



# WB

WRITER'S BLOCK

*Students' magazine for  
writing, film & literature*

#26

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# ODE TO CHANGE

TESSEL RIJNEVELDSHOEK AND ILONA ROESLI

This issue is the official finish line for us as the editorial board of '14-'15. Most of us have gone off to pursue our interests elsewhere, to broaden our experience in editorial work or have gone off traveling: taking along with us the stories that we have read, edited, and written over the past year.

The previous academic year was marked by the Bungehuis and the Maagdenhuis Occupations here at the University of Amsterdam. These actions were dubbed the *Maagdenhuis Revolution*. As revolution comes before change, and change causes both reflection and opposition, we decided that, for a change, for our own reflection and opposition, we would make an issue that consists mostly out of submissions from the editorial board of the year '14-'15.



You will find essays by Isabel and Ilona, revolution-inspired poetry by Paul and Isadora, and photography by Judith and Isabel. The important relationship between the arts and political revolution will be underlined by Phoebe's review on the women's movements in the fifties and sixties in America and a collection of our favourite revolutionary characters by our editor Jules. Tessel worked on some typography, and you'll also find the *Readers of Amsterdam* by Judith and Ilona.

We enjoyed writing, editing, and creating, and we hope that the new board, which is already working on the 27th issue, will enjoy this all, too. We wish them all the luck, but for now, enjoy the works we have written for you, an ode to the change that is going to come. **WB**

Meet the white-crowned sparrow. Although it might look like any regular North American bird (albeit very cute and fluffy), the *zonotrichia leucophrys* has a distinguishing factor that sets it apart from our Dutch *mus*: its ability to stay awake for seven days during its migration. Over the past few years, various American universities and research facilities have been investigating the white-crowned sparrow in order to create some sort of drug that mimics the sparrow's sleeplessness to be used by the military to maximize soldiers' performances. When a drug that fends off the body's need for sleep eventually is realised, it probably won't be long until it finds its way into society and will be commonly used along with sugary energy drinks or hip pick-me-ups such as coconut water and goji berries to prevent afternoon slumps or even go without any repose at all.

What will happen when the 24/7 dream is fulfilled and humans can go without sleep best resembles the nightmarish plot of a post-apocalyptic science fiction film: we'll end up stuck in an uninterrupted process of work and consumption without any time for rest and individualisation. At least, that is what Jonathan Crary argues in his novel *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. Taking the brain facilities of a species of sparrow as a starting point in this sleep-defending novel, Crary ventures to set forth the alarming socioeconomic consequences of a loss of sleep in our late-capitalist society. For us students, sleep is either seen as an obnoxious impediment and something one can easily go

# REVOLUTION IN THE BED

ISABEL HARLAAR

without for at least a few days, or, on the contrary, as a rare luxury for the overly busy perfectionists juggling their studies, multiple afterschool activities, and a busy social life both online and offline. As Crary shows, not only students struggle with getting enough sleep: worldwide, people of all ages are getting less and less sleep on average.

The average American adult now gets around 6,5 hours of sleep per night instead of the 8 hours the previous generation was getting. This might seem something that should be celebrated rather than lamented, meaning that we have increasingly more time to invest in work and leisure, but Crary believes it is now more important than ever to get a good night's rest. Why? Because sleep is the only aspect of human life that the capitalist machine of commercialisation and mechanisation has not yet been able to get its hands on. This may sound far-fetched at first, but when you think about your daily activities, Crary might bring to light some ugly truths. As he points out, "[t]here are now very few significant interludes of human existence (with the colossal exception of sleep) that have not been penetrated and taken over by work time, consumption time, or marketing time" (15).

We live in an era where sleep is predominantly seen as an outdated impediment to maximized productivity and profitability. As it is, sleep is useless and unprofitable and remains the last human aspect yet to be commercialized and cashed in on. Reducing or even fully obliterating the human body's need for sleep would



turn us into full-time consumers contained in a non-stop world of global exchange and continuous functioning. In the resulting 24/7 society, human life would be rid of its rhythmic structures and functioning having lost the distinction between day and night. Little would then set us apart from the insatiable zombies of George A. Romero's *Living Dead* films (except, perhaps, their carnivorous tendencies).

There is a reason that sleep deprivation is oftentimes used as a form of torture. Long-term sleep deprivation affects the human immune system and destabilizes vital functions. It slowly shatters an individual, rids humans of their *humanity*, which makes more than clear the necessity of sleep for daily recuperation of both body and mind. In *24/7: Late Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*, Crary offers us a form of

resistance. Since sleeping is without value to a 24/7 society, it can be seen as a form of protest, a form of revolution against our daily cycles of producing, consuming, and discarding. By sleeping we halt our endless wastefulness for a while, stop depleting the planet's resources, and resist turning into insatiable customers of an always-open market place. Perhaps the white-crowned sparrow's sleeplessness is not something we should aspire to after all. Perhaps it's time to start a revolution from our beds.[i]

#### Bibliography

Crary, Jonathan. *24/7: Late-Capitalism and the Ends of Sleep*. New York: Verso, 2013. Print.

[i] Thanks to Niels van Doorn and Abe Geil and their interesting course *Media, Time, and Space* for inspiration. **WB**

# TERRORISTER / LET ME STAND

OONA JUUTINEN

Rachel Corrie

here olive trees grow from harsh rubble high walls appear out of nowhere the children of occupied territories carry stones for presents

to stop lives from displacing others Rachel stations her body between machine and homes that are targets to level she waves her arms fluorescent jacket the ground ahead of her rolls up distance shrinking the bulldozer drives over her

for a second she is visible through the windshield of the armored vehicle mounds of dust lift her up then peel away and she falls / a castaway in remnants of reinforced concrete the bulldozer continues on in order to settle they demolish her

shouting people running friends try to lift her up but she has been pressed too deep into the soft orange earth / they can only hold her and all her wrong angles blood dries a wide river her name was Rachel they demolished her and never prosecuted anyone

# “THEY COVERED HIM WITH A SHEET AND NEVER PROSECUTED ANYONE”

Carlo Giuliani

police jeep broken rear window a pistol pointing out / a boy picks up a fire extinguisher

the shot rings through the square point-blank Carlo crumbles down him and the metal hit the ground simultaneously someone screams

here on Piazza Alimonda they shoot him in the head drive over him then reverse and drive over him again his body rolls a little it gives way under the wheels / the medics say his heart was still beating

the blood is so thick surprising how quickly it begins to pool *carabinieri* gather around he wanted something more now his blood hardens on his balaclava as it leaves him in fast trails

someone holds his hand as it stiffens / his name was Carlo and he lay there next to a fire extinguisher they covered him with a sheet and never prosecuted anyone

Rémi Fraisse

valley covered in a cloud fields split by barricades a protest to protect wildlife from greed / chak chak chak chak helicopters loom low

clashing projectiles and tear gas a policeman pulls the pin a flashbang grenade directly into the crowd Rémi collapses / the police drag his limp body away later that night he is found in the forest they blame the protesters

autopsy results / he died instantly a stun grenade in the back it ripped him open remnants of TNT clung to his flesh mixed with fibers from the backpack he had been wearing

a landscape of disaster where he fell the ground is burned black someone traces his name in the sand he was a botanist his name was Rémi they tried to hide the truth and never prosecuted anyone

# REBELLION, THE UNDERTAKER

ISADORA GOUDSBLOM

clouded/ fuzzed by temperate,  
desperate youth  
there is only innocence at the core

*i think what they mean is that trains drive very fast,  
too fast  
but that it's your own decision  
to live under the trestle*

there are so many people and objects  
seeking something and i want to give it to them,  
but what is one difference,

*we took you there  
the wild core of nature  
your fight against human anguish  
you arrived in your three-piece suit and patent leather  
shoes  
we had to explain it was you who was arriving, ready  
to go in  
~*

what does exteriority say about interiority though?

high grass and corn turfs house the building  
“you can walk fifteen minutes to the nearest stop,  
the bus comes every hour” is the nearest sense of  
freedom.

i am building memory from scratch.  
the past becomes the future- YES/NO

how can i avoid metaphor in light,  
the *Long Day's Journey Into*  
black, restless  
what is the use of “wisdom unapplied”?  
a significant insight, without action.

*meteor showers happen in their  
subliminous beauty all the time  
rocks falling down we are all  
rocks here in this national park ~the world:  
where everything comes from*

the heart threatens  
(to fly away;) and

there is only weakness  
when it matters

raised without reason, now i wear my heart  
on my sleeve and nobody can believe  
or should,  
that there is always more muscle in it;

nobody sees that death  
is staggering  
in its kickshaw<sup>1</sup>

those left behind undertake  
beyond their capacity, here  
(in your arms.)

restless, black



<sup>1</sup> something showy but without value

# LITERARY ANARCHY AND SCHIZOPHRENIA

ILONA ROESLI

“The historian will tell you what happened. The novelist will tell you what it felt like.” E.L. Doctorow, a prominent author of historical fiction amongst other things, passed away this summer. I am certain that his acclaimed statement will remain crucial for a very long time. Despite the unmistakable accuracy in his attempt to show why novels are relevant, it is hard to distinguish today between all the voices in the world that will “tell you what it felt like.” Moreover, our world has undergone a transition in which the media and visual landscape of our technologically advanced cultures have gained much more prominence. In this world, with its vast complex monetary systems, the entrapment of politics in widespread wars that haunt us by means of terrifying homemade terrorist films, we have come to learn too fast that there are more people living different lives and having different thoughts on this planet.

Yet, on the other hand, the seeming reduction of wars and conflicts in our wealthy Western world allows for a necessary optimistic perspective. In fact, we are living the dream of our ancestors: we live longer, have become richer, we are developing new medicines in a capitalistic and democratic world, and whenever we do not feel the need to pay for beautifully designed on-demand streaming platforms like *Netflix*, we simply turn to *Popcorn Time*. This enlightened Idea of Progress is not quite reconcilable with the notion of unbounded progress.

What these two perspectives mean in the twenty-first century, however, is that we are trying to figure out what democracy and capitalism actually mean, even though we have maybe bestowed it upon ourselves, at least since the Enlightenment, to celebrate these concepts fully. But I am not a politician, nor an economist, nor a historian. I read novels. And the cruciality of literature’s empathy, as described by Doctorow, does not lie in the human urge of seeking the ultimate truth or perspective or a certain aesthetic *je ne sais quoi*. Literature’s strength of empathy illustrates the urgency of critique, and moreover an evasion of binary thinking, or a way of pulling ourselves out of the quicksand that humanity frequently gets itself into.

Yet, in recent (student) protests and opposition, a dominant thought is gradually developing: literature, like philosophy, art, history, and other humanities subjects, has little or no economic value. In fact, I would not argue that the humanities are hit by an acute crisis, we have always been in a crisis, but rather an indication of the direction in which we are heading: that although we have been doing well, the two pillars of Western society - namely democracy and capitalism - are under attack, and that we find it too damn hard to acknowledge that our technological advancement exposes well-hidden racism, that the values of democracy are nowhere to be found in Greece’s debt crisis, nor in the response to people who are crossing the

“WE ARE FACED WITH A NEVER-ENDING STREAM OF SECONDARY REALITIES. NATIONAL IDENTITY? INDIVIDUAL IDENTITY? NO, THE IDENTITY CRISIS IS MOVING ON A GLOBAL SCALE.”

sea to find their luck elsewhere. We are faced with a never-ending stream of secondary realities. National identity? Individual identity? No, the identity crisis is moving on a global scale.

In their two-volume work *Capitalism and Schizophrenia* (1972 and 1980) French philosopher Gilles Deleuze and co-author and psychoanalyst Félix Guattari call this ‘schizophrenia,’ not referring to the official diagnostic term, but rather some sort of delirium in which the oscillation between schizophrenia and paranoia, the latter being subordinate to the established power and the former that overthrows it, is a constituent of Western societies. In this sense, our current society has become more and more Deleuzian.

In 2000, James Wood, a prominent literary critic, coined the term ‘hysterical realism’ for the exhausted and paranoid narrative structures typical to postmodern authors such as Zadie Smith, Don DeLillo, Thomas Pynchon, and David Foster Wallace. His criticism is directed towards the sped-up narratives that these authors bear upon their narratives, and moreover, bear upon their characters. In this sense, he argues, these novels and narratives become ‘unreal.’ However, these storylines are an apt description of

the war-like world that Thomas Pynchon’s *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966) already described in the 1960s. Or, even more, these narratives show an urgency to call upon an inclusion of the plurality of social truths and realities existing in cities such as London, as brilliantly described in Zadie Smith’s *White Teeth* (2000): why should writers confine themselves to describing one reality?

Adding to the vocabulary of schizophrenia and ‘hysterical realism,’ Pynchon’s character Jesús Arrabal from *The Crying of Lot 49* comes up with the term ‘anarchist miracle’: “another world’s intrusion into this one. Most of the time we coexist peacefully, but when we do touch there’s cataclysm [...] Where revolutions break out spontaneous and leaderless, and the soul’s talent for consensus allows the masses to work together without effort, automatic as the body itself.” The novel acknowledges that reality cannot be described, yet it, somewhat paradoxically, succeeds in describing realities. The worldview of its main character, Oedipa Maas, predisposed as a housewife from white, suburbanite, wealthy America, slightly shifts, by meeting different voiceless minorities, into a state of paranoia. In *White Teeth*, Zadie Smith has excelled in giving these minorities a voice.

Although these two novels are separated by a significant time period, they voice the repressed outskirts for whom the American Dream has ceased to be a reality. In the same decennium of the publication of *The Crying of Lot 49*, photographer Larry Clark captured his Tulsa series in the eponymous town in Oklahoma where he and his friends, as teenagers, shot up amphetamine every day. He started taking photographs in 1963, the same year that Martin Luther King wrote "Letter from a Birmingham Jail" in order to pave the way for black minorities within the American Dream: "One day the South will know that when these disinherited children of God sat down at lunch counters, they were in reality standing up for what is best in the American dream and for the most sacred values in our Judeo Christian heritage, thereby bringing our nation back to those great wells of democracy which were dug deep by the founding fathers in their formulation of the Constitution and the Declaration of Independence." The death of the American Dream had been taking half a century, until Obama might have or might not have tried to reclaim it. But that is a different discussion.

In the fall of 2014, Smith published an essay in *The New York Review of Books* titled "Find Your Beach," which gives a fresh insight into the views of the island Manhattan where she's been living in university accommodation. She concludes that "the greatest thing about Manhattan is the worst thing about Manhattan: self-actualization," where you, as a consumer, can find your own beach, drink the beers of the ads surrounding you, which help you to write and to get the work done. The city's anthem is rooted in this notion of self-actualization: "falsely, but convincingly," while "thinking of Manhattan

as an isle of writers and artists—of downtown underground wildlings and uptown intellectuals—against all evidence to the contrary. Oh, you still see them occasionally here and there, but unless they are under the protection of a university—or have sold that TV show—they are all of them, every single last one of them, in Brooklyn." It is a sincere and beautifully written antithesis that Smith sets out. In his hyper-real HD-installations, English artist Ed Atkins shows that the relationship between humans and technology might be immaterial and artificial, but could feel real too, a paradox that has also been explored in the relationship between Theodore Twombly and his operating system Samantha in the film *Her* (2013). We've come to learn that the values we object to, because they are deemed inauthentic or seen as some sort of capitalist devil, are the same values that have formed the societies in which we live now.

It is perhaps in our nature to continue on our teleological quest for truth and meaning, but real truth lies in the heart of literary fiction and the arts: the production of which enables a social, economic, and political proliferation of multiple realities, devoid of the touch of the politician, economic or historian. And while philosophers like Deleuze and Guattari, artists like Ed Atkins and Larry Clark, and writers like Thomas Pynchon and Zadie Smith have been trying hard to show what is going on, many of us are facing the world with a binary structured toolkit which renders most our tools useless. Like Irie in *White Teeth*, the humanities are asked to "take it to the streets with the rest of the proletariat." But perhaps we should follow this advice, as this is surely where we have learned how to succeed in this form of anarchy. **WB**

# READERS OF AMSTERDAM

## ILONA ROESLI AND JUDITH KROON

of *The Room* (2003). I could not stop laughing, and when I did it was to shed a tear for the authentically awful mood swings and struggles the protagonists of the book experienced.

*Phaedrea Fidessa*

*Secretary and English student*

### Where do you find inspiration to write?

I'd have to say music: music is one of my major inspirations when I write. Apart from music I draw inspiration from books or novels, usually little things: a sentence, a visualization, or a specific word. One book that inspired me most, I suppose, was Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief* (2005) which sort of showed me how 'poetry' or a 'poetic tone' could add to fiction writing, rather than being obtrusive.

### Tell us about a novel that hit you so hard that you were unable to forget it after reading it.

I recently read *Pines* (2012), the first in Blake Crouch's Wayward Pines trilogy, which crushed all my expectations and reignited my love for thrillers.

*Vincent Baptist*

*Website Manager and Media and Culture student*

### You study Media and Culture, which often focuses on film. How do you think literature relates to and differs from this type of storytelling?

I guess it has always been deceptively easy to regard literature as superior to film, since, when film had only just been invented, literature already had an impressively rich history. Film adap-



**Tell us about a novel that hit you so hard that you were unable to forget it after reading it.** Definitely *The Disaster Artist* (2013). It's an autobiographical tale about all the drama, betrayal, egomania, and redemption that went on during the disastrous production process

tations of novels are therefore particularly interesting. The great Hungarian film director Béla Tarr has adapted several novels by his compatriot László Krasznahorkai. Whereas Krasznahorkai's novels are characterized by extremely long sentences, Tarr's films are unusually taciturn. When watching his films, you have to come up with all the words yourself, which I find very interesting.



#### **Which aspect of reading a novel is most important to you?**

It should provide me with some new perspectives on life. Most importantly, it should give me some philosophical and psychological food for thought and stimulate my daily musings.

*Felicia Fabriek  
Final Editor and English student*

#### **What are the most challenging aspects of studying literature?**

The challenging aspect is that you have to read so many texts, novels, and theories in such a short amount of time that you don't always have time to read novels in your own time. However, discussing literature in class creates new ideas and gives you a deeper understanding of the text and the author, which is great.

#### **What does literary fiction mean to you, what is its importance?**

The best writers bring the characters to life, and if the characters are three-dimensional, I believe a novel can really motivate, entertain, or, most importantly, inspire a reader. Furthermore, through literature, readers come into contact with issues they otherwise wouldn't have learned about. If they are then also able to identify with a certain character, they might form opinions on these issues they otherwise wouldn't have had.

*Romy Verhoeven  
Graphic Designer and English student*

#### **As a humanities student at the UvA, you are very close to the different rallies for humanities going on right now. What do you think is the value of humanities in our current society?**

It allows us to evaluate our own morals and ethics. Like other university faculties, our faculty looks at society through a critical lens. The principle of humanities has a rich tradition in languages, law, music, history, and culture: all of immense value to our civilization. It is a shame that the humanities are in the position that they are currently in, and are viewed as condemnable.



#### **Which aspect of reading a novel is most important to you?**

I like to be enlightened by new viewpoints. I once read a quote by George R.R. Martin that said: "I have lived a thousand lives and I've loved a thousand loves. I've walked on distant worlds and seen the end of time. Because I read." Reading allows us to go on adventures and live alternative lives over and over again, to find out about how other minds work beside our own.

*Roselinde Bouman  
Editor-in-Chief and English student*

#### **You have written and published a novel. Do you think this has changed the way you read and value literature?**

If not the way in which I value literature, then definitely the way in which I value authors! Writing is incredibly hard work – and sorry if I'm blowing bubbles here – for very little pay.

You have to be very confident in yourself and your ideas and have a lot of discipline and dedication. Your publisher will give you a final deadline and is probably available for feedback when you need it, but everything else is pretty much up to you. Writing a novel has made me realize that behind every literary masterpiece, there is a person who created it, word after word. Now that is dedication.

#### **What does literary fiction mean to you, what is its importance?**

Literary fiction is all about becoming part of an alternative reality. Books allow you to experience things you could have never experienced in your own life and change your perspective. Reading is an adventure, but one with a safety net. If you don't like what you're seeing, you can simply close the book and snap back to your own reality. Quite comforting, isn't it? **WB**



# SHE'S BEAUTIFUL WHEN SHE'S ANGRY

PHOEBE ECCLES

When I was sixteen years old, I wrote in my diary that I had recently discovered within myself “strong feminine tendencies”. In fact, I had not meant to suggest that I had found my inner Audrey Hep; the word that had eschewed me at the time was FEMINIST. Since those formative awakenings, I have done my best to keep a tight grasp on this word, using it to perk me up when life gets me down, as one may similarly deploy exercise or recreational drugs.

And so the other day I took my untrimmed armpits down to my local independent cinema to see Mary Dore’s *She’s Beautiful When She’s Angry*, a documentary that harks back to the women’s movement that swept over America in the late 60’s and early 70’s. Once I got over the injustice of being seated behind the only man at the screening (I am 5’1” and he had very bouffant hair), I enjoyed myself tremendously.

How nice it is to remember a time when feminism did not dilute itself through hasty brandishings of a heforshe hashtag, a time when burning bras was not a stereotype but a sensible Sunday afternoon activity. Through interviews with activists such as Muriel Fox, Ellen Williams, and Linda Burnham, juxtaposed with original footage of their younger selves, I learnt about snippets of history such as the widescale women’s strike, organised in 1970 by Betty Friedan. I learnt about the Jane Collective – an abortion

helpline set up by women working in secret. I learnt about the struggle of Puerto Rican women against the horrifying practice of sterilization.

You’d think that the ladies of these times would be quite doom and gloom what with all they had to put up with, but no, here they are setting up group lessons on masturbation and catcalling bankers. There was even a socialist-feminist group called W.I.T.C.H (Women’s International Terrorist Conspiracy from Hell), who dressed up in capes and hexed misogyny in the name of activist street art.

Dore’s documentary plays out as a joyous thank-you note to the past. She keeps the frame wide, wishing to include as many as possible in her embrace. While this breadth is what gives the film so much of its warmth, it also serves, ultimately, to weaken the final punch of the product. Throughout, we are reminded of the pitfalls of the second-wavers: despite claiming to represent the interests of all women, these movements repeatedly excluded and contributed to the oppression of women of colour, working-class women, and LGBTQ+ women. Yet acknowledging this doesn’t go far enough. The face of Angela Davis, surely one of the most monumental women activists of the 1970’s, only appears for a millisecond. The face of the white, straight feminist, although critiqued for her reinforcement of violent structures, remains at

**“YOU’D THINK THAT THE LADIES OF THESE TIMES WOULD BE QUITE DOOM AND GLOOM WHAT WITH ALL THEY HAD TO PUT UP WITH, BUT NO, HERE THEY ARE SETTING UP GROUP LESSONS ON MASTURBATION AND CATCALLING BANKERS.”**

the figurehead of the film. And, through racism and homophobia being addressed at two separate points of the film, presented as two separable phenomena, there is a failure of intersectionality: where do women such as Audre Lorde, self-described “black, lesbian, mother, warrior, poet,” stand in relation to mainstream feminism?

After the screening (which was, rather heart-warmingly, the busiest I’ve ever seen my local cinema), there was a panel discussion between three well-known feminist writers and activists: Lynne Segal, Clarissa Jacob, and Emma Dabiri. Dabiri, who is half-Nigerian, half-Irish, brought to attention the soundtrack of the film to further question how race is positioned within it. She pointed out that a soul song is played at the very beginning to accompany a frame of white women, thus transforming black-ness into a prop, signifying universal political struggle but only to particular (white) ends. She also questioned the inclusion of The Velvet Underground and Nico’s “I’ll Be Your Mirror,” what with Nico reportedly being a vocal fan of white supremacy.

Despite being problematic, the film still serves as useful watching for today’s generation of feminists.

Like our sisters from the 1960’s and 70’s, we need to learn how to get angry at the same time as getting creative in order to prevent feminist progress from being subsumed into a neoliberal agenda.

We should get back into the practice of burning of degrees if we don’t like what they stand for. We should keep demanding free childcare, as well as free and easily accessible birth control. And we should always, as the feminist Silvia Federici famously said in relation to wages for housework, make *demands* for our liberation rather than requests, proposals or pleas. However, in order for feminism to properly reclaim its radicalism, what we must do is make demands that specifically address the epistemological violence incurred upon certain demographics of women both past and present. So, for white straight cis feminists like myself, this will involve ceasing to reproduce our own image to the ends of representing the cause.

We have been represented enough. I’m weary of my reflection! The lens must be adjusted so that intersectionality in every possible form exists at the centre of feminism, as opposed to the sidelines. **WB**

# REVOLUTIONARY CHARACTERS IN FICTION

## EDITORIAL BOARD

In between all the serious content informed by our volatile theme, 'Revolution,' a little list can be a tangible breather. Thus, to provide some air and fluff for this edition of *Writer's Block*, we have compiled a list of a few of our favourite revolutionaries from fiction. Of course, the term 'fiction' covers quite a lot, so you can expect quite diverse figures from our editors. We cheat a little with Isabel's entry, but with the credentials put forward by our editor, we simply cannot omit her chosen revolutionary.

### Jules: Rik from *The Young Ones*

Yes, yes, this snotty student from the classic British comedy series (1982) is hardly the stuff of revolutionary legends, although the self-proclaimed People's Poet confidently acts the part. Even with his face full of pimples and the misplaced pride he has in his protests and his anarchic poetry, he radiates the energy and passion of a revolutionary like no other. He may be a git that annoys his flatmates and virtually everyone else he knows and meets. He may be the poorest (sociology) student Britain has ever seen. He may not have brought about any real change in his fictional universe, but he definitely revolutionised his medium. Rik, as portrayed by the late great Rik Mayall, and his fellow Young Ones, changed comedy forever with their bizarre alternative comedy, and the medium is the better for it.

### Isabel: Clarice Lispector

On December 10, 1920, a girl was born in the *shtetl* of Chechelnyk in Ukraine while her family was fleeing the wave of pogroms spreading throughout Central and Western Europe du-

ring the Russian Civil War. Eventually managing to emigrate to Brazil, the family settled in a north-eastern part of the country. Perhaps inspired by the perils of her youth, the girl decided she wanted to write at an early age and published her first novel when she was 23 years old. Today, this girl, who goes by the name of Clarice Lispector, is finally getting recognized as Brazil's greatest modern writer. A title that she absolutely deserves, writing with a poetic mysticability that only finds its semblance in the works of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf. Addressing The Big Questions while putting forward the inner lives of her heroes and heroines in a most revolutionary way in novels such as *The Hour of the Star* and *Near to the Wild Heart*, Lispector never fails to electrify one with a little breath of Life.

### Tessel: J.K. Rowling's characters from *The Casual Vacancy*

It is a difficult task to think of which character is, for me, an important revolutionary character. A character can be revolutionary in so many ways that it took me a long time before I landed on the characters in J.K. Rowling's *The Casual Vacancy* (2012). For me, Shirley Mollison, Parminder Jawanda, Howard Mollison and the others are, at a lot of times, such absolute – pardon my French – wankers, and all in their own way. At other times they are vulnerable, kind or compassionate, and I am left in a state of confusion, because I can't figure out whether I like or dislike them. I realized that the confusion came from the fact that they were the most human characters I had so far encountered in a book. This love-hate relationship



that I had with the characters, as well as their humanity, made them revolutionary characters in my eyes, and my favourite ones at that.

### Judith: Quintana from the *Lumatere Chronicles*

I'm going to take a leap from literary fiction here and talk about one of my favorite epic fantasy series, Melina Marchetta's *Lumatere Chronicles* (2008). In this world, two neighboring countries are ruled by two very different queens. The first is led by Isaboe, the embodiment of female empowerment, who is loved and respected by her people; the second by Quintana, who is treated as nothing more than a body to be used and abused, despised by her country for not being able to produce an heir. A lifetime of abuse and abandonment have caused Quintana to go vicious and slightly mad. And yet, while Quintana has no hope for herself, she is doing whatever she can to make sure she is the only one to carry her burden, to make sure the other women

in her country don't have to undergo the same fate. This kind of unexpected strength and quiet determination make her one of the most revolutionary characters I have ever encountered.

### Ilona: Tristero from *The Crying of Lot 49*

In *The Crying of Lot 49* (1966), Thomas Pynchon describes a counterrevolutionary organisation titled Tristero. Oedipa Maas, the novel's protagonist, tries to unravel the company's secrets, but is continuously confronted with the question: does Tristero exist or is she merely hallucinating? However, whether it exists or not, this underground world gives voice to the repressed minorities in the sixties of America, the period in which this novel was published. The uncertainty surrounding Tristero underlines the socio-economic and political instability of this period. Because of that, the organisation is a rare form of revolution: secret and ambiguous, but hopeful. **WB**

# REVOLVING REVOLUTIONS

PAUL HOFMA

A whip cracks, ceaselessly,  
Yet silently,  
Across your back  
Time,  
And time,  
And time, and time again  
I watch  
And I weep  
And I whisper to  
Long forgotten gods  
Who will never hear me  
Begging for them to  
Save you from torment, but  
There are no gods here.  
There are only those who watch  
From the balconies  
Smilingly slyly, nodding  
Absorbing, with silent glee,  
The pain, the agony, the suffering, the fear  
We forever slim and slink away  
As they consume, and tower above  
The meek.  
And we stand in silence –  
Acquiescence  
  
But then,  
A bolt of lightning and  
Confusion, rushes through the crowd  
A single man screams at the top of his lungs  
The balcony remains indifferent  
He throws another bottle and fire  
And panic break out  
The balcony waves and  
The man falls forever silent in a spray of  
Maroon.

But though fires and  
People are but easily cleared away,  
Hatred and anger and pain  
Are not doused as easily  
And so the balcony stirs as the  
Supports dwindle and fade, and  
Supremacy and violence shifts  
To those who seek their fall

And as they tumble, after long,  
Savage, and inhuman years of  
Condemnation and destruction  
They must scream.

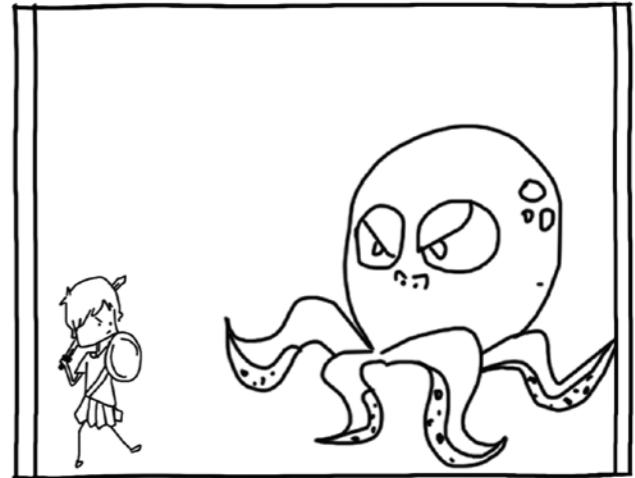
Yet, without a balcony, it seems  
The palace too shall crumble like  
All things must fade to  
Dust before the ages.  
Though more rapid, like the  
Cascading of the waterfall and  
Falling of night.

And so it came to be that  
There was no more life in that square where,  
Long ago,  
One man was beaten  
Another rose  
And fell.  
And all the others were liberated  
Though from what I shall not  
Say.  
Because it is not my place to speak –  
Like all the others, I have been  
Permanently  
Silenced.

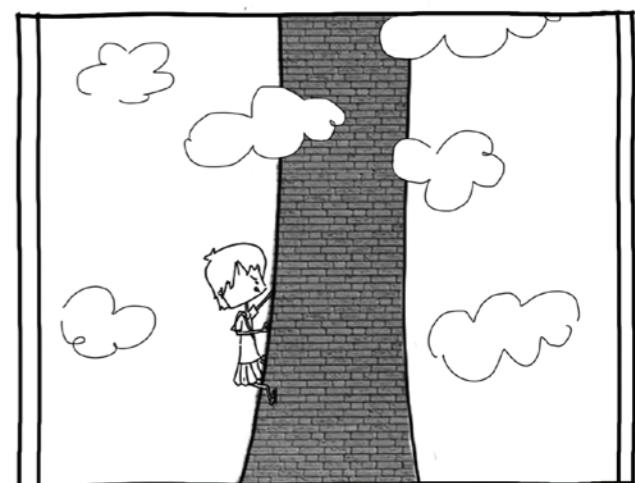
ONE MORNING I DECIDED I HAD TO SEE HER



SO I FOUGHT ALL THE OBSTACLES  
THAT APPEARED IN MY WAY



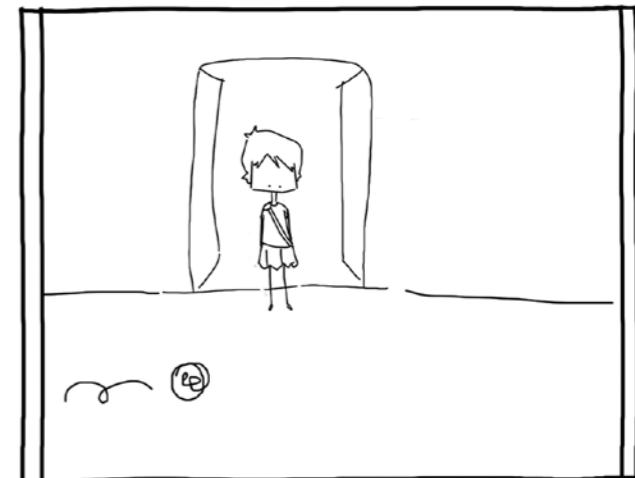
THERE WERE A LOT!



AND WHEN I FINALLY GOT TO MY  
DESTINATION, FATE BETRAYED ME



IT WAS SATURDAY



MILENE CORREIA

