

## Scribbler

JANUARY 2015

ISSUE 82

## Editor's Note

Loosely translated, *Homo sapiens* means the one who knows. That's the name we call ourselves. Other phrases we use to identify ourselves by a defining characteristic include: *Homo ludens* the one who plays, and my personal favorite *Homo faber* the one who creates or makes. We've been making stuff ever since we became bipeds – not just to ensure the food supply, but for fun. Hand prints, anyone? Since then, about 7,500 generations of us have made lots of stuff for lots of reasons: stuff like music and pictures, photos, poems, ceramics, and so forth. This issue is about all the stuff we make called art.

The theme of the next issue of the *Scribbler* will be *money*. Please submit poems, short stories, mini-essays (500 to 600 words), and cartoons about money via email to [Karnit@LMI.net](mailto:Karnit@LMI.net) or by snail mail to Kayla Sussell, 420-45th St. Oakland, CA 94609. **(If you want to read the Money issue, send us some! We need it!)**

– Kayla Sussell

## Magic in Theory &amp; Practice\*

for Mike Goldberg

to all you with gaunt cheeks who sit  
glamourized by the sounds of art in the  
last remaining lofts, shining like gold in ore in the  
sleek grime of NYC under the shadow  
of MOMA, breathing no air, finding lustre in the  
huge speaking canvases that whisper  
like Miles Davis in your dusty ears, to all  
you climbing laboriously on scaffolding shaping  
these same canvases, bending light, or drinking hot plate  
coffee on "studio couches" flanked by skinny girls  
oh how my love reaches for you, gross & holy men  
fancy women pretty boys expensive flowers oh home  
I may never see again oh glamour  
like Baudelaire fading in a long hall of mirrors  
called past as I move backwards over  
its black velvet floor

– Diane di Prima

\*Reprinted with the poet's permission from *Selected Poems* 1956-1976 (VT: North Atlantic Books).

## Close-ups in Brown\*

Mud is the sound of spring, the sound of fall,  
the sodden ground of life. This wax and oil,  
this luscious piling on of umber muck,  
enshrines a molten mass of muddy track  
in rain-soaked woods: Imagine a surround  
of fallen leaves like hands pressed to the ground,  
decaying autumn colors soaked to brown,  
in clay-dark rivulets that trickle down  
and ripple, catching earth and bits of moss  
and fern, the green dissolving. Here – come close;  
a hint of something lost: a copper fleck,  
an iridescent beetle's wing, a slick  
of oily film, metallic rainbow dulled  
by dirt. Look closer still: the underside  
must almost seethe with movement, almost roil  
with coprophilic creatures of the soil,  
at work on nature's waste, and on this wall.

– Didi Goodman

\*From *Greed: A Confession* © D.R. Goodman, 2014.  
Used by permission of Able Muse Press.

**Founder and Editor Emeritus:**

Craig Heath

**Publisher:**

Clive Matson

the Scribbler

c/o Clive Matson

472 44th Street

Oakland, CA 94609

clive@matsonpoet.com

**Editor-in-Chief:**

Kayla Sussell

**Production Manager:**

Jean Hohl

**Featured in this issue:**

Diane di Prima    Didi Goodman    Tama Zorn  
 Kayla Sussell    Chris Grady    Kirk Johnson  
 Judy Wells    Gary Turchin    Matt McKay  
 Richard Loranger    Daniel J. Kaiser    Alice Molloy

**PREVIOUS-ISSUE FINANCIAL REPORT:**

Issue 81: 450 printed, 395 mailed (2 to Costa Rica)

Expenses: copy and fold, \$232.73

Stamps: \$195.85

Collate, address, seal, and stamp: donation

Total expenses: \$428.58

Total income (from donors): \$120

**DONORS:**

Jerry Amundson, Erin Matson, Gerald B. Matson,  
 Katy Remington

**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 and Editorial Policies:**

**Basic Acceptance Policy:** If the current editor likes a piece, it gets published; if not, it is passed on to the next editor who will either use it, or return it to the author. All rights are reserved. Send submissions to: [scribbler@matsonpoet.com](mailto:scribbler@matsonpoet.com)

The Crazy Child Scribbler is published four times a year by Clive Matson. All materials remain copyrighted by the authors and any reproduction requires author consent.

**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 and Jayne McPherson.

January 9, February 13, March 13, April 10

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

Saturdays, 10am - 5pm, once a month.

January 3 in Oakland

February 14 in Oakland

March 7 in Middletown

April 4 in San Anselmo

**10-WEEK WORKSHOPS** poetry, prose, plays, nonfiction (fee: \$400), Mondays and Wednesdays, 7pm - 10pm, Temescal District, Oakland.

Current sessions end February 16 and February 18.

Next sessions start February 23 and February 25.

**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.

**STRUCTURE OF LARGE WORK**

(fee: \$400 for ten sessions)

For writers with a draft of a full-length play, script, or novel, or who want to start a large work. Our topics are standard repertory, starting with "Whose story is it?" Current sessions end January 29, next sessions start February 27.

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

In this workshop four novelists commit to reading each other's novels and examining how the novel works as a whole. We'll devote a two-hour session to each novel. Current sessions end in May, next sessions start in June, dates to be arranged.

**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).

## Art as Appetite

For me, art is primarily about appetite. I am, quite simply, hungry for it. When I encounter something I love, visual or aural, it does not first enter through my brain. It enters through my belly, where it feeds a constantly hungry void, capable of digesting great gobs of high-calorie sustenance. I am gluttonous in all things: food, paintings, music, words, pottery and poetry, Velazquez and Voltaire, it all goes into the voracious center of my belly first. When I stand in front of a painting that stuns me, I can feel my appetite rush up from those viscera long before my brain comprehends what I am looking at. I have found myself feasting before Bonnard's at the Tate, Goyas at the Prado, any and every Rembrandt self-portrait I have ever seen, mural art in East Harlem, Iznik tiles in Istanbul. Each experience makes me feel as though I've been fed at a fabulous banquet.

When I hear great music, it goes into my gut like the best Baba Rhum before I separate genre, lyric, or literal meaning. My stomach is fulfilled by Rostropovich playing Brahms, Billie singing "Am I Blue," Willie singing "Blue Eyes Crying in the Rain," Irma Thomas singing anything. Like a painting, their music enters me through that portal, my gut, and for the moment, I'm no longer hungry.

I am a perpetually hungry person: I eat too much, feel too much, care too much, absorb too much. I don't want to be abstemious. Gluttony is at every one of my nerve ends. Bring it on. I'm going to die undieted. I know still lifes are often allegorical paintings showing that the ultimate cost of untrammled gluttony is death. Nonetheless, even when I see those molting pheasants hanging off wooden tables, feathers bloodied, what I see is a vehicle for currant sauce with port wine and immediately I visualize dinner. I've sometimes wondered whether my esthetic delight in lining up beautifully chopped vegetables by their colors is my version of spirituality.

All this raises this question: do we respond to art differently based on whatever our strongest personal trait might be? Do ascetics respond somewhere else than in their bellies first? Maybe their hearts, brains, eyes, or even their veins. Do we each arrive at our esthetic truths by means of different physical channels? Are there many digestive tracts for consuming art? Can we discover new body type phenomena: artistic endomorphs, ectomorphs, mesomorphs, etc., each of whom channels her/his response to what is perceived as beauty through a different organ, functioning as the transmitter?

Perhaps that's what Buddhists mean by the "third eye."

Hunger for beauty is a primal appetite, and I'm sure people who don't go to museums or concert halls feed their hunger elsewhere: with flowering fields, flutes sounding, a moment picking a perfect pepper, the curve of a cheek, a million small and piercing moments we barely know we are eating and digesting. When for a moment, you are a Maenad, not Athena, before you think, rate, rank, or otherwise try to keep beauty from devouring you – by distancing it, containing it, or placing it in intellectual context. How does it find its way to your center? Because we each have a portal. I know this... through my belly of course.

– Tama Zorn

## Praisesong for Music

*"Without music, life is a mistake."*

– Nietzsche

Me? I say  
Music saved me,  
Lotsa times.  
Days when I ache to be not here  
I crawl into the spaces between the notes.  
There, music moves in and takes over.  
Can't sing it. Can't play it. *Can* hear it!  
Hearing music makes  
staying here  
plausible – even desirable.

"Tell me when you were happy," my shrink said.  
"When I heard the Eroica under the stars."  
"Another time?"  
"At Carnegie Hall when I heard the Weavers."  
"Another?"  
"When I heard ..."  
He cut me off and asked,  
"When were you happy *without* music?"  
I rummaged memory – came up blank,  
was mute for the rest of the hour.

One day when I was twelve, Tchaikovsky's  
*Romeo and Juliet*  
surged through the speaker of the old Philco.  
The rush was so intense, I fainted.  
Came to with hot salty tears  
coursing down my face.  
Didn't know what had happened.  
Probably puberty.  
Knew I'd been blessed anyway.

– Kayla Sussell

## So What's It Going to Be Today?

When you start most days trying to produce a specific sound, a big beautiful lush sound by vibrating your flesh against a small metal cup, matters can quickly turn dicey. I'm talking about lips against a metal trumpet mouthpiece. That's my instrument, that's what I play.

When I started, I had to carry my trumpet cases by luggage cart because I wasn't big enough to actually carry them. Maybe that's why I became attached to my horn so quickly. The luggage cart made me seem "special."

When I practice today, it's more about getting my horn to sync up with me, physically and emotionally. Each time I pull her from the case, we have to re-introduce ourselves. (Yeah, she's female.) I find myself saying, "So what's it going to be today?" I never know until my lips start buzzing on that mouthpiece. When vibrating flesh against metal, every day is a crapshoot.

My horn isn't a separate entity from me. I didn't choose it, it chose me. Over time, it has become an extension of my being and, more importantly, my voice. I'm constantly trying to *sing* through it, but every musical instrument has its own unique idiosyncrasies; some sing better than others.

Last week I was recording a studio session for a documentary film, and was listening to the playback of the "fake" electronic trumpet line and thinking about how to make that line come to life. Listening to a pre-recorded, computer-generated trumpet line is like kissing your sister; it just *feels* wrong. So I asked the producer if I could see the part of the film I was to play over so I could figure out what kind of personality to bring to it. I thought, "How can I connect this horn line to the film and make it meaningful?"

That morning my trumpet and I were synced beautifully and before I knew it, we were emotionally involved in that scene together. We were totally lost in it. We were in the zone my horn and I. We knew exactly how to work together to make that scene resonate, and I felt it. It doesn't happen often but when I get chills after I hear the playback, and the producer is smiling a big smile, I know me and my horn worked that one out!

Then there are the days when I turn to my horn to change dark emotional turmoil into something lighter. Sometimes my practice sessions turn into a complete catharsis. It's like the horn guides me to take musical risks where normally I would just use

my usual coping mechanisms for dealing with emotional upheaval. The horn guides me and grounds me.

I don't know how many times the trumpet has transported me from out of a dark place to one of hopefulness. I know I can always reach for it whenever I'm feeling desperate. It has proved again and again that it can carry me completely out of despair to a calmer saner place. Sometimes new projects even get born this way! This may sound dramatic but this shit is *real*. Bad breakup can = really good solo project.

Without question, I have developed a tight emotional bond with my instrument. We strive *together* to move the music, let it sing and breathe, give it space, and in turn, I'm enriched by playing it. It's not just a piece of metal I blow air through to make music. It's not *separate* from me... it's an extension of me, of my voice. All I need is to continue to try to sing through it.

—Chris Grady

## TWO FOR LESTER

### Indiana

back again  
& just slipping  
through  
one chorus  
out of every  
not to say lightened  
but lifted  
to a point of  
no return  
& at that angle  
straying back  
to no place  
like home

### A Porchlight In El Sobrante

Supper done, the girls in bed,  
their mother away at her dance class,  
Lester Young's on the radio:  
the late version. Mean to Me

The one with the simplified premise:  
no older, younger, none of that  
grief. Just the straight sibilant  
nagging of decay

—Kirk Johnson

## The Traveling Mole

“La Traviata” outdoors  
on a huge, full-color screen  
at Vienna’s Staatsoper square –  
Free seats are set out for Wieners  
and tourists who become  
part of the opera!

It’s almost a sing-along  
when an audience tenor  
begins Alfredo’s solo on key  
before the real star opens  
his mouth on the screen.

And then there’s the soprano –  
the magnificent Violetta  
dark-haired with porcelain skin  
whose every pore  
is magnified on the screen.

And look! That mole  
that used to be on her bosom  
has now migrated to her neck  
during a scene with a passionate,  
open-mouthed kiss with her lover.

I am so disappointed  
we have to leave before Act III  
as rain comes pouring down.  
The Wieners and stalwarts  
raise their umbrellas and sit in puddles  
but we decide not to get drenched.

Still, I did want to see  
where Violetta’s mole migrated next.  
On her lip above her voluptuous mouth?  
Perhaps on her forehead  
when she’s quite near death?

Did the soprano who played her  
view that dark mark as a good luck charm?  
Or was she just playing games  
with us, the peons  
without hundreds of euros  
for an inside seat?

No matter –  
Her singing was thrilling.  
Her acting superb.  
I will never remember her name  
but my memory still lingers  
on her traveling mole.

– Judy Wells

## Opening Reception

At the opening reception  
the artist mistook his mother  
for a still life.  
Her ears for pomegranates,  
her eyes for avocados,  
her heart for a crusty loaf of bread,  
which the knife of her tongue  
sliced through like butter,  
just as she’d sliced his youthful bitters  
from chunks of her own,  
and served them up as entrees  
to his manhood,  
now lurking in the shadows  
between the wine  
and cheese.

– Gary Turchin

## Outside West Jefferson

Trees at the far left are bare.  
The few by the stream  
hold a thin corona of leaves,  
now iridescent

in the afternoon sun.  
Beyond are the haystacks  
piled up in a combed field.  
And then the hills of Ashe County,

high and massive, casting shadows  
down a pasture  
to a silhouetted train –  
the steam, gushing

from the engine’s safety valve,  
explodes with sunlight.  
Which is the exact  
location of the sadness

found by Winston Link’s Roloflex  
in 1956: a single  
bright plume  
before the coming night.

– Matt McKay



## Writing (on the) Outside of the Box

While studying at the U. of Michigan, way back in the Pleistocene, I once took a one-on-one tutorial with a visiting professor. Though I'd loved working with words for many years, I'd hit a very odd wall, a sort of depression, and couldn't think of anything traditional to write. But I wasn't bone-dry; in fact, I became fascinated with writing only one thing: pairs of words in numbered lists.

I'd sit with my typewriter, type "1", type a word, try to blank (or blink) my mind, then type another word. Then I'd hit the carriage return, and type "2". And so on, until it felt done, like a poem. Actually, I considered them poems, although I named them Blinklists, after the process. In truth, I thought they were pretty goddamn beautiful. Sadly, the professor did not.

That spring I met Liz, an interesting artist who lived in an abandoned steel mill on the outskirts of Ann Arbor. In one of the steel mill's vast industrial spaces she had sketched hundreds of cats of every imaginable size, from tiny to extremely large. One day while visiting, she led me to a large piece of torn black paper taped to the floor. It was about five feet in diameter. She dumped a bunch of chalk pastels on top it, and asked me to write a poem.

I took one breath, and dove into it Blinklist-style, covering the paper in many-colored verbs, written in every direction. By the time I finished, it looked as though a jumble of happy verbs had fallen from the sky directly onto the paper. I called it *Verb Dance*, and told Liz that to finish it, she and her girlfriend had to dance barefoot over it, until all of the words and colors smeared together. Which they did.

Liz sent me home with a giant roll of black photo backdrop paper and the box of pastels. I spent months wrapped in that paper, filling it with texts of smeared chalk, dripping and run-together gouaches, and vibrating oil pastels. Words leapt off the paper and onto other objects. I ended up having an art show on campus, which the writing professor checked out and continued to be mystified by, and a show at a local gallery.

I still write traditional(ish) poetry and prose, from strictly formal to wildly not so, but the Blinklists have stayed with me, sometimes dormant, sometimes in full bloom. Over the years, I've produced scores of oil pastel Blinklists, mostly on flat black paper, from poster-board size to quite large (6' x 9'). And I've written poems on all kinds of objects: walls, sidewalks, coffee cups, Mobius strips, cigarettes, boxes, scrolls, etc. Obviously they're fun to make, but there's another, more salient reason I continue to write in these media.

That is this: *because they're not publishable*, they're not reproducible; so I can write whatever I want to without any sense of a greater audience, or of anyone to answer to. I make Blinklists for myself, with no pressure and no expectations at all. And this freedom extends into my other writing, freeing me to write whatever I want or need to, without regard to the poetry industry, or trends, or "acceptable" styles. It has helped me be a free writer.

—Richard Loranger

## Nomenclature

The kingdom of jazz has never lacked for royals.  
Many Kings have worn the Crown and held the Orb.  
Their reign began with King Oliver, ended with Nat King Cole.  
Mingus was a Baron and there've been Dukes and Counts galore.  
No Queens, but Ella was known as our First Lady of Song.  
And a commoner, called Sinatra, became the Chairman of the Board.  
Neither was theology ever neglected.  
Among his peers, Art Tatum was known as God.  
Nina: High Priestess of Soul, Thelonious, High Priest of Bop.  
We'd travel anywhere for Miles.  
Found Sweets' licks good enough to eat.  
We pledged life-long fealty to Lady Day  
Voted all our ballots for Prez.

And Bird flew.  
Really.  
He flew.  
I'm here to tell you  
Bird flew.  
Yes.  
Really.  
He flew.

—Kayla Sussell

## The Golden Majestic Beast at the Ending of the Wood / Arkestra of Cosmic Covenant

Seven grand sequoia shower  
Golden majestic rainwater  
Through Saturn-like rings  
Seven seeds are sown  
Ancient in magnitude

Yet wise to the throne  
Of intergalactic outer space  
From Jupiter to Cronus  
They take their place  
Firmly assuring and  
securing their roots  
Sprouting off at the mouth  
in plans of cahoots

To usurp the crown of Uranus  
Then Zeus  
And replace old rule with a  
universal truth  
Turning golden-rich sequoia  
Into evergreener spruce

— Daniel J. Kaiser

## Reflections & Covers

A zeitgeist was emerging in the 1960s and Bob Dylan was riding it, as were many of us. Everything was changing. New attitudes, new behavior, new dreams, new activism, new (to us) philosophies opening doors, new language use even. Dylan expressed much of what was happening within us, the words and phrases we had within us, even if we didn't know it.

I think of the hundreds of years of melody crafters building on each others' melodies, as artists do, and Dylan did the same thing. Many of his melodies are part of that historical weaving. While he spoke with his generation's rejection of the past, he never rejected the musical past. And so, his songs live on and on, through three generations now. With tons more covers, in all genres, than any other singer-songwriter. And he continues to write and tour (the man likes long rides). There needs to be a music magazine devoted to reviewing Dylan covers.

I certainly understand why so many musicians want to perform his songs: I have no music training (except for two years of Gregorian plainsong choir in grammar school) yet sometimes a Dylan song will thunder away in my head, with added embellishments.

He crafts both words and music, two streams of sound. His voice pouring out "The cavalry charged, the Indians fell" coupled with the melody, powerfully evokes a charged scene.

Moving with the zeitgeist, his voice was compelling and his words and phrasings and passionate melodies were compelling. When the zeitgeist ran its course, people became absorbed in daily life, and my attention shifted to other music.

For the most part. Over the decades, once a week or maybe once a month, there will be some phrase from a song or album I have to listen to. (Most recently it's been "Billy, don't you turn your back on me"). Thanks to YouTube I can usually immediately find it. Eyes straying on the YouTube page bring me to other songs, and covers by other singers. I can be immersed for hours, looking especially for live performances. That's where gems can be.

And there's the face: One didn't see that much of his face for many years but it always looked different (the man thinks about his face). This clip <http://www.tu.tv/videos/bob-dylan-return-to-me> is his sweet version of 50s crooning, and shows many versions of his face over time.

Here's how he looked at the Oscars, singing the song he won an Oscar for, "Things Have Changed" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=nwrHU2yyC-c> (The whole line is..."I used to care but things have changed." Quite an anthem for our time.) The way he uses his face, his eyes, his mouth in this clip caused me think of Paul McCartney performing "Once There Was A Way to Get Back Home" at the Grammy Awards. I thought, "Did Dylan watch this clip several times in the days or hours before his Oscar performance?" <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jVi1IG1F9UQ>

These are my current favorite Dylan covers:

Sinead Lohan's live clip of "To Ramona." She's a darling: young, Irish, a bit frail looking, offering sweet loving solace to another frail sounding woman. I could melt watching this clip. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8nHwILs8bdo>

Odetta evokes deep longing in her recording of "Tomorrow Is A Long Time." I doubt there's a male singer who can match her depth of feeling. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KPyCIIPTjps>

The Oakland group Whiskerman, performing "Just Like Tom Thumb's Blues" at the Freight and Salvage, audio only alas. A song about being in pain. One goes on an intense spiritual trip with this impeccable version. <https://soundcloud.com/whiskerman/08-just-like-tom-thumbs-blues>

Kronos Quartet: "Don't Think Twice" an exquisite instrumental experience. Music to almost swoon by. <http://music.amnestyusa.org/products/kronos-quartet-don-t-think-twice-it-s-all-right-instrumental>

— Alice Molloy

## Annual WRITING EXCURSIONS

### WRITING COSTA RICA

January 31 - February 7, 2015  
Nosara, Costa Rica, fee \$1400  
Host: Deborah Tommassini  
debratom@aol.com, 212-381-1823  
www.NosaraRetreat.com

## OTHER WORKSHOPS

### HARBIN HOT SPRINGS

May 22 - 24, 2015  
The Vineyard House, Harbin Hot Springs,  
Middletown, CA  
Fee \$335 (Harbin residents \$210) includes  
dormitory lodging on Fri. and Sat. nights, five  
catered meals on Sat. and Sun., and use of all Harbin  
facilities. (For more details, see Clive's website.)  
To register, contact Elaine Watt at 707-987-2339 x72  
or accounting@harbin.org.

### SCRIBBLER FINANCIAL REPORT

Total expenses: \$428.58. Total income (from donors): \$120.  
Seriously, Clive needs your help to cover the costs of this journal.

### MAILING LIST

If we don't hear from you, and you've been receiving the *Scribbler* for two years, this is your last copy.

THE SCRIBBLER  
Clive Matson  
472 44th Street  
Oakland, CA 94609