impressions
2013
stories
Poetry
art
Nathan Tang, Year 12

by Lorraine O’Brien

Works of fiction create imaginary worlds and even the most realistic of them provide escape routes from our own experience. Nowhere is this more obvious than in the speculative fiction of Year 10 students, reproduced in this 2013 edition of Impressions. James Hool begins his story “The Stream” with:

It was a late Sunday afternoon when I strolled the streets, past Mrs Winton’s house to the outskirts of the town. It was sixteen thirty precisely – my favourite moment of the day, when I heard the sound.

What is there to question in the establishment of such a familiar setting? What is the sound that encourages a pedestrian to stop? The story takes the reader into a world of nature that speaks of ecological harm wrought by human beings. It is a story that engages and teaches.

This anthology takes a marked change in direction with the inclusion and celebration of creative work by students in the Preparatory School. Their prose, written in a garden or overlooking the Swan River, complements the fairy tales and poetry of their peers. These in turn resonate with the experiences and work of students in the Senior School as writers reflect on the theme of “Family”, the focus for the English Department’s Creative Writing Competition. Winners were Hasan Gilani, Year 12, and Stefano Tudor, Year 10. Their stories are published here, along with other narratives, protest poetry, examples of parody, and responses to the P.D. Nash Poetry Competition, won by Andrew Stewart, Year 12.

I hope you enjoy immersing yourself in the world of creativity offered by the fiction, poetry and artwork of students at Christ Church Grammar School.
... from one word to the next.
A perfect harmony of voices.
I tasted summer again. She waited for me beside the fence, like always, despite the unadulterated heat goading our resolves. That day, we were the ants under the magnifying glass. I met her with a swift embrace and then we were the shadows that slivered through the cracks of the buildings and the roads and the fences.

Her name was Anusha. She never said much, but to me, her expression was unparalleled. I could talk to her for hours at a time and her thirsty gaze would never falter - not for a second. She would cling to my words, as if each was a melody, and she was hearing music for the first time. Her countenance would flicker with the most pristine and natural emotion whenever I would read to her from my Dada's book - the stories that my parents read to me every night when I was young. Her body shivered at the tales of the corrupt kings and thieves and bandits and her eyes would brighten with elation at the triumphs of the noble princes and knights. It was almost as if her own parents had not taught her anything about the world. Like a fire without tinder, she clung to me as if I was her oxygen. She was my violin waiting to be tuned and she made me feel alive.

For some reason, she would insist that our meetings must be private. During our conversations, she would often twitch with considerable unease, like she was dreading some sort of ambush. That day, after I fervently assured her we weren't being followed, she took my hand and led me through the town, through the alleyways and seedy lanes that she knew almost too well.

We wandered together through the winding back alleys, avoiding the main roads clogged with soldiers and bad men - roads irrigated with the various perfumes of suppression. There were fewer people here. We heard only the subdued whispers of irritation from the desperate locals trying to eke out a wretched existence. Men slumped over on the curbs, some drugged, some passed out, all silently begging for relief from their chains of inevitability. Children forced in upon themselves, whose expression took on a sort of blankness, trying to comprehend an adult world - a world of men and mosques that held no meaning to them. As we walked through the back alleys, I saw a society, our home, scorched by a merciless Arab sun and burned from within.

We landed at an unfamiliar place, where the air was cool and still, perhaps damp with the memories of that time long ago when people knew how to smile. It was an old schoolyard, with a modest playground and a croaking set of swings.

"This is a good place," uttered Anusha, in a rare occurrence of speech. We each sat contentedly on the swings for a few minutes and then, without a prompt, I began to recite my favourite story from the tired pages of the book.

"The Fisherman and the Genie... On the shores of the Great Sea of Persia lived a kindly fisherman. His wife and children waved farewell to him every morning as he set off with his nets to catch what he could. 'Let the sea bring us riches', they all used to say....

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She never said much, but to me, her expression was unparalleled.
“The fisherman himself became one of the richest men of all. The Sultan gave him untold riches and loved him like a brother. He did not go fishing again, but he never forgot the Genie who promised to make him richer than he ever dreamed possible.”

I looked up and saw Aleem close the book. The story was finished. He had been reading to me for so long that I did not know what the time was. I knew Ummi and Dada wanted me to return home soon, but I did not want to go back. I wished he would read me another story. His voice reminded me of the silk that Ummi used to bring home from the bazaar. She hadn’t brought silk home for years.

I never liked to speak in front of Aleem, because I feared he would tease me for knowing so little. He was educated and words flowed like water from his mouth. His tales and stories were so exciting and yet his voice could put me to sleep. How could I wake up and come back to the real world after such sublime visions? Even the dreams I had when I slept at night could not compare to what I experienced with Aleem. With every new story, I was a different person, but in a familiar world. Sometimes I was a sea captain on an old ship resisting a storm. Sometimes I was a knight in a vast army, riding into battle. Sometimes, I would teach him about school, the place where children go to learn stories and how to read and write and play. Even though the sun was setting, the heat was very strong. I had been walking for a long time and soon the main roads and buildings were replaced with dirt roads and decaying stone houses. Nobody in this part of the town talked to each other anymore. The men and women who passed by looked only at their feet and shuffled like their feet were in chains. I hated this place and all the people who lived here. Aleem mouthing the words and heard his voice drifting like musk. It was Aleem’s favourite story. Sometimes I would practice the words over and over until I fell asleep.

He took my arm with force and dragged me to my room. I was gripped with fear and all I could feel was the cold leather of the book pressing against my skin. I prayed to God he wouldn’t find it. He knocked me through the doorway and slammed the door with such force that my ears popped and all I could hear was a dreadful murmur. The turning of the key in the lock seemed like a lifetime to me. I held the book close to me and through my tears, I saw Aleem mouthing the words and heard his voice drifting like pollen into the cracks in the walls and the ceiling. The book opened to The Fisherman and the Genie. The pages were worn and creased and gave out a wonderfully familiar musk. It was Aleem’s favourite story. Sometimes I would watch him read the words on the page and sound the letters out in my head. On the night’s he gave me the book, I would practice the words over and over until I fell asleep.

“On... the... shores... of... the... Great... Sea... of... Persia...”

I could hear Aleem’s voice:

“... L-lived a...”

I felt like I was dreaming.

“Kindly... fisherman.”

The sky was red when I arrived home. Ummi and Dada were working in the back when I snuck inside. I knew they would be angry with me for coming home so late. Dada’s head appeared in the corridor and I could tell he was in a fury. His eyes widened and he threw open the door. The book felt heavy tucked inside my shalwaar.

How dare she return empty handed.

“Insolent girl! Where have you been all day? Did you go to the market like we told you to?”

She stared at me with those vulgar eyes, and said not a word.

“Answer me.” I could feel my voice tremble with anger.

“Yes.”

“Where are your earnings?”

Silence.

“Please, Dada, I’m sorry. Please!” She was pleading with me. How dare she plead with me, after what little she does for this family. My own daughter did not respect the name that I had worked so hard to build. Where did I go so wrong?

I had always known that she was different. Always talking of stories, music, reading, writing, friends. School! What nonsense! How can these things help you in the real world? How could reading a book pay for the food that we struggled to garner? How can these things help you in the real world? How could reading a book pay for the food that we struggled to garner in the first place? What good were friends in a country where you couldn’t trust anyone, not even your own neighbour? My daughter had no sense. No shame. No sacrifice. No idea how the world really worked. I had seen how dutiful the boys from next door were. How I wished I had a son instead.

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Part of the Pack

Stefano Tudor, Year 10

The unforgiving arctic wind howled and the great pine trees of the north made loud grans that reverberated into the depths of the night. The blizzard had been raging for a day and almost all life in the woods had long since fled deep underground or disappeared into lairs and nests hidden by the dense foliage. As the snow storm continued to sweep the land, a dark moving figure appeared on a large rock. The figure’s determined eyes shone, briefly illuminated by the moon. The moon betrayed the fact that the shape on the rock was a wolf and then disappeared back behind the clouds.

The wolf was running at a steady pace, out in the open, despite the cold fury of the storm. The wolf was not panting; it had only just started running. The wolf’s lips were quivering and its hair stood up on end, belying the fact that it was on edge. The wolf was indeed on edge and was running only because it felt in the marrow of its bones that a call had been issued to which it was its age-old responsibility to answer. The two-legged mammal had not come back to the pack den that night and the wolf instinctively knew that it was in danger.

The shrill sound of arctic birdsong echoed through the frozen woodland as the first feeble rays of the day’s sunlight attempted to light up the pale, and now clear, sky. The wolf, however, seemed not to notice dawn breaking and even though it had not stopped to rest for the night it continued to run towards the pull of the call. The wolf knew the two-legged mammal’s scent instinctively and it stopped once or twice an hour to scent and confirm that it was on the right track.

At midday, the wolf came to a destination that forced it to halt. It had come to a lake, the surface of which had frozen during the night. The lake dominated the landscape and the wolf gazed across it with uncertainty. The wolf knew that the mammal had crossed the lake on its raft as it usually did to gather nuts from the opposite side of the lake. After some contemplation the wolf decided that it would have to risk crossing the lake by foot, for time was running out - it could feel the two-legged mammal’s life force weakening rapidly.

Without further doubt, the wolf stepped onto the lake. Some cracks in the ice set its fur on end, but after almost slipping and falling through the ice, the wolf proceeded across the lake. The wolf was within reach of the opposite bank when its left hind leg plunged right through an unstable ice sheet. The wolf struggled but this only increased the fissure that had formed in the ice and the wolf was fully submerged. In the murky water, it couldn’t find the crack from which it had fallen. After several attempts at swimming towards the dim sunlight only to be stopped by hard ice, the wolf’s head began to spin.

As the wolf began to pass from this world, it once more heard the call. The two-legged mammal was in danger. Its call had been sounded and it was the wolf’s duty to respond. Filled with new strength, the wolf made one last effort and, swimming hard, it crashed through the sheet of ice. After taking a few deep breaths, the wolf hauled itself onto the top of the frozen lake and made it to the opposite bank. The wolf shook off its coat, then continued running.

The woodland flattened out to form a small expanse of fields full of dull, green grass on the opposite side of the lake. At the end of the fields, large mountains loomed and it was towards the base of these mountains from where the call was coming. The wolf knew it was close, but a low gravel sounded in front of it, forcing it to stop in its tracks. The wolf looked up to find a large brown bear, which reared up on its hind legs and let out a roar.

The wolf stood its ground and tried to make it clear that it meant no harm. The bear was snarling and didn’t appreciate the wolf crossing over its territory. The wolf began to again walk towards its destination, proceeding deeper into the bear’s territory. The bear roared with rage and prepared to charge the wolf. Sensing the attack, the wolf turned to face the bear and fixed it with a stare that told the bear it was doing what nature had made it to do. The bear seemed to understand and, in a moment of kindness that was rare in the hostile arctic, it let the wolf pass through its territory.

As the wolf reached its destination, it observed that its instinct had been right - the two-legged mammal was in danger. The wolf found it trapped under a mass of snow that had slid from the mountain slope in the storm. With purpose, the wolf dug until it finally uncovered the two-legged mammal. It had almost ceased breathing due to suffocation, but was otherwise free from injury.

The creature coughed and then opened its eyes. “Vorak! You saved me. I always knew you were family and you have proved that today by risking your life to save me as only family can,” choked the mammal, full of gratitude.

The wolf wagged its tail and nuzzled the creature, like it would have done to a member of its own family and indeed the wolf and the two-legged mammal were family.

Throughout the ages, the wolf grew more domesticated as man became more civilized, but always it guided man through life. As the centuries passed, the bond between these creatures grew so strong that man, and what is now known as “dog” are, and forever will be, family.
The Stream

James Hool, Year 10

It was a late Sunday afternoon when I strolled the streets, past Mrs Winton’s house to the outskirts of the town. It was sixteen thirty precisely – my favourite moment of the day, when I heard the sound. The oaks sang their song as the wind passed through the leaves. I was passing the approaching stream, where I came every day, as I heard it. A faint whisper. I would have mistaken it for the trees if it had not been so unique. It was not in unison like the trees, but more like a thousand tiny voices to the harmony of a choir. As I grew closer to the stream, the voices became louder and louder, until it spoke.

“Closer.”

I walked to the edge of the stream and peered into the darkened, trickling water, now covered by the shadows of the afternoon. It spoke again. An introduction maybe, but the voice was like honey, flowing from one word to the next. A perfect harmony of voices.

The voice continued to speak, explaining his life. He talked about the early days of his life, when he was just a trickle of water, finding his path down the maze of the valley. As time passed he created a lake at the foot of the valley and every year birds would flock to the safety of his waters and the trees by his shores. He could remember when people would use his waters to carry goods and weapons downstream. And then later, when the children had played with the tadpoles on his shores. Lately, he explained, he had been noticing that I had been coming down and watching him. That was ten years ago. A second in the life of a timeless beast.

As he continued, his sweet voice erupting me into a daze, I thought of the time we had spent together. The first time I thought for a moment of my encounter with the stream. A shock came through me as I realised what he had spoken his next words, “It is gone,” he said.

A shock came through me as I realised what he had accomplished. With all his strength, he had rid his waters of the terrible black liquid. Although he had sacrificed his shore, he had made his waters clean. It was an effort much greater than anything else, as his trickle was now less than half its original size.

Then birds began to sing and look for their nests. Insects started to chirp and frogs croaked. The old willows gushed as the wind found its way through its leaves. I stood up and looked at the stream. The once pure waters were now littered with leaves and branches. A sense of sadness came across me as I stared into his waters.

He spoke again - a soft disbelief. He felt a sense of dread as he spoke his next words, “It is gone, the poison.”

A moment of silence as everything that had witnessed that terrible black liquid. The water glittered in the afternoon sun. Frogs and fish played in the water like children as I walked up stream in search of a clue. A clue to lead me further into this mysterious black liquid. The water glimmered in the afternoon sun. Birds chirped and there was the occasional tap of a woodpecker, when I came across it. A beaker of vile, earthly black. I stared into the beaker, my reflection staring back at me. I picked it up for inspection – a flawless black with a foreign script printed on the side. I took it back and presented it to him, placing the beaker on the shore. His currents washed over it, as if inspecting it. He confirmed its vileness with the crash of a wave that tossed the beaker and its contents onto the grass under an oak tree.


He spoke of a black liquid, darker than night, entering his waters, poisoning them. Once again I looked into his waters of deep blue and green, searching for this vile liquid. His anger raged as he sent tidal waves flooding downstream, crashing into rocks and trees. Bushes and small trees fell as water rushed towards me. I dived out of the way, but the torrent caught me and I was carried by the fierce current. I wasashed against rocks countless times until my shirt was caught on the roots of an upturned tree. The waves pushed and then as if a switch had been flipped, the water calmed, the currents slowed. An eerie silence came over as I inspected the damage. I witnessed the sight of a dead water rat and a bird that had been unable to escape the branches of a tree as the tree fell.

There was a moment of silence as everything that had witnessed the flash flood froze in shock. There was silence, apart from the trickle of the stream.

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As the shadows crept forward and darkness rolled in, I left the stream. Climbing the hill, I went past the oaks and made my way back to the house. I stood and paused and thought for a moment. I pushed open my heavy front doors as though a burden was being heaved from me. A drop of rain hit my head. I thought for a moment of my encounter with the stream.

I settled down to a cup of tea and the evening news as the rains started. Pouring and pouring, the water didn’t stop for hours. Out in the dusk, the stream continued to flow. Perhaps this was a new beginning, new life.

Boy

Bertie Smallbone, Year 11

i am a little boy (no great man)
i do not pretend to understand 'big world' problems
i know not what motivates, and drives,
or why they fight over small matters
i just sit, and watch, and wait

i am a little boy (far from your angry turbulence)
i know not what you do for a living
or why you cannot sleep soundly at night
i know only that when with me
you do not worry about today, tomorrow or yesterday
you live to fight the tide of life

i am a little boy (far from the disorder of what is your family)
i know not why you smile in front of the children
or why you quarrel behind closed doors
i only know that within me, is the key
to easy laughter, and to discover joy without words

i am a little boy (small, compared to your outside world)
i am ignorant of so many different things
but i do know my friends, sister and brother and friend
i know the sounds of their laughter
the gentleness of their voices, as we talk together at night
know the touch of their arms
when we playfully fight
i know those of you who keep me warm
and i know you are wondering about what you are missing
when you walk out that door

i am but a little boy (no great man)
but i do know a great deal.
Nowar Koning, Year 9

I despair for where the future is head
Where we will be in one hundred years
Everything we know of will be dead
It will prove true all fears

Clarity in its purest form
I can see where it will all be
In the midst of one giant maelstrom

With every day that has passed
My despair grows stronger
The die has been cast
The days grow shorter

But this is the problem with human nature
We are so diverse we cannot change
It has always been our biggest failure
We will march on as if nothing is strange

Clarity in its purest form
I can see where it will all be
In the midst of one giant maelstrom

Matthew Hawkins, Year 8

Last night I had the best time of my life. It started when the good ol’ captain decided that life was a bit too quiet. He organised a meeting and asked us what we thought would be a jolly way to enjoy the trip.

We all went into the Captain’s room and sat around his big table. He put the question out there and we decided that a good party would really make the trip more enjoyable. Then Boy Lorenzen had the splendid idea of utilising some of our cargo of 1,701 barrels of raw alcohol. He came up with the plan of mixing it with a bit of water and making a salty beverage.

We had no idea how well that would turn out. That night we rolled out a few barrels of alcohol and started mixing. The result was exquisite. It made you a little bit dizzy at first, but once you get over that it was quite refreshing. After a few hours we had rolled out a total of nine barrels, what a night!

After hours of fun and large quantities of alcohol I needed to relieve myself. I strolled to the bow of the boat and I thought I could see a small glow. I hallowed to the captain and he staggered toward me, a bit unstable from the drink. I saw his eyes widen so I knew I wasn’t imagining the glow. He snapped into sobriety and barked commands at me and the rest of our crew. We blindly followed his commands, lowering the boat and collecting his navigating equipment, including his sextant.

Duncan Grainger, Year 8

Behind the crumbling walls
There is glory still
Reflected water dancing across frescoed ceiling
With its gold angels and important domes
Deep in the labyrinth of unnamed alleys
Don’t send me where the tourists go
Travel is my first love

Jones Rees, Year 10

After we had all gotten into the boat, good ol’ Albert remembered to put the anchor down. The captain made the wise decision not to order us to drop the full size anchor in the state we were in and ordered us to tie a rope to one of our stern anchors and drop that off the side.

We then set towards the light, but the swell was larger than we had realised when we were on the boat and I was struggling to paddle us into shore. Boy Lorenzen offered to take over on the oars and I gladly accepted, but the waves were too much for even his marvelous physique. And still the waves were picking up. The captain ordered us to return to the Mary Celeste but it was too far. I hurriedly stuffed my diary papers into a bottle. If we were going to tip, I wanted to keep my memories dry. I kept one page out and that is the one that I am writing on at present. But I fear this is going to be my last entry. I can see the wave that will swamp us for sure. I just have to finish this entry… Not enough time. If anyone finds this please tell my wife, Sarah that I love her…
Mission Beach

Brynn O’Connor, Year 11

"Cyclone warning update for Far North Queensland, in areas between Cooktown to Bowen. A blue alert is now upgraded to a red alert as the system intensifies to a category four...," announced a presenter through the crackling of the radio.

It was barely heard over the sound of the wind gushing against the house.

Brent put the final nails in the wooden boards. This wasn’t the first time he’d had to dress the windows with protection during the cyclone season. His wife, Shirley sat down with their young son, Ben and looked anxiously as the last grey gloomy light was blocked by boards.

"Wind gusts of up to one hundred kilometres an hour on the first front, with winds projected at two hundred and twenty kilometres an hour by the main front at three pm Eastern Standard Time," intruded the presenter.

"Brent, how do you think the house will hold?" enquired Shirley.

"I have no idea. Ain’t never seen or heard of something this big," replied Brent.

Shirley’s face went a little pale and her face grew a worrying expression as she cursed under her breath. It was a big one. No escaping now. The last twenty-four hours had seen over three hundred millimetres of rain, and had washed away the only roads that fed the small community.

It was middy in Mission Beach, a little town one hundred kilometres south of Cairns. Middy is usually when the cane farmers come in and rest after a dirty morning’s work of cutting and burning the crop. It was also the time when the boats from the little harbour would venture out to take in the pristine beauty of the Great Barrier Reef. Today, however, the cane fields were empty and the harbour tied down. Not even the tourists were willing to stay for the sight of a category four cyclone - to watch it come and wreak havoc on the far North. This was the big one.

The quiet beach was now full of surf the height of houses and wind that blew away anything that dare stand in the way of Mother Nature.

Inside the corrugated iron house, Brent and Shirley sat still and listened to the wind lashing the panel boards. Ben sat on the floor next to them playing with toys, blissfully unaware about the impending danger.

The authorities had recommended that people evacuate the area immediately as it was their last chance to escape. But Brent and Shirley, along with the fifty people who lived on Mission Beach, decided to stay and battened down the hatches on the house they built from scratch. Having no roads to escape on, all but bounded them to the final verdict that the cyclone would deliver.

The family had a rushed lunch before the power was cut off by the winds. They filled up two jerry cans of water in case the spring became infected with rubble. The time crept by, slowly. They could feel the presence of a monster at their doorstep. By two pm, the rain and the wind had intensified. The sky had grown a cold, dark glove.

Brent and Shirley now made their way to the bedroom at the back of the house. Ben followed them, dragging his toy car along beside him. His mother picked him up, held him and whispered softly in his ear, “Everything is going to be alright, mate,” even though she wasn’t sure herself.

It was too late to leave the house. Brent and Shirley wondered if they had made the right decision by staying after all.

As time built up to the impact point, the family huddled up together in the wardrobe of the bedroom. The safest place they thought. But nothing was going to stop the impending beast now.

Slowly but surely, the once quiet creaks of the tin roof started to grow into a loud moaning from the constant pounding of the wind. The house began to shake a little more as the panel material came flying in, swirling, tearing everything apart.

Slowly but surely, the once quiet creaks of the tin roof started to grow into a loud moaning from the constant pounding of the wind. The house began to shake a little more as the panel boards holding the windows began to shudder.

Just like the foundations struggling to hold the house down with the incredible forces, Brent and Shirley began to shiver with nervousness and unease about the continuing barrage of the cyclone’s fury. Even little Ben, once naive, now became restless and distressed about the loud noises that surrounded him.

The family huddled closer. Through the ferocious wind they could hear the palm trees being lifted from their roots.

Brent and Shirley exchanged cries of, “I love you,” and “Hang on, we’re gonna’ make it,” as Shirley wrapped her grip around Ben even tighter. Then a massive crack rose just outside the house, followed by an explosion of iron and tin. Suddenly, the whole house opened up. The wardrobe door swung open as if the cyclone was peering in to see its next victim. Debris of trees and material came flying in, swirling, tearing everything apart. The wind and the rain tore away the walls and Shirley’s grip of Ben.

Shirley screamed and looked across to Brent for some help, but Brent wasn’t there. Then the twisting and treacherous house let out a tortured scream of pain as it was lifted off its foundations and flung violently into the sand dunes. This left Shirley exposed, much to the delight of the cyclone. She was picked up by the circling monster and carried into the cane fields. Nothing was left of the house as the cyclone now looked towards the inland, wanting to create more devastation and destruction.

An eerie silence swept across the beach. There was no more heartache the monster could cause.

The next day, North Queensland had come to grips with the most comprehensive devastation Australia had ever seen. The big regional cities of Townsville and Cairns had been flattened to the ground, and stripped away of its inhabitants. Mission Beach was beyond recognition. None of the houses stood standing, nor did the community spirit which once surrounded the peaceful town. It looked like nothing had ever existed there before.

Two days after the cyclone, the State Emergency Services went about checking each of the costal towns where they knew people had stayed to face the cyclone. They arrived at Mission Beach, sifting through the area looking for any signs of the families that once called this place home. Doing a sweep of the area five kilometres away from the beach, a team discovered Brent’s body lying in the middle of a drainage ditch. A little while later, Shirley’s body was found under a piece of tin in a cane field, just outside of town. After continuous hours of searching through the day and finding the last dead inhabitants of Mission Beach, the search team discovered the last victim of the cyclone’s homicide. That was little Ben, who was found in the area of what used to be the living room, holding his toy car.

It looked like nothing had ever existed there before.
Sunrise

Liam Kearney, Year 12

“I wasted time and now doth time waste me.”

I know each day the sun will rise
And suffocate the sallow skies
Our scourge swallows the city like a sentient shadow
And souls dissolve into flesh and blood.

Down below where the ravens feed
Amongst that frenzy of feet rushing from end to beginning
Amongst those evanescent dreams rushing from beginning to end
Bathed in the frigid mist that appears and vanishes
In the time it took to glance the other way
I stoop bearing the memories of time’s lost passage.

How I do remember those youthful tendencies?
The vaulting ambitions and pernicious intent?
The ebullient soldier, riding the bubble
Dangling from the weathered cliffs of ancient dogmas
And having no sense of the ills to come, imprisoned
By the sweet liberty of forgotten tears?

I remember the artificial smiles and poisonous dissension
Where a second’s indecision would cost millions
And a second’s foresight reverse it
The world is my oyster and I shall pry it open
For I can buy the brightest diamond and the finest champagne
But can I buy the gladness of purpose?

I remember the sultry intoxicated nights,
When radiant angels gathered delivering my desires
Their sordid echoes haunt my mind like tempest after sun
The swallowed bait to cool those carnal strings
Brings the briefest joy and profoundest pain
Just as hot amour bleeds cold disdain.

Gaze long into the abyss and it gazes back
Now this world of closing walls and ticking clocks is the only one
I know.
And when I am gone, my legacy shall live on
Framed in bank receipts and treasury bonds
I am the flint and not the paper knife
A minute speck on the tree of life.

The door of time is chained, for Orpheus had no second chance.
In a single moment, hope is lost and despair eternal
Sunshine and senses flee, down comes the night
To envelop me, possess me, drown my light.
I feel the murk of emptiness drawing in, I close my eyes
And make a wish.

That maybe tomorrow the sun will not rise.
So maybe tomorrow I can be free.

Freshwater Bay, Claremont

Robert Browne, Year 7

I looked across the bay of boats
Up high above the riverbed,
Where fishermen once held their ropes.
In matted sea grass insects flee,
I see ripples of water moving along the river’s edge,
I look back across the stillness of this day.
And watch the sun reflect upon the broken river’s bridge.

Excitement runs through my soul, for,
I see fishermen on the jetty while seagulls screech!
The fish glide slowly past the shore,
As numerous as the sand upon the seashore.
I am delighted! Ecstatic, for today
I will be catching fish along Freshwater Bay.

The swans glide by, so straight and proud
The dogs are barking, owners holding them back
But I just laugh out loud!
It is surreal; I am here again to watch and fish
On my familiar jetty, in the Swan River bay, I am back!

My rod is ready, how great that feeling!
To cast it into the clear blue water steadied by my hand
The waves sing a song as they roll against the sand.
The Place of Magic

Oliver Sheldrick, Year 6

The sun rising over a cliff,
Enlightening the calm, glistening surface,
The delicate flowers make me sniff,
This river as beautiful as it can be,
Cacophony of birds squawk with glee,
Water flows for as long as I can see.
Whispering trees sway side to side,
I smell the scent of a pulchritudinous flower,
Water lapping, rising the tide,
The soothing grass gives me power,
Majestic birds as high as can be,
Motor of boat humming like a bee.

Bringing back memories from the past,
Disliking this place would be a sin,
This happiness will forever last,
Persuading me to go for a swim,
I feel more peaceful than I ever have been,
It has to be the most beautiful I have seen.

Skimming rocks on the shimmering river,
Slimy jellyfish bop up and down,
The cold water makes me shiver,
This will never make me frown,
Speeding boats you can barely see,
Hanging off the cliffs are the trees.

All alone pondering with enjoyment,
Thinking back to the magical place,
I can still smell the wonderful scent,
The soothing wind chilling my face,
I sadden because I had to part,
From the place that’s forever in my heart.

An Angry Letter to the Editor

Andrew Stewart, Year 12

Dear Mr Editor

I think it’s time we stopped this now.
The pedantic, meticulous
Bordering on ridiculous
Political corrections you are making.
Don’t get me wrong, I hold no prejudices.
Yet I feel I must make emphasis
That your futile fight for censorship
Will over the edge, society tip.
We have come far from where we were,
(admittedly still far to go)
but where does society need to be
to warrant true equality?

Why do you think that we seek to attack
Those people we describe as ‘black’? (African American)
Why do you maintain a total ban
Of any word that ends in ‘man’? (person)

Rohan Golestani, Year 12

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Why do you think that we seek to attack
Those people we describe as ‘black’? (African American)
Why do you maintain a total ban
Of any word that ends in ‘man’? (person)

Why do you judge those persons who
Define someone as heavy or ‘fat’? (fuller figured)

Don’t label us with Iago’s intent
If we don’t quite say what it is we meant.
Don’t stamp us with Buchanan’s burden
If our lives are not perfectly worded.
The words you replace,
(they’re politically correct)
The appropriate, the censored, have little effect.
As words you alter, words you change
In society mean exactly the same.

Try as I might
I fail to see the point of your plight
Because if you persist
I think you will find
A world unable
To speak its mind.

Seth Dobson, Year 10
skywards for the second lamp. However, it did not present itself.
The automobile next to him had only one shadow, as did the
tree behind him. Yet, arching over his right shoulder, was the
unmistakable form of a tall stranger.

I am ill,' he told himself. I am over-wrought and my nerves have
gone to pieces. This day has taken more out of me than I know.
Something has happened to my eyes. Unless I am well in the
morning, I shall see a specialist.'

As he composed his mind with these reflections, he came upon
a happening that plunged him into newfound oscillations of
terror. A gust of wind brought his hand to his hat. The hand
of the shorter shadow went to his head and the longer one
remained stable. Now his stomach was truly lost inside of itself.
He whirled once more, his arms lashing in a cavalcade of attack.
Yet all he struck was cold and empty air. There was no one. The
fear rose to consume him once again.

He broke into a shambling, confused run. Such was the tumult
of his mind that when he reached his own garden gate, his
fumbling fingers had difficulty with the latch. A lone street light
illuminated it and, to his upmost despair, when he looked upon
it, two shadows presented themselves - not one. He rushed
inside, trying desperately to calm himself. He said nothing to his
wife.

And indeed, he did begin to feel normal once again.

The next morning his wife watched curiously, as he tentatively
frequented darkened streets. His wife noticed these queer
tendencies having become the norm to him and those
remained imprinted on the ground, ever still, watching
towards the next. Perrenet could
silently wherever there was light behind it. Perrenet could not
tell anyone of his father's hallowed presence, not even his
wife.

'They will think me mad!' he reasoned 'And for good cause! I
am, positively insane… I must be!'

Still, he endeavored to live as normal. He expelled the idea
of the shadow altogether, in the hope that a willing ignorance
towards its existence would see it disappear. He avoided walking
in sunlight where best he could and at night he took to
frequenting darkened streets. His wife noticed these queer
tendencies, however, he quelled any worries she had,
calming her as he inwardly calmed himself.

And indeed, he did begin to feel normal once again.
When he was not careful enough, he would glance the
towards the wall, her golden hair flying around her face. Tears clouded
her eyes, and she looked at him pleadingly,

'It was your mother, she telephoned… something has
happened'

The next month of Perrenet's life saw his mental state
deteriorate considerably. His father, it seemed, had met his
fated end from an aneurism to the sinciput. Still, his form
remained imprinted on the ground, ever still, watching
the shadow altogether, in the hope that a willing ignorance
towards its existence would see it disappear. He avoided walking
in sunlight where best he could and at night he took to
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tendencies, however, he quelled any worries she had,
calming her as he inwardly calmed himself.

And indeed, he did begin to feel normal once again.
When he was not careful enough, he would glance the
shadow, printed somberly next to his. However, now he was
electrocuted less by its presence, simply casting it from his
mind. His life, it seemed, had begun again.

Three years passed in this fashion, his seemingly agoraphobic
tendencies having become the norm to him and those
around him.
It was an inclement night in May. Perrenet sat by the fire, his heart at peace. He had finished his nightly work and the warmth of the hearth was congenial to his content disposition. The air inside the room mocked the violence of the storm outside. The howling of Aeolus on the exterior was joined only by the clicks of the death watches inside the walls. Perrenet sat in silence, his eyes closed, near-napping.

The shrill sound of the telephone pierced the silence like a scimitar through the heart. Perrenet was alert once again, his brow creased. He glanced at the wooden grandfather clock in the corner of the room, darkened and doleful. As he glared, the clock sounded 1, and the phone continued its unearthly cry. His brow furrowed further, rising to the receiver. ‘At this hour,’ he picked up the phone, ‘who could it possibly be?’

He answered with his name, receiving a rushed and grainy response from the other end of the line. He dropped the receiver, staggering backwards. The table was thrown, and his glass shattered against the floor, staining the carpet with blood-red brandy.

His younger sister, a woman he cherished with the ardor of a curious child. Instead, this idea permeated up through to the surface of his mind from the stagnant depths of his will. He had ceased to reject the evidence the world placed before him — there was no denying it — even before he knew of the passing of his sister and her husband, next to his own form. He was tinctured with the idea of the macabre figures of his family, glaring at him. Did they want something? Was it his fault they were imprisoned in this unearthly state? He had descended into unrestrained interpenetration, drowning himself each night in alcohol so as to forget for a few hours his perennial guests. Glass followed glass in the darkness of his house at the early hours of the morning — and it was indeed darkness in which he drank, for he had removed every light fixture by which he may have cherished the ever-growing kinship beside him.

His dear wife had not been angered or entirely perturbed at his behaviour, only consumed by worry for her husband. He had maintained there was nothing wrong with him and refused to see a doctor. Still, he descended further into the black of paranoia.

He had become obsessed with the idea he would one day lose his wife. Every time his shadow and the inhabitants behind it were revealed, he thought he saw her, standing there, beautiful and magnificent. She was what he adored most. He could not cope with the idea he would one day see her as he walked into the sunlit — there, looming over his shoulder, mocking him for not knowing of her death. He could no longer sleep or eat, and instead simply kept in his house with his wife. He cherished her, and venerated her, wished her everything.

And still he became more at horror of the prospect of losing her. He simply could not go on. He sat in the darkness of his house on another storm-lad night, sipping in silence.

‘I simply cannot go on!’ He confirmed. ‘I must cast myself away, never to return to this place, to my wife.’ He was unconvincing by his own sophistry. ‘That will not do!’ he answered, ‘it will only hurt her more if I am to leave, and besides, she will follow me to Ultima Thule and back if I am to leave now, announced or otherwise!’ He sat in silence awhile longer.

‘Suicide,’ he began to himself, ‘must be the only avenue remaining. I shall become a ghastly shadow on the back of some other victim, some other poor sod.’ He dismissed this thought.

‘She would miss me all the same, worse than if I were to simply leave, to be sure!’ He pondered further. ‘I cannot afford to keep in this state of apprehension. It does not help her or me. I will simply not wait for her to appear behind me as a blackened phantom.’ He pondered longer in the dark.

The conclusion he came to was not in any way evinced suddenly. It did not startle him as an idea startles an inventor, or a curious child. Instead, this idea permeated up through to the surface of his mind from the stagnant depths of his will. He had known of it all along — yet only now did he realise it, and he did so solemnly, and without the fervor one usually has when they have reached an unquestionable solution to a difficult problem.

‘It seems,’ he announced dejectedly to the black and empty room, ‘I will have to solve this Gordian knot in the same manner as Alexander.’

He found he was too overcome to stand properly, his knees giving way and bringing him to the floor. He struggled over to the fireplace and in time brought the hearth to a roaring activity. Still on his knees, he turned his back to the fire and examined the still figures of his extended kin. His mother and father stood next to one another, together in death. His sister stood with her husband, next to his aunt and uncle. He still knew her. He still knew them all. He brought his hands together, glaring at the ceiling. ‘You scoundrel,’ he scorned.

Perrenet Moriau never descended those stairs, nor did his wife.
Matthew Sofield, Year 5

The emerald lake of molten glass laps gently at the soft cold shadowed shore.
The water is so inviting so cool and refreshing.
The ancient jetty sits like a black swan with speckled legs.
Sixteen moorings give the water hats.
The waves endlessly lap at the rough cliffs.
Waves reach up to pull in the hanging trees.
I can hear the nervous birds squawking.
The pleasant wind whispers in my ears as I write.
Houses and trees cling to the rocky cliffs.
Fish dance in the water like fireflies in the night.
The blue sky floats through the landscape like a field of brilliant azure flowers.
I am very proud of the Swan River, elegant and sweet.

Lucas Kailis, Year 5

I hear the click of the cicadas. Their beat sounds as if they are listening to a metronome.
The sun is shining on the river like many cameras flashing.
A light, north westerly wind cools me down as it is a very hot day.
Cabbage moths flutter in the wind peacefully.
Many flies are highly annoying. They buzz around us uselessly.
There are some boats making a low humming sound.
The trees are blowing in the wind and their leaves are making a rustling sound.
I am sitting on grass. The weeds feel like hairy feelers against the back of my legs.
Sweet sounds of the birds’ singing their song is calming.
Blue water that surrounds me is glassy
Tall trees are balancing in the wind.
It seems like I can hear everything; that is how quiet it is.

Henry Yau, Year 3

Blue water that surrounds me is glassy
Tall trees are balancing in the wind.
Alexander Brown, Year 6

Myles McNeilly, Year 6

Jack Salom, Year 6

Thomas Rodwell, Year 6
WILLIAM UP CYCLES

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Luke Kolbusz, Year 12

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Blair Ward, Year 12
... the gateway to life inside.
It’s quiet. The first feeble rays of sunlight streak across the cold panels of glass that seem to reach upward forever above the Swan River. The Bankwest tower, the blue monolith that stands guard over the Narrows Bridge, reflects the headlights of the first few commuters as they traverse the Kwinana, preparing themselves for the ever-present heat that the day will bring. Yet there’s one indifferent from the waking antics of the concrete beast that curls around itself and sprawls east into the hills. His short sharp breaths pierce the cold morning air as he falls into the rhythm—the very rhythm the city is made of. He’s been riding for a while now and his muscular legs are accustomed to the rise and fall of the unicycle’s pedals. With the river on his left, he pushes on towards the convention centre. Stopping now would kill him, so he pushes on. Onto the bridge and then vanishes into the haze caused by a Coles truck hissing in a car park nearby.

Thirty five kilometres southeast, the boy is already awake. He stretches as he gets the milk from the fridge and contemplates waking his brother from the constant slumber that seems to fixate him. Deciding against it, he leaves his Weet-Bix on the table and walks out into the backyard. The smell of leftover snags and smoldering grass greets him and he can tell it’s going to be a hot day. He hears the fridge door shut and goes back inside. A short woman in her forties is making a coffee. She looks up as the flywire slams and frowns.

"Jeez, Mitch. It’s 6:30. What’re you doing wandering around?"
"I couldn’t get back to sleep."
"There’s a perfectly good telly there. I don’t want you wandering around the house and causing dramas."

She’s about to keep going, but her heart’s not in it. She wonders if she’d treat him any differently if he was her son. Then again, that kind of thinking was dangerous for someone in her line of work. She found the more she got attached to a kid, the worse she felt when they got moved to a different house or got sent home to live with their parents. He picks up his bowl from the table, already feeling the pit in his stomach at the thought of another week of school. This was his second school since he got moved from Albany, which he still considered home. In Albany he liked going to school. He had a lot of mates and the work always seemed easy. Southern Hills was completely different. No matter how hard he tried to understand the writing on the whiteboard, it always seemed one step out of his reach, tantalizing him with the idea of sudden realisation and frustrating him no end. He was constantly in trouble for things he didn’t even consider were wrong, such as not tucking his shirt in or being late to class. It didn’t matter though. A year and a half and he would be at his brother’s school. At least that’s what he told himself when someone in his class started giving him a hard time.

On his way to school he heard two boys from his school talking at the back of the bus.
"Ya know they’re building another skyscraper in the city?"
"Yeah, the guy from BHP reckons it’ll be the tallest in Perth!"
"Ya think that means they’ll build another Maccas as well?"

He thinks about the cranes he’d seen the other week when they caught the train into the city to see Nan out in Como. He’s always hated the city. The traffic. The people. The unfamiliarity. The buildings that seem to stretch upwards, distorted and cruel. His thoughts carry him all the way to school, where he begins another six hours with the same feeling pulling him down.

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**Boys**

*Brayden Schofield, Year 12*

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3:25. The front door of the old duplex opens briefly before slamming shut. Mitch walks past Brenda in the living room reading a Life magazine and continues to his room saying nothing. Twenty minutes later he walks out into the living room wearing a jumper and a backpack.

“I’m running away.”

“Well, mister grown-up twelve year old, where to?”

She speaks sarcastically, but looking up and seeing the tears in his eyes she immediately stops.

“I don’t know. I’m not going to that school again. I’m not staying here.”

“Mitch, I know it’s been a long day and you’ve just been walking in the sun for a while, but you better stop and think before you start making decisions, because if you walk out that door there will be consequences.”

Hot with a mixture of anger and frustration, the boy turns and walks down the bare hallway. Out once again in the heat and the distinct smell of suburban monotony, he starts running. He passes the burnt out Commodore squatting morosely in the grass. He passes the small park where the faded play equipment, blending into the surrounding asbestos fencing, shelters half a dozen Aborigines as they drown out the world with muffled cries of anguish, cackles of wheezy laughter and a ten dollar goon-bag. It’s five thirty by the time he reaches the train station and, boarding a C pattern carriage devoid of any signs of life, he sits down. Checking the contents of his hurriedly packed bag, he finds three things. A water bottle. A bag of chips. A picture of his mum. Great, he thinks, just as a surge of regret and second thoughts start to overwhelm him.

It’s getting dark as he leaves the outer conglomerates of houses and shuttles past the Burswood Complex, a great pyramid of slanted glass and hedonism nestled in palm trees and motorways. Then suddenly the habitual screeching of steel on steel fades. The blurred trees and tagged pylons fall away to reveal the river, but the tracks and the Freeway are gone. He is suspended by fascination. The ninety tonne train is suddenly weightless and ascends into the stars as the orange haze in the distance subsides to reveal a moon that envelops the train. Just as he begins to reach out, the train lands roughly back on the rail and hisses to a stop at Perth station.

It’s dark. The man sits atop the single wheel and thinks of nothing else but his repetitive breath. He’s nearing the Bell Tower and a tourist suppresses a laugh when he surges past. His legs working to the same beat as the cars fly past in a continuous line of lights and metallic undercoats. Suddenly and without warning, he makes a right and travels deep into the heart of the city.

Leaving the train station, the boy wanders through Forrest Place feeling furious that he would think to come here. He walks through the city, ignoring the clusters of green-haired, pierced youths. Walking across the vast expanse of grass that ripples beneath the imposing structures of the city, he sees a bench.

He sits down, just in time to see a man on a unicycle ride past. With the river on his right, he pushes on towards the convention centre. He pushes further on to the bridge and then vanishes into the haze caused by traffic. He is free and beautiful.
The lazy afternoon sun wafted through the thatched roof of the teepee, a slight breeze ruffling the four people sitting inside. Luke watched his mum place the joker on top of the large pile of cards. His parents had won, yet again. He collected the cards and began to shuffle them. He wondered whether or not they would be able to play cards again in the future, once they had grown up. Luke proposed the topic to the conversation currently running around the table and after much shuffling of cards, a specific date to meet up was finally agreed upon. It was to be fifty years in the future, at precisely the same teepee they were sitting under right now. He dealt the hands and each respective person took their own hand and put it in their pockets or a purse.

Luke walked into the large office building, telling his secretary sitting at the front desk that he planned to attend the international conference that would confirm his place within the world’s top 20 most affluent companies. As he rose high into the clouds, he glanced at his expensive smartwatch. The date was September 29 - it struck an unfamiliar chord in his brain. He sat in the expensive office chair, mulling over that image. He had forgotten about an important errand, he straightened up, wrote a quick and messy letter to his wife and children and left again - not five minutes before he had arrived. He programmed the autopilot to take him to the nearest airport and took a quick nap before they arrived.

Luke’s brother, Richard, looked at the huge list of patients due in for neurosurgery the next day. As the chief surgeon, he had to decide which cases he wanted to accept and which ones to pass to the rest of his team. It was late and he didn’t want to disturb his children, so he entered quietly through the front door, not turning on any lights. He crept upstairs to the study and began to sort through his things. Before long, fatigue struck him and he went to bed. While he was getting changed, he accidentally bumped against an old, weathered trench-coat that he used to wear when he was younger. Something fell out of the left pocket and, groaning, he bent down to pick it up. With the shock of someone who had forgotten about an important errand, he straightened up, wrote a quick and messy letter to his wife and children and left again - not five minutes before he had arrived. He programmed the autopilot to take him to the nearest airport and took a quick nap before they arrived.

Sighing, the old man creaked out of the luxurious bed. His wife was already awake, cooking breakfast. He smiled, thinking of the happy times they had shared. He bent down to pick it up. With the shock of someone who had forgotten about an important errand, he straightened up, wrote a quick and messy letter to his wife and children and left again - not five minutes before he had arrived. He programmed the autopilot to take him to the nearest airport and took a quick nap before they arrived.

Family

Albert Qiu, Year 10

Despite the torrential rain, the leaky shelter held together, supported by the sheer willpower of the four heads, barely distinguishable in the shimmering translucency of the raindrops. Hands magically appeared from hidden pockets, a magician’s last ace in the hole. Candles flickered unsteadily, but settled to a warm, yellow pool of light cast on the weathered jarrah table, its deep maroon grain glistening in the weak light. Droplets spattered against the ground, swirling around, patternless. Puddles formed dark, unfathomable depths that the weary sun, masked by layers of cumulonimbus, could not penetrate. The delicate sliding of cards placed upon each other penetrated the soft, monotonous raindrops on the ground. The sheer moment of joy upon victory, accentuated by the fist silently hitting the air. The businessman and surgeon stood up and embraced their father and mother - family united after fifty years.

A quiet sigh escaped from lips, finally beaten. Rivers sprung on the weathered landscape of their mother’s face, hidden from her children’s beaming faces, tears in rain.
Christian Fini, Year 12

“Do you remember our holiday up to Byron Bay one summer? We stayed with you, Uncle and older cousins, Rachel and James?” asked the man in the front seat. The boy paused, replying, “Of course I do, Dad.”

“What a trip, hey Don? You could barely swim at the time - I think you were nearly five, but it was almost impossible to get you out of the water. As soon as your uncle taught you how to ride the waves down to the shore on your belly, you loved it and wouldn’t get out of our ear about heading back up there. Do you remember?” asked Don’s father, who was exultant.

“Ahh, I think so, but it’s been quite a while,” replied the boy with an air of hesitation.

“The windows were down and a hot breeze raked through the boy’s long blonde locks and the old man’s few remaining whiskers that stood erect on the top of his scalp. A sense of nervousness clouding the boy was blown away with the warm breeze that flooded the car, a breeze as free as the mountain winds that rushed off the Blue Mountains.

“They’ve missed you very much and came down to stay with us for the weekend. Needless to say your little brothers couldn’t wait. They’ve barely caught a moment of sleep in the past week. It’s as if you’ve reappeared out of thin air after all this time,” said Don’s father as they steered into the driveway past week. It’s as if you’ve reappeared out of thin air after all this time,” said Don’s father as they steered into the driveway.

“Donny, your mother has been cooking all day for you. It’s supposed to. It was a rich compound of lawn bowls, whiskey and after-shave. ‘Donny, you’re the spitting image of your father, you know that? You’ve got the same good looks he stole from me, rather than his mother,’ he chortled as Donny’s grandma slapped him on the arm. Two young boys ran into the room, footy in hand.

“Watch out, Don!” shouted one of them as he sprinted past, ducking and weaving between them.

“You two! Stop that!” shouted his mother from the kitchen. “You’re going to knock something over and God help me, if you do you’ll feel the back of my hand.”

The two boys stopped where they were, gazing forlornly at the floor. They joined Ross as each and every family member, who’d travelled from close and afar, queued one behind another to hold Donny, hug him, touch his skin and kiss him on the cheek. They put their arms around him and for some bizarre reason he felt that he was terribly happy to see them again, even though they were completely foreign to him.

The boy called Donny sat down at the end of the dining room table, placing his small bag beside him, which contained only few possessions - his spare pair of shorts and a fresh pair of underwear.

“Mum has been cooking all day. She remembers your favourite meal – roast chicken and spuds,” said Don’s father. A large, lively woman swept through the doorway straight towards the boy. She was crying, her face red and damp, taking him into the tightest embrace. He could feel the air leave his body from the women’s touch. She finally released him and took a seat beside him. “Haven’t done this in a while, Don – had a big family dinner with everyone,” she said, noticing the smiles of everyone around the table.

The boy noticed he had been holding onto his breath. He breathed out. He couldn’t help but be relieved that they didn’t recognise him. Don was not here. Perhaps, it was such a long time. With doubt in their minds and a will to believe he was alive and safe, they were ready to accept anyone, vaguely similar.

They sat around the table, spuds, two roast chickens and peas and corn spilling over the sides of bowls and plates, talking for hours. They all wanted to know what had happened and where he’d been. “We didn’t leave Broome for weeks, Donny. It was as if you disappeared into thin air. The police couldn’t find any piece of evidence,” said Don’s father, choking on his words. Though many questions were asked, he revealed only small, disjointed fragments of his past. The family didn’t want to overwhelm him and for all they knew the past eleven years were filled with abuse, kidnap and trauma. “You must be tired, Donny. We don’t want to wear you out.” He nodded in agreement, wanting to be out of focus from staring eyes. Picking up his small bag, he received hugs from the grandparents and the younger boys. The boy could not help being overwhelmed. A family dinner was foreign to him, as foreign as an entirely different culture. Right there at dinner he came to realise and appreciate when he looked around the table that if the bright light of family is nurtured and cultivated and loved, life comes to shine.

“Come upstairs. Mum and I will take you to your old room, Donny,” said Don’s father, walking down the corridor. Walking slowly behind him, Donny felt a sense of vulnerability walking up the unfamiliar staircase. His pulse felt shallow, as though he was barely alive. Faintly lit, he was able to see the artwork, which decorated the walls, mostly children’s vibrant scribble of fish and other creatures.
At the top of the stairs he could see light pouring out of an open door, two silhouettes moving inside, "I just put some fresh sheets out for you," said the mother. The stranger's room was faintly lit and it revealed a shadow cast behind him – a shadow nonetheless, but not his own. Don's room was filled with belongings of a young boy. Dusty stuffed toys, books, and action figures along with other melancholic and miscellaneous objects lined the pine wood shelves from top to toe in the corner of the room, each object perfectly in place. Papers were splayed across the bedroom floor, illustrating scribbles of past innocent memories. The bed was small and overflowing with mismatched cushions, obviously designed for a young child. "It's exactly how you left it, Donny," said Don's mother quietly standing beside the door.

Leaving the room without a reply from the boy, they closed the wooden door. Hearing their footsteps walking away downstairs to a room of laughter and family gossip, he took a seat on the end of the bed. A small shy mysterious smile began to creep its way across his face. Across from the bed were three picture frames stationed on the window sill. A small, fair-skinned boy, slim with a full head of light brown hair, was photographed in all of them. He looked like the boy currently sitting on the bed, fair skinned and lean. The boy in the photograph was young and skinny, but very endearing. He wore a blue bathing suit, a matching sun hat and sunscreen layered over his arms and face protecting him – a shadow nonetheless, but not his own. Don's room was faintly lit and it revealed a shadow cast behind him. There was a sound of rumbling far away, coming closer. Memories of the orphans, his forgotten mother, New Norcia, the missionaries, lost and stolen adolescents danced in the night sky. He wished to go to sleep and not wake up in the morning, to stay with a family that loved him.

Three weeks ago, it was as if the stars lined up in his life and he was given the opportunity of a new beginning. A woman representing the State government came to the monastery to share the story of a reopened case of a missing boy named Don Jones who went missing in Broome in 1941. The profile and the photograph of a missing five-year-old were somewhat similar to the reflection the boy saw in the shattered bathroom mirrors. A similar, youthful smile. The missionaries had no information for the woman and sent her on her way. Without saying any farewells, the boy grabbed his small bag and left the monastery. Following the woman until he met her in the next town, Meckering, to tell her he was Don Jones and he'd been placed in foster care for years. The boy saw the opportunity to find love and family.

That night he did not sleep. He gazed into the darkness of the night sky, as the clouds shifted overhead: saturated and about to explode. Thunder and lightning drew harsh scars in the sky, which lasted only momentarily. Lightning clashed down not far away and then skittered from the scene. The night sky was obscured by relentless rain as it began to pour, with seemingly a protective force field encompassing the home. The family, mum and dad and siblings and dogs, kept dry, shielded from the elements. It was a moment in his life where he caught a glimpse of the North Star through a break in the clouds. He was alive. Reinvented and encompassed by stars – of family and of guidance.

A small shy mysterious smile began to creep its way across his face.

He lay in bed, tossing, asking, awake, smelling the unfamiliar dusty scent of the bedroom. The noise of frogs and crickets and children being ushered into brush their teeth echoed down Oxford Street and into the room. With his arms folded behind his head, he gazed out through the skylight, a telescope that eyed the atmosphere, of the past and of history. Light years away. The night sky revealed stars, not as they are now, but in the past. For all he knew, the North Star may be dead and had been for a long time, and the same could be said for Don. Darkness crept over the sky. White zigzags of lightning glowed here and there across it. There was a sound of rumbling far away, coming closer. Memories of the orphans, his forgotten mother, New Norcia, the missionaries, lost and stolen adolescents danced in the night sky. He wished to go to sleep and not wake up in the morning, to stay with a family that loved him.

He was not raised by one family, but a number of foster families, throughout the country's western end. He travelled throughout the wheat belt towns, each and every one, along the southwest coast, being brought into sympathetic families briefly and then spat straight back out onto the gravel. Schooling was not really an option for him. He was a failure but at the same time quite intelligent. His foster families had little interest that he had taught himself to read and write by the time he turned nine. He was sixteen years old now, and somewhere in the process he'd lost his identity.
Greed is Good

Kori Nakano, Year 10

In the year 2160, a grim time had crossed the earth. Most of the world’s fresh water had been lost from the effects of global warming. The trees that were once lush and green were now shriveled pieces of dry wood. The freshwater lakes that were glistening from the sun’s reflection are now potholes in a large, desolate wasteland. Anarchy is breaking out - a war for fresh water across the world. The start of World War 3 had begun.

“Ah! I have finally done it!” Andrew Clemence shouted cheerfully, a broad smile on his face emerged. “The number of lives we can save with this new technology!”

He turned up the brightness of the lights in the dimly lit room and ran hurriedly to the intercom making tapping sounds with the heels of his shoes, which echoed throughout the large, white room. He passed by lots of glass fish tanks with labels marked as “Test-36” or different numbered fish tanks filled with water that appeared old and murky along with the sight of dead fish and surgical equipment.

The room was surprisingly clean, but had a heavy smell of antibacterial cleaners and saltwater. “Avarice! I’ve completed the experiment successfully, you need to see this!” Before Avarice, Clemence’s boss, could respond, Andrew ran to the door and waited anxiously, like a dog waiting for its owner to come home.

The glass door opened slowly and a woman approached from the dark hallway. She was wearing a dark greenish jacket, the colour of the murky water in the fish tank, with long, dirty black pants, that were defiling the shiny, white floor. Avarice had a smile on her face, a soft smile, a warm smile, a smile so insidious, that it made Clemence shake. Avarice gave him a thoughtful stare. “Go on...”

Andrew gave a smile and whispered to Avarice. “I finally found the answer to making fresh water in mass quantities! Basically, we can take as much sea water as we want and convert it to fresh drinking water! Imagine, no more thirst! No more death...” He stared at Avarice, as she looked at the glass water tank, labelled “Test-42, SUCCESS!” containing the crystal clear water, which gave a reflection of the shimmering, bright light bulbs, partially blinding her.

“Well done.” She smiled at Andrew and gave him a kiss on the cheek. “Well continue tomorrow...” She brushed Andrew’s shoulder with her hand and walked off, back into the dark hallway and disappeared in the shadows. Clemence stared at the glass tank for a couple of seconds then walked to his room.

Clemence opened up a worn out book that had a large crack in the spine to the area of the book from which he read every day - a title “Revelation” on the top of the page. Clemence started to read “21:6.” He and said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end, I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely. He tore out the page and pinned it on his wall then turned off the lights and went to sleep.

The world started becoming a paradise again. War had stopped, trees had started growing again and the desert was now a thriving city surrounded by lush vegetation - the water-powered machines producing more and more fresh water. An endless wall separated the path, connecting the machines to the city. A towering mansion stood in the centre, the gateway to life. Inside, stood the saviour of the world. A figure that was completely hidden and unknown, like a shadow. People were lining up outside the mansion to pay for fresh water and the masked saviour had appeared to be giving a shy grin, not because the citizens were happy, but because of the money that was coming through the door.

Clemence woke up from the dream at the darkest hour of night, “That couldn’t have been me...” he thought hesitantly. He waited until morning to get out of bed.

An hour passed by and Avarice appeared from the dark hallway. “Let’s get down to business,” she had said with a soft smile. “A machine like the one you have invented would be priceless to the people. Do you know how rich we could be?” Avarice looked at him with a raised brow and Clemence returned a disgusted glare.

“How could you be talking about money?” he shouted at Avarice furiously. “We can, and we will, save billions of lives without any means of payment! It’s my damn invention and I’ll release it however the hell I want!” His face was turning red with anger and outrage. Avarice’s face was emotionless, as if not hearing a word Clemence had said.

“Andrew, without money, we would have worked for nothing. We gain nothing if we give it to them for free. I hope you understand.” Her face was hidden by the darkness of the hallway.

Andrew looked at the Bible page pinned to his wall. “Revelation 21:6,” he quoted: “And he said unto me, It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely...” He tore out the page and pinned it on his wall then turned off the lights and went to sleep.

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The shiny, white floor was stained with blood and a sharp cry of pain echoed through the large room. “Proverbs 14:12,” Avarice whispered into Andrew’s ear, as she held him and removed the scalpel. “There is a way that seems right to a man, but its end is the way to death.”

Andrew’s eyes widened as he hit the ground hard. He looked at Avarice, taking heavy breaths.

“I understand you were trying to help the world.” Avarice said, as she bent down to Andrew’s level, “but in my opinion, I believe that Greed is good.”

She gave Andrew one last soft smile as she plunged the scalpel into his heart, making him squint in pain, before drawing his last breath. Avarice walked towards the hallway and turned the bright, white lights of the room off, as she looked at Andrew’s still, bloody body, then walked off into the dark hall.
Lord, please, take my hand

Christian Meares, Year 11

It was the shot heard around the world – not from Massachusetts but Memphis, Tennessee. Far from us being free at last as he had wished, it felt like a net had been cast once again over the black community. I was at Moses’ Barber Shop when I heard the news. The whole place was awash with righteous indignation. While Bill and Jim were preaching violence, I knew that the good Reverend would have called for a non-violent reaction, as he always did. But the lust for retribution was palpable and a majority – at least in Moses’ barber shop – had already decided on a course of violence.

The caliginous streets of West Chicago seem to grow darker by the minute, slowly being engulfed by flames of retaliation. As I solemnly march through West Roosevelt, to the Hopewell Church, I see acts of violence everywhere. The fire starting next to me dims the sky, and the way to the Church is obscured. The smoke fills my eyes, and advancing through the rage filled artery of the true heart of the city is labious.

"After this, the word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision: Do not be afraid Abraham. I am your shield and your very great reward."

Genesis 15:1

I make it out of the street onto South Kolm Avenue, and the gates of the Church greet me with open arms. I am not surprised to see the Church is almost full. After all, he did come here. A bereaved atmosphere fills the church. I find a seat at the back, by myself. Bowing my head in mourning. I find a surprised to see the Church is almost full. After all, he did come here. A bereaved atmosphere fills the church. I find a seat at the back, by myself. Bowing my head in mourning. But he does not arms of my family put me at ease. But he does not do what you are doing, you are doing. I am not surprised to see the Church is almost full. After all, he did come here. A bereaved atmosphere fills the church. I find a seat at the back, by myself. Bowing my head in mourning. I find a surprised to see the Church is almost full. After all, he did come here. A bereaved atmosphere fills the church. I find a seat at the back, by myself. Bowing my head in mourning.

"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want."

Psalm 23

Segregated no longer by law, but now by the ignorance of white men. Housing districts have done nothing but draw a line between black and white. There is no grey in society. The only grey we see is the hard, dirty concrete that envelops the whole of the West Side. Real communities are vibrant and full of colour: colourful characters, colourful places, colourful conversations. But there is no color in this community – only the dark weight of depression, pervading every nook and cranny of every household.

In my household, it is no different. Although I always tried to be upbeat, it is hard to walk around with a smile on my face. No job, no money, no future. I didn’t want that for my son as well. He schooling hasn’t been enough so I make my best effort to guide him on the righteous path with the words of the Good Lord. We both ask the Heavens for help – me to find work and my son to give him the strength to stop the white bullies at school. Things were supposed to be better in the North. We fled the low land deltas and cotton fields of Mississippi in search of the apparently limitless opportunities of big city Chicago. Sure, I haven’t seen a lynching since I’ve been here, but really it’s no better.

"I draw the line in the dust and toss the gauntlet before the feet of tyranny, and I say segregation now, segregation tomorrow, segregation forever."  

George C. Wallace

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"The Lord is my shepherd; I shall not want. He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: He leadeth me beside still waters."

Exodus 4:7

While the streets are ablaze with the fury of my brothers, I try to provide for my son. Red beans and rice is the order of the day (most days in fact). But I am stopped, as if by Medusa,
iron fist of society. My feet seem glued in place; I feel like I'm running in slow motion. A slow waltz between oppression and freedom, although the music favoured them more than me. The intolerance of society has forced my hand. I have to run. I don't want to, but I have to. Right or wrong. Innocent or guilty. Free man or slave. It's all the same to them.

They see the color of my skin, and that's all the evidence they need.

The force of a massive shoulder crushes my ribcage, knocking the voice of freedom from my lungs. I collide with the grey cement. I lie there for a second, which feels like an hour. Lying as lifeless as that very grey cement.

Oppression. Can it be escaped?

Leaving my house I see Bill and Jim setting fires to nearby buildings. Is it worth it? The fight for rights should not be fought with the fires but with patience. They should know this. But I fear they have lost their way. Whilst I know what they want (equality), I know that it will not be achieved. Not today at least. But then again, could such a dream be achieved? To change the perception of the world? Possible. But not like this. To burn down a city to rebuild from the rubble. Their plan follows neither logic nor preparation. It is not a plan. It is selfish. Destructive. Wrong. But I fear I have hung around with them for too long.

Big Brother screams down the streets in the form of an oppressive megaphone. It calls me nigger and tells me to get on the ground “where I belong.” I turn and run from the
The Clockmender

Wei Juen Lo, Year 11

05:25

Suddenly he was awake. His waking had the abrupt completeness of an electric light, entirely off one second and entirely on the next. This was no warm transition from a confused doze to a partial consciousness of the world, an awareness that would begin with the pillow, the position of his relaxed body under the bedclothes, and that would work slowly outwards to a comfortable realisation of the world, with him in it, each piece falling naturally into its accustomed place. No. This was an abrupt and full awakening from a profound sleep, and the world that presented itself was naked, instantly concrete, sharply defined and entire.

He knew at once that there was no hope whatever of drifting off again and he realised with horror that the grey light in the room could not have been there much above an hour. He looked over the edge of his bed at the pair of chronometers on the low table. On each severe dial the steel hands showed five twenty-five. Some disturbance, some chance noise had cheated him of three hours of sleep.

It was early, so early. The man felt unbearable pain, both physical and emotional, that there was no way he could go on. Still, he knew that there was no hope whatever of drifting off again. The man finally submitted to fate. It was a tragedy. He would have to get up very soon, for in a short time the insistent restlessness of his body would make him intolerable and he would be forced into wasting another day, another cruelly lengthened day.

The man was exact. There was a certain routine that needed to be observed at all costs, that could not be disturbed by anything. His body was like an alarm clock and although he felt entirely alert, there was something not right about his wake at such an early hour.

It was early, so early. The man felt unbearable pain, both physical and emotional, that there was no way he could go on. Still, he had to. To not follow, regardless of the order, or how he felt, would almost certainly result in more embarrassment and pain. As his body slowly began to switch on, he glanced at his broken friends and had simply been shot down as if they were no more than moving dolls.

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His jaw clenched and his brow furrowed as a shot of doubt and unease coursed through him. At once, he repressed it. Emotions were something to be ignored. He knew that accepting emotion and allowing himself to delve into that abstract world of feeling that he couldn’t control could only cause harm.

Since his escape, life’s disturbances all but went away. It was the first time in almost twenty months that he’d been woken up early. Promptly, he set about correcting the horror he felt. The man began his daily ritual of deep breathing, letting himself detach from his existence. First, the deep breath in as he focused on expanding below his chest, while he slowly raised his arms to reach closer to the wooden roof. The rush of blood into his head as his body stretched and slowly focused him into a powerful machine.

Surrounding his sanctum were natural clocks that he had made out of the materials around him. They surrounded him like a careful array of naval ships, each casting a shadow in the same direction, the greatest testament to the order the Clockmender had created - that he was prepared to maintain with his life. The dull, grey pair of chronometers, the only mementos of his past, lay on the wooden platform next to his bed.

Outside, the sun was still not up. There was colour in the sky though, creeping silently until it would engulf the world. The man finished his exercises as the clock struck five thirty. The timing was perfect. His body had instinctively held each pose for twenty five seconds, unconsciously moving with the steady ebb of time, resting for five and then moving on to his second of ten exercises.

There was a warmness that filled his body as he allowed himself a brief feeling of contentment at the exactness it had evolved to work - at the calm that was finally returning to his jagged soul.

05:30

Still, that nagging fact that something had caused him to awaken continued to disconcert him. The strength of the feeling made it impossible for him to drift away. The man noticed he was unconsciously pacing across the room. Hunger was starting to set in as well. He decided to investigate.

Here in a small clearing deep in the jungle there were many creatures that inhabited alongside him. When he’d first arrived, the heat and humidity had made him feel dizzy and weak and he lived in constant fear of snakes and brightly colored insects.

Now, he had become part of the ecosystem, just another organism that effortlessly co-existed. Snakes would slide over his feet like they were roots of a tree. Birds would perch on his shoulders like they were tree branches. Occasionally, even feline, black cats would silently stalk through the greenery and they would exchange a glance, a sign of respectful acknowledgment, and he would momentarily lose himself in their striking green eyes.

Animals were so much easier to get along with and they understood and accepted him, just as he was. With them, the man didn’t have to live with the unbearable weight of differentiating between good and evil, of conforming to the unnatural nature of morality.

Opening himself to his physical environment, listening to its calls, the man forgot about his early awakening and everything else but the jungle. All that mattered now was to begin the process of disconnecting, to slowly detach from the world.

05:52

Something was definitely disturbing the jungle. It was eerily silent – at a time when the soothing rattle of cicadas usually flew through the trees. Suddenly, he heard a sickening crack, so soft that it could be mistaken for imagination, yet the violence rang true. There was no shouting to be heard, so it was probably just a deforestation group. Still, it was a sound he’d heard many times before in a vastly different context - a bayonet muttering ancient, untouched forest in order to move through the thick undergrowth for the success of the mission.

The sun was setting, staining the sky with the colour of blood. Indeed, the area was filled with mutilated corpses to the point where the man needed to tiptoe and try to avoid one of the enemy soldiers. After air support had arrived, the enemy had no chance of success, the chopper raining down bullets like holy fire. Screams filled the jungle from both sides. The enemy had tried to escape and had simply been shot down as if they were no more than moving dials.

Oliver Girdwood, Year 9
In a few moments, the tide of battle had been completely changed and the desperate, scared man had become ecstatic, crazed. He had seen his death flash before his eyes. All he cared about now was to enjoy this victory. In a war, when death was a shadow that weighed you down and never left you, the only option was to seize the moment. He looked at the other men in his unit as their general raised his arms, triggering a savage war cry. The man knew from his map that there was a now unprotected village nearby. They would enjoy themselves there.

06:09

The man's vision was blurred as he opened his eyes. Flashing images of screaming children and women struck him down like condemnation from a mighty judge. Tears were streaming down his face and the guilt and pain he had tried to bury with indifference had returned, slicing through his heart and squeezing the air out of his lungs, making him choke back nausea. Like the shots of a machine gun, a torrent of shameful images continued to bombard him, no matter how hard he fought it. It was useless trying to stop it. Time would never heal it.

The cracks of machetes grew louder and louder, like demons closing in on him, spiraling his thoughts into a dark and terrible place.

The destructive scenes of yesterday were still all he could see as he stumbled desperately through the overgrown jungle, not daring to look back. Every time he closed his eyes he saw the face of the baby boy. The man remembered the last look of pure terror at something so innocent witnessing something so evil in one of the pathetic soldiers mercilessly having his way with the mother of the child.

And those big eyes dimming and those inescapable wails ceasing as his mother screamed at an onrushing soldier who, bloodthirsty eyes alight, plunged a bayonet into the little boy’s chest. The man would never forget that look of hopelessness he saw in the mother’s eyes.

He could not keep battling forward, could no longer ignore what was happening. The only option now was to run, and never be found.

This time there was no place to run. He didn’t want to keep running. The broken soldier finally admitted defeat. The machetes were drawing closer now, each thud echoing like the sound of a missile burying itself in the earth, exploding. Soon, the unknowing men would find him. The man knew that time had run out for him to leave, that the time to continue living had long passed. There was only one option.

Fifteen Million Chickens

Keaton Wright, Year 8

A Parody of Fifteen Million Plastic Bags by Adrian Mitchell

I walked into the unregistered warehouse
Where the daylight never goes.
I saw fifteen million chemical bleached chickens
The reality the company never shows.

Fifteen million lay colourless
Fifteen million pumped with hormones
Fifteen million and none lay untouched
The only sounds were their moans

Were they for eating or just tests gone wrong?
Would society ever know?
I knew that if the corporations continued to hide it
The torture would never show.

And fifteen million lay colourless
Fifteen million pumped with hormones
Fifteen million and none lay untouched
The only sounds were still their moans.

So I smuggled away a chicken
And nurtured it back to health
And I used it as my evidence but despite my efforts
The companies still accumulated wealth

And even still fifteen million lay colourless
Fifteen million pumped with hormones
Fifteen million and none lay untouched
The only sounds were still their moans.
‘I became insane, with long intervals of horrible sanity …’

Harry Sanderson, Year 12

I spoke words that would curl your blood like a twisted oak. When my face was smooth and young
Like a wind-worn stone, and my eyes lay
Virgin of hallowed sights, human sand-bags
And men and death death death. Long and timeless
Like an ancient day - waiting for a wasp
Wanting for a hornet, waiting for a Bomb. I spoke words that would drive me mad.
Minds melted like warm margarine. A
Frightened, muffled shout rung here and there, a
Firefight in the dark. Faces mutilated-
Surreal impressions of men, to be sure-
Sunken cheeks, bloody eyes. ‘Oh for the state!’
I scream now the same words that I abate.

I saw men burn in warm green fields
Coughing and howling and begging for
Something oh, any final touch, any
Last respite from years of misery. Oh
They burned alright, and perhaps they were
Content in those last moments, free of it all.
Free of satan, love, loss. For in truth we know,
In these far fields - no one feels comfortable alone
Or with others. No one is stable, no one can
Exhale and lie by dreams without fearing
Warm bullets. Thus, the fire was the lesser
Weevil. Lord’s fire was the greater good;
I’d join those men in their fields, were I could.

I met a wandering death in a storm
Who knew my gravestone in his mind and said
‘Alight home by the blackened lanes at dawn
Alone, astute; amidst those calmest dead,
Lest some insidious wretch should wish you warm.’
He saw these stone eyes as plagued by the most
Sinister of villains. The danceless dead,
They once content fled their so-craved blue host
For burning hell. ‘The Roman soldiers fall
For even Cleopatra! Fall ghost
Or phantom leave you staring at a wall,
Knocking on a knocker, or collapsing
On the stairs: willing an end to it all…’
He strode on- the black dog’s howls relapsing.

But now fighting sleep
Snatching thoughts lost ‘midst the deep
Sights of past friends sunk at a lone knell...
She asked me if I knew it, I gasped, ‘I know it well’
She said ‘those men are covered, that they no longer can appall’
I begged ‘they can yet attack in the night… please don’t let it fall…”

Nathaneal Ong, Pre-Primary

Jonathan Roost, Year 2
I spoke words that would drive me mad.
I look on as the chronic scene presents itself, 
Complemented by the shuffling of detached feet, 
And the dull scraping of plastic on concrete, 
And the caustic tessellate of shadow on wall.

I am greeted with the smell of nicotine in the morning, 
Assuaged with the ennui of trivial conversation, 
Nice weather we’re having… 
I shiver, nod and carry on.

As I sit and examine the vulgar patterns on the table 
I hear through shell-shocked ears, 
Through an anarchy of butterflies and hurricanes, 
My name cast through the dim lit room. 
My muscles perform the movements necessary to lift my gaze, 
Settling like bricks on the woman sitting across from me.

I see her eyes… 
Her own Alcatraz, prisons of memory 
Enclosed within iron-clad eye-lashed gates, 
Secured fastidiously by the tedious temperament 
Of surrounding tides.

Brimming with restricted emotion, 
Alas! the true danger to society, 
Fugitives forgotten by the years, 
And almost no escapees.

I see them every day, 
Though my senses have since lost credibility, 
And now I reside in the city of delusion, 
Choked, gagged and left to the vultures in a valley of ashes.

They provoke me, 
They amplify gravity, muffle the music I once knew as life. 
Make me believe I am fastened to the concrete bed I lie on, 
Whisper in my ear, 
And with the timid care of a child, plants the seed of an idea.

You have no idea who sits before you.

My gaze lifts to her forehead, 
And through the dying spark of nightvision, 
The scornful tinge of the Tempest mocks me, slowly but surely 
Claiming her hairline, 
A raw gradient of grey 
Summoned and quickened by the deadly rain-dance 
Of the court, the magistrate and the officer. 
All the while, time is growing weary…

Do I dare ask that overwhelming question? 
Are you my mother? 
Of course not, 
Thankfully I have reserved enough sense for this.

My fruitless struggle with consciousness continues, 
And the contemptuous voice resounds, 
The pitiless voice of pestilence, 
The sound of salt water dissolves me, 
Falstaff’s counterfeit humanity, 
Coupled with the spineless smirk of lucidity, 
Drowns me of my intolerable thoughts.

Visiting time is over, make your way to the front. ***

Amongst the goodbyes and the farewells, 
Amongst the tearing of eyes and the dripping of noses, 
Amongst the scraping of plastic on concrete, 
A familiar hand takes hold of my own.

Somewhere inside, 
Behind a foreign exterior, 
In a place much brighter and warmer than here, 
My mother patiently sits and waits 
For the boat that will take her home.