

Scribbler

April 2020

ISSUE 103

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.

PSALM 11

THE SUN RISES LIKE
SOULS OF THE JUST DEAD
MAY THE GIVER
SHEPHERD ME TODAY
AS HE DOES THOSE SOULS

© 2019 Charlie Newman

— Charlie Newman, Chicago, Illinois

Editor's Note

I am grateful for the opportunity to reach out to so many fine poets, requesting their poems for this Scribbler. This issue is dedicated to seniors. Elder poets. A look at their vision and their experiences. Most of the poems were written before the pandemic. Most look at the world as it was a few short months ago. There are three times as many good poems left behind in this effort. I hold an ambition to gather anthologies and single author collections of writings from we Elders who have much to share. I thank you all for fueling that ambition.

— Carol Hogan, Poet, Editor and Arts Advocate

Again alone

Throw down the cup of liquid death to
fall upon the rocks below
where we will wake all sore and blue
we'll start again this writer's journey
perhaps to join in another's Valhalla
or share again the rapture of sunrise
again alone

— Carol Hogan
Phoenix, Arizona

Every Indifferent Glance

Very clear he was
about his outcome in life
work with what you know
work with what you have
first person care is the rule
let every glance be indifferent
to others, once you are clear
they pose no threat.

She was small in that alley corner
he typed her, then ignored her
with every indifferent glance
stretching under her thin red coat
shivering every breath she took
so small in that alley corner
not worth a serious look
in his backgammon world.

Rose where did you?
sprinted through his memory
quick-stepping past old pain
Rose where did you get?
that other one had been a silver mini
in her merry-girl crimson shawl
all those many months ago
Rose where did you get that red?

No one remembered her story
too many other tales of distress
now he shrugged and repositioned
his hard-won nonchalance
all through evening shadows
so that every indifferent glance
could find this new one quickly
in case she lasted through the night.

— Jeanne Powell
San Francisco, California

Workshop Schedule

**note: 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)

the third **Saturday** of the month, 10am to 5pm:

April 18, May 16, June 20, July 18

Register at clive@matsonpoet.com for the Zoom link.

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poetry prose plays nonfiction

Wednesdays 6:30 to 9:30pm; clive@matsonpoet.com for Zoom link

Current sessions end April 8 — New sessions start April 15

Fridays 10am to 1pm

Current sessions end April 24 — New sessions start May 1

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(drop-in writing time)

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the fourth **Sunday**, 2:30 to 5pm - April 26, May 24, June 28, July 26

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

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(drunk on poetry!)

*Free — register at clive@matsonpoet.com
for Zoom link.*

Second Fridays at 472 44th Street, Oakland
7 to 9:30 pm, second Fridays

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

April 10, May 8, June 12, July 10

THE SCRIBBLER

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Death By Metaphor

This morning it feels like my heart
is knocking against my ribcage.

I mean that
in all sincerity.

Heart, in this case,
is muscle and not metaphor.

Ribcage is
a common descriptive term for the arrangement
of the ribs.

Morning is when this is happening;
these words should be seen
as carrying no figurative weight.

I mean to say just what I say:
**it's morning, and it feels like
my heart is knocking against my ribcage.**

Note that I did not say, "trying to break free"
from my ribcage. That would be stupid.

The heart has no will of its own.
It doesn't know freedom and it's not
going to leap from my body
leaving splinters of bone
and a huge hole behind it.
That would invite metaphor again
and I'm trying to avoid it
as my breathing's too shallow
to use so much oxygen
on creative thought right now.

Did I mention my breathing was shallow?
Don't assume I meant something else. There's
nothing hidden there;
my breathing is shallow, meaning I'm taking
smaller breaths than usual, higher in my chest,
more quickly. I could add that they do not
expand the ribcage as much as normal breaths.

You should get the picture
though I'm not trying to paint one:
just the facts here. I'm wincing
with the effort of staying in the moment
with the pain in my shoulder.

Yes, I'm in pain.
For a full description of it,
I'm going to have to dip a bit into
comparison.
Forgive me. It's what we all do;
I don't know how else to say it, so:
**it's like something's cutting me at intervals.
Sharp pain. We call it that because it explains it
to another. We've all felt it. Right now,**

it feels like my left shoulder's being slashed
from clavicle to pit; a rod's being shoved in the wound
and shoved down my left arm from the inside.

That's accurate as a description
even if it's not a fact. No wonder
my breathing's so shallow. No wonder my heart
feels like it's knocking on my ribcage.

I would feel safe
in having you assume
that these are the signs
of a heart attack, which itself is a metaphor
used to describe a myocardial infarction
or some other cardiac event. Heart attack
is a bad description: as if the heart
were capable of hostilities.
It's not attacking me. It's doing what it is supposed to do
in response to my not taking care
of it properly. Fatty foods, no exercise, pack a day habit.
No metaphors there, just facts, though
I suck at self care contains a metaphor
that works, even if the sentence
makes no objective sense.

This morning, then,
let's just say that it feels like my heart
is knocking against my ribcage.
Let's say, further, that my dumb heart
and my ribcage
and my arm are in some kind of distress
and as a result ... I am too

although I don't know
what *I* means, who *I* am
distinct from awareness
of my body. **If I did?
would I be writing this
instead of calling the ambulance?
If the heart dies I'm sure I'll find out.
No metaphor in that, either.**

**I suspect there will be a moment
when I will understand
the meaning of *I*
if keep writing instead of calling.
I won't come back to tell you about it, though.
You will have to draw conclusions
from the poem and the pain and the heart
and the dying. You will say
the old bastard died
writing a poem while his heart was failing,
and you'll be correct.**

I'm sure someone
will make it into a metaphor,
though in fact it isn't.

— Tony Brown
Worcester, Massachusetts

LAX

1.
When I got to LAX
there was nothing but CELL PHONES
sprouting from people's ears
it made me wonder if Rod Serling had risen from the grave!

as I passed
their eyes would lock into mine
and I would hear their thoughts
screaming through space, MY space
as their lips moved
I felt strangely odd that there was not a CELL PHONE on my ear
and then at Starbucks

(AGGGGHHHH) ...at Starbucks... (AGGGGHHHH)
they said to get a refill
I would need a cup and a receipt
but they didn't give me a receipt
when I told them I wanted a large coffee
they spoke French at me
and I said OK
and they gave me a small cup (AGGGGHHHH)

I hunched down in my seat at gate 85
there was a sign on the door that read
"Enter here ZONE 2,4,6"
and I wondered if it was a sign from a higher power
"Enter here ZONE 2,4,6"
then
there was a chauffeur
at least I think he was a chauffeur
he held a sign that read Blame
a large, heavy lady
with a green back
and duel-colored buttocks
one red and one blue she came up to him
I think she was a soprano from the opera
but I didn't hear her sing
she spoke into a cell phone and looked right at me
she said, "you will be asleep when I get home
so, I will see you tomorrow."

"Enter here ZONE 2,4,6"

I wanted to have a smoke
but I didn't want to trip the metal detector again
the way I did when I left San Diego
didn't want to be waved over by the wand
nor interrogated by the
never smiling female airport security guards
they are afraid of CELL PHONES too!
I had to go on
on to ZONE 2,4,6
ZONE 2,4,6

2.
Their individuality lost to my skewed perspective
of distance in miles
I can no longer see movement below
Earth is microscopic
trapped in swirling patterns of amplified light
suspended
moving slowly at 300 miles per hour
I am alone in the sky

3.
Into the isolation of self
the day creeps
expanding in ever widening circles
that drowned my dreams
until night comes
and I will fall into them again

— Chris Vannoy
San Diego, California

Untitled

Sudden movements
tiny waves across the pond
metallic sunshine
bouncing on the evergreen
of the thriving bamboo
a day to safeguard
in the memory of the lost

the illusion of contentment
spreads like a pleasant virus
along the edge of the day
where solitary men
re-string their electric guitars
to the sunny tune of I
like eggs in a frying pan

— Bengt O Björklund, Sweden
FB: The poetry of Bengt O Björklund
March 19 at 6:21 AM
By special permission of the author.

Rock and Roll Eyes

I am like a 70-year-old teen-ager
pumped up on life
stretching before me
like the wake from
turbo jet engines at mach 5

I press the weight
of the world from my shoulders
doing pushups with military
precision even though
I am a pacifist

I have been a teenager since
my bar mitzvah in 1961
it hits me
like yesterday's blues
like next day's newspaper

– my passion keeps me younger
than James Dean

I look at the world through
rock and roll eyes
filled with Smokey's miracles
with thanks to Jay's Americans
getting my girl with the
Temptations at my side

I've been a teenager longer than Dick Clark
cause I never lost my love shack
to the B-52's or got stuck in
the oldies but goodies rack
with Wolfman Jack

I see the world through
these rock n' roll eyes
that have seen prejudice and bigotry
but love more often than not

– L. Jaffe
Dunedin, Florida

Solar Return

When worlds collide in the upper atmosphere, they call it *storm*;
down here, barely moved to notice, we call it *coincidence*.

The space station passes by at night, a white laser spot
busying its way southeast. How easy it can be
to miss it. My heart flutters. I remark to no one
There are people inside that light.

They could peer through their porthole,
the flood of illumination mapped below.

Perhaps they think
There are people sleeping underneath those lights.

I am one of the unnamed, that drowsy fraternity
of the faceless, I am not sure
what that means in the broad view
but it is terrifying in the micro.

Having completed more than sixty flights around the sun,
I keep coming back to simple things: the garden,
the birds, the moon. The void of inaction.

Sparrows line up for turns to feed.

– Georgia Popoff
Syracuse, New York

Destiny

Yet, this is the woman I am now: the one who often frees flies
rather than swatting, the one who moves plants one at a time,
like a Buddhist monk, or purges like the Bureau of Indian Affairs.

I am she for whom tears were once standard,
small explosions like sputtering bacon fat.

She who identifies with lava, with eruption,
magma seeking reason.
The lassitude of grief buried in a red-hot river.

But now my eyelids are crusty, tear ducts dry from lack of use.
I eat granules of Mt. Hekla and spoonfuls of diatomaceous earth.

There will be no more love poems.
That view of beautiful has turned to salt.

I covet rock and crystals in lieu of the once salty ocean
inside me that has ebbed, revealing a deserted beach.
No longer catering to the moon, I've grown unaccustomed
to blood cycles, an ironic communion with *barren*.

– Georgia Popoff
Syracuse, New York

Untitled

I got lost there,

just like you. And now we're both lost there and the good news is we have each other and this vast whiteness except for a few marks, marks we cannot read because we are too close to it or too far, or too much to this side of it or that side of up or down and there is no use reading the landscape for meaning if you can't make out what the landscape consists of so we spend a great deal of time pressing our fingers against our eyes as if to wipe the tiredness away but clarity won't come and there's some small comfort in that, to be surprised you know, to let whatever happens happen, and good news, we're still here and we are between this and that and life is like that I being yours and you being mine meandering in this place we've found ourselves in, throwing the dice since perhaps the colors will be better found that way, the cloth perhaps better woven that way, by god knows what means, not by your means or my means, but divinely made as such things are if they come at all and as I said, we got lost there long ago. It was the throw of the dice, you know. They said we could go anywhere. Just pick a place, any place. That meant so much to me once, that is to say, a long time ago.

—Jenene Raveslout
Chicago, Illinois

First published in *After Hours Press*, 2019

Untitled

taking the ride to equality
hordes of wanna-be's
hip-hopping their way to lowest denominator
hiding vulnerability and insecurity
behind oversized clothing
loud conversations and predictable posturing
instead of reaching up looking to the stars
climbing difficult mountains
masses of souls leaping into the abyss
ears plugged in and wires dangling
heads down and screens blinking
they don't want to be in our world
to hear our world
moving thru life with heads
buried in a miasma of silicon generated superficiality

—Carol Hogan
Phoenix, Arizona

Esteem

The day he was admitted, he listened to me
talk about rights, how he would be treated

respectfully, how he could still call the shots
when it came to what time he would get up or

retire to bed, how he could even play his shiny
sax as long as it didn't bother anyone else.

The day he was admitted, he listened to me
talk about liberties and choice and how

he could name someone to manage his money
or refuse to swallow a pill or simply smoke

a cigar as long as he did so in the smoker's ring
outside. The day he was admitted, he asked me

to talk about something else like dignity or duty
or destination and how a guy like him could find

a way to keep his worth, a way to earn his keep.

—Rich H. Kenny, Jr.
Chadron, Nebraska

Shapshots

for Grandfather Homer

The paisley bandana caught my eye.
However, it was hard to overlook
the fringed leather vest, tie-dyed t-shirt,
shaggy wig, and love beads; not to mention
the fingers flashing peace signs. Truly, *déjà vu*
all over again. A night out on the town,
reliving the 60s. Off to the playhouse,
finally getting to see a fantasy of youth
performed on stage – decades too late –
(naked!) *Hair*. His e-mailed photographs
made me smile. In fact, I laughed out loud.
Strong joyous laughter, a gift from a dear friend.
A step back in time before retirement,
grandchildren, and excessive possessions.
Left to ponder why what we once proclaimed
and sang had been turned upside down.
A look back on how our generation,
just like we said we would, changed the world –
unfortunately: from we to me, from substance
to shine, from share to bear arms, from left to
right, from welcome all to build the damn wall,
from a fallen dreamer to a womanizing schemer.
When I remember those years or hear people say
that I am a product of the sixties, I realize
I ought not to laugh out loud. Aged and turning
sour (spoiled?), obviously I've lingered beyond
an acceptable shelf life. What a bummer.

– James Robert Platt
Tempe, Arizona

After Forgetting Lines of Two Poems

Can eagles dance?
Can I in long bones leap?
my hands are shaking now,
calling the direction of my brain
into question. A shaking hand,
long bones leaping, an eagle
dancing. Why not fly, eagle,
leave us who have
no wings, who drag our bodies
through dry seasons,
to flutter our ghosts.

– Adam David Miller
Berkeley, California
Published in *The Sky is a Page: New and Selected Poems*

I WILL SCREAM NO MORE

I am an old woman, yes hear me
Sisters one and all
The bloody courses cease to rule me
Fire and ice run through my veins
Like silver arrows
Leading me to far, far nascent depths
Touching within that nadir
Each heart these old eyes beheld
Visions blest by waves
Of truth and laughter
Waves of soul and light

I know the right on of moving on
The sweet, wet, cold of left alone
The cosmic experience of
Electrically induced clitoral restoration
The in your face bend over and pick up the soap
Out front and personal
Grab your balls and cover your ass
I don't care what you think
For I'm old, my flesh warmed by memories
My soul seared with the past

I no longer scream the screams of a thousand nights
Time has borne those wretched scars upon the Eagle's wings
Long memory glides in wisdom with the why or how
Pity for the evil in life
Each man who seeks to rule me
A ship of misery unable
To complete his journey
Locked inexorably in a cracked mantra
Of self-loathing and emasculation
Raining down his disease upon my glowing heart

Fear of the long, long night
Of heavy hands about my throat
Daily rape of ownership
Lust *cum* anger, *cum* dominance
It was when that long night stretched into day
I fled
I ran with brother Wind at my heels
Ran from pain,
Ran from the constant branding
Blacks into blues, greens and yellows

I will scream no more
For I am an old woman
I sit upon this place and watch the years
I sit upon this place and seek my sisters
I am an old woman, I will scream no more.

– Carol Hogan
Phoenix, Arizona

**WRITING HIGHWAY 395
EXCURSION**

(assuming shelter-in-place is over)

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 be a witness to the Perseid meteor shower and enjoy the natural hot springs that abound in the area. Intensive focus on your writing; and exploring the eastern side of the California Sierra.

August 8-16, June Lake, California

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

For more info and registration, go to:
Writing Highway 395 or contact Clive.

Watch for
a one-day reading of the entire poem

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Paradise, Goodbye"**

at the Art House this summer.

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matsonpoet.com
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clive@matsonpoet.com.

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Because of the pandemic, we'll keep everyone on the mailing list for another year.

We hope that by then, the situation will be over.

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