

## Scribbler

OCTOBER 2016

ISSUE 89

## Editor's Note

Usually "modernity" refers to whatever major disruptions are taking place in the world right now, paired with a disdain for traditional ways. Feelings about modernity are often a mixture of anxiety and pride. Most of the work in this issue seems more anxious than proud, leading me to the theme for issue No. 90—that is, **Politics**. Almost any topic is grist for the mill that is politics, i.e., climate change, war and peace, race and gender relations, economic inequality, overpopulation....

Please send work to [Karnit@LMI.net](mailto:Karnit@LMI.net) or to Kayla Sussell, 420-45th Street, Oakland, CA 94609. Poems can be as long as 60 lines and prose must be no more than 950 words. Rants are welcomed. **The deadline is Dec. 15, 2016.**

— Kayla Sussell

## Among Ghosts

Stepping into the space  
Of the dimly lit restaurant  
I pass a table of five  
Their drinks untouched  
Each face lit by moon light  
Shining off five hand-held screens  
Their silence thick and heavy  
Their absence tangible  
To my left Descartes laments  
"Iphone therefore I am"  
To my right Eliot murmurs  
"A condition of complete simplicity  
Costing no less than everything"

— Franz Spickhoff

## GPS to Hell

He's got a souped-up Lexus SUV  
modified for high-octane racing gas.  
He took a high-performance driving course,  
always has to be accelerating or braking,  
no coasting. He's been using GPS  
so long he can't read a map anymore  
or find his way out of a paper bag.  
The GPS speaks in a low, seductive  
woman's voice. "Turn right here.  
Drive two and a half blocks. Turn left into alley.  
Put car in park. Leave air conditioner on.  
Unzip your fly. Lie back...."

— Jan Steckel

## "The Future Isn't What It Used to Be"

But it's the one we're falling into, so why not  
charge our electronic devices  
and get on with it? Let your daughter mock  
the vinyl discs that carried you  
to paradise. Save nostalgia  
for high school reunions and 12 Step meetings.  
Admit the beauty "back then"  
had its own snares. Are the kids  
exhausting their thumbs in substitutes  
for talking really more disconnected  
than you, twirling in your parents' kitchen,  
phone cord wrapping like a snake  
around your awkward body?  
Bodies are the same, though of course  
yours was firmer in that past  
which was then the present. Which your  
daughter will realize someday, now twisting  
in the mirror, transfixed  
by imaginary flaws. Be honest—isn't the future,  
however lacking, still better  
than your own confused youth  
when you sang with loneliness,  
smearing sweet potato on your face  
to get more kisses from the dog?

— Alison Stone



**Founder and Editor Emeritus:** Craig Heath

**Publisher:**  
Clive Matson

the Scribbler  
c/o Clive Matson  
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Jacqueline Berger	Jan Hersh	Jane Kenyon
Lauren Crux	J.P. DiBlasi	Dale Jensen
Abigail Warren	Sam Hersh	Dan Gellepes
Glen Fitch	Marc Hofstadter	Lynn Sugayan
Dawn Ramm	Jeff Clark	J.E. Cohn

**PREVIOUS-ISSUE FINANCIAL REPORT**

Issue 88: 450 printed, \$216.81  
398 mailed, two to Costa Rica: \$196.44  
Collate, address, seal, and stamp: donation  
Total expenses: \$413.25  
Total income (from donors): \$180

**DONORS**

Anonymous, Erin Matson, Dawn Ramm.



**Subscriptions:**

Participants in Clive Matson's creative writing workshops receive copies of the Scribbler for two years, and for as long thereafter as the recipient shows interest. If you are interested in receiving copies of the Scribbler, send an email with your name and mailing address to: [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com)

**Submissions:**

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**SCHEDULE AND ANNOUNCEMENTS**

**POETRY SALOON (drunk on poetry!)**

Meets at 472 44th Street, Oakland, the second Friday of the month. Potluck at 6pm, reading at 7:30pm. Bring poems or prose by you and others to share, or come just to enjoy. Hosted by Kayla Sussell.  
October 14, November 11, December 9, January 13

**CRAZY CHILD WRITING WORKSHOPS (fee: \$80)**

Saturdays, 10am - 5pm, once a month.  
October 15 in Benicia  
November 12 in San Anselmo  
December 3 in Oakland  
January 7 in Benicia

**10-WEEK WORKSHOP** poetry, prose, plays, nonfiction (fee: \$400), Wednesdays, 7pm - 10pm, Temescal District, Oakland.  
(Sessions end November 16, start again November 30.)  
Fridays, 10am - 1 pm, Temescal district, Oakland  
(Sessions end December 16, start again December 30.)

**NOVEL AND CREATIVE NONFICTION WORKSHOPS (fee: \$400 for ten sessions)**

One ongoing, intensive workshop meets for three hours every other Monday in Marin. Writers bring ten pages to each session. Limited to five writers.

**BOLINAS WORKSHOP (fee: \$40 or any donation)**

6:30 - 8:30 pm Thursdays  
Starts November 3, ends December 8

**MIDDLETOWN WORKSHOP (fee: \$50 or any donation)** Meets the third Sunday of the month, 10am to 5 pm. To register, email Lisa Kaplan, [MiddletownArtCenter@gmail.com](mailto:MiddletownArtCenter@gmail.com).  
October 16, November 20, December 18, January 15

**THE NOVEL'S ARC (fee: \$500 for five sessions)**

In this workshop four novelists commit to reading each other's novels and examining how each works as a whole. We'll devote a two-hour session to each novel. Next sessions will be arranged as soon as four authors declare their readiness!

**WRITING EXCURSIONS: SEE PAGE 8**

For more information about any workshop, visit [matsonpoet.com](http://matsonpoet.com) or phone 510-654-6495. To register, phone 510-654-6495 or email [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com) (unless otherwise noted).

## Don't Think Twice

A man comes up to my table on Market Street.  
I've just left the theater  
so imagine it's a scene.  
He wants a dollar and I give him one.  
Improv's first rule: say yes.  
He starts to go inside, get a coffee,  
then circles back, sits down.  
He's pretty intense, but not fully  
crazy, asks about this and that,  
then: *Do you have kids?*  
*I don't.*  
*Nathaniel and Rebecca?*  
*No.*  
But his eyes are tearing, and he's staring hard.  
*Are you Nathaniel?* The right question  
if we were acting.  
He starts to cry.  
Absolutely the wrong question,  
I see, in life.  
*Mom. Mom.*  
And now there's no going back.  
I can't convince him I'm not  
who he's looking for,  
the woman who left her kids,  
Nate and Becky, disappearing  
into her own chaos  
and sending them spinning,  
no center to steady or hold.  
He's beginning to scare me.  
I get up to leave, start walking fast  
but he follows, shouting  
across the crowds: *Are you from Santa Cruz,*  
*L.A.? Where do you live?*  
He's finally found her, no way  
he's going to let me disappear again.  
When I see the Hyatt,  
I slip through the revolving door,  
head up the escalator, into the lobby,  
tell the host to help and find a seat  
in the lounge, pulling its white safety  
around me. Pulling  
its clean-clothes safety, its calm-voice,  
not-causing-a-scene safety.  
*Mom, Nathaniel screams.*  
He's made it into the lobby,  
but already surrounded,  
three men, then four, in suits  
ready to call the police.  
He might have guessed it would be like this.  
How many nights ended  
with the red lights on the patrol car  
circling blearily in the winter fog,

Mom in the back seat, accommodations  
made for the kids, cots in some place  
they'd never been, or had they,  
how long before they were back together,  
before it unraveled again?

—Jacqueline Berger

## Earbud iPod Blues

almost forty years afloat  
on our comfy dream boat  
you and me  
between two sheets for better or worse  
until this curse  
wrecked our sacred craft  
and now we lay  
still side to side  
or back to back  
but no longer entwined in our cozy sack  
worlds apart  
a wide divide  
your ears aground in soundtrack mode  
oh god  
I hate that damned iPod  
awake or asleep  
in another sphere  
no longer here  
you've tuned me out  
i hate it  
my dear

—Jan Hersh



## Cesarean

The surgeon with his unapologetic  
blade parted darkness, revealing  
day. Then from her large clay  
he drew toward his masked  
face my small clay. The clatter,  
the white light, the vast freedom  
were terrible. Outside in, oh, inside  
out, and why did everybody shout?

—Jane Kenyon

**From *Little Rambles***

# 5

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Do you remember life before Google?

I mean, it's all out there now, amazingly so: How to care for a bird that's flown into a window. Green drinks for cancer patients. The phone number of a hotel in Portland. And if you forget what you've just looked up, there's "History" to help you find it. Or "Time Machine" to retrieve that document you accidentally deleted.

It's stunning really – you can look it up and find answers to almost anything: how to breathe; how to cut your cat's toenails; how to make a bomb or a peach pie.

Sometimes I prefer to guess, or to try and remember. Sometimes I enjoy not knowing – the spaciousness of curiosity itself.

Sometimes I like the tenderness of asking, "Would you like to be held?"

With affection,

– Lauren Crux

**Barbie**

They've made a new Barbie,  
developed to boost sales,  
restore Mattel to #1, make

millions making millions  
of little girls believe  
inanimate objects really are alive,

their virtual best friends, confidants,  
able to talk to them using over 7,000  
words of interactive dialog.

The child's version of Siri  
& adults believe her, don't we?  
*Turn right in one mile, go left*

*at the intersection. Here are the restaurants  
within a two-mile radius of your location.  
You did say Chinese, didn't you?*

she says calmly, yet confidently,  
like Hal. You do remember Hal, don't you?  
*Discovery I? Daisy, Daisy?*

Barbie, laboratory-tested, child-approved.  
Synthetic friend, fabricated reality.  
Now, at a store near you.

– J.P. DiBlasi

**Transcendent Experience**

celebrate life

spend lunch in a laundromat

your clothes  
will transcend the earthiness of everyday experience  
and come clean with themselves

you will soak in the machines' vibrations  
while reading magazines you'd never touch otherwise

enjoy the simplicity  
of grey concrete walls

hear conversations  
you wish were in a foreign language

find out if the change machines  
actually work

you will clear your head with a headache  
from the stench of all that detergent  
and will no longer have to eat  
thereby overcoming  
physical desire

a new step toward sainthood

laundromats and holy clothing

need i say more?

– Dale Jensen

### When Leeola Was Telling Me The Prime Interest Rate

I was wondering if you really want a divorce  
when Leeola said there's a penalty for early  
closures.

And I thought about that word *closures*  
in grief,  
in miscommunications.

Making the world predictable again.

Auden said,  
*about suffering they were never wrong  
the old masters,*

just as Leeola handed me the pen,  
I saw Icarus falling.

The old masters *knew* that  
the rest of the town goes on doing their  
townie things, and they  
still painted pictures of that great fall.

When Leeola said *closure* again—  
I thought I might send you a text message:  
Is this what you want?

And did I really,  
want to hear  
your answer?

*In a text?*

I looked at Leeola's hands,  
while she reviewed  
my interest options,  
her fingers short and plump,  
nails painted a soft pink;

and there was her diamond ring  
and wedding band,  
and I instantly felt my ring finger,  
thumb running over  
the bones, band gone.

While Leeola  
reviewed the documents,  
pointing at the *full disclosure  
truth in lending,*

I imagined  
that she'd go home  
and make supper for  
her husband,  
or maybe he likes to cook.

She said what a pleasure  
to work with me,  
her black eyeliner, thick,  
but perfectly drawn across  
her eyelids,  
and I thought I can't bear to send that text.

And *Truth in lending* seems like a good idea.  
I cannot think about the answer.

But wonder how long  
I was flapping my arms in that glorious sun  
before I noticed, feathers, gone.

— Abigail Warren

### Contact

Your voice message  
is remaindered on my machine  
although you are out of service  
it comes up often  
still in touch

How much time must pass  
before striking out contacts:  
seven days or thirty  
eleven months  
or never?

My devices well versed and versioned in afterlife  
warm my pockets and call out  
to let you know  
I meant to  
get back  
sooner

— Sam Hersh

### Tanka #175

No meds, no treatment for now.  
Coexist peacefully.  
Now and then  
take potshots at each other.  
You'll have your war soon enough.

— Dan Gellepes



## Plaque

Used wrapping paper,  
plastic cups, faux hair,  
cliff hangers, instant coffee,  
childproof caps,  
repeated jingles,  
static, squelch, dead air.  
Oh, every other driver,  
cell phones,  
snaps, all polka dots,  
and potholes, power lines,  
stringed lights, long cords and cables,  
tiny type, those packing pellets,  
pop-up windows, signs that flash,  
most garnish, all election hype,  
those cards that fall from magazines,  
stuffed birds,  
chewed gum, cheap sandals,  
copy ink, frayed ends,  
words mispronounced, misquotes  
and made-up words,  
my friends' ex-lovers,  
worse! ex-lovers' friends,  
all surveys, pet hair,  
floral-scent shampoo,  
rude waiters, shower scum,  
cigar smoke,  
you.

— Glen Fitch

## Twenty-First

Is this my century?  
I'll know less of it  
than I knew of the last  
unless some miracle occurs.  
Mobs may stir violently,  
oceans inundate cities,  
populations disappear  
in clouds of gas.  
Do I pity our children?  
We lived through World War II.  
Suffering never ends.  
They will deal with it  
in their own way,  
with postings and connections  
beyond our ken.  
I wish them well, wondering  
if there's anything I can do.  
And then I think —  
I'm doing it!

— Marc Hofstadter



## From a Letter to Clive

Forgive me please for my long silence. I have been away in more ways than the distance of the mountains. It is as though I have been experiencing a drought in the well of Words that, for a long time, has buoyed the bubble of my realization of life. The sensation (without Words) is akin to sinking in the middle of a long-distance swim across the lake. A coldness seeps to the bone.

Words have been my inner companion throughout my life. Words have always been dialoguing with every fragment of literature I stumble across. In the mountains, Words come from rocks that tell about the path of glaciers, the forest tells of deep snow and wind storms, and the cold water of the lake penetrates my body with a song like no other. The summer of inner silence was mirrored by the silence Rachel Carson described. There was an eerie silence in the mountains as well. Almost all of the delicate insects that I greet each year have vanished or diminished in such vast numbers that there is no food for the frogs and birds; their numbers too have dwindled and the duration of their presence at the lake was brief this summer.

Perhaps it is my sense of powerlessness in this electronic era of blog babble that is depressing me. Everyone is a writer now. I long to be back in a writing group but I'm too appalled at my inability to sustain a thread ten pages long.

I am consumed by the belief that pesticides and herbicides and petroleum emissions are seeping into the tiniest crevices of life and that my Words should serve the goal of bringing about positive change. But, only if my Words come back.

— Lynn Sugayan

## Toward the End

Another year or so—Maybe.  
Or more—maybe. Meanwhile the clutter  
continues to accumulate.

Though I want to strip myself clean  
my shelves remain too full.  
Tubes of half collapsed acrylic paints  
and I don't paint anymore.

A paisley-patterned duffle bag  
filled with camping gear.  
I don't camp anymore.

Stacks of photographs for a future  
grand collage. I planned a tornado of deer  
touching ground around the fig tree.

Poems and dreams buried in this computer  
given life on paper and tossed in binders and  
drawers  
without date or signature.

At eighty is there anything new?  
Only this gathering up. This letting go  
to allow the closing words.

—Dawn Ramm



## White Tower

We can burn it  
It's infected  
fields, records, our fruit  
water, mosques, it casts inordinate shadow  
I have a lighter, you have the fuel  
Hatefully designed, well-defended, it kills, sells  
We won't try to climb, we douse  
the perimeter, flood the subfloors with fuel  
We drench the lobby  
White tower that sodomizes horizons

—Jeff Clark

## Search for Meaning (Is a Book Festival in Seattle)

Truth is on a timer now, and a turn  
of phrase needs to appear at the top  
of the page, or come with a visual.

Wikipedia says *TLDR*,  
short for **TOO LONG DIDN'T READ**,  
came up from the forums.

TLDR morphed into *tl;dr*  
(too long; didn't read)  
among editors—

This, from professional communicators,  
when an emoticon with a tongue  
sticking out says as much.

Perhaps the deadly pharmaceutical and financial  
advertising short-circuited sensibilities—  
all those details in small font.

Maybe it was update overload—  
legions of one-dimensional avatars  
standing in for people we know.

But anything beyond the first photo  
is getting to be too much info.  
Read: the terms of engagement.  
Einstein said Something.  
"Too much reading kills Creativity."  
How does that go, exactly?

Hobbes said Something in a similar vein.  
Not those exact words, but true enough  
in the grand tradition of the search engine.

Online, when a question has no answer—  
"How much minced garlic equals  
one clove?"—we just vote.

We conduct trade in measured responses,  
though meaning isn't data, though truth  
can't be discovered the same way twice.

No. Meaning is  
concrete  
felt by bare  
warmed by Sun  
made in  
memory, out here,  
where the words end

—J.E. Cohn

## WRITING EXCURSIONS

### LAKE COUNTY WORKSHOP

"LET THE CRAZY CHILD WRITE!"

Saturday, October 22, 4 to 6 pm, and

Sunday, October 23, 10 am to 5 pm

Lake County Arts Council Gallery  
235 Main Street, Lakeport, CA 95453

Fee: \$55 or any donation.

Phone 707-263-6658 to register,

510-654-6495 for details on the workshop.

### WRITING COSTA RICA

Two sessions in 2017:

Jan. 28 - Feb. 4

Feb. 5 - Feb. 13

Clive Matson, Facilitator

Fees per session: \$1,400.

**\$100 deduction for taking both sessions**  
(\$1,800 single-occupancy)

For more information, visit

<http://matsonpoet.com/Costa-Rica>. To register:  
510-654-6495, 510-508-5149. [Clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:Clive@matsonpoet.com)  
[www.NosaraRetreat.com](http://www.NosaraRetreat.com)

### SCRIBBLER FINANCIAL REPORT

Total expenses: \$413.25

Total income from donors: \$180 (thank you)

If you love poetry, if you know that the poets  
among us take time to grow and flower,  
please donate for the sake of this publication.  
Your generosity helps to keep *The Crazy Child  
Scribbler* (and Clive) going.

**THE SCRIBBLER**

Clive Matson

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