



# anthologia

## #2 Library Edition

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YOU ALONE  
A LITTLE  
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## Featuring

Julian Isaacs

Thom Boulton  
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William Telford  
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Dan Morgan  
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Photograph of Kenny Knight ©Ian Beech 2017

The Library Edition  
Anthologia **Jan 2017**

## The Library Edition

This edition of the Anthologia was never planned. It happened on a spur of the moment when the news was announced (in Plymouth) that the local council was planning to close ten libraries in the city.

Several writers were outraged that such a large axe would be swung and put pen to paper. A few of the writers got together to form 'The Library Party' on Facebook and the writing movement soon caught wind.

In total 15 writers have penned a piece or two for the blog post and it even got a relaunch several weeks later to include the influx of work submitted after the initial release.

This is a backdated version of that post.

I thought I'd start off with Julian Isaacs' short poem as it really sings true. It sums up how everyone involved in this edition really feels about shutting down local libraries.

- Thom

*(Thom Boulton, Editor of The Anthologia)*

### A Little Limerick

by Julian Isaacs

The house that books built  
Will decay to silt  
Forget the ifs and buts  
Fight the library cuts  
Before leather bound flowers all wilt





## Heritage In Ruins

by Thom Boulton (Blaidh Nemorlith)

Archaic temple, shadow engulfs the explorers,  
they, fuelled by spirit of discovery,  
arrive in search of legendary structure  
that, according to fable,  
was once a staple of society, a pillar.

Upon discovering the entrance,  
they step inside to dust drenched vault  
and discover  
that such a place once housed the knowledge of  
their ancestors.

It is nothing more than a tomb for the tome,  
a home for rotten paper that sparks image  
of deforestation, a cull of trees that were once  
branded with  
ideas, song, and precious gifts to pass along.

It was their inheritance.

Legend states, that whilst the powers that were,  
made sure inheritance was financially easier to gain,  
they refrained from  
protecting the one heirloom, truly of worth.  
That, as they hacked away at the hospitals,  
choked the institutes of schooling,  
whilst all that was happening,  
they stole their books from underneath them.

Books they used to make beds  
so their imaginations were not sleeping rough.

Texts they wrapped themselves in  
when the price of keeping warm was too high.

All the remains, crumbled shreds of civilisation,  
once brought so much comfort  
for those who depended on it.

Now, where the altars sat,  
digital gateways to the web of knowledge,  
instead  
rests plastic shells filled with rotten wiring.

Explorers continue to walk through the shrine  
stepping on the spot where  
children used to explore faith in stories,  
discover themselves through discovering tales,  
but now there is only a stained rug  
with clouds of moss forming upon it.

They say that the reason books were made from trees  
is because  
they were really seeds,  
whose words could make a mind grow.

This place is a peeled shell  
spiky capsule split open, conkers stolen,  
and they blame the collapse of society,  
on the spell cast  
when they killed the last sanctuaries.

Upon the floor,  
one of the explorers spots  
perhaps the last relic of that enlightened time,  
and upon picking up, wiping the cover,  
they translate inscription,  
*The Time Machine*, H.G. Wells  
and thought  
dwells upon them for a moment - if only,  
if only.

**Soulless**

by William Telford

Dupree was lounging on a little sofa thing near the Classics section. He was on page 815 of Anna Karenina when a library staff woman strode up to him, pointed and said, ‘Right buster, we know what you’ve been doing.’

‘Could you elucidate?’ said Dupree, because he had been reading a lot of books.

‘Indubitably,’ the library staff woman answered, because she was also well read. ‘We know you’ve been living in here.’

Dupree looked up from page 815 of Anna Karenina and, blinking like he was in a smoke-filled room, stammered, ‘Wha-what exposed me? Was it the soap and tooth-paste in the men’s WC?’

‘It was the tent,’ said the library staff woman, pointing to the one-person pop-up planted by Health and Wellbeing. ‘So, time to beat it.’

Dupree decided it was also time to quote Cicero. He told the library staff woman that the venerable Roman philosopher had said a room without books was like a body without a soul. And then he’d added that he, Dupree, loved books so much he didn’t want to just live in a room full of them, but a building full of them. He didn’t say he had a large student loan to pay off, no job and had fallen out with his mum over stinking out the house with experimental cooking.

‘It’s nothing personal,’ said the library staff woman. ‘Whole library’s closing. Cut-backs.’

‘Wha-what?’ stammered Dupree. ‘But you can’t, I mean, where are people going to go for education, edification, enlightenment, for succour and cultural sustenance? Plus, I’m only two pages from the end of Anna Karenina.’

‘Whole thing’s going on-line,’ the woman said.

‘Bu-but, you can’t live your life on-line,’ said Dupree, still blinking.

‘Really,’ the woman said, lifting the book from Dupree’s hands and gently easing him up off the sofa, ‘tell that to my ex-husband. Turned out he was also an 18-year-old Italian exchange student called Isabella Rossella.’

She led Dupree to the exit and gently pushed him out. He heard a door click behind him and stood looking at a world grey and cold and noisy and soulless. It was full of ignorance, insouciance, arrogance and, apart from that, was pretty grim. And no one could tell him what happened on the last two pages of Anna Karenina.

## Overdue

by Dan Morgan (Dorian Sounde)

Dear residents of Plymouth,  
you are hereby notified  
that a few of the City's Public Houses will be closed,  
their stocks dissolved,  
and their services moved to an online platform.

Please note, we are not closing all  
of your watering holes,  
just the ones that we feel are an eye-sore,  
becoming costly,  
or in under-funded areas of the City.

This is a temporary trial over the course of 6 months,  
and if successful (success is inevitable)  
the closure of the remaining Public Houses  
will commence.

Your favourite beverages,  
bar snacks  
and a set-menu of entrees  
will be available online,  
on an all-new, exciting,  
shiny,  
single operating platform, and,  
for a monthly subscription fee,  
we can send an agent to your door,  
with the fine scent of musk and  
a sugar-solution  
to give your carpets that authentic, sticky touch.

Tips for the online host are now mandatory.

This is the future,  
get on-board with it.



Forget all you know about human interaction,  
it's time to live through a screen,  
become machine,  
no late-fees,  
no laminated card required,  
all interactions will be electronic.

Let's face it; money is just electronic numbers,  
books are just PDF files,  
kept in a little online store,  
pork scratchings are just pig fat,  
cooked in fat,  
so we've removed them from the list  
of available products,  
replaced them  
with a free download of a topical meme.

Get on-board,  
this move is overdue,  
the future is here.

To upload your mind to the mainframe, [click here](#).



## Tombstones

by Laura Reinbach

Taken from Death of Libraries.

They will not be forgotten.  
With backs straight and arms open,  
They embraced a fate  
Which spelled death for the community;  
A slow liquidization of the mind  
Just as their pages were reduced to pulp.  
Characters fled disaster  
But could not escape the purge:  
The Negro went down with the ship  
Amid calls of racism;  
The female swoons into her own grave  
Dug by feminist hands;  
The opium trader is burnt alive  
In anti-colonialist revolt.  
Stephen Dedalus has gone  
Into permanent exile,  
Told to take Poetry and Art with him,  
Leaving the shelves bereft  
With only glossy dust jackets  
To fill the gaping void  
Left by irrelevancy.  
How long before it is decided  
That we are no longer relevant too?  
I can already see them carving my tombstone.



## The Library

Notes from Sara Elizabeth Smiles.

She crept down the aisle, running her fingers across dusty spines. Enroute to the children's section a gold briar rose caught her eye. Stopping; she slid the book out from its neighbours, *Selected poetry of Wordsworth*. Well, she did like words, was obsessed with syllables even; splitting words down into numbers. Her first name was a two, her middle name a four and her surname was a two; or was it a one? If it was a two, which she suspected then it made it odd.

Made her odd.

Creaking open crusty pages she flicked through until she saw clouds. Ohh clouds. She liked to lay with her sister after tennis watching them dance across the fields, making daisy chains as a misty Pegasus galloped across the horizon.

'I wandered lonely as a cloud,' she read

Oh this is me. I do this. I'm a cloud, through my books I can make a bubble and worlds unfold.



**Poem**

by Kevin Tole

When I was 11 we moved from 2 bedroom hell  
To three bedroom luxury  
half way up Everest on the way to Blandford Road.

But stayed at the same school.

The daily trek across the dangerous isthmus  
of The Narrows  
Left me on the right side of the road  
But the wrong side of the tracks  
To the Green Green Grass of Home  
Or the Tip as we called it.

But going that way meant  
by-passing the house  
of the Mad Molester  
At the end of the hill.

In a brick house-come-garage which  
looked like half a fire station  
Opposite the Congregational Hall  
where the scouts threw me out,  
I was introduced to The First Circle.

And Everything Changed.....

The wonderful Good Readers Circle world and  
10 points on the card  
Got me through the tongue tied stage of  
independence  
And onto the Black Arrow  
with Missus Pepperpot and the Wooden Horse.

But Sasha showed me the chance of another world.

Forty Years on and the NKVD are  
coming to close down the Brick House.

Sasha's been locked up, released and flown the coop.

No chip shop graces the Narrows,  
nor does Freddie's Rolls glide the back street passes  
Whilst we gazed in awe at his sheep-skinned  
tweed  
off-license hands  
Dealing a fag a time  
which we'd cheekily cough over down the Arena.

They say there will be a book burning to rival  
the pyre of '72  
when we raided the engine sheds  
And dragged black bitumen coated sleepers back.

Never mind. It's all on-line now.

Full digital access.  
Computer suites.  
Pop-Up libraries like tin men  
at a Whitelegg's shooting gallery  
Ready to be popped down when my aim was true  
When a shooting gallery meant  
something quite sinister.

Pop-Up... and then gone  
just like the Fair.

Yesterday it was at the end of the tip  
just in front of the Arena  
This morning there's a Community School there  
set to replace four others.

Everyone's a zek now.

Sometimes you have to stand.

## The Library

How can anybody think that you don't need them?  
There're books in there - you want to read them  
You have to take them back, it's true  
But the stories get to stay with you  
Where Mum and Dad sang rhymes and songs to you  
It's your library - it belongs to you

Just what history might you unleash  
Scrolling through the microfiche?  
Where else will a bookworm leave their cast  
If libraries are consigned to the past?  
Don't stand for it: start a reading riot  
It's your library – you can't stay quiet

by Jemima Laing





## Hard Copy

by Lianne Morgan

So my daughter just told me that books are obsolete. Apparently, what's the point in reading something so cumbersome and heavy, with the added effort of turning pages too, when you can read the same thing on a phone or tablet? I told her that I like the feel of the pages between my fingers. She said that wasn't a good enough reason to keep enough to fill a library. I told her I liked the way that books smell and the excitement of opening one for the very first time, wondering what sort of a world you'll be pulled into. She said you can do that on a kindle with the flick of a finger, minus the funny smell I'm attracted to. I told her about how I love going to a bookshop or a library and running my fingers along the spines, pulling random ones out and inspecting them before deciding if they were the book for me. She told me that was weird and I shouldn't ever tell anyone that, dear god mum, please, that's so embarrassing! It was quite amusing, watching her take a deep breath in and turn to me, as if she was about to explain something to a child for the fifth time.

'Look at it this way mum' she said 'what can you do with the paper version that you can't do with the screen version?' So I threw my book across the room and told her I could still read it.

The glare she sent my way was priceless.

"Apart from that?" She huffed.

"I can read it when the battery is dead," I answered. "And I can read it in the bath without having to get it insured." She's scowling at me now.

I'll never agree that books are obsolete. It would be like saying you could run a library online, absolute rubbish.



## Putting Litter Into Literacy

by Benjamin T. Serpell

The Chamber's dressed in Purple, Gold and Blue  
Litter floats down the empty paths of Market Avenue  
And just like yesterday; America's still not in view.

Will Bowyer's legacy be one of litter and illiteracy?  
Where's the sense in throwing money to the sea,  
Liners and Hotels, now what's their worth to me?  
I like the pleasant confines of a well-stocked library.

There's barking in the Chamber, the dog bins overflow,  
Woof-Woof go the litter of illiterates running the show,  
They're balancing the books - and now even the books must go.

There's a Mayflower hole in the Ocean City's purse,  
Things are bad and they're going to get worse,  
Before too long Councillor Riley will be in The Herald  
- dressed as a nurse!

*Notes from author: 1 Ian Bowyer is leader of the Conservative coalition Council in Plymouth, his main manifesto pledge was to tackle the City's litter problem. 2 John Riley is the lead representative of the UKIP half of the coalition Council. He refuses to be interviewed by the City's main paper The Herald, although he recently appeared photographed in the letters page emptying the dog litter bin in his local constituency.*

## **Digitised Dystopia**

by Jonathon Porter



Server loading..... Server loading.....

Welcome to the online library database.  
Enter username. Enter password.

Username or password not recognised please enter correct details.

Welcome.

Swipe left, left click, press right for next page.

How can this compare to wetting the end of a finger trembling in anticipation?

How can blankly staring at a screen compare to the ever so slight creak as the spine of a new book opens to infinite possibilities, awaiting to entice and transport the human mind awake from the never ending digital onslaught of the 21st century?

his is the way the world ends not with a bang but with a "incorrect password".

The mind will absorb information like a sponge. Information institutes such as libraries and theatres are the sustenance keeping this sponge nourished. In a time where human contact is becoming lesser, surely the wisest decision would be to grow and expand places where growing minds and opinions can educate and discuss the problems the world is facing.

An anonymous message board will not compare.  
A social network is not an acceptable substitute.

Welcome to the new age.  
The digitised dystopian age.

Session expired. Thank you for visiting the online library database.

**Library day, Mumbai**

by Susmita Bhattacharya

On Saturday mornings, once a month  
We woke to the excitement of getting on the  
local train  
across town, counting down the stations  
Eight in all, till we pulled in at Churchgate  
Pushed through the crowds, got on the bus  
Took in the sea breeze from the top deck  
until we reached Nariman Point  
And elbowed through the lunchtime throng  
to the British Council Library.  
My mother and I went upstairs  
while father waited below.  
Rooms and rooms of books,  
from ceiling to carpeted floor.  
An island of literature: British classics,  
novels, poetry, essays  
We touched the pages, yellowed with age  
Their hard backs smelling of rain and the cold  
My mother always chose three books and I one  
Then we went down to my father,  
already tucking in to the fried snacks  
in the street stalls  
We walked back to the station  
Munching vada paos  
wrapped in yesterday's newspaper,  
carrying the books in our shoulder bags  
Pushing through the crowds once more  
Waiting to get home to read our books at bedtime



**Costcutters**

by Simon Travers



I may be wrong,  
 but bargains were implied.  
 When the concrete streets  
 were torn apart and  
 Woodhey became Yellowmead,  
 and Grassendale faded,  
 there was some kind  
 of a bargain.  
 Sacrifices were made.  
 People who lived in Swilly  
 died in West Park.  
 Families were punted  
 across the A38;  
 new uniforms bought  
 for primary school kids.  
 Rooms would shrink,  
 gardens become  
 too boxed in for play.  
 Hopes of home improvements  
 would wait as rumours of  
 compulsory purchases  
 crackled like a bonfire.  
 Small sacrifices fit  
 for smaller spaces.  
 Nothing you'd stop  
 the progress for.  
 Nothing you couldn't  
 deduct for tax purposes.  
 Some houses were  
 not fit to be homes,  
 some gardens grew sofas,  
 but there was sacrifice.

In return? A beacon,  
 a modern home for a  
 nursery to sketch the  
 future with, one finger  
 painting at a time.  
 Meeting rooms, the  
 kind of place a church  
 could take root,  
 or a slimming world.  
 Computers and a  
 national chain cornershop.  
 A new library, which  
 apart from anything else,  
 is where we go  
 to vote now.  
 Two years later,  
 there are no bargains  
 and no funds for the library,  
 and no sign of a  
 commitment to do  
 anything other than  
 let this community  
 fend for itself,  
 and no idea what'll  
 be next or if we'll  
 end up with anything  
 other than the  
 Costcutters.

## We Want To Read The Desiderata

by Kenny Knight

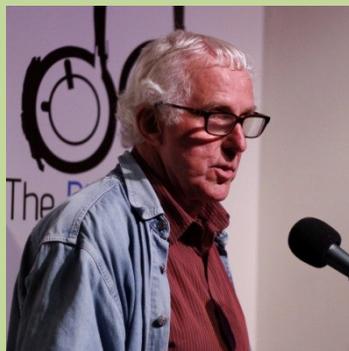
We don't want austerity.  
We want Hilda Ogden  
and a statue of Agatha Christie  
overlooking the stars on Royal Parade.

We don't want the Civic Centre.  
Knock it down or open the windows.  
Turn it into an archive  
for poetry and fiction  
into an art gallery  
and skateboard park.

We don't want to leave Europe,  
but if we must  
we want to twin Brussels  
with the Pannier Market  
plant sprouts  
all over the runway  
at Plymouth Airport.

We don't want  
to be called Ocean City  
don't want to be called  
the city of empty shops  
don't want to see  
another hospital sold  
on the free market,  
World War Three  
or Donald  
in the land of ducks.

Five million pounds  
is a lot of money  
in Efford and Laira,  
Ernesettle and West Park.  
We don't want to close  
Eggbuckland or Peverell.



We want a last  
little sip of summer wine  
a statue of Norah Batty  
and another of Hattie Jacques  
dressed as a waitress  
waving like a film star  
to Christmas shoppers  
carrying capitalism home  
on Royal Parade.

We don't want to be  
writers in exile  
travelling quietly  
across the city  
along streets of lost words.  
We want to be  
as loud as feedback  
on Electric Ladyland.  
While we're being distracted  
by the library closures  
let's spend some  
of that five million  
on a replica Mayflower.  
Send the pilgrims  
of the city council  
on a one way trip  
across the pond  
to Massachusetts.

We don't want  
to close North Prospect.  
We want to dance with words  
in Alexandria and Tothill Park.  
We want to hear Walter Gabriel  
reading Kelvin Corcoran  
in Ambridge Village Library.  
We want to read George Eliot  
and George Orwell.  
We want to read the Desiderata,  
Anne-Marie Albiach  
and Rosemary Tonks.  
Who needs politicians  
when we've got books.



**The Children's Library,  
The Adult Library, and My First Job.**  
by Angela Sherlock

**The Children's Library**

Books were not plentiful in our house. We had a few children's stories – *The Water Babies*, a volume of fairy tales – but we could not afford to buy books, so the library was our only resource. The children's library was up the hill, almost a mile away. It was separated from the adult library, which opened on a parallel street and which we could not enter until we had reached the magical age of 14.

An older sibling marched us up the hill every Saturday and, armed with our four library tickets, we browsed for an hour or so, trying to guess what would keep us occupied for the following week. Biggles was good, and his female counterpart, Worrals. Blyton's *Mallory Towers* opened a magic window into the mysterious world of boarding schools, but I don't think we ever came across *The Famous Five*. I have fond memories of Rosemary Sutcliffe and Elizabeth Goodge. And there were all those books about how to become a ballet dancer, a musical comedy star, or an air hostess, none of which I turned into.

One day I managed to read all the books I had borrowed that morning. What, nothing for another week! I trudged back up the hill, only to be told that books could not be returned on the day they were borrowed. My mother took pity on me and lent me two of her childhood volumes. We were not noted for treating her possessions with respect. We had once borrowed her books to make furniture for our dolls to sit on and we drew gas rings on the cover of a volume of Moliere to serve as a doll's cooker. *Augusta, A Queen among Girls* was about a plucky heroine who sacrificed herself for her little brother. I think she fell ill – young heroines tended to contract brain fever and had to have their hair cut off – but she was revived by beef tea. I had no idea what that was, but Augusta won through in the end. And then there was *Hollyberry Janet*, which reduced me to floods of tears, the ultimate accolade for any novel.

## **The Adult Library**

This was a holy place, hushed, great mahogany book cases lining aisles where silent readers lurked. Old library buildings always seemed to have upper galleries, secret places into which the staff vanished, staircases that borrowers could not ascend.

I read indiscriminately – Virginia Woolf, Colette and Georgette Heyer; James Baldwin, Saul Bellow, Alistair Maclean. I fell in love, briefly, with D.H. Lawrence, but was disillusioned when I read a biography that located his characters in real life. I was shocked. He hadn't made them up, these were people he knew, which I considered cheating.

The classification system was a wonder to me. All knowledge was neatly ordered, and the catalogue resided in a vast array of drawers that could answer an enquiry from any angle, alphabetical by author or subject, numerical by Dewey Decimal. Folklore resided at 398, the arts in the 700s, history at 900, and it all made perfect sense.

Here I discovered poetry, play scripts, travel books. It was an upmarket guide to Paris that sent me there on a solo trip, aged about 16, staying in a two star hotel, navigating the metro with my schoolgirl French. The guide book took me to the Louvre, to Sainte-Chapelle, Montmartre and Sacre-Coeur, to the Jeu de Paume. Lots of very sophisticated night spots were recommended but I did not venture beyond the pages of the book. I was impressed by a reference to James Bond's favourite cocktail, having worked my way through all of Fleming's novels. I still wonder what champagne and Benzedrine would taste like.

## My First Job

Imagining a world of possibility, at 16 off I went to the Youth Employment Bureau. Unfortunately romance and imagination played no part in their brief so when I said I loved reading and wanted to travel they sent me to Stepney Public Libraries - not quite what I had been hoping for.

The library was very fine, built on the Victorian scale. In addition to the book lending section there was a collection of gramophone records, newspapers and local history. The reference library was always full. Mile End was a deprived area and the elderly and the poor congregated here, often falling asleep in the warmth. On a wet day they would spread their coats over chair backs and radiators, and it was very smelly!

My first library had a section marked Classics, each volume carrying a yellow sticker to distinguish it from the common run of fiction. I rose to this elitist challenge and worked my way through almost all of them. There was a mysterious looking trilogy, grey volumes with a curious border of runes and an eye. No blurb, no excerpts from reviews. It was Tolkein's *Lord of the Rings*, my first fantasy novel, a genre of whose existence I had been ignorant.

We ran Story Hours in the children's libraries and I picked up a smattering of Turkish from the children I read to. Many of them, only four or five years old, wore fur coats. It was a traditional area for furriers and some of the older Jewish tailors suffered from hairballs. Car manuals were so sought after that a dummy book resided on the shelf, the original being claimed at the desk, lest they be purloined.

There were smaller outposts, Cable Street, or the Isle of Dogs. Borrowers were fewer, but there were the same types – eccentrics with life stories to share, old ladies who wanted 'another romance novel, love', or young Asian men, struggling with the language, educating themselves by working their way through the 'Teach yourself' books. Then, as now, the libraries were used for learning and recreation.

END OF FEATURE