Jenean McBrearty

Of Knotted Ties

The Rooster knows
inside the white-washed walls
of a red-doored cottage
resides the bones of one long dead,
and the baby Bonnie, lovely Bonnie,
born to a father rendered mute by idleness.

"Take care of Bonnie," the Mother says,
as she leaves to make their living
in a city now close by train.
He, not needed in mill or mine,
replaced by mechanical invention,
first muscle then mind, atrophied
while Mother is paid
to solve the problems of the inner city.

He is an inner city,
full of ambition and desire,
full of a warrior's memory
and sport championships well earned,
as tarnished tin and ragged ribbons eloquently attest.
He wears them proudly on his vest.

Daily, he watches the Rooster from a window,
waiting as he does each day,
for Mother to come home
and fret and tsk, and relate how the world
has changed, "...and not for the better."

He watches the Rooster,
peck the young male chicks,
who does not hesitate to make their eyes bleed,
and after blinding them,
dig his feathered fetlock claws
into their scrawny necks until they cease to struggle.
The Rooster is still master of the barnyard,
guilty of a ghastly crime,
but struts with authentic earnest.

The redundant man placed
around his throat the chain of slavery
that would ultimately set him free

in a Hereafterland of bygone accomplishment;
and the Mother, lovely Mother, found Bonnie
crawling 'neath his swinging corpse,
hungry, chewing on a copper coin
that fell from the fingers of the forgotten Father.

Jenean McBrearty is a graduate of San Diego State University, who taught Political Science and Sociology. Her fiction, poetry, and photographs have been published in over two-hundred-fifty print and on-line journals. Her how-to book, *Writing Beyond the Self; How to Write Creative Non-fiction that Gets Published* was published by Vine Leaves Press in 2018. She won the Eastern Kentucky English Department Award for Graduate Creative Non-fiction in 2011, and a Silver Pen Award in 2015 for her noir short story: *Red's Not Your Color*.