

Scribbler

October pushing November 2019

ISSUE 101

Even before Crossroad Poets got under construction, Crazy Child Scribbler kids were romping in foundation trenches, making paper airplanes out of old blueprints and throwing them into the circus streets, jazzed that something's going on behind the clowning.

Editor's Note

For this 101st issue of the *Scribbler*, I asked poets I knew personally and/or as social media friends to submit works based on the theme of "power spots."

It could be a power spot in the Native American (or even Old European) nature-worshipping sense. It could be related to sacred geography and sense of place—grand or gritty. The type of places where one goes to feel a connectedness to self, nature and even a transcendent reality. Or it could be a more personal and internal power spot: such as a powerful emotional or transformative experience. Or it could be "all of the above."

It was my hope this theme would elicit some very subjective, idiosyncratic interpretations from the featured poets: Neeli Cherkovski, Marc Olmsted, Kyle Harvey, Suzi Kaplan Olmsted, Cassandra Dallett, Al Winans, Gerald Nicosia, rev. myo lahey, Peter Marti and myself.

I was not disappointed.

—Ron Buell

April 26, 1607

So now they tell us—
one third of the bird population
in North America lost
in the last 50 years.

What I want to know is,
since April 26, 1607,
the first English landfall
on Virgin Soil—

How many giants
in the forests of the primeval
Eastern Woodlands
have been toppled?

How many birds
nested in those burly trees
can still be seen today?
How many are extinct?
The God Bird of the bayous,
for one.

For over 3,000 years,
our brothers, the trees,

were only cleared for villages
and sacred ceremonies
of the Woodland peoples
east of the Mississippi,
the great watery
highway.

The Algonquian,
Mississippian,
Hopewell,
and Adena cultures.
And before that,
Marksville,
Tchefuncte,
Poverty Point...

Their great earthworks
piled up from baskets of soil
into mounds, circles and figure
eights
aligned to the rise and set
of the bright
timeless stars.
Now all but a few
of these power spots
plowed under paved over

for subdivisions, strip malls
and parking lots—
Indian names
are everywhere,
but just try
to find one.

Now even the fiery birds
streaking the night sky
are diminished in number
by the great works
of an electric empire
afraid of the dark
and its own
shadow.

—Ron Buell

Workshop Schedule

CRAZY CHILD WRITING WORKSHOPS

Let your creative self write with abandon —
based on the tutorial *Let the Crazy Child Write!* (New World Library, 1998)
(fee: \$80 or any donation; included in 10-week workshops)

Saturday, December 21, 10am to 5pm, Grand Lake District, Oakland
Saturday, January 18, 10am to 5pm, Benicia
Saturday, February 15, 10am to 5pm, San Rafael

THE BEAT AESTHETIC And Why We Need It Today

(\$5 or any donation)

Omni Commons, 4799 Shattuck Avenue
(at 48th Street) in Temescal District, Oakland

Saturday, December 14 — 1 to 4pm
(See page 8 for more details.)

10-WEEK WORKSHOPS

(fee: \$400)

poetry prose plays nonfiction

Wednesdays 6:30 to 9:30pm Temescal District, Oakland
Current sessions end January 15 — New sessions start January 22

Fridays 10am to 1pm Temescal District, Oakland
Current sessions end November 8 — New sessions start November 22

2-BUSY 2-WRITE

(drop-in writing time)

(fee: \$10 or any donation, like healthy cookies)
Every **Tuesday**, 7 to 9pm Temescal District, Oakland

MARIN WORKSHOP

(fee: \$25 or any donation)

7 to 9pm in San Rafael on the third **Thursday** of the month
Register at clive@matsonpoet.com for address

THE NOVEL'S ARC

(fee: \$500 for five sessions)

*Four novelists read each other's novels and examine how each works as a whole. Two-hour sessions, once a month, are devoted to each novel. Currently meeting 7 to 9pm on the first **Thursday** of the month. New sessions will start when four authors declare their readiness.*

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT
matsonpoet.com or phone (510) 508-5149

POETRY SALOON

(drunk on poetry!)

Second Fridays at 472 44th Street, Oakland
Potluck at 6pm, readings start at 7:30pm

*Bring poems or prose by you or others
to share, or come just to enjoy.*

December 13, January 10

THE SCRIBBLER

PREVIOUS-ISSUE FINANCIAL REPORT

Issue 100, 550 printed:	\$269.50
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(includes \$100 rent for 100th Issue Celebration and \$50 for videographer)	
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(includes income from 100th Issue Celebration: \$26 from raffle and \$111 from door)	
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DONORS

Lois Lyle, Pete Najarian, Jamie Erfurdt, attendees at 100th Issue Celebration

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SUBSCRIPTIONS

Workshop participants receive the Scribbler for two years and as long as the recipient shows interest. To get on the mailing list, send an email with your name and mailing address to: clive@matsonpoet.com

PLEASE DONATE to keep the publication going. You can write a check to Clive Matson and mail it to:
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SUBMISSIONS

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THE SCRIBBLER may also be found
online at matsonpoet.com.

If you wish to stop receiving the print version,
please notify us at clive@matsonpoet.com.

Western Suite for Nothing in Particular

after Bill Berkson

Even as the evening light lays golden upon us
there is a despair in the air
for nothing in particular
and for all things
but we must not say so

Though I want for nothing in particular I find myself
unfulfilled and unsettled
full of uncertainties
and desperate leaps
of imagination

It's 12:46pm on Wednesday afternoon
I've written a few good lines
for nothing in particular
and for which no one
will care, nor will I

It's 12:48pm on Wednesday afternoon
and it doesn't matter who I am
or for what winds blow sand
in Devil's Canyon and
for nothing in particular

It's 1:39pm and a black hole just ripped
through me and now stars leak
from my veins, my cosmos aches
for nothing in particular, still
an ache is an ache

is an ache. I don't want to stay
and I don't want to go.
What hasn't changed
is my will to be
estranged.

— Kyle Harvey

Zermatt

The cemetery is full of dead young men
Under the Matterhorn
I rode on the Disneyland version so many
times as a child
Six years old I waited for rescue
Our roller coaster car off the tracks
On the ersatz Swiss mountain
Sitting alone in the Grand Hotel Zermatterhoff
Under a mountain and deep in the fire
Emptying the minibar, again
Oath breaker
Mountain snow silver bright in the moonlight

—Suzi Kaplan Olmsted

In This Game of Thrones

small minded men
have big sticks and shields
riot gun's rubber bullets
aimed at your head.
In your cell
pigeons visit the window sill.
The sun sets and rises
in a reflection across the street.
In your dreams
a hawk comes
stares into your eye.
You stare back
accepting his challenge.
In a savored bit of phone time
I tell you
*a hawk visiting your dreams
is a sign that your mind is sharp,
that you've outsmarted your opponent*
and so, it will be
through the maze
of correctional facilities
in front of you.
You tell me about the night before
a guard with a grudge
forcing your cellie
to pack his belongings
how the two of you
shed tears at parting.
Late in the night
you realized
the man with the badge
and grudge
didn't even have the power
to do what he threatened.
You fell into sleep near dawn.
You stood your ground.
Your guide found you.
I know now,
they cannot break you.
Though I also know
they will try
leaving you in holding cells,
in flooded cells,
in darkness
and fluorescent light.
But you will come home whole,
maybe even less broken
than the man you were
before.

—Cassandra Dallett

Going Back in Time

When I was young I drove to Salinas
Stopped and ran through the bean fields
Pretended I was James Dean in East of Eden
Made my way to Monterey walked Cannery Row
Imagined myself packing sardines in between
Midnight conversations with Doc and the boys
Drove to Carmel where I scribbled a poem
On a bar cocktail napkin
That later became the title for my first book of poems
But the rents were high and the job pay low so in 1964
I took my first full-time job in Modesto
Drove on weekends to Stockton's public square park
To drink with the down and out
In Crow's Landing, I drank with unemployed Mexicans
At run-down cantinas
In North Beach and the Mission District
I hung out with deadbeats and losers
Street people fighting junkie tremors and cirrhosis of the liver
In the Fillmore, I cut my teeth on jazz
Let Billie Holiday patch up my bleeding heart
In the Potrero I saw the last of the factory workers
Grow thinner like their paychecks fearing for their jobs
In the Tenderloin, I drank with whores and prostitutes
Who opened their pocketbooks as freely as their legs
On Market Street I witnessed panhandlers crouched
Like criminals in open doorways
A short distance from the Jesus freaks
With God's billboards pointing the way to heaven
At the old Southern Pacific Railway Yard
I saw the last brakeman smoking a cigarette
With eyes vacant as an empty satchel
While on the other side of town
High on top of Nob Hill society ladies sat
In chauffeured limousines
White poodle dogs nestled between their piano legs
Unaware of the dredges of humanity
Walking Third and Howard Street
Drinking cheap port from brown paper bags
Starving cold disheveled as the homeless today
Waiting on god or pneumonia to walk them to the grave

— Al Winans

Incipient

Summer on the sapphire Aegean
Fifteen and barefoot
Ten of us, too young to be independent
Off the island of Mykonos at sunset
Terraced white buildings up the hills in the brilliant glow
A faceted diamond in the gem of the sea
Magic and music wafted toward us with the tide
A glittering party promising everything
Just out of reach

— Suzi Kaplan Olmsted

Book Depot Café in Early October

In the old railroad Depot building,
Now a bookstore café with
The crumbling stucco walls, flaking paint
And noisy pipes that let everyone
Know they can finally
Let their hair down
Mr. Homeless Crazy, bearded and bald who
Always looks dark and dirty
In standard garb of work pants and hooded sweatshirt
Sits hands clasped in front of him
Staring Zen-like over
His half-empty coffee cup
Two tables down from him
A loud con artist
Aggressively tries to sell his potential victim
A franchise of his "business"
Telling him how his London office
"made a million dollars last year...
Though you might have to leave a little
Money on the table this year."
(Ha ha)
Assuring his would-be victim he'll be taking
Year-long sabbaticals soon enough
"Now if you say to yourself, 'Why am I
Taking this job?'" Mr. Aggressive asks,
And then spends the next half hour answering
Answering answering
While his potential victim nods
With eyes downcast
Two tables down from them, the same
Quiet blonde woman
With black roots showing proudly
Works quietly as she always does
On her laptop
Two tables down sit I, taking it
All in — wondering
Which of us is really holy?
Outside, the wind blows the leaves —
The first drops of rain.

— Gerald Nicosia



White Butterfly

A white butterfly
In traffic, a wise word
For those who sleep
As I have, who know
Where I'll never go
Turnabout filled
With truckers
Who crossed the chained
Cosmos in order
To drink coffee
From a Styrofoam cup
While waiting
For the light to change
White butterfly come rest
On the wheels of a machine
Digging deep into the heart
I am sleeping and walking
Into nobodaddy's lair
The rooftops are
An ultimate goal
White butterflies
Congregate on the roofs
A loner I am in a crowd of
Dreams, Loner who rides
Alongside Orpheus, I love
To hold a moment
Across the decades in order
To see where I am going
A rustic fence
Is where the butterfly
First appeared, one of her class
One in an armada,
Torn from the sky
Love is a multitude
My dear old friend
Off to work down the
Freeway, I'm going
To be 85 one day
Walking not so easily
What the hell
Nothing better than to
Descend into a pit of lava
When you were dreaming
And white wings superior
You say, hey dream
A palace sinking into ruin
I adore brave librarians
Dropping out of
A tournament in hell,
No reason given
Forgetting and learning
All night long and
Into your eyes, down
To a cathedral of
Wet leaves, down
To the butterfly

Roaming in rush-hour
Through the wilderness
Of traffic and
Bleeding horns

—Neeli Cherkovski

Goodbye Tibet

Goodbye Tibet
You've pounded me with stone footprint blessings
goodbye Tibet not your occupied WWII France—
instead I'll miss your continual magic and the chance
of a talking statue—
of a tulku serving butter tea
that tastes like hot *bleu* cheese dressing
& the thousand kittens on the sunny steps
of your monasteries
Goodbye Guru in the rock & lake
Goodbye dakini of the psychedelic cliff
goodbye sovereign king & queen
of ice & sky
& a new litter of piglets
goodbye yak of dignity
goodbye home before I had one
(last glimpse green fir'd hills
from the hatch as I board)
my jet's plastic seat awaits
Robin Hood airplane movie
my crime novel
my punk history
my notebook goodbye Tibet
I may never be strong enough again
for your kiss
three weeks I'm 57
don't forget me
leave a strange purple flower
in my heart

—Marc Olmsted

(untitled)

Some rooms
are permanently occupied

Some, more sumptuously
appointed, house

those who arrive, stay
awhile, then move
on, no matter

how sweetly
you ask.

Those rooms
are empty, now

I only visit them
at night

and only by moon-
or starlight.

I wait to catch a
trace aroma

of sweat, or of
clothes just laundered,

or a whispered "Where
you go, there I too
shall go"

Silence reigns

— rev. myo lahey

Western Suite Without Sleep in Egypt

for Clark Coolidge

I'm a sleeper
though I've never slept

in Egypt.

There are too many stones
and they are there all night long.

They keep me awake,
beg me to silence.

They fever my doves.

I lug
with nothing
but love

kissing the trout
in the last Mingus of morning.

In the last Mingus of morning
I am kissing the trout

I am pouring water into the bed
in which the Nile River used to lay.

Tell me when to stop.

There is almost nothing left
of my landscape. These letters

those stones.

The soils of
paradise lost.

My poem is trying *to survive its own exposure*,
the lies of its own BIG DATA – aperture of truth.

There is almost nothing left
of my earliest architecture. There is

almost nothing.
Even nothingness is no longer not.

I'm a half-hearted banjo gambler
howling at the moon.

How about this heat, I might say.
Doing well with the big sadness, maybe.

*And how's your mom?
Are you working at the same place?*

*Your hair got long
and on and on and on.*

And then we are left holding these bags

full of this Big Empty Understanding
this Big Empty Mystery
this Big Empty Faith
this Big Empty Fracture
this Big Empty Poem
this *Hollow Joy*
this Emphatic Holy Static
this Big Empathy
this Radical Kindness
this Spooky Action At A Distance

Tell me about that time when you were a kid
and September was almost October

Tell me about that time when you broke into your old house
Tell me about your grandfather's hands
Tell me about the Springhill Mine Disaster

Tell me about the way the crystal on the sill
behind the sink catches the light
and throws poems on the wall

– Kyle Harvey

Solstice

My wife and I have an agreement not to talk about
work at home but, if we do and then regret it

I might walk the front yard to look for stars
if it's too dark to go far
I just stand and breathe in the evening
away from everywhere

there might be the smell of skunk, the rustle of
something in the brush by the bamboo where last week
saw turkeys fucking in violent wing-flapping
hops

Voices rise in laughter across the way
dusk birds coo

bats rustle into the early night sky
swooping up from their hiding
– black brush strokes
across the last light of
day

– Peter Marti

Ghosts in the Night

ghosts appear in my bedroom
they are faceless
their moans inaudible

one as large as a garden of watermelons
camps at the side of my bed
leans over like a sinking ship
his eyes an anchor weighs me down
mocks my eighty-one years

a Zen Monk marks the months
on my calendar with large X's
the ghost turns human plays
the blues on a miniature clarinet

Wonder Woman appears from nowhere
does the waltz with Billie Holiday
who is singing "Strange Fruit"

a mortician appears in a puff of smoke
walks in heavy boots to the sound
of John Susa's marching band

I'm assigned a seat in Dante's hell where
Satan roasts hot dogs on a spit of fire

a cannibal sizes me up
issues me an invitation to dinner

the night engulfs me in angel dust
the four-walls collapse in the lap
of a defrocked priest
drinking wine from a goat's flask

the Dead Sea scrolls comes to life
high tide battles low tide
a smattering of stars fall from
land at the foot of my bed

the Pope asks for an audition
washes my feet in angel dust
God is not impressed
Jesus lets out a yawn

there's a crow outside my window
his cawing is driving me crazy

Count Dracula gives me his blessing
drops me off at a closed down railway station
fangs dripping in blood
at the sight of a railway signalman
waving his lantern at a speeding train
heading in my direction

– Al Winans

Divine Disrupters

At the resort, sparrows
dive, and plummet,
nest in cabanas,
chatter in eaves, wings spread
fork tailed arrowhead couples
swiftly bank buildings
swoop over rooftops
to the vineyards and back
despite a convention of Catholics
drinking in the lobby.

Daddy, you should see
the swallow's magic,
the way they run this place
like the barns we had.
Maybe you're already here,
snatching dragon flies
on the wing, dive-bombing
the teal-blue pool.

– Cassandra Dallett

Idea of Flight (a found poem)

Devoured histories,
dreams of soaring,
dreams of arts –
studying the sky
wishing I were in it.
1,000 black butterflies –
visual rhythms
a murmuration of swallows
to conceal my own hand.
A place of damage
and loss.
Conspicuous consumption,
crushed cans,
shipping pallets,
lost gloves –
spoke to me.

– Cassandra Dallett



THE BEAT AESTHETIC AND WHY WE NEED IT TODAY

In the 1950s and 60s Beat Generation writers developed a robust version of Modernism while, at the same time, their social identity was wildly popular. By separating out the social persona we'll be able to focus more clearly on the aesthetic. We'll discover how Modernism and Beat directness are cornerstone strategies for understanding ourselves and the contemporary world.

A trendy, stressful, and entitled conformity pushes at us, our government behaves largely as an enemy, much as in the 1950s, and honesty is sorely missed in the public discourse. Special attention will be given to how Beat writers dealt with similar issues. Participants will be encouraged to present Beat authors and propose how they contribute. We'll point out ways that the Beat aesthetic energized and evolved into activism, feminism, Rap, Hip-hop, and Spoken Word. Clive Matson was in New York in the 1960s. He knows who said what to whom and why it was said, what was on the air and what has not yet been articulated.

You are invited to bring a Beat Generation poem and start the discussion. Does your piece contribute to our understanding of this world? Or does it detract? Call or email me and we'll talk about your presentation, 510-508-5149, clive@matsonpoet.com

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\$5 or any donation.

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