

Two poems:

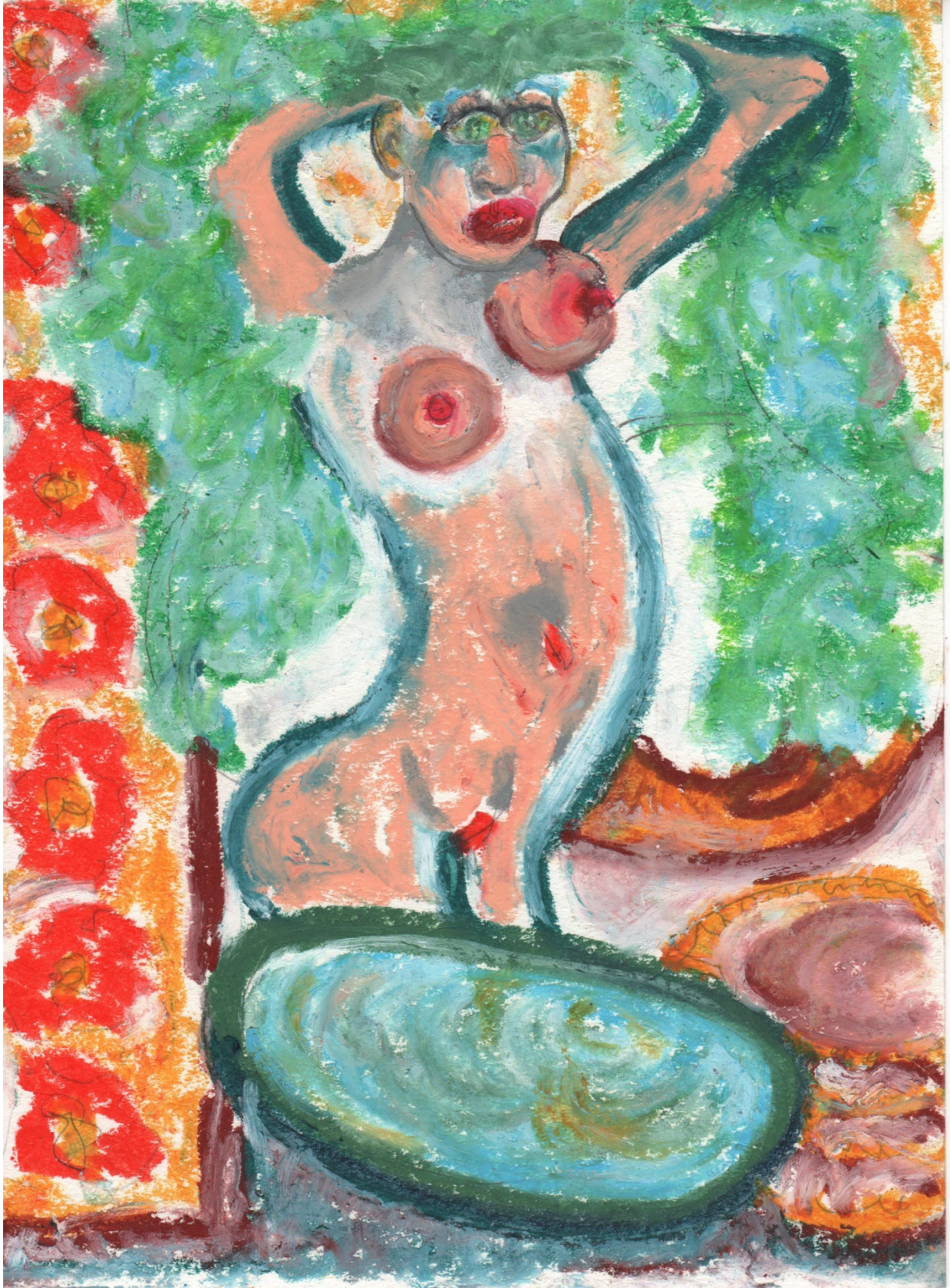
America is...

And

The 'white and ragged' rulers

By Kristen Shelley Jones

Artwork by KS Jones



America is . . .

Power... well, power is not a thing that deals in morality or ethics, as such; but instead deals only with reality: who can do what to whom, when and where, and finally, to what extent.

Dr. Feelgood (circa, 2020)

We twist our truth until at last  
It resembles our fantasy that  
We are good and that justice  
Is our guide and freedom, well

It is the blood running through  
Our veins. Or might it be oil and  
Un-natural gas that powers this  
Posturing of diabolic imagination?

Looking back, feeling our way  
Through a manufactured darkness  
We can see, perhaps inconveniently  
That when we (pre-Americans)

First arrived here on these 'discovered'  
Shores there were already some, that  
Is many, miscellaneous Native Peoples  
Scattered about throughout its breadth







A continent already occupied it seemed  
But, only 'rightfully' so, as we were able  
To fully fledge into our rabid and fetid  
Military status, it became an easy

Measure to marshal and then  
Extend our means of organization  
To turn this complexity into such  
A simple solution: spilling blood

For progress has always been  
An answer to this question  
Never asked, but instead blessed  
And now holy. Indubitably, we

Have archives showing our  
Successes and (we hope) to alleviate  
A bit of our stresses, as it has been  
A hard journey too for those on

Top, courting our blessings and  
Banking these sorrows as joy. It  
Seems that only gold can serve  
Now as our paramount virtue!





As for all those below, well hell, those  
Few on top must need someplace to stand  
Which is not just a vapid rationalization  
But merely reality. There is to be sure

A certain efficacy bound up within the  
Heart and legalities of this mythology  
We can after all repeat it over and  
Over and over again...

An excellent feature when one has  
Limited time and/or capacity for thought  
And/or care. Aforethought, yes, but  
Afterwards never! Indeed, inconvenience

(by conscience) must be avoided at every  
Expense, and thus was established our  
Governing foundation. And then too  
We had cotton and tobacco to

En-splendor the South with that magnificent  
Black-backed engine: until, I guess, we  
Were at last directed (by textual anomaly)  
Or was it from our gods (to whom we can





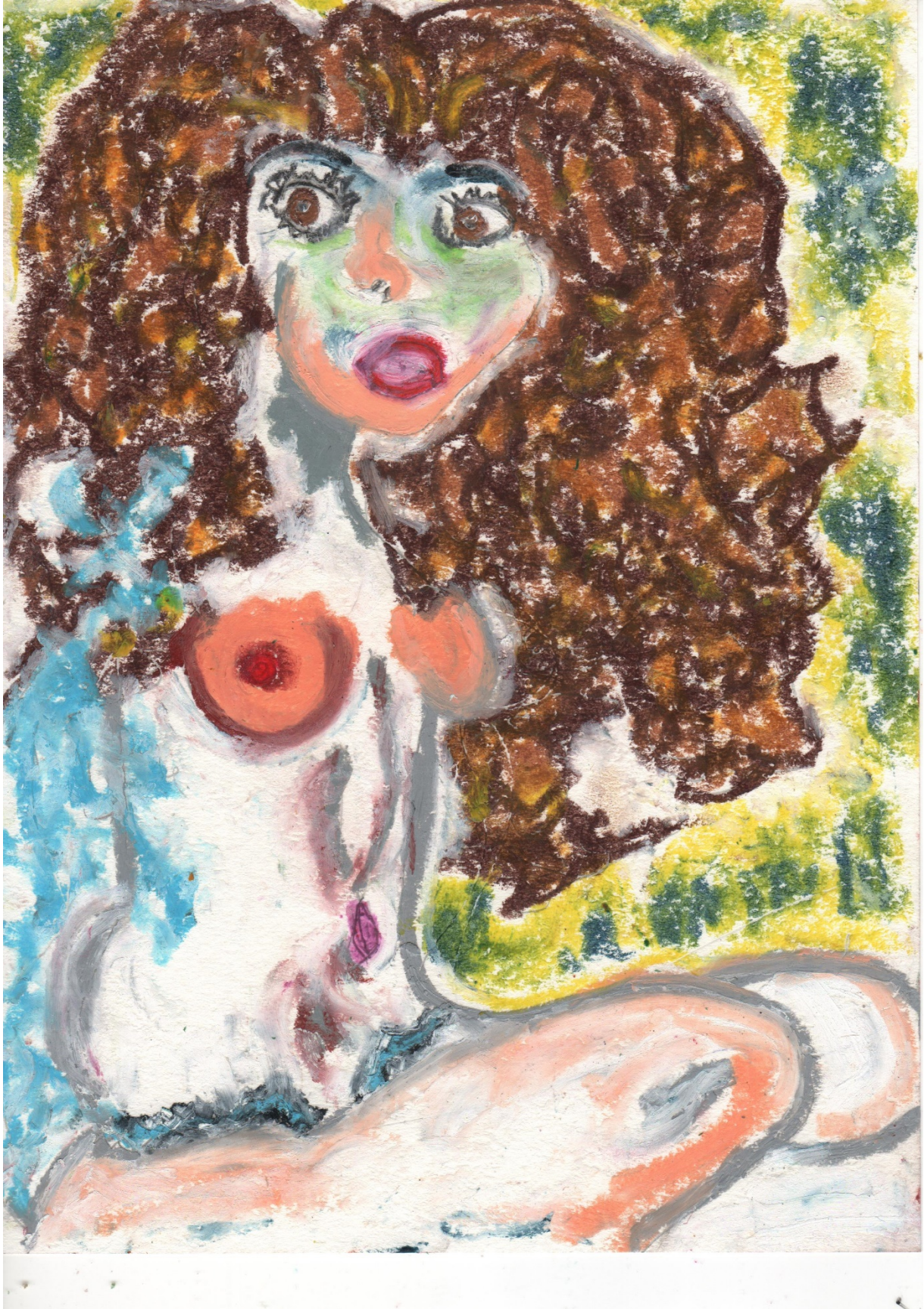
Always appeal and from whom  
Ineluctably reveal) to let loose  
Of this treasure; but alas, in the end  
We could not allow ourselves

To let go the ropes, nor the clubs  
And guns that we've always used  
To maintain control and control  
And control. It goes on and on

And on, as if we could not learn  
Or is it our will that keeps us impotent  
Disallowing our religions to teach  
But only to preach (and such

A hollow echo it has proven  
To be!) But we keep on and on  
And on; it seems a pathway we  
Cannot escape, for even a road

As noxious as this still has its  
Luxuries and conceits. We take  
Great pride in our victories of vice  
And viciousness (duly refined by





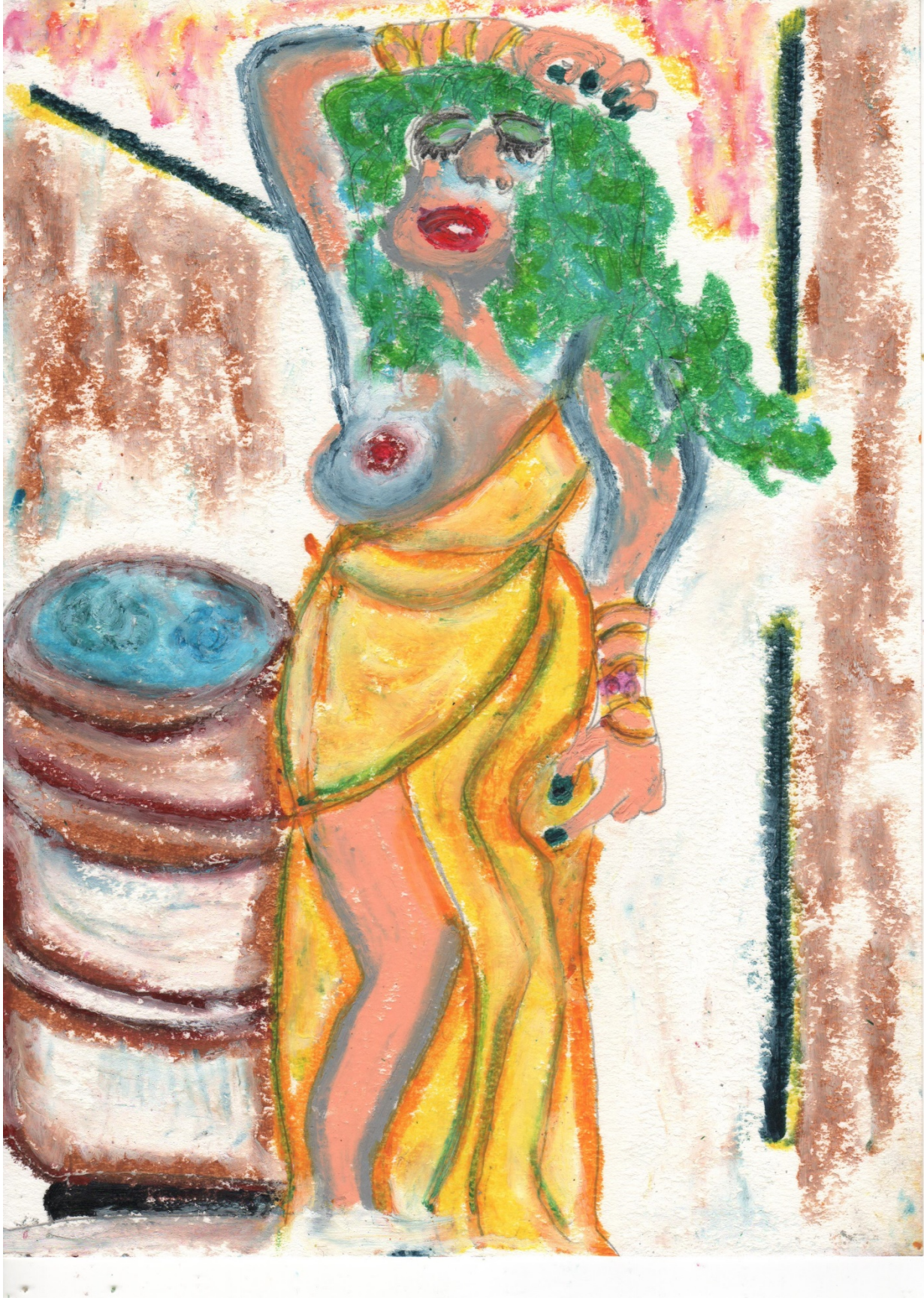
Historical distortion and political  
Message before given over to  
Our public consumptories)  
We rest most easily upon these

Laurels of efficacious robberies  
We do not mince our glory  
When we speak of these necessities  
Or, when seen in reverse

Perspective, atrocities, for after all  
When playing this zero-sum  
Game of right and wrong  
Evil requires less good in order

To flourish. In this we have excelled:  
Naming evil as any loss of opportunity  
(to be the winner!). And all else? Well hell  
Be damned! But ponder this one final

Secret, both terrible and fiercely  
Profound, and must now be revealed:  
War is just another word for greed  
They both are really quite the same





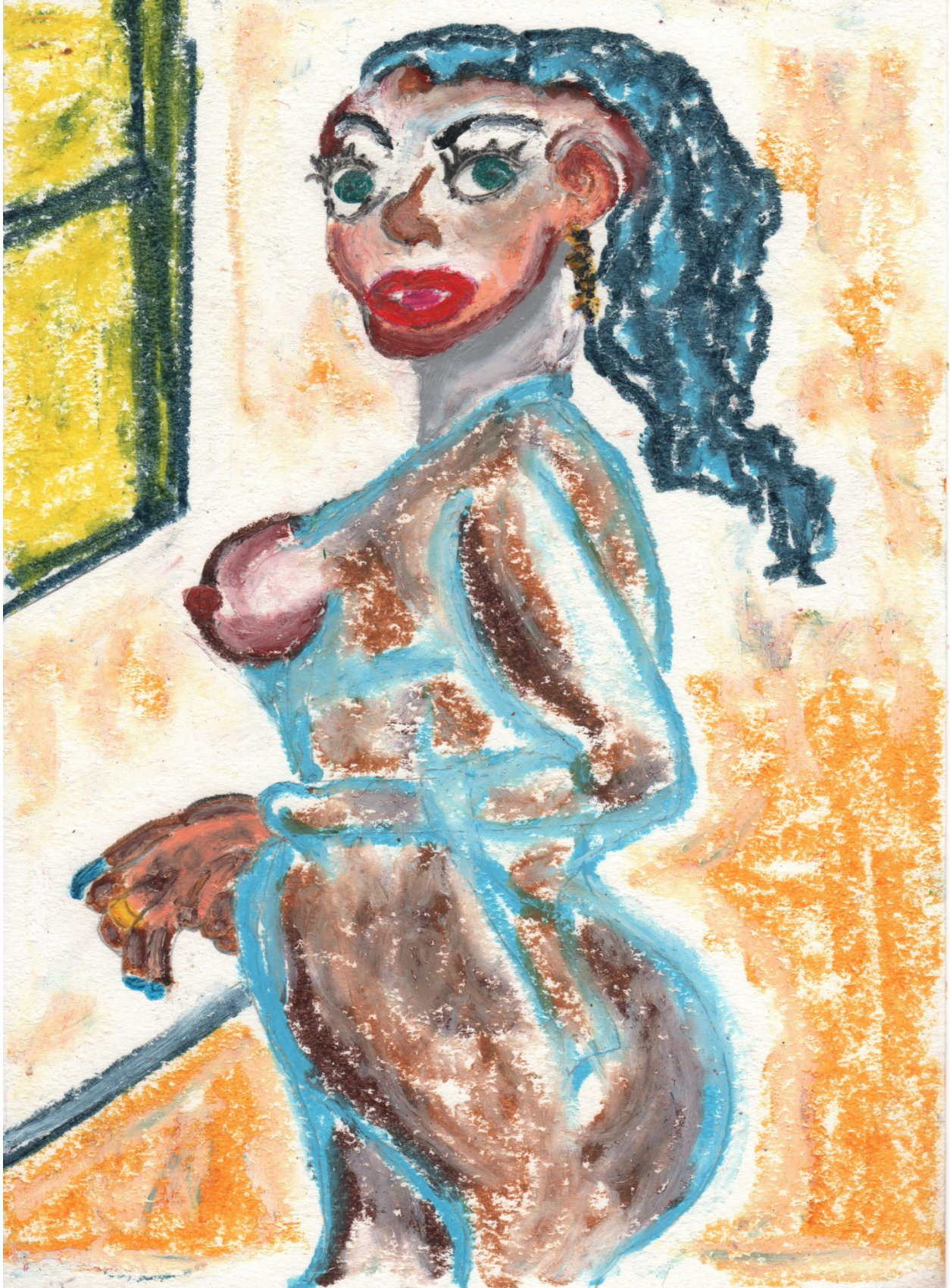
Their singular bane works in  
Reciprocal reflection, each fuels  
And fosters the other, just as fear  
Engenders hate, and perversely

Works conversely just the same  
While ignorance is our way  
Of coping, as we put forward  
Our claims of innocence, hoping

That repentance can be delayed  
Surely that is our gods' provenance  
And thereby cannot be our own  
We will use any words we need

To disprove our culpability  
Guilt is for losers, they do not  
Make the rules, only fools  
Would have a care for them

Essential workers these, alas  
Yes indeed, but being on the  
Bottom and with so much weight  
Concentrated and beaming down





From the very tip-top, that it  
Cannot be a goal to make a  
Move to ameliorate this hell  
Or a turning back, to what?

It is the physics of being rich or  
Being poor: our gods protect these  
Transactions (in our minds, at  
Least) if not so much in democracy

Some do hesitate to call themselves  
Free, when there are still constraints  
Upon the boundaries of their  
Adventure, upon the rhymes and

Rhythms of life and death  
Reality is forestalled, perhaps  
Or stolen, and now misplaced  
In devious and nefarious complicity

Why has it has always been the  
Same? Is there is no adjustment  
To be made? Have these valleys  
Of deceit and despair become





The legacy of the American Way?  
Now only a foreshadowing of  
Our own darkness, yet to come?  
Perhaps. The odds for recovery bleak

For to many they seem about the  
Same as finding a heaven upon  
Release from this earthly purgatory  
Of toil and duty. There is doubt and

It sits much like a shadow cast upon  
The soul: one cannot step away from  
It, nor deny its chill: cold as a tombstone  
In winter is: a shiver and a sigh, as

The stars continue to shine anyway  
Could a chance encounter with some  
More intelligent life-form, either  
Here or from some other star-space

Prove to be our savior? Though this possibility  
Is dimmed by probability, shall we strive ahead  
In this penumbra of default, defeat and delirium?  
Or do we re-gear our vision to see these truths





Never hidden? Have we been called  
To find our better selves? Can we not  
Parlay these failures of our religions  
And our politics into new discoveries

Of justice and peace (to dare love)  
And respect for one another?  
If we could just push re-set and  
Then have another chance

But no, there is no mother-Mac  
To guarantee a different track  
Should we be ashamed of our  
Own vulnerabilities, or proud?

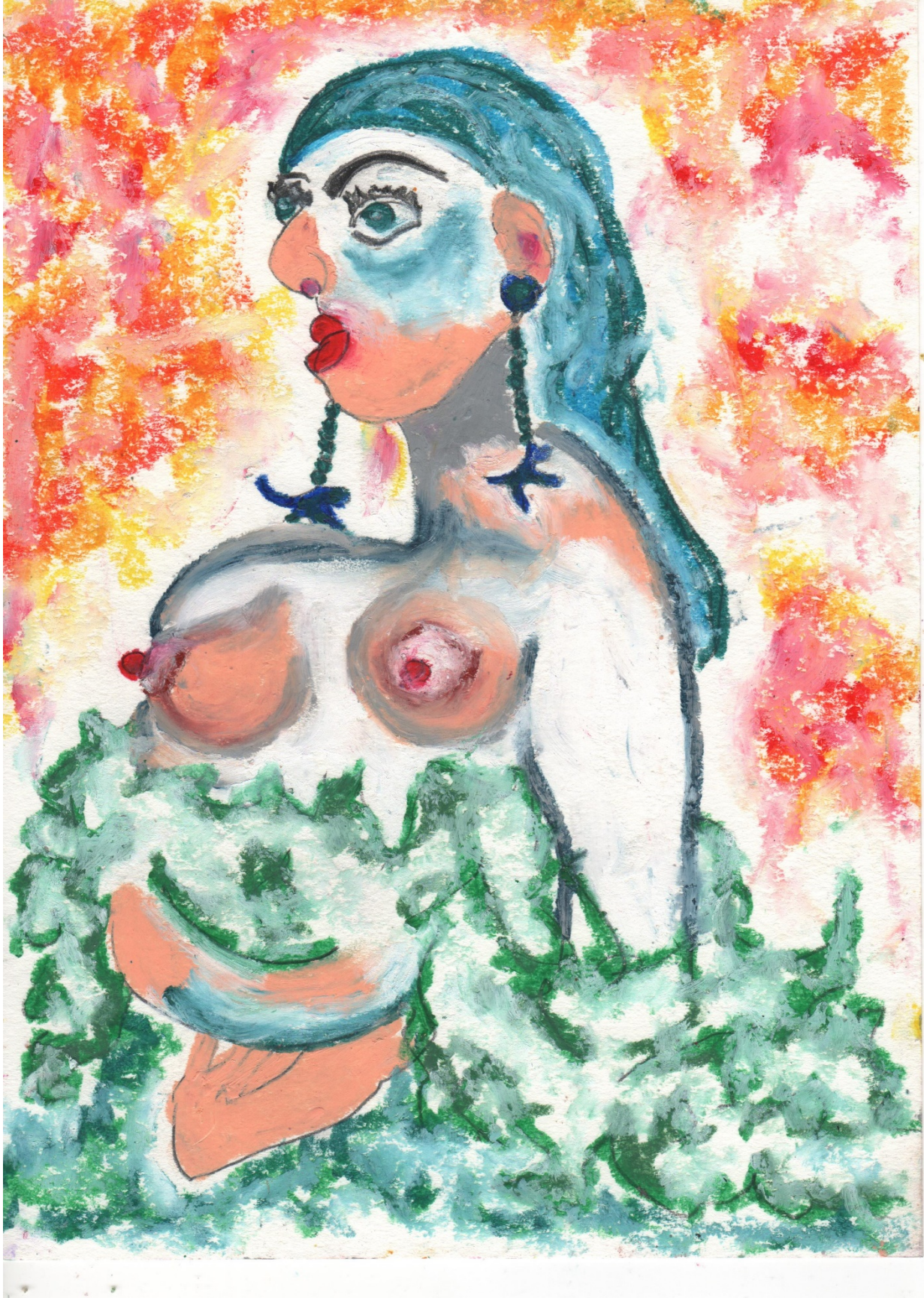
Dr. Feelgood, what is your mood?  
Might I have a word or two  
About your interpretation, or  
Even better, our own prognosis?

Come on now, don' be lazy  
Give us light, everything is hazy  
All our ideas seem diffuse and  
Really not of much use...

There is, he said, but one conclusion  
Even though it might puncture  
Your most precious delusion  
'America is... f'ing crazy!'

Inspiration for this poem came from Nina Simone's  
song "Mississippi god-damn."





## The 'white and ragged' rulers

we only study how  
our wars were fought  
won or lost at what cost  
instead of where and why  
the peace has gone?

does not this sad  
yet ultimate defect  
deserve some retrospection  
or even a modicum  
of thoughtful deconstruction?

in lieu of who killed  
the smaller number  
of babies and thereby  
blessed as the more Just  
we could instead discover

who killed the first one  
and why? or perhaps  
this is a too simple  
calculus, though I suspect  
it goes to the core

of our being: why?  
Why, WHY... we are after  
a consideration of our  
scriptures and philosophies and  
oxymoronic political enlightenments





left only with a naught  
It seems to be a dream  
achieved, but left bereft  
of its warmth, its equity  
its humanity... n'est pas?

are politicians truly our  
lowest common denominator?  
do they define the  
one region of overlay?  
is it as simple as Hell

or does it require some  
even lower level of  
disadvantage and subjugation  
until aggrieved  
understanding can register

as... fuck this!  
do I choose to walk backwards  
in steps destined  
to be my future?  
even selecting my solutions

only from my ignorance  
or some worse reaction  
within that sphere?  
dare I take this moment  
to declare my freedom





or is it too late for  
reconciliation, too late to heal  
from this gash of greed?  
I cannot wager against myself  
what could be the use

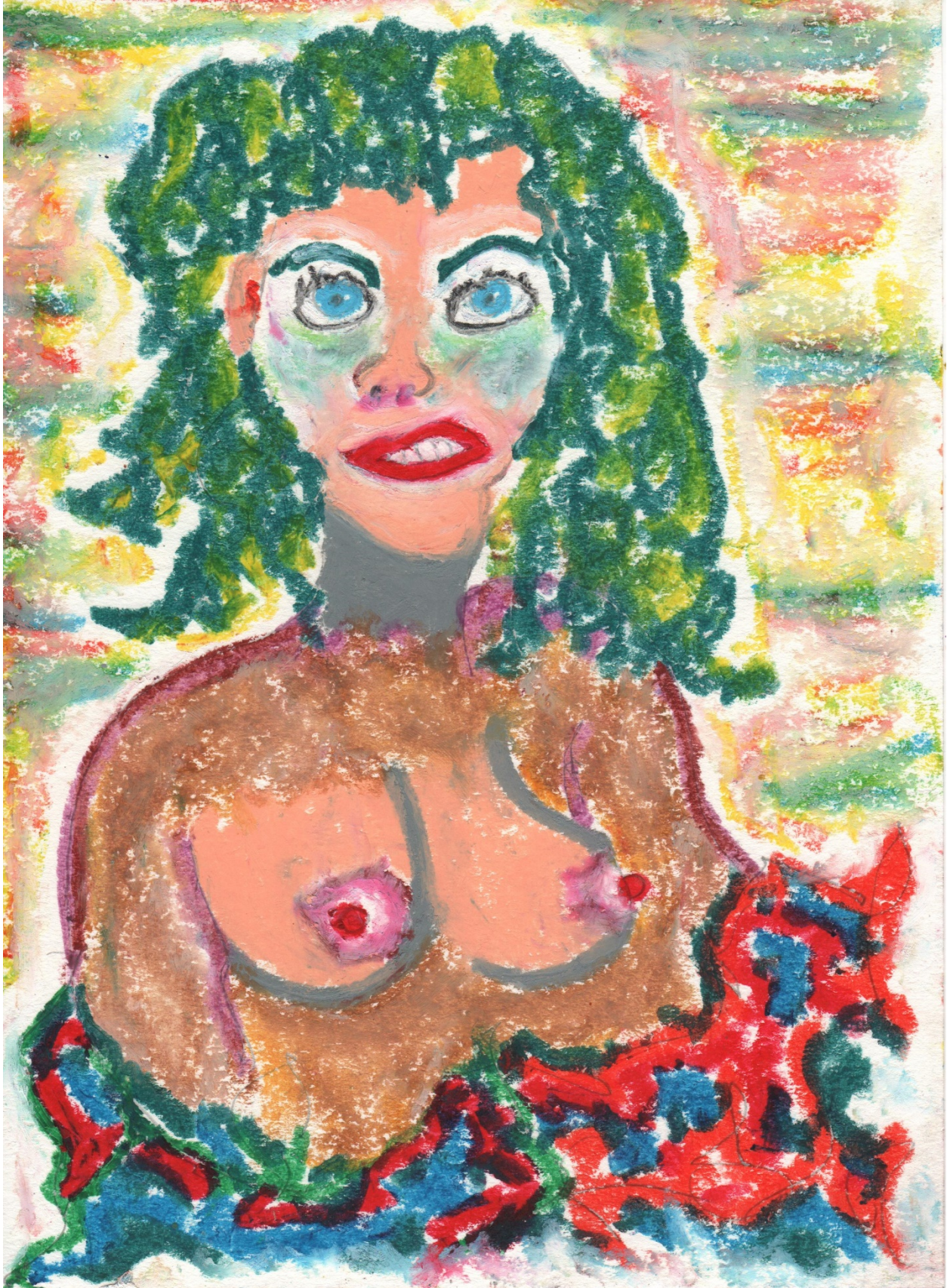
of defeating one's  
own breath? one's own  
image held against the sky?  
will we mind losing  
these relics of ourselves?

how could we presume  
to traverse this chasm  
from here: desolation row  
to there: a confident reappraisal  
of our survivability

amongst this plethora of  
self-inflicted arrows of woe?  
are we arrogant enough  
to persist, much less  
to persevere, amongst

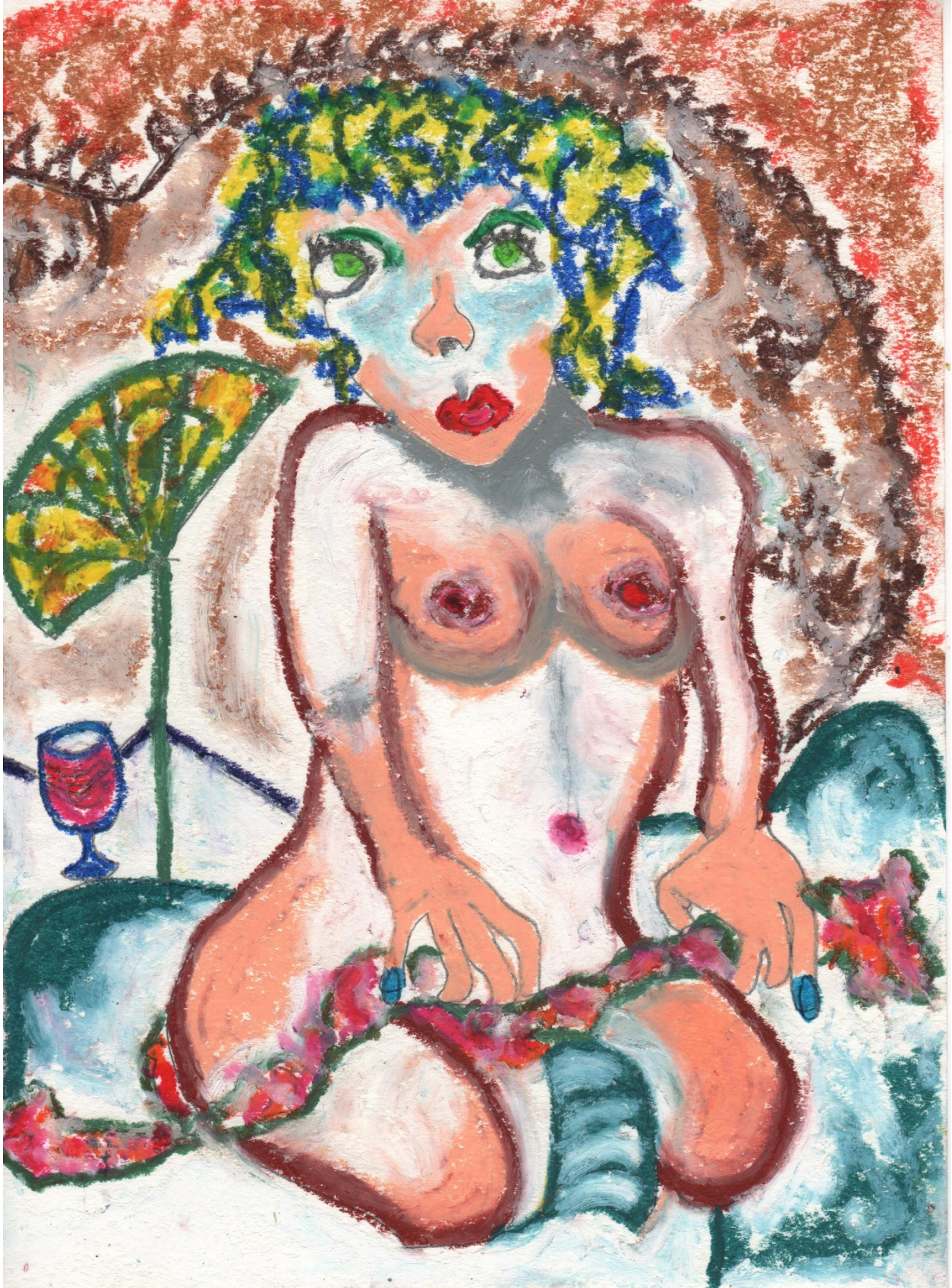
these demons of failure and loss?  
do we indeed offend the  
Cosmos by this egregious  
over-estimation of our value  
or the significance of our gifts





to a possible future?  
or even by our much proclaimed  
yet impossible contentment?  
so now, do we question  
our gods? even as their  
credentials become more  
suspect and bogus?  
have we become the discombobulated  
democracy? given this new knowledge  
we now have of ourselves?  
rather terrible knowledge, I concede  
but I cannot rage against  
this most reasonable insanity  
perhaps we can re-invent justice  
or at least equity—  
is not fairness as good as  
any metric to serve as  
a bottom-line for Society's  
intersections, or some facsimile  
of same, please! do not  
shame the blood of our  
soldiers, who fought for  
this ideal or a part of  
some other silent dream...  
do we now abandon these





musty and dusty principles  
from which we have derived  
our current demise of reason?  
do we, as 'white and ragged'  
Americans, now have our own

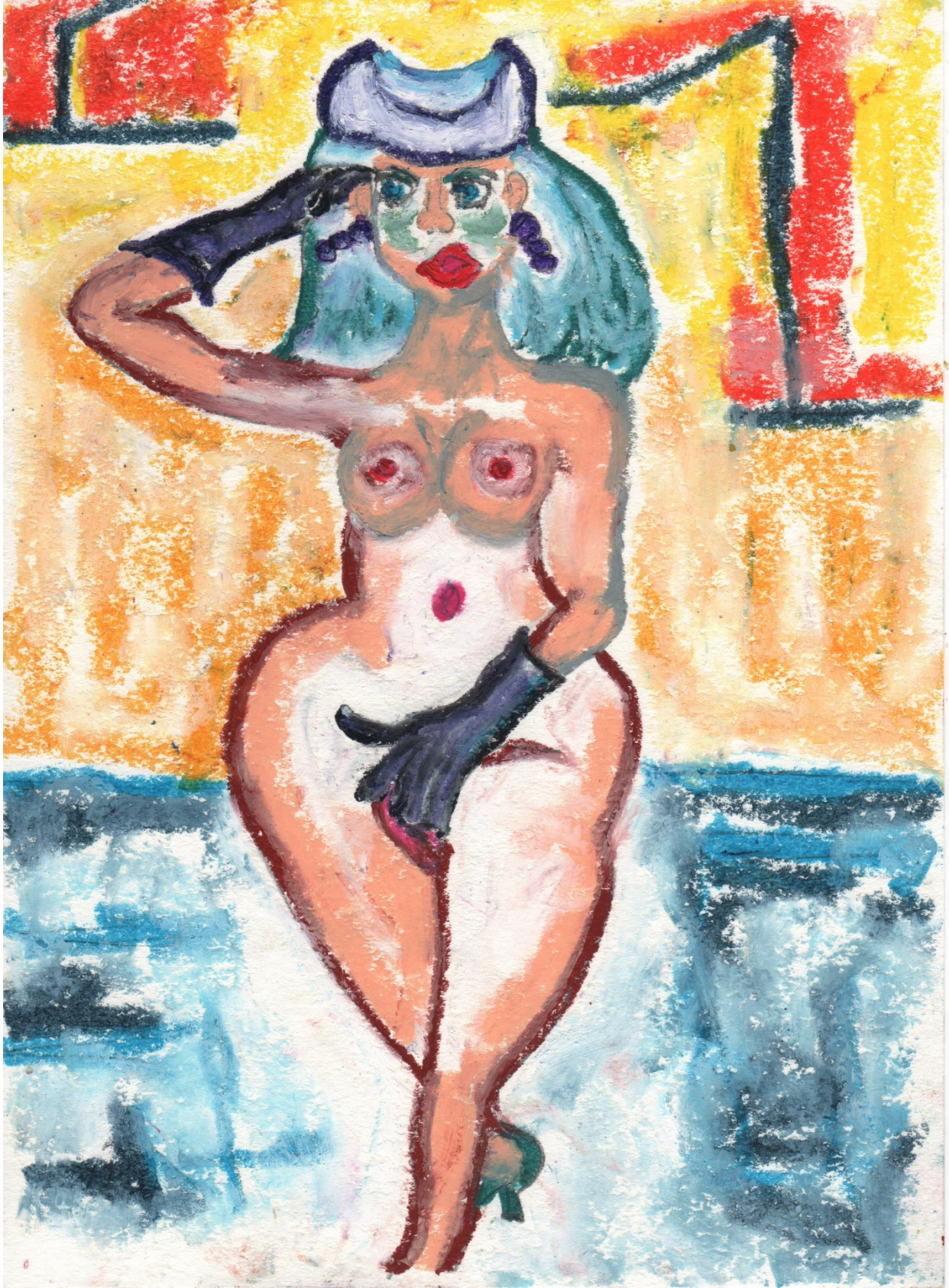
'alternative meanings' to these  
mythic democratic principles?  
it does seem that anything  
outside of this bubble of babble  
is easily labeled as extraneous

to our reality, and thereby  
at least ostensibly, Evil  
which can then be easily  
transmogrified into our own fierce  
and lethal traditions: god's plan

for us; manifest destiny  
(a.k.a. cleansing of American territories)  
our own god's mandated separation  
of some selected number of us  
from some, obviously greater

number of us: engendering slavery  
(not an American invention, certainly  
but a most ingenious perpetrator  
of same, without doubt!)  
we have stolen (blatantly and





feloniously), killed our fellow citizens  
of this world (mercilessly!), enslaved  
and disenfranchised each other  
(continuously and without conscience)  
all to achieve this, our own 'white and ragged'

American Dream! and, due course  
we have become prodigiously  
proud of these accomplishments!  
our patriotism, as it were  
is without parallel, except of course

in our Evangelical zeal to conceal  
our fears and failures by advancing  
a miraculous, fan-tabulous Journey  
(begun only upon death...) to a most  
Wonderful place (hard to describe

well, because dead people  
cannot talk, and in this case  
one must say, quite conveniently so!)  
perfectly designed for our American  
post-life experience, and aptly

thought of as Heaven  
this being in truth, the great, great...  
grandfather of all conspiracy  
theories—a rubric that disallows  
any doubt or critique





as it is at base defined  
to be Perfect, and then  
there is the other opportunity  
held in special reserve for all  
disavowers (or Socialists and  
other Scum, of whom we  
shall not speak!): Hell  
simply stated, but of which  
so much has been imputed  
and for which we have provided  
our very own training grounds  
and inculcation of evil: Prisons—  
their denizens and all associated  
appendages to this malignant  
manifestation! while these  
most fortuitous and expeditious  
realities do in fact and in  
justice 'Handle' most problems  
indigenous to this outlying segment  
of our 'alternative' society  
there are still some who  
dare to appeal to a 'common'  
ground for a more intuitive  
sense of fairness... and what  
blasphemy is this?





who are these co-conspirators  
desiring to de-fund and de-fuse  
the logic and lethality of  
this American juggernaut of  
historically contagious greed  
and corruption? the veritable  
exemplar of the 'American Way'?  
we could proceed with greater ease  
I believe, if we simply demarcate  
those who are not currently  
within this favored portion  
from us others, who are  
it would be too easy to say  
that we are the chosen ones  
for clearly, it is we who do  
the choosing! we are 'white'  
skinned, of course (more figurative  
than literal, indubitably, yet  
we seem certain of who we are)  
but so much more is needed for  
such a hallowed credential  
a college degree is de rigueur  
and though rumors have long  
held that there is a kind of rigid  
rueful and ruinous mentality





that infiltrates these institutions  
(most especially, the most exclusive)  
there are no exceptions to this rule  
being a male in this fateful game  
is most advantageous

though some women do advance  
(through a chorus of incredulity)  
and in the end, without  
respite, all shall be impervious  
to disbelief in one's own supremacy!

we start our children out in our  
own tracks, and even while knowing  
it has been a journey fraught  
with indecision, fear and failure  
we strive ferociously to engender

a trust in the belief  
that justice is Just  
that in fact our god is  
enabling us and that above  
all else, America is good

and right in its ways and means  
and then, everything else—all other  
countries, all other peoples  
(even those of our own who do  
not possess the de rigueur credentials!)





becomes nothing but elements  
with pre-assigned functionalities  
working to make the magic  
of the 'American Dream' real  
palpable, indefatigably resilient

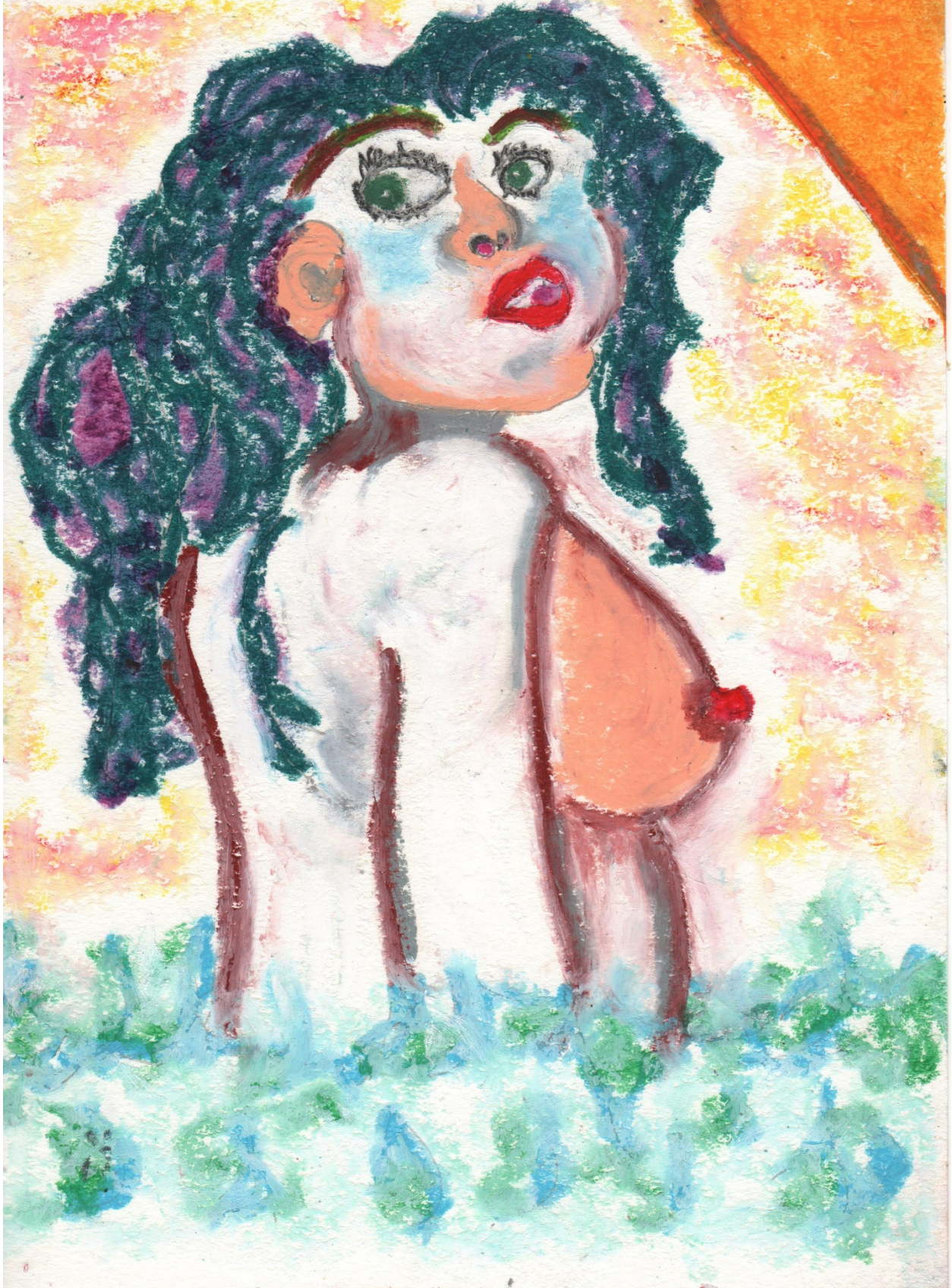
and inexorably persistent  
one might even call it a 'stain'  
upon the earth, but with a  
finite presence, to be sure  
especially given the proclivity

of this ever powerful American  
Ship-of-State to navigate  
these troubled waters by forever  
staying within the grid  
of its own coordinates—

infinite ambition and greed  
calibrated by infamous measures  
of success and dominance!  
this obesity of self-inflated  
arrogance has become our Guide

and is now our Master  
we have our Cackle-Ninnies  
who inform and inspire us  
to embrace these discontinuities  
of verity and grace, perhaps in





the hope that we can believe  
in ourselves again  
to belabor and anesthetize  
our feelings, as if we were  
not a part of a greater humanity

but somehow hovering above it  
judging it and then manipulating  
our results to match our obsessions  
a sorry surrogate for wisdom  
especially after given such a very

very long time to think  
about things, to evolve... to become  
better than our failures somehow  
there will be a cosmological  
irony of sorts in our future

likely, the dinosaurs will have all  
our bones lying upon their backs  
someday to be discovered  
and marveled upon by strange  
visitors to this now 'finished' planet

wondering, perhaps, what  
could have happened and why?  
but it is not upon us, after all  
to declare our own death...  
for that is premature, n'est pas?

The 'white and ragged' rulers ran  
but they could not hide—

Dr. Feelgood, signing out

Please visit my website [www.kjnudes.com](http://www.kjnudes.com) for additional  
writings and artwork.



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