

For A 2024 Better World



POEMS AND DRAWINGS ON
PEACE AND JUSTICE BY
Greater Cincinnati Artists



“For a Better World” 2024

Poems and Drawings
on
Peace and Justice

by
Greater Cincinnati Artists

Editor:
Saad Ghosn

"Peace is not the absence of violence, but the presence of justice."

Martin Luther King Jr.

"If you want peace, you don't talk to your friends. You talk to your enemies."

Desmond Tutu

"It is my conviction that killing under the cloak of war is nothing but an act of murder."

Albert Einstein

"The nationalist not only does not disapprove of atrocities committed by his own side, but he has a remarkable capacity for not even hearing about them."

George Orwell

"We will not learn how to live together in peace by killing each other's children."

Jimmy Carter

Foreword

We live in an increasing world of inequity, inequality and violence, where justice is daily trodden upon and flouted, human rights ignored and abused, discrimination and prejudice sanctified, poverty established as the norm; and where compassion and love are lacking, replaced by greed, selfishness, and the power of guns...

In these dire times we need more than ever the valiant voices of our poets and artists, to combat bigotry, point to prevailing ugliness, oppose violence and oppression, stand up for peace based on real justice, for equality and acceptance; to offer an alternative for a better world, and rally behind them as many other voices as possible.

In this 21st edition of "For a Better World," eighty local poets used their poems just to do that. They addressed the many issues our world increasingly faces: violence and war, racial and gender discrimination, social and economic disparity, abuse of human rights, destruction of the environment, to name only a few. They used their voice and their words to reflect on their own life, on our societal problems, on our values, on what is really at stake for being human. Twenty two of them also addressed the issue of homelessness and of hunger in the world.

These poets were joined by thirty six visual artists who used their artistic power to also contribute, in their own way, to peace and social justice; and thus, all in unison, to advocate for a better world.

The included poets and visual artists fight for everyone's rights, for the discriminated against, the oppressed, the weak and the poor; they combat darkness, violence and evil; and they spread compassion, love, and acceptance. They all speak for a world after their heart and values; a beautiful and equal world of hope, fraternity and unity; a rich and diverse world where peace is based on truth, justice, and kindness, and on the empowering and unique contribution of every individual.

Of all ages and backgrounds, these poets and artists use their art as their voice to 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. With their lucid song, they 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 Ellen Austin-Li, Jerry Judge, and Kathy Wade, 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, editor and organizer

May 2024

“For a Better World” 2024

Poet	Poems/Visual Artist	Page		
			Michael Burnham	Drawing by Claire Flath
			Penelope Epple	Hungry for Some Answers 35-40
				As an American Trans Person I Cannot Let You Ignore the Palestinians, Sudanese, Congolese, etc.... 35-37
				Drawing by Lane A. Trevor
Lauri Ann Aultman	Thank you for your service, Sir. 1-3			
	War Games 3 5		Ella Cather-Davis	A Dark Tale 41-43
	Let's Talk About It 5			Bear 44
Padma Chebrolu	A Song for Unity 1-4			Nobody 45
	Drawing by Kai Miller		Linda Kleinschmidt	Put Your Foot Down 41-43
			Anisha Kanakia Sanghani	Dark Place 41-43
				Drawing by Soren Melbye
Ellen Austin-Li	Assay on Religion 7-9			
	Stop Light 11		Laurel Chambers	Not Hungry 47-49
Brian J. Shircliff	When Ecstasy Jumped Into the Pool 7-10		Julia Lankisch	Issue Twenty Two 47-50
	Drawing by Farron Allen		Karen Weber	NOW 47-49
				Drawing by Clare Dunn
Carol Barrett	Chocolate Soda 13-15			
	Skies Over Kyiv 16		Padma Chebrolu	1-4
	Origins 17-18			
James George	Feeling Hungry 13-16		Vickie Cimprich	Collateral Vignettes 51-54
	Drawing by Kurt Nicaise		Jo Anne Moser Gibbons	Even the Doves Have Flown 51-53
				Peacework 54
				Drawing by Christine Kuhr
T. Bartlett	For Zazu Nova 19-21			
	Love, Hope, and Peace 22		Ashlie Cox	Peace 55-57
Barbara Grimsley	Queens 19-21		Terry Petersen	After the Bomb Blast 55-57
LaWren Watson	Dangling in the Crosshairs 19-21			An Unfinished Dance 57
	Drawing by Abril Huerta			Peace at Home 58
				Drawing by Hannah Jane Martin
Diana Becket	First Night in Juvenile Detention 23-25			
	He's Released 25		Angela Derrick	For Zack 59-61
	Food Insecurity 26		Preston Frasch	Hope in the City 59-61
Wesley Duren	Resolution 23-26			Song for the Dead 62
	Drawing by Bill Olsen		Mark Sean Orr	Paint the Walls 59-62
				Drawing by Billy Simms
Nancy Susanna Breen	The Lucky Ones 27-29			
	Fine Dining 29		Wesley Duren	23-26
	A Lesson in Cleanliness 29		Penelope Epple	35-37
Paul Shortt	Love – Forever 27-30			
	Love – Two Dads' Advice 30		Gregory Flannery	Woody Guthrie Died at the Border Crossing 63-65
	Drawing by Cedric Michael Cox		Alan Jozwiak	Migrant Wall 63-66
Kristina Nichole Brodbeck	33 31-34			Drawing by Holland Davidson
Diane Germaine	42 Seconds 31-33			
Susan Scardina	Slavery Secrets or Revisionist History 31-34			
	Whose War 2003 34			

Don Fleming	When Passions Stirred	67-69	Michael Henson	Charles Koch	101-103
Henry Spottswood	Of Peace and Justice	67-70		The Dream Children of	
Chuck Stringer	Song for the Madness	67-69		Addison Mitchell McConnell III	104-105
	Origins	70		Steve Bannon	105
	vladimir	71	Larry Simpson	Heaven on Earth	101-103
	Drawing by Tina Tamaro			Drawing by Nick Felaris	
Preston Frasch		59-62	Sue Neufarth Howard	There Is Joy in the World	107-109
				Give Hope a Life	109
Steve Frey	Alone On a Bench	73-75	Carole Stokes-Brewer	I Hunger	107-110
	Remove the Plank and See	77	Noel Zeiser	Trying Out Justice	107-109
Deanna Hurtubise	A Hungry World	73-76		Drawing by Amy Bogard	
Jerold London	Need a Chance	73-77	Deanna Hurtubise		73-76
	Drawing by Michael Romanos				
Gary Gaffney	War	79-81	Nancy K. Jentsch	In Praise of Bridge Painters	111-113
Maurice Mattei	Lucre	79-81		Inequation	113
	Drawing by Anisha Kanakia Sanghani		Joe Wagner	Napoleon	111-113
				Bird's Egg	114
James George		13-16		Drawing by Patrice Trauth	
Diane Germaine		31-33	Heidi Joffe	Birdtalk with Crocodile Tears	115-117
			Carol Marino	Catastrophic Failure	115-118
Jo Anne Moser Gibbons		51-54		Drawing by Kelly Murray Frigard	
Susan F. Glassmeyer	How To Kill Time	83-85	Gifted Johnson-Wilkinson		87-89
Mary-Jane Newborn	SNAP Judgment	83-85			
	Dear Amoral Cooking Show	85	Alan Jozwiak		63-66
	Transgressions	86			
	Drawing by Anna-Grace Tracy		Jerry Judge	Trumplless	119-121
Elena Estella Green	The Pen and the Poem (an Ars Poetica)	87-89	Gary Walton	A Fable for the Trump Years	119-122
Sharon Louallen	Mother Earth	87-90		Hope and Justice in New Jersey	123
Gifted Johnson-Wilkinson	Tied the Moon	87-89		Hunger	124
	Drawing by Steve Groh			Drawing by Tom Lohre	
Barbara Grimsley		19-21	Blanche Saffron Kabengele	Beat Red Black White and Blue:	
				A Poetic Dialogue	125-127
Nikki B. Groen	No Poetic Words	91-94		wake up	130
Brandy Lockaby	That Hug	91-95	MoPoetry Phillips	Reparations	125-129
	Drawing by Zoë Lynn			Drawing by Carol Mackey Andrulevich	
Richard Hague	Why They Starved	97-99	Mirsada Kadiric	I Remember	131-133
Michael J Olson	It Didn't Matter Their Fangs	97-99	James Palmarini	Uvalde	131-133
	The Scariest Show in Town	100		Ukraine Interview Overheard	134
	The Equation Solved at the End of the World	100		What We See What We Are	134
	Drawing by James Oberschlake			Drawing by Fred Daniell	
			Linda Kleinschmidt		41-43

Marilyn Krebs	I Don't Want to Sing Your Songs of War	135-137	Julie Rehkamp	Inconveniences	153-155
Alissa Sammarco	The Crows	135-138		The Pretty City	157-158
	The Fate of Lot's Wife	138	Suzanne Smith	Both Disease and Cure	153-156
	Drawing by Gary Eith			Drawing by Nate Waspe	
Julia Lankisch		47-50	J.V. Sadler		149-151
Rebecca Suter Lindsay	Wasteland	130-141	Alissa Sammarco		135-138
	The Windmills of La Mancha	143			
Katie Nichols	Leftovers	139-142	Anisha Kanakia Sanghani		41-43
	Drawing by Chrissy Collopy				
Brandy Lockaby		91-95	Sam Sauer	In the Forest	159-161
				Not Ever, Not Yet	162
Jerold London		73-77	Ayana Sloan	Hunger, a Thief or a Neighbor	159-162
			Michael Whitney	Bite	159-161
Sharon Louallen		87-90		Drawing by Carrie Barnett	
Carol Marino		115-118	Susan Scardina		31-34
Maurice Mattei		79-81	Brian J. Shircliff		7-10
John Patrick Michael	Hypothermia	145-147	Paul Shortt		27-30
	Any Street	147	Larry Simpson		101-103
Mike Wilson	The Speciesism Card, a Dream Poem	145-147	Ayana Sloan		159-162
	The First Circle, a Dream Poem	148	Suzanne Smith		153-156
	What Republicans Mean When They Say				
	There's No Clear Objective in Ukraine	148	Henry Spottswood		67-70
	Drawing by Davis Hampton				
David Moody	Day 16	149-151	Sherry Cook Stanforth	Hangry	163-165
	I Can't Breathe	152		Starling Day	166
J.V. Sadler	Palestine on My Mind	149-151	Kathy Wade	Leftover Soup	163-166
	What Am I Gonna Say to the Babies?	151		Drawing by Sarah Hynfield	
	Drawing by Jeff Casto				
Mary-Jane Newborn		83-86	Carole Stokes-Brewer		107-110
			Chuck Stringer		67-71
Katie Nichols		139-142	Kathy Wade		163-166
Michael J Olson		97-100	Joe Wagner		111-114
Mark Sean Orr		59-62	Gary Walton		119-124
			LaWren Watson		19-21
James Palmarini		131-134	Karen Weber		47-49
Terry Petersen		55-58	Michael Whitney		159-161
MoPoetry Phillips		125-129	Mike Wilson		145-148
			Noel Zeiser		107-109

POEMS:

LAURI ANN AULTMAN

Since 2006, Lauri Ann Aultman has been a mixed media Artist Activist with SOS ART. This is her 4th year in *For A Better World*. In 2021 and 2023, her poetry was used for Global Water Dances (Cincinnati). Lauri Ann works part-time at the Kennedy Heights Arts Center. She is also writing children books.

Contact: lapeaceart@gmail.com

PADMA CHEBROLU

Padma Chebrolu is a multi-artist and recipient of the Ohio Arts Council's Heritage Arts Fellowship for lifetime achievement. She is Founder and artistic director of Cultural Centre of India based in Cincinnati. Her dance films based on the Ohio River received international film festival awards. Padma serves on the advisory board of OhioDance and Ohio Alliance for Arts Education.

Contact: padma@culturalcentreofindia.com; culturalcenterofindia.com

DRAWING:

KAI MILLER

Kai Miller is a cartoonist and animator based in Cincinnati, OH. She currently attends the Art Academy of Cincinnati, majoring in animation. While her art varies wildly in both tone and medium, Kai's passion has always been storytelling, and she will continue pursuing that passion in school and beyond.

Contact: foureyedkai03@gmail.com



Thank You for Your Service, Sir.

(by *Lauri Ann Aultman*)

Thank you for your service, Sir.
Sorry if my peace signs upset you.
I heard you say they remind you of the protesters when you came back from Vietnam.
I do not mean to remind you of the horrors of war and the hurt of your "unwelcome home."

But my peace signs are trying to signify love for all.
I don't want innocents dying on either side of any conflict.
I don't want people losing life or limb over land and resources that should be shared.
I don't want people hating other people because of where they come from or the color of their skin.

I know I am naive, but I still hope that a little peace sign and a lot of love can heal the world.
Perhaps I have the wrong peace sign?
Maybe praying hands or a dove would seem more peaceful to more people? Maybe a heart symbol? What would make you think and feel peace, sir?

Again, thank you for your service, Sir.

A Song for Unity

(by *Padma Chebrolu*)

In the heart of the world, where the sun meets the sky,
Lies the echo of justice, where dreams learn to fly.
A tapestry woven with threads of peace and might,
Inclusiveness thrives, casting darkness to light.

Hunger, a whisper amidst lands that ache,
Echoes of empty stomachs, lives at stake.
Yet, in this chorus, a call to unite,
To weave a realm where all souls alight.

In the tapestry's embrace, justice reigns fair,
Eyes open wide to the burdens we bear.
Each voice a verse, every soul a song,
Peace finds its rhythm, righting what's wrong.

In fields where seeds meet the cradle of earth,
Respect to soil, a sacred rebirth.
Hands that labor, weathered and true,
Tend to the land, where dreams anew brew.

Water, the essence of life's flowing grace,
A hymn sung by rivers, in every embrace.
Respecting its dance, its tranquil expanse,
A pledge to preserve, enhance and advance.

Spirituality's essence, a universal thread,
Weaves through beliefs, in the paths we tread.
An embrace of cultures, indigenous lore,
Wisdom that echoes from ages of yore.

Let's forge a realm where justice's hand,
Fulfills the promise in every land.
Where hunger surrenders to compassion's might,
And peace reigns supreme, banishing night.

In the circle of unity, all souls entwine,
No room for exclusion in this design.
For each heart, a place at the table of plenty,
Inclusiveness reigns, a beacon so gently.

The hunger we battle, a foe so stark,
Calls for unity, a light in the dark.
Not just for stomachs, but spirits too,
Nourished by justice, by peace, by what's true.

Let's honor the wisdom of indigenous lore,
Their legacy, a treasure to explore.
Their harmony with earth, a timeless guide,
Teaching respect, walking side by side.

In this tapestry woven, let's take our place,
Hands clasped together, every creed, every race.
For a planet reborn, with compassion anew,
Justice, peace, inclusiveness true.

So let the seeds of change find fertile ground,
Where respect for all, in hearts, is found.
Let water's flow cleanse the wounds we've sown,
As unity's embrace becomes our home.

May the soil beneath us, a cradle so vast,
Bear fruits of harmony that eternally last.
And may justice, peace, and inclusiveness reign,
A symphony of hope, dispelling pain.

In this realm we sculpt, with reverence and care,
A legacy grand for the world to share.
For hunger to wane, and spirits to soar,
A planet transformed, forevermore.

War Games 3

(by *Lauri Ann Aultman*)

Please stop waving some shiny pawn to distract us from what is really going on.

You talk about the "big game" on TV, while you are gaming us with all your schemes.
You encourage us to look away while people are dying in Ukraine and Gaza.
Meanwhile, US troops have been dispatched to Africa and drones are doing serious damage in the Middle East.

We can't stop your game.
It goes on without our permission, but yet, you use our money and the lives of our loved ones .
Perhaps if your son or daughter was on the front line, you would think harder before sending someone else to die.

I do not know how to stop your war games, but I do know how to plant seeds.
So we will plant seeds of love here and hope that you stop sowing hate.

Let's Talk About It

(by *Lauri Ann Aultman*)

"There's been an accident,"
Those words still ring in my mind, 8 years later.
But it wasn't an accident. It was a tragedy.

A tragedy that happens every day right now.
Why won't we say the words?!?
I can tell when it happened again.
There is ambiguity in the obituary,
because no one wants to talk about it.
And yet because we don't talk about it,
it happens more and more these days.

No, it is not a copycat.
No, we are not telling people how to do it.
No, people are not more likely to do it if you talk about it.

Yes, it is a cry for help.
Yes, it is a national health emergency.
Yes, it is a problem that we need to address and talk about...

SUICIDE, Death by suicide.
Please talk about it..
Talk about it so that Liam's suicide,
Mike's suicide, Derek's suicide, Jessica's suicide and so many others',
will help us stop another SUICIDE.

POEMS:

ELLEN AUSTIN-LI

Ellen Austin-Li's poetry appears in *Artemis*, *Thimble Literary*, *The Maine Review*, *Salamander*, *SWWIM*, & many other places. Finishing Line Press published her chapbooks *Firefly* and *Lockdown: Scenes From Early in the Pandemic*.

Ellen holds an MFA in Poetry from the Solstice Program. She lives in Clifton, where she hosts "Poetry Night at Sitwell's."

Contact: ellenaustinli.me

BRIAN J SHIRCLIFF

Brian J. Shircliff is the author/translator of *The Naked Path of Prophet* series of biblical translations revealing the clever poetry-rap that most Bible translations ignore or even cover over. Director of VITALITY Cincinnati's donation-based holistic self-care programs and avid meditation/movement sharer, Brian writes for vitalitybuzz.org.

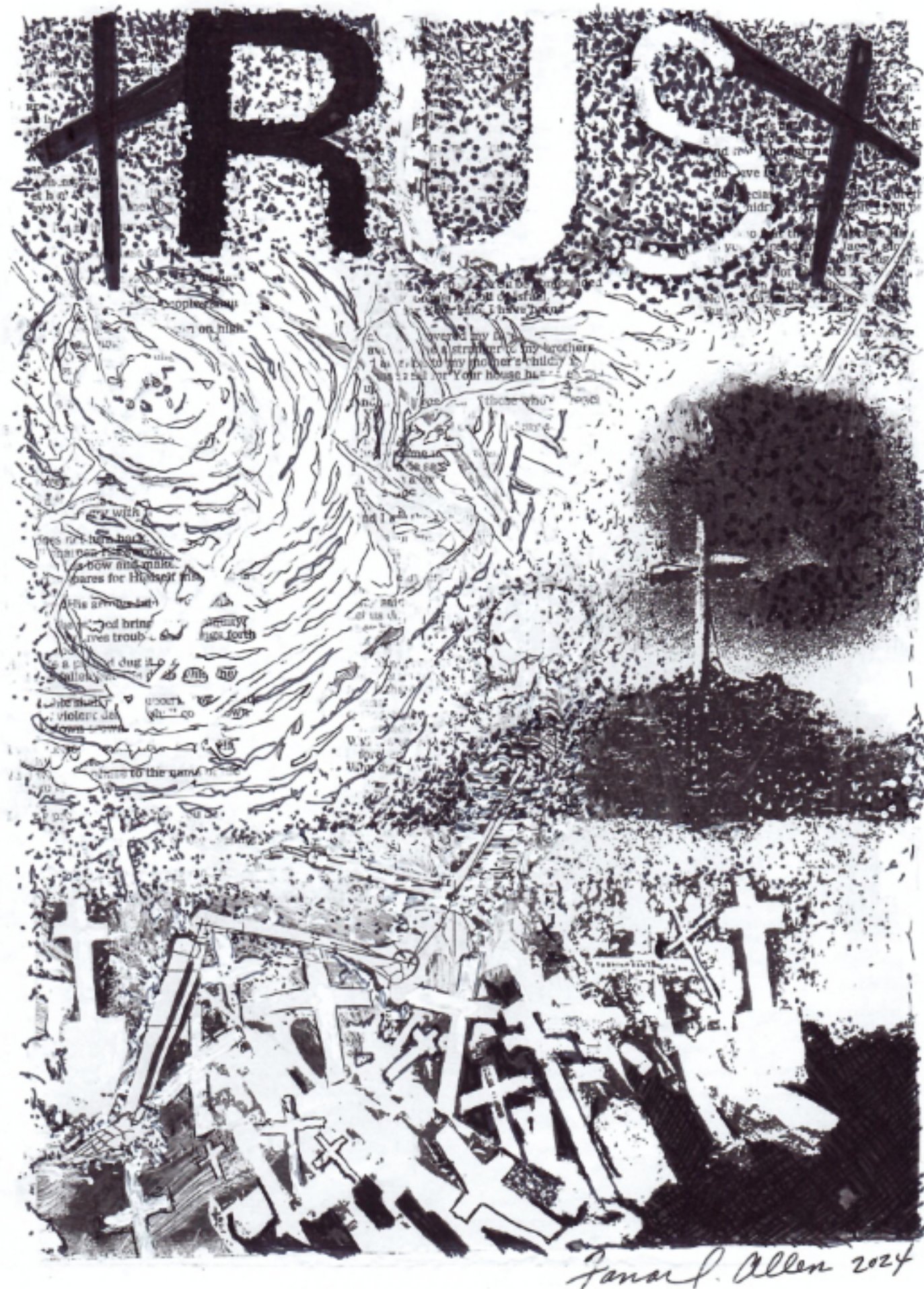
Contact: brianshircliff@vitalitycincinnati.org

DRAWING:

FARRON ALLEN

Farron Allen ran and taught the Sculpture Foundry class at the University of Cincinnati for 32 years. Currently running his business, making art, and writing, life continues to challenge and fulfill him.

Contact: farronallen123@gmail.com



Janet Allen 2024

Assay on Religion

(by *Ellen Austin-Li*)

Pages containing "truths"
deemed unassailable by social groups
most often linked by common

land. One
god or many, one path
to an afterlife, or many

levels of incarnation. Humans
channeling the otherworldly, or
voices from the past

directing our thoughts, our actions.
Treatise on how to live, when
to speak, when to kneel, when to eat,

when to kill. Walls impenetrable
and electrified, tunnels dark and
labyrinthine, side by side but never

coexisting. Incense smoke & bombs.
Altars and confessionals, golden
ceremonies and vestments, pilgrimages

and houses of worship. Hosannas, psalms,
and oms. Poppy fields that yield carmine
blooms and seeds that sink the masses.

When Ecstasy Jumped Into the Pool

(by *Brian J. Shircliff*)

He certainly dressed the part
swim cap, goggles
getting all ready there on the deck while
the rest of us swam our laps
back and forth and back
in our neat little lanes

he must've grabbed a noodle
you know one of those kiddie things
to help stay afloat
or maybe he brought it

at least as much as we would later put together
from the lifeguard's story long afterwards
the details we missed in our dutifulness to the
sergeants inside us
cajoling those laps for health or beauty or
someone else's love or whatever

and then he jumped into the water
noodle in hand
and howled
laughter
from the deeps somewhere
on and on and on
every which way he flailed,
the lane lines no longer meaning much of anything

we all stopped
looked
these very different waves coming at us

unsure what to make of the guy
there
jumping up and down in the far deeper end
there
continuing his laughter
there
before he began swimming on his back, the
noodle under him
his arms free to twirl and smack
there

and toward us
as we resumed our dutiful laps around him
in any lane he wasn't in for awhile

and he continued his monologue
laughter
pointing at someone a few lanes over
you splashed me
his accusation
his finger pointing out the accused
before he howled again
and swam toward them to swell his joke
over and sometimes under the lane lines
when he'd don his goggles
look beneath the surfaces
to find a fellow swimmer

I guess he should've been embarrassed
his lack of suit and all
all of his decorum floating out there in the breeze and water
we'd all been taught that he should've been embarrassed

he wasn't

but we were
all of us taking turns with our goggles and seeing
him there, all of him, judging him in that same water
in which we too were swimming
with our very thinly disguised costumes
the shapes of ourselves not a whole lot different from the interrupter

laugh with him or get angry at him or ignore him or join him
we had our choices
in that pool
where Ecstasy jumped in
all hungry for life like the naked prophets before him — those biblical humans who carried out
a playful peace — some of whom were drowned for it — these ecstasies* who expose(d) the
foolishness and whimsy of us all

**the original Hebrew word for 'prophet' in the Bible is 'ecstatic' — those who knew the ecstasy
of YAHWEH...the wind, the breath, the atmosphere that pervades us all and sustains us all*

Stop Light

(by *Ellen Austin-Li*)

The rusted maroon pickup sidles alongside the traffic island, idles at the red light, its throaty
muffler rumbling, the tailpipe fixed with a wire coat hanger. The engine trembles next to a
man, gray-haired with the patchy pink and white complexion of a drinker, dressed in dirty
green army garb. He sits in a wheelchair in the burned-out grass, cigarette in hand, holding a
makeshift cardboard sign that spells: *Homeless Vet, Please Help*. Burned-out. Fingerless
glove raking the air.

A black arm extends out of the dusty truck, the driver's side window half down, and proffers
some cash to the unhoused man, who at once stands and walks towards the truck's cab,
his face lit up by a brilliant smile. He takes the offered hand.

The red light changes. The truck reverberates away.

POEMS:

CAROL BARRETT

Carol Barrett has published three volumes of poetry, most recently *Reading Wind*, a winner in a chapbook contest sponsored by The Poetry Box. She also has a book of creative nonfiction *Pansies*. Carol has supervised doctoral students at Union Institute & University in Cincinnati, Ohio for 43 years. An NEA Fellow in Poetry, she has placed poems in venues in seven countries.

Contact: cbarrett@saybrook.edu

JAMES GEORGE

James George is the author of over twenty books and 3,000 published poems. He is retired as a logistics consultant to the US Department of Defense. James is a watercolorist and illustrates many of his books. He and his artist/printmaker wife, Maureen live in Montgomery, Ohio.

Contact: jagpr.net@gmail.com

DRAWING:

KURT NICAISE

Kurt Nicaise is a visual artist and educator living in Covington, KY. He has been active in the schools and communities throughout the Cincinnati area over the last 30 years. In recent years, he has been a teacher at Saint Ursula Academy and professor at Cincinnati State College. Kurt specializes in projects of community expression, community service learning, and practices of mindfulness through art.

Contact: knicaise@gmail.com



Chocolate Soda*

(by *Carol Barrett*)

What's for supper? Ten to feed. We took bets on the next meal: tuna noodle casserole. Crockpot hamburger with corn, cheese and tortilla chips. Open-faced sandwiches, more pickles and radishes than meat. Sometimes at wit's end, my mother would plop a scoop of ice cream into a glass of coke, bobbing while the cream sizzled, squirting a sweet bit on my face. She drizzled Hershey's syrup on top, dark as molasses. A quick stir, and heaven was at hand.

That treat could keep you a long time --*until hell freezes over*, my Dad would say. No matter how much snow the winter carried in pregnant clouds, the lake near us never froze, except at the edges, waves lapping the ice whenever the wind tried for a homerun.

With a chocolate soda, you could forget what *hungry* was. You could slurp the last few swallows of that potion through a straw, and the gurgling would convince even my Scottish grandmother that sleep would come easy. Nothing more one needed to do. Just wash the glass and spoon, set them on a towel to dry. My mother's magic, quelling all bets.

*appeared previously in *The Packington Review*

Feeling Hungry

(by *James George*)

A child may not know what makes the stomach ache, or feeling so weak and tired that it is impossible to think or to be able to do anything except feel bad.

A hungry mother is unable to produce milk for her baby, as she, too, suffers from malnutrition, and the father without work being disabled because he is starving.

The root of hunger is poverty, and the world knows and feels it throughout as humanity lives in crowded places where resources will not sustain them.

Fossil fuels dry up, and the deserts expand while the oceans rise, and people living on the water's edge drown in flood and famine.

Islands of people stranded or displaced, divorced from opportunity, denied freedom of movement, hungry for a good life and equal opportunity to apply their innate abilities.

Feed the lost children and their parents, stuck in poverty and suffering from mental and physical pain, longing for help from who can provide it.

Skies Over Kyiv

(by *Carol Barrett*)

for Gail Halvorsen, who dropped sweets to children during the Berlin airlift. He died a week before the war in Ukraine began.

We need the Candy Bomber now. Small parcels of chiclets and chocolates tied up in mini-parachutes offering a dollop of hope for children wondering

if the next whistling missile is coming for them. My student in Ukraine evacuated the day before Putin's war began. I cannot reach Yulyia, children

in her lap. Reporters film train stations, thousands trying to get out, lives jammed into a single suitcase. My colleague from Russia has the same name as Yulyia

but spelled differently. I studied Russian in high school, know multiple spellings are possible, this language with letters English does not have. When I was a child

my father lined a basement room with lead protection from Russian fallout. I lived in a Russian house in college, a way to prepare for war. But the war never came

until now. The skies above my home lie dark except for pillowed stars. Nothing falls. No flares, sparks, no flumes of smoke. Even the incessant snow has moved on,

clouds bored with winter. I look up, imagine the skies Yulyia's children watch. Terror sweats. It sticks like pine pitch, like spilled oil on a duck's wings.

No moon can offer rest, no *halvah* sweeten sleep.

Origins

(by *Carol Barrett*)

Morning chore: feed the chickens and collect the eggs, a sleepy bird still plump on the roost in the old barn, some pecking the tray of crushed oyster shells. Chattering, they led with their heads, pronged feet tamping the sawdust. Back in the kitchen, my father pulled his eggs joke: F-U-N-E-X? (Have you any eggs?) The answer: S, V-F-X. (Yes, we have eggs.) Cleaning the coop: after-school chore, so as not to soil my plaid skirt and orlon sweater, before the run for the bus, braids flapping, notebooks ruffling in the rain.

I assumed everybody had chickens for eggs, closets with boxes of clothes passed down from one kid to the next. Turns out, we did a lot of things differently. But eggs, they're a staple, not just for the ten of us. The keepers of numbers say Americans eat 278 eggs a year, even if not everyone has a scalloped platter for deviled eggs, yolks pureed with Miracle Whip, mother's wrist dotting them with paprika.

My doctor advised me to cut back on eggs, on account of cholesterol. But the shredded wheat I substituted raised my blood sugar, so he said, *go back to eggs*. I did cut down, but still can't eat breakfast without remembering my fluffy friends of old. My mother couldn't pat butter on her corn, without recalling butter rationing in the war. Taste follows us like a puppy, eager on the path.

Years ago I had an Iranian friend who put eggs in every tabled dish, as well those served on the carpet for chums too numerous for chairs. Eggs got mixed into rice, soup, any concoction they could muster. Special occasions, they indulged in ground beef. *With eggs*. Eggs sustained their studies, celebrated soccer wins, aided nightly debates. They were crumbled onto salads, stirred into shakes, glazed over beans. Eggs were a cheap protein habit from their native Persia, where baked lamb sprinkled with tart *somah* was king, but hard to come by.

Wonder how they're eating now, with a dozen eggs pushing five bucks. The avian flu has taken down 44 million hens. Think of the multitudes unable to scabble in yards where children name their favorites – *Mischief, Princess, Louisa*. The pandemic has shot up the cost of corn, barley, oats –

regular chicken fare. I try to forego my favorite breakfast for granola on yogurt, canned peaches with cottage cheese, or peanut butter toast with bananas, cheaper than honey.

But I do miss my eggs. This quandary of the pocketbook can't stamp out the morning ritual of long ago, happy squawkers starting the day with me, red crowns and cheeks jiggling. Gleaming produce rolled along slanted wooden chutes. I loved the fresh ones warm in my hand, wire basket slung over my arm, grateful for bounty. Memory feathers me, even when eggs cannot.

POEMS:

T. BARTLETT

T. Bartlett (she/her) is a photographer and writer who's had poetry published in *Anthropocene: Poetry about Environment; For a Better World* (2020, 2021, 2022); Kentucky State Poetry Society's *Pegasus*; and *The Voices Project*.

Contact: info@tanyabartlett.com

BARBARA GRIMSLEY

Barbara Grimsley is a local poet. She works as a Senior Communications Manager for Shattles Communications, a Cincinnati-based full-service marketing communications agency. She lives with her husband and two daughters, a constant inspiration and source of hope for a better world.

Contact: barbara_e_grimsley@yahoo.com

LAWREN WATSON

As a member of the trans community, LaWren Watson facilitates support group meetings for transgender folx. She is a member of the Human Rights Campaign in Cincinnati. In a previous career, she owned a pottery and clay art business for 20 years, receiving the Kentucky Arts Council's Artist Emeritus Award.

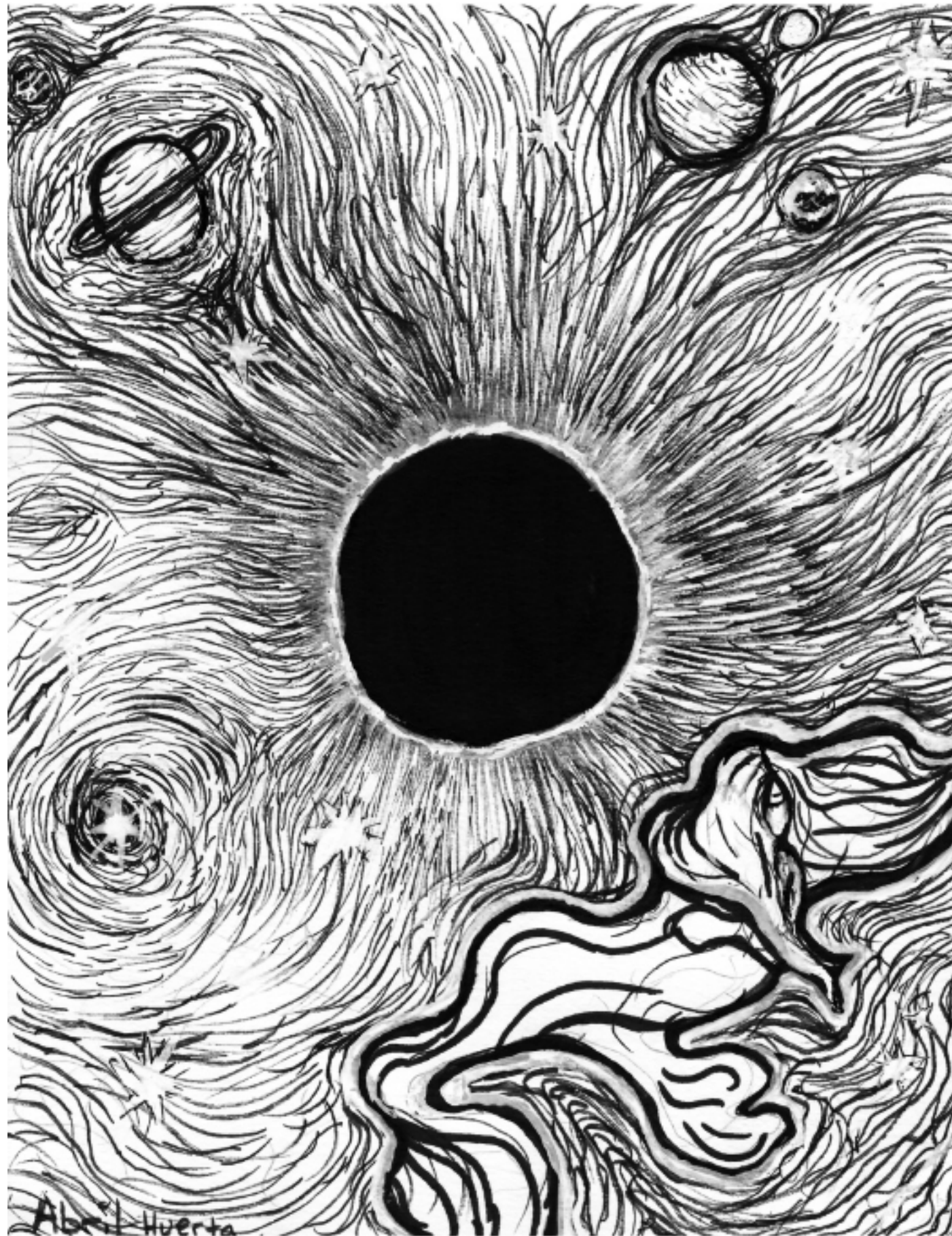
Contact: lawren@pathwayconsult.com; pathwayconsult.com

DRAWING:

ABRIL HUERTA

Abril Huerta, a Cincinnati based artist, has worked with digital art, mixed media, and printmaking. She is a graduate of the Art Academy of Cincinnati in 2020 and very involved in local Hispanic and LGBTQ+ activism. She also works for Lane Libraries and has established their Hispanic Heritage Festival & Teen Pride Club.

Contact: gorecat24@gmail.com; gorecatillustrations.com



For Zazu Nova

(by *T. Bartlett*)

She is molecules of water and night.
She is made of colors, lines, and light.
She is hope. She is profound love.
She is radically subversive.

She is the rise, and she is the fall.
She is a star on the stone wall.

She is a rebel. She is liberation.
She is the orbit of revelation.
She is a queen. She is a mystery.
She is a hero in a storied history.

She is the rise, and she is the fall.
She is a star on the stone wall.

Dangling in the Crosshairs

(by *LaWren Watson*)

A cloud of unfounded vindictiveness
blots out the sun's dancing rays
Total - as a solar eclipse,
Pitching me into suffocating darkness.
The birds of joy and love go silent
in this temporary downcast enmity.
With the newness of this targeted attack,
my heart grows sluggish,
clinging to the cliff's edge of hope
that seems too slippery
in the canyon of hate.
Helpless,
vulnerable to the whims, worries, and
 aspirations
of the select few,
dangling my fate before my eyes
like stars of yin and yang.

Note: poem written in response to the anti-trans "Rules" that Mike DeWine proposed after he vetoed HB68

Queens

(by *Barbara Grimsley*)

***You are a queen
and queens respect other queens***

Your kingdom may look different.
You may rule in your own way—
different than mine
different from yours
but still respect it.

Don't buy into the negativity—
the bullies on the inside and the out
who push and yell
and take up space in your mind
that you are not the valuable
special person that you are.

***You are a queen
and queens respect other queens***

Wear your crown
even if only on the inside.
Let it shine
and be patient.

All queens are on a journey.
Some easier than others.
Their issues are not your issues
necessarily,
but you have to support one another
because without that
our kingdoms can fall
grow dust
and feel alone.

***You are a queen
and queens respect other queens***

Love, Hope, and Peace

(by *T. Bartlett*)

Such a frail thing—Love—
under heavy hearts beating, breaking, and bleeding
as if Love itself is a being.

Such a courageous thing—Hope—
upon wishful hearts desiring, designing, and dreaming
as if Hope itself is the gleaming.

Such a tender thing—Peace—
within hearts restoring, recovering, and repairing
as if Peace itself is a clearing.

POEMS:

DIANA BECKET

Diana Becket began to write poems when she retired from teaching composition courses at the University of Cincinnati. Her poems have been published in the anthology, *I Thought I Heard a Cardinal Sing*, *Muddy River Poetry Review*, *Moss Puppy Magazine*, and *The Cape Rock*.

Contact: dianabecket@gmail.com

WESLEY DUREN

Wesley Duren, a passionate outdoorsman and horticulturist, is the co-owner with his beloved wife Diantha Duren, of Marvin's Organic Gardens, an ecological landscape business. Wesley is currently working on publishing his first book of poetry for global inspiration, motivation, conversation and transformation.

Contact: wes@marvinsorganicgardens.com

DRAWING:

BILL OLSEN

Bill Olsen lives in the Cincinnati metro area and works at the Jessamine Studio in Camp Washington.

Contact: billbert2@me.com



BA Olson '04

First Night in Juvenile Detention

(by *Diana Becket*)

*“Special report: Ohio’s juvenile detention system struggles with violence, neglect,”
Cincinnati Enquirer, 11/15/2023.*

The room where they take her is cold,
bars seal the door to a corridor
lit by brutal ceiling lights, she doesn’t know
where she is—doesn’t understand
why they arrested her.

She was in a fight at school, accused,
cornered, she tells them she did nothing
wrong,
they say she was aggressive,
she’s handcuffed, told to contact a guardian,
calls her caseworker and adopted parents—
hears nothing back.

She hasn’t eaten since midday, a fight breaks
out in a nearby cell, angry shouts echo
through the metal ducts,
the cries of people
in pain.

Alone, no one around to talk,
she waits for people
to explain.

Resolution

(by *Wesley Duren*)

When issues don’t get dealt with decisively,
they compound and create words used divisively.

Problems arise that need to be talked through,
when left unresolved tend to fester and accrue.

It’s not easy facing challenges and seeing our faults,
sometimes resolution feels more like an assault.

Though it might seem less daunting to run and hide,
the real medicine comes when we face our own pride.

He’s Released

(by *Diana Becket*)

from the Juvenile Detention Center
onto a bus into town, used to isolated
screams
echoing from adjacent cells, freeway traffic
barrels against the windows
a nonstop barrage
in his ears.

He sleeps at the homeless shelter
but has to leave each morning,
walks streets carrying his belongings,
averts his eyes from walkers stalking
doorway sleep space, holds
his breath against
the bite of trucks’
diesel fumes,

catches shadow relief from sidewalk walls
and walks in their shade—finds
passage through the city.

Facing eye to eye and working through adversities,
requires the courage and strength of Hercules.

Humility is an essential ingredient towards reconciliation,
but there's no need to fear confrontation and humiliation.

We all fall short and in relationships miss the mark,
we all struggle finding the light through the dark.

Uniting in love and carefully listening is equally crucial,
hearing what the other is saying can be very useful.

Peacemaking is an art form that heals all involved,
when we join earnestly, there's no problem we can't solve!

We are sacred reflectors, heart connectors, negativity deflectors,
life coach directors, soul perfecters, misalignment detectors

and each other's protectors as we allow ourselves to be fully seen and vulnerable.
This duty of holding sacred mirrors for one another is both loving and honorable.

Food Insecurity

(by Diana Becket)

drags his eyes
from words dancing
on pages, drives his attention
from computer screens,
drowns instructors' voices
in underwater currents,
pushes his stomach
to an independent
life of its own:

clenched into defense
mode, it marshals forces
to a hard canon ball,
that threatens his body
cowering under
demands
for food.

POEMS:

NANCY SUSANNA BREEN

Nancy Susanna Breen is a retired editor who lives and writes in Loveland, OH.
Her poetry has appeared in a number of publications and anthologies, and she
has published four chapbooks.

Contact: nudgery54@gmail.com

PAUL SHORTT

Paul Shortt, known as a stage designer and UC-CCM professor, also writes short
fiction, plays and poetry. He and wife Marcia, a graphic designer and
watercolorist, divide their time between their two daughters, three grandkids and
family in Cincinnati and the Monterey Peninsula, Marcia's origin.

Contact: paulshorttdesign.com

DRAWING:

CEDRIC MICHAEL COX

Cedric Michael Cox is best known for his paintings and drawings that merge
surrealism and representational abstraction. He received his BFA in Painting from
UC/DAAP, in 1999 and while a student, he was awarded a fellowship to study at
the Glasgow School of Art in Scotland. Cedric's work ranges from cubist-inspired
geometric compositions to cityscapes, landscapes, and curvilinear floral-like
forms. He has exhibited his work regionally and nationally.

Contact: cedricmcox@yahoo.com; cedricmichaelcox.com



The Lucky Ones

(by Nancy Susanna Breen)

A black man held his toddler son
as they waited to cross Eastern
near our house. I was so small
I had to climb up on a footstool
to watch them from our upstairs windows.
“Look at that stupid colored man
and his stupid little boy,” I said.
My mother came down on me
at once, scolding I should never
think bad things about colored people
or talk about them that way.
I couldn’t explain, not at that age,
that it wasn’t their race
that triggered me. I was
jealous of them, of the
tender way that father
carried his son, more of a caress
than the bearing of a burden.
He’d drawn warmth
and protection around them
both like a cloak as they waited
for a break in the traffic.
Somehow I knew that father
never grabbed and yanked
when he was impatient, never
whipped off his belt to menace,
never threw up in the flower bed
when he was drunk.
It made me so mad. How did
that little boy get so lucky?
It wasn’t fair I couldn’t run up
and ask that tender father
to hold me like that, too.

Fine Dining

(by Nancy Susanna Breen)

To drive to the nice restaurant
in the nasty part of town,
to double-check the door locks
when we turn at the light,
to pretend we don’t see
the battered old woman
crumpled on the battered stoop,
to hold our breaths
when the frazzled young man
with glazed eyes and stained crotch
staggers off the curb,
to sigh with unconcealed relief
when we pull into the parking lot,
to hurry toward the entrance
as if we’re about to be
accosted or robbed,
to believe those leaded glass doors
are barricades against
that world out there,
to believe that’s not our world,
to lower our heads
over our menus, but not
in shame or prayer.

A Lesson in Cleanliness

(by Nancy Susanna Breen)

I must have been about five
when Grandma Mary warned me
not to touch my white gloves
to the handrail on the Shillito’s escalator.
*It’s so dirty. That colored man
had his black hands all over it.*
I gazed at the man getting off
the escalator ahead of us.
He looked quite natty, dressed
in a smart sport jacket and woven
panama hat. Sometimes I played
with the neighbor’s grandson,
so I knew black hands didn’t
mean dirty hands. When I secretly ran
my fingers along the glossy black handrail,
I wasn’t surprised my glove remained white.

Love – Forever

(by *Paul Shortt*)

I saw them near
St. Margaret's Hall
Three generations
Comprised them all
In the lead
The beaming child
Looked up at me
A joyous smile
Close behind
Two parents clung
Their arms around
The three as one
Close behind
Listing left
Shuffled a fourth
Whose life had run
Staring down
Somewhere in time
Of her that now
Was left behind
In a bed
Seen just before
His dear other
Whom they all adored
Whose Final Day
Was soon
to come

The Arc of Life
Still Joined as One

Love – Two Dads' Advice

(by *Paul Shortt*)

Son, put your hands on the wheel,
keep them there –
and no sudden moves,
ever.

Keep your eye on the ball,
all the way in,
and step into it
with a level swing.

Don't look 'em
in the eye –
it's a challenge –
an' always step aside.

Always look them in the eye,
and give them
a firm handshake.

Don't run with a kid
who's packin' –
you'll end up
shot dead.

Don't drink and drive son,
hand your keys over,
and pick a
designated driver.

You see someone
shoot someone –
remember the police'll
come askin.'

Don't speed through
a yellow son,
there could be a cop
behind you.

When the police ask,
Did you see the shooter?
always say *No* –
'cause snitches get killed too.

We don't think
you should go out
with that dark girl,
there's talk at
the club.

Keep it low
an' cool –
we gotta live
in this neighborhood too.

Get suspended
from school,
you'll get
a bad reputation.

Keep runnin' with a
pack a' fools –
you'll end up
in Lucasville.

Keep your grades up
and you'll go to college,
your father's got
a place for you
in his office.

An' stay outta
white neighborhoods.

And stay out of
black neighborhoods.

You'll get yer
ass killed.

You'll get
yourself killed.

Jus' like
George Floyd.

That wasn't a killin,' Dad –
that was a...

LYNCHIN'!

POEMS:

KRISTINA NICHOLE BRODBECK

Kristina Nichole Brodbeck's first book of poems, *Play*, was published in 2018 with Finishing Line Press. She teaches literature and composition at UC and MSJU. Kristina lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with her husband and three children.

Contact: kristina.brodbeck@gmail.com

DIANE GERMAINE

Diane Germaine graduated from the Performing Arts High School (NYC). She was Principal Soloist for Paul Sanasardo Dance Company (NYC), a recipient of NEA, OAC, and FAF grants, and was named one of "8 to watch" by Cincinnati Enquirer. Diane has contributed her poetry to *FABW* for several years

Contact: dgermaine.writer@gmail.com

SUSAN SCARDINA

Susan Scardina is a Cincinnati poet living in Walnut Hills. Retired from U.S. District Court in 2020, she works part-time at The Cincinnati Art Museum as a gallery attendant where inspiration for her poetry abounds.

Contact: susanjane533@gmail.com

DRAWING:

CLAIRE FLATH

Claire Flath (Cincinnati, OH) uses painting to desexualize the female form. She emphasizes romanticism, absurdity, and femininity in each of her works, while always prioritizing beauty over disgust.

Contact: claire.flath@gmail.com; IG: [@claireflath](https://www.instagram.com/claireflath)



42 Seconds*

(by *Diane Germaine*)

After fifty years, a 42 second mention is no more than,
“My hair used to be blonde.”

And 42 seconds of ‘fundamental fairness’?
...Is that all that we deserve?

We all know ‘fundamental fairness’ is all but impossible....
It’s a show, a hide, an excuse for, “It is what it is.”

...As for a reinstatement of the federal right to an abortion?
Wake up Mr. President! It’s gone!!!!

**The time it took to mention the rescission of Roe v Wade
in President Biden’s 2023 State of the Union address.*

33

(by *Kristina Nichole Brodbeck*)

Now I’m 33 and here’s all my wisdom.
There is no wisdom but my thirties are for me and after burying
my mom with a head full of dark hair,
I welcome every gray hair that shows up on my head with sigh of relief.
I fantasized about leaving religion and late one night
we made an exit strategy. This is where I started unzipping, my therapist said.
The word of the decade is release. You see, I thought I was supposed to
be the good girl but all I ever knew was how to perform many costumes of womanhood
so it wasn’t until 29 I learned that my ed recovery room and not a church pew was the least
judgmental place to be. They don’t teach you that in religion class.
There’s more questions than answers now like do you think about the day you’ll die
or the last time you’ll have the best sex of your life?
Have you thought about how many more times you will have to watch a seagull
run from the waves?
29 isn’t that old but if I’m dying before 60 like my mom, then call me middle aged.
So every day I ask what didn’t a religion teacher want you to know that you can learn today?
What didn’t they want you to say that you can speak today?
Sometimes I’ll whisper *mom look at me now*, walking out of an ed recovery room
unburdening all the secrets women hold onto for their families.
I have no wisdom only facts I memorized like body liberation is a birthright
and flushing away fifteen years of bulimia is possible but only with thousands of dollars I didn’t
really have but spent on myself anyway.

What would the religion book say about that selfishness?
Will my stories always begin with *this one time at catholic school*
this one time at my treatment appointment?
This one time at catholic school I remember a teacher put her arm around me to say she was sorry to hear I was pregnant and could I at least show some shame for the sake of my family? She didn't know I already bathed in their shame every night and asked for seconds at dinner.

Slavery Secrets or Revisionist History

(by **Susan Scardina**)

In response to "Cut to the Quick" (1994 – 2019)
by Kara Walker
As exhibited in the Cincinnati Art Museum
November 5, 2021 through January 16, 2022

mind spinning
like a skipping 33
needle not landing in grooves
not stopping without the player's hand
the hard crack of whip
*wounds that never heal**
no soft scars
scars you can't see
yet see forever
demanded sucking
or up the rear
worse than a dog life
Sugar Baby

buyers seek out he-men
from the dark continent
better bang for the buck
big hipped women for easy birthing
breasts to get lost in
fucking and fondling on demand
progeny on the cheap
keep the labor coming
keep the virgins coming
do it here in the manor house
do it there in the shed or in the field
do it where he wants it

the man with the powdered wig
a gander eaten without a spit
by the geese who lay his golden eggs

legacy hung on generations
like a stained hand-me-down quilt
wounds continue to fester
never heal
won't until acknowledged
not skipped
from the record

*From Natasha Trethewey's
A Daughter's Memoir
(New York, Harper Collins, 2020), p. 3

Whose War 2003

(by **Susan Scardina**)

In my dreams I see
soldiers at the window
with bayonets ready for what
bayonets do best.

I fear for my mortal flesh
forget eternity
and worry if they stab me
it will hurt.

Then I think,
who do Iraqis see at the window?
And know
it is I.

POEMS:

MICHAEL BURNHAM

Michael Burnham used to make annual stops at Robert Frost's grave to apologize for having written too few poems, let alone any good ones, and, too, for sounding more Sandburg-ish than Frost-like, except for, maybe, "*The Death of the Hired Man*". Michael is in Cincinnati's Entertainment Hall of Fame, but not, he says, for his poems.

Contact: michaelrobertburnham@gmail.com

PENELOPE EPPL

Penelope Epple (Pronouns: [in writing] *e/h*/h*s, [in speech] they/them, e/em, one/ones) has previously had h*s work published in various anthologies, zines, and journals. *E currently lives in Fort Wayne, IN.

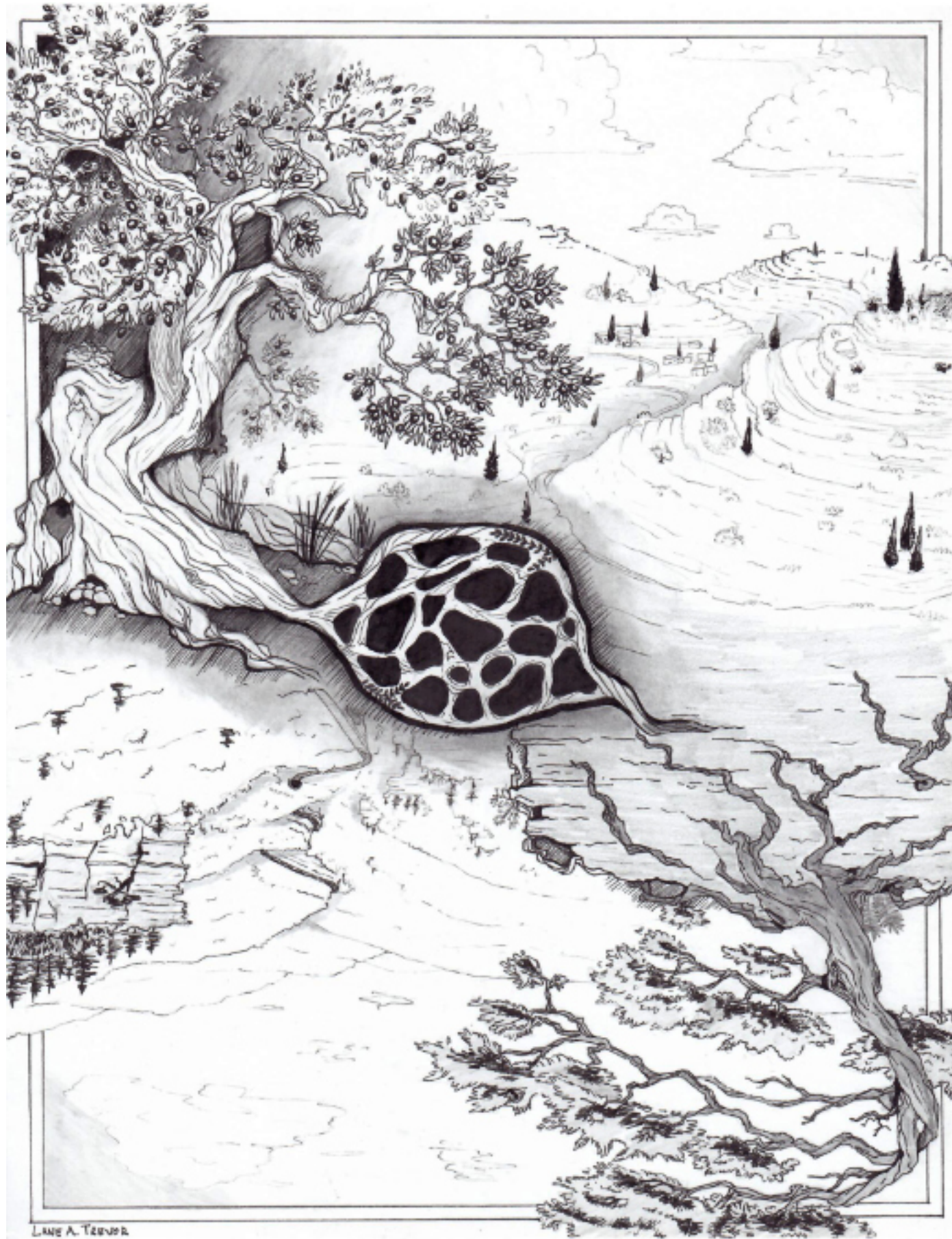
Contact: penelopeepple@gmail.com; IG: @poetpenelopee

DRAWING:

LANE A TREVOR

Lane A. Trevor is a mixed media artist with focuses in alternative clay media, wood and metal. Lane spent large portions of his early life surrounded by the hills and trees of Kentucky. This close relationship to the natural world inspires his work today as he explores his own body, mind, and soul, and their connection to nature.

Contact: gatlingyr@gmail.com; lanetrevor.com



As an American Trans Person I Cannot Let You Ignore the Palestinians, Sudanese, Congolese, etc....

(by *Penelope Epple*)

I would be the worst kind of hypocrite
if I begged you to do something about my people's genocide,
if I begged you to care,
and then stood by silently, doing
nothing,
as I watched other genocides destroy
half a world away.

At the end of the day it's all the same,
someone with power decided that
people like us shouldn't exist,
and they will do anything to make that true,
all while repeating the lie that
everything they do is justified.
Say it over and over and over again,
until you have no choice
but to believe them.

(Don't think it's escaped my notice that
my own country, born in the blood of genocide,
is involved in all of this.)

Why do you think I wouldn't care for them?

Why do you think I wouldn't feel for them?

Why do you think I would agree with the people who want me dead as well?

Why do you think I wouldn't want them to be able to listen to the bird songs again,
now and forever?

And I don't want to hear your what-abouts.

I'll take your arguments seriously when
you can answer one simple question.

Why are you trying to justify war crimes?

Why are you trying to justify genocide?

Your pain and grief is not an excuse.

The suffering and death of other people is not your thought experiment.

There is one difference in our genocides though.

I can tell you about them

without worrying

that these will be my last words.

Hungry for Some Answers

(by *Michael Burnham*)

I was thinkin' 'bout Hamas
and how first they came for the peaceniks
'cause the peaceniks refused to choose sides.
"Where did they learn that crap?" I thought,
and then, "Gee-as-in-willikers,
maybe it's Issa's fault."
He did sorta start it, right?,
when he said,
"I'm going to roll over,
please move..."
And then there's that song, y'know,
that my daddy taught me when I was a boy:

"There were ten in the bed
and the little one said,
'Roll over, roll over.'
So they all rolled over and one fell out.
Nine!"

Daddy's name was Charlie
and he had a piece of the Taj Mahal he'd chipped off
in that way some Kilroys do
when they need you to know they've been there
but you, like me, aren't born yet.

"So they all rolled over and...
Eight!"

Then I thought of the IDF:
Where'd they learn their response?
And I remembered a dead man who told us
"we are here on Earth to fart around",
which only halfway explains
why it took him 23 years
to tell the tale of when he was held hostage
and his side came to his rescue.

"...and one fell out.
Seven!"

Dresden.
Saint Vonnegut locked in a basement
'cause bombers were comin' and

– bargaining being what bargaining is –
you don't wanna waste a hostage.

"So they all rolled over and...
Six!"

In a couple of days, they let him come up
– four square miles were smoking and flat –
and he got to help stack bodies.

"...and one fell out.
Five!"

But back to my father.
He signed up to live in a tent
in a country he called "Inja"
and he helped to load bombs onto B-59s
that dropped 'em on Nipponese.

"So they all rolled over and...
Four!"

In March of 1945,
Daddy's side switched to fire bombs.
It was Dresden again
but this time times sixty seven.

"...and one fell out.
Three!"

And on August the 6th
our Little Boy fell
and on the 9th
– my dad Charlie's birthday –
Fat Man fell, too.
"Best birthday present ever!"
– or so he said at least once a year –
"There was a nip in the air on my birthday.
It let me come home."
(He sent me to look up nip.)

"So they all rolled over and...
Two!"

Almost done.
Only a verse to go.
Could go forward
and tell about

some generic Charlie's ear
I won in an on-base bar.
Or could go backward
to Sherman's Conundrum
after his March to the Sea:
What the hell do we do with all these black folks
now that we've made them free?
But,
frankly,
I'm just too tired to go there.

"So they both rolled over and one fell out.
One!"

Ok.
Back to Issa.
If you've forgotten
or maybe you somehow don't know,
here's how the whole thing goes:
 "I'm going to roll over,
so please move,
 cricket."
Please, m'love, please,
please show me a cricket in Gaza
or maybe a six-year-old girl
stuck in a car full of dead folks
with a phone that works and she's calling for help
and help is trying to find her...

"There was one in the bed
and the little one said,
'I'm lonely...'"

"So it goes,"
says Saint Vonnegut from his grave
and
"I'm so sorry, son,"
says Daddy from his,
"that's just the way that it's done."
And I think, yeah,
but aren't we forever evolving?

What I ask them instead is this:
why the hell have I lived this long
and what chunk of "Never again"
did I totally misunderstand?

POEMS:

ELLA CATHER-DAVIS

Ella Cather-Davis holds an Associate of Arts degree in English Literature from the University of Cincinnati. She is a member of several local writing groups and her written work has been published in books, anthologies and newspapers.

Contact: mikenella45@gmail.com

LINDA KLEINSCHMIDT

Linda Kleinschmidt taught college writing for years and now edits worldwide as the WriteWatchman. She has published children's books, articles, columns and received awards for Poetry, Screenwriting, Nonfiction, and Children's fiction.

Contact: lmk42@earthlink.net

ANISHA KANAKIA SANGHANI

Anisha Kanakia Sanghani, a multidisciplinary artist based in Cincinnati, has a BFA from DAAP/UC, and a strong work experience in Graphic Design, and Textile Designing and Printing. She is presently working as an Art Educator for several local art centers and organizations.

Contact: anisha.k.sanghani@gmail.com; anishakanakia.com

DRAWING:

SOREN MELBYE

Soren Melbye is a budding illustrator from just outside Cincinnati, Ohio. When he is not drawing and drinking exorbitant amounts of caffeine, he likes to hit the gym or go buy books he'll never read.

Contact: sorenmelbye.com; IG: [@surrealistic.zombie](https://www.instagram.com/surrealistic.zombie)

Put Your Foot Down

(by *Linda Kleinschmidt*)

Life never stops today, it
Moves on irrevocably.
Still there is opportunity if
We want to hitch our hearts to it.

The more garbage that comes at us
Out in the world today,
Tech and otherwise,
The less we understand and realize
The garbage still remaining in life and each
of us.

So put your foot down and
Put it down hard, but always remember that
When you do lift it up,
That your goal is both more true and further
wise.

Dark Place

(by *Anisha Kanakia Sanghani*)

Every place seems dark to me
From the fear of the unknown
To the uncertainty of what the future holds...

I do not see the light at the end of the tunnel
Like they say there is...
I feel the chills from all things seem dark
and eerie

Walking on eggshells is not my favorite thing
but I can't stop walking or else
I'll never know what the future holds

A Dark Tale

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

*"I wonder if that's how darkness wins,
by convincing us to trap it inside ourselves
instead of emptying it out.
I don't want it to win."
Jasmine Warga*

Once, on a rain-slicked cobblestone street
inner-city, there sat an old Victorian home.
Inside dwelled three little girls and
a shape-shifting Demn.

As in Plato's cave the little girls were captives
whose fate was to see the world in shadows.
Their third-floor dormer window viewed only
rooftops and several spires of old churches.

That window was also the little girls only view of
outside their cave. Laughter was not permitted,
unless commanded by the Demon, and
there was very little laughter there, ever.

Brown beer bottles sat on the street at morning,
abandoned by their despairing consumers.
There was no grass nor trees, only iron fences,
sentinels in a row with their spears standing vigil.

It was a dark place even on the brightest day.
Darkness is sometimes the absence of light,
a vortex, a black hole all-consuming.
Darkness is sometimes an angry Demon,
full of hate

Look out the window children,
look to someday.



Bear

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

Some years ago, over a decade, I believe,
that black chow dog came to choose us.
Because he resembled a bear cub
he became Bear and love was his wont.

He wiggled his backside in greeting,
rolling on his back, exposing his belly
blocking your way, begging a caress,
speaking his love.

He took his position seriously,
guarding the door from the
energy reader and U.P.S. delivery man
looking more forbidding than he was.

If you caressed Bear he melted, and
accompanying in a walk in the woods
was his delight, as was fishing, where
he bit the water, not catching much.

Last evening, Bear did not come to supper,
a first occurrence, and after a sleepless night,
we went to search for him. A long time later
we spied his dog-friends somberly filing
away from a nearby meadow.

"He'll be there," I said,
"His friends are keeping watch."
And, sure there by a round-bale, he lay dead,
one shot, point-blank to the head.

Struggling to understand now, it is clear,
someone called to him and he went,
back-end wagging, head raised for caress,
trusting . . .

We brought him home digging his grave
facing the woods and pond, I prayed
to understand. I'd like to understand
killing intentionally, snuffing out a life,

There's a monster lurking out there
and his heart is full of hate.
Be very afraid

Nobody

(by *Ella Cather-Davis*)

"I'm Nobody! Who are you?"
Emily Dickenson

Stopping for lunch at a pizza place with Mother,
I spied an elderly gentleman in a trench-coat,
wearing tennis shoes and obviously, no pants.
Shocked, I thought "Oh no, an exhibitionist,
Mother will give him a piece of her mind."

But he simply sat down at a small table nearby
and began to eat from a crumpled pizza box.
Ravenously he ate the single slice, looking about
at the other empty tables for perhaps more food.

Then, resigned, he simply rose and left.
He bent over into the dumpster outside
and really, he was wearing no pants.
I vowed to bring him some clothes.

Gathering items from my husband's closet,
I drove again to the pizza place. Pausing outside,
I summoned my courage to ask the pizza man
to give the clothing to the elderly gentleman.

His reply was jarring, he told me he would not
give them to the man because he was a nuisance
and really bad for business, what with all that
dumpster diving and then coming inside to eat.

For a few minutes I tried to reason, but then, relented.
I understood that the elderly man was not a person
to the pizza man, not a hungry man with no trousers.
The elderly man was not worthy of clothing or food.
He was Nobody.

POEMS:

LAUREL CHAMBERS

Laurel Chambers, from Cleveland, has called Cincinnati home since graduating from college. Her first chapbook is *Places in the Mist*, and her poetry has been published in *Within Us*, *Poetry X Hunger*, *For a Better World*, and *Anthropocene: Poems About Environment*. Laurel is a former English and Journalism teacher.

Contact: ljmchambers@hotmail.com

JULIA LANKISCH

Julia Lankisch is an environmental educator working with a youth and community development non-profit on the west side of Cincinnati. She is passionate about equity in food justice, outdoor recreation access, education, and housing.

Contact: jclankisch79@gmail.com

KAREN WEBER

Karen Weber writes poetry as a hobby, mostly about her large family but also social and societal issues that touch her. A graduate of the University of Dayton, she has been a teacher, community organizer and realtor.

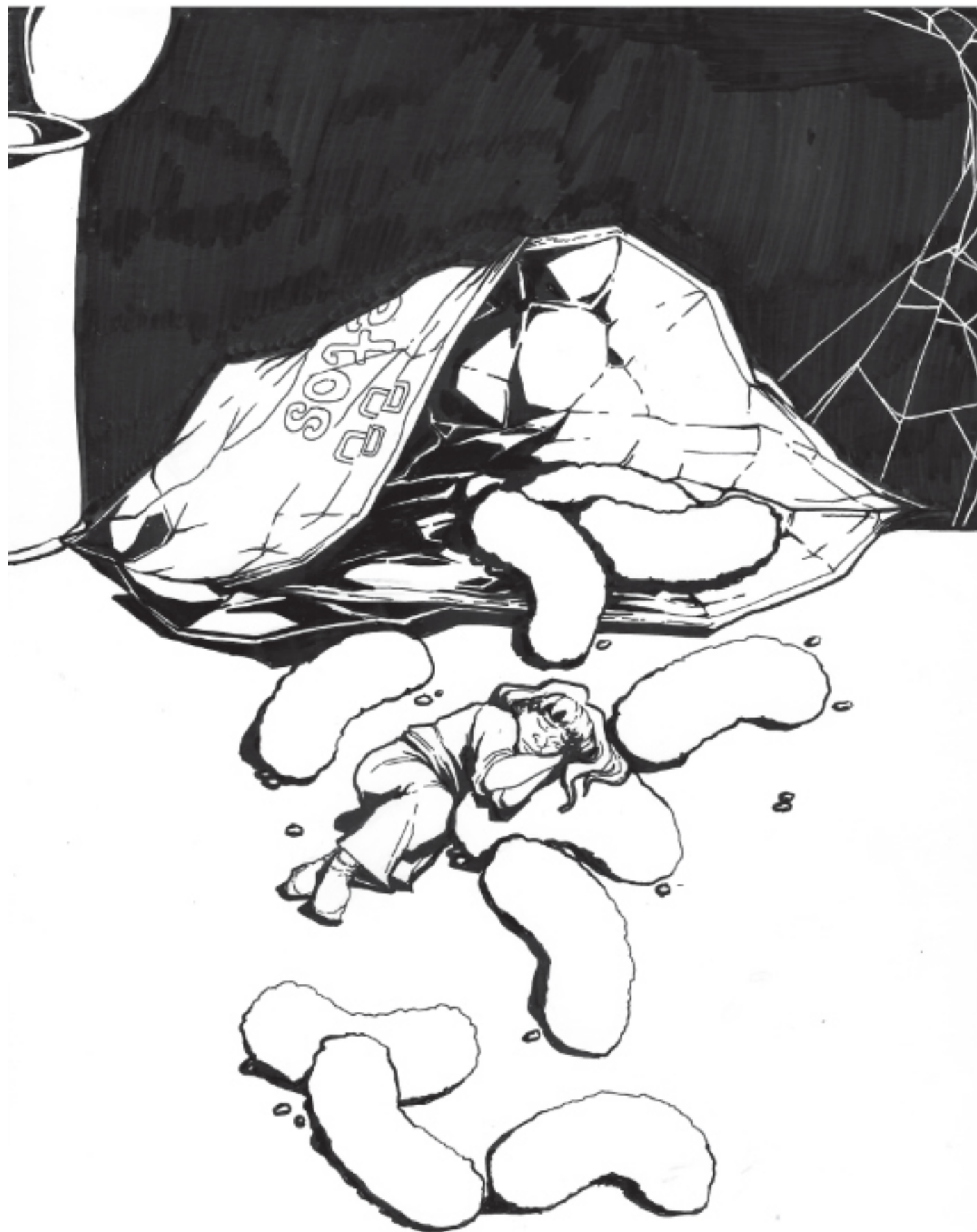
Contact: kweber43@icloud.com

DRAWING:

CLARE DUNN

Clare Dunn is an illustrator, printmaker, writer from northern Kentucky. She loves fantasy, baking, puzzles, and her pets, Thor, Sprite, and Cracker Jack. Currently, she works at *Everything But the House* as a cataloger and has been a part-time illustration adjunct at Xavier University and a video game production artist.

Contact: clare-dunn.com; IG: [@cclaray](https://www.instagram.com/cclaray).



Clare Blinn

Not Hungry

(by *Laurel Chambers*)

They were never hungry, just starving
for flavor; a salty potato chip,
chocolate sticking on the roof of their mouths,
an orange, juice dripping down their lips.
Vanilla ice cream melting on their tongues.

The week before mom's pay day, they knew
how smooth a bare kitchen shelf could be.
Loaves of cheap white bread in the drawer.
Some dry cereal at the bottom of a box,
no milk, a flat filling after school snack.

Mountains of mashed potatoes for dinner
with tomato sauce or packaged gravy on top.
In bed, they looked forward to school lunch.
The steamed burger, the crunch of an apple,
two Oreo cookies, which they always ate first.

When kids stopped at the Bonnie Lou Bakery
for fresh cinnamon rolls, they kept walking.
Had to get home to help mom, to baby sit,
to go somewhere, to do something, anything.
They hurried from the fruity smell of warm pies.

People saw them as sturdy children, good athletes.
Strong, silent in the way they carried their shame.
It was the plain beige shade of their lives that hurt
the most. They stuck together, lonely outcasts
in a world battering them with colors and candy.

NOW

(by *Karen Weber*)

There was a time
I worried about hungry children.
Not just worried,
Organized,
Researched,
Published.
"Hunger is here."
"Children matter."

The here and now
Present a different depth:
The real hunger is greed.
Greed for power,
Greed for money,
No matter the cost-
To children,
Our country,
Our planet,
Our souls.
Now I worry about all of us.

Issue Twenty Two

(by *Julia Lankisch*)

Hunger feeds on the Family Dollar parking lots.

Soil is abundance;
trees are food;
bugs give fruit
green vitality.

Hunger zones out small agriculture and
Black dirt black joy black community black mobility black
Walnut trees

Watching the trainyard spill into your creek, our creek
On the wet days from the viaduct,
I am hungry on behalf of the birds.

We almost kept the railroad but
Westwood had no chance with that Kroger.

Greed does not see black people or birds.

POEMS:

VICKIE CIMPRICH

Vickie Cimprich's books include *Contrary-wise* (Broadstone Books, 2018), and *Pretty Mother's Home - A Shakeress Daybook* (Broadstone Books, 2007). Research for an article "Free and Freed Shakers and Affiliates of African Descent at Pleasant Hill, Kentucky" in the 2013 autumn *Register of the Kentucky Historical Society* was funded by the Kentucky Foundation for Women.

Contact: vjc1@zoomtown.com

JO ANNE MOSER GIBBONS

Jo Anne Moser Gibbons continues her fascination with storytelling as a published poet, writer, and photographer, and as a volunteer at Harriet Beecher Stowe House. Former editor and principal of a marketing communications firm, she enjoys exchanging haiku with two of her young granddaughters.

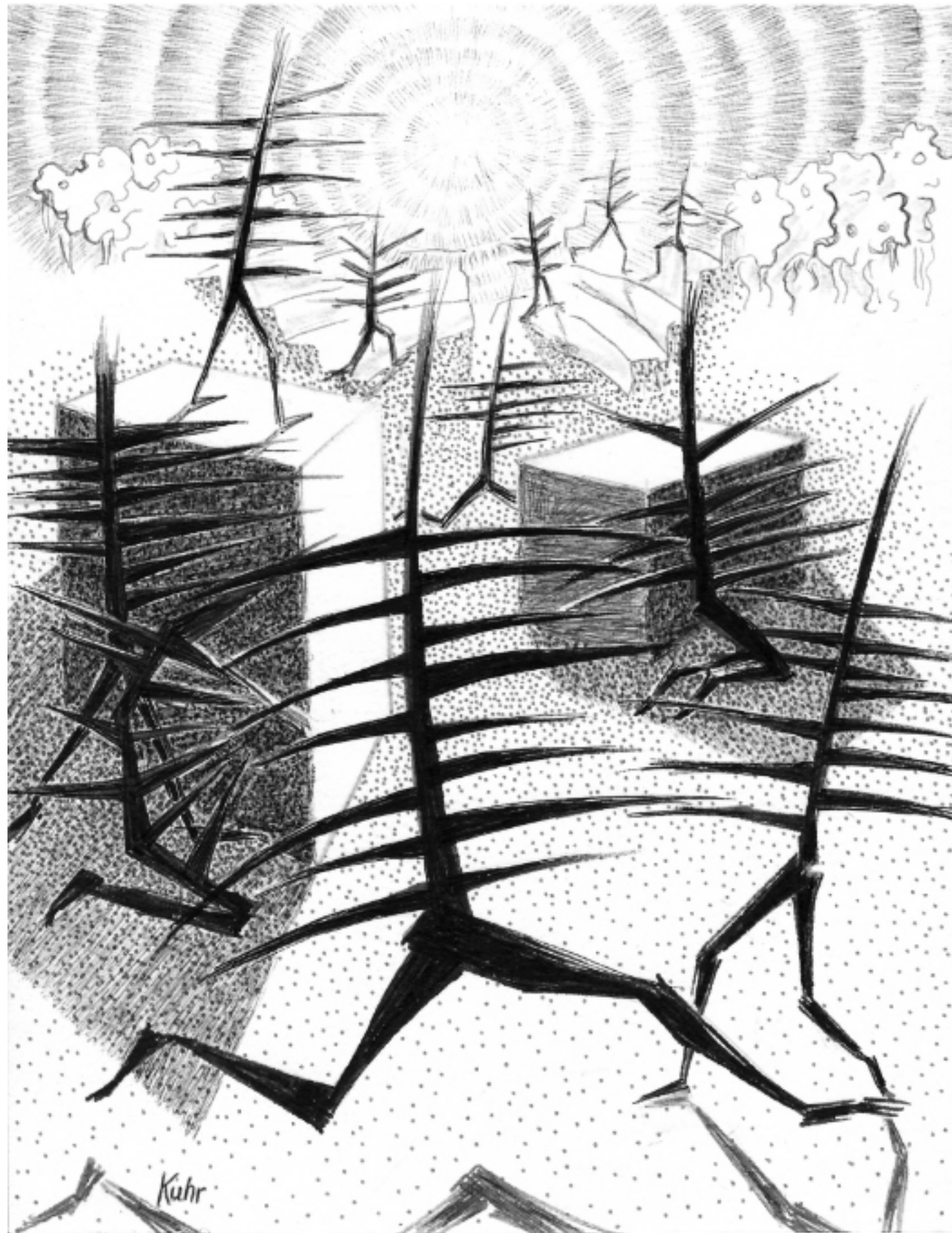
Contact: jagibbons@gibbonsgroup.com

DRAWING:

CHRISTINE KUHR

Christine Kuhr is an American Scene Painter creating plein air and studio work. Her work is a channel to an object-of-desire, either in the paintings' physical display, what the scene implies, or the feeling it evokes. Christine's artwork is a call-out to linger and reflect.

Contact: christinekuhr.com



Even the Doves Have Flown

(by *Jo Anne Moser Gibbons*)

*"...the song of the dove is heard
in our land"*

--Song of Songs, 2, 12

Arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,
and run!
Look! rockets blast,
our music, our party are destroyed.
Terrorists assault us from all sides,
the time to flee is now,
and cries and screams and sobs pierce what once was peace.
The fig tree is ravaged—fruitless,
and the desert yields uncertain escape—maybe slaughter.
But arise, my beloved, my beautiful one,
we must run!

O my dove, in the clefts of this desert rock
by this secret hiding place inside these shrouding bushes,
Let me see you,
Let me hear your voice,
For your voice is sweet,
you are cherished,
and we are still alive.

Seize the terrorists, the heartless murderers
that ravage our homeland, for
our homeland, our people are precious.

My lover belongs to me and I to him;
we grovel in this desert dust.
Even after the day cools and shadows lengthen,
we must run, my lover, flee
to safety
like a gazelle or a young stag
away from horror and hate and death—
toward life
toward freedom
toward peace.

Note: On Saturday, October 7, 2023, Hamas militants attacked Israeli youth as they gathered for a music festival in the Southern Israeli desert. Revelers were massacred and abducted; some fled into the desert--their only way out. The biblical Song of Songs of the Old Testament was my inspiration for the format, style, and content of this poem.

Collateral Vignettes

(by **Vickie Cimprich**)

Edge of Israel October 7:

I am boogying with all the might of my laughs
at this Supernova Trance festival.

Within an inch of my life.

We were shaking the sky over Kibbutz Re'im.

Then percussives not drums, drove me to the ground.

I ran then gritted grains of the Negev between my teeth
and felt the streaks of red welt scratched on my face.

An overturned food truck hardly can hide me

as I try dialing my cellphone *Help me, Mommy.*

Some men drag away the ones among my friends who aren't dead.

Under Gaza October 12:

Where is mother?

Here some arm lying next to me smells like somebody else.

On top bending my neck towards my empty belly,

hard corners and slabs, all is dark.

Dust of my house's shards keeps moting sharp in my eyes.

So long my hours and days of dry rasps, chewing plaster

before slivers of a light slice through at me

and some alive fingers poke in and probe.

Their wiggle stabs through the dark and pinch under my arms.

My leg, caught, is broken before or during their pull.

Peacework

(by **Jo Anne Moser Gibbons**)

*There can be no justice without peace. And
there can be no peace without justice.*

--Rev. Martin Luther King

Fill every bowl
one family we'll break bread
from hunger to hope

let's make good trouble
struggle stand firm overcome
peace our justice tool

Come—grow together
as trees rooted by the water
branching out toward peace

or wildflowers that bloom and bloom
sowing seeds of peace

We the peacemakers
always justice bridge builders
peacework yet to do

hope pray march persist
forever rainbow peacework
side by side by side

POEMS:

ASHLIE COX

Since a young age, Ashlie Cox has been using writing to express herself in ways she couldn't do verbally. Now she incorporates creative writing into the work she does as a clinical mental health therapist. In the last three years, Ashlie has pushed herself outside of her comfort zone, sharing her work at open mics, poetry slams, and submissions such as *For a Better World*.

Contact: ashlie@holistictherapycinci.com

TERRY PETERSEN

Terry Petersen is a 77-year-old grandmother. She is the author of the *Star-League Chronicles*, writes a blog at terrypetersen.com, and writes periodically for *Piker Press*, an online magazine. She looks for beauty in the ordinary and desires peace for all the world.

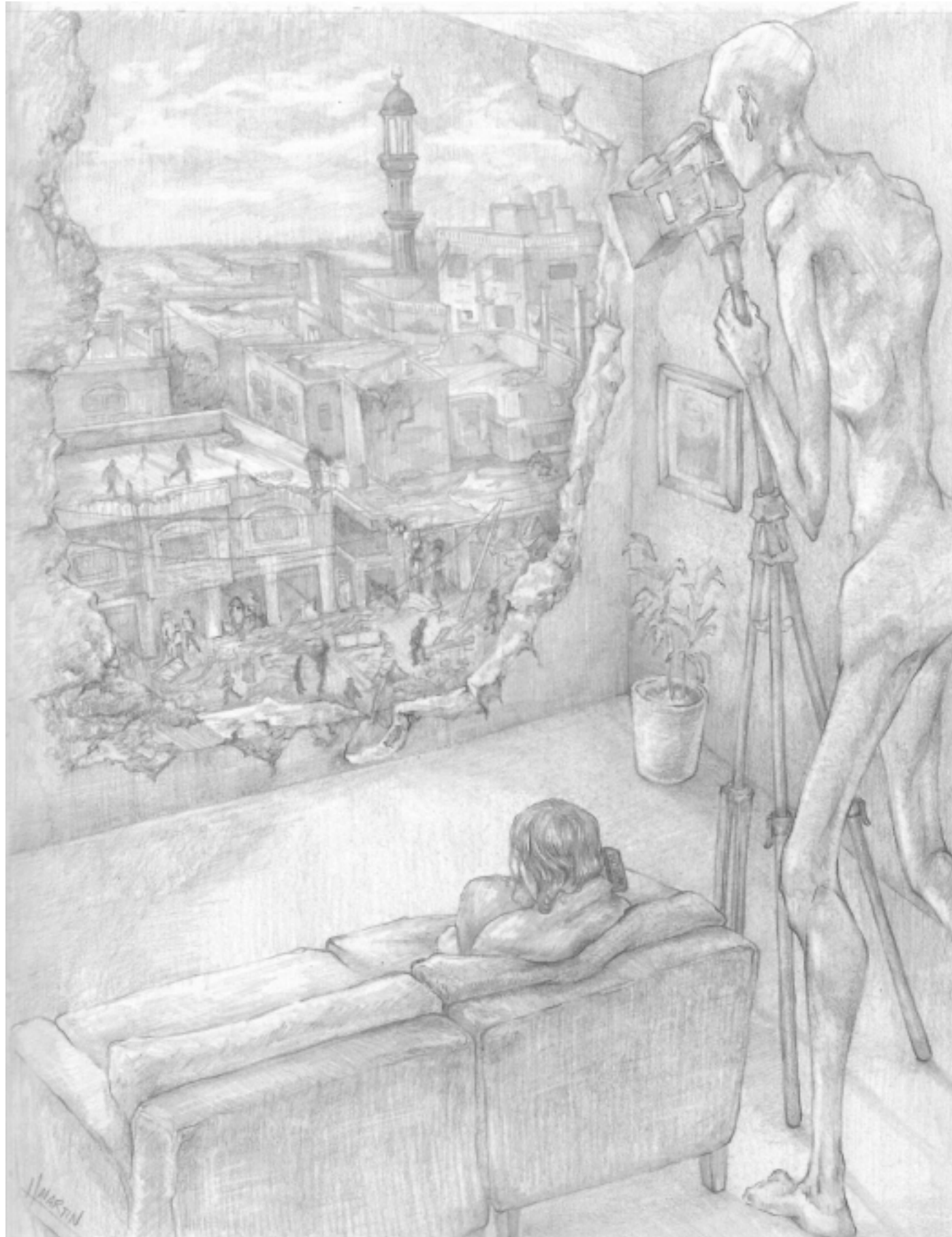
Contact: tpetersen@fuse.net

DRAWING:

HANNAH JANE MARTIN

Hannah Jane Martin (she/they) is a Canadian-American artist based in Cincinnati, Ohio. As a multimedia artist who works frequently with painting and sculpture, Hannah uses the artistic process to investigate themes of identity, womanhood, trauma, and memory. They hold a BFA in Studio Art from Miami University with dual concentrations in Painting and Ceramics.

Contact: hannahjanem.art@gmail.com; hannahjanemartin.art



After the Bomb Blast

(by *Terry Petersen*)

Where is the cameraman's face,
as he zooms in on the hungry bleeding child?
Is the small boy frightened of a creature
carrying a camera? Does that person
bring bread and bandages?

Then the camera moves to the next atrocity
and delivers sensationalist stories for the 6
o'clock news?

On the other side of the screen
viewers chew carryout pizza
and wait for the next commercial
to get more beer from the refrigerator.

Where is the cameraman's face?
A minute-long film
can't tell the full story. Somehow,
may the captured moment ignite help
and not more hunger and pain.

Peace

(by *Ashlie Cox*)

Peace
Existing without pressure or fear
Gentle. Calm. At ease

Peace
Expressing without rejection or judgment
Letting go. Unburdening. A release

Peace
Feeling without hesitation or consequence
Connection. Understanding. In my dreams

Peace
A remedy found only from within
Healing. Patience. Curing a massive disease

Peace
Attainable and within reach
Justice. Together. Change in varying degrees

An Unfinished Dance

(by *Terry Petersen*)

Dear Mike,

You were taller than any other teenager.
Silent as a giraffe, your long, awkward legs
dangled along the open side wall of Sue's patio.
You remained hunched over all evening,
the only boy that night in the 1960's,
or any evening our group met on Fridays.
Your silence shouted.

Yet none of us heard.
One of the girls turned the music up
and taught me the Seven Step,
a dance, where legs crossed,
one way up, the other moving backward,
we clumsily moved onto the darkening concrete.
Seven steps up and back, repeated

eventually in smooth rhythm.
"I enlisted," you stated as the record ended.
"I'm going to Vietnam." You said no more
and climbed back into yourself.
An assurance your rock-quiet exterior
could not expose a bullied spirit.
My dancing friend asked how soon.

In Vietnam, you didn't live seven steps
or seven days. If I could change the past
I would write another letter to you
long before that Friday night, I would lead
the others
to relay all the good they saw in you.
A dialogue could have flowed.
Then this poem may never have been needed.

Peace at Home

(by *Terry Petersen*)

You say, "My father beat me."
Your voice carries fluid strength after
years of recovery and growth.
A cell phone sanitizes the pain of eye contact.
and makes each blink less obvious
as my friend and I open our hearts
to trauma in our lives, held
inside our past. We admit the worst
yet celebrate the positive we can give.
We wish to tell others who were taught
they were nothing that they may own power.
Peace at home, it needs an I-force,
capitalized in a way that blends with the whole
without falling or dominating. Peace, one full,
essential syllable. May it find loving human direction.

POEMS:

ANGELA DERRICK

Angela Derrick is a mother, grandmother, artist, poet/writer, and activist. She is a long time resident of Cincinnati.

Contact: angela@angeladerrick.net

PRESTON FRASCH

Preston Frasch is a writer living in Norwood, Ohio where he loves his wife and three daughters Magdalena, Milana, and Mercy. He attended the University of Evansville and the University of Cincinnati where he studied creative writing and teaching. He has a computer job and enjoys friends, nature, baking, and making.

Contact: preston.frasch@gmail.com

MARK SEAN ORR

Mark Sean Orr is a photographer, author, writer, and historian living in New Castle, Indiana. Mark has published ten books dealing with history, poetry, and photography. Poetry is a passion of his.

Contact: mpcc@comcast.net

DRAWING:

BILLY SIMMS

Billy Simms is an artist, curator, educator who lives in Hamilton, OH with his wife and three cats.

Contact: bilysimmsart.com



William (Dr. My) Simms

For Zack

(by *Angela Derrick*)

In Loving Memory of Michael Duane Zack

Someone is always leaving
by exile, death, or heartbreak.

Sometimes it's all three
all at once.

It's how you left, unwillingly
yet inexplicably filled with love.

You refused your last meal
and I get it - I understand.

Why accept a tradition meant
to somehow humanize the inhumane,

a seeming kindness accompanied
by the most unkind of acts.

It seems like an eternal moment -
you, strapped down, raising your head

to proclaim your last words:
"I love you all."

Oh Bro, you move me. May I
hold your words within me always.

Thank you for your time.
Blessings to you.

In God's Name,
XXX

Hope in the City

(by *Preston Frasch*)

There are elders praying for the city
Holy women
Men in prayer

There are angels welcoming
The broken arise
enshimmered

Children breathing first breaths unafraid
There is strength for this moment
Alone and without moor to world

Song for the Dead

(by *Preston Frasch*)

Seas away
 The night is long
no one is allowed to go
 I wish I saw you every day that morning
Held steady by the gentle weight of you
 Would find us happy in the sun
 As warnings turn the very air to danger
I'm sad to play the part of a father and a son
 But not to know you in a thousand hours
 The morning new England in the warmth of your smile
Comfort you imbued the very air to calm

Paint the Walls

(by *Mark Sean Orr*)

Every morning she awakens in a pain filled haze.
It takes everything within her to begin each coming day.
Her crooked aching fingers grab a palette and a brush.
She tries to paint her sadness out, but some days it's too much.

She sometimes sits cross legged at the painted window sill.
And looks forlornly at the passing world, the one she left when she took ill.
Her canvas paintings have all sold... the money's all been spent.
One look upon her pallid face tells where the money went.

So she moves slowly round her loft in every room, in every hall.
And she pours out her emotion painting every single wall.
She fills the walls with color, from the ceiling to the floor.
Then moves on to another room and paints the walls some more.

Her life is there in muted tones laid out as in a book.
And some day when she's here no more the world will take a look.
Paint the walls! Paint the ceilings!
The fixtures and the floors! ...and when the paint is run out...
She will paint no more.

POEMS:

GREGORY FLANNERY

Gregory Flannery is the descendant of European immigrants who arrived without passports or visas and made a home in the United States. He thinks all human beings should be free to live in peace and freedom wherever they choose, with those they love, without regard to borders or government interference.

Contact: gflan_1999@yahoo.com

ALAN JOZWIAK

Alan Jozwiak teaches college composition and writes for the theatre (as a playwright and theatre reviewer) and about comics (as a scholar exploring comic history, from the Sunday funnies to superheroes). He is working on a podcast about the history of American comics. Alan also writes poetry in his spare time.

Contact: jozwiaae@ucmail.uc.edu

DRAWING:

HOLLAND DAVIDSON

Holland Davidson resides in Cincinnati, Ohio and has exhibited her art professionally since 1993. Her paintings and drawings have been included in many projects with the SOS ART organization, and are held in collections both public and private worldwide.

Contact: holland.davidson@icloud.com



Woody Guthrie Died at the Border Crossing

(by *Gregory Flannery*)

after Woody Guthrie's 'This Land Is Your Land'

This land is my land, this land ain't your land.
From California to the New York island,
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters,
This land was made just for me.

As you went walking that ribbon of highway,
And you saw above you that endless skyway,
You saw below you that golden valley –
This land is not for you, but for me.

You roamed and rambled, and you've followed your footsteps
To the sparkling sands of her diamond deserts.
All around you, a voice is sounding:
"Get out! This land was not made for you, but for me."

There was a big, high wall there that tried to stop you.
A sign was painted: "Foreigners Forbidden."
But on the backside, it said "Land of the Free Man."
This land ain't for you but for me.

When the sun comes shining, then I was strolling,
And the wheat fields waving, and the dust clouds rolling.
The voice was chanting as the fog was lifting:
"Keep out! This land is just for me."

This land is my land, this land ain't your land.
From California to the New York island,
From the Redwood Forest to the Gulf Stream waters,
This land was made only for me.

Migrant Wall

after Frost's "Mending Wall"

(by *Alan Jozwiak*)

Something there is that always wants a wall,
a wall which looms so straight, so strong, so tall
that it sifts and sorts the people it cleaves
treating them like warp and woof in a weave.

*Hush, my darling Fernanda
Don't you fret
Don't you fear
Your mother is here with you
She will always be with you*

“Mind the gaps, please. This wall is still not whole;”
so say the lovers of this wall whose sole
aim paints danger onto this crannied wall.
They fear those gaps bring terror for us all.

*Sleep, my drowsing Fernanda
Don't you toss
Don't you turn
Your father is here with you
He will always be with you*

Frost once penned, “Good fences make good neighbors.”
Would he approve of these lover's labors?
Frost sought connection and avoided strife,
feeling his neighbor was part of his life.

*Dream, my dozing Fernanda
Don't you startle
Don't you shake
Your brothers are here with you
They will always be with you*

Fernanda and all then came to that wall.
They learned the hard truth behind their hard haul.
They were stuck on the outside looking in,
for no foreign-born were allowed within.

*Dry your eyes, my despairing Fernanda
Don't you weep
Don't you wail
The U.S. will let us in
The U.S. will someday let us in.*

POEMS:

DON FLEMING

Don Fleming writes poetry in retirement and resides in Crescent Springs, KY.
His poetry has been exhibited at Centre College in *EAT: A Literature + Photo Installation*. His poems have been published in: *ParodyPoetry*; *Pegasus*; and the anthology *These Summer Months: Stories from The Late Orphan Project*.

Contact: fleming@fuse.net

HENRY SPOTTSWOOD

Henry Spottswood was born, 1940, in Mobile, Alabama. Several of his poems capture childhood experiences in the port city during the big war. Henry retired in 2017 after 35 years of work in agencies treating substance addiction.

Contact: spottswood@fuse.net

CHUCK STRINGER

Chuck Stringer tries to be a loving partner, parent, grandparent, relative, friend—an Anglican Christian living as a poet close to the earth. He lives with his wife Susan in Northern KY, near Fowlers Fork, by which he daily walks and writes.

Contact: chuck.stringer1@gmail.com

DRAWING:

TINA TAMMARO

Tina Tamaro, a figurative oil painter living in Cincinnati, Ohio, has recently shown at Indian Hill Gallery (IHG), NKU, Antioch College, SOS ART exhibits, YWCA, the Weston Art Gallery, one person show at Shawnee State University as well as at the Bleicher/Golightly Gallery in Santa Monica, CA and the Blue 5 Art Space in West Hollywood, CA. Tina is represented by IHG and 506 Ash Gallery.

Contact: tina-tamaro.com; IG: [@tina_tamaro](https://www.instagram.com/tina_tamaro)



When Passions Stirred

(by *Don Fleming*)

When passions stirred by fear hold sway and minds with fear inflate,
Then guard lest your emotions be snatched up by a thief.
Question those convenient *truths* which any fool can state.

Does self-interest lurk behind what strong voices advocate?
Do they rely on rumor, innuendo, grievance, grudge or beef?
Beware when passions stirred by fear hold sway and hate-filled minds inflate.

Hot words stoke tempers and cause temperatures to elevate.
Any useful words will do, like flame applied to driest leaf.
Question those convenient *truths* which any fool can state.

A band of believers may be undeterred by factual debate;
Unconcerned if supporting evidence is lacking or is fleeting brief.
Beware when passions stirred by fear hold sway and hate-filled minds inflate.

Must I ignore what's common good and erase my conscience's slate;
Forget fair play and disregard the golden rule and similar belief?
Question those convenient *truths* which any fool can state.

The thief will sell you strength and cunning wrapping it in hate,
But offers only thoughtless, quick, and fleeting stress relief.
Beware when passions stirred by fear hold sway and hate-filled minds inflate.
The wise will question those convenient *truths* which any fool can state.

Song for the Madness

(by *Chuck Stringer*)

Driven by a vengeful rage, now the psalmist's words resound:
Happy the one who pays you back for what you have done to us!
We strike the blasted cities, charge the rubble—mound on mound—
driven by a vengeful rage. Now the psalmist's words resound:
Dash them against the rock! Pile them on the rocky ground!
In the wreckage, Rachel, Gaza weeping—to *hell* with the fuss!
Driven by a vengeful rage, now the psalmist's words resound:
Happy the one who pays you back for what you have done to us!

poet's note: On December 28, 2023, the Feast of The Holy Innocents, I was haunted all day by images on the news of children slain in the Israel-Hamas war, with the lines of Jeremiah 31:15 and Psalm 137 ringing in my ears. Three days later I was finally able to write about it, with this result. The war rages on...

Of Peace and Justice

(by **Henry Spottswood**)

Can we enjoy one without
the other? I can't imagine it.

How may I gain a toehold in these
massive abstractions, to do my part?

A brief streetcar ride takes me to
the Hamilton County Courthouse.
High on its west facade are words
prescribing the equal administration
of our laws for social justice.

In the open street-level spaces I hear
the people talking, waiting, breathing
the air of bus exhaust and freedom
and hot dogs from the social center
that is the curbside lunch cart.

They guard vital pairings
that make our lives whole,
my self and all others,
body and soul.

Origins

(by **Chuck Stringer**)

My spit says England, Scotland, and throw a little Norway in;
though if you trace the science back, in Africa we all begin.

But I did not choose my relatives; my partner, Susan, was my only choice.
And we all live and die in mystery, all pray to the same voice.

So, if your pronouns speak a language of division—a *them* and *us* prescribe—
I will not claim that ancestry, that people, nation, tribe!

vladimir

(by **Chuck Stringer**)

he trained himself like a long lance
he made himself menace, like a sombre god
dispenser of this blood

I see the ancient being, the slave, the sleeping one
his mouth agape like a dark scar
in that history of torments

I came by other ways, through streets, river by river,
city by city, one bed after another
to touch those sleeping faces

love, love, until the night collapses
the days of unravelled light
all the way to death they did not understand

they were lit and burned
smoke of the ritual lamps
nothing was left but bones

led to a warrior's bed
by murky blood
tell me how he slept when alive

poet's note: cento lines taken from the following poems in Neruda: Selected Poems, ed. by Nathaniel Tarn:

"Education of the Chieftain" (pp. 215-217): lines 1, 2

"The Heights of Macchu Picchu" (pp. 179-193): lines 3, 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 16, 18

"They Come For the Islands" (p. 195): lines 6, 12, 13, 15

"A Soldier Sleeps" (pp. 197-199): line 14

"In Spite of Wrath" (pp. 211-213): line 17

POEMS:

STEVE FREY

Steve Frey, a native of North College Hill, was a teacher and school principal for 37 years. He is currently CEO of Ascendant Educational Services, a writer, and a photographer. He writes poetry, short stories & columns for several newspapers.

Contact: stevefrey2@gmail.com

DEANNA HURTUBISE

Deanna Hurtubise, a former high school and university French teacher, has written 3 picture books, 4 historic fiction books for children, and 2 memoirs. She currently teaches French language, history and travel at UC's OLLI. Deanna is a world traveler and has three children and eight grandchildren.

Contact: maddiesmeme@yahoo.com; deannahurtubise.com

JEROLD LONDON

To Jerold London, Cincinnati poet, playwright, and blogger, poetry and theatre are to travel other planes of consciousness; to ring bells others have not heard that way before; to celebrate the personal freedom of journeying the unimagined and the unfamiliar; and to pull strings of compassionate social behavior.

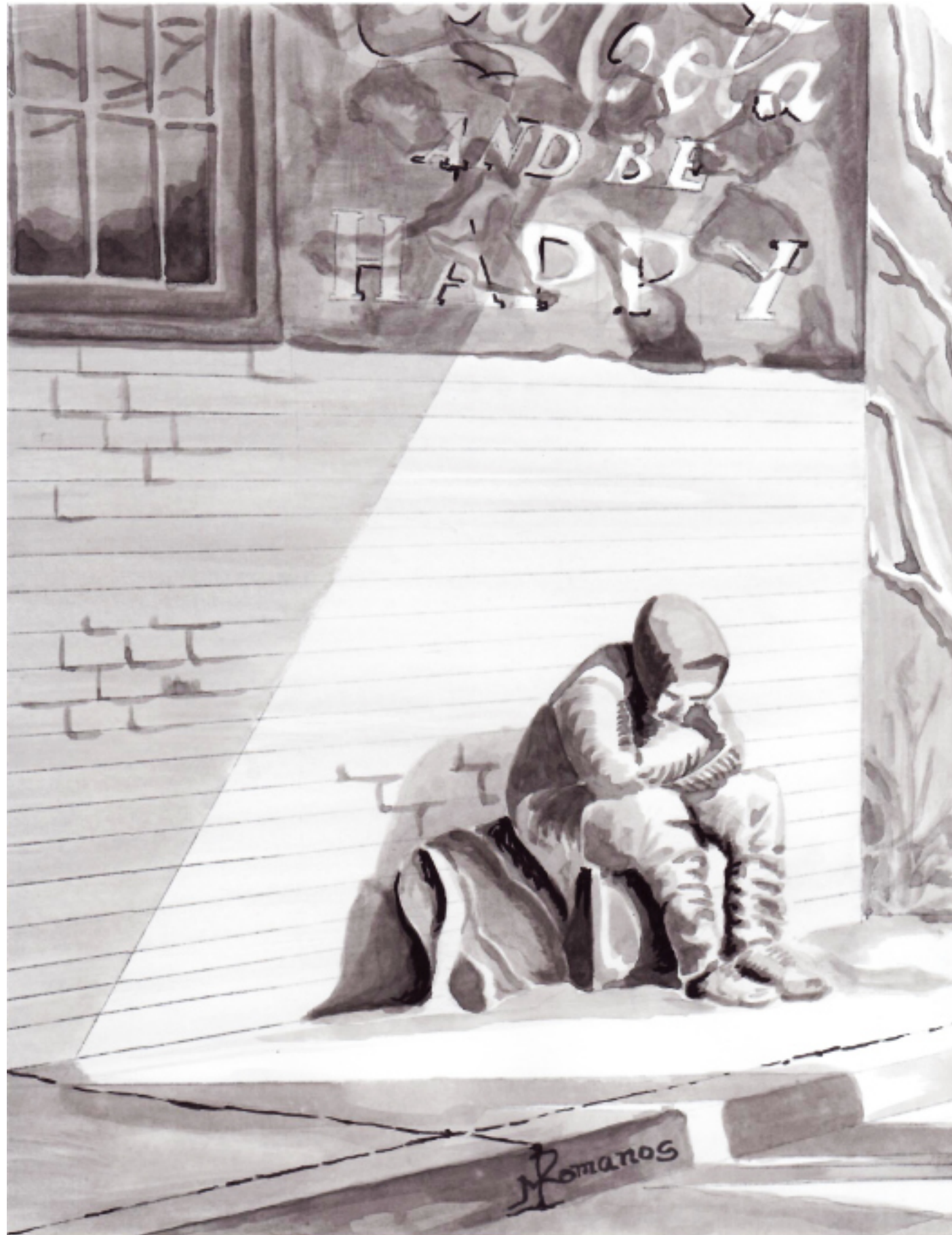
Contact: fink@taftlaw.com; deepweaversfaith.com

DRAWING:

MICHAEL ROMANOS

Michael Romanos is professor emeritus of city planning at UC. Since his retirement, he has devoted his time to woodworking and painting. His art subjects are diverse, but he is especially interested in portraits, cultural scenes and situations, and images illustrating the conditions of poverty and homelessness.

Contact: michalisromanos@gmail.com; michalisromanos.com



Alone On a Bench

(by *Steve Frey*)

He continually screamed about the homeless.
Why didn't they just get a job?
They'd hang out down in the beautiful park.
He said they're disgusting slobs.
He saw them on his daily walk.
He'd pass them without murmuring a sound.
They knew how much he hated them.
They looked away when he came around.
One day, as he walked his walk,
Filled with anger, outrage, and hate,
He felt a pain deep in his head,
And his leg could no longer hold his weight.
He had to sit on a nearby bench;
He slowly slouched, then laid down.
He couldn't talk or wave his arm;
His face was just a crooked frown.
As people walked their walks in the park,
He heard their bitter condemnations.
No one came to help or care;
He was just another abomination.
Finally, a policeman heard him cry,
On that bench in the beautiful park.
He gently nudged him to move along,
It was time to go; it was getting dark.
But he could not move or say a word,
And the policeman knew something was wrong.
He called for help, and help soon came,
But he'd been on that bench far too long.
He lost his job because he could not work;
He lost his healthcare when his job was gone;
He lost his home because he couldn't pay;
He lost everything he relied upon.
So now he limps to find a bench,
And he is the "bum" walkers scorn.
He begs for change to buy a meal;
He has a torn blanket to try to stay warm.
The lesson he learned was hard and bleak,
And it's too late for him, he cries.
Perhaps others will understand:
There but for God's Grace, go I.

A Hungry World

(by *Deanna Hurtubise*)

He's homeless on the corner, a cardboard sign he wears,
I lost my job; I need some help, with hungry eyes he stares.
I stop the car and drop some coins; he thanks me with a smile,
I say a prayer and wish him well; he's been there quite a while.
He's just a kid who sits alone; he doesn't quite fit in,
Nobody knows or even cares he's hungry for a friend,
He's gay, she's trans, he's scared, she's sad, both misunderstood,
But judgment rules at this fine school where acceptance would be good.
The soldier wakes from anguished sleep. What do these nightmares mean?
He's home and yet he can't forget reliving horrors seen.
With post-traumatic stress he lives, the flashbacks never cease,
He prays for healing, prays for calm; he's hungry for some peace.
Parents scramble, babies wail as bombs explode on high,
Their homes are rubble; where to go? Their children wonder why.
Their hungry hearts all pray for hope, beseeching God above,
Our world's on fire, please make it stop! Why can't we all just love?
He's mentally ill, yet has a gun and goes to find his prey,
The voices in his head say "kill" and bullets find their way.
His victims have no chance to run or call to those held dear,
Survivors hunger to be safe but now they live in fear.

Accept me; feed me; love me; care. The cries fall down like rain,
But who will listen? What will change to quell the hunger pain?

Need a Chance

(by *Jerold London*)

When does a poem wax more sermon than a blog?
If conscience bleeds and critics ruminate!
The table scraps my children dropped to feed our dog,
That's poetry. Though I'm alone of late.

I tend the Hungry now, with meals that chefs prepare.
Clothe some new-bought, and some with odds and ends.
Drive bitten, ill, or injured to the urgent care.
And Strangers by and by I call my friends.

I strive to do the best a single man can do,
And pray to God the same my Country can.
Been nicknamed Matthew XXV a time or two,
The one I am, this under-perfect man.

I miss the mountains.

But more than charity these stranded souls have need:
To be accepted AND TO HAVE A CHANCE.
To work, find home, in God to trust that they'll succeed.
And every day to dream the dream to dance.

We're not at war, but refugees of poverty
Come to our town to live on city streets.
Broad stripes; bright stars; o'er fruited plains can we all see
Dawn's early light: how Loneliness repeats?

What shame's enough if empty hands of Liberty?
What ears hear only anthems, not distress?
Is this the way Democracy shall set worlds free?
And prove the Faith Americans profess.

Home of the Brave.

Remove the Plank and See

(by *Steve Frey*)

Some can't help but sermonize;
Others over-dramatize.
But unless you learn to sympathize,
Unless you start to empathize,
Unless you hear their muffled cries,
Stand with truth, and question why;
Unless you see what some pulpit denies,
Unless you stop hating and let love arise,
They'll always see through your crass disguise,
And despise you for all your self-righteous lies.

POEMS:

GARY GAFFNEY

Gary Gaffney is Professor Emeritus, Art Academy of Cincinnati, where he taught both academic and studio courses. He has exhibited his work nationally and internationally and is the author of five books,

Contact: ggaffney@artacademy.edu

MAURICE MATTEI

Maurice Mattei is a songwriter, photographer and sketch artist. He occasionally writes poems. His work has been viewed, reviewed and misconstrued both nationally and internationally. His current album of 25 new songs is called "*JUNGALINGLE*" and is available on Bandcamp.

Contact: mauricemattei@gmail.com; mmattei.com

DRAWING:

ANISHA KANAKIA SANGHANI

Anisha Kanakia Sanghani is a multidisciplinary artist based in Cincinnati, Ohio. She has a BFA from DAAP/UC, and a strong work experience in Graphic Design, Textile Designing and Printing. She is presently working as an Art Educator for several local art centers and organizations. Having spent her childhood in Mumbai, India, Anisha's artwork references both Indian and Western cultures.

Contact: anisha.k.sanghani@gmail.com; anishakanakia.com



Lucre

(by *Maurice Mattei*)

Reading Maccabees
As the wars rage on
Countless miseries
In a world gone wrong

Here the sun shines
We sit and fiddle
Far from land mines
In the middle

Between the dead
And those still living
While up ahead
Wheels are spinning

Galloping horses
And painted clowns
Checking my sources
I soon found

Behind the sashes
And regal masks
Are muzzle flashes
And poison gas

Bodies charred
Beyond description
Faces marred
And odd convictions

That such pursuits
Measure for measure
Are worth salutes
Worth all such treasures

On blood-soaked ground
Where arrant limbs
Of children found
Then lost again

Among the rubble
Beneath the concrete
Small bodies huddle
In cratered backstreets

As flags are waving
And profits soar
Of those seen bathing
On sun-drenched shores

Immersed in plunder
And ill-earned fortune
Oh, the wonder
The ceaseless portions

Of caverns filled
With jewels and gold
Culled from those killed
And weapons sold

To highest bidders
Of all degrees
Such are the rigors
Of such as these

Behind the curtain
Beyond our reach
One thing is certain
The past will teach

These vain beliefs
That you may cherish
Are blank motifs
That soon will perish

War

(by *Gary Gaffney*)

The cold, bloody axe
Splits them again, choosing hate
As their engagement

Peace is buried now
In decades of sand and dust
While deep fear takes root

Who will remind us
We are all human beings
And that is what counts

War is a failure
To speak for humanity
Letting weapons talk

Mounds of bloody flesh
Dead children in mother's arms
Will not deter them

Children are fodder
Hostages are brutalized
No one thinks of love

This is human beings
Shedding their right to glory
For the choice to kill

The sane have no voice
The peacemakers are stifled
War's engine prevails

This is all of us
What we keep choosing to be
Noble words seem cheap

POEMS:

SUSAN F GLASSMEYER

Susan F. Glassmeyer is the codirector of the Holistic Health Center of Cincinnati where she works as a somatic therapist. Susan was named Ohio Poet of the Year in 2018 for her first collection of poetry, *Invisible Fish* (Dos Madres Press). Her work has appeared in *Rattle*, *JAMA*, and other notable publications.

Contact: susanglassmeyer.com

MARY-JANE NEWBORN

Mary-Jane Newborn is a native Cincinnati, Liberation vegan, VeganEarth volunteer, Certified Master Recycler, Little Free Librarian, Reiki Master, and extreme composter. Mary-Jane modeled 26 years for art classes. She lives in a Certified Natural Wildlife Habitat. She loves to laugh and make others laugh.

Contact: newbornmaryjane@gmail.com

DRAWING:

ANNA-GRACE TRACY

Anna-Grace Tracy is an illustrator based out of Cincinnati. Her work focuses on creating a safe space for herself and others through expressive portraits, fantasy worlds, and the dualities of life and death. Anna-Grace loves learning new techniques and mediums and trying new things.

Contact: ghostless.net; IG: [@ghostlessart](https://www.instagram.com/ghostlessart)



How To Kill Time

(by *Susan F. Glassmeyer*)

Time
is a life form

gavaged
like a goose

force-fed
beyond hunger

gorged by going
and getting and doing

until its liver
obese with busyness

bursts.

SNAP Judgment

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

For I was hungry and you gave me...

a form to fill in with my name and address
and social security number and date of birth,
and the names and social security numbers
and dates of birth of every person in my household,
with copies of photo I.D.'s, and birth certificates
or naturalization papers for myself and all such persons,
plus award letters and/or pay slips and/or
tax returns, and bank statements and
disclosures of any other assets,
plus rent receipts or mortgage payments,
plus copies of utility bills, medical expenses,
and insurance premiums, and,
after all documentation is returned,
and my application has been processed,
I will be issued an electronic bank transfer card
which I can use at any authorized retailer
that can afford the installation and use of
the technology necessary to accept it,
to buy food so that finally I will be able

... to eat!

Dear Amoral Cooking Show

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

Since you are eager to facilitate
the preparation for consumption
of any life form that grows,
or walks or flies or swims or slithers
anywhere on Earth,
with no apparent concern or squeamishness,
I have a question for you:
Can you give me some tips?

I'm planning a party to celebrate a birth
and we would like to welcome our newest guest
by feasting on their sloughed-off placenta,
as some tribes traditionally do,
literally incorporating the latest member.

So, can you suggest some recipes
for cooking this slab of meat?
Also, would you happen to know if it is kosher
to use some of the mother's milk
among the ingredients?
Thanks so much! Looking forward to a tasty treat.
P.S. Make sure it's ethically vegan!

Transgressions

(by *Mary-Jane Newborn*)

Homophobes, who actually hate their own
androgynous nipples, selves,
flash protest drag shows nationwide,
their pretext being to protect children.
Who protects children from them?
What would they make of traditional British pantomime?
These beloved winter holiday shows feature characters
like the Dame, a buffoonish man dressed in
voluminous skirts and wigs,
and the Principal Boy, a hero played by a woman,
like Mary Martin as Peter Pan,
who didn't want to transition into a man.
And how about women Santas?
Whose lap presents more peril?
What about Tootsie, Madame Doubtfire, both Dames,
or, heaven forbid, Victor, Victoria?
L. Frank Baum wrote about Ozma of Oz,
who as an infant was enchanted into a boy
and later disenchanting back into a girl.
For those salacious listers of banned books
who drool to save unemancipated minors
from exposure to any idea that incenses aroused censors,
some like it hot, some like to pack heat,
and some like to throw hot water.
Saints preserve us from Shakespeare in whose own time
all roles were played by men, and who created
cross dressing comedies, with midsummer bestiality
thrown in.
Pruritents, know thyself.

POEMS:

ELENA ESTELLA GREEN

Elena Estella Green is a poet and native New Yorker. She studied creative writing at NYU Gallatin School. This past summer she received a co-fellowship with The Well and her work has been included in several anthologies.

Contact: eegpoet@aol.com

GIFTED JOHNSON-WILKINSON

Gifted Johnson-Wilkinson's artistic creations started about 23 years ago. She is the sponsor and coach for the *Poetry Out Loud* National Arts Education program 2023-24, and the author of a 3-book series, *My 30* collection. Gifted has used her talents to become a catalyst to expand interest and access to poetry..

Contact: giftedpoetry@gmail.com

SHARON LOUALLEN

Sharon Louallen is an Ohio-based Artist, a healer in Reiki Energy, a hypnotherapist, and a Feng Shui Practitioner. Her love of writing started in Soho, NYC & Brooklyn Writing workshops. She has a BFA from Miami University, Ohio, and holds an AA from Virginia Marti School of Fashion Merchandising.

Contact: shamarlou@gmail.com

DRAWING:

STEVE GROH

Steve Groh has been teaching art and photography for almost 30 years and most of that time at Oak Hills High School. He graduated from Bowling Green State University with a BFA in graphic design and later from UC with a Master of Arts in Art Education. Steve is a husband, father, and avid hiker.

Contact: sgroh8386@gmail.com; IG: @stevieg513



The Pen and the Poem (an Ars Poetica)

(by *Elena Estella Green*)

Praise to the life that brought me into this world.
A beautiful blue planet seen from space.
Without borders or conflict, without arguments
Born from misunderstanding or prejudice.

A silent sphere of night and day, A change of seasons,
A change of heart. Praise you sun that rises everyday
and the night moon emerging in phases like the
Changeable moods she inspires.

Praise the hours of the day.
Sometimes long. Sometimes fleeting.
The geese flying home overhead
Their call signals evening.

Praise to the breath that fills
The empty spaces
The engine of song
And the beginning of words.

Praise the pen and the poem
And the paper that holds them.
Thoughts and images flourish
Like a field of sunflowers.

The seeds nourish a new generation
Of creatives praising where they came from.
A legacy of art, a notion of destiny
Presenting everything from virtue to vice.

Praise to the force inside
Praise to eternity
The idea of forever that
Gives rise to the brown sparrow

And the leviathan.
A lasting phrase
A kind gesture
Worthy to set among the stars.

Tied the Moon

(by *Gifted Johnson-Wilkinson*)

Yesterday I tied the moon
To my waist

Allowed it to sweep me off my feet
Skipping along the stars
Sunken eyes popped
As we floated high above
The mountain of bills
Bangles of pain dropping out
My pockets like loose
Change

Iridescent mustangs ran free cloud
To cloud and I caught a ride
Wrangled the calm of his wild
And steered his wander
Of marshmallow tulips
Leaving singed black fairy soot
Along our mirrored trail

Golden dust falls
Through the silence of the
Pale purple sky
Feeding the hunger of
Stale brown grass
In the middle of the field
To nowhere
Where people gather to fill
Their cups full of leftover
Dreams

Yesterday I tied the moon to my waist
So that I could have its magnificent
Shine on my every climb

Mother Earth

(by *Sharon Louallen*)

Mother Earth speaks in melodic, tones, and gestures.
She gives to me and I listen,
With my hands, feet, and spirit.
Sometimes the Earth talks with passion
When the rain pours down from the sky.
Sometimes the tree talks as it burrows in the wind.
Animals dance with each other
In the forest of enchantment;
Water finds a way to the drought;
Sometimes the sun scorches the living
Yet comforts my head in the heat of midday afternoon.
The quartered moon hides behind a cloud,
Appearing full and voluptuous.
The sand between my toes
On a spring-like summer day
Makes me want to dance alone.
Sometimes the balance of color from the sky
To the depths of the ocean's eye, makes me
want to fly in the rhythm of a Senegalese seagull.
Subtle waves splash against my skin
And I want to cry.
Sometimes an orange-red leaf wedges a home
In the crevasses of a wet rock
Metamorphosizing itself
Into an ancient fossilized design.
I want to be free,
Free from the measured judgments of others
Who mirror themselves by what they call
Human and call myself the geranium,
The violet, the rose.

POEMS:

NIKKI B GROEN

Nikki B. Groen is an inspiring advocate for mental health and SA victims. Despite the shadows she has lived in for most of her life, she speaks out to give others courage and hope. As a multiple trauma survivor with CPTSD, she shares the most painful parts of herself to show that healing is possible.

Contact: nicolebgroen@gmail.com

BRANDY LOCKABY

Brandy Lockaby, founder of Brand Y Design, blends corporate canvases with collective consciousness. An artistic activist, she believes magic is made at the intersection of empathy and creativity. At night, she retreats to her bathtub for poetic expression and deep healing. As a mother, she is committed to creating a more beautiful and equitable world.

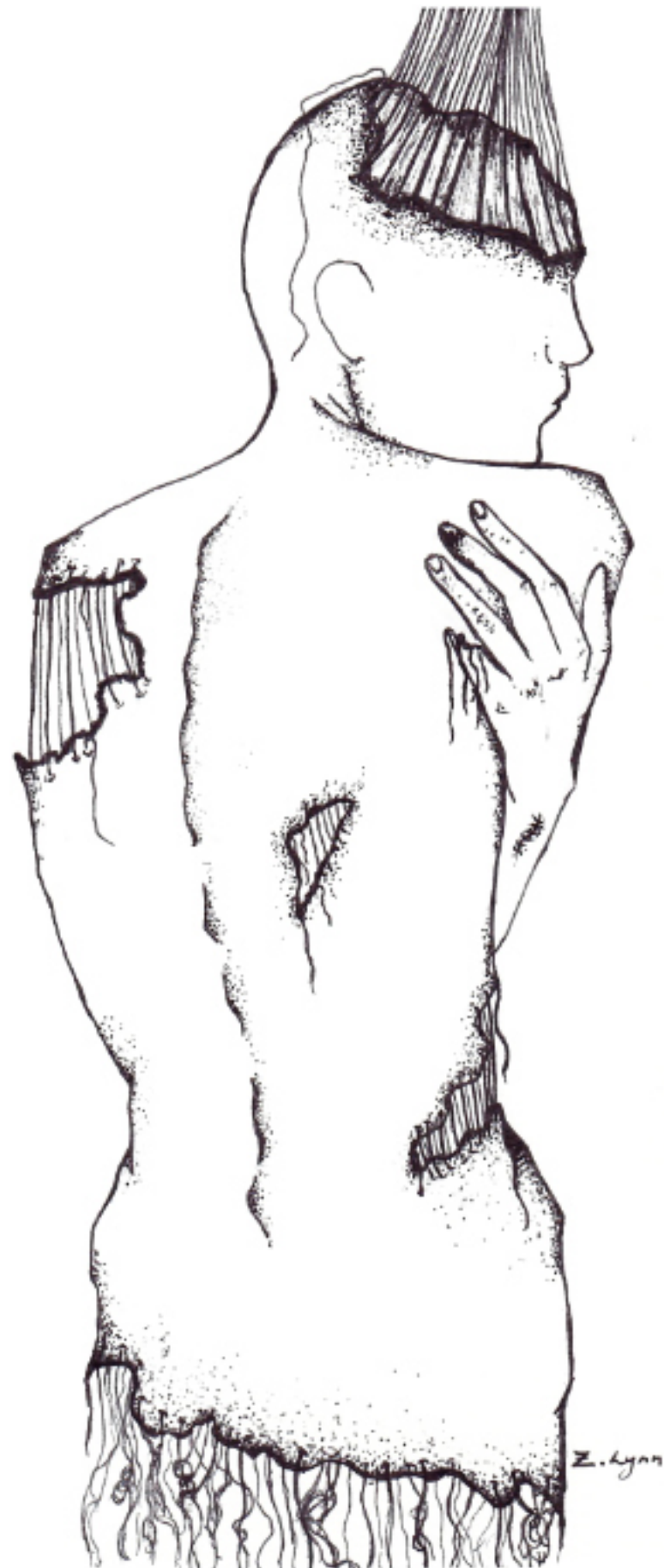
Contact: brandy@brand-y-design.com

DRAWING:

ZOË LYNN

Zoë Lynn, an Ohio-based multimedia artist, often uses found, secondhand, or trash material to create tactile sculptural pieces. She has a BFA in Studio Art and Art Therapy from Miami University, Oxford, Ohio, and her background in psychology and Art Therapy heavily influences her practice and her exploration of themes related to identity, trauma, and the human experience. Her hope is to encourage empathy for the realities of womanhood, girlhood, and personhood.

Contact: zlynnstudios@gmail.com; zlynnstudios.com; IG: [zlynnstudios](https://www.instagram.com/zlynnstudios)



No Poetic Words

(by **Nikki B. Groen**)

There are no poetic words
 That will reflect the pain
 That fill my body
 That haunt my dreams
 And torment
 My living hours
 That will ever come close
 To describe
 The fire
 That burns inside
 That cries for the baby
 Denied in her mother's womb
 Abandoned by a man
 Promised to protect her
 Screams for the toddler
 Molested every nap time
 Fondled on the school bus
 By boys who grabbed
 Whatever they wanted
 Holds tight
 The mother raped
 While out with "friends"
 Who shouldn't have gone dancing
 Or worn a dress
 Because "boys will be boys"
 Even those who seem like your brothers
 Have no problem
 Taking their drunk "sister" home
 Without her purse
 Without her keys
 Without her dignity
 She wakes with someone on top of her
 Bruises all over her body
 And told that she "wanted it"
 There are no poetic words
 For the humiliation
 Of having your rapist drive you to
 Your ex-husband's house
 To pick up your daughter
 Or the shame of being raped
 While your child lay in the next room
 There are no poetic words
 For continued trauma

To the body
 Of this poor, unfortunate soul
 Who finally was brave enough
 To listen to the girls
 And women screaming
 Inside her many masks
 When she finally heard enough "me toos"
 Believed she was not crazy
 When our so-called President
 Bragged about grabbing pussy
 When black men
 Are suffocated on the streets
 When a virus spreads over the entire world
 There are no poetic words
 Describing how hard this woman worked
 To keep herself alive
 To provide for her girls
 To protect them
 To heal herself
 To illustrate how her bravery was met
 With a mouth full of medicine
 There are no poetic words
 That will paint
 What a medically induced mania feels like
 Or to replicate how the scream
 "Can you hear me now?"
 Is met with twelve
 Who sedate her again
 Drug her
 Lifeless
 On a filthy mattress again
 In a public bathroom
 There are no poetic words
 To fill this 600-word poem
 To tell the story about how this mother
 Fought tirelessly
 Despite everything
 Everywhere telling her
 It is easier to give up
 There are no poetic words
 That reflect the pride I have for her
 Advocating for herself again and again
 Who spent so much of her earnings
 To help those girls inside her
 To heal a body set on fire
 Being watched and warming on-lookers

There are no poetic words
 To unpack what it feels like to come forward
 To report a rape that happened twelve years ago
 At Cincinnati District One
 In a public setting
 To Tweetle-Dee and Tweetle-Dumb
 Who insist you drive by the house
 where you were raped
 To get the address so they could do their jobs
 There are no poetic words
 To describe the invisible stack of reports
 The officer shows you with his hands
 How long it will take the detective to get to your case
 To describe the horror of our modern justice system
 Or articulate the trauma
 Of the toll it takes on a body
 Barely hanging on
 To do a bunch of detective work
 For a detective who
 Rejects all of your evidence
 That you brought, because she told you could
 When she had no interest in seeing any of it
 There are no poetic words
 For the immense sorrow hearing
 Your rapist's lawyer declined an interview
 And that's all he has to do
 To get away with it
 When the detective only tries calling
 Others there for a single week
 Before she gives up
 There are no poetic words

That Hug

(by *Brandy Lockaby*)

I woke up this morning
 With you on my mind
 The last time I saw you
 You hugged me so tightly
 With a grip so fierce
 Unlike anything
 I've ever experienced before
 It didn't need words to say
 "I'm glad you're still here"
 "I'm glad we're both here"
 They said with their bodies
 There was too much sorrow around
 To acknowledge
 Our own painful journeys out loud
 But that hug never left me
 I woke up today
 Hungry for that hug
 To be squeezed so firmly
 By someone I know would protect me
 By someone who sees me
 Who understands
 That under my smiling selfie
 I'm really not "fine"
 I'm better
 But I'm not as good as I might say
 I often wonder
 If I were to remove all the medical masks
 What would that un-numbed girl say?
 Would she speak, or would her scream
 Be so piercing that human eardrums
 Shatter as the first note left her mouth?
 I imagine she would be ablaze
 A lava monster
 Like Te Kā
 "The burning one"
 They made her a villain, you see
 Humans stole her heart long ago
 And refuse to give it back
 She's been violated again and again
 And again
 Abandoned
 Resented

Neglected
 Molested
 Raped
 Betrayed
 Drugged
 Left for dead
 And forced to smile about it
 Her rage and her pain
 Forced to bellow deep below
 Where only one girl can hear her
 In her dreams,
 Nightmares,
 When she's left alone,
 Her scream never leaves
 Sometimes, I think I'm doing right
 By muffling that girl
 Avoiding her anger
 Transforming it like alchemy
 Into something more palatable
 More pleasant
 More flowery
 Can I till that burned-out ash into soil?
 Is that what I should be doing?
 A place where flowers grow?
 This vision, sweet
 Like the happy ending, we all wait for
 But like the Disney classics
 It's not reality
 And is more harmful
 To slap happy bandaids
 Sew that screaming girl's mouth shut
 Wait for her to explode
 Wait for that bomb inside her
 To finally release 40 years of bondage
 Slavery to a society
 Who can only see her smile
 Look beautiful
 Act happy
 Can you imagine this girl's insides
 Splattering all over
 The face of an innocent passerby?
 Are they innocent?
 Or are they simply zombies?
 Too afraid to be present with pain
 Head down in a virtual reality device
 Pretending
 Day in and day out

Watching dead children
 Be ignored across the world
 "Too much"
 "Shove that into a corner somewhere"
 Maybe under a beautiful new rug
 To dress up our bedroom
 "Yeah, we can DIY that...right out of our brain,"
 So we think
 Knowing it will never go away
 Simply hiding under a pile
 Of material distractions
 Now I think back to that hug
 And wonder
 What would happen
 If two people with PTSD truly collided?
 Could we be trusted to hug again?
 Or would our bodies erupt instantaneously?
 Like a static charge turned atomic bomb
 What if that squeeze shattered
 Our bodies
 Our souls
 All over those nearby?
 Like a suicide bomber
 Everyone covered in blood
 In bits of flesh
 "Oh, there is her earring"
 "I got a piece of her hair"
 "I found a toenail"
 "A tooth got logged in my check," he said
 "Is that a police badge?"
 "How fun! We can dress up like a cop
 For Halloween this year!"
 They wipe the blood away
 Get out their phones
 And swipe until they find
 Something more pleasant
 A thumb hits a 'like'
 A smiling girl
 "Aw, Isn't she pretty!"
 "I wish I could be just like her."

POEMS:

RICHARD HAGUE

Richard Hague has been writing, teaching, and leading workshops in northern Kentucky and Cincinnati for 54 years. His latest poetry collection, *Continued Cases* (Dos Madres Press 2023) contains nearly a dozen poems originally published in various editions of *For A Better World*.

Contact: haguekort@fuse.net

MICHAEL J OLSON

Michael J Olson is an author from Cincinnati, Ohio. His first full length poetry book, *In the Tall Grasses*, will be published by Finishing Line Press in June 2024. Michael holds a degree in Creative Writing from the University of Arizona and currently leads the Cincinnati Writer's Project poetry workshops.

Contact: mo45069@yahoo.com

DRAWING:

JAMES OBERSCHLAKE

James Oberschlake has been creating art for over thirty years and received his MFA in 2011. Whether using a pencil, paint brush, or an engraving tool, his creative process stems mostly from "automatic drawing", where an image starts with light, random marks and is formed without a preconceived idea. In recent years, he has started working under a microscope, opening new creative avenues.

Contact: jeoberschlake@gmail.com



Why They Starved

(by *Richard Hague*)

*"The point is there ain't no point."
—Cormac McCarthy*

Buried beneath their school years,
their alphabets and times tables,
their scoldings and venial sins,
something they could
never count or say: something
with no color, no texture,
something composed of zeros
mooning off into infinities.
Inside them
nothing they could speak
or count on. Nothing
they could spell or number.
Nothing they could brush
the dust off. Nothing
they could show to friends.
Nothing addable nor nullable.
Nothing growing lesser
every day, o shrinking
down to dot, dot
to simple atom
they could see through.
This, they came to
understand
was it. It.
The ungraspable,
the loss that even
to its own loss
is lost.

It Didn't Matter Their Fangs

(by *Michael J Olson*)

It didn't matter
our lambs were shorn
when the wolves bared fang
didn't matter
it was easy to make them bleed
they would bleed anyway

it didn't matter
we wouldn't wall them,
would not shepherd them
wolves always find a way
to quiet their mad hunger
they come anyway

it didn't matter
their fangs were formed to make things bleed
when the school bells rang
didn't matter
it was forbidden for mad wolves to bare them
they bared them anyway

it didn't matter
when our young ones screamed
others only heard a whisper
didn't matter
we didn't know to help the mad wolves
they would be mad anyway

it didn't matter
we thought our young mattered
that we saw them grow out of things before
knowing what they could grow into
the wolves still came
the mad wolves fed anyway

what matters now
less wool to warm us
more loss to lose us
more blame, more hate to hold us
the hunger still comes
it comes anyway

The Scariest Show in Town

(by **Michael J Olson**)

Assume the fetal position.
You'll need this to protect what matters.

Every night – something seen on evening news
keeps my shredded city sobbing.

Somewhere another mother's son
feeling not enough decides to become enough.
He will be enough for the many
his bullets find.

Unforgiven.

Somewhere in the dark a gay man disconnects
from his place in the world
and falls
off its edge into melancholy's abyss.

Unloved.

Across the street and down it
dogs and doglike
kicked by whiskey-blooded men
lick their wounds with echoed howls.

Unanswered.

We are here, safe, in fetal position,
sunken into cushions overstuffed with indifference

my shredded city sobbing
its weary peoples – no sleep, no sleeping,
hoarders collecting sadness in scattered jars,
hiding love in buried armoires,

Unwanted.

and in the comfort of gutters –
etceteras of my city weeping without name.
To not know the sickness next to them
they wear their moonshine shields.

Unseen.

but in this quiet space between eye and
storm
living a quiet ignorance
we are safe in fetal pose
distant from what matters.

The Equation Solved at the End of the World

(by **Michael J Olson**)

I mastered math in a peculiar way
adding up atrocities and subtracting
apathies —
all multiplied by a philosophy of forgetting
to solve the theorem of Armageddon

but all we need to do is watch as the soldier,
who, without grimace or tear
puts a bullet in the eye of an old man,
to know how this world will end.

This old man crossing the street
to comfort a child weeping,
this enemy, built for this soldier
of one man's tinker toys of ego and fear —

this theorem of Armageddon proved
only with this ignorance,
this riddle of ignorance
solved only with our living in each other's
arms.

POEMS:

MICHAEL HENSON

Michael Henson is the author of six books of fiction and four collections of poetry. His most recent book is a satirical novella, *The Triumphal Descent of Donald J. Trump, as Recounted to the Archangel Gabriel, from a Manuscript Discovered, Edited, and Translated from the Original Aramaic by Michael Henson* from John Brown Press.

Contact: michaelhenson642@gmail.com

LARRY SIMPSON

Larry Simpson has recently been writing Haikus inspired by his nature photography.

Contact: larrycsimpson@gmail.com

DRAWING:

NICK FELARIS

Nick Felaris (aka Codex) is a multimedia artist from Toledo, OH. Drawing on his punk rock and graffiti backgrounds, he creates black-and-white universes involving abstract animal characters and punk culture. Nick received his BFA in printmaking and painting from Miami University, and he is currently a digital art graduate student at Bowling Green State University.

Contact: nickfelaris@hotmail.com; nickfelaris.myportfolio.com; linktr.ee/nickfelaris



COPEX

Charles Koch

(by *Michael Henson*)

This is a man
 whose purpose is as dark as his money.
 His copperhead tongue
 is slick with oil
 and his eye has an anthracite glitter.
 He bleeds oil.
 He coughs coal.
 He exhales methane.
 He lurks in the ideological shadows
 like a wraith out of legend
 to steal the breath of infants in their cradles.
 Ever arrogant, ever vigilant,
 he has aroused the ghosts of the Border Ruffians
 to bleed a new Kansas.
 Bleakest of weathermen,
 his hidden resolve
 is to crush all opposition
 in a cyclone of dollars.

He is the Corporate Witch of the fossil-fuel West.
 He mounts his broom
 and the monkeys flap their leathery wings.
 He cackles, and the cowardly lions of Congress
 start to shiver and twitch their tails.

Dorothy! Dorothy!
 Wake up and click your heels!

Heaven on Earth

(by *Larry Simpson*)

(A song without music.)

Sailors and explorers,
 Trekkers and poets
 and conquistadors,
 Search the whole world
 To find heaven on earth...

Chorus:

..... but it all slips away,
 like a dream at the break of day,
 forgotten.

Princes and queens
 and all the kings-men
 built castles and gardens,
 statues and museums
 to create heaven on earth....

Chorus:

..... but it all slips away,
 like a dream at the break of day,
 forgotten.

Emperors of war,
 and their soldiers of fortune
 fought without virtue
 enduring hardship and torture
 to capture Heaven and earth....

Chorus:

..... but it all slips away,
 like a dream at the break of day,
 forgotten.

Pilgrims and pioneers
 Brought gunpowder and disease,
 Slaves and axes to cut trees
 Hopes and prayers and trails of tears
 Dreaming of heaven on earth....

Chorus:

..... but it all slips away,
 like a dream at the break of day,
 forgotten.

Dictators and liars,
 Politicians and deniers,
 Billionaires or maniacs
 Demagogues and autocrats
 Promise heaven on earth....

The Dream Children of Addison Mitchell McConnell III

(by *Michael Henson*)

What are the dreams
That await the sleep of Mitch McConnell?
Do children enter with their hungers?
Do they sit at the side of the road of dream
with their empty bowls
and their wide curious eyes?
The faces of these children are very serious;
these are children who do not play.
I believe they wait each day in their hidden places
along the congressional corridors,
hidden in the pedestals of the heroic torsos
or in the pages of the latest report.
They listen closely
as he takes counsel
with donors, with lobbyists,
and with the men who line their pockets
with congressional silver.
And when at last he reaches the end of his workday,
and his heels click along the marble walkways,
they follow him home
to the commodious house where he takes his rest.
They watch and they wait until,
after all the calls to more donors, more lobbyists,
he lays his wearied head, at last,
onto his expensive pillow.
There, they gather each night.
I fear they might stumble
into his commodious jowls
and be smothered under his multiple chins.
But they enter, like miners,
through the drift mouth of his ears
or down the haunted portals of his nostrils.
And there they begin to explore.
Their tiny encandled skulls
flicker in the catacombic corridors
and all along the calcified neurons of his cerebellum.
They tiptoe carefully to avoid
the pockets of methane and legislative obstruction
as they explore each lobe, from stem to cerebellum:
Frontal, temporal, parietal, and occipital,
through the fraught closets of the hypothalamus,
careful not to stumble
into the stagnant, trauma-riddled pools of his amygdala,

wherein lie the fraught tangles of its medial, basolateral
and fearfully anterior subnuclei
and into the committee rooms of the medulla oblongata.
There they observe the nodes of prevarication and avarice,
the glands of duplicity, the ganglia of manipulation
and those synapses
in which are sparked the neural signals
for insult and vituperation.
They continue in their nightlong forensic investigations,
to search, hopelessly,
amid the odor of carbide and conspiracy,
for any hint,
any flickering shard
of the dismal wreckage of a soul.

Steve Bannon

(by *Michael Henson*)

Old Stubble-Jaw
Big Brother Graybeard
Bristle-bearded fabulist.
Blustermaster
Catastrofactor
Chaos captain.
Carhartt carnivore
Fauxbilly philosophe
Rumpled stealskin,
Spinning lies into gold.
Master of the language of calamity.
Misreader of history,
He settles into his task of
Miswriting our story
with that ever-self-satisfied smile.
He fattens on our befuddlement.
Herald of unhinging,
He can smell the ink on the darkest of dollars
and he knows where the eucharistic bread is buttered.
Bull-neck bully in the china shop of a nation,
he scans the wreckage and the rubble.
There, among the shattered crystal
and the bone and the blood,
he captures what he covets
with a quick, adhesive flick
of his thick, reptilian tongue.

POEMS:

SUE NEUFARTH HOWARD

Sue Neufarth Howard, a poet and visual artist and a former Cincinnati, now resides in Long Beach, CA. She is a past member of Greater Cincinnati Writers League (GCWL) and Linton Street Writers. Her poems have been published.

Contact: fhunt10jhkh@yahoo.com

CAROLE STOKES-BREWER

Carole Stokes-Brewer is a psychotherapist, poet, and author. Her passion is to use words to inspire and bring clarity to the human experience through storytelling. She uses the power of empathy to create a space where individuals can navigate the depths of self-discovery.

Contact: cstokes@cinci.rr.com

NOEL ZEISER

Noel Zeiser has been a member of the Monday Morning Writers Group for over ten years. She loves to write poetry and has published two books: *The Pearl Street Flood*, the story of her father's experience during the 1937 Ohio River flood, and *Salute the Moon*, a collection of poetry.

Contact: noelzzeiser@gmail.com

DRAWING:

AMY BOGARD

Amy Bogard is an artist and traveler whose work explores the concepts of attention, the power of place and inherent beauty. Based in Cincinnati, Amy can often be found teaching and painting in far flung places.

Contact: abeefrnd@gmail.com; amybogard.com; IG: @amybogardartist



There Is Joy in the World

(by Sue Neufarth Howard)

Ready to be found
in quiet and noisy places
waiting patiently to be noticed
to be rejoiced
waiting for our attention

What keeps us
from the world's despair
what keeps us alive
amongst evil and trouble
everywhere

Quietly waiting
for us to discover
with a sparkle of beauty
we find or create

In beauty resides
the soul nurturing joy
and when there is joy
hope will not die.

Give Hope a Life

(by Sue Neufarth Howard)

Hope without help
without heart
without heft big or small
transparent
fleeting as a whisper
From the heart
to the hand, the help,
ever so small
sparks for reaction
one enough to light a fire
that spreads to Hope

Trying Out Justice

(by Noel Zeiser)

Like the sun
shining on my face
through the window, I feel
your presence, Lord,
blessing me
on this cold winter day.
Your peace enters
my worrying heart. I rest
for I know you are with me
fully and completely,
as a baby in
her mother's womb.

Inhaling and exhaling,
you are breath
always with me
though I am but a child
grasping a rattle one second,
dropping it the next,
weeping, then laughing.

Lulled by your morning
sweetness and comfort,
yet plagued by darkness
at every dusk,
my faith slips away and
I grow fretful.

I push you away,
but you refuse to leave.
I long for daybreak again
and yesterday's cozy warmth.

You ask for more.

I Hunger

(by *Carole Stokes-Brewer*)

Within the caverns of an empty space,
A dormant hunger rises
With a yearning for living.

Its plea echoes
Unheard

I HUNGER

I hunger
for the day when the sun's golden rays wash over me, quenching my thirst and warming my soul.

I hunger
for an adventure like a book with blank pages, waiting to be filled with unforgettable stories and captivating characters.

I hunger
for a light to shine upon the darkness chasing all shadows away to leave an imprint of fulfillment.

I hunger
for the beauty in all things forgotten, like a field of wildflowers growing in forgotten spaces.

I hunger
for the Gods, mysterious and unknown, in realms of their own, to open crippled paths to find margins of forgotten hues.

I hunger
for a place empty of pain to wrap me in a blanket of never-ending fulfillment.

I hunger
to savor the sweet flavor of deliverance to free me from this suffocating grip.

I hunger
to uproot the seeds of weeds to sow vast fields of solitude that surpass all limits.

I hunger
to hold the sun-kissed heat of your hand before it slips away to create the soul of a community that unites the promises of life.

I hunger
for the moment to see a hungry child's rising experience like the watering of a wilting lily as it springs into life.

Within the caverns of an empty space,
A garden emerges transforming hunger into abundance
Answering the persistent cries.

Pleas of gratitude echo
They are heard.

POEMS:

NANCY K JENTSCH

Nancy K. Jentsch's poetry has appeared recently in *Amethyst Review*, *Braided Way* and *Verse-Virtual*. Her first poetry collection is *Between the Rows*. Her chapbook, *Authorized Visitors*, was published in 2017 (Cherry Grove Collections)

Contact: jentsch8.wixsite.com/my-site

JOE WAGNER

Joe Wagner was born in West Virginia. He enjoys non-fiction, exercise, and mountain biking where many last lines to a poem have been written. For him, poetry is a way to sort out the messages the universe seems to be conveying.

Contact: joe_wagner2003@hotmail.com

DRAWING:

PATRICE TRAUTH

Patrice Trauth is a Cincinnati studio artist working in Encaustic and Mixed Media. She is a member of the Encaustic Art Institute of New Mexico and was featured in the December 2023 issue of the Encaustics Art Magazine. Patrice has exhibited her paintings and assemblages locally and nationally. In addition to making art she was an art educator, teaching on the high school and college level. Patrice is interested in the connection between art and spirituality and art being a vehicle for this expression.

Contact: ptrauth8@gmail.com; patricetrauth.com



In Praise of Bridge Painters

(by *Nancy K. Jentsch*)

They mount their swing stage
as if entering a circus ring
to river waves' ovation.
Their feet proceed as boldly
as a model's on a Paris
runway, her colors, too,
chosen by others. They brush
their way from one state
to another, kneeling, bowing,
second-swiping missed spots
and always, always looking
up. Sky opens its bouquet
of clouds to bloom brilliant
blue. Warmth streams down
pro bono, catches beams
and bolts by radiant surprise.

Bridge painters take risks
you might not dare to
but risk takers are beyond
compare when they reach
from side to side of a divide,
connect opposing states
of mind—all under sky's
capricious clouds.

Inequation

(by *Nancy K. Jentsch*)

We think it can't happen here, happen
to us, that someone would offer our son
"ice" after he fills his tank. But we know
it can happen anywhere, happen even
here. What we think \neq what we know,
the equation's parenthetical factor being
(we need to be able to sleep at night).

Napoleon

(by *Joe Wagner*)

Two hundred years later
there are about that many books on the man
who's responsible for the deaths of millions.
But none on the farmer who cultivated
those Italian and Spanish fields they died in.
Fields that still look much the same today
and who feed millions, perhaps billions.
No books on the gardener
who grew the flower that went into a soldier's lapel.
Gardens that people walk through today
holding hands, laughing, and talking about tomorrow.

How many people would be around today if not for war?
If it wasn't for the Alexanders, Khans, Napoleons,
Hitlers, Stalins, Tojos, and Attilas.
If not for the genocide of millions by:
Sun, Pol Pot, Zedongs, Leopolds, and Pashas.
How many people would the unknown farmers have to feed?
Would they have books written about how much food they'd
grown?

When cataloging the two types of pruning and cultivation
there is way more importance put on murder,
than on planting a seed for the sun.

Bird's Egg

(by *Joe Wagner*)

More children killed in the classroom
the survivors taught the biggest lesson of their life,
skin as fragile as an eggshell
that lies broken on sidewalk.
I walk around it
like society walks around people killing children.

I ignore the eggshell,
to a job for money
that pays for a trip to another location.
A place I can go to think about the same things.
Watching food enter the mouth of friends,
and I think about the earth spinning and hurtling through space.
Why don't all the eggs go spinning to the ground?
When will it?

In the morning I wake to the bird's songs
They have forgotten about the eggshell on the sidewalk too.
or maybe that's the only choice they have.
To sing and fly. Looking for mates to share their song.
Until the apathy of science, or maybe the science of apathy
decides our fate.

POEMS:

HEIDI JOFFE

Heidi Joffe (M. Ed.) is a published poet and multimedia artist who crafts with fibers, clay, and words.

Contact: artjoffe@icloud.com

CAROL MARINO

Carol Marino has been journaling and writing poems since age 12. She holds a Bachelor of Fine Arts degree, and is a Family Medicine Physician.

Contact: marino@fuse.net

DRAWING:

KELLY MURRAY FRIGARD

Kelly Murray Frigard received her MFA in Inter media art from the University of Iowa. She has traveled widely to Sweden and Finland pursuing her interest in traditional art forms including weaving, knitting, spinning wool, and felting. In addition to her work in fiber, Kelly's work includes mixed media, metalsmithing, and drawing. She is a Professor of Fine Art at the University of Cincinnati, Clermont College.

Contact: kelly.frigard@gmail.com; kellymurrayfrigard.com



Birdtalk with Crocodile Tears

(by *Heidi Joffe*)

(*My Extinction Rebellion*)

Apples and honey for a sweet year,
and walnuts for your brain,
listen, it's still here, this earth
that we have seen seethe
and sublimate into a thousand
gaseous clouds. We felt tremors
that felled mountains, split open
and birthed the atlantic: the eden
beneath our feet
become the branches
of our thinning trees.

While some sprawled,
along riverbanks and lakes,
creatures of everglades, snaking
rivers through jungles, lurking
with scales, claws and teeth,

we have been mighty and small,
feathered brightly through all
turmoil of this terra firma,
mostly we fly above, among you,
our song, ancient notes of death
and rebirth, of life that surges,
expands, contracts and survives.

Catastrophic Failure

(by *Carol Marino*)

Sunshine glistens on the water into bright burning rays of reflected light.
Waves lap, mixing their music with the wind.
Pinene fills the air.
Blue sky
White clouds
Dark blue shining water.
Ohio in summer

The new summer skylines have a smokey haze.
Perhaps it's run of the mill pollution,
Perhaps it's wildfire smoke of an earthly demise.

More sunsets are orange and red like fire.
Perhaps it's the Earth burning,
Perhaps it's a glorious dusk.
I don't remember such intense red.

Dark white sky brightens behind a silhouette of branches.
Early dawn in black and white.
Branches develop brown and colors appear.
Sunrise.

Gray sky reaching down into gray fog.
Misty rain fills the air.
Weathermen use "gloomy" as a meteorologic term.
Ohio in winter

Misty gray rain
Wet sky.
Brown river, brown trees.
Brown on brown, gray on gray, wet on wet.

There is a beauty in it.
There is a beauty in the cold and the slush, in the mist and in the gray.
Quiet serenity, the ugly glooms.

Wind moves branches
Ever so slightly as if the branches make the wind rather than respond to it.
Beech leaves remain in a leafless forest.
The Ash trees are all fallen.

This morning I heard birds chirping like spring,
A blue jay, a finch, and a cardinal with nest building on their instinctual minds.
They are like canaries in a coal mine.
As long I hear signs of life I will appreciate.
Spring in January

Observation of the day plays in the background like music.
The Earth rotates into another day.
One day closer to the Earth being no longer compatible with humans,
The Earth's catastrophic failure.

POEMS:

JERRY JUDGE

Jerry Judge is a local poet who lives in Finneytown with his two superstar cats, Stormy and Spiderman. He has been a long-time supporter of SOS ART.

Contact: Jerryj871@aol.com

GARY WALTON

Gary Walton is the author of seven books of poetry, a book of short stories, and a novel *Prince of Sin City*. His work has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize twice and the Kentucky Literary Award. He was voted Third Place: "*Best Local Author*" Best of Cincinnati 2010 issue of City Beat magazine.

Contact: waltong@nku.edu

DRAWING:

TOM LOHRE

Tom Lohre is a life long, full time fine artist painting portraits, scenes and commissions. He created a Lego machine to paint, melting oil pastels on hot metal. His artwork in this publication uses that manner, creating beautiful transparent colors.

Contact: tom@tomlohre.com; tomlohre.com



Trumpless

(by *Jerry Judge*)

A famous man of the cloth
predicted it straight on.

He said the ex-President would ignite
from the fire of hatred in his soul.

During an Iowa rally speech, Trump spontaneously combusted -
only ashes and blackened bone fragments left behind.

The Reverend claimed he only spoke
in metaphor – he remains in hiding.

Hordes of MAGA followers descended
on the Capitol firing their guns aimlessly.

Progressives chose their words carefully –
trying not to smile about anything for weeks.

Scientists agreed that human spontaneous combustion
wasn't possible, but no outside source of fire was found.

The tape of Trump bursting into flame on YouTube
has been viewed over 700 million times.

Every member of the Republican House believed
Trump was murdered – no evidence of such ever found.

House Republicans hatched 47 conspiracy theories –
formed 47 fact-finding committees.

Biden won the 2024 election against Marjorie Taylor Greene.
The Republican party dissolved soon after.

Fifteen years have passed.
American democracy survived (barely).

There are now five political parties.
Most everyone can find a match.

It is very hot. Climate change chaos reigns.
We are finally united in the fight.

Trump's death remains a mystery.
Touchy subject – some say it was God's gift.

A Fable for the Trump Years

(by *Gary Walton*)

“...the problem never was the Democratic System-- the problem is you.”

--Charles Bukowski

A few of us knew
We shouldn't give
The chimpanzee
The pistol....

But it was the holidays,
Most of us were drunk,
Some were self-righteous
And angry—many were struck
Dumb, looking at their phones,
Mysterious algorithms telling
Them what to think like an
Electronic Mesmer, repeating
The memes again and again and
Again—Some of us thought that
We should see how much fun
Chimps with firearms could be....

But oh, the carnage!
Who could have conceived
So much blood on the carpet
And the smell of ripped flesh,
The overwhelming sound of
Wailing and weeping—the tears?

And what bad luck to have the
Petrol truck rumble by just as a shot
Ricocheted off the chandelier—through
The window, off the streetlight and into
The driver's left eye....

Grotesque enough in itself, until
The cab jumped the curb and split
The tanker into the church, spilling
Gasoline in rivers of fire down the
Street and into the elementary school....

Calls went out quickly for a monkey wrangler,
Someone who could corral the beast, but
By then the gun was empty and the chimp
Had scampered off, his own fur singed by
The flames, screeching, slapping its head
In terror and pain....

Now, as we patch ourselves up, performing
What triage we can—we are on our own since
Both the Police station and Engine houses are
Exploded; a few of us have had the presence
Of mind to hope upon hope that no one is
Craven enough to reload the gun—
But some of us, alas, are perennially
Perverse (if not suicidal) and the Chimp...
Well, let's face it—the Chimp will never learn.

Hope and Justice in New Jersey

(by *Gary Walton*)

I received a cryptic note from
A very old friend who had
Recently moved from the city
To the suburbs of New Jersey:

House ✓
Driveway ✓
Hopelessness ✓

Yet, it is clear to me that Hope
Is cheap, even in New Jersey—
One can buy it by the 50 lb sack
At Home Depot—it's more common

Than dry cement or potting soil,
More available than pink flamingos
Or bearded garden gnomes;
Even a legless beggar can hope while

Sleeping in an abandoned refrigerator box—
No, it's fulfillment that is in short supply;
One needs a jeweler's loupe to see it and
A carat scale to weigh its density—

Satisfaction is another matter entirely—
A spectroscope might define its light or
A particle accelerator might reveal its
Brief half life—

So these days I watch random YouTube
Videos of mid-century philosophers such as
Michael Foucault and Noam Chomsky
Debate the nature of justice:

Does it exist as an Ideal or is it merely
A mutable social construct?
I think of the young Black man during
A routine traffic stop just before his

Bare forehead meets the pavement with
A thud and wonder if he considers such
A rarified distinction as moot—
Then, there is the matter of social media

Algorithms—are they to be considered
Examples of postmodern pastiche or
Postpostmodern social engineering or
Just merely good ol' fashioned market

Capitalism dancing down the lane in
A new hat and gloves?
And what of the virtual fetish of Bit Coin,
Non-fungible tokens, internet influencers,

Or digital wagering on everything from
Texas Hold'em poker to high school spelling
Bees....So I think, in the end, perhaps

My friend is right about New Jersey—
And perhaps this is not the time
Nor is it the place to find justice, much less hope.

Hunger

(a tableau)

(by **Gary Walton**)

“Homeless, homeless...Moonlight sleeping on a midnight lake.”
--Paul Simon

The old man with the purple cotton
Cap, in the scruffy Navy Pea coat
Holding the cardboard Help! Homeless
Sign is not a Hopper painting, no matter

How isolated he appears against the
Dirty gray wall of the Everything For
A Dollar store—his collar is turned up
To ward off the icy drizzle floating down

In slicing brittle sheets onto the blue
Bruises of his face this foggy January day—
Kerouac would dub him “beat,” suggesting
An apotheosis of his pain to a sacred state

Of beatitude, a spirit akin to Christ on the
Cross as in those images depicted by Caravaggio
And hung in the palazzo of Cardinal Del Monte,
All the while improvising a stream of consciousness

Line in the manner of Jazz saxophonist Zoot Sims—
Ginsberg, for his part, would invoke William Blake and
Allegorize each grimy digit as a transcendent
Sunflower and remind us each of the Buddhist

Koan pointing to all life as suffering, singing
“Hare Krishna, Hara Rama” while giggling to himself;
Yet, a man is not a poem regardless of what
Walt Whitman says, nor is he a daub of paint

No matter how artfully arranged and if by some
Miracle we could crawl behind the eyes of this
Sojourner, we might find that to be homeless
Is to be naked without a roof, a reluctant supplicant

To the whims of the indifferent skies and that
Freedom is just a cipher people use to abuse one another
And that hunger is as real as a white hot coal burning
Its way through an empty aching belly.

POEMS:

BLANCHE SAFFRON KABENGELE

Blanche Saffron Kabengele developed a love for books working as a Shelves in the Children’s Room Public Library Main Branch, where she also read during Story Hour. Blanche holds a doctorate in Educational Studies, College of Education, UC. She lives in Cincinnati, with her husband Peter, and enjoys traveling and writing poetry.

Contact: blkabengele@gmail.com

MOPOETRY PHILLIPS

MoPoetry Phillips is an international spoken word and teaching artist. She is the owner of Regal Rhythms Poetry and the President of Arts Equity Collective. In addition, she is the Community Engagement Manager at WordPlay Cincy. MoPoetry has dedicated her life to trauma-informed, arts integration and connecting artists to opportunities.

Contact: 1mopoetry@gmail.com

DRAWING:

CAROL MACKEY ANDRULEVICH

With a passion for painting and drawing subjects embodying peace and freedom, Carol Mackey Andrulevich aims to prophetically translate her spiritual beliefs from the unseen to the physical world. Having recently relocated from Panama City, FL, to Cincinnati, she has showcased her work in multiple galleries. Carol is an active member of the Cincinnati Art Club and the Cincinnati Women’s Art Club. She is a retired teacher and professor.

Contact: iichronicles@hotmail.com; IG: [@carolmackeyandrulovich](https://www.instagram.com/carolmackeyandrulovich)



Beat Red Black White and Blue: A Poetic Dialogue

(by *Blanche Saffron Kabengele*)

Middle Passage Deceit

We taking you boys and girls, on a boat ride, but don't worry, you gonna like it.

There gonna be work, but you're used to working, and when you finish, we gone make you free, and civilized, like. And you gone like it, but nothing come without hard work,

so work hard and be free and civilized, not like those savages back, where you come from.

You gonna speak English. Gonna wear clothes. And we gone let you be with us, which is certainly better than that place you, came from.

South of the Mason Dixon Line's Fallen Glory

The south with its callous genteel gloved arrogance all bedecked in the sweat of others lies they telling about how Old Glory ain't gonna rise again if we get back what we lost.

Wan't our fault, those good for nothings would've made poor spittle out of the Colonel's mansion "if he hadn't pushed em' like he did."

"But kind Suh", dashing walk about a yellow Scarlet made a sash sashet ing the narrow neck of a gentlemen's striking waist, keeping a true lady's secrets held

behind a fan. Keeping a fan fanning. Keeping vapors and freckles at southern styled bay, curtsying this way that starched to the hilt fancy.

if that ain't a lady I'll wager my way off the bottom rung.

"Ye be now, in Yankee territory!"

All that cotton gone make them think they higher than they think they already are, making us second, even if we don't have the heat nor them subordinates like they do.

What are we going to do. "Why stop em'. After all we can use the fact that slavery is an abomination on the reputation of this nation think they gone make us second?" cotton or not cotton, don't forget, we got all them Micks a coming hungry off the boat every day, let's send them right away all the way down Dixie to protect our right to be first.

Now here we all are today

All smoked up, about a flag smeared red, white, should include some black, screened in the blues. about a fickle flag fluttering, blinding an eagle in flight.

Reparations

(by *MoPoetry Phillips*)

Repay me for being underpaid,
The micro aggressions
the scathing looks,
for every time I walked away
appearing to be unscathed.
Repay me
for never accepting me
as your equal.
Repay my people,
especially our men,
for making incarceration
a slavery sequel.
Repay me for failing to promote me,
for your insubordination
when I was put in charge.
Repay me for taking credit for things I created
the blatant disregard.
Repay me for always weighing my words on an unjust scale,
Repay me for the times you gave it to me,
but I didn't tell you
to go to hell.
Repay me for always thinking you are right and
I am wrong,
Repay me
double overtime
this has gone on
too long!
Repay me for feeling
I'm a threat
while threatening me with
"stand your ground."
Repay me for every person who feared me
when I was around.
Repay me for the lack of eye contact and acting like I'm invisible.
While you say,
(hand on your heart)
"One nation under God indivisible."
Repay me for your patriotism that patronizes my Black pride.
Repay me for
racist broken systems
set against me
while my reparations are spent to get you higher
rents from my neighborhoods you gentrified.

Repay me
for the whip marks
on my ancestors' backs,
black tax, and
police brutality.
Repay me like you've given reparations to other nationalities.
Repay me for the Fugitive Slave laws that had us traveling
from house to house that were on the Green Book,
running Underground.
Repay me,
Because, even today,
there are still
Sundown towns!

This poem could go on forever,
Because the math ain't mathin' even though
I'm a Mathematician.
Consider this poem
a Demand Letter,
an invoice,
a requisition!

wake up

(by **Blanche Saffron Kabengele**)

copyright *TS*, no, not *Elliott*. and if
you guessed him you were wrong,

the same as *Time* magazine did.
it's a time for war again. like when

folks would say things like
the herd needs thinning, once again,

as all of us we ponder the madness.
as if disease wasn't enough.

as if the two big *C's* *COVID*,
and *Cancer* striking down

men women girls and boys,
as if it was a time

food stamps were no longer
needed. wake up. to this new age,

when who gives a damn if those
other folks can't eat. while many

of the poor refuse free health care
because rich folks told them to.

wake up. to this new age when
doctors working had like waitresses
doing research, so many hoping
for a cure for juvenile diabetes,

for even the common cold

wake up. to this new age
when here comes *Time*

magazine parading its latest
greatest baddest of bad asses

working hard to make the world
a better place names its

Person of the Year. Woah now
who can it be, how can it be

why is it
Taylor Swift.

POEMS:

MIRSADA KADIRIC

Mirsada Kadiric, born in Bosnia & Herzegovina, came to the US as a war refugee. Despite cultural barriers, she excelled academically at Northern Kentucky University. Recognized for her professional achievements, she's currently the Associate Director at Kao USA, while in her free time she uses her written and spoken word in advocating for human rights.

Contact: mir5ada@hotmail.com

JAMES PALMARINI

James Palmarini has been facilitating and participating in public poetry reading for more than 35 years. His work has appeared in numerous publications, including *Clay Drum*, *Shelly's*, *Aloud Aloud*, and *Jawbone*. Most recently, his long poem-essay "*Welcome to the Reading*" was published in the Fall 2023 issue of *The Cincinnati Review*.

Contact: jppalm48@gmail.com

DRAWING:

FRED DANIELL

Fred Daniell attended the Art Academy of Cincinnati and resides in Cincinnati, OH. He makes observational art of people in the world around him. Through traditional methods and with a contemporary mindset, Fred paints, prints, and draws thoughtful figurative works and portraits.

Contact: freddaniell@gmail.com



I Remember

(by *Mirsada Kadiric*)

I remember awaiting nighttime,
To seek shelter from the bombs,
Hiding in my mother's arms,
While my daddy watches guard.

I remember feeling helpless,
Hoping for the world to act,
To save us from the tyrants,
With no human lives regard.

I remember departing suddenly,
Nothing but the clothes on our backs,
Looking back at our house,
With uncertainty abound.

I remember being that child,
The one you see in Ukraine today,
And the one in Syria surviving to this day,
Praying as few are harmed, this time around!

Uvalde

(by *James Palmarini*)

I want to hide from a dream
of lost children behind chairs
under tables between cracks
of two doors closing
in desperate prayer.
We want to wake them up
for a walk into the sunlight
where the wind will know
their names—sail them
out of my dreams
and yours
for good. But we can't,
and shouldn't even try.
There is no "thy will be done,"
though poets have said in dreams
begin responsibilities. Surely not
madness. Surely not evil. Surely
it's not my fault or yours, this
nightmare cannot be
hidden under a chair,
behind a table, between
two doors shading
whatever light is left in desperate prayer.
We are tired and sad, and numb and angry,
but we are not asleep.
And so, the dream resumes
in responsibility where we begin
Imagining the wonder of a single child
in one hand and the awful weight
of 400 million guns in the other.

Ukraine Interview Overheard

(by **James Palmarini**)

The birds are flying
so the tanks are rolling.
The rivers are steaming
so the bombs are dropping.
The dogs are running
so the soldiers are coming.
The children are crying
so death is at the door.
And then—
the interview is over and
I ponder when will the birds sing
gloriously to all who will listen,
the rivers flow to every port and
throughout the world dogs
lope home to doorsteps
where children wait and wonder
why balls bounce up,
why the sky is blue and
what it means
to be at peace and
The only talk overheard is
a quiet prayer for all
who cannot
imagine this now.

What We See What We Are

(by **James Palmarini**)

There is a ghost with a bullet crown
driving an ambulance shrouded
with the voices of the dead.

Here is a river of black blood carrying
bone boat flutes screaming
of their passage to the end of time.

Witness the woman clutching a memory
of her child turned dust
when the fiery brush of a missile
found them posing in prayer
at the cathedral gates of rubble
singing a brutish hymn of triumph.

Is what we see what we are?
Every gruesome image greeting the eye
like an old beloved friend
until the brain and blink meet
and realize the unspeakable
must be spoken to truly be seen.

At such moments I think poets have no use.
Then I remember that our voices
never look away.
I can't. I won't. What I see is
not who I am, not
what I say.

So, I will not let the iron shroud pass
with its relentless army of ghosts,
its black blood and flutes of bone
crossing one line of sand after another
without looking and calling out
what has and will become of us.

Listen--the woman of dust is raising her child
towards the sun proclaiming:
"May the one who brings peace to the universe
bring peace to all". What we hear Oh Poets
Is what we must see.

The cathedral calls out to us and we listen,
speak of those who cannot see, cannot sing,
cannot be, any longer.

To not
would be a surrender to the blind
winds whose chorus is silence.

POEMS:

MARILYN KREBS

Marilyn Krebs has both Bachelor's and Master's degrees in Music Education from UC/CCM. As a retiree she enjoys teaching group guitar lessons at Sands Montessori and piano lessons in her home. Marilyn has also taken up watercolor painting and is finishing her second book of poetry.

Contact: mikrebs@fuse.net

ALISSA SAMMARCO

Alissa Sammarco uses cinematic imagery to freeze those moments in time and evoke the feeling of revisiting them. She examines the common in life and relationships to find the extraordinary. Her work has appeared in *Sheila-Na-Gig*, *Black Moon*, *Change Seven*, *Quiet Diamonds*, *Main Street Rag*, *Stone Canoe*, and elsewhere. She is the author of two chapbooks, *Beyond the Dawn* and *I See Them Now*.

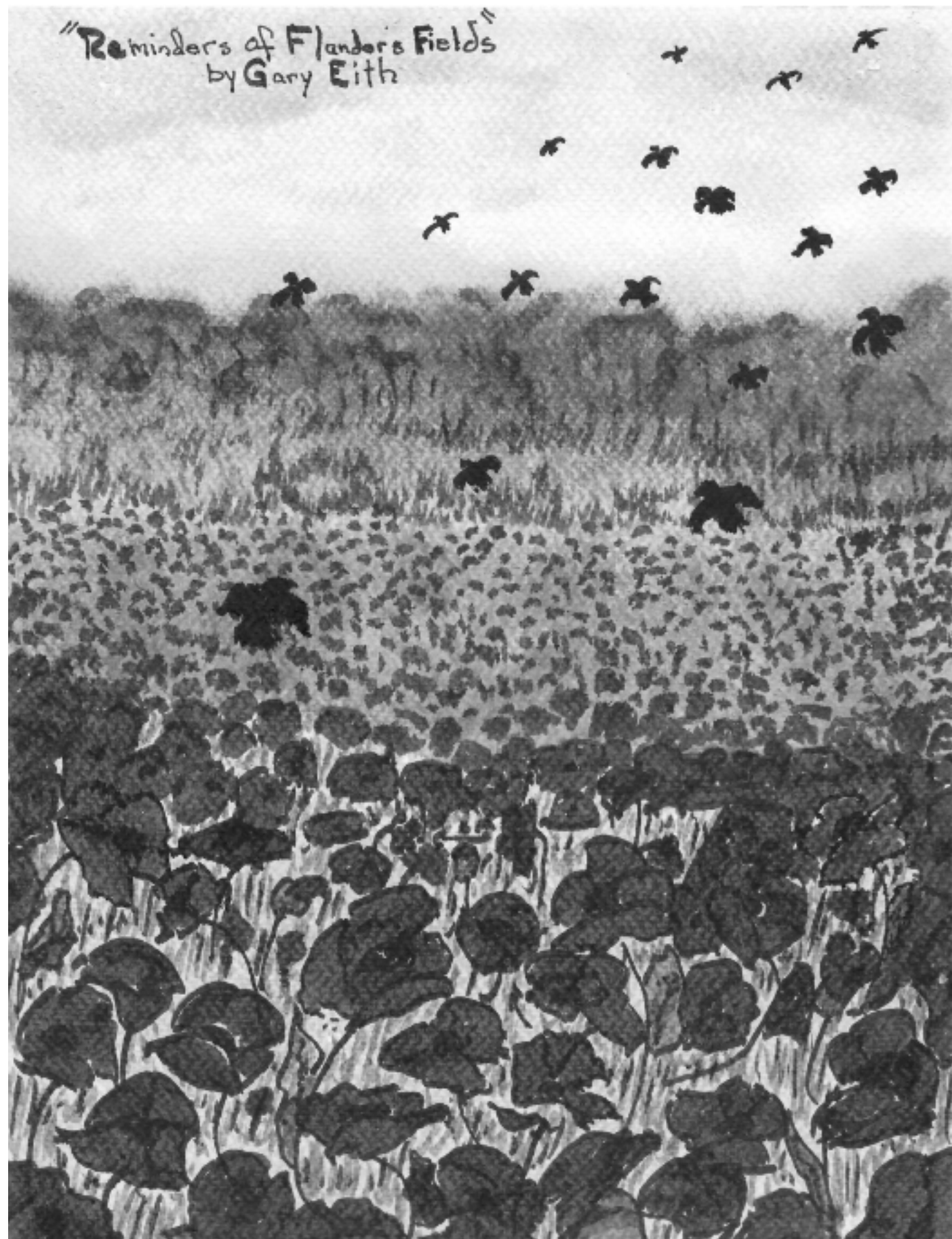
Contact: alissasammarco.com

DRAWING:

GARY EITH

Gary Eith earned degrees from NKU, UC, and a doctorate of education from Columbia University. Upon retiring as an academic dean, he pursued his visual art interests and shares still life, landscape, portraiture, and travels, in oils and acrylics. Gary is a former member of the Cincinnati Art Club's board of trustees and currently serves as their coordinator of workshops. He is also a member of the Cincinnati Decorative Art's Society and the Cincinnati Art Museum.

Contact: garyeith.com



I Don't Want to Sing Your Songs of War

(by *Marilyn Krebs*)

I don't want to sing your songs of war,
I don't want to hear the cries of the fallen,
Scenes of destruction and loved ones lost
All for the glory of the flag.

There must be a way to better broker peace.
A way to avoid such mass destruction.
Is it the flaw of man to always want more:
The natural order of predator and prey?

Is it good to be brave and defend one's sacred home
Or is it better to share instead of naming "theirs" and "ours"?
To avoid at all costs the scourge of war
And sing the perfect song of peace.

The Crows

(by *Alissa Sammarco*)

The sound of wings
against the gray sky heralds winter.

Some trees have lost their leaves,
some still tipped with yellow or red or brown

in long acorn shaped plumes.
They herald cold mornings

when footsteps crack ice-covered leaves,
snapping spines and spilling blood onto the ground.

Holy days of celebration, illuminated
fanfare for the sake of our children.

Feel the vibration, the caw of black birds,
as thunderous as cannons.

Oh Crows, the parade you herald
on Simchat Torah, exploding ancient fealty.

Muslim against Jew against Christian against Muslim
until the great swirling romance –

Fathers and mothers and sisters and brothers,
cousins – all of us –

our mothers and fathers, and grandfathers,
great-grandfathers, turning over below our feet –

The banners they wave – huzzah!
Songs they sing to the Almighty,

joined together in one voice,
no longer distinguishable,

like the crows, a murder ascending
skyward.

The Fate of Lot's Wife

(by *Alissa Sammarco*)

(After a line from "Washington DC at the Mall", by Terri Alekzander)

Over my shoulder, reaching toward the Holocaust Museum,
the capital's sundial tells of a time when monuments were
nothing more than shadows at three o'clock in the afternoon
when their strides lengthen.

How could God's chosen people endure incendiaries
fueled by bones and soft places of infants' skulls,
that spare only Moses in a pitch covered basket
amongst the reeds.

I turn away, shielding my eyes from history,
afraid of the fate of Lot's wife, salt and sorrow
that never leaves, and darkness approaching in long
tallits and thobes and sinew tied masks
that cover, forever,
what little we knew of peace.

POEMS:

REBECCA SUTER LINDSAY

Rebecca Suter Lindsay's award-winning historical fiction novel, *The Peacemakers*, is available from Shadelandhouse Modern Press (SMP). Forthcoming from SMP in 2024 is her chapter book for 7 – 10-year-olds, *Mr. Tux and the Little Garden Hotel*, the story of an abandoned cat who takes a position as butler at a small, French hotel.

Contact: loisterms@fuse.net;

KATIE NICHOLS

Katie Nichols is a writer and videographer from Lexington, Kentucky. She spends most of her time creating or thinking about creating. Writing primarily in poetry, her work is concerned with feminism, self-image, and family relationships.

Contact: katienichols09@gmail.com

DRAWING:

CHRISSEY COLLOPY

Chrissy Collopy (she/her) lives with her family in Darrrtown, Ohio where she works out of her two home studios (2D and 3D). She is the Creative Aging Acrylic Painting Instructor for the Fitton Center for Creative Arts in Hamilton, Ohio.

Contact: chrissycollopy@gmail.com; chrissycollopy.com; IG: [@sapphiresunfish](https://www.instagram.com/sapphiresunfish)



17 May 2024

Wasteland

(by *Rebecca Suter Lindsay*)

Set dead center
in a land of plenty,
surrounded by
lush gardens of beans,
tomatoes, lettuce, kale,
orchards of apples and pears,
vineyards of grapes
and fields of golden grain,
there sits a wasteland.

Inside are rows and rows
of consumables
beckoning to the customer.
In Aisle #1 the shelves
are filled with cardboard boxes,
brightly painted with come-ons,
and full of flakes
glistening with sugar,
processed, and crammed with
additives and air.

Three aisles over,
King Cookie reigns
surrounded by his consort,
Queen Shortbread
and their court of
chocolate chips.

Down Aisle #4
a woman pushes a cart
loaded with sodas.
She ignores the hard truth
about soft drinks—they are
but lifts in a glucose high rise.

And at the checkout
glitter-wrapped candy
chatters to the child
riding in the rumble seat.

Those who would break free
of the sugar cycle
must withdraw their hand

so accustomed to reaching out
and grasping the quick, the sweet.
They must resist the urge of easy
and search the aisles
for the pure and simple,
the unprocessed;
must plug their ears against
the siren song of the wasteland.

Leftovers

(by *Katie Nichols*)

In the glass
Tupperware I get for Christmas I
divvy corn pudding and potatoes and invent
expiration dates with my
label maker from Santa,
stuffing my freezer like
holiday turkey. *Does this smell sour?* Cam peels
back a surviving plastic lid. I
don't believe in things getting old, not
to any degree that
sickens me.
He smells vinegar
in my two week old
pasta salad and asks
how mad
I will be if he tosses
the rotten bits.

Waste means to use
or expend, carelessly,
or to no purpose.

I don't intend on keeping you,
his text reads, his
vocal fry in my head, I
elbow turkey between two
corn containers.

From my flamingo shaped tray, ice
clinks into my water bottle, I
think how Cam would
sip it
slow and

suck
in his cheeks,
waiting
for warmth.

I want to impress
guests with my
willpower, so squeeze
new old food between
old old food when
I am tempted
by sweat
beading glass
in my microwave.
I tape over lapsed labels.

Cam doles good rigatoni into a
microwave and dishwasher-safe bowl,
asking did my mom dress it
with ranch or
Italian this year. If it
is ranch do I
remember the brand or
if it's buttermilk.

The turkey is dry, reheated, Cam can't
stomach it. Pleasure is
pleasure, what
goes in our bodies should be
appetizing,
beyond compulsory.
Food lodges in his throat.
He hacks
and swishes room temperature water.

My face fractures in the
half-liquid
ice tray. I run the tap and wonder

at the point
if he does not want
or reach for ice,
why preserve myself
if he scraps
what is too cold
or too dry
or bitter.

Ice is
meant to melt it is meant
to be used.

*I don't intend on keeping you
permanently, he
does not rinse the dish lid.
Plastic perspiration mingles
with thawed sauce. Pasta curls
in my garbage disposal.*

I wonder at waste
for a man steered by his senses, who
eats when
and what
he craves,
who trusts his body,
throwing the remains
away.

The Windmills of La Mancha

(by *Rebecca Suter Lindsay*)

For Michael

The windmills of La Mancha
have crumbled into ruin.
Their blades no longer rotate,
their walls lie stone on stone.

Gone their celebrated work
to modern forms of power,
Of changing corn and wheat to flour
by grinding stone on stone.

But still Quixote sallies forth
upon his mighty steed,
And Sancho, ever faithful,
yet follows close behind.

And still he carries in his heart
a dream of putting right
The wrongs engendered by the world
that plague the human race.

In time, all nations rise and strut,
and crumble into ruin,
Their faded glory little more
than broken stone on stone.

And yet the legend lives upon
the celebrated stage,
Inspires a knight from time to time
to dreams impossible.

When hope seems lost, one comes along
in other human guise,
Ignores the world, elects to tilt,
despite futility.

Therein lies the formula
that keeps the world aright,
When one daft soul dares to dream
of stars unreachable.

POEMS:

JOHN PATRICK MICHAEL

John Patrick Michael lives in Clifton with his wife, Connie (a Eurythmist), her vegetable garden, and the morning sunrise. John's poems generally deal with nature, spiritual themes and the esoteric and have appeared in various journals and Common Threads. He is an Ohio Poetry finalist.

Contact: dlfrsc@yahoo.com

MIKE WILSON

Mike Wilson's work has appeared in magazines including *The Gravity of the Thing*, *Mud Season Review*, *The Pettigru Review*, *Still: The Journal*, and in his book, *Arranging Deck Chairs on the Titanic*, (Rabbit House Press, 2020). His political poetry for a post-truth world can be found on his website.

Contact: mikewilsonwriter.com

DRAWING:

DAVIS HAMPTON

Davis Hampton is a Hamilton based artist and printmaker with a wide range of subject matter. He balances fun and whimsical art that provides an escape for the viewer, with serious and impactful pieces that open doors to introspection and conversation. Above all however, Davis strives to make each day a little easier with his art.

Contact: twimbro.art@gmail.com; IG: @twimbro

XIII



THE HYPOCRITE

DAVIS HAMPTON

@twimbrow

The Speciesism Card, a Dream Poem

(by *Mike Wilson*)

Four huskies relax in the grass –
a pup, a juvenile and two adults –
on a sloped bank in front of the house.
I feel comfort being part of the pack.

Children approach, stirring the air,
little dust devils prone to tease animals.
My huskies don't understand meanness.

I rush my huskies inside, surprise my
wife, dismayed, dog hair and all that.
But we won't lock them in the bathroom.
Neither do we fatten, skin, and eat them.

Creatures are all persons, just like me,
but humans play the speciesism card
because it lets them get away with murder.

Hypothermia

(by *John Patrick Michael*)

Polymer snow and dreams cover
a storefront
to the rear is the parking lot with a
dumpster of crushed ornaments and cardboard
On my way in between are people
stressed and smiling
trying to get it right one day of the year

Joy fades into the grayness of the clouds
as peace is sung for
the tents strung high among honeysuckle
tinted with silver shopping carts
in the cold bleak midwinter

And lo a babe is born lying in a manger
an inspiration for the Monsignor or Rosetti
as we fail to see the Child again

Any Street

(by *John Patrick Michael*)

I see the day only when I am not looking
a tinny sign waffles in the wind over
Toothless buskers with women in disrepair
tapping feet of psychotic table sitters
chanting what could have been

Moving wallpaper
for the sightless strangers walking by

Away from ungathered guilt
a chorus singing in their heads
a song never to meet or mention again
voicing
confront me

And when they are gone
from memories
buried in a pen of weeds
Angels will brood

The First Circle, a Dream Poem

(by *Mike Wilson*)

The family hands the subpoena to me.
You're her grandfather. Do something.

I page through the medical records.

She's eight-and-a-half and on the spectrum.
To faceless trench coat government muscle
that's grounds to seize her, seize us, too,
as aiders, abettors, Antifa-lovers.

I file my motion to quash with misgiving.

Judges with flag lapel pins on their robes,
all stone-faced, fingers stuck in their ears,
rise from the bench like lumberjacks:

*What part of "divergent" can't you hear
in neurodivergent? Bailiff, take him away!*

But an eight-year-old girl?
Then, I see how they think.

Truth is like roaches and poets and rats –
however many you kill, they come back
secretly stowed in Hello Kitty lunch bags.

Y'all think I'm crazy.
That's what Stalin said about Solzhenitsyn.

What Republicans Mean When They Say There's No Clear Objective in Ukraine

(by *Mike Wilson*)

Let go.
America won't fire a shot.
Stop throwing money in the pot
to slow the brutal parade that celebrates
democracy's fake mustache.

Go on, China, take Taiwan.
Have at it, Russia, Europe's yours.

The door's ajar.
The runway's lit.
Fascism works just fine.

Fear + guns is the ultimate
business plan.

POEMS:

DAVID MOODY

David Moody, a Cincinnati native and a writer, enjoys writing poetry. David currently attends Northern Kentucky University, studying Data Science; also works full-time for an insurance company in Cincinnati. In his free time he enjoys as well listening to and playing music.

Contact: davidmoody2014@gmail.com

JV SADLER

J.V. Sadler is a Cincinnati writer and poet, author of *Licking*, a collection of horror short stories. She has been published by Last Exit Press, Simple Simon Press, and Poetry Is Life Publishing.

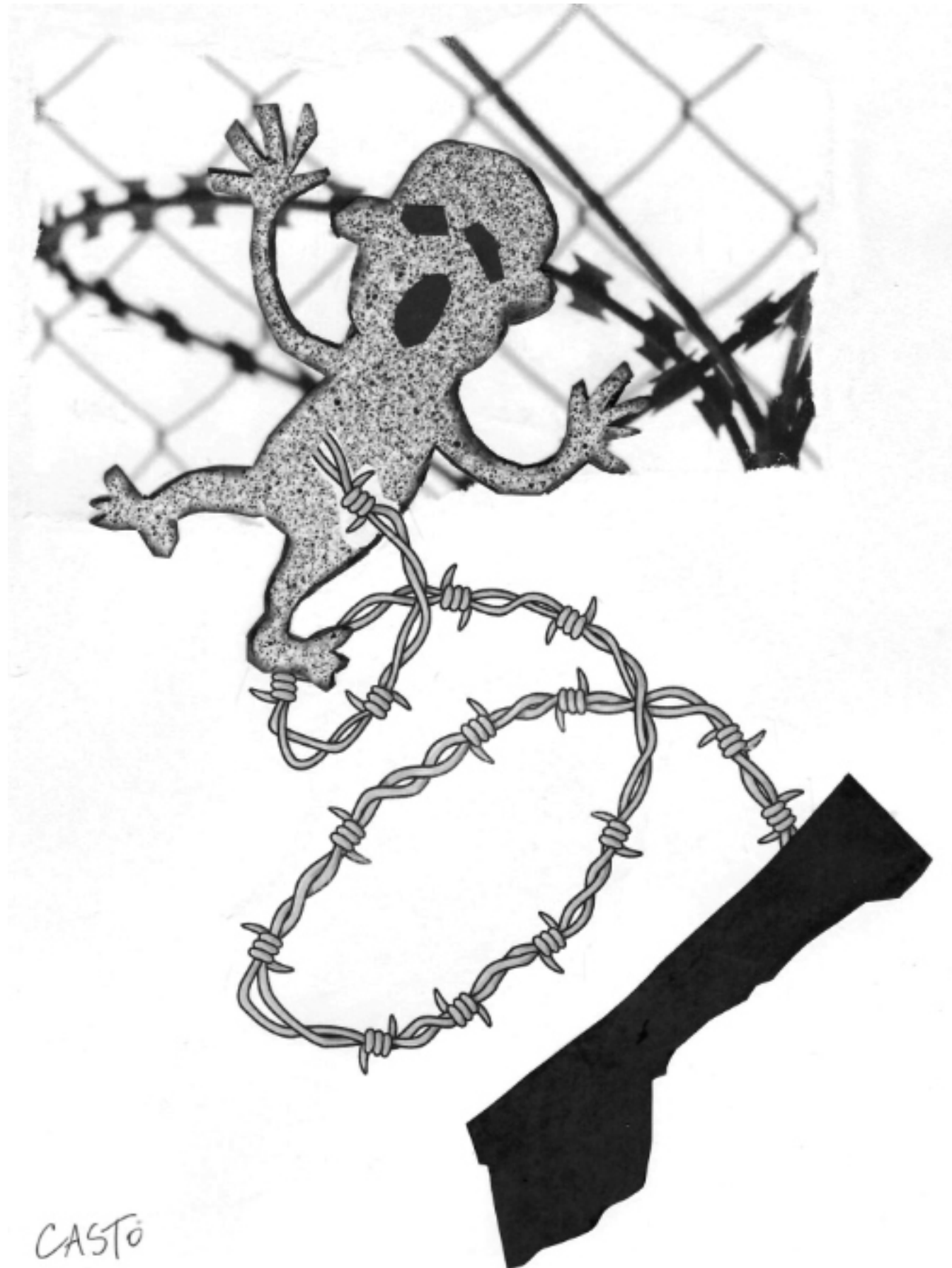
Contact: jvsadlerauthor.wixsite.com/blog; FB: [jvsadlerauthor](https://www.facebook.com/jvsadlerauthor)

DRAWING:

JEFF CASTO

Jeff Casto has been producing and exhibiting art in the Midwest and NYC for over 40 years. He received a BFA from the Art Academy of Cincinnati, 1987; and an MFA from UC/DAAP, 1989. Jeff creates mixed media assemblages that combine painted fantastical imagery with found objects. His art deals with socio-political issues, usually with humor, irony and pathos. Jeff is a recipient of grants from Cincinnati Arts Allocation.

Contact: jeffcasto.art



Day 16

(by *David Moody*)

“war” is a generous word
for what the world keeps calling this shitstorm
when in reality it’s much more of a massacre actually

“war” is not even close to accurately describing this global travesty
because “war” implies that both sides have a chance of winning
the audacity that some people have...

I swear you won’t ever catch me
using that term for what the Israelis are doing
there’s a special place in hell for that

type of atrocity they say the tongue is
mightier than the sword
but what the heck are words even good for

when there’s tragedy around the clock
when they’ve got rockets
and you’ve got rocks

Palestine on My Mind

(by *J.V. Sadler*)

I’ve got songs of freedom on my mind
The beat to the rhythm of liberation
drumming in my bones
Even from my condo in Cincinnati
I can hear the screams of the people
They shoutin’ “Freedom”
The ground shaking
beneath my feet
of an incoming revolution...
Revolution...
REVOLUTION

What Am I Gonna Say to the Babies?

(by *J.V. Sadler*)

How am I supposed to tell the unborn child in Flint
that they won’t get clean water
in their baby bottle?
Or the unborn child in Palestine
that their mother will be bombed
soon
Call me cruel but
I support abortion cause
How am I supposed to
tell
the
babies?

I Can't Breathe

(by **David Moody**)

I can't eat I can't drink I can't sleep I can't breathe I can't think

without seeing their faces every day.

it's been three weeks.
and the bombings were just the beginning

three weeks since the start of this siege
three weeks.

and I don't think that I can bring myself
to watch these human beings be dehumanized anymore

or else, I'm gonna lose it for sure
it's been three weeks.

and I don't think that I can look at another dozen dead babies
or else, I'm gonna go crazy

it's been three weeks.
almost four...

and I don't think that I can watch
another three million Palestinians be tortured by war

even though, it's not even about me
it's about the hundreds in the West Bank

who were kidnapped by Israelis
it's about the 11,000 and counting

who have been killed already
it's about the millions who are currently being displaced as we speak

if there ever was a moment that moment is now
if there ever was a time and place that time and place would be today

if there ever was a reason to believe in that reason would be to fight for freedom
if there ever was a way to speak out against injustice it would be to speak loud and clear to
say:

I can't eat I can't drink I can't sleep I can't breathe I can't think

without seeing their faces every day.

POEMS:

JULIE REHKAMP

Julie Rehkamp was raised with eight siblings on a farm in Florence, KY. After years of teaching middle and high school English, she now works in School Services at Cincinnati Children's.

Contact: julierehkamp92@gmail.com

SUZANNE SMITH

Suzanne Smith arrived in Cincinnati from the forests of England more than 35 years ago. This move offered her the opportunity and encouragement to learn and practice that which she loves most to do, alternative healing. Her poetry is inspired by her yearning for her roots and the pathways to enlightenment on this extraordinary planet.

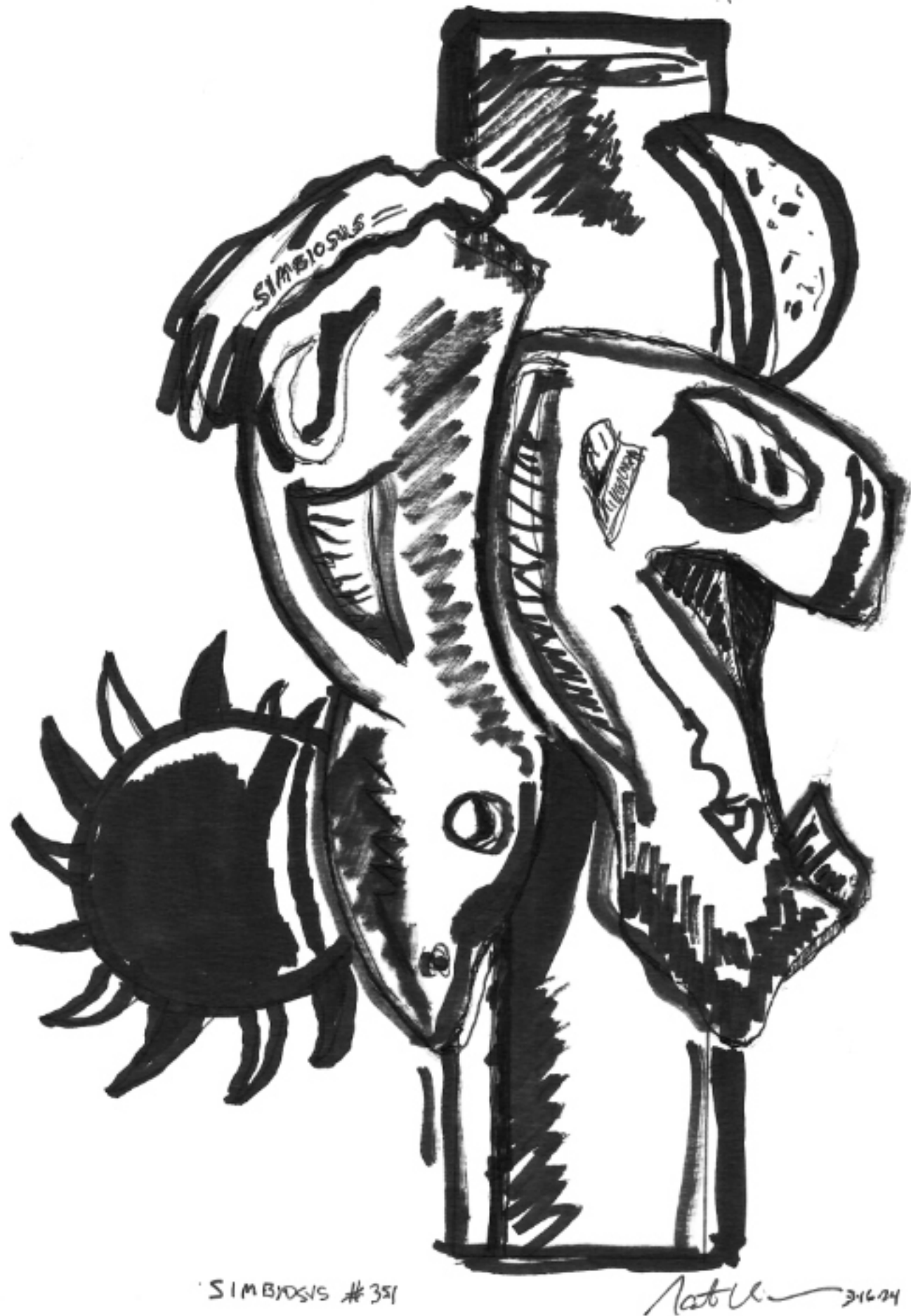
Contact: sagefemme33333@icloud.com

DRAWING:

NATE WASPE

Nate Waspe, a native Cincinnati artist, is a 1997 graduate of the University of Cincinnati/DAAP where he earned a Bachelor's degree in Art History. Nate uses acrylics and oil pastels to create canvases dealing with light and shadow; he also produces organic, whimsical linoleum woodcut prints. Nate has shown his work at places including the Fitton Center For Creative Arts, Baker Hunt Foundation, and the Hillel Jewish Student Center.

Contact: natewaspe578@gmail.com; natewaspecreations.com



Inconveniences

(by Julie Rehkamp)

traffic when you're running late
a line when you don't want to wait
doing things that are a bore
or all the things that are a chore
itchy clothes
a runny nose

showering, eating, digestive relief –
these don't need to cause us grief

They seem trivial yet have a cause.
They give us a necessary pause;
sometimes the things that annoy
end up causing the greatest joy!
We have power to find beauty in pain –
to change a loss to a gain.

What're you doing with that time between?
Don't use it to grow bitter and mean;
see it as a reminder to enjoy detail...
while moving the pace of a snail.
Notice the goodness all around:
the sky, the temperature, the sound.

Being sick makes us appreciate health;
likewise, poverty breeds gratitude for wealth.
Difficult moments prevent us from taking for
granted
all the blessings on this planet.

So next time you're tempted to indulge in sighs
remember – some blessings come in disguise!

Both Disease and Cure

(by Suzanne Smith)

We are the thirst amongst the downpour
and the hunger within the feast.
The fraud in the judiciary,
the dishonor amongst the thieves.

All the centuries, all the eras
spread behind us like a wound.
The names on all the monuments
of the bones deep underground.

We are the metal in the tank,
the glass shattered on the street,
the rubble covering the child,
the hubris and conceit.

We are the furrow on the brow,
blood splatter on the wall,
the misting of the eyes
and yet no one is appalled.

We are the wisdom lost in narrative
and the pencil missing the point.
History rewritten to order,
facts remain unvoiced.

The repetition of repetition is deafening.
The anger must endure
lest we grow in soul or character
and humanity mature.

And yet.....

We are all the breezes across the borders,
all the sounds around each tongue.
seeking truth amongst our trickery
and the anger left unsung.

We are the gold amongst the alchemy
and the voices within each prayer,
the focus within our illusions
determined to repair.

We can be witness to sound judgement
and be watchers from our towers,

the hope that signs petitions
allowing humanity to flower.

The emptiness we are feeling
is a hunger for mortal dignity,
a craving for respect
benevolence and amity.

To recall the human in dehumanization
and witness the civil in civilian
requires an awakening of humility
and an open hearted rebellion.

We are the remorse within each treaty.
We are the seasoned beatitude.
We are the solution in each mirror
and both the disease and the exalted cure.

The Pretty City

(by *Julie Rehkamp*)

There once was a girl who lived in a city
where people only cared about being pretty.

The girl was as beautiful as she was kind,
but no one paid that any mind.

When they looked for beauty it was in her face,
but they were looking in the wrong place.

The girl was put under a spell
that was impossible not to tell.

The kinder she was the uglier she got;
her looks didn't reflect what she was but what she's not.

Every time she did a good deed,
hair grew from her chin like a weed.

People couldn't help but stare,
at all that hair
that need not be there.

There were pimples that grew
with every kind thing she would do.

Yet she didn't think twice
about being nice
although she knew it came at a price.

She continued to make sure the hungry were fed,
and she visited the sick in their hospital bed,
causing her skin to be blotchy and red.

When she gave to the poor
and delivered provisions to their door,
her skin would sag all the more.

Everywhere she would walk,
she could hear their hurtful talk.

All the people would scoff and say
why does she go about this way?

The people would avert their eyes;
children would scatter with fearful cries.

But she continued to fight for good
because she knew no one else would.

For they were too absorbed in selfishness and greed
to help anyone truly in need.

A young man came to town one day;
when he saw her, he didn't turn away.

He wasn't like the other women and men;
unlike them he looked deep within.

He was drawn to her generosity
without concern whether she's pretty.

His genuine love broke the spell
for the uglier she got, the harder he fell.

Because of him she was finally free;
he helped the people come to see
her beauty was something she could never hide
for hers shone bright from deep inside.

Her beauty was something they could never take
because hers was the kind that isn't fake.

The people learned it wasn't right
to judge someone just by sight.

Now the city does good things
simply for the joy it brings.

They learned beauty comes from within,
and they'll never make that mistake again.

POEMS:

SAM SAUER

Sam Sauer is a writer from Cincinnati. His first novel *Softly, Softly, Catchee Monkey*, a dark comedy, was published at the end of 2023.

Contact: samuelsauer.com

AYANA SLOAN

Ayana Sloan, a practicing attorney, is an emerging poet. She uses her poetic voice as a platform for social commentary and to speak for those who are often excluded from the American Dream.

Contact: alsloanlaw@aol.com

MICHAEL WHITNEY

Michael Whitney holds a BA in English Literature from the University of Cincinnati. He lives with his family on the east side of Cincinnati where he sneaks in a little writing time before bed or during breaks at work. This is his third appearance in *For a Better World*.

Contact: mwhitney01@gmail.com

DRAWING:

CARRIE BARNETT

Carrie Barnett lives in Cincinnati, Ohio with her husband and pup. She is currently in her 31st year of teaching art in public and private schools, from first grade to college level. Her passion for art led her to art education, which transformed her life through a career she loves. Carrie creates artwork in a variety of mediums.

Contact: artscarrie@gmail.com; carriebarnett.weebly.com



In the Forest

(by *Sam Sauer*)

In the forest not far from
A home in which I was raised
From the earth like a crop ripe
For harvest
I came upon a doe, maybe
Half my size
Who was hungry, starved looking and
Who approached me with no reserve.
She looked about her for a chance of
pokeweed
Or perhaps the last of summer's goldenrod
But the earth held no offering
For her.
And she gazed at me, for the second time
And asked me with her eyes, to share in my
abundance
And I turned away, for I could not
Give last hope
To a hungry deer.

Bite

(by *Michael Whitney*)

It is almost too much to remember the man,
threadbare and worn as his clothes,
fold himself at the waist into the trash can,
mine through a morning's discarded wealth
to unearth a half-eaten sandwich
and a cup with a few sips of melted ice.

I can still feel his quick, hot glance
at fifteen-year-old me,
one of embarrassment, jealousy,
definitely warning,
as he peeled back the wrapper,
bit into the teeth marks
from another overfed waster,
constrictions of his thin, unshaven throat
hustling the cold meat
towards his concave stomach.

And as my uncle and I, the only witnesses
to his desperate act, disappeared
along the turns and doorways of the old skywalk,
he sat at a bench, assumed the casual stance
of any other lunchtime patron,
there, to appreciate his lucky find,
as any miner who scores a small
insignificant nugget does, while those
around him scurried defensively, burdened
by their overripe satchels.

Hunger, a Thief or a Neighbor

(by *Ayana Sloan*)

Hunger, you cruel thief!
You have stolen much more from me than the meager morsels I find to keep death from
claiming my eviscerated body.
You have banished me to a place where my cries of anguish are no longer heard by those who
protect their fragile existence by denying the horrors of mine.
You have imprisoned me in your lair of darkness and sentenced me to endless days clothed in
hopelessness and despair.

You are a cruel taskmaster and a vicious, Cerberean monster, devouring every shred of dignity and tiny bit of self-worth I desperately cling to.

You have enslaved me and locked me in an interminable cycle of fear, suffering and deprivation, leaving my soul bereft of any hope.

You taunt me daily with the savory aromas of banquets I will never attend and feasts that are never prepared for someone writhing under the weight of shame.

You have left me starving for any acknowledgement that, while my circumstances are inhumane, I am still a human being.

You know how deeply I ache for more than simply filling my empty belly with the meager scraps I scavenge daily; I long to feed my heart, my mind and my soul with the crumbs of human kindness.

However, you block my path to freedom with self-appointed watchdogs who zealously prevent me from removing the Scarlet-letter of condemnation self-righteously sown into my tattered shroud of shame.

You force me to constantly cry “unclean, unclean” whenever I approach those who are afraid they will be infected by the vile stench of poverty oozing from my wounded soul.

Hunger, you are a cruel thief, but, I’m afraid, if you remove your mask, you will look like my neighbor.

Not Ever, Not Yet

(by **Sam Sauer**)

And as waves of mortar shells

Fall like rain into the halls

Of your sister’s cousin’s mother’s bunker under hell

You’ll hear the roof collapse

As the time comes to pass

When homes destroyed by shells make papers oversell

And days will go on by

With only gray and jet black sky

To mirror what’s underneath

And there’ll be no one left to see

The forest for the trees

The forest for the trees

POEMS:

SHERRY COOK STANFORTH

Sherry Cook Stanforth is a professor emeritus of Thomas More University, founder/director of Originary Arts Initiative, managing editor of *Pine Mountain Sand & Gravel*, and co-editor of the anthology *Riparian: Poems, Short Prose and Photographs Inspired by the Ohio River* (Dos Madres Press, 2019). Her poetry collection *Drone String* (Bottom Dog Press, 2015) reflects her family’s Appalachian storytelling and music heritage. Sherry enjoys performing in Tellico and Tangled Roots bands, beekeeping, hiking, and studying native plants.

Contact: originaryartsinitiative@gmail.com

KATHY WADE

Kathy Wade's poetry has appeared in many anthologies. She published a novel, *Perfection*, in 2018, and a book of poetry, *Every Now Is a Yes*, in 2023. Kathy enjoyed a 30-year teaching career and served as teacher and Executive Director at Women Writing for (a) Change. She and her husband reside in Cincinnati.

Contact: kwade42@gmail.com

DRAWING:

SARAH HYNFIELD

Sarah Hynfield is a muralist, cartoonist, and art teacher based in Hamilton, Ohio. Her work is filled with childlike joy and wonder, featuring bright colors and bubbly, rounded shapes that combine elements of fantasy with real-life human struggles and dreams. She is very passionate about advocating for equity in all its forms, particularly those related to gender and disability.

Contact: sarah@hynfield.org; IG: [@tinyscooter_art](https://www.instagram.com/tinyscooter_art)



Hangry

(by *Sherry Cook Stanforth*)

In this poem, we're drinking
oat milk lavender lattes
at a cast iron bistro table
laughing about being *hangry*
one minute singing the language
of wind chimes, then
that snap—the curdled tone
the bladed eyes

You transform into a horned gremlin,
and me, a banshee rising
to launch its dread wail.
We live happy
inside this poem.
Waiting on the omelets,
we watch it flex
its joints and twist its spine
feeding on the perfume of
fair trade small-batch coffee
until it enjambes beyond
the morning's tinkling spoons
into a brand new stanza

where it spills past its boundaries into elsewhere,
sometimes spitting irony in the form of wise haiku:

Guatemalan child
warring for Jolly Ranchers
tossed by clinic docs

Three-legged pit bull
starving on a beggar's mat
rakes in big dollars

At the end of its little trip,
the poem returns home to its workaday
rhythm, and in a rare, confessional mood
after too much wine, it admits to avoiding
direct eye contact with two women
surviving just beyond its imaginary
bistro bordered by lit-up Bradford pear trees.

Raised in Sunday school, earnestly
hoping to keep our votes
this poem knows
to clean its lines of slurs
about addicts and freeloaders.
But in good form, it refuses to directly
feed into some particular concerns.
Just know that it donates to charitable
organizations on a regular basis
while continuing to speak great
wit and genuine inspiration.

With or without the poem, inside
or outside the poem, some women
are standing at the corner
of Vine and Findlay
waiting for change
holding up cardboard signs to honor
their city's preferred codes
of silence

Leftover Soup

(by *Kathy Wade*)

I have never been hungry,
not the way millions of people
around the world are now hungry,
are dying of hunger. And still,
I have found myself saying, "I'm hungry!"

I have sat down to dinner
in restaurants with family or friends,
studied a menu of appetizers, salads,
antipasto,
entrees and sides, beverages, aperitifs,
dessert plates, breads drizzled in butter,
wine and mixed drinks on their own separate
menu.

I've even heard myself saying: "I'm famished,"
without giving too much thought
to the people suffering from famine.

Now I am witnessing millions
of people starving from famine --
witnessing long-term severe
deprivation of food
leading to malnutrition,
epidemic, extreme suffering, death.

Yesterday we lunched at a restaurant,
full, as our warming car
slid to a traffic light in the cold.
I held a plastic container of leftover soup
in my hands. There on the corner
a thin man held up a one-word sign:

HUNGRY.

I handed him the container, knowing
my act of compassion (or guilt)
had little to do with
 feeding the hungry
 ending starvation
 wiping out famine.

Starling Day

(by *Sherry Cook Stanforth*)

In a widening whorl, they come—
air hissing, wings flapping a beat-box
pulse, that joyous search for the perch over—
the naked sycamore shivering its white dance
while bird by bird, branches bloom black
holding the clutter-clack of old tongues
never tiring. Closer and closer I step,
drawn into this sensuous spell that refuses
crickets singing lullabies or the wind
sighing through hemlocks or a woodthrush
tuning up for sundown. Here, at the scene
of invasion, the field's calm secrets
rupture and split apart in November's
chilly snap, and the cloaked tree wrinkles
in its sudden resurrection. This word carried
through birds—it winds through the tiny
portals and passages of my ears to find
my taut, quivering eardrum. Peck, peck, peck,
and I stand senseless in this wild visitation, loud
exodus followed by an impossible encampment
in the branches of a lonely farm tree, marveling
over the possible translations I am likely to miss.