



WORDSMITHS

THE ST MICHAEL HIGH SCHOOL LITERARY JOURNAL 2023-24 | 3

One of the great joys of compiling this journal, is the time it gives me to reflect on the year gone by. For the best part of a week or so I am allowed, nay, compelled, to reread and rediscover the work my students have produced and with it the literary landscapes we have traversed over the past twelve months.

After 9 years of teaching, I have a sense of where to start when it comes to selecting pieces. I can expect to find exceptional essays from Class 12 specialists, and I know there will always be students who reach new insights when they meet Odysseus or Parzival; but then there are the surprises—the students who didn't know they could write sonnets, or who underestimated the depth of their understanding of Greek Drama. The rediscovery of these pieces holds particular joy for me as a teacher, and indicates a larger mystery.

When I select pieces I am of course looking for work that stands out *at each level*. If I were just looking for the objective best of the best, this journal might contain only work from Class 12, from students who have had time to really hone their skills. But by placing all of these pieces in the context of a journey through the high school, we can see the progress—there are clear steps from the observational work in Class 10, to the insights in Class 11, to the deep, thematic readings in Class 12.

But this progress cannot be seen as a continuous flow: the jump in ability between each class, sometimes even between each block, is enormous. How Class 11 students who have focused on a clear idea in a single text become, within a year, Class 12 students who interweave nuanced themes in four or even five texts seems almost miraculous.

Equally miraculous is the fact that the student who struggles to write a commentary in December, produces a perfect sonnet in March.

But this is of course the magical alchemy of their whole education: through every subject, every challenge, and every triumph they grow in all directions, and thus miracles are made possible.

It is with great pleasure that I send into the world this, our third annual literary journal, and I very much look forward to many more miracles in years to come.

— Stella Ottewill

Cover image by Peter Beugelink

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Wide Reading

Earlier this year, Class 12 students specialising in English undertook the challenge of close-reading a wide range of texts. They looked at a short story, a play, a novel, an episode of TV, a film and a comedy special, and in lessons we discussed the manifold ways in which these texts exemplified and explored a range of themes. This year I am pleased to share two essays from this block, both of which deal with the idea of 'inside', but in very different ways.

Character experiences of awareness, physical discomfort and isolation evoke, from their audiences, palpable parallel and embodied emotional responses which entangle the narratives inside us

Esmée Lynch-Morrison (Cl. 12)

Running throughout *Rosemary's Baby*, 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl', *Inside No. 9*: 'Sardines', and Bo Burnham's *Inside*, there is a congruous theme: each text *embodies* its audience by manipulating the content of its narrative in such a way that it transcends engagement as we know it and draws the text inside each observer until it is internalised—deep—'inside'. Throughout all four narratives, this is captured within three themes: awareness (or lack thereof), physical discomfort, and isolation as a product of entrapment.

'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' ('The Fruit') in essence captures an immense excess of awareness. Acton, after committing a murder, becomes hyper-aware of his own presence and despite taking great care to eliminate risks, eventually further incriminates himself.

Although as a reader, it is difficult to imagine how one is "supposed" to react in such a situation, the use of punctuation-scarce chunks of text immersed within lengthy unbroken sections, capture the essence of Acton's panic as he becomes increasingly aware of his actions.

Throughout the text there are just two section breaks, with the last marking the transition of tone from strange to sour (after Acton has put on the gloves, but not yet displayed true mania). Following this final section break the text shifts to mirror a faster paced structure and its language becomes increasingly vivid 'wildly infested'. Repetition and rhythm build, to indicate a methodical process of manic behaviour: 'Inch by inch, inch by inch, he polished and polished'. Acton continually questions himself, completing excess tasks as preventative measures —'Which door had he used tonight? He couldn't remember. Polish all of them then'—which is frustrating to follow, for an audience trapped logically in hindsight, unable to reach Acton.

Inside presents awareness differently. We are encouraged to become aware and present as a product of Burnham's typically 'woke' lyrics. This contrasts with 'The Fruit' as we are not aware through concern for a character, but rather through our relatability and introduction to a fresh perspective on concepts we know well. Through the song 'Welcome to the Internet'



Burnham presents a fantastically accurate and simultaneously creatively strung description of the internet, with all its wonders and faults. Lines such as 'If none of it's of interest to you, / You'd be the first' accurately capture the appeal of the internet whilst lines like 'Here's a tip for straining pasta, / Here's a nine year old who died' bluntly present the vast amount of content, relevant to everything and nothing. Another example of awareness is presented in 'How The World Works' in which Burnham ironically presents, through the sock caricature 'Socko', views on sociopolitical issues such as oppression and racism. Aside from the show's content we are constantly aware that we are watching Burnham in all his insecurity. Burnham presents an image of himself as uniquely vulnerable and yet displays an incredibly information-rich perspective, which allows him to reach the audience, on an interpersonal level—prompting the question—how many of us think this deeply?

In *Rosemary's Baby* the discomfort presented remains constant. Throughout her pregnancy Rosemary suffers with and endures an abnormal, continuous pain, because she has been manipulated by those around her to believe it will eventually relent. This pain controls her life, isolates her, consumes the person she once was, and just when she is about to act on it, it stops: 'I want Dr Hill,' [...] 'If you



won't pay I'll pay my-' (p. 148) Throughout the storyline Rosemary rarely advocates for herself, and living off Guy means we never see her spend her own money. Beyond the fact that the pain has pushed her to do so, its conclusion at the end of her sentence, is symbolic of a turning point in the storyline to a more heated, intense and terminally consequential turn of events. Although we, as readers, are continually frustrated by Rosemary's discomfort, and her lack of action regarding it, the pain's termination, if not coincidentally well timed, forms a climax, as it offers not relief, but further concern. Via Oxford languages, pain is defined as 'a highly unpleasant physical sensation caused by illness or injury', or at best, a warning. Rosemary's failure to act upon this, despite the pain leaving her powerless, and physically unwell, causes a long-lasting discomfort for the reader—intensified following the pain's conclusion when Rosemary's realisation kicks in (which is comparable to the way in which discomfort increases when Acton begins to behave manically, following the second section break in 'The Fruit').

Throughout the duration of 'The Fruit' Acton is consistently engaged in a physical battle with his mindless, obsessive thoughts. Acton's will to eradicate evidential trace of his whereabouts, appears initially logical, and we as readers enthusiastically back his drive to complete this, leaving the premises in time, forming a healthy, gripping tension as Acton shifts from object to object. However, Acton's desperation to fashion himself a clean slate, and his inability to regulate when this objective has been reached, promptly becomes evident and the narrative shifts, provoking us to feel physically uncomfortable, as the cleaning becomes increasingly unhinged and the possibility of escape slips away.

As the object of time becomes extraneous to Acton, we experience his own discomfort with the situation in which he is embedded, pitying him, being caught in a position of vulnerability—forgetting Huxley's body. This is particularly evident when the drunken visitor interrupts Acton: "Go away," whispered Acton soundlessly, crushed.' Here we see how truly vulnerable Acton is: he should remain quiet, but is crushed by his own burden, trapped and isolated within a routine he created as a form of defence. When he later replies "Yes I'm in here" we sense his helplessness and we too feel helpless, unable to assist him. As the text progresses, so does Acton's mania; he talks to himself "Would you?", "I would!", sees things 'little spiders had [...] swarmed all over the already clean walls, dirtying them again!' and loses sense of all logic: 'if he left one little print it would reproduce.' Although Acton's routine is, in the end, what forces an encounter between the very thing it was designed to prevent, we as readers don't discover this until Acton does, and are therefore compelled, by the thorough nature of his cleaning, and with the concern of time—thus, as Acton veers off track, intrigue amplifies as anticipation rises. Acton's struggles seamlessly contrast with those captured in the collective setting of 'Sardines'—Acton is hyper-aware *because* he acts alone and lacks logical reasoning,

whereas the characters in 'Sardines' struggle to regulate themselves while interacting collectively.

'Sardines' being set inside a wardrobe, perhaps captures discomfort in the most literal sense; however, interestingly, the isolation portrayed is caused by group interaction as opposed to time alone. Each character is literally contained beside others, which awkwardly contrasts with the combination of relational tension between characters, and the tense atmosphere created by 'the elephants in the room'; (there is an irony between the elephants and the lack of space within the wardrobe) namely Stinky John, Boring Ian, Geraldine and of course the connection between all three; Andrew, former abuser of three of the men present. Aside from its wardrobe setting, this episode exhibits many of the awkward behaviours one would attribute to any children's game played by a group of adults, who either are not well-acquainted or don't get along, emphasising another source of discomfort.

For both observers and characters, tension arises when the paths of guests cross and wardrobe doors shut. This begins at the start of the episode, with the uncomfortably forced interaction between Rebecca and Ian.

The underlying tensions between characters generate discomfort both inside the wardrobe, and out, as focus is directed towards the absence of compassion for, and awareness of each of the wardrobe's occupants. Every character in the wardrobe has some emotional conflict with another; Rebecca and Carl display an air of intolerance towards fellow players, causing conflicts or highlighting an emotional disregard; Rachel, Lee, Geraldine, John and Ian, a lack of awareness towards the social situation, as Rachel is constantly unaware of the game rules, Lee and (predominantly) Geraldine of their places in the group, John and Ian of the lack of space, and Stu, Mark, Elizabeth and Andrew, of their inappropriate actions. Although each character is implicated in the general feeling of discomfort in the wardrobe, in Ian's character this is most prominent in terms of physicality, as can be seen in the still below.

These jarring interactions between characters impose suffering upon all, forcing the audience to mirror discomfort and recognise the absence of space inside the wardrobe, leaving the question of what will happen when space inevitably runs out.

In *Rosemary's Baby*, every aspect of Rosemary's isolation



can be put down to the cult that surrounds her, as it consumes her relationships, her body, her baby; her life. Rosemary's entrapment evidentially begins after Terry's suicide leaves the cult without a host. It is from this point that the Castavets build a relationship with Rosemary and Guy, intertwining themselves into the couple's life—although neither we nor Rosemary grow suspicious of this until later, when this treatment becomes smothering and claustrophobic.

One prominent example of Rosemary's helplessness and isolation is her narcotisation through Minnie's chocolate mousse: 'The mousse was excellent, but it had a chalky undertaste [...] Guy tried but could find no 'undertaste' at all' (p. 76). After Rosemary is gaslighted by Guy to believe that she is drunk—'No wonder [...] All that booze' (p. 79)—and should sleep, we receive a vastly vivid description of events, with aspects of reality from Rosemary's life combined with some of nonsense 'sitting with a drink in her hand on President Kennedy's yacht' (p. 79)—consistent with a dream, and throughout which come hints of warning from Hutch: "'Typhoon!'" Hutch shouted' (p. 80) which (although seemingly abstract) are in alignment with an earlier conversation between the two, when Rosemary mentioned cursing Hutch for telling her of The Bramford's dark past: 'you might with equal justification curse [...] the weather bureau for the typhoon' (p. 32). As Rosemary is drugged, raped and helpless during the cult's ritual, we too are trapped reading the passage—in fact throughout the book we are trapped, separated from Rosemary who is always one step behind figuring out why she is isolated and therefore, as readers we feel we alone are (with Rosemary's interest at heart) aware of the state of affairs.

Because 'Sardines' takes place inside a wardrobe, naturally there is a feeling of claustrophobia and entrapment. The tensions evoked by the atmospheric discord inspire a view of each character as isolated from the others, encouraging the physical space to appear scarcer despite highlighting the emotional distance between characters as larger. This aptly captures the emotional and physical entrapment of abused characters (comparable to Acton's isolation in 'The Fruit'), and each player's entrapment inside a family ritual. A technique used to focus on the absent space is the intensification of oral sounds: parting of lips, breathing, sighing and whispering. Manipulating the emphasis of sound, extenuates the silence, heightening awareness of the discord between characters and for the audience, by instigating hyper-awareness towards the lack of space.

Inside *Inside* Burnham is undeniably trapped and isolated by his entrapment; in the midst of a pandemic, in his home, in his 'show' even. But uniquely his entrapment presents him with a seized opportunity for great creativity. By utilising the covid-19 pandemic, a globally recognised duration of isolation, fear and uncertainty, as a springboard from which to 'heal the world with comedy' whilst simultaneously and satirically presenting some of the most serious and contentious topics of modern

conversation, Burnham breaks free of expectation, turning an otherwise-considered indecorous action, into a historic reference, indirectly through his comedy (yet directly, through its internet presence) promoting recognition of the world's wrongdoings.

Although the exclusive lyrical wittiness, accuracy and relatability expressed by Burnham is undoubtedly compelling, there is a sense of entrapment that accompanies the experience of audience members—an imposed, overwhelming need to continue watching, even through segments of content with which you do not personally resonate. In this way the compelling nature of Burnham's work becomes as much entrapping as it is gripping—just like the content continuously consumed via 21st century social media.

This essay captures how, through the images materialised by intricately manufactured narratives, the concept of being 'inside' can transcend beyond the literal embodiment of an entity. Each narrative explored in this essay hosts a combination of profound emotions which act as entries through which to not only compel, but penetrate, their audiences, evoking the parallel and embodied emotional responses which drive the narratives to entangle themselves inside us.

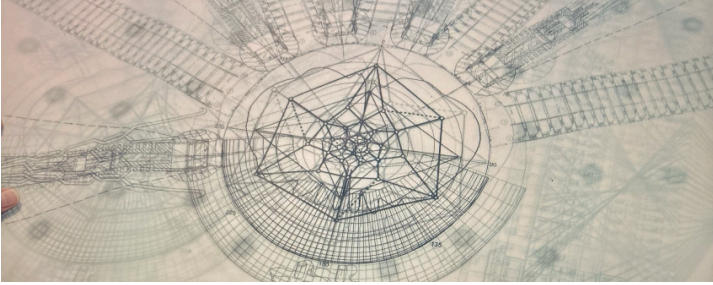
The emotions within the narratives are imaginary, their connections to us intangible, but the emotions felt as a result are absolute.

Body: a wide reading Daisy Meaker (Cl. 12)

To be in a body is to hunger and to thirst; to ache and heal; to love and to be. Existence in a body is intrinsic and comes in many forms. A body can be many things, it can be a life, a building, an object... In this essay I will illustrate this experience in a wide reading of four texts: *Rosemary's Baby* (Levin), 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' (Bradbury), *High-Rise* (dir. Wheatley, 2015), and *Inside* (dir. Burnham, 2021).

Which came first, the chicken or the egg—does a building grow to reflect the inhabitant or is the inhabitant a reflection of the space they choose? They start as the latter and grow together; in the colour of the bathroom tiles and the communities one builds. In *Rosemary's Baby* and *High-Rise*, bodies are reflected by the buildings they inhabit. In *High-Rise*, the descent of social chaos is echoed in the cleanliness of the luxury apartment complex. At the beginning of the film, a strict social hierarchy is accepted and the building reflects this with long, clean corridors, brightly lit apartments, and sparkling windows. When chaos descends, the building becomes a junkyard of human waste. At its messiest in the final 15 minutes of the film, Robert Laing says

Well, the lights fire like ... neurons in a great brain. The lifts seem like chambers in a heart. And when I move ... I move along its corridors like a cell in a network of arteries. (*High-Rise*, 1:46).



Laing tells a story of the building through a simile of the body, directly comparing himself to a ‘cell in a network of arteries’. The building as a body isn't the pristine high-rise we were introduced to, no, he is commenting on the mess and chaos, for what is more bodily than to be surrounded by the product of living (our trash)? The high-rise best reflects bodies at its dirtiest. There are five high-rise buildings, representing a hand. Laing's high-rise is the index finger. This broadens the metaphor of the film: that it is a collapse of society, one limb at a time.

Charlotte asks Laing “Who are you talking to?” “No one. Just the building.” (*High-Rise*, 1:53), which questions the perspective of the viewer; are we the building? In *High-Rise*, the building is not only the bodies inside it but us, the viewers, too. We are as objective as concrete. We can do as much to change the story as the high-rise can. In this way, we are as much inside the building as we are the building.

In *Rosemary's Baby*, the Bramford is known for its unpleasant inhabitants—serial killers and baby-eating sisters—and a collection of accidental deaths. The building has a personality—one of mysterious and dark events which is reflected in its dark, gothic-inspired architecture: ‘The Bramford, old, black, and elephantine, is a warren of high-ceilinged apartments prized for their fireplaces and elegant details.’ (*Rosemary's Baby*, p.3) This description is animalistic—‘elephantine’ and the word ‘warren’ evokes images of rabbits scurrying around in darkness—yet elegant and unnatural. Rosemary had always dreamed of living in this building—an odd match, considering her taste in white-washed wood and pastel wallpaper.

Rosemary transforms her apartment into her design paradise, and discreetly before our eyes, the Bramford transfigures her.

If the body can be a building, the body can also be an object. The natural process of the objectification of a body is death—in which the only barrier from total objectification is human emotional attachment. In ‘The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl’, William Acton refers to Huxley's dead body as ‘it’. ‘He hadn't dry-washed it. He went to it and turned it now this way, now that, and burnished every surface of it.’ This is total objectification; in grammar, emotional attachment, and action. He treats it as he does the door handle and picture frame. Huxley is merely a mess to be cleaned. In moments of distress or trauma, leaving one's body can be a necessity. In this case, Acton leaves his humanity.

To treat a body as an object can be harmful, especially when it is seen as a sexual object. Sexual objectification is rampant in *High-Rise*, in which people are reduced to their utility and socio-economic status. A large part of their perceived utility is sexual, as seen when Charlotte tells Laing ‘You really are the best amenity in the building’ (*High-Rise*, 1:25). This subverts a common trope in sexual objectification,—men objectifying women; in this extract, it is the women of the building calling Laing an amenity. He's better than the in-building grocery shop or laundry, but serves the same purpose: to be used. Bo Burnham discusses objectification throughout *Inside*, particularly the objectification of celebrities in parasocial relationships. Parasocial relationships often have both sexual and literal objectification—the disregard of the celebrities own opinions and feelings, perceiving them as a good for your own consumption.

The experience of being inside a body is exemplified in *Rosemary's Baby*, *Inside*, and ‘The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl’. “Yes I'm in here,” whispered Acton, feeling long and sprawled and clumsy on the floor, clumsy and cold and silent’ (‘The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl’). Acton enters the dead body of Huxley, long and cold and silent on the floor, and even speaks as him—“Yes, I'm in here”—in reply to a man asking if Huxley is home. There is an emphasis on the word ‘clumsy’, which typically describes an action or the nature of a person; in this case it is used as a verb, which evokes the heaviness and helplessness of a dead body. This haunting moment is the closest we get to Acton's guilt, which manifests wryly as empathy. The descriptive listing increases the intensity of this scene—time drags on as we try to reach the end of the sentence.

Until now [the pain] had been inside her; now she was inside it; pain was the weather around her, was time, was the entire world. (*Rosemary's Baby*, p131)

Rosemary has left her body and is inside pain. ‘Until’ and ‘entire’ sound similar, and there is a repetition of ideas, which makes the quotation circular. This embodies the human experience of pain. It comes in waves, an unstoppable tide, again and again. When pain is truly

terrible, it becomes the only thing you have—the only thing you are. Reading this in the book made me nauseous. I have experienced debilitating pain, and although I cannot remember what it felt like, one knows when it is expressed, and the circularity and repetition evoke that feeling.

Two examples of being inside a body are on opposite pages of *Rosemary's Baby*. 'Within her, under the hands that lay alertly on her stomach, a tiny egg had been fertilised by a tiny seed.' (p.102) This is written in the passive voice, which is reflected in the use of the word 'alert'. 'Her hands on her stomach shielding the embryo inside her.' (p.103) There is a page between the quotations, in which Rosemary is thinking about various situations that could hurt her baby, such as fires or falling objects. Acting out of anxiety, she puts Minnie's charm necklace on. This marks a definitive change in the story: she is now in the grasp of Minnie and Roman. The change from the adverb 'alertly' to the verb 'shielding' marks a definitive difference in the tone of these two quotations. The latter quotation is written in the active voice, which has a dynamic quality. Could Rosemary be shielding her foetus from falling objects or the real danger, the Tannis root, and her cult neighbours? Rosemary experiences the two most fundamental ideas pertaining to being inside a body—pregnancy and sex. In her body forms another body, a life that grows from her own. The conceiving of the child is not the only sex in the book, but certainly the most graphic.

The hugeness kept driving in her, the leathery body
banging itself against her again and again and again.

(*Rosemary's Baby*, p.82)

The scene is Rosemary being raped while she is half-conscious. This is an emotionally challenging scene. The repetition of 'again' captures the unstoppable mindless violence and evokes dread and helplessness in the reader. 'Driving' and 'banging' are violent verbs, both very bodily and inhuman. I found this chapter distressing to read. It is confusing to understand what is dream and what is reality, and the violence and helplessness of her situation is chilling. This sets a very different tone from the one in Burnham's *Inside*, in which he is alone, masturbating.

Another night on my own, yeah

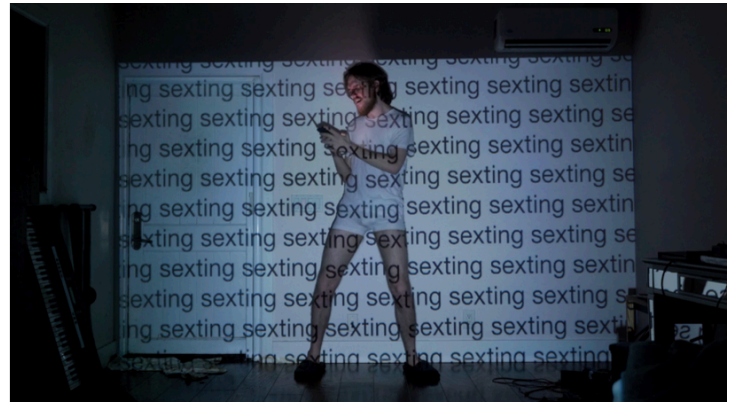
Stuck in my home, yeah

Sitting alone

One hand on my dick and one hand on my phone

(*Inside*, p.7, from 'Sexting')

Neither of the scenes are happy; Bo reflects on the loneliness of lockdown, and Rosemary is being raped. Both are trying to connect to real life and failing. Rosemary is in a dream, half conscious, trying to connect to reality, and Bo is sexting with a person on his phone, searching for the human connection of sex in a bodiless world. They are both almost reaching reality, but neither succeed. Bo's sex is detached from humans, similar to Rosemary's in that she is being raped by the Devil; however Rosemary's interaction is physical, and described



sensually, despite the brutality. 'Leather' and 'body' are bodily words, whereas Bo's is cold and technological.

In *High-Rise* a body takes many forms: reflections in a building that is succumbing to chaos, and utilitarian objects for sexual gratification. In *Rosemary's Baby*, not only does a building create a body, but a body creates a body too—little Andrew. 'The Fruit at the Bottom of the Bowl' exemplifies literal objectification, as well as empathetically existing inside a body. In *Inside* we see a man not only trapped inside a body, but also a house and a National lockdown, and we watch as he craves another body to be with. Everybody's living space reflects their inner-space, and pain, reproduction and loneliness are universal bodily experiences. Our bodies are all we have, and our experience of being inside is the source of humanity.

Modernism

At the beginning of this school year, Level 3 English specialists completed a module on Modernism. As discussed at length during this module, Modernism defies definition, although it can perhaps be characterised by reading such texts as The Waste Land (T. S. Eliot), Ulysses (Joyce), and Mrs Dalloway (Woolf) — all three of which are concerned with the everyday and inner human experiences, whilst being extremely innovative in their use of form. Modernism is my particular specialism, and so it is always a great pleasure to be able to bring this movement to my students, but I could not have predicted the nuance and subtlety they would bring to their own work, which is exemplified in the following essays.

In Eliot's *The Waste Land*, 'form is content, content is form'

Hannah Edsell (Cl. 12)

Poetry is a great art of centuries. Form and content build the feeling, the structure, the language, the story, the images. They are the bones, they are the meaning. They are everything, all the words, all the sounds, all the rhythms, and they are nothing. Not writing, not meaning, just words to guide future minds.

Eliot's *The Waste Land* uses form and content in many ways to create *the* picture, *his* picture. The first image the reader is given is that of nothingness, of bare land, but out of that comes emotion and ideas. It may be a moment of realisation or 'temporary crystallisation of the mind', as Eliot once put it, but all of that can be recognised through language and through simple ink lines.

Focusing on part V. 'What the Thunder Said' lines 322-358 I will argue that form and content develop each other and become each other.

Throughout *The Waste Land*, content and form are used in opposition to build strong pictures, or as Eliot calls them, 'broken images' (l. 22). This means that the structure of the poetry can seem unrelated to what the words are saying. The first three stanzas of part V. have a constant flow, like water. There is absolutely no punctuation within this section, which creates an odd feeling of unstoppable, uncontrollable movement, not only on the page but in your mouth. No breath, no stop, like a stream.

Which are mountains of rock without water
If there were water we would stop and drink
Amongst the rock one cannot stop or think
(ll. 334-336)

However, as shown by the quotation above, the content here is almost entirely about the lack of water and the longing for it. It's like a trick of the brain, when someone tells you not to think about water, you immediately picture it. The title of part V. ('What the Thunder Said') which also suggests water in some ways as thunder gives rain. An expectation is set in the reader's mind and then shut down instantly with the almost 'apocalyptic' first three stanzas: a complete destruction of all form or structure, no rhyme, no punctuation, no connection to anything else in the poem, a

complete change of writing style compared with sections I-IV. Later on when the water does finally come, 'In a flash of lightning. Then a damp gust / Bringing rain.' it almost feels underwhelming, even with the full stop, because of the large gap and change of subject. I think the use of this title and contrasting content at the beginning is quite a shock, however, also slightly prepares the reader for the feeling of disappointment when they come to the final line of the poem. Without its closing sound (om) the poem feels abandoned: 'shantih shantih shantih' and that longing for something more, remains.

The strong visual images throughout the poem evoke emotion in the reader and although content and form are intertwined in many ways to create feeling, here they work together. In the third stanza (ll. 345-358) the style of writing changes in order to cater to a change of feeling through the language:

If there were water

And no rock
If there were rock
And also water
And water
A spring
A pool among the rock
(ll. 345-351)

The lines become much shorter and the words, more repetitive, creating a quick, 'Drip drop drip drop drop drop' (l. 357) effect. Here, a few simple words written in order on a page don't make the reader feel much, but adding the rhythm and the sharp, short words like 'rock', 'drop' and 'spring' creates a clear, direct, poetic picture.

The abundance of repetition and alliteration that fills the short frequent lines, gives the feeling of circular thoughts, dehydration, fragmented thinking, and once again, the desperate longing for something that isn't there —water.

Here is no water but only rock
Rock and no water and the sandy road
The road winding above among the mountains
Which are mountains of rock without water
(ll. 331-334)

Using simple descriptions of scenery or real-life moments that can be easily recognised by the reader, such as 'the sandy road / [...] winding [...] among the mountains' (ll. 332-333), 'torchlight red on sweaty faces' (l. 322) and '[The] sound of water over a rock' (l. 355), builds a familiar story; however, the use of these phrases is not to 'study the actual [meanings, but to use them] to enable us to clearly see the abstract ideas and emotions [that the language] really wishes to present'.

Almost every stanza in *The Waste Land* contains some reference to a book, other poems, songs in many languages, greek mythology, the holy grail, the Fisher King, London's history etc. allowing connections to be made to past, present and future, and between the five parts. However, not only does part V. have the almost 'apocalyptic opening', it has no references to anything

outside the poem itself, except 'stony places' which is used in the bible a few times, but as mere description. It is perhaps the least edited and commented-on, section of the original poem, by Eliot himself, or by Ezra Pound (changing only a few words like 'the' and 'nor') and other critics, separating it still further. Why is there nothing to say? It is called 'What the Thunder Said', but it does not say anything. Does Eliot have nothing to say but only the longing to speak? When the thunder sounds 'He who was living is now dead / We who were living are now dying' (ll. 328-329) — they cannot speak.

The section starts with the word 'After' indicating that the following words exist 'After' or outside of the rest of the poem. '[It] is a self-contained narrative, [beginning with a] stream-of-consciousness' and ending with open longing.

Here form is content, content is form. [...] It is not to be read — or rather it is not only to be read. It is not to be looked at and listened to. [The] writing is not about something; it is that something itself. (Samuel Beckett)

They are each other, help each other, oppose each other to build each other, they challenge each other, complement each other and become each other.

In *Mrs Dalloway*, Woolf draws explicit parallels between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith

Esmée Lynch-Morrison (Cl. 12)

The characters of Septimus Smith and Clarissa Dalloway hold individual depths beyond the immediately apparent. Simultaneously, these characters resemble one another through a map of deep-rooted connections. Despite their polarities, there are aspects of relation that one senses throughout the narrative. In Woolf's *Mrs Dalloway*, Clarissa and Septimus never physically encounter one another, and yet Clarissa holds a relationship with Septimus that is arguably more profound than the one she shares with her own husband.

Throughout this essay I will argue that in *Mrs Dalloway* Woolf draws explicit parallels between Clarissa Dalloway and Septimus Warren Smith. This argument will focus on the line 'I'll give it you', delivered by Septimus moments before his suicide.

Clarissa, a middle aged woman on the brink of an identity crisis, isn't portrayed with an abundance of personality, rather an absence of it. Septimus, on the surface, characterises simply a WWI veteran and victim of shell shock. Alone, these characters' impacts are limited, ordinary, questionable; Septimus seemingly an irrelevant background character, Clarissa a shallow middle class woman. However, when observed in conjunction, the two augment each other, entertaining a number of similarities.

'What we get with Woolf is a preoccupation with the inner life' (Katherine Simpson). An initial similarity between the two is the way in which external quality of life affects inner ability. Clarissa's dissatisfaction in her

external reality is notable throughout the novel, and consequently affects her internal state, relationships and overall contentment; in many ways she 'lost herself in the process of living' (p. 203). Septimus has long-standing trauma rooted in the external events of WWI. This results in the fragmented and paranoid inner state that eventually destroys his personal life, embedding his mind and leading to periods of anxiety, difficulty processing emotions and disjointed relationships, eventually costing him his life. 'Holmes would get him' (p.163)

The most interconnected aspect of these characters is expressed through their disquietude. Although existing in contrasting circumstances, both characters consistently struggle with feelings of fear and guilt. After hearing of Septimus' suicide Clarissa feels 'in the depths of her heart an awful fear' (p.203), just as Septimus, when he jumps, is fearful of Holmes and 'did not want to die' (p.164). Later Clarissa exhibits guilt, as if iniquitous: 'She had schemed; she had pilfered' (p.203); an emotion common to Septimus, when in conversation with doctors about (hypothetical?) war crimes for which he feels overwhelming guilt: 'What was his crime? He could not remember' (p.107).

By subtly correlating the two, Woolf allows deeper aspects of Clarissa to be understood. Clarissa consistently struggles with the guilt of dissatisfaction, a product of her upper middle-class lifestyle, which when viewed against Septimus's increasingly disturbed mental state, appears petty, highlighting Clarissa's repression. On the other hand, Clarissa's guilty conscience is relatable to a much wider audience than Septimus's embedded trauma, and the sense of insecurity over personal issues that appear, in the grand scheme of things, insignificant, is a feeling that most understand and therefore overlook. Essentially, Septimus contextualises Clarissa's 'irrational' thoughts, enabling readers relatability and deeper understanding.

During Septimus' final moment he stands beside the window and before jumping bellows 'I'll give it you' (p.164). This line is not explained nor is its addressee stated, — so who is Septimus addressing? The most obvious candidate is Dr Holmes, however there is evidential suggestion that Septimus is covertly referencing either himself or Clarissa.

Initially Clarissa's response to Septimus' death appears exaggerated, even egotistical, but perhaps Septimus' pre-suicide statement directly addresses Clarissa, affirming their connection, justifying her reaction.

Until Septimus' death the relation between the two characters is purely dramatic irony, portraying Clarissa's emotional response to the suicide as unseemly. Evoking fear and immense reflection, Clarissa describes it as 'her disaster — her disgrace' (p.203) perhaps because the only impact the death has on her is inconvenience: the lateness of two of her guests. Many of Clarissa's later responses are likened to Septimus'. Firstly the repetition of characterised anxiety triggers: for Septimus this was 'Holmes' (p.163), for Clarissa 'The young man' (p.203). Clarissa states Septimus' suicide as 'her punishment to see sink and

disappear here a man, there a woman, in this profound darkness' (p.203). This is comparable to Septimus' frequent comment that 'human beings have neither kindness, [...] faith, nor charity. They hunt in packs' (p.98). Additionally Clarissa reflects on being 'forced to stand there in her evening dress' a parallel to Septimus' forced suicide; she departs from the company of her party, as Septimus departs to avoid entertaining Holmes.

Most importantly, after attempting to rationalise her emotions, Clarissa admits that 'she felt [...] very like him' (p.204) not only recognising the two's relation, but suggesting the possibility of a transcendental transaction. Perhaps 'I'll give it you' was a symbol of Septimus' sacrificial efforts to fuel Clarissa's drive to survive. Whether Clarissa is aware of this or not remains undisclosed, but we know 'she felt glad that he had done it' (p.204).

Standing at the window Septimus observes 'coming down the staircase opposite an old man [...] stared at him' (p.164). Considering Septimus' frantic state, such an observation appears inappropriate. Perhaps this man stands as a symbolic allusion upon which Septimus must reflect—is his statement 'I'll give it you' symbolic of an end to his suffering?

Sigrd Nunez writes 'Woolf's characters tend to notice the same [...] things, [...] draw the same conclusions about what they see, and to be emotionally affected in the same way.' (p.172) Here another parallel surfaces; Clarissa too stands at a window observing 'in the room opposite the old lady stared straight at her!'. Fascinated by an existence (quite literally) parallel to her own, Clarissa considers her presence in relation to this woman: 'could she see her? It was fascinating, with people still laughing and shouting in the other room to watch that woman, quite quietly, going to bed alone' (p.204). This alludes identically to the isolation experienced throughout the novel; although connected, the two characters exist separately, within the same worlds, same city even. Instantaneous anxiety corrupts Clarissa's mind. 'the old lady [...] put out her light! the whole house was dark now' (p.204), a metaphor for sudden death—death identical to Septimus'.

Although the actions of this woman shadow Septimus, there is a connection to Clarissa. Clarissa describes Septimus' death constructively: 'They went on living' (p.204). An ironic statement, as Clarissa identifies not with 'them' but with Septimus, who she doesn't know but has now lost. Perhaps this woman foreshadows her future, Septimus terminating his; the reality of this old woman could well become Clarissa's own.

Narrative aside, *Mrs Dalloway* is a novel structured around the passing of time, a subject which eerily misfits Septimus and Clarissa who jointly struggle as outsiders trapped in time; lost and isolated in disjointed, hostile situations. Although a sorrowful fate, ultimately this is why they are eternally connected. Septimus faces relentless paranoia, leading him to (unwillingly) commit suicide after losing his health to a war in which he

admittedly participated for 'Shakespeare and Miss Isabelle Pole in a green dress' (p.94). Similarly Clarissa Dalloway, a dissatisfied middle aged mother and wife, reflects on a life indebted to a marriage she approved as a naive 18 year old trapped in a society built on tradition. This novel is rich with stories, comparisons, characters each unique and simultaneously selfsame; an aspect clearly integral to Woolf: 'I want to give life and death, sanity and insanity I want to criticise the social system and show it at work at its most intense' (p.54). Perhaps Woolf's work was best reflected on by Nunez: 'Everyone is death-haunted, everyone is a poet, everyone is neurotic, everyone is a genius, everyone is Virginia Woolf' (p.172) but no two characters are as interconnected as Septimus Warren Smith and Clarissa Dalloway.

Parzival

Wolfram von Eschenbach's Parzival is, at its core, a Grail legend. Its story is simply that of a young knight, divinely chosen to release a land from heartache and pain—and yet the entire story is shrouded in mystery, allusion and ancient wisdom. In Class 11 students are perfectly placed to contend with the complex emotional and narrative journey of this text, and at the end of their study are invited to look more closely at its themes. This year I present two essays, one which considers the role grief plays in the narrative, and the other dealing with duality.

Grief in *Parzival*

Sophie Mair (Cl. 11)

Grief is an emotion felt at the depth of one's heart. It is an overwhelming feeling of sorrow, which we experience through the loss of someone or something we love. In *Parzival*, grief is a prominent theme and typically appears alongside its greatest companion, love. We meet Parzival's joyless cousin Sigune, his mother Herzeloide, and the Grail King Anfortas. Through them, we see grief portrayed as a natural part of life, depicted uniquely in a way where, as readers, we can access the parts of our hearts where we perhaps hold grief, and we can truly resonate with the characters. Reading *Parzival* has expanded my perception of how grief can take such different forms in people's lives, and this is what I will explore in my essay.

At the beginning of the story, we meet Parzival's parents, Gahmuret and Herzeloide. Little does Herzeloide know that his fate lies beyond their life together, and Gahmuret is soon killed in battle. 'Such is the way of the world: joy today and grief tomorrow.' (p.12) This quotation refers to Herzeloide sorrowfully waiting for Gahmuret's return, unaware that he never will. It expresses the inevitability of grief, by linking it closely to joy. The joy that Herzeloide feels so recently by getting married is abruptly overwhelmed by the grief of losing that same knight. Her shock perhaps plays a role in all cases of grief. Everyone knows that grief is inevitable, however, when we experience it it's as if nothing could have prepared us for it. Hence, 'today' and 'tomorrow' remind us of how closely in time we can experience the extremes of joy and grief. This sentence, particularly the phrase 'the way of the world', paints the idea of a cycle, where grief is a natural process of living and of experiencing love and joy. The repetition of the 'w's similarly adds to the feeling of a cycle. In the second half of the sentence, the 'a' in the word 'today' gives it a more lively sound, whereas the flatness of the word 'tomorrow' which has three o's, gives the opposite effect. The consonants in 'tomorrow' follow the roughness of those in grief, and the word feels as if it's heavily dragging on, such as the way one pushes through life whilst grieving. Furthermore, the name 'Herzeloide', which means 'Heart's Pain', acts as if suffering was in Herzeloide's story from the beginning; like she is fated to grieve, as perhaps we all are.

Sigune is arguably the most grief-stricken in this book. She has lost her one true love, which some may say is the worst instance of grief. I don't believe I have experienced true grief, so I can't resonate with it as the characters in this book do, but I have felt that when you lose someone close to you, even if that person is alive, it feels as if a part of you has gone with them; perhaps how Sigune feels. 'I shall give him love through the joyless days that remain to me. [...] There are two of us here. Schionatulander is one, I am the other.' (p.38) 'Two of us here' could symbolise how Sigune already feels dead, or likewise that her love for Schionatulander is so overwhelming that he feels alive in her, despite his parting. Here she has accepted that any happiness in her future is nonexistent. Through saying 'the joyless days that remain to me' Sigune consciously expresses knowing that her fate will end in grief; that death is at her feet. In the end, Sigune indeed dies of sorrow, finally reunited with her true love. Sigune is a significant character when looking at this theme. She gets so stuck in her grief that it consumes her, and it's as if there is no space left in her heart for anything else. It is crucial for those who experience grief to not get lost in it the way Sigune does. We must strive to keep going, whilst still taking all the time needed to mourn. Grief is a part of life, not a way of life—as Sigune experiences it. Many joyous people in the world live full and happy lives, whilst bearing grief.

There is a large spectrum in which one can experience grief, and my last example is of a character who suffers a much more physical form, compared with Sigune and Herzeloide. The Grail King Anfortas, whose recovery requires his nephew Parzival to ask The Question ('what ail's thee?'), lives in illness and constant suffering. 'He and happiness had settled accounts with each other: he was more dead than alive.' (p.22) This quotation shows how Anfortas is not only aware of his condition but also that he deeply feels for himself. The phrase 'more dead than alive' shows that he is grieving not just for his past self but grieving like he is already dead. The repeating d's in 'dead' gives it a more concluded and staccato feeling, just like death is the conclusion of life. Whereas 'alive' feels much more open-ended, and in Anfortas' case, being alive makes him open to great suffering. 'More dead than alive' emphasises a deep feeling of emptiness, and to use this statement is to truly state the severity of his grief. I feel that it is also highlighted by the complexity of the first part of the sentence, truly stressing how intense it is. Similarly, 'settled accounts' with happiness is a very concluded term; he has experienced happiness but is certain he won't again.

Unlike Herzeloide and Sigune, Anfortas has a rare hope for his suffering to end. Even if he doesn't feel hopeful, hope is still there. People who grieve death, perhaps never have the hope to stop grieving. It is a feeling that you can never truly recover from, but we constantly find ways to fill the void of our loss. To experience true grief is to feel the pain of eternal and unexpressed love, for we never really get enough time

with the people we love. I find comfort in remembering that although grief is inevitable, so is death. I believe that grief never marks the end, it is only a part of the human cycle; as explored in this story.

Duality in *Parzival*

Walter Kelly (Cl. 11)

Duality is, in essence, the two ends of a spectrum. The life of man is governed by dualities in almost every aspect of his existence. The duality focused upon in this essay is one between respecting the wisdom of others and of thinking for oneself. The average individual from any time period may find himself somewhere on this spectrum of independence and co-dependence, often resting on one extreme or the other. Great comfort is found in being fed endless information without having to think, while inversely the satisfaction of having all of your thoughts stem from a personal esotericism is attractive to many. On both extremes there is a certain quality of individuality missing, one must live in the world but not be wholly made up by it. The aim is to find the mean between these two extremes by piercing one's way through the heart of existence and finding the self somewhere between the collective and the singular.

I search for duality in my own life by attempting and often failing to embrace both my own ideas and those of others with equal value. In my essay I will be examining how the theme of this duality plays a role in the development of Parzival and his eventual discovery of the Grail.

As the tale of Parzival unfolds, we are taken not only on a physical journey but one of faith too.

Alas, what is God? Were He all-powerful—were God active in His almightiness—He would not have brought such shame! Ever since I knew of Grace I have been His humble servitor. But now I will quit His service! If He knows anger I will shoulder it. (p. 30)

This passage demonstrates the loss of faith which Parzival undergoes after being confronted with the failures of his past. One could interpret Parzival's unsettled faith as a manifestation of the battle of his inner duality. Parzival's hubristic turn from God can be viewed as a signifier of his departure from youth, the ignorance with which he committed each act and the juvenile reliance on others around him, toward the wasteland of his adult individuality.

The extract uses language which draws parallels to an earlier passage in Book II.

The boy was quick to ask 'Oh mother, what is God?' [...] 'pray to Him when in need. His steadfast love never yet failed the world. Then there is one called Lord of Hell. Deceit cleaves to him. Turn your thoughts away from him and treacherous despair.' (p.14)

The shift in Parzival's duality can be summed up in the

change of the question 'Oh mother, what is God?' to the later call of 'Alas, what is God?'. We see that Parzival's innocent questioning of the world and reliance on others such as Herzeloide or Gurnemanz has disappeared through his public humiliation in Arthur's court. Parzival is now calling out inside himself with the word 'Alas', echoing his forthcoming search for Munsalvaesche mirroring the call into his inner wasteland.

Herzeloide assures her son that God's 'steadfast love never yet failed the world' while in the later passage Parzival seems to believe that God has failed him, claiming that if he was truly powerful 'He would not have brought such shame!' The 'betrayal' of Parzival's God shows how his thinking has developed into one fixated on distrust as he begins to lose faith in the advice of others and rely on himself. The questioning of one's own faith is a distinctly human ordeal. We see people question and even lose faith in their government, economy, education system etc... The transition from blind acceptance to conscious questioning is in most cases accompanied by a shift in this inner duality of the self. Take for example an individual who grew up taking the world at face value. This individual might experience a drastic shift on the spectrum once he begins to question the institutions he grew up trusting and the scientific method with which he used to explain his reality. The shift away from his reliance on others may lead him inversely to an obsession with the transcendental, overexposure to esoteric teaching and a loss of connection with the real physical world. Parzival, as we see later on in the tale, manages to find equilibrium between the two and, in words fitting with his name (Parzival), pierces the valley of his existence, finding who he truly is.

'Dear Uncle, what ails you?' (p. 71)

As the story concludes, Parzival rediscovers the Grail and asks the all important question to his uncle. The Grail is in this sense a representation of the self we strive for, this is why it is not hard for Parzival to find it and attain it in the final book as he has already attained his inner Grail by reconciling the two aspects of his duality. The appearance of Feirefiz, with his white and black skin is a signifier of Parzival's reconciliation of his duality. In asking what ails Anfortas he shows care for another, stemming from both his own intuition and the teaching of the outside world (Cundrie and Sigune) bringing together what was lacking in each section of his journey and attaining the greatest prize of knowing himself.

In conclusion, Parzival moves from one end of his duality to the other and ends up finding the mean between the two therefore attaining the Grail. The quest for the Grail is one all humans undertake, some get lost along the way and forget their objective, finding too much comfort in one of the extremes, i.e Anfortas losing himself to his inner wasteland. The journey of Parzival, although obscure in places, represents the powerful 'I am' in all of us. The quest for the Grail is one we all undertake, and Parzival is a guide to follow in any time period or circumstance. By examining the theme of duality in Parzival I have uncovered an aspect of my own duality

which I had not considered before. It struck me how the figure of Parzival had to rely on words of those around him as well as his own intuition to find the Grail; he could not survive by prioritising one over the other—I would do well to follow his example.

Myth to Literature

As Parzival is to Class 11, so is Homer's Odyssey to Class 10. As teachers we always ask ourselves what will best serve the needs and interests of our students, and year after year this text proves effective and affecting. The students look at the tale of Odysseus as a picture of humanity, and having heard the story are invited to discuss the qualities of the writing. In the Michaelmas Term Peter Brewin taught this block, and I am pleased to share this essay from one of our Class 10 students.

Homer's Use of Descriptive Language in *The Odyssey*

Lila Harrison-Evans (Cl. 12)

In this essay, I will explore two passages from Homer's *Odyssey*, an epic poem that tells the tale of the hero Odysseus and his struggles to return home after ten years at war. I will look at how Homer uses illustrative language to add depth and meaning to the scenes he describes.

The first passage is taken from the fifth book of *The Odyssey*, when Odysseus departs from his imprisonment on the island of Calypso, and sets sail towards Ithaca. There, on the sea, he meets with Poseidon's wrath. The sea god brings a horrific storm down upon him, which shatters his raft and almost drowns him. Odysseus survives, clinging to the wreckage of the raft and searching the horizon for land.

Yes, but now,
adrift on the heaving swells two nights, two days—
quite lost—again and again the man foresaw his death.
Then when Dawn with her lovely locks brought on
the third day, the wind fell in an instant,
all glazed to a dead calm, and Odysseus,
scanning sharply, raised high by a groundswell,
looked up and saw it—landfall, just ahead.
Joy... warm as the joy that children feel
when they see their father's life dawn again,
one who's lain on a sickbed racked with torment,
wasting away, slowly, under some angry power's onslaught—
then what joy when the gods deliver him from his pains!
So warm, Odysseus' joy when he saw that shore, those trees,
as he swam on, anxious to plant his feet on solid ground again.

(Book V)

This passage opens with Odysseus's despondency in the lines "adrift on the heaving swells two nights, two days—/ quite lost—again and again the man foresaw his death". The author uses repetition here: "two nights, two days", which gives us a sense of the passing of time. Our hero believes death is something near at hand; something he can no longer foil. Odysseus is a man who is very sure of himself; he is used to having control of his own life, so this hopelessness may frighten him somewhat. The words "quite lost" are isolated from the rest of the text by two dashes on either side, emphasising his isolation. Or, being now accustomed to random acts of vengeance by gods and spirits against him, he may have simply resigned himself to his fate. However, we see Odysseus, to whom Homer

often gives the epithets of “shrewd” and “shifty”, return to himself with the words “scanning sharply”, which suggests his survival instinct and razor-sharp wit has been restored to him upon sighting land.

Homer provides us with a simile to elucidate Odysseus’ relief upon spotting dry land. He describes the feeling of joy when a child’s father, who has long been bedridden and near death, finally recovers. In ancient Greek times, this might have been a common picture amongst Homer’s audiences, and therefore, his listeners would relate easily to the story because they had experience of similar things. Odysseus feels the same safety and protection from a land long denied of him as a child would feel from a father that loves him. This is a very specific image which, used alongside this scene, gives us an enhanced picture of Odysseus’ jubilation.

In this verse, with the help of metaphor and simile, we experience Odysseus’ wretchedness transform into euphoria when he sees land on the horizon.

The second passage I will examine is taken from book thirteen, towards the end of the epic, when the Phaeacians, under the direction of King Alcinous, sail our exhausted traveller home to Ithaca after almost twenty years away. On the journey, a deep sleep takes Odysseus, one which does not release him until they reach his island home.

When they reached the ship at the water’s edge
the royal escorts took charge of the gifts at once
and stores of food and wine, stowed them deep in the holds,
and then for their guest they spread out rug and sheets
on the half-deck, clear astern on the ship’s hull
so he might sleep there soundly, undisturbed.
And last, Odysseus climbed aboard himself
and down he lay, all quiet,
as crewmen sat to the oarlocks, each in line.

They slipped the cable free of the drilled stone post
and soon as they swung back and the blades tossed up the spray
an irresistible sleep fell deeply on his eyes, the sweetest,
soundest oblivion, still as the sleep of death itself...

And the ship like a four-horse team careering down the plain,
all breaking as one with the whiplash cracking smartly,
leaping with hoofs high to run the course in no time—
so the stern hove high and plunged with the seething rollers
crashing dark in her wake as on she surged unwavering,
never flagging, no, not even a darting hawk,
the quickest thing on wings, could keep her pace
as on she ran, cutting the swells at top speed,
bearing a man equipped with the gods’ own wisdom,
one who had suffered twenty years of torment, sick at heart,
cleaving his way through wars of men and pounding waves at sea
but now he slept in peace, the memory of his struggles
laid to rest.

And then, that hour the star rose up,
the clearest, brightest star, that always heralds
the newborn light of day, the deep-sea-going ship
made landfall on the island... Ithaca, at last. (Book XIII)

The ancient Greek concept of Xenia, or hospitality, is well observed by the Phaeacians. They not only allow

Odysseus rest and recuperation in their country, but they offer to end his painful journey by bringing him all the way home. They “spread out rug and sheets/on the half-deck, clear astern on the ship’s hull/so he might sleep there soundly, undisturbed”. They expect nothing from him; they only want to help him in any way they can. The Phaeacians believe Odysseus to be a “man equipped with the gods’ own wisdom”. Our hero has also observed Xenia, which requires the guest to bring news of the outside world, and has touched them with his stories of the Trojan war and his fruitless attempts to return home.

Sleep takes Odysseus almost as soon as they are underway; “the sweetest, soundest oblivion, still as the sleep of death itself”. Perhaps he sleeps because he feels safe with the Phaeacians as he has not done for many years, or perhaps because he realises his journey is at an end, and the exhaustion he has fought for so long, finally catches up with him. This is confirmed by the lines “now he slept in peace, the memory of his struggles/laid to rest”. The words “slept in peace”, “oblivion” and “laid to rest” give us a sense of finality, even death; the end of the epic.

The Phaeacians sail at an extraordinary pace, and Homer recounts this with a simile; “the ship like a four-horse team careering down the plain,/all breaking as one with the whiplash cracking smartly, leaping with hoofs high to run the course in no time.” The author equates the Phaeacian ship to a horse-drawn chariot, barrelling at top speed across the land, thus showing just how hard the Phaeacian men are working to get Odysseus home. According to Homer, not even “a darting hawk, the quickest thing on wings” could keep up with them.

The final words of this passage are expressed like a sigh of relief; “... Ithaca, at last.” Even though Odysseus still has troubles ahead, for now we can relax in the knowledge that he is finally home.

Homer’s *Odyssey* is brimming with consistently descriptive, powerful language, which creates a dramatic atmosphere throughout the poem and grants the reader an almost palpable understanding of Odysseus’ suffering on his journey home.

Commentaries

Occasionally students are freed from the demands of essay writing and invited, instead, to write commentaries. Commentaries do not require introductions or conclusions, and students can simply observe and reflect on a passage of writing, exploring its qualities and themes. This year our commentaries come from two blocks which Peter Brewin and I co-taught. In the Class 10 Love, Blood & Fate block the students studied drama, starting in Ancient Greece and arriving in Shakespearean London. For these commentaries they chose extracts from Antigone (Sophocles). Meanwhile, in the Class 11 Romantics block we moved between the lives and poetry of Blake, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Byron, Shelley and Keats, before finally coming to Mary Shelley's Frankenstein. The students were then invited to write commentaries on poems of their choosing, thereby demonstrating their understanding of both the literature itself and how these works reflect the time in which they were written. Here we have two pieces from Class 10 and three from Class 11.

On Loyalty in *Antigone*

Finlay Michael (Cl. 10)

Antigone is a tragedy written by Sophocles in Ancient Greece. I will be looking at the loyalty used in *Antigone*. In the passage I have chosen *Antigone* is arguing with her sister *Ismene* about whether they should bury their deceased brother *Polynices*. You can see loyalty from two different points of view: *Creon* thinks loyalty should be given to him, and those who are loyal to him will be honoured by him whilst those he deems to be traitors will be denied the dignity of a sacred burial. *Antigone* in contrast gives her loyalty without asking for loyalty in return. She tells her sister that she must look to her own conscience when deciding whether to bury *Polynices* whilst *Antigone* puts loyalty to her family and the Gods above that of obedience to the King.

I won't insist,
no, even if you should have a change of heart,
I'd never welcome you in the labor, not with me.
So, do as you like, whatever suits you best—
I will bury him myself.
And even if I die in the act, that death will be a glory.
I will lie with the one I love and loved by him—
an outrage sacred to the gods! I have longer
to please the dead than please the living here:
in the kingdom down below I'll lie forever.
Do as you like, dishonor the laws
the gods hold in honor.

At the start of the passage *Antigone* says “I won't insist, no” “I'd never” “not with me”, the repetition of negative phrases showing that whether her sister is willing to help her or not, nothing will stop her from giving her brother a burial. “I won't insist, no” gives the sense of her sheer determination; she is adamant and the extra “no” that is used underlines her unwavering loyalty.

Antigone is very passionate about burying her brother, so much so, that she would die just to bury him. The

repetition of all these phrases, “die” “death” “I will lie” “dead” “I'll lie forever” are related to death in one way or another, showing us that she knows what she is trying to accomplish could cost *Antigone* her life. She is completely fine with dying because she says that dying in the act of burying her brother “will be a glory”, the word glory showing the pride she would take in fulfilling this task. She would rather die than keep living without having honoured him. *Antigone* also displays her loyalty to the Gods: “I have longer / to please the dead than please the living here”; it is more important for her to follow the laws of the Gods than the rules decreed by the king.

When *Antigone* says, “dishonour the laws / the gods hold in honour”, by using the opposites “honour” and “dishonour” it emphasises how contrasting *Antigone's* and her sisters views and characters are. Perhaps *Antigone* is happy to die so that she can see her brother or maybe she thinks the afterlife would be better than the life she has after all the family she has lost. She also believes life on earth is short and the afterlife is eternal: “in the kingdom down below I'll lie forever.” The kingdom down below references being buried but can be used as a metaphor for hell. *Antigone* wants to carry out her brother's wishes and give him the burial he wanted even if that means breaking the law of her city, showing how much she cares for her brother.

An example of the way loyalty is shown in our modern day is the ‘Just Stop Oil’ protestors, who are so determined to prevent climate change that they are willing to put their lives on the line. For example, the way they cement themselves to roads and the way they attempt to prevent people from using cars for transportation by creating blockades with their bodies. The ‘Just Stop Oil’ protestors are often seen as selfish, and people question their methods. By indiscriminately disrupting people's lives are they really advancing their cause? Or are they alienating themselves from the population and losing support? They hope, perhaps, that the more people are affected the more people will become aware of the cause and put pressure on the government to agree to the demands they are making. Meanwhile *Antigone's* rebellion can be seen as more personal—does it present a danger to the power of the state and the King? The disloyalty she demonstrates to the King in burying her brother against his decree undermines his power and if others saw this perhaps it might lead them to question whether they should remain loyal to the King and state, or challenge the autocracy of the monarch. *Antigone* is dealt the harshest of punishments which would then serve as a deterrent to others that might have questioned the ruler.

On Power in *Antigone*

Lila Harrison-Evans (Cl. 10)

Power in *Antigone* is shown through three main characters (or entities): *Creon*, who has power over Thebes and its laws, *Antigone*, who has power because she

is not afraid to do the right thing, and the gods, who are completely omnipotent and have power over everything. I have chosen to look at Creon's power, or rather his dwindling power over Thebes and its inhabitants, through this passage taken from around halfway through the play:

But whoever steps out of line, violates the laws
or presumes to hand out orders to his superiors,
he'll win no praise from me. But that man
the city places in authority, his orders
must be obeyed, large and small,
right and wrong.

Here, Haemon, Antigone's husband to be, approaches his father, Creon, hoping to change his mind about Antigone's death sentence.

This passage is short, and the words are easy to understand. Creon, the speaker, uses clear, legible language to ensure the comprehension of the listener; in other words, he cares more about getting the message (or threat, in this case) across than he does about the flow of his speech. Certain words and phrases jump out at me: "out of line", "violates", "laws", "hand out orders", "superiors", "win", "authority", and "obeyed". These give us a sense of Creon's commanding, tyrannical nature. The roughness of his speech has much to do with the almost complete absence of adjectives. They are only used in the final lines, where Creon uses them to emphasise his warning. He also speaks about "the man the city places in authority", and we can only assume he means himself. He believes himself the elected, rightful leader of Thebes, and therefore his every command will be followed. It's basically a threat.

At the end of the quotation, Creon says that his every command must be obeyed, whether they be "right or wrong", which proves he cares more about his power than he does about the morality of his orders.

When I want to write something dramatic or suspenseful, I will do exactly as Creon does in this speech: I shorten my words and use direct, uncomplicated sentences. It gives the reader the sense of urgency and threat which beautiful, flowing language fails to do.

I feel that characters like Creon are rarely explained, but in the play, the depths of his corruption are made very clear, as well as his fear of losing his power. He would go to any lengths to retain domination of Thebes, even sentence his own sister's daughter to death. His madness, his desperation to keep control are driven by his love of power, which I never knew could send someone so fanatic. Power is a necessary thing; a good thing in the right hands, but Creon, who has the fatal flaw of hubris, has been in power for many years before the events of *Antigone*, and it has corrupted his mind as it does to many weaker men.

Creon's desperation to hold onto his power comes from his fear of being without it. He has held the role of the ruler of Thebes for a great many years; even since before he was king. He condemns his own sister's daughter to death when she opposes him, showing how deep into the madness and lust of power he has sunk, and only sees "the

error of his ways" when Tiresias tells him that the citizens of Thebes no longer listen to him. In a final, frantic attempt to regain control, he goes to free Antigone, only to find she is already dead by her own hand. He has lost the trust of his citizens and his power is gone. One cannot help but pity him, however, when we are presented with his wretchedness at the end of the play. Even after all the strife he causes, in the end, he tries to redeem himself, to set things right, but redemption is denied him, as punishment for his own crimes, or for the crimes of his family before him.

'Ozymandias' – Percy Bysshe Shelley Peter Beugelink (Cl. 11)

I met a traveller from an antique land,
Who said – "Two vast and trunkless legs of stone
Stand in the desert. . . . Near them, on the sand,
Half sunk a shattered visage lies, whose frown,
And wrinkled lip, and sneer of cold command,
Tell that its sculptor well those passions read
Which yet survive, stamped on these lifeless things,
The hand that mocked them, and the heart that fed;
And on the pedestal, these words appear:
My name is Ozymandias, King of Kings;
Look on my Works, ye Mighty, and despair!
Nothing beside remains. Round the decay
Of that colossal Wreck, boundless and bare
The lone and level sands stretch far away."

The story of the poem is about the statue of Ozymandias (Rameses II). Shelley wrote this when the British were bringing the statue from Egypt to Britain, however he never actually saw it. This poem is very grand; it uses strong, grounded language like 'stone', 'sunk', 'stand', 'stamped', 'command', 'mighty', connecting to the power and authority of a king—a statement of structure and sturdiness.

In the second line we have a strong image of these legs of stone in the desert. The word 'trunkless' makes us think about the trunk of a tree even though 'less' means without; it still gives us the picture of these huge legs. In the third the ellipsis gives us a break mid-line to imagine the legs on their own in the open desert. However we then find that half the head of Ozymandias is protruding from the sand next to it, the face describing a harsh, bitter and punitive king. The alliteration in the line "cold command" is very strong with the 'k' sound cutting through, making you feel unpleasant; it also describes the way in which his tyrannical empire was built, something Shelley despised—which is why he describes Rameses II as a ruthless man. In the 6th line he compliments the sculptor on how well he portrayed Ozymandias; however he is not necessarily only talking about the sculptor of the statue but maybe also the sculptor of the poem, (Shelley) himself, saying that he is just as skilled as the sculptor. In the next line he tells us how these cruel emotions survive in this lifeless stone;

maybe he is saying that there will always be brutal people in this world, but that is what makes us see the good in others. It is interesting that he says “these lifeless things” instead of ‘this lifeless thing’; this may be because he is referring to his own work. In the 8th line he disputes that not only the artist’s work will be remembered throughout history but also the sculptor himself (or the poet).

After the volta he talks about the words that are written on the pedestal of the statue. They appear as if Ozymandias is speaking to you (the reader) proclaiming that he is the ‘ruler of all rulers’ and that you should look upon his great work and fear him. Then there is a pause and it allows you to again imagine the landscape, and in turn see nothing, just the sand of the desert. The following three lines are the thoughts of the viewer: there is nothing to be seen of his great empire, just the vast open landscape.

The might Ozymandias obtained is now gone, because of time, and the only thing that’s left of him is lying in one of the most uninhabited areas of the planet. It shows the unimportance of authority in one man; that afterwards this empire is lost and forgotten. This contrast is also shown in the language of the poem with the strong and sturdy words and those that show the downfall like ‘wreck’, ‘shattered’, ‘decay’, ‘bare’, ‘sunk’, ‘lone’ and ‘level’. This often gives you a splitting feeling like you are being pulled from one side of strength to the other of fragility throughout the poem.

There is an aspect of nature in this poem: the desert. The reason for the statue’s ‘fall’, is the desert’s harsh climate, its sandstorms eroding the statue’s features and covering its broken body in sand. This depicts the power of nature, able to disintegrate stone and engulf a massive rock; this relates to the romantic ideas of the time: that in this case even the mightiest “King of Kings” cannot withstand the force of nature.

In this poem the form and content work very strongly together. The poem does not have a particular rhyme scheme like Petrarchan or Shakespearean sonnets. There are also many lines where rhyme is inexact or unclear. There are also some words which one has to slightly adapt in speech to make them rhyme perfectly, like ‘sand’ and ‘command’ and ‘stone’ and ‘frown’. This mixed with the fact that there are a couple of lines where depending on how you pronounce a word the line may have 11 syllables instead of 10—all of this gives the poem a lack of structure, like the third line, broken in two halves. This line as well as the whole poem relates to the statue’s lack of structural integrity, because it broke in half and is still being eroded by the desert taking away its defining aspects.

I chose Ozymandias because I found it interesting that this poem was so different from other romantic works which often focus on the beauty of nature and bountiful lushness. This poem is about the desolateness of nature and in some ways the lack of life.

The deep dive into this poem has illustrated to me that the power and authority in one person cannot be sustained

throughout history. That when one has made it to that highest point it is only down from there. That life is a rise and fall from birth till death, and is full of many a smaller rise and fall throughout.

‘I Wandered Lonely as a Cloud’ — William Wordsworth

Barbara Grochulska (Cl. 11)

I wandered lonely as a cloud
That floats on high o’er vales and hills,
When all at once I saw a crowd,
A host, of golden daffodils;
Beside the lake, beneath the trees,
Fluttering and dancing in the breeze.

Continuous as the stars that shine
And twinkle on the milky way,
They stretched in never-ending line
Along the margin of a bay:
Ten thousand saw I at a glance,
Tossing their heads in sprightly dance.

The waves beside them danced; but they
Out-did the sparkling waves in glee:
A poet could not but be gay,
In such a jocund company:
I gazed—and gazed—but little thought
What wealth the show to me had brought:

For oft, when on my couch I lie
In vacant or in pensive mood,
They flash upon that inward eye
Which is the bliss of solitude;
And then my heart with pleasure fills,
And dances with the daffodils.

Wordsworth’s poem begins by evoking a sense of isolation in the reader, serving as the perfect prelude to contrast with the visual effect the daffodils will later bring. The initial two lines flow slowly and delicately. Words such as ‘cloud,’ ‘floats,’ and ‘high’ accentuate the ethereal quality and the airiness of this part. The transition to dynamic joy is marked by the phrase ‘when all at once,’ heralding the introduction of the daffodils. Daffodils symbolise rebirth and new beginnings, serving as a hallmark of spring.

A simile, “a cloud”, connects the speaker to nature in its light, temporary, almost “purposeless” character, humbling mankind and underlining how nature and humanity intertwine. The phrase ‘a crowd’ implies a gathering of spectators, reacting to the situation at hand. When considering the daffodils as a symbol of nature, this suggests that they observantly watch and respond to human behaviour. This highlights the romantic idea of nature as a “living being”, powerful and expressing its outlook on the world. While ‘a host’, being someone

welcoming others, serves as a metaphor for a human being, merely a guest in the world of nature.

A dactyl used at the end: ‘**Flu**-tter-ing | and **danc** | -ing **in** | the **breeze**’ makes the rhythm flow smoothly almost as a waltz-like feel—ONE-two-three. It is also emphasised by the explicit word “dancing” which is repeated in each stanza. Though the poem’s iambic tetrameter creates a steady, not hastily, walking pace.

Similar to the previous stanza, the second commences with a simile, this time comparing the daffodils to stars and underscoring their abundant and scattered presence. The seemingly endless vista of yellow, or as previously described, ‘golden’ daffodils and their star-like shape, in fact, make it a particularly apt image. The phrase ‘twinkle on the milky way’ imparts a sense of eternity to the fleeting flowers and evokes a delicate sense of the sublime. The cosmic imagery of nature enhances the notion that the speaker is experiencing something transcendental and fundamental to existence.

The metre and sounds in lines 7 and 8 add to the mind-bending idea of the universe. An extra syllable is added with the word “continuous” which then reads iamb-anapest-iamb-iamb—‘Con-**tin** | u-ous **as** | the **stars** | that **shine**’—enhancing the thriving of nature. Both the sibilance in line 7 and the assonance in lines 7 and 8 increase the “twinkling” quality of the stars. The ‘s’ sounds across “stars”, “continuous as”, “shine”, and the ‘i’ sounds of “shine”, “continuous”, “twinkle” and “milky” flash on and off like the stars in the night sky. The stanza-ending line “tossing their heads in sprightly dance” effectively highlights the deliberate movement of the flowers, suggesting an intentional action rather than merely being swayed by the wind. This anthropomorphic presentation creates a connection between human existence and the vibrant life of the flowers.

The word ‘dance’ in the third stanza refers this time to the waves, introducing another instance of personification. This further contributes to the speaker’s acknowledgment of intention within nature, creating the impression of the entire natural world being immersed in a vibrant dance.

As seemingly light as lines 15 and 16 may appear, they actually encapsulate the essence of the entire poem. They explicitly establish the connection between the daffodils and the speaker’s happiness. Throughout the poem, the daffodils are portrayed as cheerful, and this sentiment appears to transfer to the speaker.

This choice of the word ‘poet’ rather than ‘person’ is noteworthy and implies that an individual must possess a certain sensitivity to the world, be engaged with nature, and be prepared to receive its beauty. In line 17, the repetition of ‘gazed’ emphasises the duration of time spent observing the daffodils. The speaker’s unhurried approach is mindful towards nature. Although the poem is narrated in the past tense, lines 17 and 18 forward to the present, an ongoing relationship with the flowers, and serve as a setup for the final reflection.

In the final stanza, a “vacant” or “pensive” mood shows a disconnected, absent-minded and thoughtful state of

mind. The long vowels enhance a thoughtful and sentimental atmosphere, disrupted by the unexpected speed of “flash”, signifying the return of the daffodils as an overpowering memory. The assonance of “dances” and “daffodils” signifies that the flowers “dance back” and he reflects on the lingering positive effect of this memory. The poem concludes with the poet metaphorically joining nature in its joyful dance. It symbolises that true happiness and true pleasure can only be secured through a deep connection with nature, held dearly within the heart.

To fully comprehend the poem, we need a context about Wordsworth’s poetic practice. In the ‘Preface’ to *Lyrical Ballads*, Wordsworth writes: ‘Poetry is the spontaneous overflow of powerful feelings: it takes its origin from emotion recollected in tranquillity’. In the poem, “the spontaneous overflow” is the encounter with the daffodils and it can then bring back the emotions in a pure, spiritual form, where it “actually exists in the mind.”

The poem’s ability to evoke a heartwarming effect upon quick reading, yet still retain its depth upon closer examination, is what drew me to it. The stylistic richness is a field to explore on various layers. Furthermore, it portrays a beautiful, touching, and rewarding connection between humans and nature, resonating on multiple levels. It leaves me with a transcendent feeling and a longing for mindful encounters with nature.

‘Composed upon Westminster Bridge’ – William Wordsworth

Sara Freitas-Ruivo (Cl. 11)

Earth has not any thing to show more fair:
Dull would he be of soul who could pass by
A sight so touching in its majesty:
This City now doth, like a garment, wear
The beauty of the morning; silent, bare,
Ships, towers, domes, theatres, and temples lie
Open unto the fields, and to the sky;
All bright and glittering in the smokeless air.
Never did sun more beautifully steep
In his first splendour, valley, rock, or hill;
Ne’er saw I, never felt, a calm so deep!
The river glideth at his own sweet will:
Dear God! the very houses seem asleep;
And all that mighty heart is lying still!

While the poem isn’t about Westminster Bridge, the mention of the bridge in the title not only lets us know that it was from the bridge the poem was written but the word bridge on its own creates a link or bond which could relate to the poem itself. When thinking of a bridge one might picture a structure connecting one side of land to the other, creating a link between the two, which in relation to this poem can be the bridge/bond of humanity and nature playing together to create this picture of a sublime beauty. A bridge is a manmade structure that spans over a feature of nature.

'Composed upon Westminster Bridge' was written during the Industrial Revolution making the impact of the clear sky and fresh air even more dramatic than it would normally be in a city. While normally during the day all one would see is smoke, the imagery of the morning and everything being asleep and clear is very strong in the poem. This strong imagery occurs in lines 4-8, as he describes that the city is wearing a 'garment' that could be 'covering' all the smoke and clouds, creating this smokeless air and beauty throughout the city. Another way to look at it can also be as the 'calm before the storm'. The tranquility before the city wakes up; while not permanent, the idea that even with the change of the city 'waking up' beauty can always be found again every morning. This idea can also be thought of as the natural cycle of nature. While it is constantly changing there is always beauty that can be found. The poem is unusually human in the context of romantic literature, but it can also be seen as a way of dismissing the human world. While the beauty he describes is in a city, this beauty is in the early morning when there is no sight of human life. It's purely nature.

The first line of the poem explains that there is nothing more beautiful on earth, which makes the reader more interested and left wondering what he is talking about, making you want to keep reading. The mention of Earth can be seen as a model of the whole poem. Earth is a place where both humans and nature coexist; however, one could say that humans are not always considerate of nature, creating this nature vs. civilisation (the industrial revolution specifically in this time period) feeling in the poem.

The poem being short, to me, helps me to understand the immense feeling of awe. By making the poem a sonnet, the awe comes out more strongly than it would on a longer poem. It makes it more relatable creating that feeling of being lost for words, or otherwise, admiring the sublime. However, the language really ties with the grandeur of the feeling it emits. Words like, "majesty", "glittering", "splendour", and "mighty" help us to understand the immense beauty of the sight. In line 5, the use of the words 'bare' and 'silent', depict the vulnerability of the scene described. While the city would normally be covered in smoke, very noisy, the smokeless and silent city feels bare.

On lines 6 and 7, Wordsworth presents this very manmade image of different buildings, but goes on to say that they 'lie open unto the fields, and to the sky'. This can be seen as a way of the buildings submitting to nature. Both an earthly and ethereal landscape is described, and it's as if the buildings are sandwiched between the two. These manmade things exist in between these two worlds, not necessarily as a disconnection, but as a natural bridge between them. On the other hand, what could be portrayed as a human interference in the natural world is the mention of the river. On line 12, his description, gives me the feeling of freedom, perhaps from what the river would have to normally endure, this being the boats of trade sailing up and down and overriding the river's

natural pace. The use of the words 'glideth at its own sweet will' encapsulates the river's natural flow and its 'freedom' from being forced to 'carry' the boats up and down its stream during the day.

The regular form of the poem really adds to the calm and serene feeling of it. It provides a very stable and tranquil feeling, which reflects the harmony and beauty in the moment. It also helps to set the tone of sublime awe. The use of commas creates a sense of fluid continuity while also allowing you to have a slight pause to take the poem in, while the semicolons add emphasis on this pause to draw attention to key moments. The regular, thoughtful rhyme scheme, creates a musicality of the rhymes which help to unify the phrases and also adds to the beauty and elegance of the sonnet.

Sonnets

When it comes to poetry, perhaps the most exulted and most difficult form with which to work is the sonnet. Immortalised in english by William Shakespeare, sonnets not only adhere to a strict form but traditionally deal with high human ideals through allegories of nature. In our Romantics block this year, students in Class 11 were challenged to observe nature and compose their own sonnets.

Composed below a Fatherly Oak

by Maxine Tzonev (Cl. 11)

I now retrace the footsteps of my youth
 When joy was rife and troubles infantile.
 Thou regal tree, thou'st little changed, in truth,
 Thy branches seem in sympathy to smile,
 While I in ever morphing turmoil stand
 The weight of age and loss of innocence.
 Oh glorious oak, still towering, spreading, grand,
 Still grow thy leaves untouched by cage or fence.
 But thy unchanging stance must surely fade.
 This fertile, fragrant earth beneath thy roots
 Of stuff more strong than you or I, is made
 And soon cruel time shall cease both leaves and shoots.
 Then we shall lie, both you and I, below,
 For e'er the wind, upon our buried bones to blow.

The Way Out

by Maxine Tzonev (Cl. 11)

How can my eyes with any reverence glance,
 Upon this bleak, grey, metropolitan sight
 With lowered head and stooping, weary stance,
 When all that now I crave is cowardly flight.
 To once again have grace my vision rays
 Of setting sun that gild the luscious fields.
 In gorse and heather hills to spend my days,
 And reap the joy that beauteous nature yields.
 Ah lord, to lie bereft of country bliss
 With inward eye to traipse the fragrant woods
 And crave like starving man to feel the kiss
 Of dainty dewdrops dripped from foxglove's hoods.
 Thus refuge must I seek in nature's shawl,
 And by maternal hand be rendered whole.

On Rain

by Walter Kelly (Cl. 11)

I do not claim to know from whence you came,
 Nor what your saintly fall, past cloud and peak,
 Achieves in self-destruction. Curséd souls
 You fly from grace like He whom terror seeks
 To strike me with the wanton, tragic
 Might of ten-thousand skies! A-thousand moons
 For a-hundred brothers who each hold ten
 Reasons to hate one for their misfortune.
 Yet you hurt me not, down my pale cheek you
 Weep like a tear cried for eternity.
 Like a gift to humanity, falling
 From grace—spilt from His cup, divinity
 And disunity; Promethean rain
 As heaven's gift will forever remain.

A Meditation with the Ivy

by Bo Holden (Cl. 11)

To fall upon a heart that beats as mine,
 That leaves may fall like colour from my face.
 When in this time I see no foreign place,
 But sulking ivy binding legs with twine,
 Says stay, sweet love, and traps me in my mind.
 And like the biting wind that chills my face,
 Now sways my heart, leaves me in bitter state,
 With nothing but a cold and helpless cry.
 A stream of light falls tender on this place,
 A peace bestowed that hearts had longed to find,
 A heavy foot is lifted, stops the chase,
 Invited in, the stilling of my mind.
 The wind runs thin against my tired face,
 So, silently I watch both leaf and vine.

Bells Hidden in his Skin — To John Keats

by Bo Holden (Cl. 11)

The old church bells rang through the frozen hauls,
 He views his home through dark and heavy eyes,
 His ears are drowning in the unheard noise,
 Reverberating through the ice like walls.
 The bells, they reach and catch him as he falls,
 And bind him in their cold and cluttered cries,
 But infants are left deaf when Mothers die,
 And longing to be heard, they wail, they call.
 When beauty visits let her enter in,
 And let truth sink beneath your rooted feet,
 Bells creep beneath the surface of your skin,
 And settle, lost within you, somewhere deep.
 You cannot stop it; let their work begin,
 For Bells will make you laugh, then make you weep.

The vigilant eye

by Keaton Morrison (Cl. 11)

As I sit here so wondrously alone,
 Whilst gazing at the silently still flow,
 It's sad to think I'm sat here on my throne,
 Towards the hour, shorter time becomes.
 Without hand-held device known as a phone,
 It's tiresomely boring, staring, numb.
 Across the vastness there beneath my feet,
 As Lensbury's lifeguard duty was complete.
 As ripples wave, from one end to another,
 The children scream! now making their glee known,
 The echoes of their splashes, laugh's embrace,
 Resound throughout the space, aquatic grace.
 The length of these short hours, a week sat still,
 Do cause apparent mind games, duty filled.

The Hens

by Peter Beugelink (Cl. 11)

As I walk up they start to loudly cluck,
 For they believe that I have brought them luck;
 Their jerking heads move quickly side to side
 They see no food—and think that I have lied,
 Just Truffles hops as Primrose loudly digs.
 Melodious birds are heard above in twigs;
 The skies on high are darkening the scene,
 Soon only Snowy's feathers will be seen.
 Their plumage delicate of warmth to heart.
 I hear their soft and creaky throats cackle,
 They soothe the anxious, restless thinking part,
 Whispering over a silent shackle.
 Awake! The time has come for them to sleep,
 The day has been, at once the dream is deep.

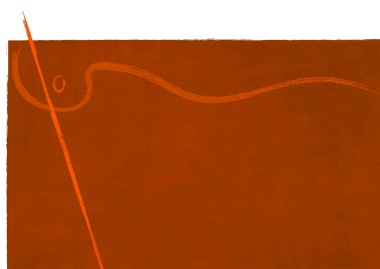
Creative Writing in Class 12

In the last year of school Creative Writing is an optional and independent pursuit. Students are invited to work in any form and to send me their work at any time over the course of the year. I am therefore afforded the great privilege of acting the role of editor, helping these young writers to hone and develop their skills—usually through many, many drafts. This year Class 12 student, Hannah Edsell, took up this challenge and I am delighted to share this piece, which forms part of her Class 12 Project.

The same or different

by Hannah Edsell (Cl. 12)

The batteries can be cut down by half!
 As much our breaths as snow drips down towards
 our tightened feet, that rest in plastic hopes,
 in plastic shoes, to say they are but fake—
 essential up the wooden hill to bed
 and up the sharpened hill to where we start
 our tests. Who will be ill? And who will breathe
 a shallow breath of thinning icy air?
 Until emotions are the same or gone,
 the same or different? The same, the same or
 the same, the same or different? The same.
 How beautifully can the mountain clouds
 lay over peaks or eyes or freezing lake,
 or hands, click here, breathe, wait, click here, click here.
 ...
 1 7 4 9 3 0, correct.
 Do we really need 3 laptops instead
 of 2? The question lies in stillness, left.
 My burning lungs are fuelling burning eyes
 so eager, now, to glimpse the sight sublime
 as close to Angel's fall as possible
 to climb, to walk, to stumble or to die.
 On scale of 1-3 how dead are you?
 8 5, correct. 2 4 6 1, that's wrong!
 How slowly are you falling from a strike
 that cut the power of a safe haven—
 it saves the burning muscles (not the eyes)
 from illness quickly hitting in the brain.
 (I find that brains are strange to hurt their own
 Body, of which they have eternal rule.)
 We walk on green and greys to reach the white,
 and talking less does calm our mission, which,
 sounds strange when strength is taken to account.
 However, this is quiet and this is true;
 perhaps the realest thing that ever I
 have done. The realest thing to ever do.
 The batteries were dropped and left to frost
 while pulses of our thumbs pulse on and on,
 pulse on until our minds are settled, low
 below the crystal rocks of hurting snow.



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Steiner School

June 2024