Cincinnati, Pittsburgh, Louisville, Los Angeles, and Munich. His illustrations have been used for magazines, comic books, t-shirts, and music album covers.

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MATT REED

A Light Squeeze

(by *Jerry Judge*)

Your Glock 26 gave you peace.
You felt as secure as when you held
your papa's hand walking downtown.

When your husband cheated and left,
you tried to chuckle and said you still had Rod -
what pistols were called in old movies.

Rod was Mr. Dependable.
You would fieldstrip and clean him
to show your love after target practice.

He lingered by your bedside.
Rod was there
when your darkness would not yield.

PTSD

(by *Toni Lackner*)

We placed a cold metal gun in his hand
We trained him to kill
To cross the moral line
That had been his guide
THOU SHALT NOT KILL

Back home the line seemed too blurred
Too twisted to cross back over
He walked into a bar
Did what we trained him to do

KILL

He walked into a bar
Did what we trained him to do
Back home the line seemed too blurred
Too twisted to cross back over
THOU SHALT NOT KILL

To cross the moral line
That had been his guide
We trained him to kill
We placed a cold metal gun in his hand

HEAR ME ROAR!

(by *Toni Lackner*)

We marched in our pink pussy hats
Said NO to being judged by our appearance
Said NO to old white men deciding on our rights
Said NO to a man's right to grab our pussies
Said NO to taking a back seat again.

They thought the Lioness had slumbered all
these years
They thought she would pounce and go back to
sleep

HEAR ME ROAR!

We came home and organized
Came home and encouraged women
Came home and put our money in the pot
Came home and canvassed
Came home and made phone calls

They thought the lioness went back to sleep
But with ONE ferocious roar
She led over 100 women into congress
I AM WOMAN HEAR ME ROAR

POEMS:

LONNA KINGSBURY

Lonna D. Kingsbury remains driven by her “singing words” which have served her well over her 70+ years, from Chicago to Cincinnati. She is the Miami Township Poet Laureate and the Second Congressional District of Ohio Poet Laureate. Lonna guides young people throughout the greater Cincinnati School systems stressing that the word is always mightier than the sword.

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RICHARD SCHOEFF

Richard Schoeff has enjoyed writing poetry for years and is in agreement with William Carlos Williams who said, “It is difficult/ to get the news from poems/ yet men die miserably every day/ for lack/ of what is found there.”

Richard lives in Cincinnati in an old house on a hillside that seems to be sliding slowly down toward the river.

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DRAWING:

LAUREN MITRO

Lauren Mitro, born in 1993, studied Architecture at Miami University, OH and abroad at the University of Sydney, developing a passion for printmaking and woodworking. After moving to Columbus and working at an architecture firm she went back to school to pursue an MFA in large scale installation and painting at the Columbus College of Art & Design. Lauren’s current work involves an exploration of architectural materials and their relationship to abstract, expressionist painting.

Contact: laurentmitro@gmail.com



Her Blindfold Had Slipped

(by *Lonna Kingsbury*)

Lady Justice it seems
in response to false cries
from the right
from the left
from the rear
attempting to whisk
a tear from her eye
shifted her scales
as she tried
to weigh every truth
before her at length
without ever questioning why
adjusted her cloth
to recover her eyes
reaching beyond each disguise
bearing to right
bearing to left
centered again by the proof
stood bravely in balance
through hatred and malice
assessing each lie for the truth.

TRUTH PEACE JUSTICE

(by *Richard Schoeff*)

We have grown
With questions...

Like What is art?

Is it painting a dog
Bright colors
Dressing as a deranged Pilgrim
And parading
Through a church
Full of unsuspecting
Snake handlers?

And What is justice?

Do you find it by hanging an inverted urinal on the wall
Signed with intention Meant to blow the lid off
All convention
Exposing the world from a to z
For what it is
Call it a fountain
Factory made and
Full of the piss
We hope to never see again.

What's that to do with Justice?
You say or Peace or Truth
Shaking your head and turning away

Another question
As any answer
Never seems to lessen

I laughed at a friend
Who talked about truth
Absolute and Relative
I laughed and said
If truth can be divided this way
It is not a game I want to play

Then he spit out proof after proof
And I saw he liked to philosophize
And no longer feeling quite aloof
I began to realize

My idea of Justice
and maybe Peace as well
Was like his of Truth
the truth to tell

Absolute and Relative
The old eye for an eye
And tooth for tooth
But... By and by

Sprinkled with vague modifiers
Emotion and lusting
For the old home fires
Dreams and fables
Fed through the night
From infancy to the dying of the light

Peace Truth and Justice made
To suit the feel of the day
Whether chiseled in stone
Or vague as only what we say Now I find the three
Only seem to me to be
Caught in the quiet space

Between breaths

POEMS:

KMP

KMP is a Cincinnati native who works in the public health field. She is a strong woman and a mother of two. For years KMP has been too shy to submit poetry but she continues to write as her story develops.

MOPOETRY PHILLIPS

MoPoetry Phillips is a spoken word artist. She has a Bachelor of Arts in English from Northern Kentucky University, and is a current student at Women Writing for (a) Change in her hometown, Cincinnati, OH. MoPoetry will be at the Black Poetry Cafe, Poetryfest in Myrtle Beach, SC in May 2019.

Contact: 1mopoetry@gmail.com

DRAWING:

AUSTIN CATHEY

Austin Cathey, an artist from the mountains of Western North Carolina, graduated from the University of North Carolina at Asheville with a BFA in Drawing. He is currently a first year MFA candidate in Printmaking/Painting at Miami University, experimenting with different mediums such as ink, dirt, time, and evaporation. Austin is interested in identity, spirituality, the nature of reality, and the human condition. He is married with two spoiled cats. His art practice is fueled by coffee and heavy metal music.

Contact: austincatheyart@gmail.com



Austin Cothran

Facing Prejudice

(by *KMP*)

Skin furiously flushes in anger.
Nervous glances create suspicion.
Whispers echo like rustling leaves.
Hatred's foggy fumes engulf the room.
Sharp stinging sweat runs down a reddened face.
Bitter mouth tastes like fermented cider.
Fiery orbs criticize.
Stereotypes pierce the flesh like prodding spears.
Ignore the insults.
Restrain frigid trembling hands.
Stand tall and be proud.
Accept yourself for who you are.

I Don't Want to Be Black

(by *MoPoetry Phillips*)

I don't want to be black,
Those are the words that my ten year old son told me with tears in his eyes.
He is tired of being viewed as a threat.
5'1, 130 pounds, broad shoulders-
Easily mistaken for a man,
A man who is black,
Another black man, who could easily be shot in the back.

Seen as having a weapon,
Even when he is empty-handed.
Seen as resisting arrest,
Because he doesn't understand why he is arrested.
Seen as obstructing when what is obstructed is his liberty,
Not wanting to be black,
Because there's too many things he is taught not to be.

Not wanting to be black,
Even though his black role models are hard-working,
Educated examples of who to be.
Not wanting to be black,
Because it's hard to be black, and feel free.

Warned that when in the presence of police don't move,
Don't turn, never run,
Don't grab or hold onto anything,
That they can say is a gun.

Watch who you hang with,
What is seen is not always what is perceived.
Warned over and over,
So I won't be the next-
Black mother left to grieve.

Told to never become irate,
Even if he is falsely blamed or accused.

That "Hands up, don't shoot,"
Really means don't move!

Because "I was in fear for my life,"
Is the excuse they will use,
And even when there is evidence,
That is not the truth,
Justice is refused.

Eradication of Ventriloquy

(by MoPoetry Phillips)

(A poem inspired by "The Freedman" sculptor, 1863, by John Quincy Adams.)

I want you to speak about your perfectly sculpted back,
How smooth-
A back void of engraved evidence,
Left behind from masters' whip.

I need you to speak about your pedicured feet,
Feet that should show how you shuffled,
Across miles of weary ground,
Searching for freedom-
Trying to sniff it out like a hungry blood hound.

Please speak about your calloused hands,
Hands that sifted through soft white cotton,
Presented as strong, free hands,
Instead of hands deflated by the cruel puncture marks of thorns.

Speak about the woman you could not protect,
The child that was torn from her arms,
Your woman.
Your child.
Your heart that said they were still yours,
Even as you watched them leave with the man that held the bill of sale.

Say what the sculptor's hands smoothed over,
Reveal how he attempted to remove past truths.

How degrading to set a man free and deny him equality.
How sad to silence by omission.
He silenced you-
Sculpted in bronze,
Displaying you as "The Freedman."

POEMS:

MARILYN KREBS

Marilyn Krebs resides in Mt Washigton and has retired from 27 years as an Administrative Assistant at UC College Conservatory of Music. She has Bachelor and Master degrees in Music Education from UC and currently teaches private & group lessons in piano and guitar. She enjoys writing and sharing her poems.

Contact: mikrebs@fuse.net

AUBREY STANFORTH

Aubrey Stanforth is a high school student interested in the creative arts. While she loves poetry, she also enjoys cooking, singing, and playing soccer. Aubrey hopes in the future to work towards positive changes in her community.

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ELI STANFORTH

Eli Stanforth is in the 8th grade, homeschooled by his parents Sherry and Dave, also by Thomas More College. He has been taking English and poetry classes from his mother and will be attending Seven Hills high school in the fall of 2019.

Contact: elistanforth@gmail.com

DRAWING:

MARGEAUX LIM

Margeaux Lim is currently enrolled at the University of Cincinnati in a BFA program. She practices in the realm of sculpture, ceramics, painting and mixed media. Margeaux's goal is to create a new way to perceive the body, evoking a sense of the uncanny and intrigue with biomorphic forms.

Contact: margeauxlim98@gmail.com



#NEVER AGAIN

(by *Marilyn Krebs*)

(Quoting Bob Dylan's "Blowing in the Wind")

How many stories does it take on the news
Where parents and teachers have cried?
How many times does it take 'til we hear that many more students have died?
Yes, and how many times do we find that our leaders
Have taken the NRA bribe?

The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind.
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

How many shootings does it take 'til we know
That it isn't safe in our schools?
How many guns must some children collect from what should be military tools?
Yes, and how many marches on capitals does it take
Before they can just change the rules?

The answer my friend is blowin' in the wind.
The answer is blowin' in the wind.

China Doll Bloodshed

(by *Eli Stanforth*)

A child darts around the yard looking
for Easter egg treats to indulge in.
Scanning the grass by the shed she discovers
a rough swamp green container,
instead of the vibrant zentangles of lines and dots
covered with a smooth shellac.
She assumes that she has found a special surprise.
She pulls lock, then lifts the latch to reveal
a barrage of gunpowder and flames.
She is propelled through the air, a bird.
Her parents run outside just in time
to see her slam into the oak fence.
She cracks and then shatters,
once a beautiful china doll
now fragments of porcelain
decorating the ground.

What a Little Mind Learns to Think

(by *Aubrey Stanforth*)

A boy shoots his toy cannon
The other pops his gun
Lucy sits in the corner
watching
Her two doll sons
Black night
Black day
Oh the games we play

POEMS:

JOSHUA KRUER

Joshua Krueer began writing poetry under the platform, Nature Was Here. It has been a platform for his art and music for the last decade, but the project is now aimed toward educating students and adults to be empowered in Climate Action.

Contact: naturewillbethere@gmail.com; naturewashere.com

KIMBERLY ANN SCHWARZ

Kimberly Ann Schwarz is a retired elementary teacher who loved bringing the reading and writing of poetry into her classroom for 27 years. She's been busy learning how to be an "adult" reader and writer of poetry for the past four years. Her writing has been supported by her fellow poets from The Cincinnati Writers Project, Cincy East Poets, and OLLI poetry classes.

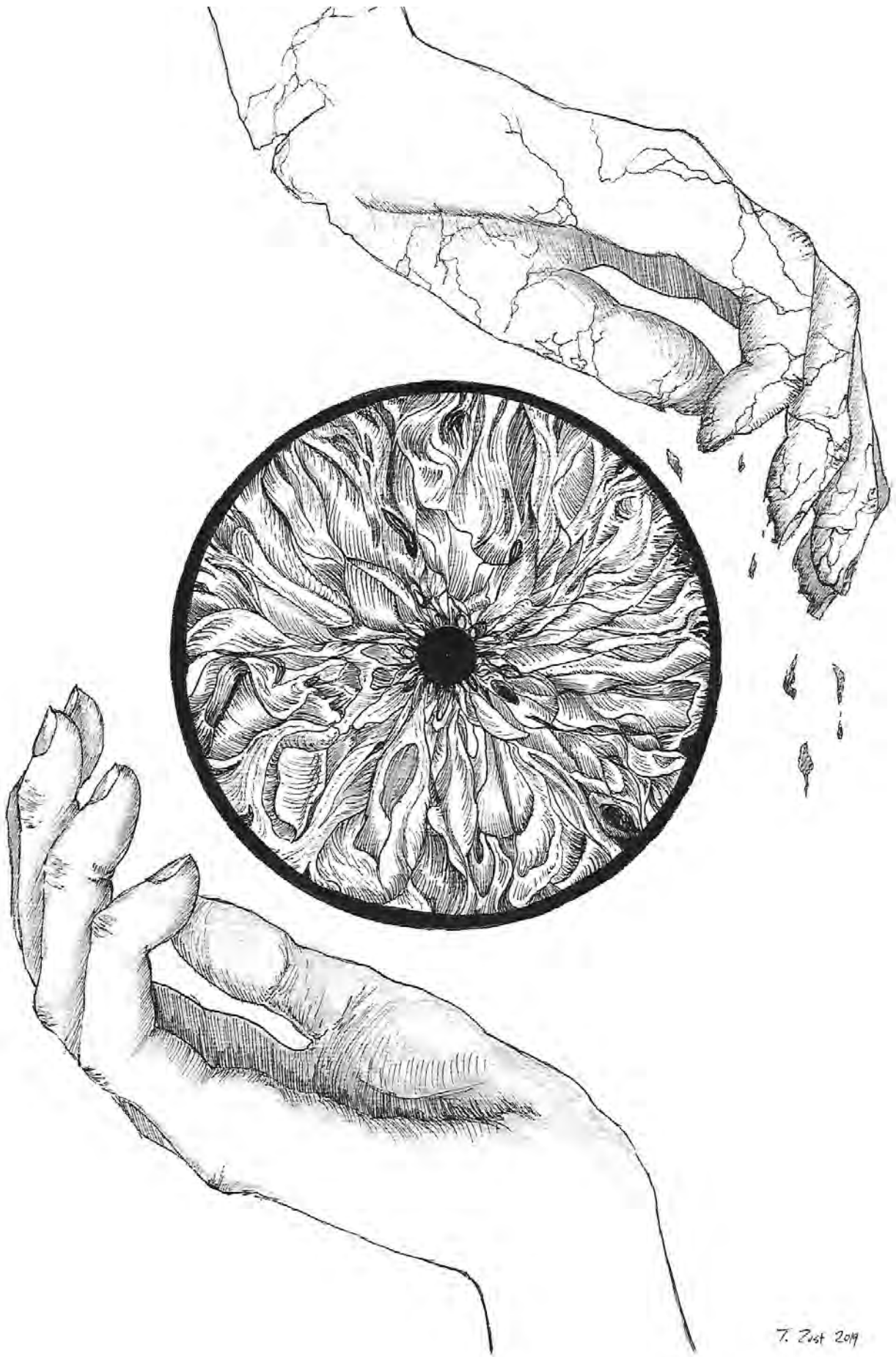
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DRAWING:

TARYN ZUST

Taryn Zust is a 4th year Fine Arts student in the college of Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning (DAAP) at the University of Cincinnati. She works in a combination of 2-D and 3-D media, and is drawn to integrating narrative elements and storytelling into her art. Taryn's work, at its core, strives to build and inspire empathy between the viewer and the work, and to examine aspects of humanity through the lens of the surreal, peculiar, or monstrous.

Contact: zustt15@hotmail.com



T. Züst 2019

Persistence of Vision

(by *Joshua Kruer*)

access to see it all and never forget
No-limits in Security
and unlimited Agency
watching and recording
watching time itself
gatekeeping records
saving and s-tocking
memories of a future threatened

cameras everywhere
cameras like eyes, always watching
in all directions
cameras geodesic, like flies eyes
like flies on the wall
cameras the size of flies
disguised as flies
cameras that fly, eyes in the sky
block out the sun: drones
cameras that see in the dark, don't
 need the sun
straying further from the light...

progress

thinking for us, as if we can't bare the
 responsibility any longer...

beckoning us to that forever sleep
nature's mind turned machine
sprouting and stalking
but they don't see my dreams

when I close my eyes, I am at peace
ever envisioning freedom, my...

persistence of vision

Peace

(by *Kimberly Ann Schwarz*)

Where are you?

Here.

Here? Where is here?

Where I have always been.

But I don't know where here is.
How do I know where you've always been?

You will know.

How will I know?

Look into your heart.

My heart? Why?

Just look.

Okay.

I looked. Where are you?

Still here.

But I looked, and I still don't know where you are.

But did you really look?

I thought I did.

*Keep looking into your heart. Every day.
When you find me, you will know I am here,
 where I have always been.*

*Then, we will know how to go from here to there.
There, we will see me in the places where I am wanted.
There, we will see me in the places where I am needed.*

POEMS:

MAY LANG

May Lang is a poet and mother from the Northern Kentucky area with a Bachelor's degree in English. She believes that art is the greatest conversation ever had about peace and is glad to be a part of it.

LAUREN TEPE

Lauren Tepe, a Cincinnati all her life, currently resides in Northern Kentucky to attend The Northern Kentucky University where she studies English and Secondary Education. Writing poetry has become a recent passion, a way to get her thoughts and feelings out on paper. Lauren's goal with her poetry is to relate to those around her who feel secluded and have no one to talk to.

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DRAWING:

KC HAMANT

KC Hamant is a student at the Art Academy of Cincinnati. She is also a licensed esthetician and makeup artist. KC's favorite subjects to draw are people and plants. Her primary mediums are digital, ink, pencil, and acrylic paint.

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My Rapist Writes Poetry (by *May Lang*)

My rapist writes Christian Poetry.
He's been saved, the Lord found him.

After years of suffering
- his, or mine?
he's going to minister
to the lost in Christ's name
He knows how it feels to be lost
in Christ's name.

He's willing to do anything.
He is behind me.
He is behind me.

Skinning myself
alive, sleepless, burning,
I run from him still.

I run from trees in the woods,
tripping over irrational roots.

I run from trees he's never seen
afraid he is behind one of them.
I run from men

who would stand behind me,
men willing to do anything
in Christ's name.

The poems I write
are for human beings
on this earth,
human beings
unsuccored by faith.

The poems I write
are for those whose rapists
have not suffered
enough.

The poems I write are
unreported wounds.
They are unrecovered,
gone to the grave.

My rapist will stand and speak on
faith like a rock, with the cross
he is so willing to carry
in Christ's name.
He is pleased
to do this.

Being saved, he is willing.
I cannot speak like that.
I am unwilling.

The poems I write
are without faith.

I am not saved.
The Lord has not
found me.

And the poems I write
are not for the Lord,
not mine,

and definitely not his.

But I Did Not Ask Him To (by *Lauren Tepe*)

His warm hand runs from the nape of my neck down to the small of my back,
but I did not ask him to.

His lips slide up from my knee to hip as if to find the softest spot to plant a kiss,
but I did not ask him to.

If I were to collect the tears shed on that bed, it could never be enough to wash myself clean
of his weight as he holds me down restricts my breath and takes power over me
when I did not ask him to.

He whispers of the pleasure I bring him in my ear,
but this pleasure he so roughly desires,
I did not ask him for.

They say you can fight and they say you can scream, they say "just say no".
But I ask you judge, have you had someone twice your weight pin you down and take every
last will and desire from your body as if it was free to take
when you did not ask him to.

You instead, ask me what I was wearing because that will finalize the case.
Men have been taking what is not theirs since the time of corsets and cages hidden by the
layers we used to hide what was ours to keep to ourselves but in the end,
it was my fault.

All the things I did not ask for...my fault.
The bruises left on the insides of my legs...my fault.
The cries muffled by a hand over my mouth...my fault.

So, I ask you now judge,
if I decide this weight you put on me by blame is too much
and I take the only thing I have left to take;

Is it your fault?
Even though you didn't ask me to.

POEMS:

MARK LOUIS LEHMAN

Mark Louis Lehman is a retired English teacher, classical music reviewer, and magazine editor. His poems have appeared in *Eureka Review*, *Cincinnati Poetry Review*, *Cincinnati Neighborhood Poets Anthology*, and *The Lyric*. His prize-winning short novel *Mocky's Revinge*, a bittersweet depiction of a small-town Ohio family told in the idiosyncratic language of its 8-year-old narrator, was published in 2006.

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REBECCA S. LINDSAY

Rebecca S. Lindsay is editor of *Pegasus*, journal of the Kentucky State Poetry Society, and member of the Monday Morning Writers Group in Cincinnati, OH. Her poems have been published among others in *Inscape*, *Change Happens*, *Pine Mountain Sand and Gravel*, and her short stories in *Inscape* and *A Few Good Words*. Her novel, *The Peacemakers*, the story of Mennonite pacifists and Unionists in the South during the Civil War, is forthcoming.

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DRAWING:

CHRISTINE TWEDDELL

Christine Tweddell is a Cincinnati native and current student at University of Cincinnati studying psychology and fine arts. She has worked on several mural projects throughout the city. Her passion is to use art to help others, and design to initiate change.

Contact: christinetweddell@gmail.com



CHRISTINE TWEDDELL

The Long March

(by *Mark Lehman*)

Little we bring to the lost and broken—
A tent and blanket, clean water and soap,
A can of milk for babies awoken,
A ragged doll, a fading glimpse of hope.
Little we can do for the grieving will
Cheer them. We can't return the child now gone,
Lost or torn from their arms. We watch as still
They dream of one who yet could return home.
Their grief drains our weakening will to fight,
Their pain invades us and becomes our own.
We may not see an end to the long night;
We may falter and perish before dawn.
Yet something of us lives still in the light
To come, if only our shadows walk on.

Seedlings

(by *Rebecca Lindsay*)

In Hebron I saw a young girl,
Barely a decade old,
planting flowers.
With great care she buried their roots,
patted the dirt firm.
On her hands was ancient soil;
on her face was written hope.

At the tombs of the Patriarchs,
I saw five boys,
each no more than eight.
In their hands they carried
pitchers to collect water
to tide their families over
until the authorities
once more turned on the tap.
They were happy boys
who frolicked and chased,
chattering amongst themselves.

A soldier there hassled the boys,
screaming at them,
wagging her finger,
her other hand
never far from her gun.
On her face was written hate.

The harvest is certain.
The farmer knows
from a kernel comes corn,
from a grain comes wheat.
Flower from flower,
thorn from thorn.
Always the same.
What fruit then shall
come from hope and hate?

Lullaby for a Refugee Child

(by *Rebecca Lindsay*)

Refrain:

Lay your head down on my breast.
Hush, there's no reason to weep.
While angels above
Watch over you, love,
Let the stars sing you to sleep.

Verses:

Far from our homeland we've fled,
Away from that dangerous place.
Over mountain and plain,
You've been soaked by the rain,
And felt the sand stinging your face.

Traveling day after day,
Trodding ahead without cease,
Leaving behind strife,
Seeking a new life,
The promise of safety and peace.

The sigh of the wind through the trees,
The song of the rippling stream,
The soft glow of moonlight
Bid all fears to take flight.
So, close your eyes, dear one, and dream.

Fleeing from Bethlehem town,
The threat of the sword and the spear,
You'll be safe from your foes
In the land of pharaohs,
Far from the violence and fear.

Walls

(by *Rebecca Lindsay*)

Go ahead,
build your wall.
Make it concrete
or cinderblock.
Face it with limestone
for elegance,
and top it off
at eighty feet.
Or economize with metal stakes
sunk deep,
jammed close
only inches apart,
so the other
can stare through
at what he cannot have.
In a pinch, throw up
a barbed wire fence
crowned with razor wire.

But whatever you do
back it up.

All the famous walls in history
could not stand alone.
The Great Wall
was built for chariots.
The one in Berlin
had a no-man's land
guarded by men
with orders to shoot.
And checkpoints,
armored cars and soldiers
enforce the wall
that strangles the Palestinians.

So go ahead,
build your wall.
Just remember:
a wall only works
when it's
backed up by guns.

POEMS:

KATHY LONGSHORE

Kathy Longshore grew up with the love of writing poetry, inspired by life and friends. As a grandmother of 8, she especially enjoys children's literature. She is a Scrabble lover, fascinated with words. In 2018 her poem "*Personal Sacrament*" won honorable mention in the Ohio Poetry Association annual contest.

Contact: rlongshore@cinci.rr.com

KEN WILLIAMSON

Ken Williamson is a native of Cincinnati, graduate of Ohio University. He was a U.S. Army Photographer and Journalist in Vietnam in 1969. Many of his poems appear in his book *Saying Goodbye To Vietnam*.

Ken is an active writer, photographer and public speaker.

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ZOHREH ZAND

Born to an Iranian father and a German mother, Zohreh Zand is a Canadian citizen who has resided in Cincinnati since 2011. She is a member of the Monday Morning Writers Group and a docent at the Cincinnati Art Museum.

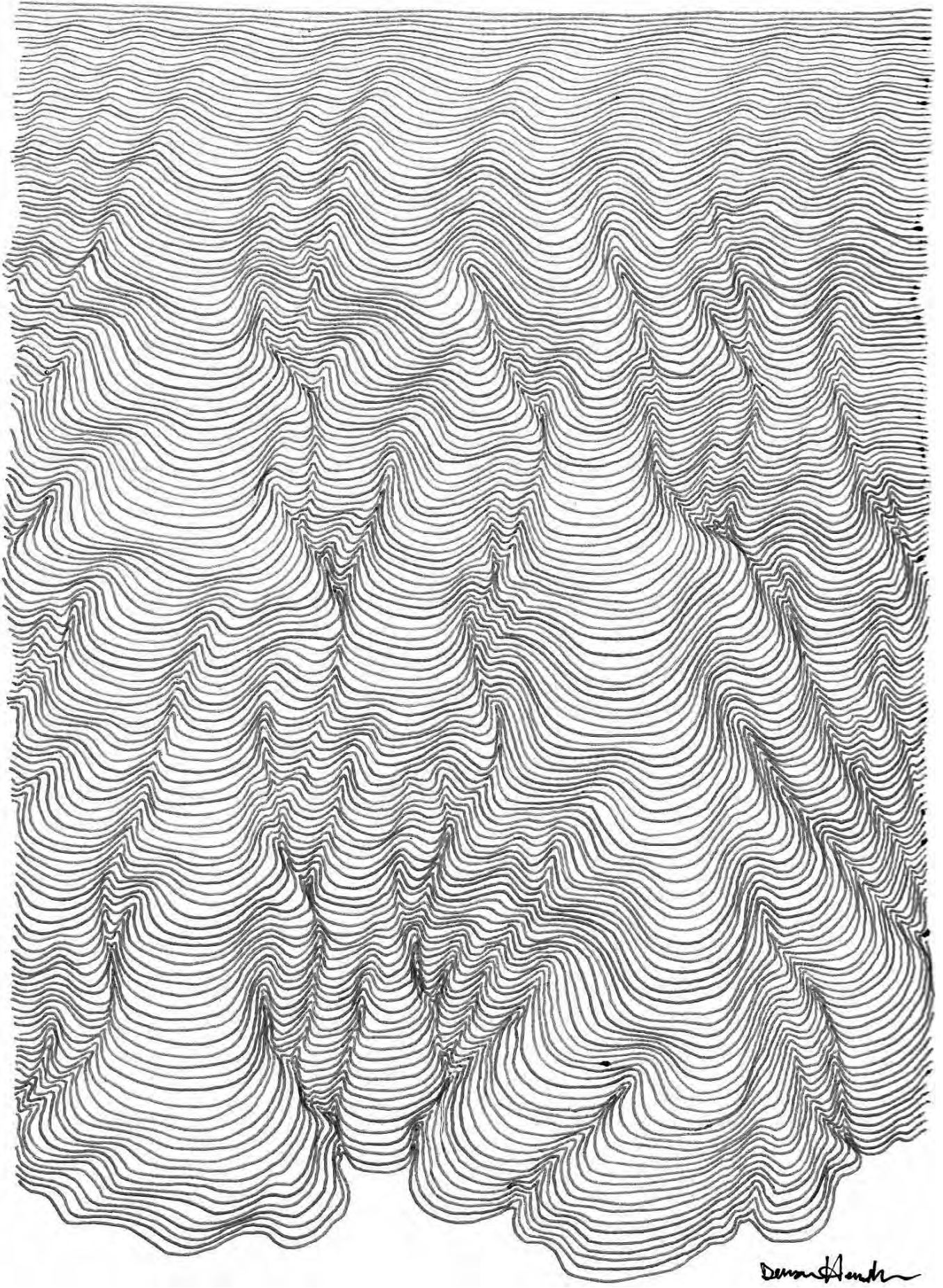
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DRAWING:

DEVON HENSLER

Devon Hensler, born in 1997, currently lives in Cincinnati, OH. She is an artist and student expected to receive a BFA and a BA in Art History from UC/DAAP in 2020. Working within digital and two dimensional media, Devon uses her art practice to rectify her relationship with making mistakes and as daily meditation.

Contact: devon.hensler@gmail.com



Demetrius

Obliqueness

(by *Kathy Longshore*)

This should be the year
To come up with some lines;
Everyone can see that
Lines have been drawn.
As accusers lined up the abusers
Investigators lined up the indicted.
As the migrants lined up in Mexico.
The furloughed lined up for food.
The lines in this country have become
Jumbled not unlike a
Picasso painting
With distortions
Of major proportion
Which are often misunderstood
But always controversial.

The Wall

(by *Ken Williamson*)

That damn wall!
Hiding in the depths of subconscious babbling
accepting and rejecting,
blocking out all who wish to pass,
friends and foe alike.
That damn wall!
Turning light into darkness,
concealing the thoughts of yesterday
tumbling around like cans kicked down a gravel road,
their origin lost forever among the clanging
of gravel against metal -
like politician's voices,
shouting down the ideas of centuries past,
muddling around in the goo of life's defecation.
That damn wall!
Mindlessly wandering,
building up,
tearing down.
Strands of razor wire strewn across the borders of the soul
like words recklessly scattered and kicked down life's dusty road
ready to slash the tender skin of peace and justice.
That damn wall! - I built it again!

Let's Build a Wall

(by *Zohreh Zand*)

Yes, let's build a wall
A wall not just for the southern border
But a wall for each State
Through each city
Through each home
Through each street
A wall around the country
A wall through the mountains and
oceans
A wall around all the continents

Yes, let's build a tall wall to
Stop the entrance of
Hate, fear and separation

Let's build a long and tall wall
A wall that does not separate
A wall that will unite
Let's hold hands
And give each other
A layer of love
A layer of compassion
A layer of care
A layer of understanding
A layer of empathy
A layer of forgiveness
A layer of mercy and grace
And call this beautiful wall
Embrace

POEMS:

DOROTHY JEANETTE MARTIN

Dorothy Jeanette Martin, having crested eighty, is officially old, but still has a lot of living to accomplish. She boasts no advanced education in Creative Writing, but is trading in a lifetime of engineering and science for the fun of writing poetry. Cincinnati is her forever after home.

Contact: djmartin777@gmail.com

VERA STEPELER

Vera Steppeler was born in 1935 in Germany, in Königsberg (now Kaliningrad), East Prussia. She survived the bombing of her home literally by minutes and after being evacuated from village to village celebrated the end of WW II in Bavaria. She then moved to Westphalia, where she eventually got married, came to Canada (for 3 years), and ended up in Cincinnati, where she still lives with her 3 children, now widowed. Vera has published "*The Love Trap*," and recently a booklet "*WW II (through the eyes of a child)*."

Contact: vera123@fuse.net

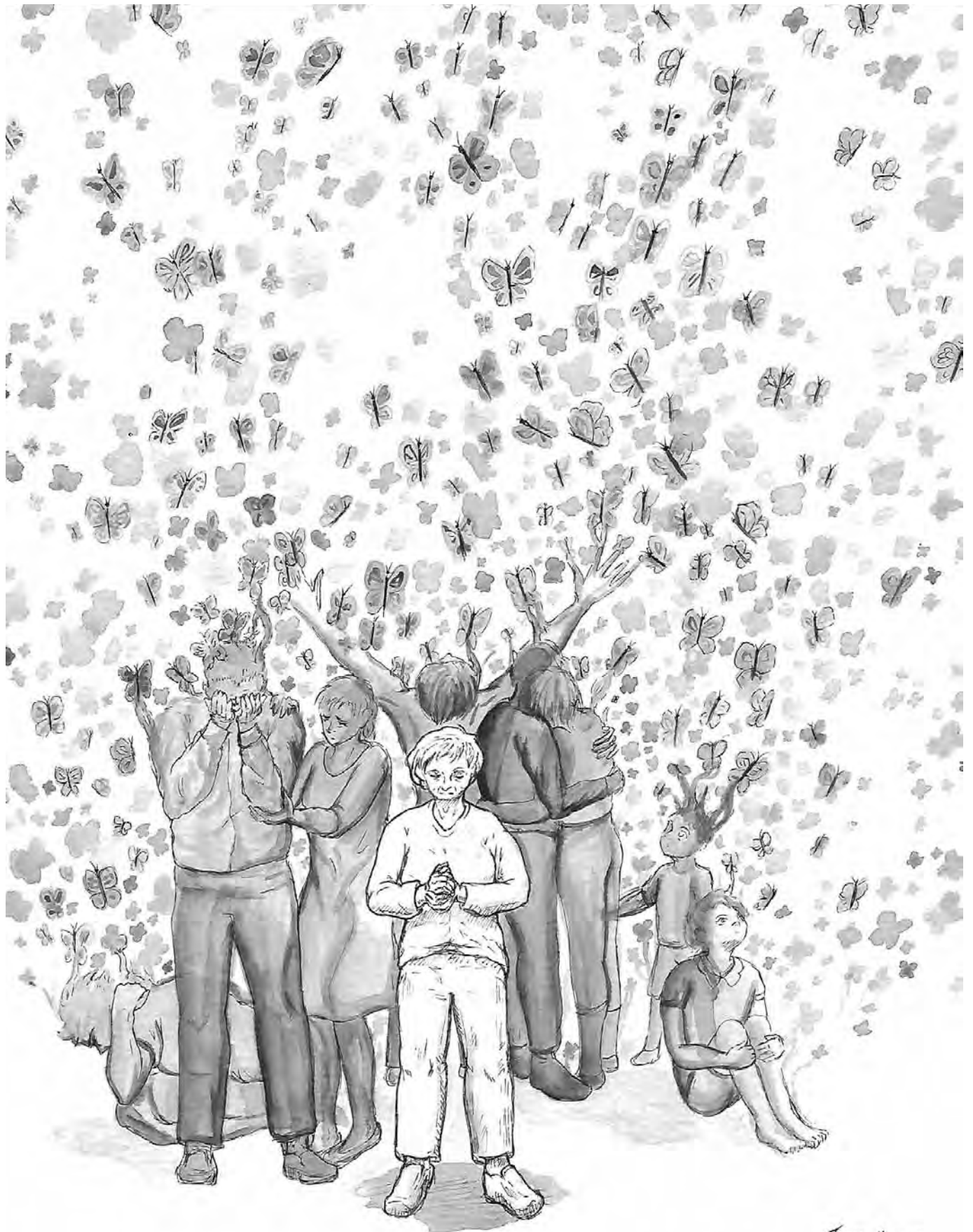
DRAWING:

JOSIE MASSET

Josie Masset, born in Cincinnati, OH is currently a student of Studio Art and Interactive Media Studies at Miami University, Oxford, OH. Strongly influenced by illustration and animation, Josie works to integrate complex themes, emotions and artistry with comics and animation. Her work also integrates her studies of Japanese language and culture, and an interest in historical and spiritual sites.

It spans subjects from daily life to natural succession and rebirth.

Contact: massetjosie@gmail.com; josiemasset.com; [@sakurart_jm](https://www.instagram.com/sakurart_jm)



Tosie Messet

Forgive and Forget

(by *Dorothy Jeanette Martin*)

Is it enough to forgive,
or must I forget as well?
If I dwell on it,
chew on it,
masticate to pulp of mind,
surely I will swallow it
in one great gagging gulp.
Where then will it be,
stuck rumbling in my gut,
a toxin to all thought,
that ruminating mind,
a bovine chewing on its cud?
Most surely it will stay,
inured to reason's blade.
Would that I could cut it out,
Excise the pus and pain,
drain that obsessive swamp,
and free myself this day
and evermore..... but no.

It's not enough to forgive;
We must forget as well.
Open the cocoon of pain,
so it may flutter flit away
a butterfly of love,
forgiveness giving birth
to all that might become.
We know in some dark place
that forgetting must ensue
if we would be truly free.
We lean toward dementia's hoary hood,
Knowing oh so well that forgetting
Is the path to not-knowing,
and forgetting near so fine
as never having known at all.
I forgive you, and you, and even you.
I forgive all that ever was,
and even better yet,
I promise to forget.

I Remember...

(by *Vera Steppeler*)

I remember FEAR
of sirens, followed by sounds
of bombs being dropped,
hysterically screaming neighbors
in a dark cellar.
No end for hours.

I remember LOSSES
Dad's and Grandma's death
during WW II,
our home being destroyed,
many relatives and friends never found.

I remember HUNGER
Standing in line at school
with soup bowls to be filled,
going from farm to farm,
begging for food.

I remember PRAYING
for peace and justice
as a young child,
hoping for the end of war,
WONDERING,
If it would ever happen.

I remember RELIEF
Watching people crying
and dancing in the streets.
The war had ended.
Welcome American soldiers!

I remember A NEW LIFE
a new city, an apartment,
a stepdad, my marriage,
and no more hunger.

I remember EXCITEMENT
Moving to Canada, then America,
having three children,
a house, and cars.

I AM OLD NOW.
For the rest of my life I shall be praying
"for a better world".
Not only for 2019,
But forever.

POEMS:

BILL MC CORMICK

Bill Mc Cormick is a retired high school teacher of German and English. He believes that we adults have a huge responsibility for making the world better home for our children. Bill is impelled to write about areas of injustice and cruelty toward fellow inhabitants of this earth.

Contact: mccormick1931@gmail.com

DRAWING:

DEBORA MYLES

Debora Myles earned an MFA in Drawing and Painting from Auburn University, AL. She taught there for many years receiving an outstanding teaching award. After retirement to Cincinnati, Debora won the Clifton Cultural Arts Center Golden Ticket First Prize and had a solo exhibit there in March, 2018. She participated in the SOS ART exhibit in 2018 at the Art Academy of Cincinnati and has exhibited her work in solo and juried art exhibits across the U.S.

Contact: mylesdc@auburn.edu



Apart

“This realization. This realization that I will live my life in this world where I have privileges.”
Rachel Corrie

I live as on a sphere apart,
set off from worlds of want and woe;
the only life I really know
is that of bounty from its start,
with studied blindness at its heart.

I live at a remove from earth—
where countless humans spend their lives
in vain attempt to improvise
existence in the face of dearth
of water, food and claim to worth.

I live in privilege, am free
from threat of murder at my door,
from carnage wrought in endless war,
from all imbalance I don't see
between the daily out-there and me.

Oblivion

A school is the scene of a shooting one day,
next day, shots ring out on a square.
Americans take note of the victims of such
by making a show that we care:

To their loved ones we offer our thoughts and
prayers,
sing a hymn to promise them grace;
for the dead we lower the flag a few days,
in a ritual that's now commonplace:

A charade we've given ourselves over to,
providing a welcome distraction
from the comfort we've given the gun-lobby folks
through our nearly autistic inaction.

Let us who escape each new taking of life
by the madman whose friend is the gun
be careful to proffer our thoughts and our prayers—
leaving nothing essential undone.

On Bended Knee

“Cheerleader kneels during national anthem...” Toledo Blade

She's black, Nia Snelling,
in her school's brown
and orange, leading cheers
from mostly white
faces for the team and
school she loves.

At 17, Nia knows that
exception is too often the rule
for non-whites in America,
that, in our society, many
face blatant injustice,
even fear for their lives.

In Sylvania, Ohio, pop. 20,000,
high school basketball's big—
nevertheless, it seems an
unlikely place for public protest,
as done at other sports venues
by professional players.

Nia's father says, “If you
want to do this, it has to be
in your heart. You have to be
ready for backlash. Don't
do it just to be trendy
or popular.”

Think, then, what effort, what
courage will lead a teen girl
to make herself—perhaps even
her family—objects of scorn; will
highlight her racial difference,
so as to challenge stereotypes.

At the first chords of
the national anthem, all
rise, hand over heart: “Oh,
say, can you see...?” Nia
Snelling sees what many
do not, and takes the knee.

POEMS:

SHARON METZLER-DOW

Poet/writer Sharon Metzler-Dow was a guest reader at Greater Cincinnati Writer's League in 2018. Her poetry published in the anthology *Eternal Snow* was on world tour 2018-2019. Her poem "*Beyond the Cave Wall*" was published for international readership on The Leakey Foundation website, a major global anthropology organization. Sharon was the 2014 Conference Poet for the annual International Conference for Women's Reproductive Health. Her sister's family lives in Cincinnati, and she, herself, a global traveler, lives in Oakland, CA.

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DAVID MOODY

David Moody, a first-year student at UC Blue Ash majoring in Information Technology, enjoys writing poetry in his free time, also reading. David hopes to write professionally someday.

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DRAWING:

JILLIAN CAMPAGNA

Jillian Campagna is a Junior at Miami University, Oxford, OH majoring in Studio Art with a concentration in Printmaking. She creates art that is figurative with a focus on nature and environmentalism. Jillian's designs range in style from photo-realistic to illustrative. While printmaking is her primary medium, she also enjoys creating drawings with charcoal and ink.

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Paris, November 16, 2015 (by Sharon Metzler-Dow)

The TV screen is a thin glass wall between
the warm nest of my Amsterdam hotel bed
and ISIS in Paris,
the terrorists crouching and fanning machine guns
at cafe guests.
The video streams the police raid
for suspects in Saint Denis.
“HE-IS-NOT-MY-BOYFRIEND!” a Muslim girl screams.
Vests explode,
ripping air and bone debris.
Then silence.
What is in this stillness?
Next morning I fight wind fists and cold’s knife edge
leaning into the rain to the Rijksmuseum.
On the soaked sidewalk a flattened umbrella folds --
black crow lying on its side with a broken wing.
I lift this spent warrior
and lean it against the green hedge.
My own flailing umbrella pitches and flaps in the gale
like a sail on a Dutch frigate. Grasping tight I spin
and dart in the frothy grey holding compass
to the museum’s gaping entry way.
There, a Gothic arch of stone holds high
a dry still space
like a great ribbed belly of a ship overhead.
Has the world turned upside down?
A long glass wall divides this cold
from the lobby’s grand hall — a light-filled atrium.
White-marbled calm.
I see museum-goers there,
one-hundred-fifty all stopped in place.
Their faces raised. A silent museumscape.
“A tableau?” I ask the visitor beside me.
He whispers,
“Amsterdam’s minute of silence for Paris.”
In the midst of terror, everyone there
standing still.
My wet red coat in the museum cafe
hangs over the back of a modern Linse chair.
All around, an orchestra of voices —
Hindi, Chinese, Russian, and Deutsche.
Balancing water bottles on a tray,
a waitress circles toward my table,
“Still or sparkling?” she asks,
waits for my thought,
twists the cap from the flask,
rests it on the white tablecloth,
the black cap with its white letters:
“STILL”

The freedom We Seek

(by David Moody)

The freedom we seek
In need of us all
we seem to wanna speak
but don’t mean to wanna call

we read it but don’t release
we hear it but don’t frown
we see it but don’t cease
we merely make a sound

the fear is the feat
Yet we cheer for the brown
we steer towards defeat
and it’s clear, we allow

but how?
where is the love?
where is the peace?
where is the vow?
where is the police?
where are we now?

the freedom we seek
in need of us all
is calling today
will you heed the call?

this brain

(by *David Moody*)

let's face the facts
it's not fair being black
it's neither here nor there
but be aware how to act
it's not their glare
but their opinion that's whack
we're caring, I swear
but they're staring at us
declaring at max
for us to cease and desist
cause we're daring and black

we scare, and that's a fact
I'm not comparing my hair
nor sparing the ax
I'm wearing this do
I'm airing this attack
I'm staring at you
this one's a buzzer beater
for flair
cause it's true
I'm rare
and I'm black
so don't compare us to you
don't compare us to jack
just gimme change and a chair
Gimme air
And I'll make em' stack
gimme names and a dare
I'll make these chains disappear
I'll make em' quack

I aim to be fair
and I aim to be black
cause I got the range
and I got the knack
I got the flame
and she's got the same
and He's got our back
I'm not playing games
I'm laying tracks
I'm laying claim
and then laying back
cause this train ain't stopping
it's staying on track
and this grain ain't popping
it's staying packed
until this name is topping
until this name is capped
until this brain is in blossom
until this reign is in fact
cause this brain is awesome
because this brain is black
cause this brain is colossal
because this brain is black

POEMS:

JOHANNAH MIKELL

Johannah Mikell is a high school student of the homeschooling variety. She enjoys writing and taking care of her three pets. This is her first published work.

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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 wasted organic matter excites her.

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DRAWING:

JOHN LANZADOR

John Lanzador is an artist, designer and art educator living in Cincinnati, OH. He has designed several murals throughout the city and has exhibited his works in many galleries in Cincinnati, Columbus and Northern Kentucky.

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Hamzador '19

Gilded

(by *Johannah Mikell*)

You see a gilded rose.
A wildflower you crafted.
But that rose was crushed beneath the gold you threw on it.
That rose was beautiful before you changed it.
You ripped open the rose and forced it imitate bloom before it was ready.
So you coated the rough edges with gold to create a rose in your image,
you stripped the rose of its thorns, and now the rose will not bloom.

CRI DE COEUR

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

Morning, afternoon, evening, night,
day in, day out,
week in, week out,
month in, month out,
year in, year out,
the cries of a child assail me,
wearing me down, sucking my strength, bereaving me.
Penetrating heart-rending cries,
more abrasive than diamond dust,
wear through skin and flesh and rib
and grate on my swollen bruised bare heart.

Cries of a child shut away
behind closed doors,
deaf ears turned,
machinery masking the plaints;
cries carefully aimed in my direction;
I, locked out, unable to help,
unable to avoid the sounds
that constantly assault my ears.
Ears sensitive, ears highly skilled
from hours and years of careful training
to hear the tiniest, merest sounds:
formula for unbelievable torture!

Cries of a pink child echoing
cries of a brown child,
gold child, copper child,
olive child, bronze child,

cries of a hungry child,
cold child, fevered child,
frightened child, sick child,
angry child, lonely child.
Cries of a bare child,
furred child, feathered child,
scaled child, prickly child;
child born, child whelped,
child kindled, child hatched,
child farrowed, child calved,
child sprouted, child lambed.

One's cry every day
focussing acute ears
on billions of cries,
sharp, insistent, demanding cries
of a billion tiny newborn beings;
two legs, four legs, six legs, no legs,
hot-blooded, cold-blooded, no-blooded;
beings of air, of water,
of wood, of earth,
all asking for but one thing:
Love!
All children of the same Parent.

PLEASE HAVE MERCY ON LIFE!

Grief

(by *Johannah Mikell*)

The man who works a dead end job
And lost his child to a drunk driver
The man who is a CEO
And his daughter was taken from a young age
The young college girl
Who lost her life in one blow
The elderly woman
Who lost her life with a simple shove
Down
Down the stairs
The young boy who in 15 years will take his life
Right now he dreams of being a baseball star
And the baseball star who thinks of ending it all
Right
Now
The model who struggles with her looks
And the mother of five who feels the same
In all the same resounding grief

POEMS:

TERRY PETERSEN

Terry Petersen is the author of the *Star League Chronicles*; the third in the series will be published this spring. Terry writes a blog on positive thinking at terrypetersen.wordpress.com and writes for the online Piker Press. She facilitates the Hamilton Writer's Group and enjoys encouraging people to see themselves as worthwhile. A Better World is what she would wish for all.

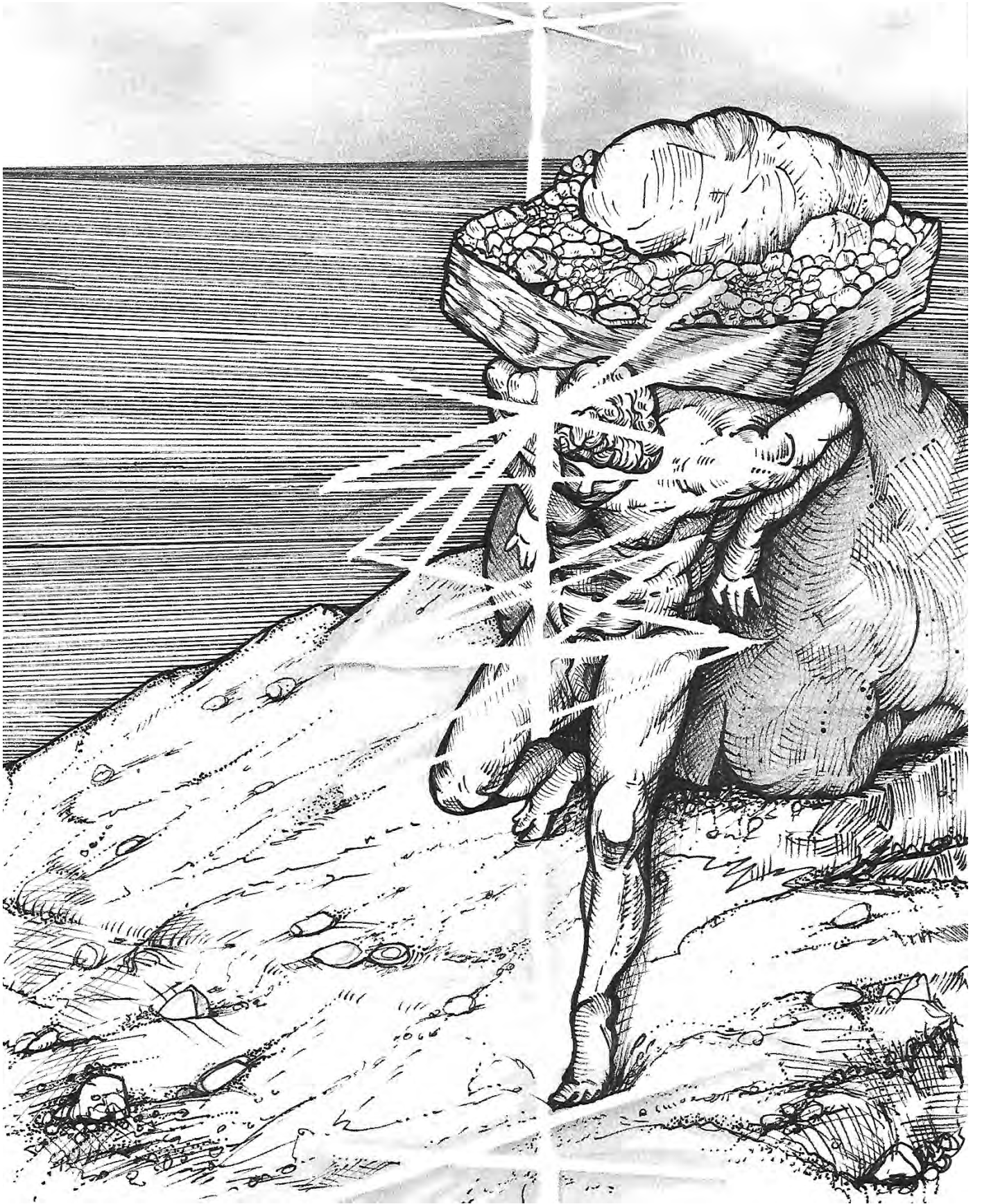
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DRAWING:

JENNIFER PURDUM

Jennifer Purdum is a visual artist currently living in Cincinnati, OH. She works in Hamilton, OH at a branch campus of Miami University where she teaches classes in drawing, color theory and printmaking. Jennifer received her BFA in 2001 from UC and her MFA in 2003 from American University, Washington, DC and Corciano, Italy. She has been exhibited internationally and nationally, including the "Printmaking Today" at the Cincinnati Art Museum, where her *Exodus Print Series* is part of the permanent collection.

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Jennifer Purdum

Hope and a Wagon Full of Pebbles

One seven-year-old boy and one older woman lead a red wagon across a flat back yard—An ordinary Thursday and fantasy fade in and out like clouds moving past sun. A patch of green becomes an airport, farm, planet.

The boy collects pebbles well-crustured with earth.

Do pebbles grow into rocks? he asks.

No, she answers, over time rocks break into pebbles.

She laughs, then recognizes a this-moment-in-time analogy.

Rocks crack, like childhoods past.

Imaginations dissolve. Differences evolve, wholeness forgotten.

The boy paints his treasures.

They glow with colors made from random discoveries.

Red, green, gold. Blended into a sacred, messy experiment.

You know you won't live forever, the boy says.

I know, the older woman responds. *That is why I celebrate*

time with you and give to as many people as I can.

The television blasts the latest White House foible. The woman winces.

Want to go out with the wagon again? the boy asks.

His innocence wins. And it gives the older lady strength to fight for good.

I am that woman. The boy is my grandson. And I am grateful.

Dakota gives me the strength I need to hope, to work for justice.

To continue to believe in pebbles joining again as one rock.

Fog, Sun, and Hope

Bare, black trees stand out inside a low cloud. Fog.

Headlights hide the vehicles they lead

until they arrive close enough to be

seen by other drivers.

In political fogs fact and factoid blur. Alternative facts,

lies that wear well-constructed masks. Fear wins.

Each lie repeats often enough to be used as light beams for

followers. The mask asks folk to scoff liberal non-believers.

And the non-believers respond with taunts, point out stupidity,

lack of logic, inconsistency. A no-win war begins.

In the natural world, sun, blue, and clouds reappear.
Black trees remain leafless. Headlights become optional,

a choice. Drivers can see without them. Can eyes open
and human roots join for change? Must fog live in all seasons?

Or can sun live despite fog? As headlights point out need
can drivers carrying hope respond with an ear instead of censure?

Yes, I hear where you stand, Trump-lover, but disagree.
Peace for the world. Eventually. Please.

At the Polls: November 6, 2018

I smile at voters as they approach,
even if some avoid a Democratic presence.
In some folks' eyes literature provided by liberal
individuals could be soaked with a mind-altering
virus.

Others pause, mention the thunderstorm
that didn't strike today, share concerns
about voter fraud and imprisoned children. Yet,
they seek hope. Through the power of the people.

A man with arms and legs
slender as licorice sticks arrives.
My husband and the leader of our group
look to see what he has brought.

Aftab, he says in a soft, gentle voice.
But the text speaks of low-hanging fruit.
A campaign designed to destroy our candidate.
I choke on the contrast.

The man has no money.
He doesn't know who offered him \$175.
Money to pay bills,
cash necessary after heart surgery.

My husband and I talk to him,
even as we relay our truth.
Are you thirsty? my husband asks.
My husband drives the short distance home.

He brings back a bottled fruit drink
for the man.

Our poll group fights for justice—with
integrity.

For the poor, the old, the young, the sick,
people of all backgrounds and colors.

And as the slender man hands out
his flyers, he tells voters to speak to my
husband
if they have any question. Peace,
the cost is genuine caring. Pass it on.

POEMS:

JANE PUGLIANO

Jane Pugliano, a poet, has been writing in community at Women Writing for (a) Change since 2005. She works a day job she loves and enjoys the challenge of composing a life that balances creative, spiritual, and practical well-being.

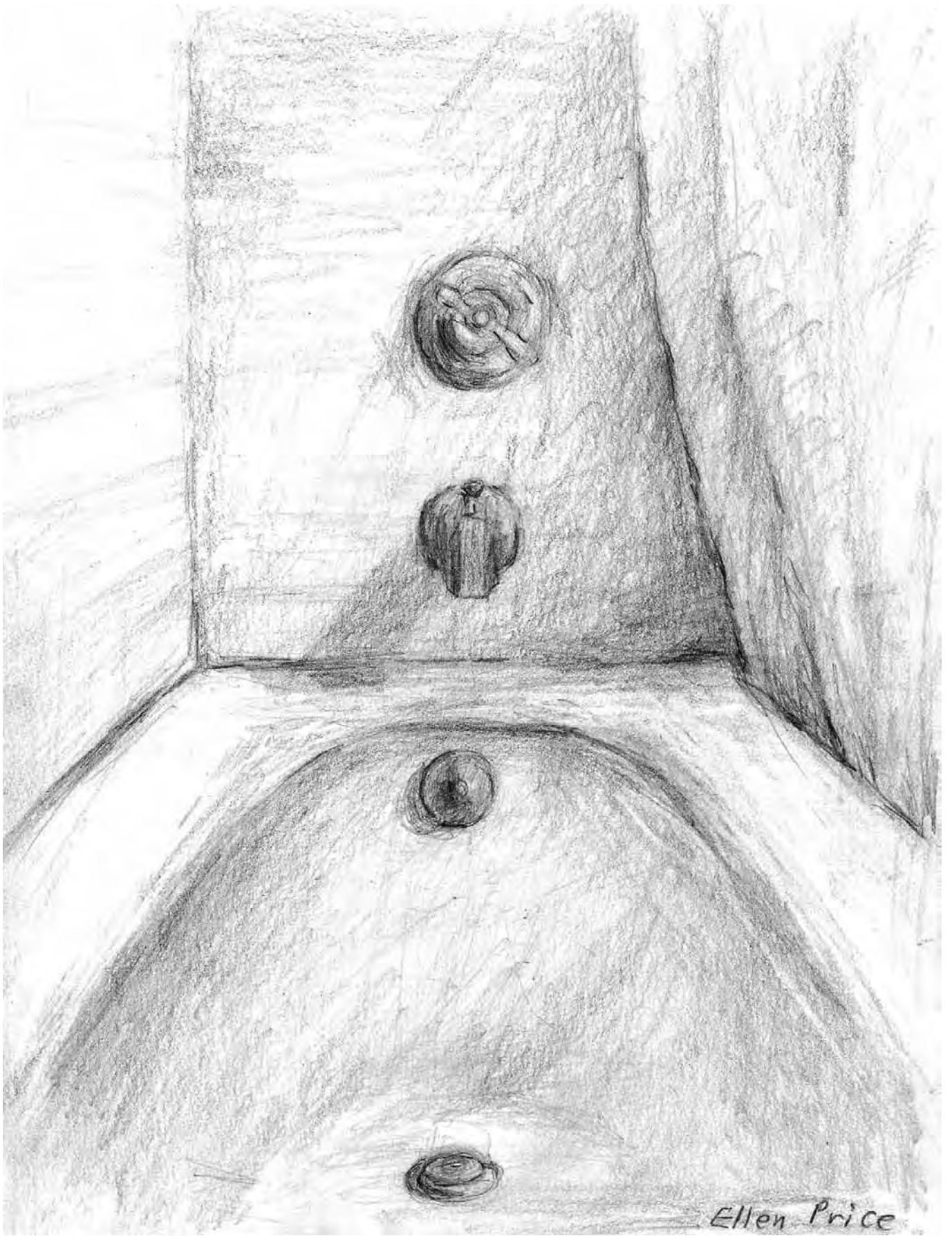
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DRAWING:

ELLEN PRICE

Ellen Price was born in New York City and received her BA in Art from Brooklyn College and her MFA from Indiana University. She is currently a Professor at Miami University, Oxford, OH where she teaches printmaking. .

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She

November 2016

I run a bath.
Too warm.
Too shallow.
Too bright.
I hope my misery
might ooze
from my insides
to my outsides
and down the
silver drain, leaving
me for good.
But there is no
water hot enough,
no food comforting
enough, and **no**
medicine strong
enough to help me
unhear the sound
of our citizens
heaving hate
upon the heads
of their own
people.

Their champion
made it clear.
"You are undesired
and undesirable.
You are a loser
because
she is a loser."

In this bath, I
see what he
might see
and feel shame
for the audacious
enthusiasm I felt
when I cast my
vote for her.

My face and my
body, her face and
her body, show the
wear and the
worry of life and
motherhood
and trying to find
our way year after
year.

The champion's mouth
and the mouths of his
fawners fracture and
echo and ditto in
my still white bath.
She and I are degraded
and defeated again
and again.

Naked and wet,
I feel crazy to
think I was ever,
or will ever be,
wanted or worthy
of respect or
esteem in the
eyes of this
country and the
straight-backed
self-righteous men
who lead.

This country.
This stolen land.
This false refuge.
This junkyard of
entertainment and excess.
This land of intolerance,
misogyny, racism,
and hate is both
home and hell.

Convenient Disasters

It's so easy to feel the pain of the
victims we see on the television news

they fit so nicely on the screen
convenient
living color

mudslides look appropriately dirty
hurricanes blow sideways - wet
roof collapses crush quickly, with surprise
avalanches bury cold with more cold
shootings bleed red
tornadoes toss communities into chaos
car accidents crumple lives
forest fires char green to black
terror frightens in foreign tongues
robberies steal peace of mind
droughts crack earth and tender skin
bombings shatter safe minds and bodies
kidnappings bewilder open hearts

eyes fill with tears
maybe we write a check
maybe we write a letter
maybe we say a prayer

but we always change the channel

Not a Boomer

I am five and at my first day of school
I am thirteen and I just got my period
I am eighteen and I am married
I am twenty-two and the mother of two
I am thirty and I am a Girl Scout Leader
I am thirty-five and I am fed up
I am thirty-seven and in love with a man who is
 not my husband
I am thirty-eight and divorced
I am forty and I am happy
I am forty-five and I am happy
I am fifty and I am happy
There are so many Janes inside of me

I am, I am, I am.
I am all of my ages inside of myself
I have been around longer than you - and that's ok
I want you to see that I am much more than my age
You are, you are, you are.
You are all of your ages inside yourself too
You are newer than I am - and that's ok
I see you as so much more than your age

This world is full of
different looking people
different talking people
different thinking people
different loving people
all of varying ages.

No one is ever just their age so why do we try
and sort ourselves out that way?

We are, we are, we are -
so much more than our years.
Let me be my years and I
will let you be your years.
Just don't call me baby boomer
and I won't call you anything
other than your name,

your sweet, sweet, name.

POEMS:

KINDRA ROACH

Kindra Roach loves everything that has to do with Fiona at the Cincinnati Zoo. In her spare time she enjoys doodling in her journal while binging on chocolate and Diet Pepsi. Her favorite quote is:
“We may encounter many defeats but we must not be defeated.” Maya Angelou

DRAWING:

PATRICIA CLARK ROPER

Patricia Clark Roper grew up in Paulding, OH and has lived, studied, and worked in Bogotá, Colombia and Madrid and Barcelona, Spain as well as in different cities in Ohio. As a Spanish instructor in the Department of Romance Languages and Literatures at UC, Patricia uses language, culture, and art to connect with others and to encourage her students to expand their horizons.

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Chimera Bubble

Most days bleed into one another.
It is the meandering splatter,
Of color blending into indecipherable grays and browns.
You know...
Those ordinary days of no particular consequence.
The warm blanket of routine,
Makes you feel swaddled by illusionary comfort.
You float inside your chimera bubble.
You ignore the nagging feeling inside your gut,
Pushing it down with chalky flavored tums.
You rinse away the "what ifs",
As though it were an annoying eyelash scratching your cornea.
But you don't really want to see the truth.
The mind deludes you into being a failsafe of false promises.
You cover the gray with root touch up.
You take your aging parents to the grocery store and
Adopt a dog with bark and bite.
Maybe you hit the gym a couple of days a week
And take the stairs.
No false sense of lethargy here.
You text the kids as many times as you can before
You get the exaggerated sigh and eye roll.
You get the kiddos up for church on Sunday
And volunteer at the neighborhood soup kitchen.
These are all worthy attributes of a good citizen.
The evening news is drenched with splashy violence so...
You channel surf and settle on re-runs of "Friends".
Look how easy is it to escape into the idiot box with a chilled glass of red,
Desensitized and numb.
Yes that's it,
Sink into the couch.
Go over your Saturday morning: To Do List.
Drop the kids off at practice.
Water the lawn,
And clean out the fuzzy science experiment growing in your fridge.
Every day is on a wash- rinse cycle
And repeat.
You have your daily morning banana smoothie while speeding to the office.
You wave pleasantries at your co-workers,
Before plopping down in your cubicle.
You nurse on your favorite Latte courtesy of Starbucks,
While fielding messages from your boss.
It is Just another ordinary day.
So you think...
The rhythmic sounds of fingers tapping on keyboards
Lull you into pleasant hum drum dullness.

Pop, Pop Pop.
You hear shots fired outside the office window.
The Chimera Bubble bursts wide open.
Your lungs burn hot.
Your hands feel like ice.
You can taste your wife's lip gloss,
On your tongue;
Strawberries and cream.
You can feel the silk of her hair,
Graze your cheek as you kiss her dismissively goodbye.
Did you remember to whisper? "I love you." in her ear,
Before you closed the door.
But you realize now there is no time to think.

(This poem is dedicated to my Fifth Third Family.)

Brown Makes Me Invisible?

My skin dissolves into the background of white noise
I am whatever they want me to be
Sometimes my mouth is a vacuous suction
Devouring their dirty little secrets whole
Hushed words slither like a serpent's tail
Rattling through the pit of my belly
It is difficult to hold it all down
I anticipate their needs before its arrival on the tongue
This is my shroud of protection
Against the pity reflected in their eyes
Pity begets guilt
Guilt begets anger
The stain is cleansed with my blood
Yes and thank you is always spoken with the betrayers of my soul
Focused squarely on my feet
My voice is an even line
Emptied of telling emotion
Their barrage of hefty demands, leave my body weak and broken
Submission is imperative to my survival
My flesh wrestles with the need to be self realized
But I am shoved to my knees
Ashamed
If God's eye is on the sparrow
Then I am present
I am here
This is the salve that cools the stinging bitterness
Until
I can no longer be denied my Brown Skin

Swing Low

The rusted chains of the swing pinched my fingers,
As I twisted around and around,
Creating semi circles with my sneakers in the dirt.
I tucked in my legs,
Once the chains bunched up good
Then let go,
To enjoy the fruits of my labor,
A dizzying spin.
I knew I was too big to be swing 'n.
I was going to be ten in a few months.
But I loved the weightless freedom it gave me.
After the spinning lulled into an easy sway,
I squashed my knees together in the seat,
And got to work on a plait that was too tight.
Mommie still put barrettes in my thick plaits,
That puffed up like knotted pastry.
Daddy came outside and sat in the swing next to me.
His long legs sprawled out in front of him.
The crease in his faded jeans drew
A severe white line
Down the middle of his legs.
Mommie starched all of his clothes.

The quiet between us was cumbersome.
I felt like I had done
Something bad.
I wanted him to push me in the swing like he used too.
I wanted to touch the clouds.
I watched him from the corner of my eye while I fidgeted with my pink barrette.
His voice sounded like dry gravel when he began to speak,
Rubbing its abrasive texture against my bear arms.
"Daddy loves you."
"I know Daddy... I love you too".
He wasn't looking at me.
Instead he looked out,
Beyond our back yard.
His handsome face was draped
In lines and shadows.

Soon Mommie would make me come inside.
The sun was already tucking itself in between
A blanket of violet clouds
And a tangerine sky.
This time he twisted around awkwardly to face me.
"The world hasn't grown up yet. It doesn't play fair."
The swing set didn't fit us anymore.
It creaked and swayed as he adjusted his weight in the seat.

“Like when Mommie makes us eat liver when Grannie comes to visit.”
I smiled big, hoping to see his eyes crinkle up.
“Yea kinda like that baby doll...
Mommie loves us very much.” He snickered.
I scrunched up my face but held back the yuck yuck sounds.

Daddy puffed out his cheeks, letting the air out real slow.
“People are not always going to like you baby
And the reasons why won’t make a bit of sense.”

My heart was burdened with feelings I couldn’t articulate.
“Kayla didn’t invite me to her birthday party Daddy.”
Everybody got invited ‘cept me.
Amber says it’s ‘cause I got nappy hair
And Kayla don’t want no nappy hair gett’n in her cake!”
I twisted around again in my swing.
My bottom lip trembled but I refused to cry.
I dirtied Mommie’s blouse earlier with my theatrics.

He grabbed my seat to still me.
“You hair is beautiful and so are you baby doll.”
He yanked on a plait,
The source of my contention and offered me a crooked grin.
“You have to cook up enough love for yourself,
So you have plenty leftovers for Kayla and Amber.
I doubted Kayla and Amber would be giving me any leftover cake.
I nodded as if I knew what he meant.
It took years before his message sank in good.

Daddy got up and pushed me in the swing like he did when I was little.
It was dark outside but Mommie let us be.

POEMS:

PAUL SHORTT

A theater set designer and professor by trade, 37 years at CCM, 50+ productions at the Cincinnati Playhouse, 10+ at the Cincinnati Opera, and many other projects near and far, Paul Shortt turned to writing poetry, short stories and plays for diversion, intense and otherwise, some dozen years ago. And the enjoyment has only increased.

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DRAWING:

TYLER GRIESE

Tyler Griese, an artist based in Cincinnati, OH, received an MFA from Arizona State University and a BFA from Northern Kentucky University. His paintings and drawings have been exhibited nationally. Tyler is a recipient of an Elizabeth Greenshields Foundation Grant and a Summerfair Aid to Individual Artist Grant. He maintains a studio practice at Wave Pool in the Camp Washington Neighborhood of Cincinnati.

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TG Tyler Griese

Bar Talk

In town for the big show

The trial you mean?

Grand jury bullshit - Hearing – Whatever

Think it'll be a “show”?

Those boys're fine – *Shit we used ta pull !*

Is that right?

Only difference, today they got YouTube

And you think?

Wished we'd had that

You mean?

Oh Yeah – Hot stuff – No wonder kids like it – Little girls too

You think forcin' that little girl?

Little girl – Shit! – She got what she deserved

You don't fault those guys?

Only doin' what a lotta guys done before

What would you do – if she was yer daughter?

Beat the hell outta her, by god – She'd a' know'd better

So what should I do – If a guy tries ta rape me – A guy like you, say –

Follows me outside – Grabs me – What then?

You comin' on ta me?

What makes you think I'm comin' on to you?

The way yer talkin'

Okay – So is this an open carry state?

Damn right!

Then I'd shoot your balls off

Then you'd be in a whole lotta trouble

Why's that – You followed me – You grabbed me

You can't come in here talkin' like that –

I thought we had free speech and open carry

Jesus! – Get the hell outta here – You fuckin bitch!

Thanks for the drink – And interesting conversation

.....

What a fuckin' cunt !

Former Porn Star in an Orange Jumpsuit

. . . 'Bout my brothers, too –
sneakin' in the winda –
doin' me for a grape soda.
But the worst was the big dark
 daddy bear,
threaten'n me if anyone knew.
Then I shot him with a .22
An' ran away.
He lived, a' course.
But I made my way –
far away.
Ta' men friendly, then nasty cruel.
Who coked me up,
and filmed me down,
then turned around,
an' upside down,
an' said it was cool!
Ugly men – inside an' out.
An' now I come this far –
up to today.
Let's hope that what I pray –
turns out ta' be okay.

I kinda said all that
like some a' the girls in here talk.
They do it good,
an' I kinda like it.

But there's still a whole lot wrong.
Maybe with everything.
'Cause Justice . . .
isn't even . . . *JUST*,
'Cause it's not "*EVEN*" –
– us an' them –
– "*MEN*" –
with all their "*FOREVER*" Power.
An' so-called –
"*LAST WORD*,"
As the gavel slams down.
An' knocks me . . .
to the ground.

"The Other Great Lusting"

The crave for killing,
The thrill of shots,
So much more
Than what *you've* got.
Hip level, knee high, or
From great heights,
School day mornings
Or desert nights.

'Cross the classroom
Or parking lot,
The forty-first floor
. . . with bolted door,
In your head
You hear the roar –
*"Do it once,
Then do it more!"*

The one-shot pull
On semi-auto,
The delicious bump stock
On full auto –
Love it all,
An' love the rush –
*"You tough enuff
Ta be one a' us?"*

And if you are
You understand,
The huge great rush
Of killin,' man.
An' even greater
When there's more,
With fresh blood floodin'
'Cross the floor.

Afghanistan, Iraq, an' Syria –
Brothers truly hardened
With killin' deliria.
Then, back home
With State-side blues,
You act surprised
Over national news,
Makin' a fuss
When it's one a' us

Spreadin' death
With our last breath.

Have you no
Imagination for
Causes of such
Machinations?
It doesn't take a
Genius anticipatin'
These most violent
Inclinations:

Killer crush
or carnal lust –
Opposin' sides
Of Nature's thrust.

And then, what a break!
Our deepest anger,
Our harshest spite,
Is fully graced
By our
Second Right.

Sit back, relax,
Hear some comfortin' facts:
The NRA don't meddle in
This lucrative rush
Of adrenalin.

And so, America, Amen.

"Happiness is a warm gun
mama." By John Lennon,
who died by one.

"You're taught – there's joy in
killing, delight in destruction,
pleasure in causing pain. . .
. We don't kill for any honest
reason – not to feed or clothe
ourselves – but to satisfy the
craving for killing inside us."
Paul Crenshaw, "*Cadence*,"
US Army Boot Camp, Fort
Sill, Oklahoma, 1990

POEMS:

SHERRY COOK STANFORTH

Sherry Cook Stanforth, a native of Clermont County, OH, is the founder and director of Thomas More University's Creative Writing Vision Program where she provides interactive educational and public arts programs for diverse (and underserved) populations in the Cincinnati/Northern Kentucky community.

She is co-editor for *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, the literary journal of the Southern Appalachian Writers Cooperative, and faculty advisor for *Words*, the campus literary magazine. Her poetry collection *Drone String* (Bottom Dog Press, 2015) reflects the storytelling traditions, music and migration experiences of her Appalachian heritage. She is the managing editor of *Riparian*, a forthcoming river-inspired collection (2019). Sherry performs in a 3-generation family band, Tellico, and enjoys hiking, beekeeping and studying native plants.

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DRAWING:

JAMES OBERSCHLAKE

James Oberschlake is interested in a wide variety of drawing, painting, and sculptural media and consistently challenges himself to successfully combine many of them in intuitive ways. Subject matter is less important to him than process, and maintaining some elements of surprise is what keeps him engaged in creative work. James nearly always begins the creative process with little or no idea and enjoys the evolution.

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Veronica
2019

Interpreting the Passage

A train interrupted the poem
I was writing near the river
wall. I heard vireos calling,
then that deep stir of old track

woven inside yellow compass weed.
I could not go back to the page. I had
to cast aside my task of writing grief
(a woman carrying a hand-stitched sheet

to cover the face of a mantle clock)
into lyrical, storied sense. I raced
over the rain-cut hill to sit and watch
boxcars pass. Their rattling jarred

my teeth, sped up my heart in such
a way as to make my eyes tear. I knew
the rarity of this passing—so few trains
ran these days—and I recalled the girl

I once was, standing too close to the rails
pulling nectar from honeysuckle
with the tip of my tongue, imagining
my life, ticketed and then tucked into

a journey of blurred cedar trees, hoboos.
Smoke plumes curled into a long-
whistled wail. Chicory and grasses lifted
in the wind as blown pages, and I believed

the low hum in my bones was proof that
magic still existed along the boundaries.
I stood there, believing, while miles bent
toward the darkest part of the text: sections

bearing centuries-old coal with covers stamped
CTCX, UTLX and AMOX...something pressurized
In white tubes. PROCOR segments in green
bundles, steel cold pipes ready to pump

fluids into prepped earth-holes,
plus rounded tubs marked VELX,
and sulfuric acid waiting to flame
into petroglyphs. At the end, no

caboose—just two cars sporting
an artist's graffiti—*Catelin loves A.J.*

scrawled beneath I AM BOSS in block letters,
sprayed with precision in primary colors.

I thought this might echo some story
I'd met before, but I struggled to translate
the folded grasses and that loud rush of air
with no words following.

Busy

My grandma, alive
for nearly a century, tells
me that I am as busy
as a bee. I stand before
her, still for once,
holding Earl Grey decaf
steeping in the mug.

I think of my hive, workers
zipping in and out of goldenrod
mazes, ironweed, even manicured
mall gardens, all paths lit
with pollen. All day long, the bees
go and know where to go
to feed the brood. They are born
crawling through honeyed geometries.

We sip together, not speaking.
I meditate on the tomato vines
I forgot to water, the empty
hummingbird feeder I failed
to fill. My kitchen holds ingredients
for unmade soups and bread that I
dreamed of making. Beyond:
the unbuilt treehouse and nearly
grown children, those unsorted
giveaway piles littering our basement,
unlearned mandolin chords still
a mystery to my hands. My girl asks
if we are ever going back to hike
that odd little creek where
ghosted sycamores lean on
one another, forming an ancient
miraculous tunnel—some other world.

I did not save
the seeds
for next year's garden.

"I'm not like the bees," I say,
and she nods, knowing
this talk we share does
not always beg reply.
I see bees bearding
around the hive body
in humid evenings, or balled
up—a warm cluster
in the sharpness of February.

Busy, they scatter for miles floating
high above white rippling clover,
lighting down on the fat heads
of milkweed flowers, then finding
the way to home. They know
to accept each small gift
offered in still moments—
to make something good of that
peace without any thought of purpose
or wishes in mind. "Well, be good,"
she says, every time I stand
to go back out there.

Pawpaw Pie

Two cups of coffee, no lunch.
Tweets blowing up in my face every
day, two hundred and fifty-five emails behind
schedule, daily dose of life-draining messages and
that dark worm
twisting inside my brain, making me crazy as a caged
crow and pressed

by the ache for home things: kitchen table
talk and dirt-digging, bean-snap, chord-strum.
All around me, monitors blink blue, stringing
out stories, looping little wired nooses
around my windpipe—breathe, breathe.
One day they'll find a cure for labors performed
inside grain-gray corporate shadows.
I review news. I type. I send.

Then, in walks my girl—maker
of messes and imaginary worlds—
a traveler circling around all
super-sized cash-cow
consumerist waste piles
and the contorted erections
set by walls or dogmas.

Now home from traipsing
woods and lit by prismatic glory,
she finds me: "Mom, can we
make a pawpaw pie?"
Eye meets eye and
she holds seven pawpaws
in the crook of her arm
ready to act.

How can I deny when it's time
to leave the screen? A child
stands right here next to me,
mud-booted and breathing out
a mission. She smells of bonfire
smoke and a sweet gum leaf
is still tangled in her hair.

She wants to make something
happen. I fetch a paring knife
and bowl. We slime our hands
with yellowy pulp, pluck out seeds
and sift the flour for cut pie dough.
The oven creeps up to 350 and things
get messy. We sing together, marching
around the kitchen while the computer
sinks into an unruptured sleep.

POEMS:

SARAH J. STEPHENS

S. J. Stephens lives in a small town on the east side of Cincinnati with her tiny dog Samson. She is a Writing Instructor at the University of Cincinnati and Northern Kentucky University, and has been writing poetry for over twenty years. S. J. finds inspiration in the bravery of other female writers and the beautiful landscapes of Cincinnati.

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DRAWING:

JAKE BRINKMANN

Cincinnati based artist Jake Brinkmann is a creative adventurer seeking out his passion through the visual arts of multiple mediums including woodworking, charcoal, ink and duck tape. A recent Fine Arts Graduate from the University of Cincinnati, Jake currently creates with duck tape through sculpture and classic two-dimensional form.

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M. B.

Diminishing Brilliance

Hyacinth Macaw poached and caged
in the Salty Dog Café. Born a wild thing, captured.
Her predator's claws rip her underbelly clean
leaving a blue scattered ground of glory
where children steal in to find treasure lost in slurry.
She watches within the madness of captivity.

What humanity has bred this careless custody?
Who pride themselves on their civilized cage.
Patrons ignore the filth
of magnificence captured.
And in precious vestige of her pallid brilliance,
somehow their blood runs clean

of narrow minds unwashed
in their own captivity.
As they swim in the currency of her luminosity.
I claim this exotic bird caged,
and rage against its capture.
Bathed in the grime

of unconcerned immoral waste,
of a creature scrubbed
and netted.
In her depraved captivity
the depth of my compassion is caged
and I ache with her in solidarity of lost glory.

The diminishing of her brilliance
in blue feathers floating into the refuse
vicious disdain sells t-shirts to cage
the brilliant, lost, and unclean.
A new kind of feral in her captivity,
our depravity captured

in innocent souvenirs children captured,
a foreshadow of their harvest homage
that will be held in captivity
as they wade through the filth
and beg to be clean
and free instead of a gilded caged.

Finally, aware of humanity caged
in the choice of unclean
choices, we are lost in the filth.

The River Runs Too Deep

My spine is hidden in the flesh of an arched back
and I wear the impression of Cinderella and her feminist rant
like an evening gown.

My glass slippers pinch to pay the price of beauty
or the price of fitting into the rigid ideology
and when we've had enough
we're chased and shaped.

The essence diluted and dumped into the river
like leaves that float with the current.

Pulled spine and bones in a river
the framework identity intact
like blue that flows silk to the floor.

Complicit Not Consensual

I.

I don't know if you're a rapist,
But I know that I said no
Five times, the memory is vivid.

You took my virginity in a drunken brawl
Tearing me in half
I left your half in a pool of blood on your bed

When I returned to collect it
You'd thrown it out with other unwanted things
So I left the contents of my stomach behind instead

II.

Sixteen years
the smell of your apartment,

your breath,
the brutal weight of you,

the feeling of you inside me
blood that ran copper down the drain,

fresh like flowers after a solid rain.
Memories are ripped from me when others speak their rape.

III.

Sometimes, I'm angry

at the confusion rattled by memories when I think of you
at the guilt I feel in my complicity
at allowing you to touch me

at how I enjoyed your kisses and your hands on my body
at the innocence I willingly placed in your hands
at my need to not be raped.

I rage at the radio announcers who think Louis C.K.
should be allowed to earn his living doing
"what he loves and is good at"

"Should he have to pay for the rest of his life
for one mistake?"
Fuck Yes. He should pay.

IV.

I don't know if you know, you raped me
But I know you violated me
And changed my humanity

POEMS:

GARY WALTON

Gary Walton has published seven books of poetry, his latest *Waiting For Insanity Clause* (Finishing Line Press, 2017). His novel about Newport, Kentucky in its heyday as a gambling Mecca: *Prince of Sin City* was published by Finishing Line Press in 2009. Gary has been nominated for the Pushcart prize twice and in 2010, was voted Third Place: “Best Local Author” Best of Cincinnati 2010 issue in City Beat magazine.

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DRAWING:

KIM RAE TAYLOR

Kim Rae Taylor, a visual artist, designer, educator and Associate Professor of Fine Art at UC Clermont College, received her MFA from UC/DAAP, and BFA from the University of Texas at Austin. Additional studies include the University of Georgia in Cortona, Italy, and the Metáfora Center for Art Therapy Studies in Barcelona, Spain. Kim worked for a long time as a graphic artist, also in cartoon animation and product design. She has been an artist in residence at Taipei Artist Village in Taiwan, Red Gate in Beijing, and Cill Rialaig in County Kerry, Ireland. Her work draws from nature, language and gender. Kim’s current projects include researching women of the 20th century modernist avant-garde within gender and aging.

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American Gothic

Anonymous America

Likes to ride her bicycle
Through town, feeling her

Heart beating faster and

Her muscles stretch—
Some days, she watches

The people bent over picking

Up their dogs' poop—
A few, she knows, have high

Powered jobs, paying ridiculous

Salaries—others, both men and women
Spend hours at the gym or in

Barber shops and beauty boutiques

Pampering their skin, varnishing
Their nails, poofing their perms—

And, yet, here they are at the

Service of their dogs' butts;
Why do they do it? Is it love?

Duty? Fear of a summons? Mere habit?

But these are questions America
Has to abandon, like the ones

About compulsive lawn care:

Why does each little house need
A patch of green that must be shorn

And edged, peppered with poison

To kill all that is not deemed "lawn"?
Sometimes in the evening, she can

See, through the windows of the

Houses facing the street, families
Sitting down to dinner, stuffing

Slack mouths while peering at

Video screens and mobile phones—
No one listens because no one talks,

Their faces lit by the eerie blue aura

Of their devices; their minds
Are miles away, so they barely

Notice each other, much less
Miss Anonymous America as she
Takes in the moment, and cruises

Slowly by, watching the moon
Rise yellow and full just above
The sugar maples and red tiled roof tips.

Ode to a Sparkleswizzlecaster

Extra sparkle-licious
Became our leader—
P.T. Barnum has nothing on him.

We watch his antics like a kitten
Ogles a ball of tin foil.
His face is a clown's

Made up of white and orange
Mugging and winking,
Baggy suit, oversized red tie

(we expect it to rise on its
Own, powered by a squeeze
Ball hidden in a pocket in his pants—

Or water shoot out in a limp arc
From a frilly fake boutonnière).
A tawdry cliché at best—

His handshakes seem to shock
As if a buzzer is nestled in
The tiny palm of his right hand.

Like children who hate clowns,
We fear him—knowing the menace
That lies behind the paint and

Glib repartee—
Yet, his minions love him, as
Demons love their time in hell—

They are in such pain themselves,
The torture of others brings only
Smirks—like those of

Extra Sparkle-licious—

No joy—no hope—just spectacle.

On Holiday

“*There is no frigate...*” Emily Dickinson

On holiday, we have want to visit
Writers’ homes—famous artists—
Geniuses even—august personages—
With the hope of enveloping ourselves

Vicariously in the aura of their mantle—
Great lives to which we wish to aspire;
But sometimes, secretly of course, we
Find that we are disappointed

At these stark structures, these husks of
Of someone else’s cynosure; they are
Just houses after all, made of wood, brick or
Stone, fastened with iron nails, screws,

And brutish bolts—all have floors, ceilings,
Plumbing—dust—some have views from
Dirty windows, the ancient glass misshapen
With age, reminding us that though we can

See through them, they are still a slow moving
Fluid—not a symbol of time passing but a fact
Of same; sometimes we can sit at a desk like
The writer herself trying to remain focused on

The mighty task—Louisa May had to face the wall,
As did Emerson when he wrote that gargantuan
Nature—still, it all seems so ordinary, no more
Or less than our own with backyards full of flies

And squirrels, crabgrass and ditch weed—Here
The doors don’t even fit properly and the floors
Are warped—the walls are stained where the roof, then, ceiling leaked—
We forget that the important landscape is that

Immense vista between the ears, the only
Real estate that matters after all—
We ask at last, perhaps, isn’t it really better
When we have saved up enough time

Just to stay home and read a book?



cover art by JonPaul Smith

ISBN 978-1-7321135-3-4