

# THE RIOTS ISSUE

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- Author

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- Poet

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HERE COMES EVERYONE™

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## Editorial

The problem with writing about the Riots is that it can be very difficult to say something that has not already been said. Those on the political right shriek, shrilly point to the fecklessness of those supported by

the welfare state and decry the bestial nature of the ordinary man on the street; meanwhile, those on the left wring their hands and bemoan the awful conditions for those who do not have it as good as they. It is too easy to forgive

rioters, looters and violent criminals: like naughty children they don't know what to do; but it is equally too easy to condemn: to blame parents, society, decline in traditional values and all round barbarism. Entrenched opinions are

dusted off and trotted out, but none of this helps anyone. There has always been unrest, there always will be and maybe there always should be. This is excellent for those with an artistic temperament, since great upheavals

are inspiring.

It is almost too easy to forgive rioters, looters and violent criminals: like naughty children they don't know what to do; but it is equally too easy to condemn: to blame parents, society, a decline in traditional values and all-round barbarism. Entrenched opinions are dusted off and trotted out, but none of this helps anyone. There has always been unrest, there always will be and maybe there always should be.

As we witness with horror the bloody uprisings and civil wars that are steadily crawling around the southern coast of the Mediterranean, known without irony as the Arab Spring, it is hard to place unrest in the West into the context of noble struggle. It seems petty to be smashing-up shop windows and looting, when desperate people are shelled or otherwise quietly silenced, merely for expressing their beliefs or discontent. Equally, as Greek society struggles to resist economic

strain and the growth of militant nationalism, it seems trivial to moan about the end of the EMA. The critical point is that poverty is relative and to know poverty, you simply must live it. Few of us are really in a position to comment on the struggles of others, but we may reflect and pass comment on our own.

Over a year ago, when I spoke to the Co-Founder of Silhouette Press, Adam Steiner, and discussed the possibility of producing a magazine, it had never actually occurred to me that it might happen. Now, I'm struggling to write something that is not gushing and feeling rather absurd trying. My role as editor is to highlight my personal favourites from amongst the many submissions we have received, and I've enjoyed reading it all and couldn't (or perhaps shouldn't) choose a favourite. I should explain, we're very egalitarian here at HCE, so the pieces aren't in any particular order: we've tried to spread the work out as evenly as

possible, so that there's a little bit of everything everywhere.

As of yet, HCE is not entirely as we wish it to be. We want to engage with every sector and explore every aspect of society, but this has proved difficult. We may never fulfil our initial ambitions, but we will continue to pursue them. Our embryonic skills-sharing network, imaginatively called 'The Network', recently went live as part of the [www.herecomeseveryone.me](http://www.herecomeseveryone.me) website. The Network is steadily growing into an organic society of individuals and forms the heart of the HCE project and SP more generally as a publisher of future greats. By creating an atmosphere and a place for people to meet other creative types and work together on new projects, the possibilities for exciting collaborations is extremely exciting. There is a vast wealth of talent, both qualified and quietly working away in the shadows, that has so far been left out in the cold by the 2008 recession. A whole generation

of graduates developed skills, but have nowhere to use them and the Network was inspired as a way for those people to find each other and fulfil their creative ambitions directly – without being told that their work was right or wrong, economically viable or a high-flung dream.

For the next issue of HCE, we're at something of a cross-roads. This edition was intended to prove (partly to ourselves, but also to the world) that we could do it... and now we have. The Riots was chosen as a theme, because it presented a narrow range of subject matter and, just over a year ago, it felt very relevant – it still does. *Now, we need a new theme for the next edition, so there is nothing to do but to throw open the door and say: 'what would you (the reader or potential author) like to read, or indeed, to write?'* [*Answers to [gary.sb@silhouttypress.com](mailto:gary.sb@silhouttypress.com)].*

**Gary SB**  
HCE Editor

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## HCE - Join the Network!

Want to contribute to our next issue and get involved with other Silhouette Press projects? Sign-up to the Network on our website to connect with other writers, artists and publishing people and launch your own ideas!

The Network is FREE to join and is open to EVERYONE!  
[www.herecomeseveryone.me/join-the-network](http://www.herecomeseveryone.me/join-the-network)

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Rowan Carnihan – co-producer of Riot from Wrong

Yevgeniy Levitskiy

Paul Francis

Alex Millen

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# From A Safe Distance

by Sam Jordison

I live in Norwich now. I'm happy to say that the closest we get to thug-life here is when someone parks their tractor on double yellow lines. So when the riots kicked off last summer, it felt at first like something happening very far from my world. I watched the developing situation on TV in horror - but it was horror tempered by the fact that I was a safe distance away. It wasn't my house that was burning. It wasn't my neighbourhood that they were destroying...

...Until I realised that actually it was. A camera focussed in on Clarence Road in Hackney, where I had lived in a small flat for a couple of years at the turn of the millennium. There was a car burning outside my old front door. The shop where I used to buy my daily Hackney Gazette and the odd box of mints had been smashed up. People I had probably passed on the street every day, were now charging up and down it, their arms full of stolen goods.

My first reaction was possibly human and definitely selfish. "Thank fuck," I thought, "that I don't live there any more."

I remembered anew how it had felt to have to steel myself before walking out of that front door, every morning. The feeling of danger as soon as I stepped onto the street. The need not to look into anybody's eyes. The sadness of stepping over the man who slept outside my house. My inability to help him...

I remembered the riots that had already happened outside my house, a decade earlier, when the residents of The Pembury Estate had risen up against the local authorities en masse and spent the next month surrounded by police vans. I remembered navigating home on my bike using the police helicopter that flew over my house. I remembered not having a clue about why the trouble had ever started and, equally, why it suddenly ended.

I also remembered the man who had been shot dead at the end of my road while DJing at a New Year's Eve party. And the man in the next room, who had somehow caught the same bullet after it went through the DJs neck, the laughably flimsy wall and into his own chest. I remember finally deciding to leave when my girlfriend and I came home one evening to find that police had taped our house off, because someone had been shot in the shop next door. I was well out of it.

But then, I remembered the human beings who also lived there, and who, unlike me hadn't been able to move somewhere easier (and, incidentally, cheaper).

First, there were the kids tearing the place up. I couldn't imagine that I had been brought up in the ugliness Pembury Estate, and attended Hackney schools that I would have behaved much better. Society was just something that always let these children down. That offered them nothing for

the future and harassed and bullied them in the present.

Second, the victims. Those newsagents who were looted had done nothing to deserve such treatment. They were hardly the evil capitalist oppressor. They were just a couple of guys who had worked incredibly hard to keep their shop open all hours, make a small profit and serve the local public. What did they find in there that was worth stealing? Sweets? And why destroy their own local shop? Why piss on their own chips?

None of it made sense to me. But then, I was one of the lucky ones. I wasn't there.

## Here Comes... Sam J

Sam Jordison is a journalist, author and publisher. A new volume of *Crap Towns* will be released in 2013 and nominations are currently being taken at [www.craptownsreturns.com](http://www.craptownsreturns.com). Elsewhere, he writes about books for *The Guardian*, publishes books at [galley beggar.co.uk](http://galleybeggar.co.uk) and lives in Norwich with his family.

# An Other Revolution

by Changming Yuan

Having been oppressed  
Compressed  
Or depressed  
For too long under the ground, and  
To add insult to injury  
Having been trodden  
Trampled underfoot  
By humans and other animals  
Simply for too many times  
The dead will rise at last, shooting up  
From volcanoes, climbing ashore  
From ponds, lakes, rivers, seas, jumping out  
From every crack and crevice on the surface,  
charging down  
From ridges, hills, mountains  
In numbers overwhelmingly greater than  
The few creatures still moving on the earth.

## Rioting

by Changming Yuan

As giant ants march ahead in nightly arrays  
Demonstrating against the ruling humans  
Along the main street of every major city  
Hordes of hordes of vampires flood in, screaming  
Aloud, riding on hyenas and  
Octopuses, waving skeletons  
In their hairy hands, whipping at old werewolves  
Or all-eyed aliens standing by  
With their blood-dripping tails

Gathering behind the masses are ghosts and  
spirits  
Of all the dead, victims of fatal diseases  
Murders, rapes, tortures, wars, starvation,  
plagues  
Led by deformed devils and demons  
As if in an uprising, to seek revenge  
On every living victor in the human shape  
Some smashing walls and fences, others  
Barbecuing human hearts like inflated frogs  
Still others biting at each other's soul around  
black fires  
All in a universal storm of ashes and blood

Up above in the sky is a red dragon flying by

### Here Comes... Changming:

Changming is a 4-time Pushcart nominee and author of *Chansons of a Chinaman* (2009), who grew up in rural China and holds a PhD in English. He currently works as a private tutor in Vancouver; his poetry has appeared in nearly 540 literary journals/anthologies across 22 countries, including *Asia Literary Review*, *Best Canadian Poetry*, *BestNewPoemsOnline*, *Exquisite Corpse*, *London Magazine*, *Paris/Atlantic*, *Poetry Kanto*, *SAND* and *Taj Mahal Review*.

## The Last Judgement of Broken Britain - After Michaelangelo

by Imo Rolfe

[Facing page]

### Here Comes... Imo:

Imo recently completed her school career at St Gabriel's School and is intending to start university in September to study Theology.

Her piece is cartoon drawn and inked using traditional media and coloured digitally using Photoshop Elements 5.



# Smash and Grab

by Gemma Evans

It's not been a productive day. Everyone in the office was too busy checking the news, wondering if it's all going to kick off tonight so our supervisor let us go early. I walk the usual route home. The air is too cold for August but it prickles with that nervous energy you get before a thunderstorm or something.

Market Street's full of skinheads and girls dressed head-to-toe in Primark. They all huddle together, the lads with one hand down their tracksuit trousers, fearlessly adjusting themselves in public. I'm just amazed how blatant they are about it. If this weren't a pedestrianised street, I'd be crossing the road right about now. I adopt a walk I hope will let me go by unnoticed. Eyes down, hands in pockets, uninterested, I scoot past on the cobbles, my summer shoes slip uncomfortably between the cracks.

It's only just five but the shops are already closing. Staff exit through half drawn shutters, probably wondering what they'll have to come back to in the morning. I reach the top of the street, relieved to have made it through the gauntlet of tracksuits. There are no trams on the tracks, no cars beeping at crossing pedestrians, no taxis picking up shoppers. Instead a helicopter hovers over Piccadilly Gardens. It's strange, the sound a helicopter makes, like a ticking hum.

I take a left and walk down the empty tram tracks to my flat in the Northern Quarter. Trust Manchester, on the one night it actually needs to rain there's not a cloud in the sky. Nothing more than a mild haze of pollution. It's like someone's replaced the city centre with a replica film set. My flat is like a greenhouse and smells of the washing up I should have done last night. I open a couple of windows and let the stale air escape. A cool breeze brings in the sound of the helicopter and a distant whir of sirens.

I collapse on the sofa, my bag still on my arm, and keys in my hand; cheap leather sticks to my bare legs. It's nice to be out of that weird atmosphere. I undo my hair and massage the sore spot where it's been tied up all day. Feels painful but good. Needs a wash. God, I can't believe it's only Tuesday.



My phone rings. I dig it out of my bag.

Alex. Fuck.

Deep breaths, ignore the butterflies that have started flying in your stomach.

'Hello?'

'Hiya Abby, are you at home?'

'Yeah?'

'I'm in town and I'm a kind of stranded.

There's no buses or trams, I'd walk and try and get a taxi but it's getting dead sketchy out here.'

'Shit, that's well bad. You can come over to mine if you like?' I offer, hoping I sound casual.

'You sure?'

I could scream at him how sure I am.

'Yeah it's fine, I'm not doing anything.'

'Ah, lifesaver. Where d'you live again?'

'Church Street, you know those weird market stalls outside the Arndale?'

'Yeah.'

'It's the building opposite those. Flat 406.'

'Cool, I'll be like five minutes.'

He hangs up. My hands are shaking. I let out a little noise of excitement. Alex is coming over. Fuck, in five minutes. All those daydreams about to come true. I run to the bedroom stripping off my work clothes. What the hell should I wear? No time to do any ironing. I pull my favourite jeans

out of the wash basket and spray them with some perfume. I have one top that's not too creased to wear. Damn my untidiness. My hair has to go back up, there's no saving it. I don't think he's seen me with my hair up.

Make-up retouched, I throw the huge mound of clothes on my bedroom floor into the wardrobe and make the bed for the first time in about six months. Shit, I wish there was time to change the sheets. Jesus, would you listen to yourself? What the hell are you expecting to happen? A stab of adrenalin seers round my body as I imagine him here, his arms around me, his smile lingering, leaning in and... The intercom buzzes and makes me jump. Alex appears in the video screen: all different shades of blue. I give the kitchen and lounge a once over; it'll have to do. I make a mental note that I need to start living like an adult and not like some first year student. I press the key button and watch as Alex pushes the door open.

I sit back on the sofa, then move to the kitchen table, then to the window again. God I have no idea where to put myself. He should be knocking on the front door by now; the lift doesn't take this long. I open the front door to check he's not got lost and nearly walk into him.

'Oh, hey,' he laughs.

'Hi,' I reply, I'm sure my cheeks are glowing a horrific colour of red. He leans in to me; I think he's going to hug me. I go in for it but don't move my left hand out of the way fast enough and it ends up sort of trapped between my right breast and his chest. He's probably thinking this is really weird. That I don't even know how to hug properly. He releases me and follows me into the flat. 'Thanks for this.'

'No worries, what's it like out there? Was getting pretty tense when I walked home.'

'It's fucking horrible, like the whole of Moss Side has descended on the city centre. I probably would have been fine if I'd walked across town, but there are scallies everywhere and I didn't fancy risking it.'

'Sounds like the Printworks on a Saturday night,' I joke.

'Hey I wouldn't go that far.'

This is a familiar exchange. It's one of our things – laughing at the people who go to the Printworks, girls in crotch length dresses getting fingered in the corner of a club by a Ben Sherman wearing lad before being moved on by the mobile police unit that stations itself outside for when it all inevitably kicks off. All this mickey taking done

from the safe distance of a trendy Northern Quarter bar, of course.

He smiles, wide-eyed like he's permanently on something. I like how he's rolled up the sleeves on his t-shirt. He ruffles his hand through his hair. I think he's waiting for me to say something. I should probably say something.

'D'you want a brew?' I ask.

'Tea would be amazing, thanks.'

I put the kettle on and watch him walk round my flat. It's strange to have him here amongst my things, looking through my books and family photos. The flat seems small with him in it, uncomfortable, not like how it happens in my daydreams. I've never been alone with him, it's always been out in bars with friends, exchanging looks that last three seconds too long. I'm not sure what the rules are now there's no one else around. Something like the pressure of a first date creeps over me. It's been a really long time since anyone's spoken. The kettle shakes and whines as it comes to the boil.

'I think something's on fire.' He says finally, moving towards the window.

I leave the mugs and tea bags and lean my head out of the window. A plume of black smoke rises into the sky.

'That looks like it's coming from round the corner.' I think it's fear suddenly rising in my chest. Alex checks his phone.

'People are saying someone's set Miss Selfridge on fire.'

'Fuck,' is the only response I can come up with.

We watch the smoke rise. The kettle boils and cools. A smell of burning plastic fills the air, all that polyester melting and blistering. A helicopter hovers right above my building. Sounds like a really loud lawn mower. Blue lights flash in the windows of the apartment opposite. There's chanting and shouting in the distance like you get on match day, but there's no football on tonight.

'It's properly kicking off,' Alex shouts, there's a look of excitement about him.

Our arms are touching as we lean out of the window. I wonder if he's as aware of the contact as I am. I wonder if he's imagining a whole future based upon it. His wedding ring catches in the light. So easy to forget he's married when he does things like not moving his arm away. Hooded youths come rushing round the corner. Some on bikes, most on foot. They try lifting up the shutters on the market stalls.

‘Do you think they realise they’re trying to break into a book stall?’ I ask.

Alex laughs. A flash of white teeth.

‘I dunno, probably do ‘em some good to read something, though.’

The shutters don’t budge. There’s people who’ll probably lose their livelihoods tonight and all I can think of is how he’s not moving his arm away. I’m pathetic. I look around and all my neighbours have their heads stuck out of their windows, exchanging comments on how awful this whole thing is. People in the building opposite are out on their balconies; a few take videos on their phones as if they’re watching some sort of parade. It’s all so terrible, it really is, but I can’t remember the last time anything this exciting happened.

‘I don’t think you could call this a riot,’ Alex ponders, ‘more like a bunch of kids on the rob.’

‘Yeah, I don’t know what point they’re trying to prove.’

‘I don’t think they do either.’ Alex leans his body against mine. This is it, he’s going to take my hand or he’s going to kiss me. I think my hearts stopped beating.

‘That burning smell is awful,’ he says and retreats indoors, our contact broken. I feel myself deflate. A police van screams onto my street and flushes the loitering kids away. I shut the window and follow Alex inside.

There’s a statement on the news from the police telling everyone to stay indoors. The city centre is cut off, no transport in or out. We sit on opposite sides of the sofa watching the same scenes of vandalism replay on the news.

‘It’s weird watching it on here, knowing it’s happening just out there.’ I say.

‘Yeah it is,’ he says.

Maybe it’s knowing we could be marooned together for the whole night but the middle cushion of the sofa seems like an insurmountable barrier between us.

‘It’s really terrible,’ he says.

‘Yeah it is.’ I say.

God, this small talk is getting unbearable. Why can’t you find something interesting to talk about? I wish I had some alcohol in, and then I could just reach over to him and if it turns out I’d read this whole thing wrong I could just blame it on being drunk.

Daylight fades and the sirens get louder and more frequent. The conversation inside is still

strained. The sound of shouting outside drowns out the noise of the TV.

There’s a huge crashing thud. I nearly fall off the sofa in surprise. It happens again. The whole flat echoes. I look to Alex and we rush to the window again. A group of about fifty kids are throwing a fire extinguisher at the door of the supermarket opposite. They circle round it, taking it in turns to throw. The force of each blow makes me jump. I reach out and take Alex’s hand. I avoid looking at him for a reaction and keep watching the rioters. He squeezes it tight and relief sweeps over me. But then he lets go. Removes his hand. Was that just a squeeze of reassurance? Oh, the horror!



I want to say something, maybe a sorry, or just laugh it off, but the whole weight of my body seems to be lost somewhere in my stomach. His phone rings. I see the name on the screen as he pulls it out of his pocket. It’s Kate. The wife. He sees I’ve seen it.

‘She’ll be checking I’m ok.’ He says avoiding eye contact.

This is the second time he’s ever referred to her.

‘She know you’re here?’ I manage to squeeze out of my tightly wound throat.

He nods. I’d assumed he wouldn’t have told her about me. I’ve definitely been doing too much assuming. I feel sick. He moves to the back of the flat to take the call.

The gang shatter the glass on the shop door and try to kick a hole through. I can’t believe I’ve

been so stupid, got things so wrong. I consider throwing myself out of the window. Anything to escape. They've broken down the door now, person after person runs in and reappears moments later with arms full of stolen booty. How can they look so happy causing so much damage? I think back over things, analyse the stolen glances on nights out, how we'd sit so close together that I could still smell his aftershave on my skin the next day. But what does any of that even mean? How was I expecting this to play out?

The supermarket looks so sad, the alarm wails, shelves pulled down, ransacked. I can feel myself starting to cry. I wonder where his wife's been all those nights when Alex has been with me 'til the lights flash last orders.

He finishes the phone call and walks back over to the window. He rests his arms on the ledge, visibly apart from mine.

'What's going on?' He asks. He's referring to the rioters. I don't answer – the broken glass speaks for itself.

'How's Kate?' It's the first time I've said her name, acknowledged that I know she exists to him.

'She's fine.' He says sharply, clearly not wanting to talk about this.

'You've spoken to her about me?'

He sighs and looks at me as if I might let him get away with not answering the question.

'She knows we're friends...'

That word: 'friends'. I never thought it would hurt to hear it. I watch the last few youths leave the shop. I want to shout at him, to ask if she knows he's the type of friend to push his legs against mine when we sit together and leave a lingering hand in the small of my back when we order drinks at the bar. But I just can't seem to let it out. A couple of tears run down my cheek and I wipe them away quickly. I should look on the bright side. At least I'm not the other woman. '...I'm sorry I shouldn't have come here,' he finishes.

There's glass all over the street. I want to tell him how clever he's been. How he's really walked the line between right and wrong so well that neither his wife nor me would be able to call him out on anything he's done. It could all be called a misunderstanding.

'I should go.'

I hear him pick up his bag from the table. I contemplate letting him leave.

'Don't be an idiot.' I stop him. He looks child-

like with his rucksack on, much younger than twenty-eight. 'You'd be a hipster sitting duck.'

He let's out a stifled laugh but doesn't really smile.

'I don't trust myself around you.'

It's as close to a confession that I'm going to get. I shrug my shoulders.

I lie in bed wide-awake. Everything going round and round in my head like the helicopters still buzzing around the sky. This is not how I thought things would end up. Me in my bed, alone, him asleep on the sofa. I curl my knees up to my chest and fantasise about having the ability to turn back time. My muscles tense through the alternating waves of embarrassment and rejection and the utter horror that he is still here, asleep, only on the other side of my bedroom door.

I hear him leave around 5am. I get up about an hour later and find a note on the kitchen table saying 'thanks'. I throw it away, wincing with shame and get ready for work.

The council are out in force. Workmen are sawing a piece of boarding to cover the door in the shop across the road. There's a team of volunteers sweeping the glass from the streets and picking up the strewn litter. I walk down Market Street. Shop managers stand around looking shell-shocked, windows are smashed, shelves stand bare. There's still a strong smell of burning in the air. By the time I leave work tonight the debris will be cleared away. New shop fronts will be ordered, stock replenished and in time displays refitted. In a few weeks it will be like none of this ever happened.

**Here Comes... Gemma:**

**Gemma's story combines a heartfelt and deep longing with a sense of outraged passion. Setting such a noticeably personal and domestic story against history making events, such as rioting, provides a neat sense of perspective: the very close, intimate emotional state of the characters with the broader and more general emotions of the unrest that forms the backdrop.**

# Caught Up

by John Kitchen

Caught up, staring, a face full of random  
Ineffectual coppers, mayhem, confusion  
Try it on before you nick it, scarf hoodie  
Fingers on keys, Blackberry messages,  
Brick the police, the plate glass windows,  
Shoulder heave plasma, mindless, mob run  
Shop alarms wail, shutters buckled, blue  
Flash and sirens, angry horns, violent shouts  
Hard threat, tipped over cars burnt out  
Buildings flames, adrenaline high, dropped  
Trainers Adidas, G Max, swig of booze,  
Share a spliff, ash & smoke tweet – this is unbelievable, better than sex, fist high:  
Salute until a head full of normal returns.

## I don't actually recall that...

by John Kitchen

Here Comes... John:

John's sense of character and place are aptly conveyed by these two poems. In *Caught Up* John conveys the urgency of the situation through a single, long sentence that rolls onward relentlessly, whereas his use of graphological strangeness in *I don't actually recall that...* emphasise the sensation of unease and disquiet that coes from a world where the ordinary rules no longer apply.



Photograph by Shaughan Dolan

I won't lie  
I only went on the off-chance  
a bit of a look, a bit of  
excitement  
but you get drawn in, don't you ?  
I watched a gang  
ran with a mob  
whooped down alleys  
dodging pockets of pathetic  
policemen, confused and ineffectual  
and there were flames  
siren noise and wrecking  
and there was a sort of togetherness  
in the dark in the chaos

no, I didn't have a hoodie or a scarf  
wasn't violent didn't throw bricks  
it was just this shop front  
shutters windows smashed  
and

there was the bottle of water  
on its side lying just  
inside

and  
I reached in I took it

I was thirsty

my mum cried  
I'll only do 13 weeks

I'll be out  
soon

# The Arc of a Brick

by Gary Longden

Dense and angular  
Lacking aerodynamic qualities  
Propelled by brute force  
It cuts through the night air  
With no evident sign of friction  
Destined to meet its fate  
By gravity and diminishing momentum alone  
At sudden impact  
Crazed cracks spider outwards  
The puncture hole gaping  
Sparkling glass in dull splinters  
Bruised edges flake  
Flat side scrapes  
Inert.

Here Comes... Gary:

He says: 'The objective is to wholly depersonalise the event and to allow the reader to draw whatever conclusions they deem appropriate from the arc of a brick.'

# Destiny

by Tanweer

My father says I should keep calm.  
He said I should stay in the house, last summer. I saw it on TV. That old guy, Tariq Jahan. He heard this noise, and he's helping one of these boys on the ground, when someone tells him his own son's lying there. And he's dead. But his dad keeps calm, saying how people shouldn't get mad. They should leave it to the law. He's a faithful Muslim and he doesn't blame anybody. He believes in destiny. I don't get that. These boys aren't rioting. They're looking after our shops, on the Dudley Road. The police aren't there, so they do it instead. It's like this big society thing. We're all in this together, right? Cameron said it was dreadful, sent his condolences, whatever.  
It makes no sense. Kids get thrown in jail for pinching a pair of trainers. But these guys drive a car over the pavement at 50 mph, kill three people, and they get off. That's destiny? Tariq Jahan says let the law deal with this. Don't get me wrong. The man's a saint. And I respect my father. But I'm mad as hell.

Here Comes... Tanweer:

Tanweer's flash-fiction submission is a perfect example of the 'very short story' form. It is straight, to the point and wrenches the heart as much with what is left out as what is included. The use of short, simple, one clause sentences adds a machine-gun rapidity to the text, which allows for a feeling of careering wildly into an unavoidable conclusion.

# Looking In: Perspectives

by Arun Budhathoki

When I asked the mayor of Northampton in the UK whether he felt that the proposed cuts to police funding would increase crime rates in the area, I hadn't anticipated having my answer so soon. That summer rioting broke out across Britain that very year and my prophetic question returned to me as I was robbed by a housemate in the same year. Thankfully, I got my camera back, which was the most precious, but did not see the other stolen goods again.

I visited London the same year and was instantly impressed by its transport system and the properly built and managed city. Unlike living in Nepal, where I'm from, everything was organized. There seemed to be no problem at all. I felt as if my utopian dream had finally become real. I wished Kathmandu would transform into London city. 'It's a perfect haven,' I mused as I wandered in the streets of London using the map on my iPhone. The journey was sophisticated and efficient and I bumped into tech-savvy people, who barely talked with each other on the Tube and double-decker buses. I missed Kathmandu's streets then, where people talk and even smile at strangers. It is difficult to smile while travelling in London because the urge is suppressed by the prevalent status quo of the Londoners' culture.

Whenever I went to London, I stayed with British people and Eastern Europeans, via CouchSurfing [an online networking site for travellers who

can stay with others for free –ed.]. My perception of London slowly changed as I heard their perspectives.

Largely, there seems to be a division between British, Eastern Europeans, Black communities, Asians and immigrants (although multicultural marriages were the exception, which are fairly common). The primary reason would be the top-notch jobs and positions held solely by British whites in majority. The manual work is done mostly by immigrants and Asians. I never imagined a hierarchical division in London and the UK; various communities in London have failed to connect with each other and integrate where necessary. The distrust between communities is evident in the formation of societies and organizations. These organizations have failed in large to bridge the gap between whites and themselves. Multiculturalism is not working in Britain.

The British natives I stayed with occupied good positions in London and lived in 'posh' houses. I never dreamed that I would get a chance to live in such buildings. While talking with them, I sensed frustration regarding immigrants and woes that were cunningly buttered with largely anecdotal 'evidence' that did not stand up very well to close scrutiny.

I wondered often whether my observations and perception might be influenced by what I heard, but I had few experiences that I could

relate to. There are certain places in London where only Asians, Blacks and other non-white communities live. When I visited those places, I felt I wasn't in London but in India or some other country. Also, I saw many places in London where rich British people lived. As I like Sylvia Plath, I wanted to visit her house. I travelled to Camden and got a chance to view her apartment. I asked one British lady to have a look on the apartment and she agreed. The apartment was nothing too grand, but then I realized that Camden was a section of London where only rich British lived. There are many sections of London where rich and affluent British natives live. The only exceptions can be of Mittals [a super-rich Indian dynasty –ed.] and successful British Indians and Pakistanis or from black communities, but that doesn't make a difference in the division of the society. As I walked out of Plath's former apartment and wandered through London I asked myself—how could this happen in a developed and rich capital?

I feel thrilled when I hear the name of Prabal Gurung [a successful Nepalese-American fashion designer - ed.] and others making a mark in the world. I think a similar kind of success story in London and the UK will take a long time to become true. Even with Nepalese communities in London and without, I didn't see them having an influential job. I don't mean to disrespect the UK and its people

when saying this, but it's sad indeed to see that the mentality of British is still of imperialists. Therefore, the frustrations and disappointments have now surfaced finally. The London Riots were a likely outcome of it. The other problem is out-and-out racism. While travelling in streets of London, I often heard racist remarks and once one guy remarked, 'Are you intending to steal my car?' Another time, in a local convenience shop (I guessed owned by British Indians), the cashier told me to leave the store after five minutes as I was wondering what to buy and was bit clumsy. He thought I was there to steal and loot! The problem is not just with the distrust between whites and non-whites, but racism and faithlessness runs deep between communities and discontent is the result. I think the youths and teenagers are the same everywhere. They have dreams and aspirations and when they're unable to fulfil them, they take out their frustrations. It would be rather unwise to blame the parents only. One sage British Afro-Caribbean observer spoke on Aljazeera: 'the youths have nothing to do and have no dreams.' The death of Mark Duggan triggered the violence, but the Metropolitan Police have not been seen to investigate the case thoroughly. The lootings in London and Birmingham generated no surprised reactions in anybody. I've been to Birmingham several times and what I saw there is same: sharp division between communities. The rich are richer and the poor ones are struggling to pay their bills. Unless the British government and affluent British whites change their policies and attitude toward other communities

and immigrants the problems will remain same. Even if the riots do not return, it cannot be said that the deeper problem will be resolved. I've realized that development necessarily doesn't offer the utopian place that we crave for. Meanwhile, the problems are not addressed and the riots seem to continue and spread across UK. London is burning and the fire is spreading.

**Here Comes... Arun**

AKA Daniel Song. Arun is submitting a dissertation for MA in International Relations at the University of Northampton. He has recently authored his poetry book Edge. He is originally from Nepal.



# Angie's

by Jenny Mars

It was a great place, this. Angie worked so hard for what, five, six years? You come in here, and you feel at home. Always cheerful, ready for a laugh, that's Angie.

She didn't make much. Who does, round here?

When it all kicked off, we tried to stop them. Not Angie's, we said. She's worked hard for this. This kid looks at me like I'm a zombie. There's T-shirts he wants, the door's open. By morning there was nothing left.

Yeah. Gutted. And that was before she heard about the compensation. I tried to explain. "Where were they?" she said. "When you actually need them. Where were the bloody police?"

All over the place, the first night. Second night, they're ready. They've had a chance to work out which targets to protect, the ones that really count. And it's not us. "That's not fair" she says. I laughed.

Shouldn't have done that, but I couldn't help it. She gave me this look, not her at all, and stormed off. I tried to call her back. Fair enough, it's been a shock. But she's tough. She'll get over it. Haven't seen her since.

**Here Comes... Jenny**

In classic fashion this piece of 'flash-fiction' by Jenny rolls through its narrative through colloquialism and dialogue. The sense of 'normalness' that comes from such naturalistic writing adds to the jarring effect of the content itself.

**‘And all the local kids/  
Petrol bombed the  
murder house’**



**Image By Jen Easley**

*Jen Easley*

# Cat Brogan

*Cat Brogan is an award-winning performance poet from Northern Ireland. Her poem, Are You Going For the Riot?, is a scathing attack on the destruction caused during the English riots of August 2011 and the hypocrisy of the moral backlash that followed. Many critics were quick to condemn the rioters while refusing to acknowledge the mitigating circumstances that caused them to riot. HCE's Adam Steiner met Cat in a squat in Camden to talk more about the influences behind her poem and her own views on why the riots happened.*

**Adam Steiner:** How did you become interested in the riots and the worldwide protest scene that became so active throughout 2011?

**Catherine Brogan:** I was already working with Squatters Action for Secure Homes (SQUASH), then when I heard about Occupy London I went along to St. Pauls and stayed there for a while in one of the tents – it was bloody cold.

**AS:** What did you get up to while you were there?

**CB:** I joined-in, everyone helping out and lived next to about 200 tents. I started reading-out some of my poems with human mic thing [where the lines of the speaker are repeated throughout a crowd to avoid megaphone noise restrictions, Ed.] I then became one of the spokespeople for the event, sort of by mistake.

**AS:** And what did you tell the people at home watching television?

**CB:** That Occupy wasn't about the urban camping outside St. Pauls, it was because of the bailout and the bankers, the voice of the 99%. Occupy helped to spread a different way of doing things.

**AS:** So where were you during in the riots?

**CB:** I was actually up in Edinburgh for the BBC's Poetry Slam at the 2011 Fringe when it happened (Catherine won the slam with her poem, Omagh-ah). But my sister was living in a squat in Hackney, so I was straight on the phone to her.

**AS:** So, even viewing the riots from a distance, what was your reaction?

**CB:** I saw it as a mass mobilisation of angry people. I wrote the poem the day after and I used it as part of my Edinburgh show.

**AS:** So do you think the riots were a positive thing, your poem points the finger at the inequalities in society, but doesn't necessarily decry the event itself?

**CB:** No, of course I think it was a bad thing. I knew two boys, both aged eleven, one white and one black, and they used to come play in our squat in Hackney. One of them is from a well-off family and gets to go on holiday in the summer, he has that opportunity, and the other one doesn't, but he still has to watch everyone else going away, hence the line: "rich see August in France."

**AS:** Why do you think the riots happened?

**CB:** What has been forgotten is that a man was shot. That was the cause, but there were other reasons too.

**AS:** Such as?

**CB:** Non-white males in London are more likely to be stop-and-searched and I think people were sick of that and the relationship with the police. It was a long, hot summer and that's when things are always more likely to kick-off. People drink and the mob-mentality takes hold and that's when they act-out and do things they would never normally do. It was the bystander effect, people get sucked-in and they feel anonymous. Since the early-90s, wealth inequality in the UK between the minority and the majority has only increased, not gone down. There's no outlet for young people, no opportunities.

**AS:** Would you have felt compelled to join the riots yourself, if you had been there?

**CB:** No! I'm from Belfast, if I want a riot I can just go right outside and find one!

**AS:** What do you think of the fallout from the riots?

# Are you going for the Riot?

by Cat Brogan

**CB:** It was a gift to the government. It gave them a chance to crackdown on squats, demonise youth and people from deprived communities and it hides the real issues behind why they rioted. And then there were all the draconian sentences handed out to people who stole water or food. Although, there was loads of money handed-out to regeneration projects afterwards, they just threw it at them like compensation – riots are an easy event to monopolise.

**AS:** Given the anger in your poem, how do you think the riots were handled by the media?

**CB:** It was a gift to the media in a slow-news summer. It helped them to avoid talking about the banking crisis, the scapegoats and the ones that got away. They could focus on the riots and the Olympics and move on from the economic collapse.

**AS:** So what do you see as the role of your poem, or even, poetry in general?

**CB:** The work of the poet is to make the universal, personal. The press had their news item for the summer and I wanted to say that this was a convenient way for them to hide the systematic theft of the bankers during the economic crisis.

They're attacking shops,  
Overwhelming cops,  
The rich steal quietly;  
The poor do it loudly.  
The poor break doors,  
The rich keep whores.  
Poor see riot fires dance:  
Rich see august in France.  
Near my squat in hackney,  
One eleven year old on holiday,  
The other grounded,  
By police: hounded,  
This is his vacation.  
Releasing aggression  
On the doors at Debhams  
While his rich white neighbour  
Gets quad bikes and lazer quazer.  
I remember I was eleven:  
'Are ye going for rioting?'  
I recall my mate asking,  
But I didnt dare to go,  
I'm far too middle class, you know.  
It was set off by a murder,  
Man killed his partner,  
Cut her body into bits  
And all the local kids  
Petrol bombed the murder house.  
Now lootings spread to the Scouse,  
I'm wondering if the English yobs  
Lacking the chores and jobs  
Need to rediscover bonfires:  
My place has days for rioters.

# Birmingham's Intifada

by Eugene Egan

John was feeling tired yet restless when he arrived home from work from the day centre where he worked as a support worker for people with mental health issues. John had been working there for two years following his own recovery from depression and anxiety including spells in rehabs, prisons and hostels usually involving drugs. He was 48 this year and after living such a chaotic lifestyle for more than a decade, following a breakdown, he'd managed to turn his life round.

Home was one of those self-contained flats in the lower end of Moseley, an area that had a bohemian feel to it, where middle-aged university drops outs, writers, poets and artists lived. However, it also had its downside where the White Cider crew bickering over who bought the last bottle. would congregate outside the local shops. And the continuously complaining middle-aged couple who lived beneath him.

His place was in one of the many large Victorian houses that had been bought by a housing association and converted into flats. Climbing the creaky, dusty stairs until he reached the second floor he turned the key of the door and entered. The hall and walls of his flat were covered with posters of revolutionaries: Che Guevara and Malcolm X. There were books to match, too, everything from Marx and Lenin to Chomsky. Revolutionary politics made him tick: to overthrow the oppressive capitalist system and replace it with a Socialist Republic. John was a die-hard. A veteran of the Anti-Apartheid Movement and the Troops Out Movement before the breakdown.

Putting on the kettle, which was a ritual every time John arrived home from work, he made a cup of tea. "Let's see what's on" as he grabbed the remote and switched on the television. He could hardly believe the events that were unfolding on the screen.. Switching from channel to channel with his remote it was the same picture. Images of buildings being looted and set on fire, whilst police were being attacked by angry mobs, flashed across the television screen. "This is more than a storm in a tea cup," he mused, as he sat down sipping his drink, listening to the politicians spouting their sound bites for the media. Yet de-

spite images of London in flames beaming across the world, the Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, was still refusing to cut short his holiday. "I suppose the illustrious Boris is peeved that his holiday's been interrupted by a peasants' revolt", exclaimed John at the newsreader. He's the one who said that there was nothing to worry about, that phone hacking was not a widespread issue! Its seems, thought John, that the illustrious Boris, Gorgeous George and Dodgy Dave are the ones in it together. Rich fucking Oxbridge men back in charge. Pimping the public sector to their greedy friends in some dodgy deals whilst pretending to be the Three Musketeers. Fucking great...

'... There's also been reports about sporadic looting and mob violence on the streets of Birmingham and the police are slow to respond', said the reporter. More like the police are doing it deliberately, he thought, because they know their jobs are the line and this will act as a warning for the Government that they need them.

Oh! Theresa May's at it again, praising their dedication and professionalism, but says the cuts in the police force are still necessary. I've got no time for her politics, thought John, but the sex-symbol of the Tory Cabinet always seemed to fascinate him. Must be the Thatcher thing, he thought vaguely.

"Anyway it's their bloody fault we've got social unrest on the streets with all their attacks on the public sector and people losing their jobs," he sighed. 'They've taken the EMA off the college students, closed youth centres, and now the police have once again killed a young black man and now once again angry youths are taking to the streets with a fury. I suppose you can't really blame them.'

John wanted to know how the foreign media were covering it, as he never trusted home grown propaganda, so he switched over to the Al-Jazeera news channel, and then Press TV channel. Both channels were interviewing various Marxist political commentators based in London, suggesting the riots were due to socio-economic problems affecting working class ghettos in Britain. The government's austerity measures introduced to deal with the economic crisis brought about by

the greedy bankers had added to the crisis.

People have finally woke up, thought John, and decided to resist the cuts and fight back against the ruling classes by taking to the streets. He was really getting excited watching a revolution before his very eyes. "This is history in the making!" he thought, "and I want to be a part of it."

John liked to keep abreast of what was going on in the world. He followed the events in the Middle East, the Arab Spring, where things had gotten out of control and the army were shooting protesters and Greece, where there were mass protests against Government cuts and now it appeared to be spreading here. Could we be



witnessing the Arab Spring turning into the European Summer? he pondered. "Perhaps this is the beginning of the end for the fat-cats and global capitalism."

The TV kept talking. Apparently the young man the police had fatally shot last week was not involved in a shoot-out with the police as the gun found at the spot had not been discharged. Same old story, thought John, nothing changes. According to some pundits in the media this was what had sparked off the rioting. Perhaps, but now the protests over the controversial killing was in danger of being lost amidst the mayhem and unrest that was spreading across London.

John recalled, with a sense of *deja vu*, the last time there were riots in his home city when Douglas Hurd, the Home Secretary at the time, came down to Handsworth and had to flee the scene after being pelted with stones by angry mobs.

Politicians were promising change and investment to combat social deprivation and tackle poverty. John was a young man then but almost three decades later nothing had really changed.

It was time to go out and see what's going on. Perhaps he might even get the chance to see the unrest at first-hand. Yes that sounds a good idea, thought John as he swiftly changed his top and put on his Palestinian T-shirt. At least he could say he was there and took to the streets when revolution called. "Yes," he thought, "at least I'll be able to tell my grandchildren how I played my part." An overwhelming sense of revolutionary fervour seemed to grip him, as John switched off the television, turned off the lights and headed out to the city centre for a pint in the Square Peg where he could sit in comfort and watch things unfold.

He didn't have to wait too long: when the bus pulled up, he boarded it and paid his fare. As he looked for a seat he scanned the faces of the other passengers and sensed an uneasy vibe... or was it just a bit of paranoia? He couldn't be certain, although everyone did seem rather quiet and nobody was smiling. Who cares? mused John, as long as I can sit down and watch a piece of real life social history unfold over a nice pint of Guinness at The Square Peg. It was one of his favourite drinking haunts. The drink was cheap, it usually had a good crowd and it was central for all the buses.

As the bus approached the city centre he could see crowds of people standing around and some buses were being diverted. Stepping off the bus he crossed the road but as he approached the entrance and climbed the steps a young bar man appeared and began turning people away. John was getting perturbed he saw city office workers types with worried faces still inside, waiting for taxis to get them home safely.

"Sorry Sir, we're closed," he told John, "you won't get a drink anywhere in town tonight." This simultaneously annoyed and intrigued John. It was now time to be a part of history. He walked away and headed towards St Philip's Cathedral and began to sense an uneasy and tense atmosphere in the air which was making him agitated, too. When he turned the corner and made his way towards the cathedral, he could see lines of police officers dressed in riot-gear and crowds of youths running amok.

Oh my God, thought John, it's actually happen-

ing! Blue lights were flashing and sirens blaring, the droning of the spy in the sky with its wings hovering above. Chaos circled below them. Angry, drunken mobs of youths stood taunting the police and rioting. He stood transfixed by the surreal events unfolding before him.

Unfortunately, it appeared John was a lone figure and out of place wearing his Palestinian T-shirt, as everyone else was wearing tracksuits and many were swigging cans of lager. The middle-aged John began to feel like the character Wolfie Smith in the BBC comedy from the 1970s (Robert Lindsay's Citizen Smith, leader of the Tooting People's Front -ed.). He felt dejected. "This isn't a revolution, it's just looting,". Shards of glass everywhere, clothes and shoes from the looted shops were strewn along the streets. At one point he thought the mob was going to attack him. He decided to go through the police line as it was too dangerous to risk getting attacked by the swelling mobs on the street.

Attempting to get through the police line to safety was proving to be difficult. The police wouldn't let him through so he decided to brazen it out, by walking through the mob and taking the long way. He managed it without getting hurt, but there was another problem, how on earth was he going to get home if police were diverting the traffic? Spotting a number 3 he tried to board the bus but the driver wasn't collecting any passengers. It was getting dark and dangerous... he needed to get home. He kept walking until he found a queue of people at a bus stop opposite Moor St train station and waited 'till the bus arrived.

Whilst waiting at the bus stop, he noticed three hooded youths carrying boxes, running across the road followed in hot pursuit by a couple of policemen with batons, "all for a pair of fucking trainers, bloody idiots," thought John, as he boarded the bus and waved his bus pass over the scanner and sat down relieved to be out of it and in one piece.

Oh fuck it's that woman again .What a pest. I don't need this, thought John, as he stepped off of the bus.

"Got-any-spare-change, please." Called Sarah. "Would-you-like-to-buy-a-lighter, sir. Have-you-got-a-spare-bus-ticket-you-don'-want, sir? Would-you-like-to-buy-a-Big-Issue, sir?"

But at least she's honest and is polite enough to tell you it's last week's issue when she takes your money off you, he sighed, enough drama today as he climbed the creaky stairs. Home at last.

#### Here Comes... Eugene:

Eugene writes a classic story of anti-climax, drawing on an intimate and personal knowledge of his subject. His story is at once made more touching by the tiny details that his character presents, whilst conveying to the reader the sense that all revolutionaries eventually feel: nihilism and a feeling of revolution betrayed.

## No Reason by 'Peacemaker'

Yeah, I took a lot. I'm not saying what, but I was there for hours. A lot of stuff, and I did all right out of it. There was this journalist, taking pictures, and these guys tell him to stop. But he won't. He keeps going, he thinks he's got a good story.

So they grab his camera. He gets mad, starts punching one of them. This lad pulls out a knife.

That was it. I stepped in. Had to. I grabbed the lad and said "What are you doing? You can't stab a man like that for no reason. That's not right. You get me? I mean, you took his camera, fair enough. You got a reason for that. But you got no reason to stab him."

The journalist's still there. He's watching, looking, waiting. Maybe he thinks he'll get his camera back, get his pictures published after all.

I told him. "Walk on, man. No, stop mouthing. You're lucky you're alive. You got robbed, that's all. What you need to do is disappear." He looks at me, but he knows I mean it. I'm not moving anywhere. Finally, he gets it. And he goes.

#### Here Comes... Peacemaker:

It is not surprising that 'Peacemaker' writes under a pen-name, as *No Reason* alludes to an ugly and cynical face of the unrest. The use of a moment of crisis so concrete lends an air of captive danger to the story and it stands as a chilling critique of riot-morals, whilst allowing a sense of depth through the limits of an implied limit to the lawlessness.

# Big Society, Big Success?

by Lindsay Waller-Wilkinson

*'What is happening to our young people? They disrespect their elders. They disobey their parents. They ignore the law. They riot in the streets inflamed with wild notions. What is to become of them?'*

Plato. 427-347 B.C.

*'Nothing is more unpredictable than the mob, nothing more obscure than public opinion, nothing more deceptive than the whole political system.'*

Cicero. 106-43 B.C.

The Greeks knew something about tragedy.  
They also gave a name to anarchy.  
In three thousand years it seems nothing's changed,  
how much we have not learned... how small the progress made...

Let's get down to the city centre  
It's all kicking off in Lesta  
Market Place Stand off  
Kids yelling – fuck off!  
Lines of acid, hi-viz, helmets.  
Stick the pigs! Theresa's puppets!  
Get a pic! Man it's sick!  
What can we nick from Poundstretcha?

Cameron cuts short his holiday.  
Brown thinks – rather him than me.  
Everybody seeks to blame.  
Namby pamby! N.I.M.B.Y. Lame.  
It's pure criminality, a complete disregard for humanity!  
It's a twitter revolution!  
The British don't like their children, so Johnny Foreigner claims.  
Meanwhile, Britain goes up in flames.

But no situation's binary,  
things are rarely what they seem.  
Young guy in Tottenham asked if rioting ever achieved anything  
Says – wouldn't be talking to you now if we hadn't. Would I?  
Two months ago two thousand blacks marched to Scotland yard,  
Peaceful and calm, not a word in the press.  
After one night of riots you're all over us like a rash.  
In the last twelve months this government closed  
Eight youth centres in Tottenham alone.  
You don't want us on the streets  
Yet you take away our place to meet.  
If we ain't got a destination where can we put our feet?  
Where can we call home?

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Yet you take away our place to meet.  
If we ain't got a destination where can we put our feet?  
Where can we call home?

The Big Society's no place to be  
When you're an insignificant fish in a giant sea.  
Johnny Foreigner's right.  
We don't like our kids...  
We don't give a shite!  
Rioting isn't about looting a TV.  
It's about  
Listen Listen LISTEN TO ME!

Big Society, Big Success?  
The Greeks got it wrong, and so did we.

**Here Comes... Lindsay:**

Lindsay's polemic epic covers an enormous breadth of events and subjects and reads as much like a British *Marseilles* as a poem. She successfully dodges the 'us and them' mentality and casts a scathing eye on every aspect of the rioting, even handed and brutal as the 'Big Society' myth is smashed down.

# Furthest Touch

by Andy N

Wasn't just the riots  
That littered our country  
Like a rattled bird cage,

Or fear in the Police's eyes  
As they hovered  
Uncertain at the edge  
Of the madness,

But words spoken  
Over the carnage  
By the reporters  
As the sky thickened  
And smoke shooting  
Into the clouds  
Like a rocket.

Words that collapsed  
Off the screen  
And under the clipping  
Of the horses hoof prints  
As I saw a youth  
Surrendered by four shields,

Too little, too late.

Words that took me  
On a Joyride across the truth  
As the looters rattled the shops  
Like love out of season,

Gathering in packs  
Of wind-swept dogs

Before running away  
Back to their cages.

## Here Comes... Andy:

Andy N is a musician and writer based in the North East of England. His poems, at once abstract and explicit, take a descriptive perspective and deliver stunning phrases with a keen awareness of rhyme and form.

# Drums for their flick-knives

by Andy N

Even now I taste the flames  
Driving across the moonlight  
And the madness  
Hung dry across the high street  
The morning after  
Before it exploded again later,

Buried in chimes  
And untangled hoods  
With a gristling of fake jewellery  
Harpooned across shops  
Crawling out to the bus station  
And past the police station,

Burning in unity

Their cigarette lighters  
Humming for a second  
Before being thrown into cars  
And the drums of their flick knives  
Like soldiers marching  
Minus their uniform

Weaving anarchy  
With the flames

Burning in unity.

# Riots from Nowhere

by Jacob Andrews

Mansfield. It's a town where a drunk once got beaten to death outside the community hospital without motive. A town where you don't go out alone at night without knowing there's a very real chance of being mugged. Two of my friends have been. One was accosted under a bridge and refused to give his things over; this earned him a punch to the face that turned the white of his eye red for months. On another occasion a friend jumped into a river to escape, breaking the phone his assailants had wanted to take. We are a town used to violence. We have learned to expect it.

Why then, with its predisposition for violence, when the seething resentment finally boiled over in cities across the land and as close as Nottingham#, did it not all kick off in Mansfield? It is not a question I can really answer, especially given that sociologists do not truly know why the riots occurred at all. But I can report my town's reaction and give my thoughts.

When the news reported that riots had kicked off in the Saint Ann's area of Nottingham, the county's response was "of course they have..."; Saint Ann's is just about the scummiest area of Nottingham. Think of the most dangerous part of your town: chances are Saint Ann's makes that look safe. The rest of the country will register 'Nottingham', but 'Saint Ann's' will be white noise to them. The newsreader may as well say "the bloo-blippety area of Nottingham". It'd have the same effect. Even the little box-outs in the newspapers that show where in Nottingham Saint Ann's is and that it's Not A Very Nice Place will have done little to help. Mansfield too, had it rioted would probably stir nothing more than vague recognition – that it has a (terrible) football team that they might've seen mentioned in the sports news and it is not generally thought of as a nice place.

The news followed the riots in London, district by district, and people at the other end of the country knew their names and characters: colourful Camden; violent Peckham; universal jokebutt Croydon. Conversely, bring up Nottingham and many people will state that the whole place is a warren of knife and gun crime. Saint Ann's almost is. The city is not. That's like assuming SoHo

must be just like The Bronx since both are in New York.

In this age of technology, police.uk allows one to view crime maps from anywhere in the UK. There is a 'Neighbourhood' option, which highlights the ward on which the cursor is placed in a colour: yellow for average UK crime rate; orange for above average, red for high. Nottingham city centre is red.

So is Mansfield town centre. But then so are the centres of such small, out of the way cities as Bath and Exeter, both of which are generally perceived as Nice Places by the rest of the country. Thing is, town centres are always going to have high crime levels. They have high levels of anti-social behaviour and violent assault because they're where all the drinking takes place at night, drawing in the populace from the rest of the city. They have high levels of theft because they are where the greatest concentration of shops, cashpoints and inebriate easy pickings are. Nottingham is no different, and proportionally it's no worse.



Nottingham centre by day at least is wonderful. I wrote two considerable paragraphs on it before realising I was getting too off-subject, and could have written more. Suffice to say that on a hot summer's day with your feet in the cool, flowing water of the Old Market Square's black slate fountain, with Council House sitting prettily beside, the blue sky a vault overhead and an ice-cream van idling nearby; Nottingham city centre is so compact that there's nowhere you'd really want to go more than a few minutes' walk from this urban idyll. You can't ask for more than that. Given the respective sizes of Nottingham and

London, the Notts rioters certainly put in the effort. Police stations were stoned or firebombed. Vehicles set alight. Pubs damaged. In other aspects though they were comically inept. Only one shop was victim to attempted looting before the police arrived and dispersed the would-be pillagers. Surely it was some jewellers, or maybe an electronics store packed with plasmas, PlayStations and other multi-hundred pound diversions?

No.

JJB Sports. At least it wasn't rice, I suppose.

This choice, of course, did nothing to allay the idea that the rioters were anything more than opportunistic thugs. What's more, the riots had been going on in other parts of the country for long enough now that the police predicted and dispersed any real trouble in the city centre before it started, and the number of arrests was proportionately quite high.

So how did Mansfield react to all this hell breaking loose? Ever since London there was certainly a tension in the air. That's nothing unique, though. The whole country was on edge. Still, it's possible that the tension was different here. You see, the nation was erupting in violence and violence is kind of our thing.

I can't decide whether our rough history made the trepidation more or less. Surely we would riot, but then like an old, mistreated mule it is possible we've been beaten so often we are insensitive to the blows. Maybe the two balanced each other out. I don't remember. It was only a year ago, yet it seems distant now. Perhaps because, for us, it was distant at the time too.

To judge the town's reaction fully we must go – as is usual these days – to the social networks. Facebook and Twitter helped organise the infinitely more noble riots of the Arab Spring. Here in Britain, to those near the hotspots they provided a vital rolling commentary on what was where and how to avoid it, even as the antagonists used them to paradoxically organise chaos.

The third element to the social networks' contribution was the mocking. "If you don't laugh..." as the saying goes. A number of facebook pages shot up to make light of the situation or belittle those involved. 'UK Rioters Vs. Photoshop' invited people to use their photo-manipulation skills to make the looters look foolish, transforming scenes of chaos into scenes of humour: A red van burns, its paint peeling. Out

of the smashed-in window leans Postman Pat. In the foreground a hooded youth, scarf drawn up past his nose, holds a certain black and white cat. Perhaps most famously, Prime Minister Cameron gives an impassioned emergency speech in front of number 10 urging us to remain vigilant; behind him a gaggle of hooded thieves wait at an open window as one hops out if it grasping a box.

It's possible that some saw more images of the riots like this than through the news. There were other, less intelligent pages created too: 'Looting Poundland because you're a penny short', 'Looting Adsa's [sic] but then realising you don't have a £1 for the trolley', 'Not rioting in London because I'm too busy liking pages about not rioting' as well as far too many about the Kaiser Chiefs, despite the fact that I Predict a Riot was released seven years earlier in 2004, meaning the band was off by quite a large margin.

All of these pages were popular in Mansfield. There were also a number of reactionary pages which worryingly oversimplified the issue. 'Not looting cause my mum didnt [sic] being me up on turkey dinosaurs and stella', 'not rioting because you have more than 1 GCSE' and several more of that ilk. There were a few likes of these among my friends, but they weren't overwhelmingly popular here. We are a town used to violence. And we know it's not quite so simple as that.

Instead, another type of page proved popular in Mansfield and the surrounding area. Pages which reveal an almost inevitable bent in the philosophy of a town such as this. Pages which despite all my searching, I cannot find any more.

Similar ones still exist though. "Not rioting in [Doncaster/Warrington/Peterborough etc] because it's already a shithole". It seems a lot of places had them. I can't speak for these other towns. But here, here it felt genuine, as if we all believed it. Knew it. Is this why such a violent town had not seized an ideal opportunity? There was no point. We could not sink any lower. Such fatalism is typical in Mansfield. The town is a beaten dog.

For the most part despite the tension in the air, despite the online joking, the riots seemed oddly detached. They were just something on TV in places we'd heard of. It may be the capital, the seat of power and you may even have visited it, but unless you have friends or relatives there, sat a hundred and fifty miles away: London might as

well be Narnia.

In an interview with The Guardian dark comic Frankie Boyle said: "Imagine: Tunisia starts with looting and they bring on a Tunisian expert and he says, "It's just arseholes, really." That is what we get here. Get me another expert."

Boyle is popular here. His dark, violent comedy sits well with a town trapped by its dark, violent image. Where dead baby jokes are like playground currency. Where no-one rioted, because there was no point.

*~ All data from police.uk, city centre data based on the cursor's default position when respective city is entered. Proportions calculated by myself (occurrences of that type of crime divided by total crimes).*

**Here Comes... Jacob:**

Jacob writes with all of the authority of one who knows. His focus on the state of grand decay that exists in and around Mansfield and Nottingham, coupled with his sympathy for those left with nowhere to go, allows for a deeply intimate article that as much educates as it does convince.

## Peterloo Revisited

by Alex Millen

Shake off your chains (to steal some DVDs).  
We're living in the end times, Slavoj says  
To those in doubt. The 'Big Society',

Lost amid the youthful fiery haze;  
A neoliberal's ploy to win a seat.  
**METROPOLIS BESIEGED BY YOUTHS, FOURTH DAY.**

But to what end? The bobby on the beat  
Is not the enemy, but want of cash.  
Emboldened apathetes take to the street  
Infected with the all-pervading rash  
That kills the senses, rendering them blind.  
Steal the latest pricey gadget trash.

If Winter comes, can Spring be far behind?  
Commercialism now employs the mind.

**Here Comes... Alex:**

Alex has written a poem that channels the 'news' aspect of modern society. His rumble forward in an artful pastiche of rolling news coverage.

# The City

by Charles G. Lauder Jr

The city is a fickle beast  
Burying its past  
Like a gnawed bone  
Or pile of shite.

One day it hails the King  
On his way to battle;  
The next day it festoons his usurper  
With ermine and gold.  
Buries the skull of the usurped  
Beneath the bridge  
That cracked it open.  
Remembers him with a club foot  
And hump

The city, impatient at its confines,  
Spills over walls,  
Turreted gates,  
Built to keep the hordes out.  
Writes its name everywhere.  
Before it goes

The castle gets a facelift  
Of red brick,  
Boots through windows,  
Timber skeleton creaks and groans  
Out of fear.

**Here Comes... Charles:**

Charles is an American poet currently living in Leicestershire. My poetry has been published in British, Irish, and American journals, including Stand, Agenda, Orbis, Envoi, The SHOp, California Quarterly, and Texas Observer. His pamphlet, Bleeds, was published earlier this year by Crystal Clear Creators.

# Stash

by Jen Easley



## Here Comes... Jen:

Jen is a freelance artist based in Birmingham. Her use of cartoonised styles juxtaposed with a clear understanding of colour and form emphasise the strangeness of the situation at large. She was recently appointed Art and Graphics Editor of this very magazine.

*Jen Easley*  
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# Riot From Wrong - Interview

**A London-based youth media organisation, Fully Focused Community, recently held the premiere of their new feature documentary, Riot From Wrong, in the East End of London where some of last year's rioting took place.**

Filmed across the breadth of the United Kingdom in the aftermath of the riots of 2011, Riot From Wrong goes right to the heart of the issues affecting our society and hopes to promote solutions for change. The film includes the perspectives from Mark Duggan's family, the journalist Polly Toynbee and David Lammie MP. The film aims to give a voice to those overlooked by mainstream media from those who rioted and looted to the Met police, young people across the country and community activists edited down from 45 hours of footage.

Adam Steiner (AS) of HereComesEveryone spoke with one of the film's producers, Rowan Carnihan (RC) about youth-led filming set against the atmosphere of media fallout on the anniversary of the riots.

**AS:** Why did you decide to make a film about the riots?

**RC:** As a young people's production company we didn't feel we had any choice, the riots happened, we met as a group to discuss what was going on, the young people who form our steering group were rightfully angry, so we decided to take to the streets... with our cameras.

Our main objective was to look deeper and provide some balance. The media reaction to the riots was so one-sided; we wanted to talk to people whose voice is often dismissed.

All of us have many years of experience working with young people so we knew it wasn't as simple as branding them as 'feral' and 'immoral', there was much more to it than that and we wanted to expose the truth and provide some positive perceptions of young people amidst the propaganda.

**AS:** What were your aims in making the film?

**RC:** There are underlying problems which affect all of society not just young people, and these helped to spark the unrest in August 2011. The aim of the film was to give young people and many other people from all walks of life, affected by the riots, a chance to express their views openly. We wanted to counter the negative press given to young people by the media and encourage people to come together to look for positive solutions to some of society's issues and to recognise we all have a responsibility to our young people and their future.

**AS:** How did you engage with the young people and rioters featured in the documentary?

**RC:** Initially we went out and spoke to young people in the areas affected, some involved in the riots and some not. The fact that the young members of Fully Focused Community carried out most of the interviews meant young people were more

comfortable talking openly about their experiences.

As time went on their involvement also meant that politicians, journalists and experts often felt more compelled to meet with us.

**AS:** What do you feel is the value in this being a youth-led project?

**RC:** It has given a voice to the voiceless and provided an alternative perspective from any other coverage out there of last year's riots. Even witnessing the positive impact this journey has had on the young members of Fully Focused Community has made it worthwhile, they have a platform to speak their truth and people are actually listening.

**AS:** What do you think will be the result of people seeing the film/what would you like to happen?

**RC:** So far, after only four screenings of various sizes the response has been phenomenal, more than we could ever have expected. Most importantly the film has challenged stereotypes and made people question their own judgments about young people, and also some of the underlying issues that affect all of society.

Although the film tackles some very contentious issues, it remains balanced and actually

leaves people feeling very optimistic about the future and inspired to come together within their communities.

We continue to place a huge importance on opening up this film to a wider audience, dialogue from the film made a significant contribution to the Tricycle Theater play, The Riots and excerpts contributed to the Cambridge University Riot Symposium, cementing the film as a vital social document of our time.

**AS:** What have you learnt about rioting/young people/the police from carrying out the project?

**RC:** So much it's hard to boil down to a sentence or two. I guess you could say we rediscovered the knowledge that young people cannot be pigeonholed into any singular category and that age does not have to be a barrier to positivity, progress or intelligence. As cliché as it sounds, it really re-iterated that you simply cannot judge a book by the cover and people are much more than a sensationalist headline.

**Watch the trailer!**

<http://youtu.be/dXPfpJ4fo68>

**Follow RfW on Twitter:**

[@RiotfromWrong](https://twitter.com/RiotfromWrong)

**Learn more about the company who made RfW:**

[www.fullyfocusedproductions.com](http://www.fullyfocusedproductions.com)

# Waiting for Silence

by Yevgeniy Levitskiy

**The power to protest  
on moonless nights  
defeats our natural senses  
and resorts to  
surrendering our rights  
to modern-day empires  
of black-clad wrongdoers.**

**The freedom to protest  
in the face of  
swigging batons and  
tear-inducing sprays  
is admirable in most  
cultures, but looked  
down upon by those  
that claim to be  
in our best interests.**

**The will to protest  
against nation-wide  
resistance and media  
attention, we betray  
the rights promised  
to us in the books  
in favor of so-called  
peace and sterilized safety.**

**The choice to protest  
while video-cameras  
steam coverage of  
burning cars and  
desolate streets to  
foreign soils in  
order to spur  
interest in the  
hearts of all men.**

**The right to protest  
as the anchorman compares  
the fire and smoke  
in England's streets  
to Vietnam when the  
military dropped  
Agent Orange on foliage.**

**Here Comes... Yevgeniy:**

Yevgeniy received a B.A. in English-Education from Brooklyn College, and is currently pursuing a M.A. His writing has been published in Hot Summer Nights (Inner Child Press), The Smoking Poet, Green Briar Review, Downer Magazine, and elsewhere. He is currently at work on a middle-grade novel.

# Smoke Signals

by Paul Francis

Into an empty sky the street fire smoke  
Belches across, blotting the light then separating out.  
More blob than blot, the shifting shape presents  
The television pundits with a chance,  
A Rorschach puzzle for the vocal few.

For government, a priceless opportunity.  
Auditioning for teachers, preachers, anyone  
Hawking hellfire and ready made response.  
The feral toerags will need sorting out.  
And social networks. Plus, the police.  
They cancel leave, review the arsenal -  
Water cannon, stun guns, thumbscrews, racks.  
The PM says society's broken down  
And his solution to the mess:  
"Call in the tanks" – or was that Yanks?

Same blob looks very different to the police.  
Don't want the water cannon, stun guns, thanks.  
They will decide the operation stuff,  
Whose leave is cancelled, who gets moved around.  
Yes, they were stretched. They took some casualties  
And saw some evil stuff go on.  
Priority was saving lives, not shops,  
But there's a gain in being overrun.  
If we can't cope with all the staff we've got  
What are the chances if they make these cuts?

The columnist permits himself a smile.  
He saw it coming, knew there'd be a price  
For cancelling EMAs and scrapping jobs.  
Take away hope, and someone has to pay.  
The hooded faces make his argument  
But he'd prefer it if they showed  
A tad more sense of what it is they're doing.  
The thugs who watch, and wait,  
Who take from looters what the looters took  
Aren't angry voices. They're just capitalists.

Far from the screen, in shops and streets  
The voiceless hundreds chart the wisps  
Of smoke, and count the damage;  
Grief and loss, defiance, waste  
Twist into distance, and away.

Here Comes... Paul:

Paul Francis is a retired teacher, who lives in Much Wenlock and writes poems and plays. "I've always believed that some poetry should deal with what's in the news, and encourage readers to respond to it as active citizens."

# Mephisto on the Street

by Paul Francis

Simple to start. Blue touchpaper.  
A black kid in a car. Shots fired.  
Say shoot-out, think of Al Capone.  
Don't say - only the police have fired.  
The family want no trouble, keep things cool.  
Small delegation, women, asking for the facts.  
Time was, they'd get some high up, collar and tie,  
Tell 'em the situation's all in hand. Not now.  
Ask them to wait, to stand outside.  
Then, do nothing. Genius, or what?

And up it goes. You know how fire spreads –  
One picture on a phone and you're away.  
Don't even need a wind.  
The police hang round, they watch, pull back.  
The flames are red and yellow. Here's a green,  
A big bright GO to help yourself.

My cherubs send out tempting little texts.  
They're human. Who'd turn down some "evil fun"?  
The photos surf all latitudes,  
Awake the conscience of the world.  
One country, stricken, mortified  
To see the UK's principles at risk  
Offers obsrves, checks on human rights.  
You've guessed it. Had to be. Iran.

As frenzied as the fever comes the cure.  
I love the smell of madness in the air,  
The late-night sittings, queues, conveyor belts,  
Decisions on the hoof, by megaphone.  
Scapegoats stuffed in cells.  
Mistakes, appeals, paperwork, delays.  
This brew takes time, but there will be a day  
When bubbling out of it will be released  
These bitter victims who have lost it all.  
Will they have learnt their lesson? Mmm.  
Result.



@lde