

# Bedales School

## The Poet's Stone

Welcome to the 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of The Poet's Stone!

Such was the strength of creative writing this year, much of it evolving from the course-work element of the new AS English syllabus, that I decided to let the language speak for itself and so we have gone for an elegant, understated design.

I am pleased, as well, that there will be a residential creative-writing week at Easter 2010 with the Arvon Foundation in Clun; an event which proved to be such an instructive and enjoyable experience last year, inspiring the launch of The Poet's Stone.

As always, student input is the key to success with these ventures and my thanks goes to Heather McGee for designing this year's edition, Lerato Islam for helping to collate material and all the students who contributed their work.

Rupert Crisswell.

**Don: I just followed my feet with no particular path and mind and this ultimately led me to where I am now.**

I then thanked Don and asked him if there was anything else he would like to add before I left him in peace.

**Don: For 20 million years we were algae...now look at us. We can sit around and discuss the fact that we were algae...this truly amazes me.**

And with those wise words as a finale, it was time to leave.

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# Poetry

## The Inquest

What a word that hates to sound,  
This is the language killing ground.  
In dusty pages are grimy streets,  
A common literal retreat.  
A life-long sentence rips the tongue,  
She prays the torture's almost done.  
But words on words repeat the sound -  
This is the language killing ground.

A murderous mash of metaphor  
Has left the witness feeling sore.  
A blade-slit syntax lines the corpse  
Of poetry she has been taught.  
Condemned to think literature bound,  
Left in the language killing ground.  
"A word," she cries, "to save me now!"  
But nothing stirs or breaks the vow.

Her final curse she shouts in prose:  
"As ink on these white pages grows,  
So literature's fine meaning sinks  
Into pretence." She breaks the links  
And jumps through silent darkness down,  
Beyond the language killing ground.  
To water-life where words are drowned,  
The jury waits for judgement found,

Still waiting in the killing ground.

Kate Banks

**worst side of people, they appear self-indulgent to an embarrassing extent. You can meet someone whose poetry you hate and actually really like them as a person.**

"I had badly miscalculated: when I kicked out God, he huffily took Satan with him, whereupon went my last excuse."

**Don: This was just a joke.**

"His song was going so well, until I heard him *express himself*...Then I knew I could never play the track again, as I'd spend all my time in anticipatory dread of that one note."

**Don: Art is for the audience not for the performer. It's about what the audience feels, not you and therefore becoming emotional about your own-work ruins it. It's not only embarrassing but also self-centered.**

"The Calvinist knife-edge. Self-loathing gets me out of bed in the morning; but for years it kept me in it."

**Don: I had a very religious upbringing that I later struggled with, ultimately dispelling humanism for materialism.**

"In purgatory, we're shown how narrow were the opportunities we missed; in hell, how narrow were those we took; and in heaven, that nothing could have been otherwise."

What was the first poem you wrote like?

**Don: The first poem I wrote, was so much of a poem it's sickening...it was a shit poem but by all means a poem.**

Do you enjoy writing for money? Can you write to order?

**Don: Writers actually hate writing. There was gap of four years when I didn't write a single poem. It's normally between books. It's like childbirth: you forget how painful it is after each time. If you didn't, there's no way you'd ever continue writing. And no...I can't write to order.**

Would you consider the post of Poet Laureate?

**Don: Wouldn't turn it down.**

I then asked Don to comment on a few of his aphorisms, taken from his new book *The Blind Eye*:

“Poetry! What a fine thing to be working in a medium that brings out the best only in the murderous soul of the poet, and quite the very worst in everyone else. Even a limerick will dig out the one grain of ugly ambition in the heart of a saint.”

**Don: Reading someone else's poetry can immediately make you hate them. Poetry brings out the**

I could be a woman

I could be a woman,  
In a silver sparkled dress,  
With peroxide hair tied up,  
And a body to impress

Out at evening,  
An eerie emulation  
Of erotic application  
Of the very best.

A clinical catalyst of countryside cruelty.  
I would grow up tall and clean.  
The very best for the very best -  
A lady must be mean,  
To see the dream a lady dreams.

That is not what I will,  
Nor want, nor can instil.

A proprietor of underestimation.  
I would climb a curtsy ladder,  
To de-tox determination,  
Filled with thorough darling thrills -

I'd rather live on muddy hills,  
With hair and hair and spots and  
A heart to hurt and head to kill.  
To lie down and not be here  
Or there, but be a woman still.

Kate Banks

Inuits

Was it ease or pain  
That made you look down  
To the bottom of the world?  
I know your time and how it pays  
To trust the word of mouth.

I'd bet it was spectacular when you got there.  
Not a footprint or a smile,  
But change and notes in piles.  
New white wealth on low land.  
Perfect for excise.

Watching all those promises arrive,  
Was not much more than experience.  
The gilt-hulled yachts with masts of fibreglass;  
It was all over the snow and sharp  
Your silvered-tongues were also.

Give me what is prime from your arsenal.  
Hard not theory,  
I'm cold and world-weary.  
Let us stand on earth and not this jilted ice.  
Concrete would suffice.

Thomas Duthie

How did you feel when you first saw your name on the front of a book?

**Don: Not as you'd expect - it was like a post-Christmas let down - I still felt like a schmuck - just a published schmuck.**

Do you feel as a poet you have any moral or social responsibility?

**Don: I think that people demand a kind of moral and spiritual support from poetry...that's what they wish us to supply. However at the end of the day I believe poets should be able to write something and then remove themselves from it and if that leads them on to making moral or political judgements, then fine. But I don't feel that poets should be pressured into providing moral guidance for the sake of it. At the end of the day we're just schmucks and have just as much right to pass judgement as any other person.**

How long on average do you find it takes you to complete a poem?

**Don: On average I'd say it takes about a year to complete a poem. I often write several poems at a time or end up splitting poems in two...one of them shit. Every poem has its own wee realm. If you had a good idea for a poem...don't write it. It will be rubbish. What's far better is if you discover a connection between two words that interest you and you can't get out of your mind...that's the beginning of a poem.**

When did you begin writing poetry and is there anyone in particular that inspired you to do so?

**Don: I started writing poetry relatively late, around 21 and I was first published aged 28. I'd say Tony Harrison was one of my main inspirations.**

And how did you go about first getting published?

**Don: (chuckles) Relentlessly sent off my work until it was accepted.**

What advice would you give to someone wanting to pursue a career in poetry?

**Don: Firstly, it's not a career - get a job. Secondly if you don't love poetry don't do it. As a teacher I see lots of students who are determined to become poets but don't really love poetry itself. There's no way you'll succeed if you're obsessed with the image of being a poet rather than the art itself.**

As a teacher do you really believe it's possible to teach people how to write or even appreciate poetry?

**Don: I believe that you can help cultivate an already present talent, but as with all art you can't make talent.**

## The Veil has Split.

Love's pulsing memories,  
Fragment the  
Stillness of hope  
From within the  
Chambers of faith.

Forgotten is the cold murmur of praise, the touch  
Of belief.  
The veil has split.

The feathers of fire fall from heaven, spirit  
Of counsel and might.  
White embers descend to anoint him.,  
Humble ears pressed to the ground,  
Whispers of a messiah haunt the vaults of sin.  
The veil has split.

Wounded hearts remembered..  
Scornful mouths fall silent.  
Every heart shall kneel  
because  
the veil has split.

Tom Kingsley-Jones

## Foretold

Faces pervert the stillness, broken  
is the hand that wields the power.  
Violent steam strides from their lips, willingly  
finding a frozen pane to leave its mark.

Conjurer,  
They call him.  
Nothing from something; something into nothing.  
Bricks of blossom build the earth on bark and mossy dunes.  
Time cracks under the fountains of ignoble truths.  
Shattered is the voice of reason.  
No tablet or scribe to remember, that  
Conjurer.

Faces pervert the stillness, broken  
is the heart that wields the power.  
Violent words stride from their lips, willingly  
Finding no place to shelter or leave their mark.

Tom Kingsley-Jones

## Interviews

### Interview with Don Patterson Freddi Miller

At the beginning of his recital, Don Patterson joked that we'd all be bored out of our minds within the first 30 minutes. He was swift to contradict himself. By the end of the first five minutes his sharp sense of wit and ragged Edinburgh tones (made even more atmospheric by a cough he'd contracted on the plane journey over) had us all entranced. The prospect of interviewing him post-performance became even more daunting. However, once the theatre had been replaced by the cosy interior of Keith's sitting room - in which Don sat holding a glass of red wine surrounded by eager students from whom he happily fielded questions - I felt a little less intimidated and seized the next pause as an opportunity to pounce:

Is writing poetry something that you'd always wanted to do?

**Don: No, when I left school at 16 it was to pursue a career as a Jazz musician. I would much rather be a successful musician than a famous poet as music in this day and age undoubtedly reaches more people. An audience that used to read poetry has been replaced by an audience that now listens to music instead.**

**Poetry effectively shot itself in the foot. It was poets such as Eliot who, although were undoubtedly masters, effectively made poetry a wholly exclusive interest meaning that modern day poets struggle to reach a large readership.**

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Hamish had been observing the girl who stood outside for some time; she didn't appear to notice him standing to the side of the window. She was a beautiful but awkward creature, he thought to himself as he lit a cigar, placing the tin on top of the piano. There was something sombre and wistful about the girl that made him disconcerted yet at the same time intrigued. He had seen her before on the estate, yet no words had passed between them; he realised that he did not know her name. She seemed lost, abandoned and bewildered as she looked into the very window by which he was standing; he noticed tears meandering down her cheeks and was about to turn from the window to ask her what she wanted when she met his eyes.

Hester had not noticed her tears that ran without caution as she saw the young man staring back at her. Something instinctive made her walk on automatically past the Lodge, as if she was guiltless of watching the scenes inside. She saw in his eyes something that was once in hers, a sense of belonging, and a sense of condescension to those who were not part of the warm world inside the Lodge that she had once inhabited. She let a sigh of relief escape as her mind finally became clear; she would leave the beauty and the memories of the estate unaltered, as she had originally known them.

Nathalie Mares

## The Stag

Over the grassy moor,  
Pounding hooves thunder the sodden peat.  
A muscular body of high power pistons,  
Strong as the keratin crown he holds upon his head.

Lie amongst the dewy heather,  
Lay low and cautious.  
From the post, the chase,  
With time they race,  
Till life is shot down.

Noble blood seeps through thick fur.  
From the hard lead,  
He falls from the thrown.  
Catch your breath.  
It's your last.

Celestia Anstruther

# Prose

aura and cast playful shadows that danced with one another on the sandy path; she did not fight the compulsion to continue down to the loch. It would be the first time since she had returned to the estate that she would have to pass the Lodge, and she was not so sure that it would be a good idea; she recalled her mother's soothing voice that would fill the dining room each evening as she lay tucked up in bed. A buzzard circling above her head blocked out the dimming sun and carved a template in the sleepy sky, bringing back the feeling of strength she felt as a child.

Each individual window of the lodge acted as a doorway to the past for Hester as she stood to the side of the Lodge, in the almost fading light; every memory was highlighted by a candle at the sill, as if to mock her obvious isolation. Warmth melted over her body as she studied the empty wine glasses, each radiating a golden hue from the flames of the candles that were placed between each serving bowl. She could almost feel the grains of mahogany and smell the rich succulent game that would be served; the click of the grandfather clock would fade as the wine and the warmth gently nudged people into a state of reflection and contentment. The tapestry on the crimson wall told the tale of a knight rescuing his maiden, bribing Hester once again to become lost in the fabric of the piece.

The piano sounded, drawing Hester's eye to the window above the dining room. She could feel the varnished keys beneath her fingertips and picture the undulations of the flames of the fire that cracked and spat. The distant thumping of children's feet along the corridors after their wash and their shouts as 'hide and seek' rang in her ears. She remembered the texture of the emerald rug beneath her palms, the warmth and energy from the blaze next to her being absorbed by her skin.

## Nostalgia

A sense of overwhelming beauty filled Hester's heart as she sat on Lingonberry Hill absorbing the view ahead of her. This was the only place in the estate where one could get a true sense of the vast hills that surrounded the loch below. Her hand trailed along the heather, plucking the flower of one bush and twisting it in her hardened fingers. Her hands barely resembled a young woman's, however, this was the life she wanted and she was grateful that she had been given the job. The sense of deep exhaustion had lifted as her body had become used to the endless hours on the hill; she was thankful that the new guests were not avid stalkers. It was evenings like these that she savoured, when the day had been wearying but not to the extent that she would have to return to her bothy immediately to sleep away the aches made worse by the previous day's toil.

Lying on her back, cradled by the cotton plants that resembled clouds balanced on match sticks, she felt at one with her surroundings. A gentle breeze kept the midges away and the red deer further down the burn; the silhouettes of the stags were easily recognisable with the bare eye on the neighbouring peak. Removing her binoculars from her breeks, she studied the eldest stag carefully. The sight, through the binoculars, drew her eye to the main Lodge. There was activity inside; a light turned on in the dining room, a blurred shadow of a woman setting on the table. She dropped the binoculars with an exhalation of breath and tore at a cotton plant with leaden heart, uprooting it and throwing it into the air, where it was taken by the wind. Getting up, she began the steep walk down hill that would lead her back to the bothy.

The evening sun gave each pine tree a hazy gold

## Giustizia

He bombed the crystal-filled packet. Slowly and stickily it slid down his throat, sending premature jitters through his body, involuntary jitters not a world away from the kind experienced by racehorses at the starting stalls; unconscious, erratic impulses. He was only dimly aware of the giant tent he was standing in. The heat of the thousand human radiators standing around him was suffocating. Jumping up above the throng he felt the swift cool convection currents which swept and swirled inside the giant towers of the tent. He stole eager glances at the faces of his friends who were slowly separating and dispersing further away from him, to be replaced by the faceless stereotypes of the massive, nebulous crowd as the no longer individual dreamers inevitably merged into one another, conglomerating into one mentality. This was the New Rave Nuremburg; they would all lose themselves and find each other in the piss-poor supposed youthquake that was to follow. The rizla coating of his ingested treasure was dissolving and the accompanying echoes of euphoria primed him; he was standing at the threshold of the closest thing to religious ecstasy his life had ever thrown at him, a secular *Transverbation of St. Teresa*, or so he thought. He caught himself gurning involuntarily to the pulse of the wave that tentatively ebbed through the medium of people, in accordance with the whim of the neon-jaded techies who teased the crowd with hints of roaring bass. He was standing amongst a crowd of Echo Boomers, the Lost boys and girls who had gathered here to forget the usual manner, by filling that ubiquitous, bottomless hole within them momentarily with drugs, delusion, and music; an attempt to add substance to themselves in the fashion expounded to them by ever changing cultural norms. They were generational heirs of the twats with baggy trousers, who had come to pray to the gaudy god that

they created. He was no different; so much of himself was in the fat-necked man blocking his view, in the short plonker wearing skinny jeans and a waistcoat, sporting sunglasses in the dead of night; he however was far too mesmerised with the vibrantly flashing giant cross on a stage to see these accidental parodies of himself.

When he'd entered the tent against the great flow of flesh towards the delta of the gents' loos located at the other side of the festival round, it had been light; now it suddenly it occurred to him that this was no longer the case. That startling image of a pitch black band of darkness between the heads of the masses and the roof of the tent smacked him hard as a reminder of that abstract influence known as Time; this distressed him deeply. His current state of mind had no room for Time, everything existed in one fantastic moment; if it didn't, how could it be what it is? It seemed to him Time was deliberately fucking with him, as if deriving some perverse thrill by laying dark eggs of doubt within the deepest chambers of this joyous palace he had constructed out of vibes and chemicals of dubious sources, soon to hatch out terrible creatures of banality and consequence; henchmen of reality sent to burn the weak foundations of his temple of ecstasy. This was the aspect of ecstasy he hated the most; the way it ruins itself by its transient nature. Any good moment can be destroyed by thoughts of how it can't last, but thankfully dull blasts of forceful vibrations blew him out of this dark and brooding reverie, and brought him back in to the fold. The music was starting. The moment had come.

What followed these tense and edgy instances of anticipation were waves; pure waves of release. The two preachers on stage poured out primal beats which

cided 'It's just a bloody bird' would be his motto. He would be carefree in all aspects of his life. No more sickly repression of his carnivorous desires; he would be a meat-eater.

He confessed his indifference towards animal rights and his love for meat to Petunia who was a little unsurprised by this revelation but was nevertheless violent and overdramatic, leaving Hector with a black eye and a divorce statement. But he didn't care, this was his new life.

No more creepy, sleepwalking, taxidermist weirdo Hector, he was going to get a real marriage, a real job and some real meaning to his previously pointless existence.

So he bought a leather jacket and hit the town, with all the cool of a retired chemistry professor. Now, any person with some sense, would quickly have deduced that a sequence of impulsive actions such as these was most probably the result of a massive mid-life crisis and would have crawled back to their abandoned wife and reopened their failing business, but Hector was a strange case. The rules didn't apply to him and normal sense wasn't something that ran in his family. He stuck to his choices and followed them through, no matter how bleak the prospects looked; something was driving Hector towards his final destination and he wasn't one to put the brakes on.

Tom Duthie

feral desires to himself and adhere to her strict vegetarian diets.

He loved her robust, meaty figure and loved the feel of her haunches against his, but the falsity of his ideals often shone through his empathic and loving façade.

Hector was a chronic somnambulist and was often found inside the local butcher's freezer-room, shivering and engorging himself with raw meat. Not a therapist in the profession was able to cure him of this so-called 'subdued Hypo-carnivoritis', and Petunia, who had gotten increasingly sick of Hector's midnight snacking habits, was often reduced to tears when Hector crawled back into bed dripping with the remnants of his night-time indulgences.

'Barry's clocked it mate. Was probably the right time though yeah? Terrible burden on me and the wife at that age, but we'll miss her,' Frank announced solemnly whilst placing a large shoebox on the counter which bore the legend 'Barry' scribbled in non-toxic black marker pen.

'Circle of life, my son, just the circle of life,' Hector said attaching a sticky label numbered 21. Hector's favourite number was 21. It reminded him of blackjack and his great interest in the weight of the soul, which was supposedly 21 grams.

Hector had no belief, however, in the importance of the body and physical form. It was just dead weight, hindering our spirits on their journey, hence why he had no problem (when unrestricted by social etiquette) with inhuman consumption of flesh; it just didn't matter to him.

'Have you got any special requests?' asked Hector reproachfully.

'Special requests? It's just a bloody bird mate. Only request I got is that you don't eat him.' Frank slapped a greasy twenty on the counter and left chuckling to himself.

Obviously the word had spread about Hector's escapades to the butcher's and that comment had struck him hard; after 15 years of taking your work very seriously, a throwaway comment like that can be very damaging, life-changing perhaps. It was from this point on that Hector de-

chimed perfectly with a strange aspect of his being, which he guessed was that thing woolly people liked to call a soul. It was unbelievable; the people around him bobbed and blorted with moronic grins of opiate ecstasy on their faces, blissfully unaware of everything but the beat. The fat man in front, blocking his view of those moustached geniuses of humanity, would occasionally spill his pint on some orphaned hair within his vicinity, or crush a particularly unlucky small teen-aged girl against the pervasive wall of railings, turning her surrogate-religious experience into an awkwardly painful irritation. He felt heartache when he witnessed this girl's fall from transcendental bliss into mild and banal pain; partly because it reminded him once more of how fragile his own joy was, partly because it was a stark reminder to him that this was not the truth, there was no deeper meaning here: although it was the only thing in his life that had ever come close to the sublime, it was a hollow Nirvana.

The pulsing wall of blissful sound continued on for another eternity, but eventually he felt an end to it as the neon cross faded and the music subsided. The crowd cried out against the death of the music, and carried him out of the tent by osmosis. He was deposited outside in some unoccupied, piss-reeking corner of darkness, completely and utterly soaked from head to toe in slimy sweat. The sudden transition from close-intimate heat to freezing, exposed winds cracked him with all the force of a sledgehammer. The gravity of the situation clocked off in his head, and the force of the experience infused him with an understanding of all manner of cults and beliefs, rites and rituals. It was as if he had seen people take god in a church, then rushed home to synthesise this thin himself, to be consumed in his personal, clinical fashion; instant karma. The crowd slowly broke down into its constituent indi-

viduals, and as his friends stepped out of the thousands in the crowd he could see the change on their faces too; they had all shared in something bigger than themselves, bonding them inexorably by the force of temperature, like comrades in the head of battle. All buzzing, all aglow, they walked hand in hand together through the exit.

A soured sound lingered in his consciousness; disturbingly appropriate words of Pat Bateman formed in his mind: "this is not an exit."

Calvin Duff

## Creature Comforts

Hector Jacobs was on his lunch break. He took the first bite of his Bean Pâté and hummus pannini at 1.26 pm and proceeded to devour it, imagining himself tearing at the flesh of some innocent squealing guinea pig. Hector truly got a kick out of his line of work.

After another ten minutes of sensory deception (Canary Smoothie, Lion Bar) he strolled triumphantly to the shop front and snorted the fumes of embalmmment and coagulation, shuddering energetically. He leant on a switchboard and after some delay, the neon lights flickered on with admirable timidity. 'Gone to the Dogs - Funeral Directors co.' spelt the sign. Hector was proud of the witticisms he introduced to his trade, it brightened up the job. But Hector revelled in it nonetheless. A failed medical student, majoring in Surgery and more specifically cardiology, he had never found a true output for his bloodlust and the dissection of God's creatures would have to suffice.

Petunia, Hector's wife, was a radical animal rights activist and truly admired Hector's line of work. Hector had acquired a taste for revolution in his hometown of Brixton; the race riots had filled him with contempt for the government and the police as many of his childhood playmates had been stabbed, beaten and arrested during this *Operation Swamp 81*.

Hector had grown up in a claustrophobically multicultural council housing block with the children of stalwart immigrants; a lovely bunch unfortunately subjected to much abuse due to their lust for work. Petunia and Hector met at an anti-fur rally outside Harrod's in 1984, both donning slimily gelled punk spikes.

Hector had known that the only place he would find someone who appreciated his profession was here; what could be more caring for critters than helping them to be at peace for eternity?

The fact was that Hector cared little for the eternal rest of creatures; he just loved carnivorous gore. But loneliness had afflicted him the years preceding this meeting with Petunia, so he thought it might just be best that he kept his

the night. *How long? How many times? Was it someone they knew together? Did it mean anything?* The last question in particular resonated in his mind.

Of course it meant something. It meant everything; his past, present and future were wrapped up in that moment, uncertain, unsettled, unsteady. He could hear his lover's approaching footsteps now. His stride seemed weary, and yet David could sense the anger in the way his body was held static and his tread, usually so light and gentle, was heavy and aggressive, pounding his feet against the tarmac with every step.

He remembered the last time they had made love, the soft rustle of the sheets, the familiar warmth of his skin, tracing the line of his spine with his finger up to a dip at the base of his neck, how they had drawn closer, physically and mentally, until they had seemed to be the same, a new being, untarnished by life's coarse brush.

Had his intricate and beautiful body been diseased even then? Had the infection spread out from his soul, through his mind, into his veins? David leant back against the brick wall behind him and sank slowly down it, the rough bricks resisting the movement, dragging at his clothing.

Finally, he was able to appreciate the ultimate consequence, the loss that they would be forced to suffer. They were all sitting in the school of Time, in which AIDS was the disobedient child moving the clock forward when no one was watching, so that Death would release them when the lesson was only half finished. He realised now, that it is unlikely that he would ever hear how it ended. David looked up as his lover drew closer. He could not see him yet.

Flo Robson

## The Wives

In the large yellow house with the green door a woman with shifty eyes stands in the front room breathing quickly. The heavy curtains are pulled shut. She paces in front of the large bay window glancing up occasionally as if expecting the curtains to have sprung open suddenly to reveal something behind them. She hears a noise and opens the thick floral fabric an inch peering out of the window suspiciously looking up and down the street. A sprinkler has been switched on at one of the houses; just one of the dozens of identical houses with the manicured lawns and matching SUVs parked outside each garage. Beneath the looming red mountains the street feels very petite and perfect like a toy neighbourhood filled with little dollhouses each containing the same homogeneous family. However, this woman's family does not associate with the other families on the street. She watches several of her neighbours, she does not know their names, gossiping outside one of their houses, mugs grasped tightly in hands, bright white smiles flashing.

Her attention is suddenly grabbed by an unfamiliar blue car roaming down the street, disrupting the tranquillity, like a virus. The woman fears the worst and rushes to the table grabbing her old Polaroid camera. She crouches low by the window, blinks several times nervously, and lifts the camera to her eye with shaking hands. She peers through the viewfinder and snaps the photo when the car's Utah licence plate comes into view. The picture slides out of the camera and she sits on the floor cross-legged holding it in front of her face. Still. Watching with complete attention like a child waiting for a surprise. She looks at the photo of the car with fear and contempt. The woman with the shifty eyes reaches under the couch and grasps the book with quivering hands. She opens it and puts the

photo in alongside the others like it. She impulsively calls to her husband but when he does not answer, she abandons the idea, knowing that he will only tell her that she needn't worry so much. She stands in her front room listening to nothing but the ringing of her voice hanging in her ears like a cloud of smoke.

A woman with a sad mouth lies in bed; sleep wrapped itself around her like a cocoon. Through her slumber she hears the shout of a woman and her eyelids flutter open once, twice, as she wakes up and then close again quickly trying to recapture her dream. Her husband is next to her sprawled across the bed, his chest rising and falling slowly under the rumpled sheet. The shadows of birds dart across the thin white curtains and the sound of their song echoes throughout the street. Through the break in the curtains, a slit of sunlight slices through the room, dust particles swimming lazily in the morning light. It is still very early but the woman surrenders to the new day and opens her eyes. She rises from the warm comfort of the bed and walks to the window. The woman opens the curtains fully, letting warm sunshine fill the room bringing a brief smile to her face. She stands for a moment inhaling deeply, taking in the smell of morning; she can tell autumn is coming. She leans out the window and spots a blue car driving past the house; the familiar feeling of unease rises in the pit of her stomach.

She puts on a robe and creeps to the door on tip toed feet trying to avoid the creaky floorboards. As she sneaks out the door her husband sleepily mumbles something and she pretends not to hear him. She hears voices from downstairs and frowns as she tries to make out the noises. She walks down the stairs into the living room listening to two people laugh half-heartedly at each other and a woman's voice saying

forced his soul mate into the arms of another man, that it was his fault that they had both begun this rapid descent into wretchedness. The guilt rose up and threatened to engulf him as he struggled to find words to mask his actions. *Needy. Clingy. Insecure.* The words sounded petty and irrelevant, like dressing up a wolf as a fly. They neither expressed his actions accurately nor helped to shift the mass of tangled emotions that had been descending on him since that moment of revelation in the club.

Despite this awareness of his own culpability, an image of his lover, his face taut with a desperate resolution, was emerging in his mind. David watched, helpless, as the figure stretched out a hand and grabbed his elbow, forcing him to turn, to listen. David struggled to pull away, hopelessly fleeing from the knowledge of the shattering confession that was to come, but powerless to alter what he already knew.

He saw, as if through a dense leaden mist, his lover's lips form the unutterable acronym that had whipped through him like an icy breath of wind, tearing the leaves from the trees in one violent wrench. It had triggered some sort of unrepentant animal instinct inside him that had lifted him up and carried him away from the pulsating music that had replaced his own rhythmic heart beat with its harsh electronic pulse, away from the aggressive flashes of light that seemed to expose him to the core and lay him open to ridicule with each hostile burst of brightness, out into the cool and compressing safety of darkness.

He had been so full of feeling as he had fled the club's claustrophobic atmosphere that it had been minutes before he considered that his lover had been wielding a double bladed sword, but as soon as his mind focused on the thought, he felt the agonising sting of a deep emotional wound and flinched as if shock had dealt him a physical blow in the face. A multitude of clichéd questions struggled for air as he fought the temptation to scream obscenities into

## On the Corner of Wardor Street

He stood and watched the silhouette moving up the street towards him, the outline frayed in the dim orange glow, like a delicate piece of material handled too roughly. As the figure drew nearer, his shadow spilt across the pavement and onto the road beside him, a distorted shape that flickered and faded in the passing intervals of darkness.

The sky behind the approaching form was overflowing with clouds, which absorbed the burnt glare of the city like a sponge, exonerating almost all illumination and releasing a steady drip of indistinct yellow that intermingled with the grey, like the ashen remains of a cigarette stub, recently cast aside by a vacant hand.

His progress down the street appeared to be slow, marred by the sudden gushes of people surging in and out of doorways like the bosom of a wave brushing tauntingly against the shore.

David watched his relentless approach, every inch of his body racked with a sensual desire, yet his mind incurably repulsed. He silently willed him to slow just a little more, to delay the inevitable conversation which was nonetheless impossible to share with a companion and lover, which would prompt the rediscovery of words which had been stashed out of sight in a dark and dusty corner of his vocabulary, hidden under a layer of fear and aversion.

But there was to be no avoiding it, although the thought of it made his stomach turn and bile rise in his throat. He knew that with each step his lover took towards him, the unspoken words forced themselves between them, as if they were standing either side of a splinter that was being gradually wrenched apart to form a gaping chasm.

He knew that he held part of the responsibility, that it was his behaviour that had driven his lover to the point of madness, that it had been his irrepressible jealousy that had

Doug Harlow joins us now with a look at this mornings forecast. She grabs the remote off of the floor and switches off the television, irritated that it has been left on all night again. She glances at the family photos arranged along the wall. There's one of the family smiling and pointing up at Mount Rushmore, another taken on Christmas morning a few years ago: everyone sitting with sleepy faces by the Christmas tree in their flannel pyjamas. And one of her and her husband at her 35<sup>th</sup> birthday, looking rosy-cheeked and jovial. She stands staring at the last photo for a few moments deep in thought. She suddenly feels very nostalgic and walks to the study. She reaches to the very bottom drawer of her desk and retrieves a large tattered envelope from beneath all of the old paperwork. She empties the contents onto the desk. Dozens of letters flutter to the wooden surface, all of which are in her familiar chaotic scrawl. She begins to read them. She re-reads all of the words she had written to her family so long ago, the words that had been ignored and sent back with no explanation. All of the contrite words and wishes seemed so silly now, so hopeless. She often wonders whether marrying her husband had been worth giving up her family. She often regrets the decisions she has made and she often resents her husband for having wanted her to make them. She hears the low whistle of the kettle coming from the kitchen and quickly puts everything away and locks the drawer.

A woman with a long braid stands in her kitchen making breakfast. She is enjoying the last quiet moments of the morning before the children come rushing in for their cereal and requests for pick-ups after school and sandwiches without tomatoes and help with last minute homework. She pours boiling water into two mugs and feels the hot steam drift up onto her face. She begins to take one of the mugs up-

stairs to her husband before quickly reminding herself that she should not disturb him. She thinks perhaps it would be intrusive or even needy to go to him now. She knows she needs to share him with the others and has to respect the unsaid rules of their lifestyle. Even though her family chose him for her she always knew that it had been the right thing. She is happy with the way things have turned out; but it can be overwhelming for her. She hears the sink turn on upstairs and reaches up to the cupboard taking down several boxes of colourful cereal and placing them on the table. She goes to washing machine and grabs bowls, and spoons, and cups, and forks. She walks into the dining room and sets thirteen places at the table.

A family gathers for breakfast. Children scurry around grabbing pieces of fruit, and pouring milk and juice, and filling backpacks. The parents sit down, father sitting at the head of the table, surrounded by his three wives. The woman with the shifty eyes sits tying the hair up of her youngest daughter and whispers something into the child's ear making her giggle, the woman with the long braid smiles at her husband and pours him a cup of coffee, and the woman with the sad mouth gazes around at her family momentarily raising the corners of her mouth into a silent smile and squeezes the hand of her husband. They all hold hands and close their eyes as the husband leads a prayer. I am blessed to be here another day with my wives and children he says earnestly. And the family smiles at him fondly and then erupt into the chaos of morning breakfast.

Emma Hurst

anything simply being able to be. And we know it. We know logic is not instinctive and can not reason why we cry to one song whilst another remains stony eyed. Or why I would wither and freeze at the lack of your presence. So watch my faith, my love, the beggar who is God. Watch the equations try to correct the displacement by starving him. But know that they have been born from the imperfect materials and so by the time that they create, they will die."

They stood by an opening in to an old and greying wood that looked like roots of hair erupting from a scalp. Darkness cloaked the trunks in the distance and leaves were fermenting in to the earth, they smelt as sweet as cider, mixing harmoniously with the warmth of the air. The night was approaching and the hills were changing their skins to blacks and greys, taking on their new roles for the night.

A raging fire seemed to burn through the other figure and it drowned the insignificant thought that proposed that its host was affected by the sun setting and as a result expressed their opinions on the evening.

"If I am to relinquish myself to the tone and shade that light will permit, I do it not as a child terrified but resentful of the dark. I cannot love the colour of your eyes because I cannot see them for every breath I take. When the sun falls I cannot see you at all, so how can I love you for your body? My love is for the unchanging hope you water me with so freely. Faces may distort with the heat of sunlight or the presence of age and you know that we look very different in the light of the evening to when we first met. Yet I am sure that you are the same. And when I watch you sleep in the blue light that covers the walls of our room I am not daunted by your seeming lack of life, or indeed the white of your hair. And so I also resent the light for trying its hardest to define us by appearance."

The air was completely empty when they made their way back home. The blackness of the night masked everything in serene silence. They did not speak or see anything but were comfortable when they lay in bed with one and other.

Will Nott

## There is no reason to love.

The shadows danced and sang with the remaining sunlight. They swam in and out of the dark shades of the trees, revealing their thin arms on the patches still lit by the warm glow of the sky. And two figures moved in a constant embrace, with the soil breathing out heavily under their foot steps. If one were to watch them, pacing the path that wound around the grassy slope, one would not be able to determine their genders. They were the same height and of similar stature.

The hill and the sky looked like one object dotted with the details of birds and clouds, but ultimately it was like one picturesque and breathing thing, brought in to being by the falling dusk. The first figure turned to the other, their mouth was stretched and fleshy and moist with life. It spoke slowly, in a flowing voice full of sound.

The figure thought of something to say in order to convey his personal opinion on the subject of rationality and emotional experience; expression grasped the logic that usually would have made up the sounds in a man's mouth and crushed it between its healthy fingers. The sense of the figure's subsequent outburst was coincidental and pure, not governed by any process, not limited by the restrictions of human comprehension.

"Picture my love, and picture you must if we could watch the world without words. If there was no word for tree or grass or path, home and sky. Watch them merge in to a thing, not bound by their essence or separations. And our thoughts of a thing like your thigh and your neck would be part of everything else. To reason, is to watch the space between, like distance or time with two points to which one can measure. Could I drink and be full of love if we did not exist as two?"

"But I know, and shoot down thought, that our oneness is what makes our love. The non-rationality of its existence contradicts any theory of relativity. We stand unified outside of this dimension entwined and consumed by the principle of

## Wether

If the farmer makes a sound as he moves through the field, he does not notice it. The horizon is bleeding upon the earth, threatening darkness. Damp settles onto the ground, as he expected it to. His walk is awkward; the land is sloped. The world around him dulls and distances as he is consumed by his reverie. He feels the rhythm of his movement, drumming in his mind. When it is broken by an unexpected patch of ground, his vision returns. His surroundings reassert themselves. No time to be distracted by himself.

He remembers when the area used to be hidden. Only a few dirt tracks or lanes - now a motorway connects it to the world. He enjoyed the isolation, now he has to work for it.

Imprints of hooved feet are scattered across the ground. All are imperfectly formed. His eyes follow their trails, his feet follow his own. There is a shape collapsed motionless in the mud. At first he sees it as a plastic shopping bag. Faultless, unbroken white. With each step clarity is approached. A lamb. The farmer is still. There is no blood on the animal; no sign of palpable death. Its coat is fresh and full. Its features are still lifelike, not the usual cocoon of death. Familiarity does not ease the farmer. The lamb's eyes are vacant, as to not see what discomfort it has caused.

He crouches. Together they are motionless.

The sun sets beside them. Wind brushes the soil and disturbs the lamb's juvenile coat. Cold consumes. The farmer recoils. His thoughts reveal themselves. He should dispose the body. Regulations. Incinerate. Rendering. Sell it to the hunt. He looks back. This is dis-

tinct. Neither food nor animal: no use to him. An elegant defiance of slaughter.

The lamb is consumed by darkness: returning home, as he must.

The night seems brighter in his room. The small red light in the corner. The regularity of the alarm clock. The hum of dormant electricity. The curtains magnify the moonlight. He turns the light on and re-reads an old copy of 'The Radio Times'. When he feels drowsy enough, he turns the light off and resumes the struggle. An owl pierces the silence. The door pulls him away from sleep. Silently he moves.

He opens the door to his shed and searches in the gloom. He does not turn on the electric light. He clasps the familiar metal and heads for the gate. The turquoise grass sways in isolated patches. The sky has a grey ting to the blackness. A fox crosses his path. The distant whirr of the motorway is less distinct. The turnstile, the fence, the feeds are all transformed into nocturnal visions. He drops his pace as he approaches. The lamb is there, unchanged, untouched. He removes the shovel from his shoulder and begins to dig. Ground once hidden is piled higher and higher. Once the hole is as deep as its creator, he stops. He lifts the lamb and feels its weight. He places the lamb in the ground and heals the wound.

He wakes. He changes. He eats. He brushes his teeth. He puts his coat on. He escapes.

He never felt at home in houses. The morning, that seemed so distant a few hours back, has established itself. The grass is glistening with dew and sunlight. He paces back up the path. The sheep are in

the farthest field and must be moved. Groggily, he retraces the night's journey. The electricity pylons frame the landscape. He has grown to like them; their towering figures standing in separation. They do not touch the ground, only skate over it. If man were to truly dominate, he would bury the cables. These thoughts depart him as he arrives to the sight of his nocturnal visit.

The hole in the dirt has reappeared. The ground is stained with blood. Skin and wool have been separated, bone lies in unnatural angles. The lamb's head lies facing the sky, its spine a meter away. Nothing to be done. The lamb will be carrion; food for crows.

He has finished with death for this week; for there is life to attend to.

Jordan Theis