

> **kill author**

a literary journal for the mostly alive

<http://killauthor.com>

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Issue Four: Ballard



Name: J.G. Ballard

Died: 19 April 2009, aged 78

Cause of death: Prostate cancer

Quote: "I would sum up my fear about the future in one word: boring. And that's my one fear: that everything has happened; nothing exciting or new or interesting is ever going to happen again ... the future is just going to be a vast, conforming suburb of the soul."

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Hermetically Sealed

Alexandra Isacson

1. Eros

The electron microscope photograph of the fallopian tubes captivated her. The fimbriae that held the egg were like the soft flaming feathers of an erotic dancer.

2. The Photo Shoot

He snapped photographs of her in the abandoned orchard. As the setting sun diffused light around her, she sculpted her dancer's body, and embodied Daphne.

3. Tear Drops

She opened her purse, unfolded the torn porn, and told the plastic surgeon, "I want to look like that."

4. Ophelia

I imagine it was a clawfoot tub that Lizzie Siddal floated in for Millais. Even though she wore all her clothes, she just about froze when the heat went out. Now she floats in oil on canvas, at the Tate Gallery. Her hands are still ice-cold.

5. Villains

In the after-life, Freud medicates Lady Macbeth for compulsive hand-washing and insomnia. Hamlet refuses to go to therapy since Freud said salacious things about his mother.

6. The Barrett-Jackson Auction

He took her out to his garage to show her his classic car. She wanted to touch the paint and leather seats, but he had sealed the car in plastic.

7. TNT

He told her implants blew up in your face like TNT. Later, he said he wanted to put them in her.

High-Flying City Fuckers

Ani Smith

Which basically dumps reports into sweet potatoes, and then we can use the benchmarks of the white light follow-up flag to determine whether your face looks like an astral firecracker as seen through the periscope of an alien aircraft. And it's not just us, we're trying to create solutions that can be integrated for everyone, anything can be installed, I want to run my banana pieces, I want to run my golden pieces, you can define that fuck flow.

Wow, that's incredible, very nice.

Because by the end of this year, we will have an incredible reach, rich virtual sugar cake in Dubai – we've got a team, we've got a team of plastic water bottles. The relationship has stabilized, the worker ants have mobilized. I mean, I haven't met them, I haven't met them but the orchid is in place and we are navigating the building into the seabed. It's going to be great. It's going to be after April, unofficially, we've been told. We've been told support is going to be mushy. We've been told, we've been told unofficially – you know the man-years, the man-years it's going to take when I go to Thailand? I mean, I don't know about you but I'm interested. We have new ideas. We have new ideas about the orchard, we're ready to give you a demo of the orchard.

I would love that. I would love that. Monkeys are going to burst out of my ass mid-July. I know you're going to do everything in your power, hire some people, be ready. Be ready on the technical side, be ready to lick my cocoa packet. And I mean that.

Made From Scratch

Cami Park

The Husband

The city of stops and bridges and lights passes into a membrane of hills and curves and longer breaths—the clear view, the lack of landmarks is disorienting, the surfeit of oxygen is suffocating; he wants out of there, back, he doesn't want to do this, he's glad it's only once a year.

The Babies

Everything good is round and warm. Everything bad is flat and cool. The kitchen floor is flat and cool until we warm it with our roundness. We take things up. We bring them down. Noise. We see her, the One, smell her, and there is nothing else. We go there, we gather, we make her our center. We learn her. Touching. Pulling.

The Wife

She rolls out a crust, glad for the way some things can be settled with a meaningful look. He had asked why, she had looked, and that had been that. Their bargain. The crust is for pies for the babies. She thinks this day's meal might be too rich for them. The two of them are underfoot now, literally, plucking at her ankles. Finished with stacking measuring cups, they're pulling at her hose and letting it snap back, again and again. They seem content enough, so she lets them.

The Husband

It's the smell. Standing next to a pig carcass doesn't help. He paces, waiting for the farmer to return with his meat and intestines. Shit. Piss. Mold. Dead things. Who knows. The farmer returns with the package, adding sweat and tobacco to the catalogue of odors. This bargain. As if knowing where their food came from, getting it, making it, eating it, right from the source, was enough to charm them against a past, a future, of stench. Or was it a penance of some kind? His wife could have everything she wanted—she would allow him to give her everything he wants a wife to want—if once a year he smelled this shit, she ground this flesh, they ate her meal. He didn't really know. That is his bargain. That they never say important things out loud.

The Wife

She feeds the meat through the grinder, gathers the flesh tendrils and stuffs them into gut casings. She likes the clean smell of it on her hands. The pies have finished baking, and she takes them from the oven to cool. There is blood everywhere. She cooks the sausages and calls the family to supper.

The Family

After eating, the wife walks to the long window overlooking the harbor, wanting. Hands against the tempered glass, she leans forward and looks back over her shoulder at her husband, still at the table chewing, staring. He swallows and starts toward her, but stops at the babies, still in their high chairs. Cock blocked again, they laugh, as he shrugs, lifts them up and out of their chairs, sets them loose on the rug.

The Babies

Where we are now is flat but not cool. The other one of us is round and warm. We touch the other's hair, face. Pull. Push. There is wetness. Coldness. Bad. We rub our eyes, chew our fists. We make noise we fall into the roundness the warmth of the other. Nothing.

The Couple

They are on the couch, stomachs full, satisfied. They see the babies, asleep in a pile in front of them. The husband says, oh, they smell worse than the farm. They are nasty, the wife agrees, and folds herself into his arms to sleep until morning.

The Atrocity Exhibition

Crispin Best

The Atrocity Exhibition

Walk onstage, pull its head off, reach inside to scoop out what you can, hold it up (grip tightly) and wait.

The University of Death

Here we are taught how to juggle, structure anecdotes, maintain suede, plait hair.

The Assassination Weapon

A dead wasp will be used. There shall always be a backup wasp should the first wasp fail.

You: Coma: Marilyn Monroe

Wake to a man (unfamiliar) in a tuxedo fast asleep in his chair, the ceiling fan shifting screamed ice hockey commentary and smells of wilting fruit.

Notes Towards a Mental Breakdown

1. Divorce
2. Financial problems
3. Overconsumption of Eggs Benedict
4. Bereavement

The Great American Nude

Before dawn, she is on a beanbag, chilly in the empty house, attempting a crossword. So: windowframed reflection fades as twilight skyblooms.

The Summer Cannibals

Steven dabs his forehead with his napkin, puts down his plate, pats his belly. He puffs out his cheeks now, widens his eyes. Matilda opens her mouth to laugh.

Tolerances of the Human Face

The face is smiling. It grows. It grows to an enormous size and flares its nostrils. The smile grows. The face is growing right here, right in front of you.

You and Me and the Continuum

Entering a shadowdark tunnel, moving gently now, hunched, shuffling, now crawling, burned or raped depending, now crawling, shuffling, hunched, moving gently now, toward an opening.

Plan for the Assassination of Jacqueline Kennedy

Jackie Kennedy will be riding her bike by the river. I will set off a firework four or five miles away. She will cycle home. Many years later, while sleeping: abrupt death.

Love and Napalm: Export U.S.A.

A freightless ship sailing. Until the ocean floor: Suez, Panama, Suez, Panama, Suez, Panama, Suez, Panama ...

Crash!

Enclosed in snow, a pilot, sleepless. A plane entering a mountain. A tiny noise.

The Generations of America

The younger is unfastening Velcro and humming; the older is cartwheeling down the garden path, vaulting that elaborate iron gate, nailing the landing.

Why I Want to Fuck Ronald Reagan

He's unpretentious and he is rich.

The Assassination of John Fitzgerald Kennedy Considered as a Downhill Motor Race

Imagine a car gathering speed. Imagine a car, bright, becoming faster, gaining speed, gathering itself forward, toward and down, and now, down, down, and still, still gathering, now.

Love Yourself, Or Else

Daniel Bailey

i'm all blasted up like shed feathers
with a heart that turns cum into milk, that awful transformation
let's demonize babies until fear fills the world of childbirth
and the human race fails to move on into the next whenever
what can i say right now, but goddamn?
i have books on the shelves that i have not read
i have empty walls
i have a window that i cannot see out of
the light inside is on
and outside is night
somewhere out there the fuckers and the shills are getting paid
somewhere the mud relapses into the dirt and all
nothing is anything without something else
nothing is still a term of emptiness that i keep inside me like fur on the lungs
i try hard not to think of all the bad things i have done to the inside of me
not knowing what i was doing, putting all manner of things into me
swords, plant growth hormone, monuments to smallness, the almighty
i feel like a baby shedding moth wings like blood fiber into the carpet,
the wept out life of the heart attack shark attack goodnight death
the constant need to be noticed lives inside my heart with claws
the all-knowing shadow destruction/swallowing of darkness
cannot be allowed to continue in the way it has continued for so long
i want my faith to be emptied out like bursts of last night's drinking
my god, the faith that i consume is enough to drown a rat, so let it
when water hits dust it all settles down into nothing, so let it
all the unborn babies in the world are unborn so let them not be
born into a world that still shakes at a promise like a hawk-dive field
where the rats get picked up like rocks by the river by a child on vacation
to a small state border battlefield where old men are honored
by the throwing of rocks into cold rivers overrun with tourists
i am dozing off to the sound outside my bedroom window
the cars passing, the trees reaching
up to some untouchable moon with no kids and no shelter
my light is still on
it is still dark outside
the only thing i've noticed is the way the world flickers
when you put it on a wick
the only thing i trust is the sound of a magnet sticking to a fridge
last night i ate the heart out the electrical outlet

my tongue got shocked into my throat
and i could not breathe for at least an hour
it felt like whales swimming in and out the mouth
like dust getting blown out the bell of a shivery trumpet
i do not have the gall or the gusto to tell you how to live your life
but, please, look out your window and into the street
something will be there
you will not see it

From: Romances Involving Chickens and/or Chicken Parts

Danny Collier

Bed

Warm feathers over air and sponge
flesh, nature's comfort: a live bed
eats the pea that would purple the
princess, and from five hundred fowl
one claw pokes up to scratch the fat
prince from twitchy sleep into dreams
of smooth seas as the flock walks out,
carries them from their room, from her
father's castle and kingdom through
foreign lands until desert, beach
or our moon's pale shell curves away
beneath them as they wake, startled
and naked before one thousand
exhausted, inquisitive eyes.

Factory

The hearts have again begun to beat, and the livers and gizzards pulse with mysterious labors. The hearts, laid in lines on conveyor belts, beat maybe for love, maybe for loneliness, beat a drumbeat summons to scattered pieces, beat to surround themselves again with warm chicken.

She's young. She's afraid. She's new to the line. She pictures zombie chickens dripping salmonella, who cluck onto her chest and peck tiny holes in her crisp outer coating, then peel it back to expose the veiny granny cowering beneath.

The hearts stop beating, but she's hopeless. She's stymied. This happens sometimes. There are procedures. They take her off the line, take her into a pale green office which smells of bleach. Since it's her first time, she gets the film. They start the machine, dim the lights and leave her alone with the projector's click and the bright image of a beautiful woman wearing the standard silver hairnet and liver-red lipstick. The image says:

It's ok. It happens sometimes. There are irregularities. Things get different. Sometimes we gut a thousand chickens but end up with 1,001 hearts. Sometimes a worker climbs on the line and rides through the factory, silent in fantasy, covered in entrails. Once a woman took a carcass as her lover and hid in a closet, madly fisting its body cavity and whispering secrets into its neck. It's OK. These are just variations, the bird with the extra head, the occasional unbreakable egg.

The film continues to roll out comfort. Her thighs quiver, legs tense, breasts tighten. She begins to cry.

Description of the Cock

Some people think it is a cross
between a chicken and a turkey.
Simple, straight, it rises
from the front to the back.
It is precisely toothed behind
a tassel of thin tufts,
very small and intensely red.
The face should be red; if it is white
it is considered a deficiency.
Wide, a bit embossed and deep,
the body seems stocky
due to the crammed belly,
and the back slightly inclines.
It is long and wide.
The cock's dark red, close
on the body, upside turned,
nicely curved
in the form of a sickle.
High, not steep, it emerges
from the body
at a blunt angle.
Easily scared by strangers
but tame with those who tend
them, a grown-up cock
has a small, fine-shaped head,
short, rimmed with horn-color.
The red eyes give an impression of ardor.

What I Learned in Sunday School

Jacqueline Anne Young

The heat came from hell and cooked our sins in a clay pot the size of Texas. Let it simmer for forty days and forty nights, then added six green tomatoes and upped the heat about ten more degrees. But only to represent the number of inches Delilah cut off. Or was it twelve? Then seasoned it with a dash of lemon pepper and too much salt.

It tasted like lamb, they said.

Like lamb? we asked.

Like lamb, they said.

We see.

*

When Noah built that boat, he forgot to bring the roach. But it survived anyway, so God forgave him and created the dove out of thin air.

Like that? we asked.

And they snapped their fingers.

*

The Red Sea was actually a vineyard with root rot.

The apple a small pomegranate.

The snake a macaw who had a penchant for persuasion. They met in transit under the largest tree in the center of Central Park. She, holding four steaming hot cups of Venti Hazelnut Latte (one with soy). He, relaxing against the trunk with his legs propped up and a joint between his beak, perfectly rolled in pink raspberry rolling paper. When she tripped it was because of his smoky O's and not because he stuck his foot out like everyone says he did. He only wanted her attention. He thought she was a fine catch. A most suitable victim.

Hot brown dripped down her neck and into the crevice between her breasts. "I'm going to be late," she said.

And he, "Let me help you with that," patting the front of her shirt with his wing.

A black bra peeked out from the edge of her blouse. A mole sat just above it.

"I'm going to be late," digging through her purse for the pocket watch whose large hand had, at that exact moment, turned six minutes back.

"Let me," and brought from his knapsack a travel-size stain remover kit.

Wake them up! I am lovely

Kat Dixon

It is most surreal when everyone is naked under their gowns

and there is a new man inside my ankle
and I must tell him that we've never met.

The name for Tuesday is Evelyn.

Though every previous Tuesday the name has been Rose.

Evelyn and I are professional
strangers, but at the risk of selling off the estate I would like to say

(Evelyn, if you are half of a foot higher than five feet and require one
hundred and five point two gravitational units to keep you here, there
is a good possibility that your appendix is hiding behind my appendix

and neither can be seen in pictures unless we both eat so many oranges
that we become oranges, or at least half as round)

hello and *yes*

*yes ovaries do sound like monsters when you play back the answering
machine and yes they've been in your bed all this time and*

Oh this will kill you, this will

just

kill you.

Standing Water

Kat Dixon

For the sake of being untitled, we clip our Qs into Os
and sit with our lips parted. Without pulling

up the kitchen tiles to stow away the excess

organs, something is bound to lose its polka dots.

You've been smoothing out your skin tone with a well-versed
machete, and I want to be the person that you think of when you hear
of hurricanes that will never make landfall.

Here is the first kiss to be received backwards:

Upon Getting Into My Sister's Underwear

Lucy Jilka

I like bitter wine, a sip
here or there between masses

in my altar boy cassock.
It's as if something's missing,

my sister's underwear: white,
Cloroxed, stuffed in the top drawer

who knows when the theft happened
as the Eucharist revealed

itself to shuffling holy,
holy, holy, merciful

and mighty. I used to steal
mulberries before they'd drop

my fingers stained the purple
of iniquity. Bare flesh

and purgatory hover
on the other side of three

Hail Marys at the dinner
table or while on the toilet.

Could be that the priest got drunk
swallowing the leftovers

someone else's venial
or menial, corpulent

secrets, always a shortage
at mass time and no fess-up.

I go in search of the sweet
fruit, past St. Andrews, the high

school, across the highway. For
hours no one knows where I've gone.

It must taste this way, soft to
the skin, bitter to the gums.

This Is Why I Did Not Send The Letter

Lucy Jilka

... She's aspirated linoleum and wooden benches, unglued the doorstep and tangled up metal hinges. She's screamed in crooked pictures, in puffs across the channel. The rash of her under-legs splintered, paperclips in a rag by the door. Her labial frenzy started the clock at noon. Send money to keep her in wordless 2x4s.

Much love, etc.

I filled up with a cyst the moment you called,
suffocated in ahoy ahoy because

I couldn't dispatch it—no retrieve it from
silver fish, guttural magnets. I couldn't

crawl between blue lines, slip into a teapot.
Frankincense bled between the parquet knots and

afterthoughts, hard stones to feed a pigeon—what
I could have said but chose not. Did I or

did I not do it on purpose? Ribs and teeth,
prickly burrs, the measure of the moon constant,

I took my position. Epitaphs get wet
from the trolleybus. Wind runs down excuses.

Tabletops can't recall a chess set. I know
that's not enough. Next to the phone in a pile

of current residents, it's not my fault ink
spatters make fat spots. Let it stay like an old

man who speaks in numbers. He's lived long enough.
Try and change a letter instead of a verb.

The hospital smells like cooked animals. There
are enough excuses. It's difficult to

balance your own embryo

The Scribbler

Marc Lowe

1.

He started scribbling indecipherable messages at the age of ten. These messages were often accompanied by pencil drawings. The drawings displayed little brains with arms and legs, putting holes in themselves with various objects. The objects included: pens and pencils, forks, knives, rakes, etc.

2.

His parents were terrified by the drawings and the scribbles. They thought that perhaps their son was schizophrenic. They were so terrified of this that they decided they'd rather not know. So they never took him to a psychiatrist. Instead, they kept him in a locked room, safe from the prying eyes of others.

3.

He was schooled at home in various subjects. He had a private tutor named Tully. Tully was very patient and perceptive. He saw potential in the boy. He encouraged him to read and to draw. The boy did this. He continued to compose his indecipherable messages on paper. He had over one thousand sheets' worth of them by the age of thirteen. Nobody but he could read what they said.

4.

One day Tully asked to see the entire stack. The thirteen-year-old boy showed it to Tully willingly. Tully took it under his arm and said goodbye. The family never saw him again.

5.

And so the boy started to scribble anew. He scribbled and he scribbled. The pencil drawings had now changed, however. Instead of brains, they showed thin men that looked like Tully. The thin men were putting holes in themselves with various objects (see 1., above).

6.

Three years later the teenage boy had produced one thousand sheets' worth of scribbles and drawings. His education had ceased three years earlier, but his art continued to evolve. The messages were no longer completely indecipherable to all but the boy. In places they could be read and interpreted. But only those with a mind that worked like the boy's could understand them. They did not reveal themselves to the casual reader.

7.

His parents were still terrified. They did not understand the messages that were scribbled on paper. The drawings made them feel uncomfortable, as they continued to think of Tully as a decent human being. They wondered if they should have their son psychoanalyzed. This idea made them nervous, however. They thought it best to keep the boy indoors, away from others.

8.

The boy did not stop scribbling. He scribbled and scribbled until he had used up all the paper his parents had given him. Then he began scribbling on the walls. The floor. And onto himself.

9.

He drew his double staring at himself from outside the window onto his arm. The he that was inside was drawing a picture of his double staring at himself from outside the window onto his arm. And so on, ad infinitum. This drawing made him dizzy to contemplate.

10.

Just then there was a knock at the door. His parents stood there, holding a number of objects: pens and pencils, forks, knives, rakes, etc. They began poking themselves with the objects. They did not bleed. Soon, they had poked so many holes into themselves that the boy could no longer see them. They had poked themselves out of his life.

11.

The boy looked out of the window. There was a face staring in at him. The face was indistinct, unpleasant. The boy stood up and went to the window, but the face had gone. He tried to open the window, but it had been nailed shut. He picked up one of the many tools his parents had poked themselves into oblivion with and broke the glass with it. He hoisted himself up and put one bony leg through the hole in the window.

12.

The scribbler put down his pencil and left the boy there, one leg inside the room, the other outside. He closed his eyes. It was difficult for him to imagine what it would be like to ever leave this room. Just then there was a knock at the door.

[specimen]

Mark Cunningham

Pornography is an aid to memory. The problem with trauma is that you really never are alone. The first viewers of the Lumiere Brothers' films were captivated not by people moving—they'd seen zoetropes and kinetoscopes—but by plants shifting. "Fucking brilliant" does not usually refer to the body.

[specimen]

Mark Cunningham

The eye itself shuts down during a blink, and to see what happened you have to watch an image. He said, "And, later, it killed me." Of course Japanese people are thinner than we are—their main government organization is called the Diet. The Behavior Science Center picked the wrong advertising campaign and went out of business. They wanted to talk about the recesses of the mouth, but we just wanted quiet time.

[specimen]

Mark Cunningham

A thimble holds a million trillion trillion trillion electrons at any moment and I can still get my thumb inside, but I just went up another waist size. It was an important moment in evolution, so we filmed it and put the clip on the internet so people could watch it and laugh. Since when does leatherette not mean female leather? The ideogram for “The great learning” is “grinding corn in the head’s mortar” to fit it for use—but, ha, now our whole body is made of corn.

[specimen]

Mark Cunningham

The ad in the culture section stated, "No One Can Tell the Future," but I didn't read the rest because I wanted to find out what was on TV at ten. The doctor pulled the tip of the knife from her back and said, "It wasn't that into you." The editor thought our title, Poems that Live Forever, was premature. We visited all eight wonders of Kansas.

Red, Gentle, Soft, Sore

Meredith Legg

Inopportune innuendo
call it innate condition of the age
Digital public
gleaming phosphorescence
Illness dripping from mouth
to body to floor to air to body
Fields of energy flow
Minds dancing between and within
pulsating beats in body
blank space and dense energy
Deep assholes with numb sex organs
Clear electric lifelike, open
pathways of sweat and heat
Red, gentle, soft, sore tubes
Legions and spasms, speculations:

There would be no words without flowers.
Colorless sound and colorful silence.
Carry flowers to their bodies
To sing to their absolution.
I see silence in the opening of an orchid;
I see why the dead need flowers.

Secret Word

Meredith Legg

Large scale annihilation
Of the dominant species
Tonight, tonight, the sky
Is awake like superbug
Bacteria lovingly fashioned
Pandemic in lab, lurching

In the Back of the Throat

Meredith Legg

I feel like you have something
I could have. I could even take
down George Orwell's arguments.
Back to the world:
I stammer back
inside it,
it feels gigantic;
it makes me piss myself.
He watched me squat in the night-time
street side light, before the scooter ride:

"Nobody's here," let's ride away.

I attempt to find a truth in this
night aid free verse but the gift
of fear and conscious thought grows
weeds in my body and I'm quite
due for a fast.

The not knowing is in your teeth
and you'll be so sweet when I grab
the tops of your pants and speech
switches on and off. I'm breathing,
giving light. The unfolding of
What There Was, and possibility
echoes told tales half-heard in
the trees.

Entrainment

Rachel Andelman

He goes into the food and drug store while I keep watch outside. It is important that we not be stupid. This is a city we don't own, which we have never visited before in our lives. The time since our last bath has made us smell completely wanton, like we're bad apples. That is why I am not allowed to faint, no matter how hungry I get. If I swoon, there won't be help. My body will not be held in arms until it can be laid gently among the reeds. Rather, my skull will split against, and brains will spill great fountains on the sidewalk. The crowd will continue, too busy to observe the tableau by their feet. If anyone hears my splash, they'll see the dark sky and be convinced that it's somehow got to do with rain.

Glancing at the road, I'm caught by the waxy sheen of cars that slip in and out of sight, threads sewn in the direction of home. We don't know much about that. My empty gut says he's in the soaps aisle. Detergent prices admonish him right now in red italics, scribbled on glossy stubs like toenails. He crouches, trying his best to compare and save. I have warned him not to do this, that his spine will soon graduate into a clothes hook. He can be so choosy, but never about what's serious. Weather, for example. It has been awful all week. Clouds fuss, huge tomes of crystal surging in heavens adjacent to a nose.

I wonder if this hitchhiking, in its loneliness, makes him think about the girls. When we were younger, his bathroom erupted with them. I never got introduced. He scolded me and demanded I should hurry to bed, to read the next chapter of *Creepy Mysteries* or find my own method to be well-behaved. My answer was to glue myself to the shadows of closets, pantries, sheds, and basements, behind their backs and skirting the bounds of his attention.

One night from my darkness I saw the girls change shape. Panic rose in my chest and convinced me briefly that they were monsters. They got smaller and smaller, shedding layers and fitting into strange new clothes and drawing on their faces and pressing lips together so that I was sure the lips would disappear.

The transformation was complete. I could not believe what I had witnessed, that people could look so different from the way they'd started out. Stiff legs marched across the carpet, and a girl let out a sound, a sigh that outfitted a prayer. I watched as the object she uttered drifted towards the window, cracked open slightly to let more breath in. Outside, it glowed red and spun away. Meanwhile, girls approached the den, ducking beneath its entrance. They could no longer be seen from my hideout, as they had become themselves hidden behind a set of clouds, like the ones I see now. But as I remember, they were brown.

Licking my top lip, I attempt to guess where the weather is going. He says the horizon is the only safe bet.

Doubt On Drugs

RC Miller

Officials admit they've let Pakistan too loose.
And China, well shit, it factors last if at all,
Riding sanctions like an authentic panda taboo
Minus the coop.
Letters sent from Afghanistan describe the sight
Of models dying of malnutrition.
Their puddles increase triumphant laundry.
Their stubble reduces cost effective molecules.
In 2012, global warming will kill us white people.
O how I wish I were Beyonce's Hepatitis A
Risk and how.
Hell, I'm off to Orlando lacking roots and leaves.
A parasite of protests huffing to become ethnic.
My gnarly pants, my ashen books, my
Parents and chicken nuggets prescribed as outrageous
Fortunes proving creationism supports variable hives.
There's nothing else after 'em, these progressive materials
Manufactured for the material spent.
And chatty spaces turn into mayonnaise, softly soulless
In soft, soulless bodies dragged through Mogadishu
From boom to bust.
New outlet malls. New joystick dreams.
Wombs our lotteries obsess over with pizza.
No worries captain, the fleece and cortex construe the rest.
I'll do my best not to fester hope less.

Moesha

RC Miller

Your crude art is my way out.
But then, depression sets in.
And this depression distinguishes itself from sadness
Through its intensity and duration.
Abounding feelings of loss and disappointment
Further instill the notion that all life is futile.
And because you're young I cannot complete you, for I am
The critical result of years of sex and sin, destined to be
A crop coerced into birthing his own insecticide.
And some nights I watch you vanish into masses.
And maybe it's not half bad
Deleting that primordial flash.
In the darks in between, my accessories climb onto the brink.
And sometimes they vanish, and sometimes they reappear.
And some nights I vanish, and hot damn I'm skidding
An asteroid trail of sirloins slurred with chins.
May God bless such play.
May my God bless your filler
Mourning the first sensations to gloat.
Whatever you're healing is still desperately hurt.
It's never easy to wake a tubesock tasting of each sorrow.
Whatever sleeps under me has no antibiotics.
And I will leave here when the money runs low.
I will leave you either stoked or skinned.
My eyes they open your mouth an opening, I am hidden
By ways out.
I climb the brink and address this nudity.
Unaltered, as shame might say, engaging a wall
At peace with the law.
Now the money is done spent, and our booth sits reasonably
Enough to hold high these insults of episodic rape.
An owl's stain steals my affection for the sky.
I repeat, you die.

Americans Need To Put More Vegetables On Their Hard-Ons

RC Miller

How I will be young again
The second my seeding, my sweating stops.
I'll flounder the notebook I kept for limits I lied to,
And you'll discover the days I was aware
Of other people and what they thought.
A platter of barking gravy in a perfect puppy disguise,
I was a traveling pilgrim with a traveling mind.
What you see in me now I see in two
Flasks entering the bedrooms of shirtless beauties
Baring only their mothers' scarves.
And they tie oiled fabric around my specks,
Pleading me to bite through the layers, pleading me to draw
Out the flesh and blood that scar a body.
Never a bore, I solve many tits and try many crimes.
The hooch slaps me so graciously,
Kissing in bouts, kissing the curls sucking their own nipples.
I possess them. I control evenly my teeth.
Thrown off of beds and fished up from trends,
I bandage my pain with masks blowing bubbles of angel dust.
"Blow away, blow clean my brains you beauties!"
I plead and plead again.

O how I will be human the second I return
To where this started.
The humans by parks, the humanity of heroes
Fishing up laborious strays.
Outsourced, the animals are itching
At a time when every failure is ours to herald.
Indifferent beginnings of the eager
Unshapen by water, by race or soil.
It's all mine, courageously instigating the corporate beverages
Enchanting resistance.
Garage anthems. A condom in the foxhole. Used paperclips
On goofballs and napkins and jury duty. Defined. Trimmer. My
Eloquence like a camouflaged meatball assuming contamination.
Civilized commotions. Volcanic tsunamis. The feuds of scorpion
Weight. Aircraft or vertebrate impacts. Plentiful utilities until

The furnace scans its fetus the days aware of what to think.
In two of you I will be young again.
Seconds of seeding, seconds of sweating, the layers of this body
Are the platters undiscovered.
What is seen in me I limit.

Winter Hymns

Tom Leins

During the winter, this town is less a place, more of a narcotic. In the summer, life feels volatile and sped up, but in the winter abstract paranoia takes over and some days I can barely move. Yesterday I went down to the beach and scratched expletives in the sand with a rusty length of razor wire. The shoreline was littered with the flotsam and jetsam of dead souls. I'm not dead yet, but some days it sure feels like it.

*

My girlfriend left me with a collapsed lung and a suitcase full of used banknotes. You could say we drifted apart; maybe she just forgot to drift back in. I didn't see it coming, but then again, I never do. At first I enjoyed my aloneness: Smokey Robinson on the turntable, paperback delinquency, chain-smoking and lung-ache. Then I got bored. Bored and unstable. I had nothing much to do and plenty of time to brood. I missed her. Her petrol-station perfume. Her black hilarity. Her lipstick, her Temazepam binges. Even her depravity—casually smothered with a guise of innocence. I missed it all, and then some.

*

I tried not to think about the suitcase of money, or where it came from. I spent my days prowling the sinuous back-streets looking for similarly dishevelled drinking buddies. Stumbling through other people's last resorts. Most days I'd catch up with disgraced cabaret pub-hack Rick Ghastly. If he wasn't in the Cavendish, he'd be in the Dirty Lemon, trading war stories with the recent amputees. Rick was always good for a few pints of deranged surrealism. Considering how much he enjoys talking about himself, he never once elaborated on why his career imploded. People mention an incident at the Rawhide club involving a midget hooker, but frankly I have my doubts.

*

One day last week, Rick disappeared in a haze of Marlboro smoke, like some kind of cut-price illusionist. Titch Mitchum told me that the Feds were breathing down his neck after Rick was implicated in a knife-party that left a Tesco security guard holding his guts in with both hands. Squeeze Titch hard enough and some bullshit or other will ooze out. Running out of options, I started spending time in one of the rat-infested local cinemas, sulking in the darkness of the matinee like a dishevelled noir refugee. When the sun sank I'd stagger home and count the money

in the suitcase. All sixteen thousand pounds of it. When I was drunk enough to sleep I'd lie next to the dent in the bed and drift into oblivion. Living out this deranged psychodrama was killing me, one night at a time.

Houdini of Tahoe

Verity Hill

Clearlake is the largest mercury repository in California, if not the clearest large lake. Lake Tahoe out-spans it, but as it straddles Nevada can be claimed by neither state.

I have often felt like Lake Tahoe.

I mangle lyrics with the window down, abusing the tuner to announce my personal universe of highway.

Sole survivor of a holocaust, I am beaten from within, my organs pitched against nerveless scaffolding. The only place it shows is in my eyes, red as blood sun dragged to the ocean rim, clawed.

I am desperate to be recognized outside my nightmare.

I am hunting an intimate stranger.

A double-jointed Houdini, mine was the advantage of not being brittle. I should have broken. Because I bent instead, my magic was declared a sham.

I learn to feel again without my fingers. I learn to speak without my tongue. But I can't call you to me. I can't draw you close, so what is the benefit of conjurance?

Contributors' biographies

Alexandra Isacson enjoys tending her lush desert garden of blooming roses, hibiscus, trumpet vines, ivy, and pomegranates in the winter months. Visit her site at alexandraisacson.com

Ani Smith is an American writer living in London whose writing sometimes appears in places like Dogzplot, Pank and Robot Melon, but always at Down In Me, where she regularly indulges her love of awkwardly long yet tuneful sentences.

Cami Park's favorite food is the tangerine. Her work can be found in places like Smokelong Quarterly, Quick Fiction, Opium Magazine, Hobart, and elimae. Visit her blog, Mungo.

Crispin Best is not completely aware of anything.

Daniel Bailey lives in Fort Collins, Colorado. He is the author of *THE DRUNK SONNETS* (Magic Helicopter Press, 2009), and *east central indiana* (bearcreekfeed, 2008). Daniel maintains a blog at prayerhelmet.blogspot.com. He also maintains a steady diet of pizza and wild cherry Pepsi.

Danny Collier has lived in two homes of the blues, one formerly closed city, and two centers of empire. He loved them all. He may never know enough about chickens, among other things.

Jacqueline Anne Young has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Legendary*, *Writers' Bloc*, and *Calliope Nerve*. She enjoys photo booths and sneaking into movie theaters. She misses the San Francisco fog, yet is enjoying herself in the warm waters of Southern California. Her pug's name is Nietzsche.

Kat Dixon is poetry editor of *Divine Dirt Quarterly* and author of *Kississippi* (an e-chap from Gold Wake Press). Her work has recently appeared or is forthcoming in *elimae*, *Indefinite Space*, *Otoliths*, and elsewhere. She may be occasionally found blinking at KD Poetry and Arts.

Lucy Jilka's work is influenced by her Catholic upbringing and the Russian absurd. She works as a civil servant, which is a nice way of saying a government bureaucrat.

Marc Lowe is currently pursuing his MFA degree at Brown University. See malo23.com for more information.

Mark Cunningham lives in a state that recently ranked 46th out of 50 in terms of citizens' happiness—as measured by the people who live in the states themselves.

The main public university just came in ranked 102 out of 110 public universities. He has brownish hair, but he is always aware of the Heisenberg uncertainty principle—that if you observe a system or person’s behavior, you change it—so when he observes "himself" he wonders who he is really observing, and he can’t understand why being a voyeur should be so boring.

Meredith Legg is a graduate student of Political Science at the University of Central Florida. This is what happens when a poet goes to grad school.

Rachel Andelman is a student studying film at Bard College. Her writing has featured or will appear in *elima*, Yankee Pot Roast, and Shampoo Poetry. She likes a lot of jokes.

RC Miller currently lives in Metuchen, New Jersey. He may be found at Vision Blues.

Tom Leins lives in Paignton, UK. He has worked as a deckchair attendant, an ‘Agony Uncle’ and a DVD critic. He is currently unemployed/unemployable. Get your pound of flesh at myspace.com/tomleins.

NVerity Hill was once attacked with a knife. Her first thought was, “I’ll be really pissed off if I don’t live to write about this.” Her second thought was, “I may be dead soon. I bet it’ll sell me books.” Her third thought was, “Wow. This really sucks.”