

## Scribbler

October PUSHING December 2020

ISSUE 105

This issue is dedicated to the memory of Julia Price, who passed away in February 2020.  
 "May all of us be inspired by joy, insight, and loving kindness."

**Editor's Note**

The first episode of Rod Serling's *The Twilight Zone*, titled "Where is Everybody?", is a taut examination of the human need for human companionship. An astronaut being tested for his ability to withstand the isolation of space travel hallucinates himself as alone in a typical small town. His terror mounts as he searches for others, finding nothing but empty cars, streets and shops. In the end he cracks; he screams for help, but no one comes. When the Air Force brass watching him calls a halt to the experiment and pulls him from the isolation booth, the doctor says that the spacecraft he will pilot can be fitted with everything to survive a long voyage, except that which may matter most.

*"... there's one thing we can't simulate. That's a pretty basic need — man's hunger for companionship, the barrier of loneliness. That's one we haven't licked yet."*

The barrier of loneliness will never be licked. Psychic isolation is as deadly as asphyxiation. Much as we might think we want to be alone, to be free of social bonds, unfettered by need for the touch of a hand or the spark in someone's eyes, our hearts know the impossibility of such a state. Lacking others, we ourselves cease to exist.

This edition of the Scribbler is dedicated to the notion that we have not, and will not, lick the barrier of loneliness.

—Craig Allen Heath

Who alone suffers suffers most i' the mind,  
 Leaving free things and happy shows behind:  
 But then the mind much sufferance doth o'er skip,  
 When grief hath mates, and bearing fellowship.

—Shakespeare, *King Lear*

**Isolation**

The sun went down. The lights went out. And there I was. Alone.

Things were okay for a while. Everything was peaceful and quiet and I had time for the 'me' things I had so long coveted. How rewarding ... until an incessant hum severed my silence. That hum had the blade of a Bowie knife!

The whispers came next. Murmurs. Barely audible. Impossible to understand. Constant and unrelenting. Tiny little voices ringing in my ears so insistently that I eventually considered them house guests and welcomed the company.

In time, my company disappeared. I guess I tuned them out. Not intentionally, but instinctively. Unconsciously. And once again I was alone. All alone.

It is impossible to keep up with time. It drifts out of realm. One day...like any other day. Each night...the identical dark void. I miss the tiny voices I once considered friends.

I talk loudly these days. To myself. I speak up so I can hear (and understand) what I have to say.

I am not alone.

—Jeannette DesBoine

# Workshop Schedule

## All events and workshops are online via Zoom

### CRAZY CHILD WRITING WORKSHOPS

(fee: \$80 or any donation; included in 10-week workshops)

*Let your creative self write with abandon —*

based on the tutorial *Let the Crazy Child Write!* (New World Library, 1998)

**Saturdays** 10am to 5pm:

October 10, November 14, December 12, January 9

Register at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com) for Zoom link.

### 10-WEEK WORKSHOPS

(fee: \$400)

poetry  prose  plays  nonfiction

**Wednesdays** 6:30 to 9:30pm

Current sessions end December 2 — New sessions start December 9

**Fridays** 10am to 1pm

Current sessions end December 4 — New sessions start December 11

Register at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com) for the Zoom link.

### 2-BUSY 2-WRITE

(drop-in writing time)

(fee: \$10 or any donation)

**Tuesdays**, 7 to 9pm

Register at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com) for the Zoom link.

### POETRY CLASS

(fee: \$250 for ten weeks or \$30 per class) -

Reclaiming the Muse with discussion of Modernism, the Beat aesthetic, feminism, and the current template, while focusing mostly on our craft!

**Thursdays** 7 to 9pm

Current sessions end December 3 — New sessions start December 10

Register at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com) for the Zoom link.

### 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.

New sessions start when four authors declare their readiness.

FOR MORE INFORMATION VISIT  
[matsonpoet.com](http://matsonpoet.com) or phone (510) 508-5149

## POETRY SALOON

(drunk on poetry!)

Free — register at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com)  
for Zoom link.

Second **Fridays**, 7 to 9:30 pm

Bring poems or prose by you or others  
to share, or join simply to enjoy.

October 9, November 13,

December 11, January 8

### THE SCRIBBLER

#### PREVIOUS-ISSUE FINANCIAL REPORT

Issue 104, 450 printed: \$255.09

396 mailed at \$0.55: \$217.80

Collate, address,

seal and stamp: Donated

Total expenses: \$472.89

Total income: \$245.00

Net loss: \$227.89

### DONORS

Jane Burnett, Dan Coles, Louis Cuneo,  
Deborah Janke, David Kelso, Barbara Tooma

*The WordSwell Crazy Child Scribbler is published four  
times a year. Submissions remain copyrighted by the  
authors, all rights reserved. Reproduction requires  
author consent.*

### 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](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com)

### WordSwell CRAZY CHILD Scribbler

Founder and Editor Emeritus: Craig Heath

Publisher: Clive Matson

Guest Editor: Craig Heath

Production Manager and Editor: Jean Hohl

### Contact information:

c/o Clive Matson

472 44th Street, Oakland, CA 94609

[clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com), 510-508-5149

### PLEASE DONATE to keep the publication going.

Write a check to Clive Matson and mail to address  
above. Or you can donate via PayPal to Clive  
Matson's account : [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com)

## In this issue

- Page 1 Craig Allan Heath, Shakespeare,  
Jeannette DesBoine
- Page 3 Lori Steed, Christopher Bernard,  
Bruce Bagnell, Gleenobly Butterworth
- Page 4 Sherry Fraser, Ron Myers aka Ron Buell
- Page 5 John Paige, Dennis Rhodes, Dawn Ramm,  
G. K. Chesterton
- Pages 6-7 Allison Marshall
- Page 7 Craig Allan Heath, Brady Lewis

Watch for a one-day reading of the entire poem

### "Hello, Paradise. Paradise, Goodbye"

at the Art House in the future,  
probably on Zoom

Info will be posted at [matsonpoet.com](http://matsonpoet.com),  
or contact Clive

THE SCRIBBLER may also be  
found online at [matsonpoet.com](http://matsonpoet.com).

If you wish to stop receiving the print version,  
please notify us at [clive@matsonpoet.com](mailto:clive@matsonpoet.com).

## Widowed

Kitchen table, Empty chair  
House too quiet

Stove cold, Appetite gone  
Dinner for one

– Lori Steed

## On Wanting to Shatter a Screen

I miss it: the rolling eye,  
the quick laugh, the joke, the grin,  
the scorn at the news, the soft look  
of sympathy, the amiable  
shrug, the sigh, the shake of the head,  
the crisp sound of shoes on the floor  
and the comfortable walk into the room,  
the room's echoes, its scent,  
the texture of hair, skin, clothing,  
the handshake, the shared bottle, the passed  
bowl of chips: reality.

The tiled thumbnails of online imagery do not make it,  
nor the seasick bursts of video chat, the odorless  
echo-sapped chatrooms in the cloud.

The ghosts on the screen  
seem to belong to a life I have never known,  
nor wish to know,  
like watery images from an uneasy dream  
trying hard to look like life itself,  
but fooling no one.

It is as if, after one clicks off,  
the room savoring of the stale cigarette smoke of nothingness,  
it is as if they were never there,  
or only there to mock us  
into believing we were ever there.

Like memories of the dead,  
they look real enough to touch  
if you could just reach far enough,  
yet you cannot break through the glass to reach them.

When the screen goes dark, the room feels even lonelier.

And I escape outside,  
walking fast through streets  
that are empty and silent  
or only dotted with a few people  
wearing masks.

– Christopher Bernard

## Untitled

The Rona has us all locked in rooms  
We only hear poetry in zooms.

– Bruce Bagnell

## airport, alone

the text  
krinkles in my palm:  
*caught the wrong flight to los angeles*

I stare at these words  
willing them to change while being read.

Outside, strikers whitecap the tarmac  
sharks teeth of their signs chewing arguments

Across the avenue, a grocery store sparkles  
then, the horizon's dark meditation  
on rain, a temple of bedhead cumulus clouds,

molten droplets corkscrew the air  
haloing the raised fists of demonstrators

hammering against the airport windows  
until they thaw crack loud as ice

My phone crushes to a napkin in my hands  
My face cascades with tears.

– James Cagney

## Missing You

I am looking outside my window  
at the sky,  
hoping that you are looking outside your window  
at the same spot in the sky,  
our eyes embracing in the clouds,  
solid and true,  
you are, I am.

– Gleenobly Butterworth

## Invocation for a Dispirited Soul

You sit at surfs' edge  
your hands turned in supplication  
as your sky-reaching arms  
await a munificence  
of airborne spirits to alight  
on your fingertips, gift you  
with songs of exquisite sweetness.

You know birds can't carry it to you  
not on the wing of a bee's hum  
or the heartstrings' hallowed tune  
of a hummingbird's silence after a fight.

You see yourself wanting, no, begging to soar  
as high as the homilies shouted  
by praise be-to-Jesus and all of us preachers  
who waggle a chorus of congregational tongues  
in a gibberish of words meaning "hallelujah?"

You wonder.

And then comes a wish for insulation to layer you down  
to hold no bewailing but your own in a monk's cell  
of a prison you sorely once wanted  
until reality lies prostrate and still at your feet.

Your confinement's adjudication is a door  
right before you, so easy to open you almost miss it  
and emerge buoyant and cleansed with few misgivings  
that lead to an incantation, a breath, another and more.  
You realize no religion, but your own can be found  
which is none as you lack that thing called "belief."

On this day you mimic a concrete St Francis  
as you kneel muddy kneed in a stranger's spring garden.  
You share few attributes with the saintly Franciscan  
no charm, no bluebirds to fly a brown cloak  
and drape your countenance in happy persuasion.  
Still, you cock an ear and lean to the sound  
a flutter, a buzz from above grows louder  
and maybe, just maybe  
it's something  
like salvation.

—Sherry Fraser

## Tenderloin Detour

Here the sun recedes  
early from the inner city streets –  
once a posh after-hours  
destination during Prohibition  
and Art Deco  
decades.

Now these streets  
are a refugee camp  
for dispossessed throngs  
in the late Capitalist era.

Kerouac claimed the hobos  
and rail riders as his own,  
down in the flop houses  
at Third and Townsend  
near the big railway yards –  
all gentrified SOMA now  
with trending townhouses  
surrounding empty arenas  
for Roman-style  
spectacles.

Encrusted with details,  
a Baroque entry way  
to high rise Deco palace  
is a shock to the system  
on streets filled  
with record levels  
of squalor...

...Frida Kahlo once lived  
in a loft of the grand Alexandria Hotel,  
nearby, I recall stream-of-  
consciously...

...and here is the infamous  
Uncle Charlie's dive –  
the faded and tattered rainbow flag  
above the awning reminds me  
of the twining of the years  
and a certain glamour  
found in weathered things.

In an anxious dance  
of social distancing,  
I zigzag the broken shafts  
of light on Turk Street  
while a Hollywood backlot  
of dystopian futures  
engulfs  
me.

—Ron Myers  
aka Ron Buell

## Alzheimer's Optical (May 1, 2019)

Wake up in the morning,  
head bobs up,  
and I take a look around.  
The door to the bathroom  
is lying on the floor,  
not hanging on its hinges  
as it was before.

Since I can't walk through it,  
I shall gladly walk upon it  
to where I have to go.

Alzheimer's, Alzheimer's,  
you have crossed my path before.

Just as my feet touch down,  
the room swings around.  
The door flies back to its hinges.  
Out of sight, out of sound  
far faster than I can follow.

Alzheimer's, Alzheimer's,  
you have crossed my path before.

I should just keep on walking  
to where I have to go.  
Just keep my old hose locked down tight  
like he has never been locked before ...

Made it! I made it!

Ah! What a pleasure  
to feel the hot piss flow.

—John Paige

## Legs

A man's legs, so beautiful  
I wish I could show them to you,  
tanned muscle, sinewy calves  
so sexy I could die  
simply by touching them.  
Alas, I am a poet,  
but I would give the world to be  
an artist today! What I would do  
with charcoal and paper!  
How proud I would be to reveal  
how two hands can worship legs;  
words are trite, so goddamn  
inadequate when your heart melts  
at two impossible legs, walking away.

—Dennis Rhodes

## Gray Ash on Black

It was as if nothing happened.  
The living trees lined the road.  
There were vineyards and orchards  
behind white fences. Horses  
in the fields.

We drove on into devastation.  
Here a brick fireplace and chimney  
standing alone on the foundation  
of the house destroyed by fire.

Scorched pickups.  
Crumpled cars.  
More ruined homes  
lit with sunlight on a pleasant day.  
And only a haze of smoke.

On the distant hills  
random splashes of gray ash  
splayed like huge bird droppings  
on a black tarp.

These are the remains of homes  
sheltered among trees also burned.  
My friend fought for his home  
with a garden hose.

Knew it was lost  
when he placed his hand  
on a wall that was already hot  
before the flames terrible touch.

How quickly his life changed.  
How quickly my life could change.  
And I am not prepared.

—Dawn Ramm

*"There are no words to express the abyss between  
isolation and having one ally. It may be conceded to the  
mathematician that four is twice two. But two is not  
twice one; two is two thousand times one."*

—G. K. Chesterton  
from *The Man Who Was Thursday*, published in 1908

## The Mugging

I pull my hood tightly around my face, like the blinkers on a carriage horse. Hitching my shoulder bag higher, I ignore the strange tension in my gut, which warns me to take the longer, safer, four block walk around home instead of cutting straight across West 52nd street. An icy blast in my face makes the choice for me, one dicey block it is. I am deeply depressed by winter and don't much care about the risk.

The cars are parked perpendicular to the curb on this block outside St. Vincent's hospital, hiding the sidewalk from the road. I notice four or five young men hunched together on a stoop across the street, but I bend into the wind and keep going.

As I walk I think, I cannot kill myself, that would hurt people too much. Couldn't someone just run up and shoot me in the head. Please God, just get it over with. Someone do it for me. Just shoot me in the head. Take it out of my hands.

I mutter "Just shoot me already!" aloud into the storm. I pass beyond the lit entrance to Saint Vincent's ER, bent almost double into the ice and wind, which burns my skin. Suddenly I hear footsteps in the snow, a thup. thup. thup...strangely clear and muffled at the same time; the sound of someone running up behind me. Then I feel a painful, vise-like grip on my arm spinning me around, death wish still on my lips. A gun's muzzle is pressed hard, sharp, cold and hurting between my eyes.

For a moment I feel cross eyed looking down the barrel, then force myself to look beyond the gun at the man holding it.

"If you scream, I will blow your fuckin' head off."

I do not scream. I think, I will remember your face. I will remember your face. I will remember your face, motherfucker.

I start trying to memorize the details. He's thin to gaunt. His deep set eyes are enormous, and his nose has been broken before. He has thin lips, high cutting cheekbones, and sallow milky tea colored, paper thin skin. He's shaking and just as suddenly as he had arrived, I know he can shoot me in the head. I know he can do it.

You can feel crazy coming off of some people. His most shocking feature are his eyes. His pupils are totally dilated, the whites showing all the way around, giving the impression his sunken eyes are somehow popping out.

"Give me your bag."

"Take it," I say, soft and low, pushing my bag into his hands. Our icy fingers touch. The world stops. The snow disappears. The wind vanishes. I'm no longer cold. "Take it. It's okay," I murmur.

"Shut the fuck up or I'll blow your fuckin' head off!" His voice is rising into hysteria. He's shaking all over. I believe him.

"Put your fucking head down," he growls.

I put my head down.

"Three. Two...." If I don't find a way to remain human to him, he will do it. As he reaches number one, I looked up and into his eyes.

"It's okay. It's okay. Just take it... you got this..." I speak softly as if to a wounded animal. We're eye to eye, only the gun between us.

"Shut the fuck up! Shut up! Shut up! You fucking cunt! Put your fucking head down and shut the fuck up! Five, Four...Three.... Two..."

"Just take it man, it's alright. It's ok. You can take it and go. You're okay," I whisper, looking up and directly into the black holes of his eyes.

continued on page 7

There is nothing but the two of us now and the sharp muzzle of the gun digging into my forehead. No sounds at all. No winter. No city, no past and no future. We are alone in the universe and I am warm and at peace. Time itself stands still. I try to project that peace to soothe him.

"It's alright man."

I don't know how many times we go through this, with him counting down and me looking into his eyes at the last minute, whispering for my life. It feels as if we're there for hours, although it is likely just minutes.

Finally he starts screaming, "SHUT THE FUCK UP! PUT YOUR MOTHERFUCKING HEAD DOWN! I'M GOING TO BLOW IT OFF. THREE... TWO..." His entire body is shaking and now I know it's happening.

I put my head down and wait.

"Three.... Two.... FUCK MAN!" He licks his lips.

"THREE...TWO...FUCK. FUCK FUCK." And, unable to pull the trigger, he runs, leaving me alone in the snow reciting his features like a litany, large deep set eyes, gaunt, thin lips. I will remember your face...will you remember mine?

– Allison Marshall

## You Will Live On Between the Threads of My Clothing

The news arrived today,  
of you, my friend, beyond help, past recovery,  
ignoring the last call.  
Too far away, we could not meet again.

I remembered the shirt I wore  
when last we talked and drank and played together.  
I found it in the closet, passed the cloth  
through my hands, recalling the day.

I pressed my nose to the sleeve,  
where you touched my arm when I made you laugh.  
No scent to breathe, but in the weave you linger,  
invisible, molecular, atomic, quantum.

Matter is air, air is solid as rock.  
The universe is but sparks and particles  
and waves and nothing at all.  
All this nothing makes everything something.

The something that is you today  
will not be you tomorrow, but will not be nothing.  
You will live on between the threads of my clothing,  
warming me like a good winter coat.

– Craig Allen Heath

## Loser Poem

I am the loser of this poem.  
Birds all bedsheets, coming to me with  
The tinge of disappointment in a thousand different voices.  
Bugs, all sagging, swarm near and disperse,  
A cruelty copied but unrehearsed by  
Unwisemen and all their worried best, calling to me;  
Their concerns to rest on comfort of my defeat.  
I am the loser of this poem.  
A tyrant in my head as honest as me.  
Laughter all silent, a cruelty copied  
To routine.  
Forego ambition, with guilt, to resign,  
Great fear is present as I fall behind my  
Friends; all leaving,  
Laughter silent or confused to me.  
I am the loser of this poem.  
Sun all charred to  
A speck in my eye.  
Cry black cube tears,  
Blinking and vertices unwind.  
I am the loser of this poem,  
Sad to say that's what I have learned;  
Life, all flawed, appears to me in comfort. . .  
Shelf eyes  
Dust to mirror usage.

– Brady Lewis

## WRITING HIGHWAY 395 EXCURSION

(With social distancing, of course. We'll reserve two sites.)

Join us for eight glorious days in the Eastern Sierra. Escape the summer heat for the fresh air and inspiration of camping in the mountains, plus the Perseid meteor shower and natural hot springs. Intensive focus on your writing; and exploring the eastern side of the California Sierra.

**August 7-15, 2021 June Lake, California**

Cost \$700 (\$50 discount to the first three people who register). Check out our Facebook page.

For more info and registration, see Writing Highway 395 on the website or contact Clive.

**"WordSwell"** We have come full circle in naming our fledgling organization. We started with WordSwell and we cycled through Poets House West, Crossroad Poets, a number of others and now we're back to WordSwell. Anyone who feels empathic with our vision is welcome to join. **WordSwell embraces writing from the truth of our hearts.**

**Who we are:** We are artists who find joy in writing our personal truth and in seeing that truth communicate itself to others. We write poetry and prose in the flood of courage, freedom, and wisdom of our hearts. We seek to foster this joy in ourselves and in others.

**What we do:** WordSwell mentors beginning writers, teaches workshops, hosts readings, arranges writing excursions, and publishes work, all with those soulful joys as our guides. We encourage writing from the whole self, including the creative unconscious, as outlined in *Let the Crazy Child Write!* (New World Library, 1998).

**Mission:** WordSwell embraces and celebrates any prose or poetry written for the sheer joy of writing.

We foster and celebrate the ability of each writer to search for, discover, practice, and speak in their own voice. • We embrace and celebrate writing that buoys us with the same content, emotion, and excitement that buoys the writer. • We embrace and celebrate writing that does not need to be deciphered. • We embrace and respect writing that faces the bewilderment, destruction, and anguish of these times without flinching. • We embrace and respect writing that aspires to raise consciousness, whether of the reader, the writer, or both. • We foster writing that embraces social justice and aspires to dismantle, rectify and rebuild with compassion for all people. "Keep being an encouragement. Keep being a voice." • We embrace and celebrate pieces written without regard for what society may think. If a writing school respects what we do, or not, that is their privilege.

Allen Ginsberg: "Make the private world public, that's what the poet does."

John Wieners: "Only the heart remembers. And records the words."

Ram Dass: "The basic institution of the human heart."

Anon: "When words surge through my being I'm in the river of my passion and I know who I truly am. I meet my authentic self."

Carl Jung: "The debt we owe to the play of imagination is incalculable."

Clive Matson: "I write from the itch in my body."

**THE SCRIBBLER**  
Clive Matson  
472 44<sup>th</sup> Street  
Oakland, CA 94609

