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Boys' Club

In our post-#MeToo, post-#BlackLivesMatter, ambivalently 'woke' world, we are meeting a new kind of censorship. Not the censorship of video nasties, or the Red Scare, but rather a censorship which aims to fight racism and sexism, and to present a better, more inclusive version of history. Although the individuals pushing to remove the 'N' word from *To Kill a Mockingbird*, or to reframe Shakespeare's plays as 'anti-racist' almost certainly have their hearts in the right place—I see things a little differently.

There is a difference between building a better future, and rewriting the past. Both as a reader and a teacher, I see great value in looking at the truth, and dealing with it as honestly as possible. Of course I would never choose a text purely to provoke outrage—but a novel, or poem, or play, or film that holds some essential human truth will almost always court some controversy, and when young people can deal with both the good and the bad, when they can see that things are not black and white, they learn something of great value.

Literature lends itself particularly well to this kind of discussion. Within the framework of a crafted narrative we can approach difficult subjects in many ways, appreciating the beauty of literature as an art, as well as exploring the complexities therein.

All this my students know, and it will therefore come as no surprise that finally, in this fourth edition of our annual Literary Journal, we have a collection of essays, commentaries, and creative writing with a particularly dark edge.

We begin with essays by Class 12 English specialists, first exploring the complex, often dysfunctional, dynamics of families, before moving on to the controversial landscape of modernism. We have, too, a Class 10 commentary on one of the most grisly moments in Homer's *Odyssey*, and another which looks at a very beautiful moment through a highly critical lens. Finally we have a collection of poems from across the High School, many of which delve into the darkest recesses of the human psyche. But, bringing balance, we also have two lighter pieces from a Class 11 student: the first, a transcendent consideration of the Grail in *Parzival* and the second, an exquisitely delicate poem titled 'Snow'.

These two pieces may offer a welcome reprieve for readers, but in truth I see light in everything included here. Because no matter how sad or scary, no matter how critically our texts are considered, the pieces in this edition are all examples of the extraordinary transformation that occurs when young people look truthfully at the world—and that is beautiful.

— Stella Ottewill

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The Family and the Child

Walter Kelly (Cl. 12)

The biological family is inescapable. Whether we run from or accept our fathers, mothers, brothers and sisters they will always be our next of kin. Dynamics both difficult and easy arise when individuals live their lives connected by the invisible umbilical cord of family. Perhaps the most important familial relation is the one held between parent and child. In this essay I will explore the effects of the father and the home on the development of the child in *Fun Home* (Alison Bechdel), *Middlesex* (Jeffrey Eugenides), *Six Feet Under 'Pilot'* (cr. Alan Ball, 2001), and *Little Miss Sunshine* (dir. Faris & Dayton, 2006).

The home is to many people a place of safety and comfort. Houses, flats, bungalows and caravans are filled to the brim with identity and can act as physical extensions of their occupants. We see in texts such as *Middlesex* and *Fun Home* that the home can act as a signifier of subconscious or hidden aspects of a character or family, exposing parts of the mind or in particular cases the body, through interiors and design.

It is significant that Calliope's relation to the family home 'Middlesex' is one of undetected equivalence. There is a strange kinship between Cal and Middlesex. The very home itself is an outsider: with its unconventional design it sticks out against the backdrop of suburban uniformity, much like Cal. When describing the unique interior elements of the house (p. 258) Cal exclaims 'Middlesex! Did anybody ever live in a house as strange?' The name of the house, 'Middlesex' already directs our thoughts to Cal's biology, sitting somewhere in the middle of the sexual spectrum. The body is often referred to as the house of our being, providing a frame in which is held our identity. When Cal asks this brazen question, the answer lies directly in her own body which is this strange house she must live in.

Cal goes on: 'As sci-fi? As futuristic and outdated at the same time?' Many interesting questions crop up when considering how homes may look in a scientific future; will the red-brick rectangles with windows and a door give way to grey hexagonal pods or will the idea of a family home become obsolete altogether, making the idea of separate houses something we laugh at from our modern communal habitations? Similarly, the book asks several times, what might the future of gender look like in a scientific world? Dr. Luce introduces the idea that Cal's particular situation is indicative of a more modern human being; one which has moved past the constraints of sex and gender, embracing what is at the core of 'identity' without the binary labels of established society. Middlesex is, as Cal describes, futuristic in its bold design yet outdated in its compliance to a bygone artistic movement. From Dr. Luce's point of view, Cal is also a futuristic human yet outdated as a product and spectacle of the ancient world. Hermaphroditus, son of Hermes and Aphrodite, the original hermaphrodite, was not a monstrous being but one hailed for their beauty. Tiresias

provides yet another example of one in mythology who crossed the lines between gender and became far wiser for it.

Cal goes on to describe the peculiar interior features of Middlesex. 'The concept of the door, of this thing that swung one way or the other, was outmoded. So in Middlesex we didn't have doors. Instead we had long, accordion-like barriers, made from sisal'. As I read this passage I begin to consider the door as representative of binary gender. Cal claims, from a place of experience, that the inward-outward swinging of the door is a thing of the past. Whether the door swings into your face or you swing it into another's, the object announces itself to the world and provides a false-dichotomy: is there a way in-between? The folding doors of Middlesex, made from the natural material of Sisal, represent to me Cal's sexual state of limbo found in-between the inner and the outer yet just as natural as any other oak or pinewood door.

Children are easily influenced by their environment, especially when it comes to the home. Children, unlike adults, rarely have control over the function and design of where they live. The almost paradoxical cycle of the adult curating the home in his image, which in turn entrenches him *in* that image, is lost on the child. Their home is not indicative of who they are but of who their parents are. Young children are impressionable and often become direct products of their environment. When a child's environment is the projected character of their parent (who they often idolise at a young age) then the home may, unknowingly, become an extension of the child as well. In the graphic novel *Fun Home* we encounter this idea in Alison's relation to her father Bruce's obsessive control of their home. As is quite quickly discovered, the Bechdel family home has been curated by her father to perhaps mask a corrupt element of himself, or even to express what he is otherwise unable to. In an ironic sense, the confusing period interior that pervades *Fun Home* does speak to Bruce's character. Cal unknowingly feels comfortable in a house that accommodates for her strange physical body while Bruce curates a house to portray a side of himself that isn't real, indirectly showing his hand and presenting a house that perfectly describes his difficult personal situation. Alison comments on Bruce's incorporeal shame (on p. 20, next page).

Here we encounter Alison referring to her own deprecating emotion (embarrassment) as a scale model of her father's well established and partly repressed unhappiness. Although we are reading the words of a grown-up Alison, the idea that a father's emotion could pervade the halls and doorways of a house, instilling in his child an element of existential agitation speaks to the relationship between the home as an extension of the self and the child as a product of their parental situation. As Alison develops, she begins to uncover similarities between herself and Bruce. From a shared love of books (perhaps a product of her father's love of reading and of the shelves on shelves of classics in their family home) to an inclination toward homosexuality, Alison begins to

THIS EMBARRASSMENT ON MY PART WAS A TINY SCALE MODEL OF MY FATHER'S MORE FULLY DEVELOPED SELF-LOATHING.



IN FACT, THE METICULOUS, PERIOD INTERIORS WERE EXPRESSLY DESIGNED TO CONCEAL IT.



HIS SHAME INHABITED OUR HOUSE AS PERVERSIVELY AND INVISIBLY AS THE AROMATIC MUSK OF AGING MAHOGANY.



MIRRORS, DISTRACTING BRONZES, MULTIPLE DOORWAYS. VISITORS OFTEN GOT LOST UPSTAIRS.



resemble elements of her father perhaps partly through the influence of the Bechdel family home.

My home is, in my mind and heart, the building I live in. For some people perhaps, home manifests in the family itself, in the relationships between family members. Children tend to mirror the behaviour of their parents just like Alison and Bruce's shared love of reading. I myself have become almost an amalgamation of my mother and father's interests and values. From the specific books I love all the way to how I take my tea at four o'clock, the environment of the home can mould the child for better or for worse into pictures of their parents.

It is significant that the father-child relationships in our texts are of a more complex nature than the mother-child relationships (especially when the children are young). The mother, despite being the most important thing in a child's life, fulfils the loving role of 'mother' without the space for the child to get to know them as a distinct individual. Whereas the father, in relation to his children, operates as their first outlet into the world of 'other' human beings. In a sense, the father, after having children, maintains his individuality, his interests, flaws, dislikes and overall personality while also maintaining his position as a father. The child's personality can very easily be influenced by the character of their father from a young age. In my

own experience I was far more conscious of my father's taste in music at a young age than I was of my mother's, consequently I like very similar music to my father. It was only later on in life that I began to appreciate my mother's likes and dislikes. We encounter some of the more intense character traits of the father in our texts as we are confronted with things such as the death of the father, the sexuality of the father and the father's control over the family. The father as a unique individual can influence his children to both extremes. In our texts we encounter children embracing all that runs contrary to their father and his way of life; alternatively, we see them become carbon copies of their fathers but most often the reaction lies somewhere in-between.

In the case of Dwayne and Olive in *Little Miss Sunshine* we encounter two children with a father (figure) who is fixated on the concept of winning and losing. Richard's ideology is driven into the family through his seeming inability to refer to anything but his 'Refuse to Lose' program, saying early on in the film

I'm serious! I think we could all learn something from what Dwayne's doing! Dwayne has a goal. He has a dream. It may not be my dream, or your dream, but still...He's pursuing that dream with focus and discipline. In fact, I was thinking about the Nine Steps...

It is interesting to note how Dwayne's vow of silence is both contrary to and congruent with Richard's obsession with winning. Dwayne's entire image seems to oppose Richard's bubbly attitude and incessant optimism. At the same time, Dwayne's idolisation of Nietzsche's Übermensch and his striving toward his goal etc. aligns him with Richard's constant pressure on those around him to be winners. Dwayne is, from many perspectives, more of a 'winner' than Richard but there remains an element of irritation from Dwayne toward Richard as his comparison between Dwayne's goal and his nine-step program has a condescending edge to it, almost reducing such ideological commitment to a mere attempt at becoming a 'winner'. Of course, the pressure Richard puts on his children to become 'winners' also manifests in Olive's desire to win the beauty pageant.

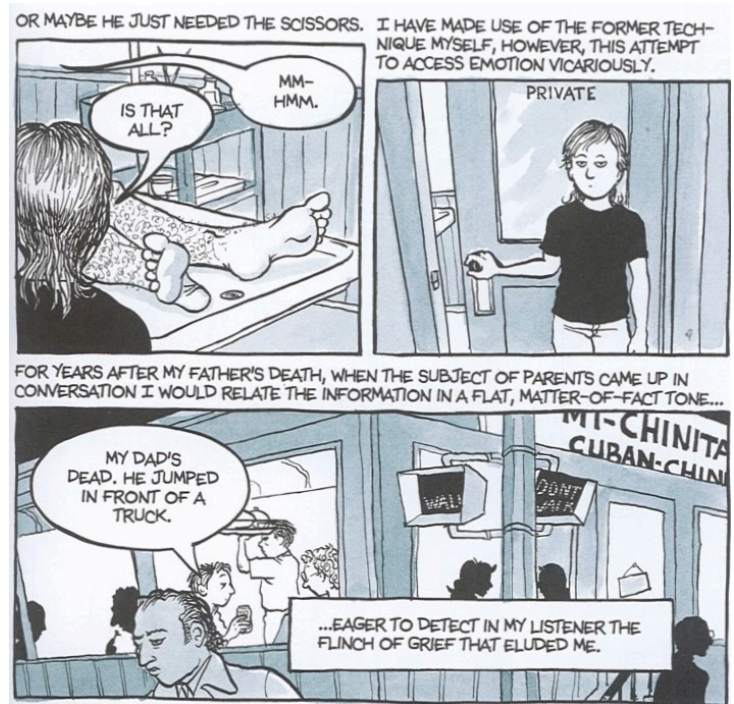
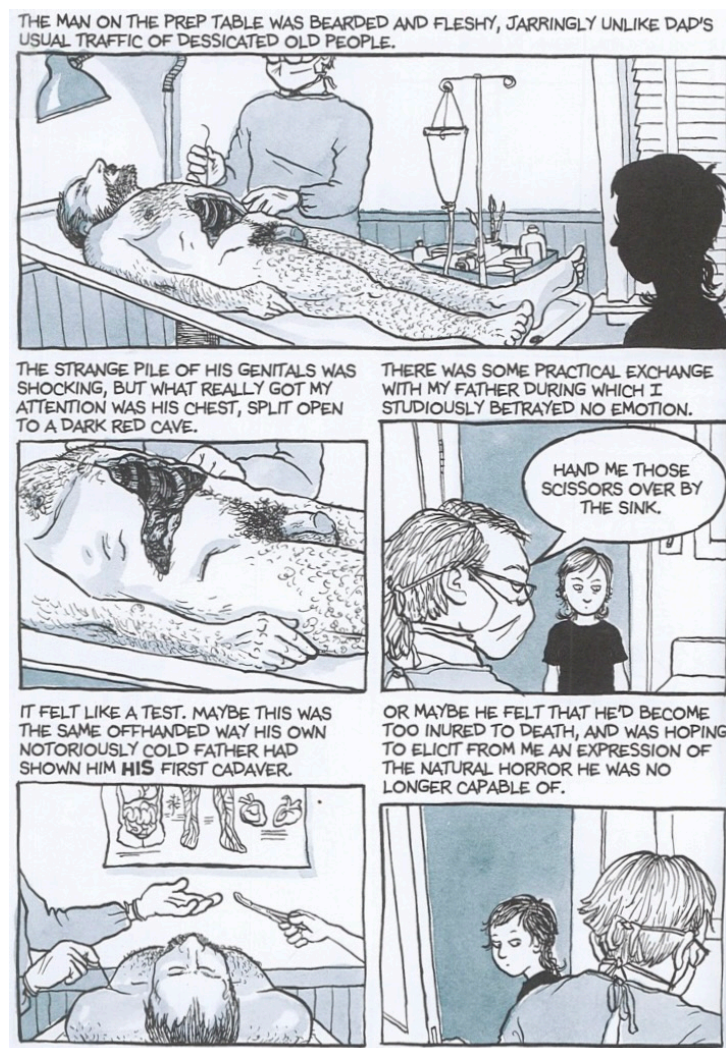
Despite his winning expectations Richard does not fit into the hyper-masculine father role. When we consider a family dynamic such as the Fishers in the Pilot episode of *Six Feet Under* we encounter a father who plays a dominating role. Nathaniel is by all means a loving father but there is an element of his masculine expectations that rubs off on his two sons. We see their father appear to them in visions after his tragic death, speaking to how embedded his character and expectations are in them. David's closeted homosexuality could be seen as a reaction to his father's masculine expectations, and Nathaniel's death stumps his son Nate who says 'How could a man who's so fucking scared of everything, who never had an accident, or even a speeding ticket in his entire fucking life... how could he have a car wreck?' In answer to which Brenda says 'Are you mad at him or the fact that we're all

gonna die?’

Nate’s discomfort at the concept of his own father’s death speaks to his death-filled upbringing. The Fisher family run a funeral home meaning throughout their childhoods the children were constantly confronted with the harsh reality of death. In one instance Nathaniel calls Nate into the embalming room with a dead body, sliced open, lying on the table. Nathaniel is unfazed and seemingly expects his son to remain so too. Nathaniel’s refusal to even accommodate his son’s shock or discomfort may have led Nate to his evident agitation around the topic of death. Nate refuses to inherit and care for the family business himself and has a choleric outbreak during his father’s funeral service, displaying this underlying discomfort instilled in him from a young age.

The initial precedent set by one’s parents in relation to taboo topics such as death, sex, crime etc... can significantly influence the child in how they relate to those topics throughout their life. I am lucky to never have had to lay my eyes on a corpse and especially lucky that my parents did not show me one at a young age. This protection has of course made me sensitive to topics and situations pertaining to issues such as death, alcohol and drugs. Perhaps an immunity and strength is built in children who encounter these uncomfortable but very real aspects of humanity at a young age.

In *Fun Home* Alison undergoes a very similar



experience (pp. 44-45, above & left).

Alison’s experience of seeing the cadaver leads her to foster a completely different relationship to death than that of Nate. Once again the father, Bruce, displays no emotion, almost playing an emotional game with Alison trying, as she believes, to elicit a reaction in her that he is no longer capable of producing. Unlike Nate, Alison grows up with a certain desensitised relation to death perhaps as a product of Bruce’s unnatural comfort around it. This seems to lead Alison to play the same games her father did but this time with friends and strangers. Alison’s suppressed emotion attempts to materialise in the shock and emotion of others when she stuns them with the death of her father. Here we encounter a father living through his child. This notion is one we are all quite well accustomed to. Fathers can, sometimes blatantly, attempt to use their children as conduits through which to live again, or to experience aspects of the world they were never able to meet in their own lives. Bruce’s life lives through Alison in a cyclical fashion, imbuing her with his shame in just the same way he allows her to find her sexual truth through literature leading her to mirror his homosexuality but despise his taste in interiors.

By considering both the home as an extension of the self and the relationship between father and child in these texts I have uncovered ways in which these themes affect the child of a family. By close-reading, comparing and personally reflecting on the texts considered I have concluded that the development of the child in the family is heavily influenced by aspects of the family home (in the instance of Cal and Alison) as well as by their relationship with their father’s individuality (in the case of Alison, Nate and David, Dwayne and Olive).

Beneath the Surface of Family Dynamics

Sophie Mair (Cl. 12)

Family is a place where love and silence coexist. A place where our identities are shaped, our morals and values learnt, and our sense of belonging in the world secured. Yet, beneath the idealised surface, families often become defined not just by the bond of love that connects them, but by the secrets, suppressed feelings and untold stories that linger beneath the surface. These hidden wounds which are passed through generations, shape family behaviours in destructive ways. In this essay, I will explore what often lies under the surface of family dynamics in *Middlesex* (Jeffrey Eugenides), *August: Osage County* (Tracy Letts), *Fun Home* (Alison Bechdel), *Six Feet Under* 'Pilot' (cr. Alan Ball, 2001) and *Little Miss Sunshine* (dir. Faris & Dayton, 2006). Whether families silence their wounds as in *Middlesex*, weaponise them as in *August: Osage County*, or use a facade to mask them as in *Fun Home*, the common thread between these five texts reveals how it is much more harmful to try and control wounds by pushing them under the surface, then it is to deal with the chaos which is an inevitable part of family life; but sometimes these acts of chaos break the family mask and in doing so, bring the families a step closer towards healing.

Trauma pursues generations when it is not addressed through direct communication, leaving the following generations with the burden of interpreting the often silent effects. In *Middlesex*, Desdemona finally confesses her secret of incest to the person whose has perhaps been most affected by these acts: her grandchild, Cal. Towards the end of her life, Desdemona tells the story to Cal, of the intersex people in her village who were a result of incest. She says, "In the village, long time ago"; instead of the date, she gives this fairy-tale-like opening. "My mother tell me this but I never believe" adds to the feeling of this story being a myth, as Desdemona has a second-hand account of what she's telling Cal. In this way, she also distances herself from what she is saying, the same way she has distanced herself from the truth her whole life. Desdemona's refusal to directly address the incest that led to Cal being intersex is a strong example of generational trauma. When an individual or family doesn't address trauma, it will surface in the form of silence and mythical stories, making it much harder for future generations, who have to deal with the subconscious burdens that they inherit. The way she tells this story disrupts the connection between Cal's intersex identity and Desdemona committing incest, reflecting how generational trauma is often passed down in a fragmented manner. Desdemona's language telling this story is also significant in understanding Cal's struggle with his identity; "they use to have sometimes babies who were looking like girls. Then, fifteen, sixteen, they are looking like boys!" (p. 526) The imprecise language that she uses to describe Cal's biological condition results in Cal growing up with this confusion around his identity, as he doesn't have the correct language or understanding to know the history of

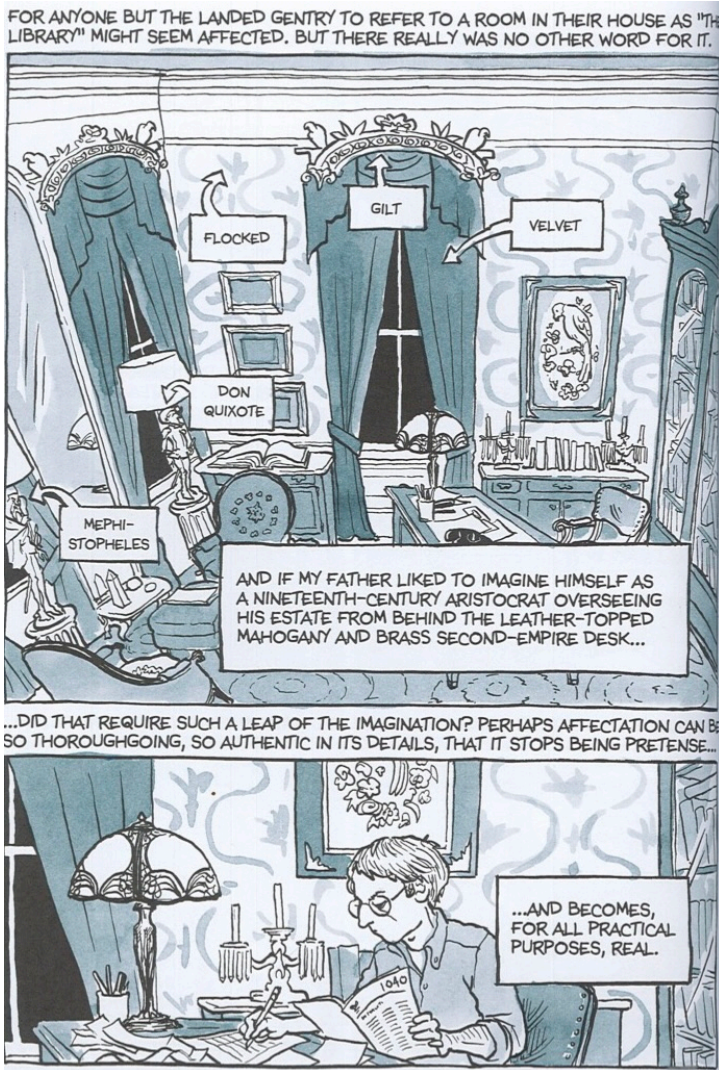
his condition: Cal has to carry not only the physical inheritance of trauma but also the psychological one.

Towards the end of her life, Desdemona's role in the family becomes much less physical, and she becomes like a ghost, holding the family's secrets, memories and emotions. She becomes a bridge between the past and present, and her confessions emerge from the blurred space of her subconscious as if she is slipping in and out of reality, seemingly unaware of Cal's transformation. This is likely due to the isolation and detachment she has from the world and her family, as she has remained bedridden for almost a decade. Her detachment from reality reflects how generational trauma can cause great disconnection and emotional distance between generations, as Desdemona is not fully able to understand the changes in younger generations, particularly Cal. Consequently, Desdemona's confession feels almost involuntary, being in this subconscious state, perhaps reflecting how trauma often operates when a person is most vulnerable. It mirrors how trauma is passed down through generations, not with direct communication, but through subconscious behaviour and half-told stories. Desdemona has kept this secret her entire life and is only now able to confess when she is in this ghost-like state, as she cannot do it consciously.

In *Middlesex*, we see how family secrets can be kept in silence for decades, and the consequences of this are often subconscious, as they are rarely discussed. Conversely, in *August: Osage County*, the effects of trauma are out in the open, but this does not lead to resolution and is equally as destructive. The relationship between Violet and Barbara is perhaps the strongest instance of generational trauma:

VIOLET (*points to Mattie Fae*) [...] This woman has dents in her skull from hammer blows! (p. 94)

The imagery we get from the use of the word 'hammer' becomes a symbol of how something that is usually used for good can be weaponised by families over time. In the same way, families who are supposed to nurture and build healthy and stable relationships can instead become sources of destruction through these cycles of trauma. The image of 'dents in a skull' embodies what generational trauma looks like: operating under the surface, leaving 'dents' in people for the rest of their lives. The line 'Tell her what an attack looks like!', which Violet directs to Mattie Fae, insinuating that Barbara has never been attacked, is ironic because Violet goes on to show Barbara literally what an attack looks like, even if she is unaware of it. She replaces the hammer which her mother used on her and instead weaponises her words, continuing the cycle of trauma. The line 'Attack my family?!', is posed as a question, but it can also be seen as a confession: Violet is literally attacking her family with her words as weapons, and the exclamation mark after the question mark perhaps turns it from a question into an attacking statement. Additionally, by saying, 'We sacrificed everything and we did it all for you. [...] You never had real problems,' (p.24) Violet dismisses Barbara's modern-day struggles, like the alcoholism she perhaps inherited from her father,



and her marital struggles, and compares them with the child abuse that she and her sister experienced. Violet turns love into blackmail and manipulates Barbara into thinking the pain she's endured isn't significant. She acts like these words are spoken from a place of love when they are instead repeating the cycle of trauma; reflecting how the wounds from trauma are often left unhealed, but generations find different weapons to use, mostly subconsciously. These scenes in *August Osage County*, of substance abuse, fighting, and verbal abuse, show how even when the causes of generational trauma are brought to the surface and directly addressed, it does not necessarily bring resolution; there is more to healing generational trauma than talking about it.

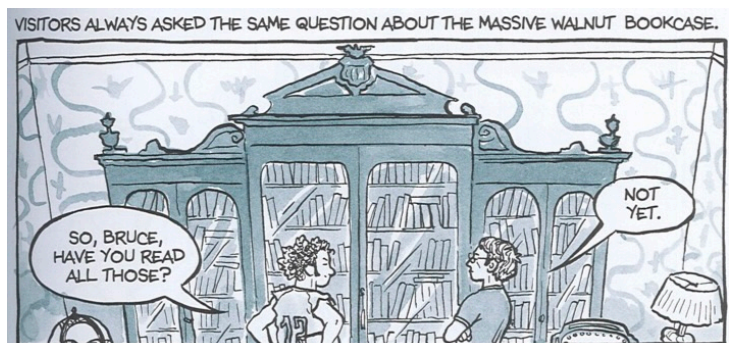
Violet's violent outbursts and dramatic personality serve as a stark contrast to the extreme control which is demonstrated elsewhere. In *Fun Home*, Bruce's obsession with his house decor reflects not just his desire for a nice interior, but a way for him to build an identity which he cannot express with words. He obsessively curates the image of being 'a nineteenth-century aristocrat'. (p.60, above)

Bruce uses his home almost like a theatre, performing to his family and visitors the act of being a respectable, wealthy, heterosexual man, hiding his true identity as a closeted homosexual. The decorations in his house, 'velvet'

curtains, 'flocked' wallpaper, and 'gilt' window frames go beyond decorations and almost become props in this obsessive performance. His library perhaps reflects the heart of his identity: he uses it as a place to explore his literary interests, sexuality, and his 'authentic self', but also to attract the attention of visitors and add to the image of a perfect, cultured family. Additionally, Bruce gives his students two books, *The Great Gatsby* and *The Sun Also Rises*, which could be seen as a confession of his true self. *The Sun Also Rises*, which includes themes of toxic masculinity and a man putting on a tough mask to suppress his emotions, is very much a reflection of Bruce, and he perhaps gives it to his students in the hope that they will understand him better. Additionally, asking his students to read these books could show his obsession with analysing these performances and studying the fake identities of men putting on a tough exterior; Bruce is constantly building this facade.

The bookcase's glass doors (p. 61, below) reflect a duality: Bruce displays these books to visitors to give off a respectable impression, but the door is closed for them to delve deeper into this facade, a literal barrier from Bruce's authentic identity. This also reflects the barrier in Bruce's relationship with his daughter, Alison. Their love of literature allows them to connect, but it feels superficial; a relationship built on Bruce's literary references to his true identity, rather than openly communicating with Alison. Bruce perhaps uses the books as a bridge between them and a barrier: they allow him to confess parts of himself that he can't use words to explain, but they also create an emotional distance between him and his daughter, and Alison is left to put together the puzzle of her father's identity. Alison can never truly connect with Bruce's true self, only with the performance he puts on. 'I grew to resent the way my father treated his furniture like children, and his children like furniture.' (p. 14) Bruce curates this fake identity so obsessively that his children become involved in the performance; the facade doesn't just cause his family deception, but emotional neglect. For Bruce, it's not just a facade; this front 'becomes, for all practical purposes, real' (p. 61), showing how Bruce is no longer just hiding his authentic self, but has forgotten it, and Alison loses her true father as a result.

Just as individuals like Bruce can create these masks to hide their true selves, families can collectively curate an idealised family image, often to mask dysfunction within family relationships. In *Little Miss Sunshine* the beauty



pageant is an important symbol of the American family's obsession with success and perfection. As the Hoovers step into the van, they are all literally moving towards something which represents perfection, and they all have goals which are driven by the idea of success. Olive to win her pageant, Dwayne to become a pilot, and most importantly, their father promoting the idea that you should never lose. At the same time, it seems ironic that the van, which is taking them towards the beauty pageant, is falling apart. As they get closer to their destination, the van perhaps becomes a symbol of their crumbling facade of being a 'perfect family', and in this confined space the dysfunction in their family is exposed.

Dwayne's breakdown in the van scene is perhaps an inevitable result of the internalised pressure from his father to 'never lose'. Similarly, David Fisher in *Six Feet Under* embodies the consequences of a family repressing emotions, and both he and his brother have to suppress their emotions because of the pressure on them to uphold the illusion of being a 'perfect family'. In *Six Feet Under*, the embalming room where David restores his father's dead body, reflects the heart of the Fisher Home: the fluorescent lights and bare, sterilised surfaces, reflect the Fisher's repression of messy emotions like grief. In this scene, whilst embalming his father's body (below), David

is also suppressing his grief, by sterilising both the physical chaos of death and the emotional chaos of grief. This mirrors the emotional repression in the Fisher family, of grief as something that should look clean and presentable. Dwayne's vow of silence, and David's eventual panic attacks, reveal the damage of families prioritising a perfect image over dealing with difficult emotions. Their breakdowns show that eventually, repressed emotions must surface, and often do so in more harmful ways. An additional example of this is in Nathaniel's funeral scene (below, left). Ruth is sobbing uncontrollably, whilst David watches over her, not showing any emotion. This perhaps symbolises the balance in families to uphold a stable image; Ruth represents the chaos of her emotions, and David the control over his. This balance maintains stability in the family, but the consequences of keeping this balance cause David to repress his emotions and grief.

Families need to experience chaos to feel essential emotions like grief, and when we try to control this chaos, it always resurfaces in more harmful ways. The embalming room reflects the heart of the Fisher family, where they put a perfect mask on death; turning grief into something that can be neat, so they can feel in control of something so uncontrollable.



Nate's breakdown can be compared to Violet's breakdown at dinner in *August: Osage County*, as these both present moments when individuals express their emotions by breaking the perfect family facade. Nate has been taught all his life to treat grief with professionalism, and his feelings finally have to surface during his father's funeral. Similarly, in the scene where Violet is shouting at Barbara, 'We sacrificed everything and we did it all for you. [...] You never had real problems.' (p. 24), Violet is trying to maintain control and look after the family, when she is instead harming Barbara. Often the harder families try to uphold this perfect image, the harder life will push back, and the damages will always resurface in these explosive ways: perfect families do not exist, and when repressed feelings and emotions are brought to the surface, even though this often causes chaos, this is what allows families to remain loving and healthy.



People often wear masks to conceal the chaos of family life, as this makes them feel more accepted by society and more in control of their difficult emotions. These texts reveal the universal truth that the more families try to cling to the idea of perfection, the more destructively the truth will explode, and the effects of this become immensely harmful to younger generations. However, in this truth lies hope: as seen in Cal's transformation, Nate's outburst during his father's funeral, and the Hoover family's eventual 'falling apart', we see that the real way that families can come together, is not through their 'perfect' or 'put together' image, but through the imperfections which they share.

In Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro', duality is vital for structure

Barbara Grochulska (Cl. 12)

Ezra Pound's 'In a Station of the Metro' is an ideal example of how much weight and impact brevity can hold. In this essay, I will argue that the dexterous use of duality strongly upholds the structure of this two-lined yet deeply meaningful poem. Contrasting images and concepts create an experience that is modestly opulent in detail and meaning, offering a profound poetic experience. The poem paints two opposing images; however, once envisioned, they become seemingly alike, creating a powerful and evocative impression. Dr Rebecca Beasley described Pound as 'the central figure in the early 20th century'. He is widely known for shaping modern literature through the imagist movement: a poetic movement characterised mainly by clarity, precision, vividness of imagery, and unambiguity, or as Jacke Wilson says, 'The principles were [...] to use absolutely no word that does not contribute to the presentation.' It broke away from the flowery and sentimental language of the Romantic and Victorian styles, and it was intended to be concise and evocative, using only the words which would summon that single, unflexing moment or image without misinterpretation. Pound's poem 'In a Station of the Metro', brief with strikingly vivid imagery and reliance, presents the core principles of the movement and can be argued as quintessential imagist poetry.

In a Station of the Metro

The apparition of these faces in the crowd;

Petals on a wet, black bough.

In the opening line, the 'faces' represent familiarity, followed by the opposing word 'crowd', which conveys an enormous mass of people. This is echoed in the second line, where the 'petals' evoke delicate beauty, starkly contrasted by the coarse, robust 'bough.' This duality is again reflected in the overall poem, creating a chain that greatly enhances the poem's structure. The first line, 'The apparition of these faces in the crowd', establishes a sense of dim, heavy movement, anonymity and transience as the faces of commuters blur together in the bustling station. The second line, 'Petals on a wet, black bough', brings a contrasting image of delicate beauty and fragility. By placing these two disparate images side by side, Pound invites the reader to make a connection. The faces in the crowd, like the petals, become fleeting, existing only in the moment. This highlights the ephemeral nature of human existence and the beauty found in the most ordinary moments. The two pictures balance and harmonise the image of the overall poem, which develops a binary opposition between the natural and the artificial urban world. The 'station of the Metro' represents the mechanical world whilst the 'petals on a wet, black bough' evoke earthly beauty and impermanence, creating a strong juxtaposition of nature versus the man-made.

The duality of reality and imagination suggests a fleeting glimpse of the faces, almost ushering in a dreamy feel and underlining the tussle between reality and fantasy. It could also signify a ghost-like vision of faces, half-seen. This otherworldly quality clashes with the concrete realism of the 'crowd', a collection of faceless people. Comparably, the bright image in the second line, 'petals', speaks to fragile beauty and ephemera, evoking blooming flowers and fleeting spring. The stark 'wet, black bough' contrasts with this image, referring to harsh, cold reality or even barren nature. This adds to its temporary air as the bough will eventually dry, and the petals disappear.

Ezra Pound also explores the duality of the individual and the collective. The 'faces' in the crowd symbolise individuality and nonconformity, standing in contrast to 'the crowd,' representing collectivism and adherence to conventional paths. This duality is somewhat mirrored in the poem, suggesting anonymity and loss of identity in the first line, contrasted with the 'petals' that represent attachment to something larger than oneself. The duality brings to light the tension between the impulse toward individual expression and the need for belonging.

The poem's lack of verbs and adjectives encourages an active creation of meaning and depicts the wandering of the observer's imagination. Without suggestion, jumping from image to image, the author blurs the line distinguishing reality from imagination.

A grammatical duality can be found when in the first line a noun introduces us to the poem: 'the apparition of these **faces**,' followed by a preposition signifying that they are 'in the crowd'. Similarly, the second line starts with the noun 'petals' before the prepositional 'on' places them 'on a wet, black bough'. The words 'crowd' and 'bough' share assonance of the /aʊ/ sounds, adding a spherical round shape to the poem, enhancing its three-dimensionality and influencing the clarity and scope of the image.

The rhythmic structure is built on a duality of opposing weight patterns between the two lines. 'In a Station of the Metro' does not have an explicit, coherent metre as it is written in free verse. Both lines are stranded from any syllabic structure. Again, Pound utilises the rules of imagism 'to write more in the irregular style of musical rhythm than a completely regular beat'. This breaks away from structured, even and orderly rhythm and creates a duality with the characteristic style of early 20th-century composers like Stravinsky or Shostakovich, whose signature style is asymmetrical and often polyrhythmic.

The initial line of the poem commences with a regular pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables (iambic metre) but subsequently transitions to a less structured, predominantly unstressed rhythm.

The app- | ari- | tion of | these fa- | ces in | the crowd;

The second line presents a contrasting rhythmic pattern exhibiting a variety of metrical feet, featuring a trochee (stressed-unstressed), anapest (unstressed-unstressed-stressed), and spondee (stressed-stressed), creating a

heavier stress pattern and a greater emphasis on stressed syllables compared to the first line, and resulting in a weight duality.

Petals | on a wet, | black bough.

This balances the lines to sound harmonic and creates the illusion of similar length.

Pound displays his poetic potential by employing his idea of an 'image' as 'an intellectual and emotional complex in an instant of time'. One might feel like the poem gives a duality of scope created by the short and fleeting nature of the observed moment and the lasting impression that it leaves. The image duality of the urban and natural worlds beside each other remains etched in the reader's mind. The poem suggests that beauty, however fleeting, can offer a glimpse of meaning and connection in the chaos of modern life.

By unravelling these dualities, the reader can appreciate the complexity and affluence of Pound's deceptively simple poem. From juxtaposing the two lines to the dualities in sounds, Pound creates a powerful and enduring work of art that can be examined on many levels. The dualities invite the reader to join in the creation of meaning, subtly blurring the boundaries between the poet's intention and the reader's interpretation.

In *The Waste Land* women reflect a post-war world
Sophie Mair (Cl. 12)

The Waste Land is a foundational poem in Modern Literature, emerging from a fragmented world after the devastation of the First World War. This literary masterpiece reflects the fragmented nature of a post-war world, by using a vast range of figures, references and imagery, from antiquity to modernity. In this essay I will examine the second section, 'A Game of Chess' to argue that Eliot uses women to reflect a loss of identity and communication in a post-war world.

The first line of 'A Game of Chess' immediately paints a scene of wealth and royalty:

The Chair she sat in, like a burnished throne,
Glowed on the marble, where the glass
Held up by standards wrought with fruited vines
From which a golden Cupidon peeped out
(Another hid his eyes behind his wing) (ll. 77-81)

'Burnished throne' references Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*, instantly presenting this unknown woman as a formidable figure. The first half of this section is dedicated to describing her overwhelmingly lavish surroundings, and the use of sibilance ('sat,' 'glass,' 'standards') emphasises the smooth, almost seductive tone. This smoothness contrasts with the harsher reality behind these words which we later discover, perhaps hinting at the futility

behind the material possessions. By using this anonymity, Eliot may have intended to elevate the woman's position of power, placing her authority above her name, however, this also further deprives her of a sense of identity. After the war, many people felt a loss of identity, with the aftermath of such a devastation leaving people shell-shocked. Consequently, consumerism was at a high as people sought comfort from material possessions,—a prominent theme in this section of the poem. Additionally, Eliot hints at a feeling of artificiality multiple times, reflecting this lack of genuine identity even further. In line 87, he writes 'her strange synthetic perfumes'—perhaps a reflection of her almost artificial identity, concealed and 'drowned' (l. 89), behind her luxurious possessions. Another hint at artificiality is in lines 83-84: the contrast between the 'candelabra reflecting light', thus light that is not genuine, meeting the 'glitter of her jewels', again connects superficiality and material wealth. Furthermore, there is a hint at the hollow relationship we meet later in the text: in lines 80-81 'Cupidon peeped out' and 'another hid his eyes' implies that one can see and the other cannot, suggesting that it is not a genuine connection if one person can see and the other cannot.

In line 99, Eliot references 'Philomel', a figure from Greek mythology who was raped by her brother in law, King Tereus. Philomel transforms into a nightingale to tell her story:

Above the antique mantel was displayed
As though a window gave upon the sylvan scene
The change of Philomel, by the barbarous king
So rudely forced; yet there the nightingale
Filled all the desert with inviolable voice (ll. 97 - 101)

Eliot could have chosen to focus on Philomel's assault, yet he focuses on her transformation. There's a contrast between the 'antique mantel' which suggests materialism, and the 'window gave upon the sylvan scene'. 'Sylvan' instantly brings the focus to nature, and Philomel is trapped until she looks out of the window, into the future, and turns to nature. Furthermore, the placement of the painting above 'the antique mantel' gives a feeling of great importance. Although this woman may lack a sense of identity Eliot perhaps suggests that there is hope for an escape from the empty feeling that exists in a materialistic, post-war world.

We next have dialogue presumably between the same woman and a man:

"What shall we ever do?"
The hot water at ten.
And if it rains, a closed car at four.
And we shall play a game of chess, (ll. 134 - 137)

Eliot highlights this woman's emotional suffering, her existential questioning: 'what shall we ever do?' (l. 134), and in contrast sees her partner unable to support her suffering, replying with mundane, meaningless answers:

'And we shall play a game of chess' (line 137). This game is their only form of communication, at an ultimate stalemate both in life and in chess, where the intensity of their anguish is so overwhelming that it isolates them in their suffering, rendering them unable to properly communicate or connect with one another.

The fourth passage abruptly shifts to the setting of a London pub, where two women discuss [a] third woman, Lil, and her husband Albert:

You ought to be ashamed, I said, to look so antique.
(And her only thirty-one.)
I can't help it, she said, pulling a long face,
It's them pills I took, to bring it off, she said. (ll. 156 - 163)

As put by Warwood: 'Futility colours the entire exchange wherein the friend occupies a space of female submission and Lil represents resistance to male power.' Neither Lil nor her husband are present in this scene to voice *their* story, and the conversation is constantly interrupted by the bartender: 'HURRY UP PLEASE IT'S TIME' (l. 152). This line is repeated five times throughout this section, serving almost as a chorus, but it fragments the conversation, perhaps reflecting the fragmentation of post-war Britain which although broken, still has certain amount of order. As Melvyn Bragg puts it:

It was like everything was still only holding together,
like some bomb had gone off but left everything still
standing; a strange sense of reality when the world just
carries on, especially in UK.

Lil's identity is taken away from her; she is a mother of five and has had a difficult life, yet Eliot perhaps lowers her to societal expectations, of having to be physically 'acceptable' for her husband. The husband Albert also does not have a voice in this section; when Lil tries to narrate the story of how her and Albert met, the bartender immediately interrupts. Lil and Albert are at another stalemate in their relationship, unable to communicate with each other or with the world. Lil has retreated from arguing against these impossible expectations, and Albert is underrepresented. This relationship serves as a reflection of the shattered communication that existed in a fragmented post-war world.

In 'A Game of Chess', Eliot portrays women as reflections of the cruel truth that exists in the post-war world. As Warwood puts it, 'T.S. Eliot's "*The Waste Land*" explores the role of the voice in the midst of this chaos in an attempt to illustrate the struggle for personal identity against the wave of modern oppressions.' Throughout this section, Eliot arguably adds glimmers of hope for the world, as seen in the attempted resistances of Philomel and Lil, to these modern oppressions. Eliot heavily reflects the fragmented nature of this world, but the moments explored above perhaps see him suggest that there is a way out of *The Waste Land*.

The Waste Land is the Fisher King's Waste Land Maxine Tsonev (Cl. 12)

In 'The Burial of The Dead', the illustration of a wasteland is imbued with references to the Fisher King. This essay explores the ways in which Eliot's *Waste Land* allegorises Terre de Salvaesche.

Early in the poem, we are presented with this image:

A heap of broken images, where the sun beats,
And the dead tree gives no shelter, the cricket no relief,
And the dry stone no sound of water. Only
There is shadow under this red rock,
(Come in under the shadow of this red rock) (ll. 22-26)

This passage illustrates a barren land; a wasteland. It commences with 'a heap of broken images', suggesting a fragmented perspective. The heavy consonants in the first three lines, b and d, are on the words: broken, beats, dead, dry. These words give weight to the desolation in the passage. Furthermore, the repetition of 'no', in 'no shelter', 'no relief', 'no sound of water', drills into the reader the utter lack of comfort in this bleak image. Next, we have the lines 'there is shadow under this red rock,/(Come in under the shadow of this red rock)'. Although the 'shadow of the red rock' is supposed to present shelter, and the reader is even invited to it, 'red rock' has a menacing tone, red being associated with danger, and instead of the word 'shade' which is more commonly associated with shelter, we have 'shadow', which inherently has a dark implication. This tenders the sense that salvation in a barren land is tainted by something evil. This image directly relates to Terre de Salvaesche, a bare, barren land, and furthermore the concept of salvation tainted with danger could allegorise the Grail Quest; the road to salvation fraught with danger.

Two themes in 'The Burial of The Dead' further associate the poem's 'waste land' to Terre de Salvaesche; infertility and rebirth. The theme of infertility epitomises the impotence of the Fisher King that renders his land infertile, and the theme of rebirth assimilates the potential for the Fisher King and his land to be cured by a Grail knight.

April is the cruellest month, breeding
Lilacs out of the dead land, mixing
Memory and desire, stirring
Dull roots with spring rain.
Winter kept us warm, covering
Earth in forgetful snow, feeding
A little life with dried tubers. (ll. 1-7)

Words such as 'dead land', 'dull roots' and 'dried tubers' impress an image of dead earth, and earth being a symbol of fertility, its decrepit description indicates infertility.

Furthermore, the poem begins with 'April is the cruellest month'. April is customarily associated with

fertility and spring, and it's appellation of 'cruel' again exemplifies degenerating fertility. This introductory line is comparable to that of *The Canterbury Tales*, which depicts April as fresh and vital:

When in April the sweet showers fall
And pierce the drought of March to the root

However, for every mention of infertility there is a mention of life. 'Lilacs out of the dead land' paints a picture of vibrant purple and green out of dull black, followed by 'stirring dull roots with spring rain' and 'a little life with dried tubers'. Moreover, in the repetition of words ending in 'ing', each portray functions of life: breeding, mixing, stirring, covering, feeding. Though unrelated grammatically, those words are like clues to the potential of rebirth, concealed in the text.

That corpse you planted last year in your garden,
Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year? (ll. 71-72)

The aforementioned themes are distinctly highlighted in these lines. A buried corpse represents literally the presence of death in the earth and the queries 'Has it begun to sprout? Will it bloom this year?' indicate its potential for life.

Later in the poem, allusions to WW1 and degenerating civilisation become apparent. These modern references and the image of the Medieval *Terre de Salvaesche* correlate, both presenting themes of death and degeneration of land. It can be said thus, that Eliot is using *Terre De Salvaesche* as an allegory for his own times: the wasteland after the war.

A crowd flowed over London Bridge, so many,
I had not thought death had undone so many,
Sighs, short and infrequent, were exhaled,
And each man fixed his eyes before his feet (ll. 62-65)

Written in the aftermath of the first world war, this passage likely relates to those who returned shattered from the trenches. The language likens the image to a crowd of zombies, with 'fixed eyes', 'undone by death' and 'short, infrequent sighs', denoting derelict land without real people. One could pair this with a line later in the same stanza 'with a dead sound on the stroke of nine', and a possible significance emerges, related to former mentions of 'bridge' and 'flowed' which indicate a river. The number nine is symbolic of the River Styx, which had nine twists as it carried souls to the underworld. Additionally, this passage illustrates an image of decaying civilisation to Eliot, engendered by a vision his friend Bertrand Russell disclosed to him at a time in which both men were observing the city during the war, losing its men and deteriorating: 'After watching the troop trains—full of patriots—depart from Waterloo, he would see London's bridges collapse and sink, and the whole great city vanish like a morning mist.' (Lyndall Gordon)

London being a symbol of civilisation, its deterioration is very the image of decaying civilisation.

You who were with me in the ships at Mylae! (l.70)

Eliot weaves in this reference to Mylae, the first of the three Punic Wars fought between Rome and Carthage which culminated in the eradication of Carthage. Renowned for trade, governmental structure and prosperity, its defeat is a symbol of the destruction of civilisation. Once again, this brings the mind to a desolate domain; a waste land.

You! Hypocrite lecteur—mon semblable—mon frère! (l.76)

Closing 'The Burial of The Dead' is this line from Baudelaire's poem 'Au Lecteur', which, written in the aftermath of the 1848 French Revolution, speaks of the vice and corruption in human society. Another line from 'Au Lecteur' (translated by William Aggeler) which befits the mood of a wasteland of civilisation is:

Every day we descend a step further toward Hell,
Without horror, through gloom that stinks.

In many ways, 'The Burial of the Dead' is an overture for *The Waste Land*, as its use of disconnected images to present a fragmented view of a wasteland mimics in smaller form the sections of diverse imagery throughout the whole poem, with similar themes of barren land, impotence, death, and ruined civilisation. Furthermore, one of the poem's closing passages is the Fisher King's narrative:

I sat upon the shore,
Fishing, with the arid plains behind me.
Shall I at least set my lands in order? (ll. 71-72)

Here the unanswered question of whether health would be restored to his land is significant. If *Terre De Salvaesche* is an allegory for the times in which Eliot lived, he is closing the poem with the question: would the world recover from the war?

The Grail in *Parzival*

Lila Harrison-Evans (Cl. 11)

It could be said that of all the themes in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzival*, the Grail is the most important. It is the centre of the story, though shrouded in mystery. It is the source of Parzival's inspiration, determination, love, grief and, eventually, it is his greatest triumph. In this essay, I will explore the Grail and ask what a 'Grail quest' really means in modern terms.

The following quotation is taken from Book Five when The Grail is brought forth by Repanse de Schoye at the feast that welcomes Parzival to Munsalvaesche:

Upon a green achmardi she bore the consummation of the heart's desire, its root and its blossoming, a thing called "The Grail", paradisaal, transcending all earthly perfection. (p. 23)

At this point in the story, it is unclear what the Grail actually is. It has been described throughout literature and history as a stone (a lost jewel from Lucifer's crown) or as a vessel (the cup that Jesus drank from at the last supper) but in all of its legends, powers of great healing and nourishment are its attributes. Although it is a Christian relic, stories about the Grail date back to ancient times, and similar objects appear in other mythologies; the Akshaya Patra in the Mahabharata, which offered a constant supply of food and water, the Cup of Jamshid in Persian mythology, said to hold the 'elixir of mortality', and the Cornucopia, a symbol of abundance from ancient Greek and Roman mythology, a horn taken from the goat that suckled Zeus as a baby. In all of these stories, these objects are strongly related to the earth and fertility, and through this, more than the Grail's relationship to God and Heaven is explored in this paragraph. It is said that she (Repanse de Schoye) 'bore' the Grail, as a mother might bear a child, and that it is the 'consummation' of the heart's 'desire'; all things that link the Grail to sex and childbearing. Then with the words 'root' and 'blossoming', the Grail is compared to nature. It is fair now to say that the Grail, whatever its form, is linked strongly to motherhood and femininity, because of its providing nature and eternal abundance. We know that the Grail is beautiful when the author tells us that it is the 'consummation of the heart's desire', but it's not until it says 'paradisaal, transcending all earthly perfection' that we know it is heavenly.

It is also interesting to note that the Grail 'transcends' earthly perfection when previously it has been compared so strongly to the Earth.

This second quotation is part of the story told by Trevrizent in Book Nine.

"This Stone is called 'The Grail'. Today a Message alights upon the Grail governing its highest virtue, for today is Good Friday. Each year on this day a Dove wings its way down from Heaven. It brings a small white Wafer to the Stone and leaves it there. The Dove, all dazzling white, then flies up to Heaven again. From this Wafer the Stone receives all that is good on earth of food and drink, of paradisaal excellence." (p. 41)

It is made clear now that the Grail (in this story at least) is a stone. This passage is more strongly linked to religion than the former, appropriate perhaps because of Parzival's recent loss of faith. Although it is common practise when discussing religion in biblical texts to capitalise the words related to God, it really stands out here, as if Trevrizent is emphasising the religious connection to the Grail to rebuild Parzival's own belief. The Dove symbolises virginity, innocence and love in many cultures, which can be described as heavenly, even angelic qualities. We learn

again that the Grail is the source of food and drink of a 'paradisaal excellence', referring again to its connection to provision and nature. The word 'paradisaal', meaning 'idyllic' or 'heavenly' appears only twice in *Parzival*, both times to describe the Grail.

What I struggled to understand while reading *Parzival* is why knights who were not destined for the Grail still sought it, because, as Trevrizent says in Book Nine; "no man can win the Grail other than one who is acknowledged in Heaven as destined for it." (p. 41) This can be explained in one way by Plato's Theory of Forms; striving for perfection (as the ancient Greeks did) with the knowledge that the perfection they seek is never truly attainable.

While quests taken by knights on horseback no longer exist, there is still a fascination with the Grail that humanity has never lost. We no longer journey to search for it but we have never lost our hope of finding it, whatever it is. Each story is a different thread, a different path, a different Grail, but all of them have one thing in common: Grail legends are almost always portrayed by an adventure, each hero seeking it must first advance *himself*, must seek his *inner* Grail; if he has any hope of gaining it, he must be perfect himself. The quest for the Grail is more spiritual than physical. Parzival's Grail quest in the end is his advancement through Rudolf Steiner's 'The Threefold Human Being', his achievement of balance between Thinking, Feeling and Willing, which, in layman's terms, makes him as close to 'perfect' as a human can become.

After reading *Parzival*, it occurs to me that the Grail and all of its legends could simply be an elaborate metaphor for human development and the real treasure, the real Grail, is the ultimate achievement of balance.

*Editor's note: the following commentaries on Homer's *Odyssey* were written under exam conditions. Therefore they do not have the traditional structure of formal writing, such as a full introduction or conclusion, but instead dive straight in, using every available moment to draw on the text itself. However, they still demonstrate insight and are therefore worthy of inclusion here.*

Comparison Commentary: excerpts from Book IX of Homer's *Odyssey* translated by Robert Fitzgerald & Emily Wilson
Chase Harrison-Evans (Cl. 10)

Neither reply nor pity came from him,
but in one stride he clutched at my companions
and caught two in his hands like squirming puppies
to beat their brains out, spattering the floor.
Then he dismembered them and made his meal,
gaping and crunching like a mountain lion—
everything: innards, flesh, and marrow bones.
We cried loud, lifting our hands to Zeus,
powerless, looking on at this, appalled;
but Cyclops went on filling up his belly
with manflesh and great gulps of whey,
then lay down like a mast among his sheep.

— *Fitzgerald*

But he
made no reply and showed no mercy. Leaping
up high, he reached his hands towards my men,
seized two, and knocked them hard against the ground
like puppies, and the floor was wet with brains.
He ripped them limb by limb to make his meal,
then ate them like a lion on the mountains,
devouring flesh, entrails, and marrow bones,
and leaving nothing. Watching this disaster,
we wept and lifted up our hands in prayer
to Zeus. We felt so helpless. When the Cyclops
had filled his massive belly with his meal
of human meat and unmixed milk, he lay
stretched out among his flocks.

— *Wilson*

Odysseus and his crew are inside the cave of Polyphemus; he has just returned home to find them eating his cheese and drinking his milk, and he has devoured two of the men.

Typical to his previous style, Fitzgerald paints the crew as powerful men rendered powerless by this monstrous situation. Visceral horror is very apparent in his translation, and powerlessness despite the crew's efforts to escape. In Wilson's text, the cyclops seems almost even more terrifying as she paints the crew as helpless and weak against his attack. Visceral detail is very prominent in certain areas of the text although grief and sadness are the main emotions coming through in the translation.

In Fitzgerald's telling the use of the word 'squirming' when describing the capture of the two crew mates implies that they were resisting Polyphemus. The word

'powerless' implies these men previously had power but the situation was one step too far, even for them. These are strong fighting men; soldiers, not poor lost sailors that would give up without a fight. This makes the cyclops seem more terrifying without over describing him or his actions.

Wilson's text gives us, maybe even more visceral detail. "The floor was wet with brains", "He ripped them limb by limb", "human meat" and "his massive belly" paint a gruesome picture of the scene, making the cyclops seem more terrifying through description. Despite the attention the gory detail, nothing in her text suggests that the crew tried the fight back. The passage, "watching this disaster, we wept and lifted our hands in prayer to Zeus. We felt so helpless," suggests the crew began to grieve their losses before the men were truly gone. It brings forward the grief and sadness the crew felt after the attack. It feels quite pathetic.

In Fitzgerald's text, he makes the crew sound more powerful in order to make the cyclops sound more terrifying, whereas Wilson describes the Cyclops as terrifying to make the crew seem weaker.

Although, when used in modern text and conversation, the words 'powerless' and 'helpless' seem very similar. When comparing these texts, it appears that the difference between them is quite stark and important to each writer's personal style.

Comparison Commentary: excerpts from Book X of Homer's *Odyssey* translated by Robert Fitzgerald & Emily Wilson
Isabella Mills (Cl. 10)

Presently in the hall her maids were busy,
the nymphs who waited upon Circe: four
whose cradles were in fountains, under boughs,
or in the glassy seaward-gliding streams.
One came with richly coloured rugs to throw
on seat and chairback, over linen covers;
a second pulled the tables out, all silver,
and loaded them with baskets all of gold;
a third mixed wine as tawny-mild as honey
in a bright bowl, and set out golden cups.
The fourth came bearing water, and lit a blaze
under a cauldron. By and by it bubbled,
and when the dazzling brazen vessel seethed
she filled a bathtub to my waist, and bathed me,
pouring a soothing blend on head and shoulders,
warming the soreness of my joints away.
When she had done, and smoothed me with sweet oil,
she put a tunic and a cloak around me
and took me to a silver-studded chair
with footrest, all elaborately carven.
Now came a maid to tip a golden jug
of water into a silver finger bowl,
and draw a polished table to my side.
The larder mistress brought her tray of loaves

with many savory slices, and she gave
 the best, to tempt me. But no pleasure came;
 I huddled with my mind elsewhere, oppressed.
 — *Fitzgerald*

Meanwhile, four slaves, her house girls, were at work
 around the palace. They were nymphs, the daughters
 of fountains and of groves and holy rivers
 that flow into the sea. One set fine clothes
 of purple on the chairs, with stones beneath them.
 Beside each chair, another pulled up tables
 of silver and set golden baskets on them.
 The third mixed up inside a silver bowl
 sweet, cheering wine, and poured it in gold cups.
 The fourth brought water, and she lit a fire
 beneath a mighty tripod, till it boiled.
 It started bubbling in the copper cauldron;
 she took me to the bathtub, and began
 to wash my head and shoulders, using water
 mixed to the perfect temperature, to take
 my deep soul-crushing weariness away.
 After the bath, she oiled my skin and dressed me
 in fine wool cloak and tunic, and she led me
 to a silver-studded well-carved chair, and set
 a footstool underneath. Another slave
 brought water for my hands, in a gold pitcher,
 and poured it over them, to a silver bowl.
 She set a polished table near. The cook
 brought bread and laid a generous feast, and Circe
 told me to eat. But my heart was unwilling.
 I sat there with my mind on other things;
 I had forebodings.

— *Wilson*

This is when Odysseus and his men are on Aeaea;
 specifically when he has come to save his men from Circe,
 and she takes him in.

In Fitzgerald's translation, Circe seems more goddess-
 like—she has nymph maids attending to her orders instead
 of nymph slaves. Someone washes Odysseus with a
 'soothing blend' rather than just water, although it is
 slightly unclear whether it is Circe or the fourth maid who
 does so. Circe is only directly named at the start, and the
 structure of the list—'she filled a bathtub'... 'she put a
 tunic'—never directly names the 'she,' which makes it
 seem like all of this is a blur. We know there are different
 maids, as they are numbered, but their actions are the
 focus. Who is doing the action is not important, or even
 not noticeable. It is the same in Wilson's translation, which
 makes it intentional. We are supposed to immerse
 ourselves in the luxurious experience. In Wilson's
 translation, Circe seems less goddess-like and more like a
 rich woman who has slave girls. The actions are described
 in a less descriptive way, still beautiful but not magical.
 Instead of 'warming the soreness' of his joints with a
 'soothing blend' the phrase 'using water mixed to the
 perfect temperature, to take my soul crushing weariness
 away' makes it sound like they're trying to soothe the

emotional pain along with the physical. The final line in
 Fitzgerald gives the sense that Odysseus is overwhelmed
 by the hospitality he has been shown; meanwhile in
 Wilson's he seems at least partly detached. The usage of
 the word 'oppressed' in Fitzgerald gives the
 aforementioned feeling, and the phrase 'But my heart was
 unwilling' in Wilson's does the same.

Wordless

[lyric poem]

by Chase Harrison-Evans (Cl. 10)

My words don't work with you.

My silver tongue had turned to lead,
And now hung useless in my head.
My graceful turn of phrase was dead.
You left me spluttering instead.

You stole the eloquence from my lips,
The rhyme and rhythm from my scripts.
My frozen mind alone, depicts
What my sane reason contradicts.

Your presence and your true perfection
Seals my lips with one exception;
To kiss your perfect cheek, expression
Of misinterpreted affection.

How can poet be dreamer, lover?
The writer, once in love, discover,
And perfect metaphors uncover,
When love like mine just makes me stutter?

We speak in silence, you and I,
When our hearts are heard 'neath starry sky.
Each beat, unspoken words, a sigh,
Til' halted by your soft goodbye.
Oh love, if you just understood
The beating of my heart so good.
You, in perfect truthfulness,
Would say the words I never could.

The Monster

[ballad]

by Selina Hallows (Cl. 11)

When I walk alone outside,
All I hear are gasps and cries.

I try to introduce myself,
In shock they run and shout for help,
I know I'm tall but what can I do?

Why they care, I wish I knew.
There's people playing down the hill,
I wave, say hi and smile, but still,
They hide and scream and run away,
When all I want to do is play.

I see them laughing, having fun,

Why am I the only one?

Why do I get called a monster?

I never get a proper answer.

Is it because of the way I look,
Or maybe the fact that I can't cook,
Feeling like I don't fit in;

It's hard when I have purple skin.

Underneath all that they see,

I have a personality.

I swear I'm really not that scary;

I have the kindness of a fairy.

I know I have bright flame red eyes,

But I would never hurt a fly,

I wish I could be just like them,
Playing games and having friends,

Always lonely at a distance,

By myself just my existence.

Why do people have to stare?

It's not that weird to have no hair.

Judging looks, expressions scared,

Oh how I wish somebody cared.

Sitting in the pouring rain,

Whilst all these thoughts rush through my brain,

When suddenly I hear a sound,

I gasp and quickly turn around,

Standing behind me is a child,

Looking at me with a smile.

Kindly hands me an umbrella,

I think it is a trick however.

Anxiously I start to say,

"Why are you not running away?"

"Why on earth would I do that?

All I want to do is chat,

You look so cold and sad alone,

Why are you all on your own?

Let's be friends," she says with glee,

"It'll be such fun you'll see!"

I hesitate and stare with wonder,

Jumping at a flash of thunder,

I turn back and say with a grin,

"All my life where have you been?"

Dear diary...**[ballad]***by Selina Hallows (Cl. 11)*

Dear diary, I sometimes don't know how to feel,
 About the existence of ghosts, if they're real,
 The thought of it sends these chills down my spine,
 I can't seem to help it, I'm only just nine.

Dear diary, I'm hearing peculiar sounds.
 A constant chorus of echoes surround.
 From where they come? I'm really not sure,
 Though I'm always careful to lock up the door.

Dear diary, it's all just a little bit strange.
 Lately, it feels like everything's changed.
 Yesterday evening, I heard a scream.
 Turns out it was only a terrible dream.

Dear diary, I'm still hearing voices sometimes.
 They talk of bad things and dangerous crimes.
 I try block them out but still even then
 They somehow manage to find me again.

Dear diary, I'm starting to get a bit scared.
 Only this morning I went down the stairs,
 I looked out the window and guess what I saw?
 A sweet little bird laying dead on the floor.

Dear diary, I've stopped checking under my bed.
 The monsters, I think they now live in my head.
 I found all these feathers stuck to my tights.
 How did they get there? Something's not right.

Dear diary, please help I don't know what to do.
 These voices, they seem to be coming true.
 This morning a girl from my class was found dead,
 Outside of her house, to death she had bled.

Dear diary, I've realised the awful truth.
 I cannot tell anyone, none except you:
 I killed the bird and it wasn't a dream;
 It was me who murdered that girl when she screamed.

Dear diary, I don't know what I've become,
 It feels like I'm under some monster's cruel thumb.
 But I have been going about this all wrong;
 The monster, I think it was me all along.

So I looked in the mirror and what do I see,
 A soulless stranger staring at me,
 We all have our demons hidden within,
 And sometimes they lose, but sometimes they win.

Psychopomp (due)**[sonnet]***by Lila Harrison-Evans (Cl. 11)*

I fear that every time I close my eyes,
 I'll see the pictures of my life, my youth
 arranged before me; try must I the ties
 to cut, to live my final days in truth
 and not in dream. But dream I do, dream I
 of places half-remembered, faces lost
 to time and memories of sad goodbyes.
 Our happiness was far too great a cost.
 The bell has tolled: the past I can't forget.
 Soon I'll become a stranger, still and gaunt;
 a mirror shows a ghost lost in regret,
 for once this world I've left I must still haunt.
 So while I hesitate, before I die;
 I think I'll sit and watch my life go by.

Snow**[vers libre]***by Lila Harrison-Evans (Cl. 11)*

Time slows.
 Under the lamppost, flakes blow
 and stick to the stone.
 It plasters the streets,
 the heat
 Is locked away, the people retreat.
 Feathers from doves line
 the windows. Nine at a time
 they fall; white chalk on a black board.
 The sky settles an inch above the road.
 Children watch, in love; betrothed
 to the flakes, engaged to the snow.
 It covers the cobbles; it touches the turf.
 Time stops:
 Something of heaven falls to earth.

Lady Macduff**[vers libre]***by Maxine Tstone (Cl. 12)*

Obscure battlements, once honeymooning castle.
 Erstwhile waxing gibbous now wanes in solitude,
 Witnessed by half of twain:
 Myself, the other gone.
 Away from Fife, away from life, from child, from love
 He knows us not, among the pines, pining.
 The infant's careless love unheeding, blissful,
 And I alone to bear the weight of misery.

Six nights have passed, now,
 Cased in stone, the bulwark stark against the dark.
 Foreboding caution from a dear one's mouth,
 And the shrill of low soaring ravens.
 The once-peaceful forest now leers with slaver's grin,
 Jaws wide, stranger, danger,
 My mother's mettle impregnable with adversity,
 Shielding the nest from those burning eyes of the
 unknown.

Not so unknown, now,
 For no hand that grips my hair and skims with blade my
 throat,
 Can hereafter be forgot.
 Silenced agony, as before my wretched gaze
 A baby's brazen venture, the kitten batting at the wolf's
 jaw,
 Must end with blood, my blood, oh god,
 that runs within his veins.
 And soon my blood, oh god, *my blood* shall run to paint the
 floors with his.

Quiet ravine, ravaged castle,
 No more Macduff shall see his pretty dears.

They who tried to cheat death**[vers libre]***by Maxine Tstone (Cl. 12)*

Let's do Macbeth, we said,
 Risk death, the Scottish play is far too tame,
 We loved the dangerous game,
 So we named his name,
 Macbeth.
 At first,
 We were blessed,
 Laughing, we put it to the test,
 Outside the theatre, chanting,
 Macbeth, Macbeth, Macbeth.
 It was funny, cheating death,
 So we dressed a doll in reaper's clothes,
 And in reckless throws threw it in the fire,
 Tied to a pyre.
 The flames whipped higher
 And we alive, still survived and full of breath after
 taunting death,
 Delighted in victory.
 But then we became contradictory,
 Conflicting,
 Some cowardly, curbing the callousness, some careless and
 irked by the cowering.
 Clashing of words
 Turned to clashing of swords,
 Then bashing and thrashing,
 Slashing of skin and perishing of souls,
 A battlefield of brothers.
 Death came to see the beaten, the battered,
 And laughed.



The St Michael
Steiner School

June 2025