

Help Spread a Better Message

HOI President D G Van Curen

Hyde Park Street Fair is September 16th to the 18th. We will again have our booth in Camels-back park. This is our 10th time to interact with the community, have a little fun, and raise funds for HOI's charitable programs. Fair hours are 4 to 10 pm Friday, 10 to 10 on Saturday and 10 to 6 Sunday. Come enjoy the festivities, greet the crew at the booth or volunteer to help staff the booth. Volunteer times are 2 hour blocks and I try to schedule 2-5 people per time block. Anyone interested can contact me directly at CelebrantVan@gmail.com.

Representatives from the Women and Children's Alliance (WCA) will be presenting to HOI at our September meeting. The presentation begins at 7:30, in the Loft conference room at the Flick's Theater. It is open to the public – come alone or bring friends. WCA is a lifesaver, providing shelter, education, social services, and other benefits for victims of domestic abuse. HOI is a long-time supporter of WCA, including sponsoring a family each year for the holiday season. Hope to see you all there.

Light The Night walk for Leukemia and Lymphoma research is coming up – First Thursday in October, beginning just after sunset. Details should be posted soon on the various Meetup pages. We are looking for walkers to participate and help raise money for the cause. Pre-event, there will be music and dinner for the walkers. It is a lot of fun and supports a worthy cause.

Changing Hearts— and Minds J Ross

Several years ago I was one of the 'angels' responding to an appearance of Fred Phelps' family of protesters here in Boise. Phelps' descendants were here, I believe acting in support of an annual vigil in opposition to the work done by our Planned Parenthood office. Rather than counter protest, a number of us costumed ourselves in white and formed an angel-wing fence facing the Phelps gang.

We were silent witnesses responding to the Phelps strategy of outrageous language and actions meant to incite. Rev. Phelps had a small army of progeny trained as attorneys, ready to sue anyone who objected to insulting, profane signage or such acts as tying a flag to one's ankle and deliberately dragging it in the dirt to demonstrate a god's objection to misguided patriotism or serving women's health needs.

I entered into a friendly conversation with Fred's eldest son, who later defected and became an outspoken critic of the family practice. But I don't expect my one action to have made the difference.

Now we have a powerful record of how the star of the Phelps clan came to see that the work of Westboro Baptist church was both wrong and cruel. Adrian Chen tells the story in the November 23 2015 New Yorker magazine.

Megan Phelps-Roper had been raised in her grandfather's belief that all society's ills were Jehovah's punishment for not enforcing real and imagined laws set in Old Testament doctrine. She used social media, especially Twitter, to bait and insult anyone willing to respond to her recitation of the Westboro message.

Then one respondent helped her see the human side of tragedies caused by natural phenomena. And a Hebrew scholar offered translations and interpretations that did not match the words on her signs. She began to see that behavior within the church did not match doctrine, either. She left that faith and apologized to those she had insulted..

West Valley Freethinkers, Nampa Contact Charlie B
deepbluesigh@gmail.com or wvfreethinkers@gmail.com

C of Southern Idaho Secular group see Facebook "Secular Student Alliance at CSI". For Freethinkers Twin Falls Contact is Erica,
erical@eaglemail.csi.edu

COSMOS COFFEE CLUB conversation begins at 6:30pm 1st & 3rd Mondays at Papa Joe's. Contact Sander Karas at
<http://www.meetup.com/CosmosCoffeeClub>

Humanists in Idaho Falls meet at the Unitarian Universalist Church. Ask Doug at gerstner_doug@yahoo.com

Idaho Society of Reason is part of Treasure Valley Coalition of Reason. <http://meetup.com/nontheist/events> 2nd in Boise, 4th Sundays Nampa at noon. Check meetup for summer changes, events.

Local Objectivists meet monthly, last Wed 6pm at varying restaurants. Ask Tim Scharff at scharffdesignworks@icloud.com

Meet An Atheist or several, socialize 2nd Tuesdays, typically at The Reef. <https://www.facebook.com/groups/IdahoAtheist/>

Human KIND project <http://www.human-kind-project.com/>

Sunday Assembly Boise: music, presentations, activities; see Fb

"Kill My Mother" By Jules Feiffer

Review by Wally Keltner

I first encountered Jules Feiffer as a cartoonist for the *Village Voice*, back in the 1950s. Since I spent those years in Kentucky and Alabama, I had to find his work in other publications because we citizens of the South were not about to be despoiled by some depraved Communist propaganda from New York City. Still, I haunted book stores, magazines at the barber shop, and such, and accumulated, at least in my memory, a few of his wonderful cartoons. A great early bookstore find for me was his cartoon collection, "Sick, Sick, Sick", from 1958. Later, I followed Feiffer in *Playboy* in my college fraternity house, and for years after, whenever and wherever I encountered his work.

Feiffer's cartoon work has impressed me as the work of a master. His style of line drawing with shading captures a character's personality and mood with facial expressions and body language. His characters move across his panels with emotional expression - grace, rapidity, reluctance, confusion, panic or buffoonery - as required by the story line. Feiffer is also a master with dialogue, choosing just the right words and phrasing and placing them or even draping them about a character in a manner that maximizes the information content without filling each panel with text. Thus he presents the reader with large portions of the story flow within each panel of a cartoon.

Recently, I heard an interview on PBS with Jules Feiffer and discovered that he was chugging right along after reinventing himself several times. He has mitigated the effects of 87 years and some health deterioration with dedication to his work, development of new skills, and by modifying his living habits. In his lifetime, he has been successful in cartooning, novels, graphic novels, film, theater, and teaching in a Master of fine Arts program. His awards include the Pulitzer Prize, induction into the Comic Book Hall of Fame, and an Academy Award.

"Kill My Mother" is a 2014 graphic novel by Feiffer. In it, he uses multiple skills bringing to life a tale he conjured from his exposure over many years to movies and books from the 1930s, 40s and 50s.

"Kill" is film noir expressed as a graphic novel. It is basically a dark murder mystery with spots of humor and some human redemption that provide balance. It's a collage of big city characters - a drunken detective, several dames ranging from floozy to well-polished, plus a boxer and some soldiers. The central theme is deep family dysfunction driving the characters into the drama of the plot. Think Humphrey Bogart in the original production of "The Big Sleep" and one can imagine the flavor of the novel with respect to the times, the rough and tough 1930s-40s characters, and the general ambience evoked by Feiffer. But Feiffer's plot, the human menagerie of characters, and multiple interweaving of subplots spread across the Great Depression and World War II exceeds the scope and complexity of anything encountered by Bogart's Philip Marlowe. Then too, Feiffer is writing in the 21st Century, so he is free to include some gender-bending and sexual kinkiness to further spice and complicate the plot.

No spoiler alert is necessary since this reader will not spill the beans. Each reader will be permitted to explore the main plot of "Kill My Mother" and enjoy side trips into the recesses of subplots as a virginal experience. Without endangering the promised pleasures, it may be said that the graphic novel is the only suitable genre for Jules Feiffer's story. It is far too convoluted to comprehend on an uninterrupted, unstoppable ride-through of a movie. A book presentation would be very tedious as the reader attempted to go back through pages of text and find the proper passages to mitigate confusion. But with a graphic novel, the reader can proceed at comfortable pace, reading and absorbing the visual information from the drawings, and then easily step backwards reinforcing the requisite minimum level of cognition necessary to digest the tale. This reader found himself doing this more than once to maintain his grip on the story line.

"Kill My Mother" offers an enjoyable experience. It is far more engrossing than Feiffer's cartoon collections such as "Sick, Sick, Sick", and far different than his introduction to the great comic books in his "The Great Comic Book Heroes". But if reasonable time is allotted and expectations are for more than a "quickie" between the book's covers, then the reader may be able to recount an enjoyable experience in Jules Feiffer's graphic novel.



Humanists of Idaho, a chapter of American Humanist Association & Council for Secular Humanism, is a nonprofit corporation promoting ethical, democratic, and naturalistic Humanism through public awareness, education and community involvement. We meet 3rd Mondays, Jan-Nov, upper room of the Flicks, Boise. Open discussion and dining at 6:30pm; business 7pm; program at 7:30pm We next meet September 19. *Find more at our meetup page, address below.*

The Manly Style Jeanette Ross

In the mythic west, success was built on guts, guns, gold and cattle, in roughly that order. Boise was a crossroads for gold seekers north and southwest of town; Oregon trail dreamers moved through, then returned, after gold played out, when the feds helped by giving financial breaks to those who tried farming with irrigation. A new bureau of reclamation then built dams that controlled water and Idaho communities began a program of selling Idaho.

Our first great salesman was “Two Gun” Bob Limbert, who used his shooting skill to sell furs and monuments to other shooters. His taxidermy and his braggadocio were packaged as an advertisement for Idaho in a booth at the 1915 Panama-Pacific International Exhibition in San Francisco. Bob used his celebrity to set out on a tour demonstrating his shooting skills. Says Glenn Oakley in Focus Magazine, Limbert “put on a show calibrated to fit eastern expectations of a man who lived the kind of life all red-blooded men would chose to live if they could.” Believers came to farm with water supplied by mountain snows and government agents.

The man who sold Idaho as famous for its potatoes had a similar style. His daughter-in-law, Adelia Simplot, once told me that Jack Simplot liked the cowboy, good-old-boy style and hired men who could bluff and cuss as well as he. One of his employees, and his only female department head, Lorry Roberts, agreed that he was a crusty old codger, but she liked him just the same. She was Jack’s photographer, wrote the corporate materials, ran the printing operation, and rode along on flights that documented award ceremonies. He used them as an opportunity to talk about hunting and fishing, and Lorry adds, “He never learns women’s names. It’s my gal attorney, my gal photographer.”

The manly style is as affective today. Presidential candidates may only shoot off their mouths, but if they are brash and crude enough, they can still hit their targets.

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Two stories of the Craters of the Moon J Ross

Explorer and Idaho promoter Robert Limbert turned three expeditions inside the lava beds of south-east Idaho into a 1924 account in National Geographic. His blend of photographs, accurate description and personal style may have encouraged Calvin Coolidge to follow the National Parks Service recommendation to create Craters of the Moon national Monument. Limbert admirably identified trails through the seemingly lifeless lava caves and flows which allowed Northern Shoshone and other Native people to hunt in the pockets that allowed life in this still mostly barren place.

Legend of the Craters of the Moon

Some time ago, a serpent many miles long lay along the bed of rock that now holds the Snake river. The serpent, though frightening in aspect, had not been known to hurt the people who traveled through in search of game, fish, seeds and roots. One spring morning, seeking warmth, the serpent moved its great bulk to a nearby mountain, where it curled around many times in the sun’s warmth. A storm arrived. Lightning touched the mountain and the sides of the serpent, which grew angry and tightened its coils. Pressure on the mountain caused stones to melt, angering the serpent even more. Mountain, trees, serpent all burned in a great heat that killed everything. Today, the ribs and bones of the serpent remain, in stone.



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“This Very Earth” By Erskine Caldwell

Wally Keltner

I first encountered Erskine Caldwell in high school in the mid-1950s and I immediately became a fan of his tales of the gritty side of life for certain social strata of the pre-World War II American Southeast. I had, of course, discovered “God’s Little Acre” and “Tobacco Road”, two of his masterpieces from the 1930s. The kid in me was titillated by the stories, but did not recognize the author’s full message, and much of what Caldwell incorporated into his stories was lost.

Today, I can recognize the driving forces to which he subjects his characters. There is a grinding poverty from the Great Depression, exacerbated by the demise of the family farm and the rise of urban centered industrialization. Caldwell’s lead characters have little formal education and are to varying degrees confined by the dogma and mythology of the fundamentalist Christianity that infested southeastern America. In this environment, Caldwell’s characters wallow in a stew of base human lust, physical violence, misogyny, incest, alcohol abuse, sloth and greed. And from these elements, Erskine Caldwell told America about the burdens of our culture and social systems upon the least fortunate elements of our population. I now identify elements of the author’s works that were unrecognized by me as a child in rural Kentucky. Caldwell’s characters and their tragedies infested our small town even though we, the more fortunate, were shielded by membership in the middle class.

“This Very Earth” is a later work by Erskine Caldwell, published in 1940. It describes the decline of the Crockett family in a small Georgia town. When the wife died, there was a total loss of direction and values. Chism, the father, immediately tricks his aging father-in-law into selling the family farm and moving the family to a small rural town. Chism hated the life of a subsistence farmer, and lacked the motivation to do more than become a parasite upon his two working age children and the county welfare system. His passions are drinking year round and hunting possums with his hounds in the colder months. The rudderless family begins a relentless downward slide. Chism’s oldest daughter is a waitress in the local diner and becomes the sex toy of a degenerate politi-

cian. The second oldest daughter is married to a cruel ne’er-do-well who drinks and gambles away every pittance he wrings from his wife or friends. Jane, the youngest daughter is in danger of becoming the mistress of the coach at her high school. And Chism begins to deflower his eleven year old son, Jarvis, forcing alcohol and sex with a local young girl upon him.

The leaderless Crockett family is helpless to deal with the pressures that life has placed upon them. The only hope is Ross, the eldest son, a lawyer. Ross absorbed the values of his mother and refined himself with his college education. He resolutely rejects offers of favors from his oldest sister’s corrupt congressman, but he seems not to command the full respect normally granted to a father in the Deep South. He is unable to change the family path in time to prevent partial disaster. He does manage to steer the two younger children towards paths of redemption, but the older girls may be lost – one as the Washington D. C. mistress of the congressman and the other to murder. The book closes with Chism sinking into denial regarding his selfish and degenerate paternal behavior. He leaves the house with his hounds to go possum hunting.

Erskine Caldwell’s message may have changed slightly over the decades. Certainly his support for a system of legally imposed involuntary sterilization and the pseudo-science of eugenics have been historical dead-ends. But his central social message remains valid. Ignorance and poverty undermine the foundations of society and destroy individuals, families and whole communities. Today’s society is learning that we must work as a team to eradicate human suffering and degradation. Horatio Alger’s stories of poor young people becoming pillars of society by hard work and self-education will not solve plights of individuals. Those yoked by poverty and ignorance will be left behind to wonder and gape at the one percent that succeeds using Operation Bootstraps. Innocent children become the adults in the Crockett families of our times and our communities, and without help, perpetuate the disasters described by Caldwell. “This Very Earth” is a fine introduction to Erskine Caldwell, and a primer on the author’s message to us all.

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Boise State

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BSU SSA is a home for secular students., encouraging critical thought, open, rational, scientific examinations of the universe and our place in it. We believe ethics and morality can be based on humanistic and rational values. We present a positive view of various -isms and non-religious worldviews through debates, workshops, speakers, movies, book club, discussion, and social gatherings.

War and Climate, War Again J. Ross

In 1916, as nations young and old sent their young men into battles of attrition, two strategists bent over a maps of East Europe and .,West Asia. How to share the winnings?

Negotiators for France and England divided the former Ottoman Empire between them in ways typical of invaders and winners of conflict. They divvied up places that needed direct control or influence between them, then established borders for invented nations that forced together former enemies. Iraq, Syria and Libya were set up this way, in theory as ‘republics’. One leader was picked out of a minority population in each territory; this gave the flavor of a local ruler, yet one so uneasily seated that he remained a client of the dominant Euro controller. These local rulers were given some benefits and some leeway to parcel out favors, jobs; the locals, oligarchs and their families then ruled by a similar system of bribes, nepotism, generous benefits for themselves and cooperating supporters, absolute control over all. Result: no common sense of national identity; beneath the veneer, tribal systems and clans continued as before.

Iraq for instance is a mash-up of three Ottoman provinces: Non-Arab Kurds including Mesopotamia to the north; Sunni Arabs in the middle; Shia Arabs, the Marsh Arabs, in the south. Britain took control of southern Syria, the coast, as Lebanon, and TransJordan, now Israel and Jordan. Italy, a little later, claimed influence over Libya. Those countries with sellable resources developed semi-socialist systems with many government services, jobs. *[This system, initiated by Alexander and th4e Greeks in Hellenic empire, was also used to establish the reservation system in America’s West.]*

This system continued until 2001, when growing populations, benefits of better maternal health, decrease of infant mortality led to large populations of youths without prospects. Stagnation reached a breaking point, traditional systems strained to breaking. Grievances were justified, but lack of training programs or other opportunities meant lack of skills or pathways to training in cultures where a job was required to marry, start a family. And the systems of absolute control meant that political options were not discussed in private or public

Everyone knew what they found wrong, oppressive, but there were not options or decision-making experience. Those long left out of access were angry, frustrated. Oligarchs maintained power with a mix of limited access to bribes and well-chosen enemies, anti-Zionism, anti-imperialism, anti-Western thought while quietly pocketing millions.

Egypt and Syria were in the worst position, with no natural resources to exploit for western Europe markets. A stabilizing force is having a sense of being one people with a history, which is part of Egypt but not Syria, which is the leftovers of the Ottoman empire when other ‘nations’ (Jordan, part of Iraq..) were carved out. Baathist party, secular, socialist and based on cultivation of strongmen secular leaders through personality cults.

Through historical background and personal stories of six families, journalist Scott Anderson describes the ruination of the Arab world since the end of World War I. The cost of arrogantly dividing a land dependent on tribal habits and pre-industrial life into spheres of European influence is just the start. Add one more force of destruction.

In a December 7 report on the United Nations conference on climate change, which gained only attention in our country as aggrieved complaints, a pointing of fingers, reporter Elizabeth Kolbert suggests another contribution to the present disaster.

Consider the artificial state of Syria, which depends upon wheat raised by dryland farming with annual rainfall similar to that in north Idaho, about 11 inches a year. The Alawite minority is led by a former dentist whose father ruled Sunni communities with a largely secular, socialist approach, trading government jobs for a tight grip on security and an enemy, the West, to blame for their troubles. Kolbert:

“In the winter of 2007, the rainy season never really began. The next year was worse.. Wheat production failed, farmers lost their herds, prices of basic commodities doubled..” Drought continued several more years; the hungry and desperate moved to cities. More thousands from Iraq moved in. Instability increased, and then came the Arab Spring.



Benefits of Science, Limits of Faith

E. O. Wilson, interviewed by Simon Worrall about his new book, *The Meaning of human Existence*, (Nov 2014) used biological findings to consider old questions of philosophy and religion: where do we come from? What are we? Where are we going? We have perspectives of evolutionary biology, our species through time; we have archeology and paleontology to help here. Or we can start by interpreting what we are. We have a boom in brain research. This research looks at the architecture of emotional responses, on the operation of decision-making, how it begins, what contributes. Then we have research in artificial intelligence, robotics.. what can we program, design? The hyper-connectivity found between areas of science doesn't endure the way large insights, creative achievements once did. Yet, science changes and continues, extending previous findings. Some results may startle, disturb us, explain something, raise doubts.. and then moves on.

How this relates to religion? What, for instance, can neurobiology tell us about the nearly universal religious impulse to personalize, universalize larger events and forces? We see that humans have deeply emotional responses to, connections to stories, narrative explanations for big questions. We find comfort in tales of magical transcendence (saved in the cerebrum) that feel as though they are bigger than our doubts. And we want pathways through our difficulties, obstacles. Religions typically preserve an idealized past, a mythic time before natural order, rules of the cosmos applied, and in that way are locked against the revisions of scientific research. We humans need guides. Myths of heroes who overcome death represent these unattainable ideals and are also by their very nature, anti-evolution. They fix humans into roles. Sins must be punished (and are evidence of a fixed sinful nature). There *MUST* be a heaven somewhere—that's the yearning of those who see no earthly path to comfort, justice. And there is validation in a group that shares our beliefs. This can be an anchor for an explanatory myth or mystical language (the power of transformation, significant change). Religion in a diverse world destabilizes; it's a comfort to believe that one's own group has a *Secret*. Accepting one's ties to an apparently powerful group allows us to 'flourish in that sphere.' **On Bill Moyers** 9/14/14, a Christian woman with science training, also a minister's wife, offering reasons why evangelicals refuse to recognize changes to climate or the need to adapt, ameliorate when we can, are hostile to climate science: Their own political and media leadership, as Rush Limbaugh, emphasize that proposed changes to improve things involve what they hate—government action and taxes. Hurricanes, storms, floods are considered 'acts of god' because considered unpredictable, so it is impious to attribute them to acts of humankind. They reject any science reports that suggest otherwise.

BUUF Humanists meet 3rd Sunday, Sept 21, 11:15:am, in the Boise Unitarian Universalist Fellowship library. Sages meet 2nd and 4th Thursdays, 9:30am, Sept 8 & 22, at the Kopper Kitchen, near the Boise airport.

◆ SAGES SHOW & TELL

We're ready for some crisper (and less smoky) fall air, and it looks like back to school time. The BUUF Sages will share a poutpourri and trip down memory lane, with "What I Did on My Summer Vacation." (If this year's wasn't worth reporting, pick another one you like.) Bring a souvenir or postcards, maybe? We'll enjoy each other's stories and a no-host breakfast, Thursday, September 8, 9:30 am at the Kopper Kitchen (2661 Airport Way). Contact Tom von Alten (tva@fortboise.org or 208 378-1217) for more information, or if you have digital images you'd like to include in the proceedings.

Humanists August 18 were briefed on the discussions held so far on how to understand and cope with climate warming. description of the work so far of the environmental "earth care" group at BUUF. Nancy Basinger identified a Utah citizens group, MESA (started by but not exclusively LDS) and a Citizens Climate Lobby, a bipartisan group that supports a carbon tax. CCL met with legislators this spring; Republican Bob English was one and he agreed that it is time to find a common solution. Carbon pricing isn't perfect but it is a private market choice. Tying climate changes to national security also puts it on the radar of some legislators. The question from someone asking how a citizen environmental group among Utah Mormons might have formed without leadership from their hierarchy led Woody to respond that their support of technology and GMO products has been entirely economic.

Farming was first possible in high desert country with government investment in underground piping. There's a 100 acre solar farm starting soon, near Adrian. Farmers see that they need higher production per acre as ground water levels sink. In his community of Adrian, they informally gather every 2 weeks to help each other with planting, harvesting, or whatever needs done. That's when they share what works. They use drip irrigation, circle sprinklers, fast harvesting so crops don't waste away after maturity in the fields—and GMO sugar beets resist black heart, are double the size—wheat better resistant to rust.. more per acre for potatoes, corn.. They see the value of experimentation, but it's dangerous, the cost for any individual farmer is too high—the proportion of failures to success, the expense involved, and so they support government agricultural experiment stations.

September 2016

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The Shock of the New Idea JR

Karl Marx's father sent Karl to college, where his drinking buddies railed against a class-ridden society that made Jews, no matter their gifts, classless outcasts. Karl thought a revolution could change everything. Thirty years later, in a Germany still locked into its old ways, **Friedrich Nietzsche** considers over the state of civilization in Western Europe. He writes that acting in good faith, among equals with similarly good manners, is a poor choice for a 'fundamental principle of society.' His reason: "life itself is essentially appropriation, injury, overpowering of what is alien and weaker; imposition of one's own forms.. exploitation.." Nice guys finish last and that suggests that the gods are either dead or ineffective.

About the time that Nietzsche was brooding, Alexander II of Russia had Lenin's older brother executed for joining a group who objected to the differences between rich (think marble halls of the Hermitage) and poor (think wooden plows). Lenin, in college, learned about Marx. Give the power (and goods) of the rich to the poor! Problem solved.

Three years later, **Sigmund Schlomo Freud** finished medical training and started practice in Vienna. He took notes on his wealthy patients and formulated theories. The dreams of these mostly well-behaved citizens were livelier and much stranger than their corseted lives. He suggested that his patients had lost or repressed their natural urges, which were erupting in their dream life, where the wild things are. Drives (for pleasure/dominance/sex live below our ordinary consciousness, along with a death urge) and cause mental disturbances, neurotic repetitions of self-damaging behaviors.

Shift focus to Paris, about the same time. Artists who once needed the patronage of the wealthy and approval from arbiters of taste, were living and working together, holding their own shows, finding a few gallery owners who would show,

sending out manifestos instead of apologizing and sell their work. One group, derisively called the 'impressionists' had already shocked the tastemakers. Enter **Pablo Picasso**, a short young man with an intense stare, who had been painting tired and starving circus performers and prostitutes for three years. In 1906 he saw examples of art and culture in Africa and South America. He painted a large canvas of women displaying themselves for customers, a common enough subject for the times, but with a difference. Really ugly masks have replaced faces. Viewers were acutely uncomfortable and had the sense that someone had just pushed over the rules of the game.

Suddenly the streets were littered with manifestos from young artists proclaiming that Nietzsche was right. It was art, the old beautiful art of triumphant armies and cultivated landscapes and frolicking maidens and lords astride horses, all that was dead in these modern times. One astonishing movement after another flourished, was replaced. Futurism glorified Nietzsche's heroes and influenced comic book heroes. The de Styl movement produced Mondrian and International style architecture. Cubists pictured several perspective per canvas. 'Mad dogs,' Fauves, colored scenes as they felt rather than as they looked.

Fast forward one hundred years. Today no critics enforce taste. No commanding, demanding manifestos, either. Each artist is a free agent and no style is ignored. Representational, abstract, comic, ironic, angry, symbolic, iconic, political-- nostalgic plus mockery of nostalgia—all here. Pablo Picasso's off-hand drawings are beyond the budgets of major museums. The spit and soot sketches of Idaho 'outsider' James Castle command thousands of dollars each. Horse sculptures assembled from rusted found metal place Montana artist Debora Butterfield in the best collections everywhere. Thirty years ago the atheist, feminist, influential critic Lucy Lippard said she's mostly interested in collage art, because there is no center that holds, only fragments and references to the first human artistic expression.

The Cognitive and the visual *More from Jeanette's library*

Responding to interest in graphic novels and cartoon art, **Scott McCloud** cites cognitive research that demonstrates how a simplified cartoon story allows readers to enter the story. As marketers of breakfast cereals know, cartoon characters allow viewers to not just watch, or admire, but to become their heroes.

Cartoonist **Lynda Barry**, is even more emphatic, and she can cite cognitive functioning research to support her perspective. "I think drawing is related to our immune system. It's for mood regulation. Her own energized, awkward style, incorporating her own younger self, expresses the adolescent angst of her characters. For the past year she has been assistant professor of interdisciplinary creativity at the University of Wisconsin, Madison, teaching a class called "The Unthinkable mind." We want to draw, she says earnestly. Watch children. When children draw, they don't set some object in isolation on the page. They get right to the edges. What often stops us is the adolescent fear of not doing it right. Artistic expression by hand makes us whole people, she says. She believes in doodling, too. She says, "We don't create a fantasy world to escape reality; we do it to stay. Stories help us transform experience the way that singing can. Singing changes our mood" in a way that reading or speaking, without music or its rhythm, may not. Lynda's students listen while she talks, even when she says "Insight starts with not-knowing," and gives them assignments like "Name something you still don't understand."

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An exercise Lynda Barry borrows from Ivan Burnett in **Cartoon Philosophy and Practice**: "Draw a car in 3 minutes. Now draw one in 2 minutes.. in one minute.. then in 30 seconds, 15 seconds." You should hear the howling and screaming as they do this, she says. Back to kindergarten. For regular assignments for her writing workshops she has a deck of cards with a noun on each card. She pulls a card that might say 'kitchen table.' First they list ten tables they've sat down to—do this in 90 seconds. Then they pick one and write for 8 minutes or so, filling in details. She will ask, what season is it? What time of day? Where is the light coming from? What smells? What can you hear? They respond in the present tense. "I'm six and I'm sitting at the table at 808 north Lloyd street, Aberdeen. Light comes from one window, over the sink. and says, "She also has an open "Drawing Jam" for children, one day a month. Go online and you can see some examples of student work on the prompt, "Draw your brain." Barry's book describing her writing workshops, Picture This includes her own free-ranging style as well as encouragement to scribble. Let in the demons, she says. The images we make, sing or dance out can open us, allow changes, allow us to re-make, re-shape what needs changing. She observes that what critics call 'horror vacui' or fear of empty space is, turned over, the desire to fill the frame with life and energy. Children do this while adults picture their own psychic life in a bubble when they set an object central and alone on a page. Lack of context is somehow more sophisticated? Just as James Castle saved papers and made his own marking materials, recreating environments from differing perspectives, Picasso, Braque and Curt Schwitters did much the same. Neolithic earth works were situated in a place; compare to Egyptian artwork, formulaic, rigidly patterned, abstracted, meant to fill a protected tomb.