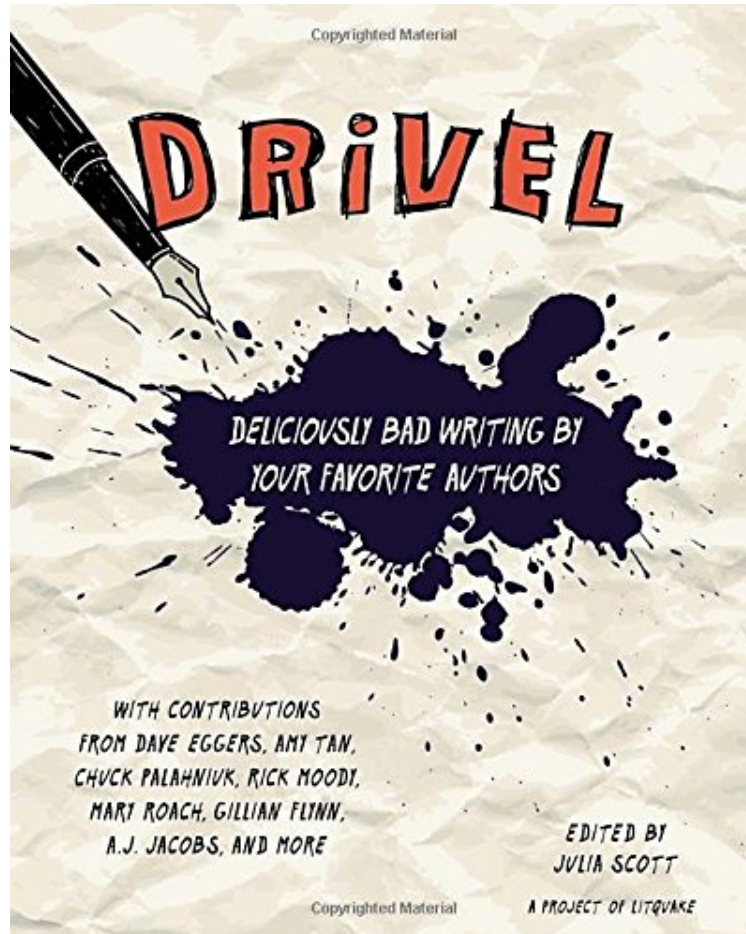


(Ebook pdf) Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors

Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors

Julia Scott

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#1493626 in Books Scott Julia 2014-09-02 2014-09-02 Original language: English PDF # 1 9.12 x .54 x 7.351, 1.00 #File Name: 0399168885208 pages Drivel Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors | File size: 65.Mb

Julia Scott : Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors:

0 of 2 people found the following review helpful. crapBy JeremyI was sorry that I bought it Just bad writing, nothing delicious about it.3 of 3 people found the following review helpful. The blooper reel of literature. A must-have and a must-read!By A Discerning ConsumerI picked up this book expecting it to be funny. What I didn't expect is that it would also be fascinating, and an addictive read that had me lingering (and snorting) over every page.Unlike "high concept" books where the premise wears thin after five or six pages, DRIVEL is a rare creature: an anthology that's more engaging and entertaining than it has a right to be. Instead of laughing AT the writer who's unearthing true drivel from the earliest shallows of their career, I found myself sharing a sort of cathartic camaraderie with them--these verbal trainwrecks are fascinating, but all the more so because we know the creators somehow emerged with their talent unscathed. The contributors were brave to write what they did, and braver still to share it with us. It's an

inspiring, eye-opening book for any would-be writer. But it's also very, very funny. Not just laugh-out-loud funny, mind you, but laugh-at-the-memory-at-awkward-random-moments funny. There's Nathaniel Rich (age 9), writing what he THINKS are obscene rap lyrics, a teenage Gillian Flynn's "Sweet Valley High" knock-off, and Dave Eggers' painting of a naked woman and a clown, for which no words suffice. This is the blooper reel of literature. Buy and read.

2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. A motivational book for struggling and developing writers
By Peter E. McGinn
Warning: If you are not a writer, this review is probably not going to help you decide whether to obtain this book. I have been a writer my entire adult life, but I have not achieved anything approaching the success of the authors in this anthology. For a long time I chased literary agents, submitted to magazines, went to writers conferences, and so on. When one agent showed a great interest in my young adult novel and worked with me through an entire rewrite of the book, only to say it didn't excite her in the end, I decided to just write and not worry about chasing financial success. (I am not bitter - in the process, she helped me turn it into a much better novel.) Then came along, so like many unsuccessful writers, I started self-publishing via Kindle. Not in the hope of getting rich (though I wouldn't fight it if it happened), but rather to make it easier for the small cadre of fans who do like my writing to get hold of it. The point is, I believe my writing is much better than it was when I started writing. When I reread my old stories, I cringe a bit. I mean, I see my style developing but I just wasn't there yet. So in reading the early efforts of the authors in *Drivel*, I see that much of it is worse than my old stories. Don't misunderstand me - I am not saying that it makes me a better writer. Their efforts were written when they were younger than I was when I published my early stories. Clearly they advanced farther and faster than I ever did, and found ways to move their writing careers through magazines, columns, or whatever it took to attract agents and become successful. So when a struggling or developing writer reads these deliciously bad works by prominent authors, the message should be that they also have permission to write badly at times. I have known writers who have many portions of books languishing in a drawer (or in a hard drive). They loved planning it and telling me about them, and started them with enthusiasm, but after writing a few chapters the excitement waned as it failed to live up to their vision. So they filed them away and got excited about the next book. What they needed to do was push on, finish the book and then go back later and rewrite, rewrite. Many times when I am writing a first draft I know inside that it is crap and will need some serious rewriting, but then I break into a new section that just flows and writes itself. So read these clunkers in *Drivel* and do whatever it takes to motivate yourself to keep writing. It will get better. Perhaps you will be like me and never experience publishing success, but neither will you ever lose your love of writing.

The writing in this book is so bad, it deserves its own taxonomy of suckitude. Gillian Flynn, Mary Roach, Dave Eggers, Rick Moody, Chuck Palahniuk, Amy Tan, A.J. Jacobs, Daniel Clowes, Jeff Greenwald, Po Bronson... the list goes on. They all sucked once, and they all have the guts to share some of their crappiest early work in *Drivel*: an uplifting bit of voyeurism, based on the sold-out "Regreturature" stage shows in San Francisco, and brought to you by Litquake and the San Francisco Writers' Grotto. Within these pages you'll find abstruse and esoteric poetry (bad); incoherent and illogical short stories (worse); bumfuzzling proto-journalism (shameful); and pretentious, overwrought journal entries (we'll not speak of this again). Thanks to these courageous but foolhardy writers, the world now knows the real meaning of a work-in-progress.

"Whether you're in it for the entertainment value or the encouragement of knowing that even the best writers once sucked, you're bound to find something to love in this collection of mostly terrible early work from some of today's big names." --Book Riot
"The book's humor is encouraging; young writers might be inspired to keep working through what might not yet seem to them such deliciously bad writing. Not only hilarious but also somewhat magical." --SF Weekly
"This endearing anthology of early poems, teenage diaries, college essays, and high school assignments lives up to its bold name. The humorous volume will inspire anyone who enjoys writing and delight those who fondly remember the awkwardness of their teenage years." --Library Journal
"Drivel will pluck your heartstrings." --Vanity Fair
"Before Gillian Flynn wrote the best-selling novel *Gone Girl*, she penned a soapy tale of evil triplets inspired by the twins of the 1980s "Sweet Valley High" series. Other highlights presented in this collection are Chuck Palahniuk's letter to Cambodian leader Pol Pot, written at age ten, in which Palahniuk pretended to be a billionaire industrialist, and Caroline Paul's haphazard letter to then-president Richard Nixon about animal cruelty. (Included is Nixon's actual response on White House letterhead.) The primary sources add to the volume's readability—Amy Tan's decidedly awful poetry is bolstered by her pretty hand-writing and the embarrassing childhood photographs throughout the book remind readers that their favorite authors had bad hair days (or years), too. Journalist Scott gathered the inspiration for her debut book from the San Francisco-based Regreturature, an annual event at which authors read their most regrettable works. Proceeds of the book benefit Litquake, the literary festival that hosts the event. -VERDICT: This endearing anthology of early poems, teenage diaries, college essays, and high school assignments lives up to its bold name. The humorous volume will inspire anyone who enjoys writing and delight those who fondly remember the awkwardness of their teenage years. Ideal for all public library collections." —Stephanie Sendaula, Library Journal
About the Author
Editor Julia Scott produces radio documentaries and news features for the BBC World

Service and nationally syndicated programs, and writes for newspapers and magazines including *The New York Times*. Her work has been featured in *Best American Science Writing*. Excerpt. © Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Photos taken at *Regreturature*, the annual live show that inspired this book. © Chris Hardy. From L to R: First row: Ethel Rohan, Caroline Paul, David Duncan, Jeff Greenwald. Second row: Isaac Fitzgerald, Katie Crouch, Stephen Elliott. Third row: Heather Donahue, David Munro, Laura Fraser. Fourth row: Todd Oppenheimer, Jack Boulware, Simon Rich, Mary Roach. The genesis for this project was a desperate idea for a fund-raiser. Janis Cooke Newman and I were brainstorming some type of collaboration between San Francisco's Litquake literary festival and the Writers' Grotto collective, which might benefit Litquake. Grotto writers reading from their work? "Who's going to pay to see that?" joked Janis, who of course is a member of the Grotto. We continued racking our brains. It couldn't be just another reading or panel discussion. It needed some real zest. And then it suddenly hit me—what if we had these respected, professional writers read instead from the worst thing they'd ever written? The most shameful, embarrassing, precocious, clunky, sappy, immature, cloyingly earnest prose that somehow may have been stashed in a long-forgotten box. Subconsciously, I think I was remembering a horrifically misguided paper I had written about hippies in the fourth grade. It was so ill-informed and painful that I could still recall some of the sentences verbatim. If I were ever to dig it up, it might amuse a roomful of people clutching cocktails. I would come off looking pretty stupid, but perhaps other writers could be persuaded to also embarrass themselves for a worthy cause. (The "essay" is included here.) But would it work? Would writers who ordinarily push themselves to be the best be willing to debase themselves and offer up a personal literary turd in the name of entertainment? This goes against everything writers strive for. It's hard enough to learn how to write well, to hustle working gigs, to get paid, to get published, to find readers, to make the world care about what you wrote. So why would anyone reverse the process and call attention to the fact their writing once sucked ass? And even more importantly, for our purposes, would they have saved any of it? To everyone's surprise, from Janis and me to the authors, their friends, and the audience, the stage show titled *Regreturature* has become a hit. We've sold out all of our events over the past four years, and now you're holding this collection—*Drivel*—which includes several of the pieces we presented, plus many other gems. It's always inspiring to hear great writing read aloud. But listening to a well-established author read from a cringeworthy teenage diary, or an earnest letter to President Nixon, or a groaner student poem is enlightening in a different way. It reminds all of us that writing takes work. That everybody does start somewhere, and often that somewhere is pretty crappy. So in a sense, *Drivel* offers hope for all aspiring writers. And it also sends a warning. If you haven't thrown away your horrible writing, we may someday hunt you down and force you to share it onstage.—Jack Boulware, cofounder of Litquake

Right about now, you're probably feeling pretty good about yourself. You're holding a collection of shamefully bad writing by authors who have invested a lot of their careers in getting you to think they're pretty great. If you've ever aspired to greatness but were scared of sucking, or spent desperate hours pulling your hair out and throwing draft after draft in the trash, you recognize the cringing terror these authors are feeling right at this very moment. Have a care for them. Why? Because there was a time, not so long ago, when their writing stank so badly it wouldn't even have been used to line a litter box. And yet the contributors in *Drivel: Deliciously Bad Writing by Your Favorite Authors* are doing the unthinkable: they are willing to impale themselves, in public, for your amusement. In fact, the writing in this collection is so bad it deserves its own taxonomy of suckitude. There's abstruse and esoteric poetry (bad); incoherent and illogical short stories (worse); bumfuzzling proto-journalism (shameful); and pretentious, overwrought journal entries (just turn the page and we'll not speak of this again). And all by your favorite bestselling authors. Yes, they've committed horrible crimes against the written word. But the lesson, if there is one, lies in what happened next. They never stopped writing. And eventually, they began not to suck. I conceived the idea for this book after performing at the second-annual live *Regreturature* show in San Francisco in 2012. I read from a journal entry I wrote as a twenty-year-old, gushing like a *Tiger Beat* teenybopper over an encounter with British playwright Tom Stoppard. ("It's enough to know that I am living IN THE SAME LIFETIME, let alone being in the same room!") Who knew my earnest writerly crush on an eminent septuagenarian would supply so many laugh lines? I was delighted. But as the evening slipped by, I sensed a second feeling in the crowd: a sort of communal catharsis. Together, we'd transcended the pain and the humiliation of dredging up our stinkiest "work." And we'd turned it into a kind of public sacrifice. By far the hardest part of putting this book together was getting authors to cough up their hoary hair balls. Some were seduced by the concept immediately and were forced to choose from a veritable catalog of tumescent masterworks. Others not so much. No matter how I framed my plea, begging for some scrap of juvenilia or errant bit of mid-career offal—anything, really, that escaped the wrecking ball of good taste and discretion—a number of fellow writers were not swayed. Their excuses were just a notch above "the dog ate my homework": "My mom threw out my early writing." "My boxes are buried in the attic." "I don't have anything that qualifies as bad enough to share." (A note on that last one: we don't believe you.) Some writers expressed genuine regret, even as they confessed why they couldn't contribute. One bestselling novelist got straight to the point: "My bad writing is so bad, and there's so much of it, and so little of the good, that it's just too painful to lay eyes on that stuff," he explained. (We understand.) You're about to meet the dozens of contributors who volunteered to pluck their turgid treasures from the bottom of a locked and moldy vault. Thanks to these courageous but foolhardy writers, the world now knows the real meaning of a work

in progress.—Julia Scott, San Francisco Writers' Grotto

MARY ROACH GUPPY LOVEMARY ROACH is the author of the New York Times bestsellers *Stiff*, *Spook*, *Bonk*, *Packing for Mars*, and her latest, *Gulp: Adventures on the Alimentary Canal*. She was guest editor of *The Best American Science and Nature Writing 2011* and a winner of the American Association of Engineering Societies' Engineering Journalism Award, in a category for which, let's be honest, she was the sole entrant. In my early twenties, I had a job in the public information office of the San Francisco SPCA. I was excited about this job, because for the first time in my limp, spotty almost-career I was being paid to write. One of the things I was occasionally tasked with writing was the "Pet Tips" column in the San Francisco Examiner. There was no byline on this column because there was no columnist. The writer changed from week to week, depending on who had managed to weasel out of it, who had pretended to be under the gun with, say, a press release on Holiday Dangers for Pets ("Deck the halls with caution this Christmas . . ."). I was dismayed by the absence of a byline because I thought I might one day use some of my "Pet Tips" columns as writing samples. Not all of them, mind you. Just the really good ones. And without a byline, how could an editor be sure I hadn't just clipped someone else's wry, sparkling guppy piece from the paper and claimed it as my own? I seem to recall being proud of the phrase "minute fry" and the sly humor of baby guppies emerging "individually wrapped" in clear membranes. Obviously the word "plastic" to describe the clear membranes is a mistake, the sort of airheaded gaffe that still from time to time shows up in my books. My long-standing inability to wrap things up smoothly (with or without clear plastic) is also in evidence here, in the jarring, graceless shift from oxygen concentrations to "So let's hear it for guppies!"

—M.R. JAMES NESTOR DEAR BUTTHOLE JAMES NESTOR has written for *Outside* magazine, *Men's Journal*, *Dwell*, the *New York Times*, *San Francisco Magazine*, *Salon*, the *San Francisco Chronicle*, and numerous other publications. His first nonfiction book, *Deep: Freediving, Renegade Science, and What the Ocean Tells Us About Ourselves*, was published in June 2014. His long-form piece *Half-Safe*, about the only around-the-world journey by land and sea in the same vehicle ever attempted (and completed), was published by the *Atavist* in 2013. Nestor owns a 1977 Mercedes that runs on used cooking oil and a 1979 Sebring-Vanguard electric CitiCar, both of which are for sale. He lives in San Francisco.