

## Welcome (back) to *WordSmyth!*

Although, perhaps, it could be called presumption on my part to assume your former acquaintance with this publication; if, therefore (although I doubt it), this is indeed your first venture into the realms of ‘creative-writing-school-magazine’, then I offer my – perhaps ‘condolences’ is too strong – assurance that there shall be something to entertain you! But first, I must congratulate you, dear reader, on your astute choice of reading – it is, sad to say, not everyone who is brave enough to venture into a publication of this prestige – and reading the introduction as well! Let us explore how you came upon this magazine – perhaps in the school library: you rush past the shelves of Books-You’ve-Put-On-Your-Bibliography-But-Only-Actually-Read-Five-Pages-Of – best to evade the Fiction-Books-You’ve-Told-Everyone-You’ve-Read-But-Haven’t-Really. Just one more shelf to dodge, these must be the Books-You’ve-Been-Recommended-And-Will-Certainly-Read-When-You-Have-Time-Just-Not-Right-Now. At last, you arrive here, and skimming the shelf for some light reading (although I cannot quite profess this publication to be such), you alight on a nice, thin magazine. Aha, you think – just the thing to spend the last few minutes of my lunch break browsing. Or – and this is by far the less exciting but rather more likely option – you have found this issue online, and are scrolling down the bright white pages, a cup of tea in your hand – best to be comfortable, after all. You might have been informed that a Bright Young Writer has managed to get their writing published here, and parental or pastoral duty compels you to investigate – but why not read the rest of the writing here as well? After all – and I think it is not understatement when I say this – we assemble a wide and eclectic range of styles for your enjoyment. So, sit back and digest this issue!

*Paul Cooley*



### New Beginnings

Grunting, sweating, shooting,  
All of that just for one mistake,  
Incarceration was inevitable, the danger was looming,  
My comrades fleeing at the sight of the enemy,  
But me, I stand alone against a sea of men,  
Bullets flying, men dying, all out of spite,  
Trying to stay out of sight,  
Fighting with all my might,  
This was my wistful life,  
  
Struggling, crying, hurting,  
They drag me like a sack of meat,  
Their numbers were thinned,  
An outburst from me - for me - a rebel waiting to break free,  
They hurled me into a desolate excuse of a camp,  
Prisoners and bleak skies as far as the eye can see,  
This was my wistful life,  
  
Working, tiring, planning,  
These monsters caged us like animals,  
Making us work till they finally kill us,  
To do that they will have to break us,  
Oblivious to them, we have made our stand,  
The stand that will finally free us,  
This was my wistful life,  
  
Sneaking, surviving, fighting,  
We eluded the jaws of death, me, and a dozen men,  
The torture, the pain, not all in vain,  
For we slithered through the night,

Liberating all those who dared to fight,  
For we are the lucky ones, the ones that came into the light,  
The fresh air and beautiful sky led us astray,  
Giving us false hope, masking the perilous trek ahead,  
This was my wistful life,  
  
Trekking, hunting, dying,  
The jungles are vast, dense, and claiming too many lives,  
We have no food, no water, no energy,  
All that we have is the vague memory of our loved ones –  
Slowly slipping out of reach,  
My only will to live lies with my one true love back home,  
But now she's a distant memory in a faraway land,  
My hands ache from burying my fallen comrades,  
My head aches from thirst,  
And my heart aches at the thought of home,  
This was my wistful life,  
  
Praying, hurting, rebelling,  
I have buried my last comrade,  
I am alone in this quest for freedom,  
With no one to guide me, no one to help me,  
In the distance I can see a village,  
My first taste of humanity since my imprisonment,  
But the beautiful structures are being burned down,  
The innocent people dragged away by the same devils that took me,  
With my last bit of energy,  
I muster the courage,  
To save the village,  
This was my wistful life,

Yearning, mourning, aching,  
After a year of nonstop walking and fighting,  
The outskirts of my elusive home become visible to my weary eyes,  
Everything becomes so lively and fills me with ecstasy,  
I have a chance to rebuild my life,  
To start afresh,  
A life with my love,  
A life without panicking at the sound of gunshots,  
A life I will be proud of,  
This is the beginning of my new life.

*Fateh Singh*

### **The Changing**

The arching forest was resplendent in Autumn, the twisting trees burdened with their loads of golden leaves. A blanket of colour swathed the woods in a fire of burnt orange and flaming red. The usually drab, earthy floor was cloaked with a carpet of incandescent heat, soon to smoulder away to a dirty brown mulch. A glittering stream snaked its way through the woodland, a sharp contrast to the burning hues of the flourishing forest. The shallow, turquoise waters skittered and jumped between rocks and fallen logs, diving into crevices before leaping free on the other side. Inside this hive of activity, glistening fish slipped serenely around boulders, carried by the unrelenting supply of energy.

Through this blossom of fire walked an elven girl. Her hair, copper like the setting sun, tumbled free of its braid and cascaded down towards the hardened path upon which she walked. Perfectly set in her sun-kissed face, her brilliant, hazel eyes were constantly scanning the blazingly bright trees lining the track. They darted between branches, skipping across fallen logs, and mossy, weather-beaten rocks. Her long flowing dress, tied up with an ornate leather belt, was a deep cyan, hugging her body before falling down past her legs. Pearlescent, turquoise beads, threaded into the fabric, shimmered as she moved, reflecting the graceful nature of the stream. Woven into her beautiful, flowing hair were strings of flowers, sea green to complement her slender dress. She was a picture of autumn itself.

In the growing shadows, between the gnarled, ancient trees, the elf caught a glimpse of movement. Instantly, she stopped, and scanned the fiery foliage for any kind of life. Her breathing stilled as she glimpsed a shadowy figure rustling around in the bed of fallen leaves. It too, froze and craned its head towards her. All that was visible were two ruby eyes, shining in the quickly darkening wood. Slowly, she reached behind her and drew her bow, levelling it at the creature in the gloom. But before she could steady her aim, the shadow turned and scampered off into the depths of the forest. Returning the arrow to its quiver, she shook herself and tried to calm her pounding

heartbeat. It was probably just a boar, wandering amongst the dense foliage and towering trees. It was of no harm to her.

Nothing in this wood was of any harm to her.

But now, deep beneath the cloudy darkness of the lifeless, colourless forest, an ancient monster stirred. Far older than the young elf, older even than the trees themselves, a ghostly creature woke. Made from the long-departed souls of all that is evil, its cloud-like, shape-shifting body seemed to glow with corporeal light as it pulsed with its lifeless heartbeat. It filled the cavern it inhabited, sprawling across the weary stone, obscuring the veins of granite which wove through the rocks. Its very being seemed to move, shifting and flowing inside of itself. It spread its inky tendrils through cracks and fissures in the rocks, climbing steadily towards the forest.

Back on the surface, the elf's golden skin grew clammy. Without knowing why, she felt that something was wrong. Something was very wrong. Quickening her pace, she broke into a run, striding back to her safe, magically warded treetop house. Running faster still, the elf rounded one final corner, and threw herself up the tree which she called home. Willing her heartbeat to return to its regular rhythm, she breathed deeply, somehow aware of another presence in her wood. Another presence so great, so powerful, it could change everything.

Growing closer to the surface with every passing second, the seething mass glowed brighter, an otherworldly green illuminating the passages in the rock. As it emerged from the twisting web of caverns and tunnels, a patch of death seemed to appear from the ground. Growing with every second, it killed the trees, wilted the bushes. It was a plague, a tide of withering which spread through woods, ruining everything. Destroying everything.

Darkness had reached the forest. The inevitable black tide of destruction had come to wreak ruin through the trees. It sapped the blazing glory from the majestic oaks. It pulled the very life from the land. It brought oblivion to the woods. It brought death.

But far across the ruined forest, far from the elf in her crumbling home, a single hope remained. A lone obelisk rose from the ground, towering above the stooping trees, ruling over the condemned land. Long-forgotten runes twisted and spiralled across the pillar, glowing, flickering with a deep purple glow. The light grew in intensity, flickering faster, faster. The ground beneath seemed to quiver, shaking with a growing power, rumbling like some beast about to swallow it whole. The obelisk began to shake, violently, explosively, sending forth an awful noise of tearing rock. The light within glowed brighter, brighter, a blinding glow of age-old magic. A crack appeared at the top, chasing down, splitting, crawling all over. It reached the ground and spread further, opening up a chasm in the earth.

And then it stopped.

The whole forest stood quiet for a second. The birds didn't call, the wind didn't brush through the trees. For a brief moment, time stood still.

Until it didn't.

Until the staggering obelisk crumpled, sending chunks of rock spiralling towards the ground. And now, where the proud, towering pillar of rock once stood, a hole gaped in the forest. All that remained of the ancient, powerful column was a small purple object. Exactly where the obelisk had ruled, a shining, glistening egg sat nestled in the dirt. It seemed untouched by the centuries, like it had laid in rest since it had been placed there many generations ago. But then, amidst the ruins and

turmoil, something completely unexpected happened. Something which could change the future of the forest, the future of the whole land.

It cracked.

*Andrew Digby*



### **A Collection of Poems in the Style of Emily Dickinson**

#### *Humility*

The Beam that breaks the roughest Wave  
Will often gentle be –  
To calm a Current quite as grave  
Demands humility.

#### *Creativity*

A copy of a painting –  
Is that a work of art?  
To replicate a masterpiece  
One must be true at heart –

#### *Curiosity*

They that live inside the cave  
Fixated on the wall  
Never know what Nature gave  
Until they heed her call –



### *Responsibility*

If None shall care for Someone,

Then I will care for None.

The wage of generosity

Should easily be won –

### *Perseverance*

A bird alone can wear out Stone

By sharpening her beak –

But repetition thoughtless done

For Talent cannot speak –

### *Courage*

The strength that is untested –

If it be strength at all –

Can scarce be counted courage

Until it fails to fall.

### *Paul Cooley*

## **The Room**

He is in a room. So simple, so complex. His existence is encased in fleshy walls, his mind trapped by the confines and boundaries of the room. A prison, as such. But not quite that. Not quite. A sudden squelch disturbs his senses. The red mess is restless. It swirls impatiently, taking on form after form, like a changing tide or an endless storm. It is eternity, in a way. Because its only attribute is change. Its only definition is being indefinite.

*Pop.* The blood boils. Veins and arteries rush with the fluid, the life giver and symbol of death. The borders of his mind. His physicality; his objectivity. The space above him is infinite: a tunnel, inconceivably long, passing up into the great paradise that lies above. Occasionally, he hears the heavenly sound of an angel's voice. But it is brief, and distant. A rancid odour fills his nose. It is always different, this scent, as is the way in this unholy environment, yet its putridity is everlasting. The man is barefoot: the room's viscous sludge seeps between his toes and slips beneath his toenails. He is no longer disgusted by it. It has been far too long for that.



He is waiting, in truth. Waiting for the room's dull red light to be blessed with that radiant illumination that belongs solely to what is above. But his wait is long, and the room's darkness perpetuates. There is no door. Believe me, he has tried. Tried to escape this hellish construct. Grasped at the gateway to edification. Yet the walls retreat, and the exit is reserved for those who are not him. At first, he was frustrated. Now, he has become accustomed to his imprisonment. However cruel it may be.

The room begins to shrink.

The gap which leads to freedom is deforming. The walls grow near, and the sound of their rippling liquids rumbles in the man's ears. He is terrified. Around him grow satanic cries, ballads of immorality, raking his ears and abusing his mind. Each word is meaningless, intelligible in no language yet horrific in all. His body fails him, immobilised by fear. He falls to his knees. Now there is a heartbeat, deep within the walls, resonant and unrelenting. It condemns what has been; it heralds what is to come. A drumbeat of the final war. Present and prevalent in all mediums and senses, a tsunami of overwhelming misery, a poem dedicated to violence alone. Yet it, in itself, is not violent. No, it is a provocateur, inciting its will in the man. He will become its vessel; its future; its mechanism. That which is above has failed to silence it; and that which is below merely strengthened its intent. The walls are close. So close. They touch his arms; he retches at their vile texture. The above is sealed by the walls: what was hope is now another barrier. He closes his eyes and readies himself.

It stops.

Perhaps this is inevitable.

*James Leeson*



**M**y heart bleeds, as the daggers of its appearance pierce my soul,  
**O**nly Lucifer himself could compare to the atrocity that scarred my eyes,  
**N**othing could halt my urge to retch at this abomination of a creation,  
**S**ickeningly, lifeless eyes roll cluelessly around its pale head, trying to escape the evil of its confines,  
**T**witching fingers convulse grotesquely on the edge of the cold, iron trolley,  
**E**venings in my laboratory were as warm as the equator – and to the chilling fear that froze my legs,  
**R**aging winds screamed, as if in eternal torture from the monstrous birth of my work.

*Will Nock*

### **The Train Station**

The pigeon rose over the bustling food stall, unmissable as it was surrounded by a swarm of hungry customers. The cart was teeming with dollar bills, eagerly anticipating every cent that it could earn. Many pigeons were drooling, like lions ready to pounce on their victim, over the gargantuan Pretzels that gluttonous souls had enthusiastically traded for their hard-earned cash. Camouflaged by salt crystals, the bread would be an unhealthy but delectable treat for the silver menaces.

Around the station, delight filled the bodies of tired businessmen as they munched on their sickly snacks. There was an array of crunching, resulting in the announcer of trains not being heard. As a result of this, five hundred people had crammed themselves into a scrum around the electronic board. The crowd attempted in vain to choose which mechanical monster to follow down the dark abyss of the underground tunnel.

Feet were raised repeatedly a couple of inches above the newly cleaned cream floor, and then thundered downward, causing a crash. An infuriated worker slouching on a nearby wall whined like a child, witnessing bottles creeping out of flooded bins onto the floor. He had known cleaning the busy terminal would never be an easy or well-paid job, especially when both humans and pigeons roamed around the area, exhaling labour as they started their journey home.

Yet the police officers guarding private doors were indefatigable. Their voices burned with a fiery and cold blade when any suspicious figures moved their way. They exerted dominance at every available opportunity, eager to stop threats at the earliest opportunity. The city was unpredictable. The officers had to react or be proactive.

The aroma of the adjacent confectionary wandered through the maze of silver, plump pigeons, who began to fly to the cafeteria, where coffee vapour was oozing out of the open door.

The sugary air engrossed the mass of juvenile beings, as they tugged at the sleeves of their parents' overcoats and began to grovel. Grovel, because their guardians swiftly declined to grant their youths an influx of energy: sweets. One by one, the children's faces drooped, like a scorched flower in summer's heat.

Each bundle of eagerness immediately shed all signs of happiness, casting it onto the floor. The rowdy offspring created a vehement roar, which erupted out of their mouths. Swiftly, their parents

grabbed their manes, and their mouths closed to rest in peace. Quiet was achieved. Once they had finished overreacting, they opened their eyes and accepted the decision.

A baby followed suit, repeating the last verse of the station's song, as their chaperones apologised to neighbouring families.

Then the 20:29 train whirred through the tunnel, pulling alongside the platform.

Havoc ensued.

Marshalls appeared out of the shadows, ushering commuters into invisible space in the confined locomotive. As the train lurched to the left, giants leaned into mortals sitting on seats. As the train jerked to the right, the giants fell into mortals. The puny mortals were crushed in the melee of city life, packed into a tiny carriage.

A young boy looked around nervously. Clutching his mother's arm, he whispered, "Mummy, why do you love this station so much?"

The mother replied, "Well, when you combine the smell of the food with the sound of footsteps, talking, wailing, begging and the wings of pigeons flapping, you get an album. An album that comforts you. An album that conveys normality. An album that portrays history. An album of joy, at your fingertips. That is why I love this station."

And with two hundred people, they boarded the 20:59 train to Washington D.C.

The police and cleaners did not hang around for long. Within twenty minutes, all was still. The comforting soundtrack had departed, not to be played again until morning.

The smell of food remained. It was stubbornly refusing to leave, despite being bribed by the brisk and piercing night. It clung to the walls, desperate not to be vanquished.

A pigeon squawked.

Another squealed.

The icy cold inferno jeopardised the frail life the fowl retained, and reluctantly, they flew home, hungry and disappointed, but safe from the night.

The feelings of the sophisticated individuals had gone. The terminal was barren. Barren and defunct. Barren in the city that never sleeps.

*Thomas Russell*



## Frankenstein Speech

*Frankenstein is standing centre stage in his operating theatre. He is looking worried.*

**Frankenstein:** Hello. My name is Doctor Victor Frankenstein – Herr Frankenstein to most. I am a scientist from Geneva. I have a father who is currently very sick, a younger brother William (*with a tear in his eye. Sniffs.*) – well, I used to, and a family friend called Elizabeth who has played a crucial role in the past few days. I also have a friend called Clerval. He witnessed the creation of my monster. I regret the craftsmanship I have put into making this monster and wish I never made it at all. The beast has been wreaking havoc through the streets of Geneva and even killed my brother. That is why I am telling you this. I need your help to stop the monster. I love science, but science can't fix this. Only physical human strength can stop this monster. Please help me. You are my only chance to stop the monster lurking in the shadows. Here's what's happened so far.

Clerval helped me in the creation of the monster. He attached the cable to the roof and connected it to the monster. He didn't know what the monster was, however, as it was under a cloak. I feel so sorry that Clerval had to witness the creation of the beast. I knocked him out as he was about to disconnect the cables and when he woke up, the monster and I were gone. Then the monster left, and I lost him. I came back and Clerval didn't know what had happened. I haven't seen him since. Elizabeth then came storming in, explaining to me that my father was sick. I didn't know what to say. Hopefully my father is fine. She then left. I hadn't seen her either until after William's death. Elizabeth was with me, and we saw someone being carried to the church outside in the streets. He was under a cloth, but we knew it must have been William. Elizabeth went to check and then the monster appeared at the window. He looked as angry as a tiger.

He said that I created him for evil and to be alone in the world. He was the only thing in the world of his kind. He wanted me to make another monster. A bride. I told him it would take three years and he agreed. He said he would stay in the darkness for three years and then return to take his bride away forever. And if I hadn't kept my promise, there would be trouble. I agreed and in so doing, created a dilemma for myself because I cannot possibly make another one. That's where you come in. I want you to track down the monster and kill it. And remember, there is a reward for whoever kills the monster. All I want is to see him dead. Goodbye.

*Charlie Graham*



**They came in like bombs**

They came in like bombs  
From the distance towards us  
Bombardments and bangs  
Screams, shells, and scars  
Men, Guns, and War

They came in like bombs  
Hell and fire raging  
Chaos and casualties  
It was man at war with man  
No regret – just killing

They came in like bombs  
Families stuck in buildings  
People hostage to freedom  
Escaping impossible  
Death inevitable

They came in like bombs  
Buildings crumbling everywhere  
Every man in despair  
Smoke arising  
Bloody bodies just lay there

The bombs had now detonated  
A wreck of debris everywhere  
City deserted  
The world hurt

All because one man told them to come in like bombs

*Harry Turnell*

## The Classroom

It was mid-winter in the middle of Warwick, as the crisp, cold wind cut through the air and the sun sank below the distant fields. On the second floor of the neglected brick building, classroom doors were held ajar by overflowing green bin bags, waiting for collection. Monday's detritus was ready to be removed, marking the end of another school day.

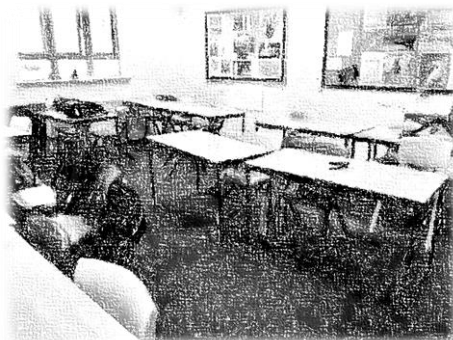
Pine framed windows peered down on the rugby pitches where players passed as a thin mist rolled over them. A goal post lay on the floor, broken and distorted, much like the chairs and tables of the classroom which had been tipped and turned as the bell released students allowing them to rush home. The whiteboard, used many times throughout the day, was no longer a perfect shiny white, but a grey amalgamation of colours each pressed over each other. Below it, the bins were overflowing with a waterfall of paper, ink, and wrappers. Lockers were dented and banged, groaning under the weight of the contents within.

Slowly, I stepped into the classroom and the reassuring ticking tempo of the clock contrasted with the disarray which it overlooked. That, and the blue revolving chair, tucked neatly under the weary wooden teacher's desk, where piles of paper and a plethora of files sat. A stark contrast to the disorder and destruction the rest of the classroom was in; gum was clinging tightly, as if it was a parasite, to bottom of the chairs and spread surreptitiously under tables in occlusion of the hawk-like eye of any teacher. The ceiling of the classroom was decorated with displays of literary devices hung in hope that students might catch sight of them once or twice. A once tidy array of dictionaries and thesauri which had stood on the far windowsill now lay strewn across the floor, hanging on cabinets, even damaged on desks. The perpetrator? Unruly students filled with boredom during the sullen, soggy lunchtime. Coarse and corroded, as I touched the wall's texture my spine shivered from head to toe. Displays of a student's work were dangling from the board, a compass to the drudgery accomplished.

Each desk, I noticed, was graffitied with names, symbols, or insults. Each chair surface scarred with scissors. Every few inches of carpet were burnt with black holes and blue-tac-bearing cabinets were scratched and scathed by various markings of different colours. The atmosphere succumbed to the musty odour of boys' sweat. This wretched smell was fighting a difficult battle against the aroma of cleaning products. At the front of the classroom an interactive board was stapled to the wall - a black badge of modern development - which rivalled the neighbouring whiteboard. An amalgamation of winding wires wound round the plug sockets towards the board, interrupted by the architraves on the wall.

I flicked the plastic light switch, submerging the room in darkness, ready for the next day. I descended the stairs of the building. Incrementally, the night's sky darkened with every step toward the ground.

*Ptolemy Walton-Hayfield*



## The Forgotten

Rue Britannia Rue Britannia they say,  
As we slog through the trenches day after day,  
Fighting to keep the Green and Pleasant lands,  
We don't complain.

Day in, Day out,  
Our rifles on our shoulders,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.

The smoke creeps up our nostrils,  
As shells scream through the air,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.

The rain, heavy as stones,  
Falls on our backs as we fire,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.

The metallic tang of blood in our mouth,  
As we trample in the sodden trenches,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.

Our families back at home,  
Not forgotten, yet all alone,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.



Gunfire rings throughout our head,  
Our clothes, sodden, dirty,  
Yet no-one turns a blind eye,  
They don't care if we die.

Rue Britannia Rue Britannia they say,  
As we slog through the trenches day after day,  
Fighting to keep the Green and Pleasant lands,  
We don't complain.

*Alex Lewis*

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