

Scribbler

APRIL 2015

ISSUE 83

Editor's Note

In her new book, *The Poetry Deal* (City Lights Books, 2014), Diane di Prima recalls this memory from her first year in San Francisco: "For a while the Free Bank lived on top of my refrigerator: it was a shoebox full of money. I never knew how much was in there. ... Anyone who needed cash could come by the house and take some. Anyone who had extra that they didn't need (and there were many – rock musicians and dealers, among others) would drop some off. The whereabouts of the Free Bank rotated from one Digger house to another, but the Bank itself was solvent, the shoebox was full for at least six months that I know of, which is proof enough for me that such institutions are possible."

When I began gathering material for this Money issue, I hoped to find something similar to the spirit of the Diggers' Free Bank. The mini-essay on page 7 offers an echo of that spirit, although the recipient of the generosity is not a community but an individual. That change seems emblematic of many of the changes of the past 50 years.

The next issue will have as its theme: the Body. The *deadline* to send poems, short stories, mini-essays (500 to 600 words) and cartoons about the Body is **June 15, 2015**. Please send work to: Karnit@LMI.net or Kayla Sussell, 420-45th St. Oakland, CA 94609

–Kayla Sussell

Apology

Oh capital let's kiss and make up
 And I'll take back all those terrible things I said about you
 To my friends and in poems. What do poets know
 Of capital anyway? It's exhilarating the daily life of money
 As it shifts and deliberates like Frank O'Hara buying gifts
 In a haze of cosmopolitan thirdworldism en route to a weekend
 Out of town yet so affectless this becomes itself a signature
 Affect. Via the artifice of the Dow Jones you often appear
 To be in New York but I suspect that if consciousness is a story
 You are in charge of narrative structure and so the Nasdaq
 And the Footsie and Nikkei index cannot be said to *happen*
 Any more than sentences happen. Like true feelings
 You are everywhere at once. That's Neo-Platonism
 For you or simple immanence but either way the road leads
 To St. Augustine and don't get me started. Nice city. Good job.
 It must be hard to hold the things of the world in an order
 While studiously skirting the question of whether you yourself
 Are a thing and I can imagine the anxiety this causes but capital
 Don't you ever lie on the couch near the coffee in the late morning
 Flipping through a magazine you picked up in one of your

Supermarkets in California until you come to a photo
 Of Britney Spears in flip-flops and drag – you know
 Sort of like googling yourself? Just to verify your own
 Existence in real life. What a relief. Could poets
 Ever hate idealism as much as you do? No ideas but in
 Money. Thus your sweetness: the portability and persistence
 Of ideas that have given us so much pleasure and move
 As pleasure must move through the gold integument
 Of this life. Oh to be form's content. Capital on behalf
 Of myself and all my friends I want to apologize
 For you know 1917 and hope we can put that behind us
 And do whatever it takes to feel joined to everyone else
 In this town and distant cities and every person in the system
 That is at this time and in this space of flows the world

–Joshua Clover

1917 was the year of the Russian Revolution (Ed.).

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Joshua Clover	Julia Vinograd	May Garsson
Kirk Johnson	David Erdreich	Dusty Bernard
Dan Gellepes	Judy Wells	Wendy-o Matic
Jan Dederick	Bonnie Smith	Kris Welch

and Anonymous

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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

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 (BUT any emailing instructions at top of page 1 rule!).

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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 and Jayne McPherson. April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10

CRAZY CHILD WRITING WORKSHOPS (fee: \$80)

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

April 4 in Kentfield

May 2 in San Francisco

June 6 in Oakland

July 11 in Middletown

10-WEEK WORKSHOPS poetry, prose, plays, nonfiction (fee: \$400), Wednesdays, 7pm - 10pm, Temescal District, Oakland. Current sessions end April 29, next sessions start May 13.

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 May 8, next sessions start May 15.

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 or phone 510-654-6495. To register, phone 510-654-6495 or email clive@matsonpoet.com (unless otherwise noted).



Money in the Bullring

The young goddess money,
her heart is cold as gold.
She gives no quarter
and gives no quarters to the homeless.
When money danced naked in the stockmarket bullring,
somersaulting between the horns of the bull
she faltered
the bull gored her soft belly
and left money bleeding banks, houses, credit cards,
jobs and the price of gas, all in the dust,
all down in the dust.
Flashing lights circled money's screams
that stopped construction and student loans.
Handlers roped money, tied her to their horses
and dragged her writhing out of the ring,
mud in her golden hair before the raging bull
trampled her sweet young body.
Money's cruel, every man's felt the whip
of her laughter on his back,
the kick of her leather high-heeled boot on his butt.
Everyone who loves her hates her.
But sure can't live without her.
When money fell used people went to used car lots
and put "for sale" stickers on their foreheads.
Ashes in shop windows fall apart at a touch,
computers made of ashes, dresses, toys. Ashes.
Money's in the hospital getting a transfusion:
envy, ambition, pride and contempt forced into her veins.
There's a plastic tube down her throat pumping countless zeroes.
The doctors, the spin-doctors never stop talking.
Last night money's broken fingernail rose as the new moon.
Money can't breathe until she's beautiful enough
for us to reach for her and curse,
spitting kisses into her face.
Like before.

Reprinted from *Cannibal Café: Open All Night*, 2014, with permission
from the poet.

—Julia Vinograd

Sunrise at Embarcadero San Francisco, Ca

I'm watching the sun rise in a city
that stays gray all day. Waiting
for the gush and flow of water
spouting out of sculptural
mouths. Cubist tunnels
yawn

begging birds to climb in
as languid seagulls
flop-fly by. In the stillness
of morning

artists gather in a sleepy haze
to fill space in the Plaza.
We're a hardy crowd.
Self-determined. Self-employed.
Hand-to-mouth

and hopeful. I'm writing this
on the back of a parking ticket
as I wait to make some money
for my piggy bank. I fill it up.
I dump it out. I pay
my landlord's mortgage.
At 8 a.m.

sales begin. Sun struggles
against fog. Winds abate.
The Plaza fills with people
and water flows.
Hand painted roses

sell well today. I make
some money for my piggy bank.
I fill it up. I dump
it out. I pay
my landlord's mortgage.

—May Garsson



Beginner's Luck

Selling weight requires customers who will buy more than a few ounces at one time. Somehow such customers found their way to me. My first wholesale deal was for ten pounds of Afghani Primo hashish. Until then, the most I had ever seen at one time was a quarter of a pound.

I started feeling nervous while loading my suitcase. Each pound was larger than an average-sized brick. Each "brick" had been exquisitely wrapped in layers of varying materials, with baby powder between each layer to prevent police dogs from picking up the scent. *Cont. on p. 5*

Footnote to "Coldly Calculating"

for Philip Whalen

The whole time
his unit was taking
rounds he was doing
sums in his head.

O he's a cool one
with a major deficit
in the human feeling department
doesn't quite add up

Not when
every morning he goes out
in his pyjamas and
cashes another check

at the corner grocery
drawn on one of
numerous stray accounts
...

By no means
a large sum, no.
Nor the same amount.
But precisely so.

— Kirk Johnson

Secrets (3)

(after seeing the Snowden documentary)

Secrets, secrets, secrets
Murder is a secret
Who is the lucky government agent
Who gets to kill by drone?
It's a secret.
At least he gets
The president or vice-president
To lie for him
If the president or vice-president refuses
There is always assassination
Secrets, secrets, secrets
Who is Cain and who is disabled?
It's a secret.
Why do secret corporate government
Murder agencies change CEO's so often?
Because they age too quickly
When they rot from the inside out
What can we do about this?
Take their tax funds away
Nobody murders for free.

— David Erdreich

Family Planning

A single welfare mother
going back to school
I'm not quite poor enough
so I invent
new lies or doctor old ones
manufacturing a self
to fit the requirements
of the grant-givers
the favor-grantors
the ass-kissees
making sure the "facts" of my case
pass, without grinding or sticking,
through the machinery
of the social service agencies
I trim documents to fit (in closets, behind closed doors)
a qualifying life

With the complicity of white-out and a simple xerox
a range of possibilities comes to hand
a laundering, as the politicians do
a legitimizing
making me
eligible
Together, my daughter and I
will strive for a future
a blazing bonfire day

— Dusty Bernard



Two Tankas

#232
Arguing about her freight deduction,
I must have made a face.
"Don't you dare
have a heart attack
before you sign that paper."

#437
Now, I'm remembering
George S. Kaufman's remark
about Hart's country estate.
"It's what God would have done
if he'd had the money."

— Dan Gellepes

The Island of Croissants

After my departure from the Shouting Isle, I sailed aimlessly for five days before I discovered another island. It too was topped by a large purple volcano, but no smoke issued from its peak. I landed in a peaceful turquoise lagoon on a white sand beach. Two dark-skinned teenage girls cautiously emerged from a palm frond shack on the shore.

They sat down on the beach and eyed me suspiciously. One had on a pink muumuu with puffy sleeves, her long black hair tied back with a pink scarf. The other wore a sleeveless white blouse and a brilliant red skirt patterned with huge white flowers. She wore a white tropical bloom in her shiny, oiled black hair. They were sturdy young women, about thirteen and fifteen years of age, and were unsmiling.

I cautiously tried the only foreign language I knew, "*Bonjour, mademoiselles!*" To my surprise, they replied in a melodious but broken French, and one asked me whether I wanted a "*petit déjeuner.*"

"*Mais oui!*" I replied enthusiastically, never turning down an offer of exotic food on my island journeys.

The younger of the two, the one in the pink muumuu, slowly got up and sauntered back to the palm tree shack. She returned and offered me a large burnt croissant on a green plate with a sly smile on her face. "*Merci,*" I said a little too sarcastically. They watched me eat the burnt croissant down to the last black flakey crumb. The young woman in the brilliant red sarong then beckoned me back to the palm frond hut.

A crudely lettered sign hung above a rustic table: "*A Vendre*" — (For Sale). Only two items adorned the table: a stack of silk scarves, brilliant red with the same white flowers as on the young woman's sarong, and a set of four tiny espresso cups, those too painted brilliant red with white flowers. "You buy?" she said in commanding but halting English.

I threw my arms up in exasperation. "You take poetry books in trade?" I asked.

"*Non, euros!*" she said crossly.

"*Je suis désolée,*" I said, backing away from the table.

I gave the two young women my poetry book anyway in payment for the "*petit déjeuner*" before I sailed away from the Island of Burnt Croissants and cross women.

After viewing Paul Gauguin's "Tahitian Women," 1891 at the Post-Impressionism Exhibit at the de Young Museum, San Francisco, December 2010. From *The Glass Ship* published by Sugartown Publishing, Crockett, CA 2014.

— Judy Wells



Beginner's Luck, cont. from p. 3

The cab ride to the customer's home was short, but nerve-wracking. I was sure the cab driver suspected what I was carrying in the suitcase on my lap. After I paid the cabbie, I was so nervous, I stood on the curb and watched the taxi pull away until it was completely out of sight. It took about half an hour to disappear completely. After it did, I was able to calm down.

When I finally carried the goods up six flights of steps, my customer asked, "What took you so long, did you get busted along the way?" I didn't say a word about my fears because I was afraid he'd think I was a wimp and wouldn't work with me again. I just sat there quietly counting out my all-cash payment of twenty grand. Ten thousand in profit. That was Beginner's Luck. I thought profits would always be like that. They weren't. No other deals ever came close to the magnificent profit of that day.

— Anonymous

Cha-ching

“Green paper stuff,”
that’s what my dad used to call it,
particularly when deals turned sour
or he got ripped off
which happened often
or he lost money altogether.
It still works for me to say aloud,
kind of loosens the restrictive chokehold for a brief second
and puts a pause on feeling an utter failure.
It’s an especially handy reminder
to friends, family and self,
especially when money is mismanaged,
or a loan never repaid,
or the cash flow evaporates
for reasons too humiliating to admit.
It’s just “green paper stuff”
that someone you never met
proclaimed has value.
And, for a moment,
I can see backwards in history –
to the Tang Dynasty
when paper money was first invented –
and I imagine
a middle-aged balding Chinese man
summoned by the government
to block-print paper
day after day
thousands of sheets of mind-numbing stamping.

– Wendy-o Matik

Money ‘n Me

The earliest experience I had with money was when I opened a school bank account with Bank of America in 1955. The class was taken together, to open our individual accounts, and it was fascinating. The bank was located within walking distance from the school. It was a field trip for about twenty-five first-graders.

The earliest experience I had with earning money was when I began a personal hair service for a neighbor, who hired me to take care of her daughter’s hair. I also began to babysit and clean houses, and it was fascinating. The homes I cleaned were located within walking distance from my home. It was a trip for a seven-year-old.

The earliest experience I had with a lump sum of money was when I left my first job, which had lasted for thirteen years. The company’s owner was retiring and closing the business, and it was sad. The company was located within driving distance from my home. It was a trip for a thirty-two-year-old mom of two.

The next experience I had with a lump sum of money was when I retired from my last job, which had lasted for fifteen years. The company was “downsizing,” and it was wicked awful. The company was located within driving distance from my home. It was a trip for a fifty-four-year-old woman, grandmother of four.

My most recent experience with having a lump sum of money was when I received my inheritance from my Mother’s estate, which she created during her ninety-three years. She passed away and it was heartbreaking. The estate is located within driving distance from my home. It is a trip for a sixty-four-year-old grandmother of five, me.

– Bonnie Smith

Wampum

Sea’s overstock shells,
cast upon the shore, collected by treasure hunters,
strung with sinews and intention,
strung in patterns bright and potent
into belts that measure status
confer leverage.

pearly spiraled wampum:
from earth-sea offerings assembled,
from beauty further beauty made,
no wound of Mother Earth required,
no slash no burn no pick no axe
no drill no bore no big Kaboom
no molten slurry glowing red
no poison marbling rivers.
Can we go back to Wampum?

– Jan Dederick



J. Beresford Tipton's Third Cousin, Twenty-Six Times Removed

I have always had a somewhat resentful relationship with money. I don't like the power it, or the lack of it, exercises over my life's conditions. Like shelter. And food. I resent money because I need it, but it doesn't need me: an unequal relationship, the kind I usually avoid.

With money, there's always the issue of "enough." Having enough. Even deeper and bigger: being enough. Of never being or having enough in a culture where being and having are inseparable.

It comforted me to travel to places where the relativity of enough was evident. Places where cooperation was everything and competition had little place. Places that prompted my pre-teen daughter to say upon returning to our cottage, whose rent was more than half my salary, "We're really rich, aren't we Mom?"

This insight was in sharp contrast to her previous experiences: of the electricity being shut off, the water being turned off, the car being towed, all for lack of money to pay bills.

I resent being unable to 1) live in a house without the fear of being evicted, 2) protect my family from poverty should Anything Happen (Alzheimer's, stroke) to my earning ability, 3) guarantee an education for my grandchild, 4) take my pets to the vet, 5) get my 23-year-old car tuned, 6) get my daughter's teeth fixed.

It is unwise to work on this list of what I don't have. Wisdom lies in appreciating what we have.

The Glass Half-Full

That was easier to see when I was younger. Now I'm in my '70s. Age has sharpened and darkened my money fears, as I can literally see that there will be an end to my earning, and now there's the grandchild.

Holy Shit

As a bona fide Deluded type in Buddhist psychology I've retreated to a fog of unknowing, blindly staggering on my hamster wheel of routine, hoping that Something will present itself, saying, "Here—this is for you. Rest a while."

And so it was that recently in my office mail, there was a large envelope from a Legal Entity, revealing that a person I did not know, whom I had never met, had died and left me \$10,000.

Yes.

WHAT?

My initial reactions were:

Confusion: did I open this by mistake? Is my name on the envelope?

Disbelief: is this for real?

More confusion: WHY? WHO? WHY?

Acceptance: whoever and why ever, I believe this.

Shame: I don't deserve this. I should give it back. It's a mistake—I am not who this person thinks I am. I am not enough!

Embarrassment: Others are more worthy.

Also: something internally unclenches, some muscular tightness loosens, a straining to "Hold on! Hold on! You have to hold on or you will lose everything!!" releases. There is a deep calm, a feeling of safety, and the realization that I had not felt safe.

The "why" was answered immediately, when a colleague at my nonprofit organization received an identical bequest: it was in appreciation for my work?!!

This is, in fact, what moved me most profoundly. I love my work, which continues to be engaging, challenging, maddening, even entertaining, after several decades. It has become a blessing in itself. But it is ephemeral, never finished, frequently thankless, sometimes attacked, and I always know I could have done it better.

So this generous gesture, \$10,000?!! of appreciation, was water in the desert and many lovely flowers have sprung from ground previously seen as barren: a deepening of gratitude for my work and my enjoyment of it, a wonder at the realization of the reach of that work, and then a commitment to serve with greater consciousness. A great blessing.

Of course now, some weeks later, the "not enough" is inevitably creeping back: \$10,000! Not enough for a down-payment. Not enough for a college education for the grandchild. Etc., etc.

But the unclenching remains.

Along with wonderment: this happened. Life is unpredictable. Your child is born with disabilities. You never did make that CD, write that book, live in China, get married. Instead, this is your life.

The dogwood is blooming. The guava tree is full of birdsong. You are sometimes aware that love for your child and grandchild is filling you like a helium balloon and you are floating with the bliss of it.

For the beauty of the earth.

For the splendor of the sky.

For the love, which from our birth,

Over and around us lies....

We are saying thank you.

— Kris Welch

WRITING EXCURSIONS

LAKEPORT CRAZY CHILD WORKSHOP

Saturday, April 18, 4 to 6 pm
Sunday, April 19, 10 am to 5 pm
Lakeport in Lake County, fee \$55
Lake County Arts Council Gallery
235 Main Street, Lakeport, CA 95453
Phone 707-263-6658 to register,
510-654-6495 for details on the workshop.

HARBIN HOT SPRINGS

Friday, May 22, 6 pm to Sunday, May 24, 4 pm
Harbin Hot Springs, Middletown, CA 95461
Fee \$325 (Harbin residents \$225), \$50 early
registration discount includes dormitory lodging
and five catered meals.
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: \$421.06. Total income (from donors): \$400.

Holy s#!*%, this time the costs were almost covered.

Thank you, kind donors. Please keep the funds coming.

THE SCRIBBLER
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