

Rugby High School

Creative writing magazine

# ILLUMINATE

Inspire. Imagine. Illuminate.

Special edition: creative writing club members and Forward/  
Emag creative/ critical responses

Autumn Term 2017

Welcome to the latest edition of “Illuminate”. Since the beginning of term, RHS writers have been busy tackling a range of creative writing challenges, with some wonderful and surprising results. Some of these poems came out of a joint workshop with Rugby School run by Alix Scott-Martin, so a huge thanks to her for the inspiration. I have also included in this edition two of the entries that Year 11 students wrote for the Forward/ Emag competition, responding to one of ten shortlisted poems for the Forward Poetry Prize. Students from Year 7 – 13 have their work published here.

As always, I am excited to read what these writers have to say, and the daring and beautiful ways they find to express their ideas.

Olga Dermott-Bond

Editor

November 2017

**Contributors:**

**Kiera Barnes/ Emily Stephens/Hannah Spurr/Lucy Eaton/Annie Fan/Amelia Forbes/Ophelia Clarke/Ella Roberts/Shona Whelan/Elise Scotney/Rachel Coates/ Meilssa Chikwiramokomo/Jasdeep Dhanda/Isabella Bonnell/ Emily Stitson**

## Shadow

*Kiera Barnes, Y r7*

Staining the floor

like a pool of spilled ink

mirroring your every move,

watching, waiting.

Like stars, always there though

you may not see it.

Engraved in the floor

yet making no mark,

walking and running

whatever you do it follows you,

a silenced demon

waiting to pounce,

waiting to destroy its prey.

Like your soul has leapt out

of your body

it follows your every move waiting

for the right moment,

maybe it's already happened

maybe you are already possessed

by your evil demon

maybe you are a danger,

a conjurer

a mystical monster

maybe you are filled already

with the dark magic

already controlled

already influencing you

and every move you make.

Reflecting you,

the long lean body

is as tall as a skyscraper,

anything you do it's there

anywhere you go

it's there

your shadow

from which there is no escape.

## **The Black Cat**

*Emily Stephens, Yr 13*

Last night we walked like tigers,  
Through a beaten door to a disco  
Lit by the balls in the sockets of a few  
Lonely men. Blue, green, brown  
On concrete, in permanent frowns  
We saw occasional smiles,  
But mostly through a hungry starvation

That bit at the cuticles of pint glasses

and heaved in the claustrophobia of cubicles

and scratched on the luck of lottery tickets

We find it is the landscape  
Of the lost, one to conceive dreams  
Over the comfort of wearing cushion,  
And pinch them gone, throwing them  
Like darts into the backwards bullseye  
Of the moon.

Untitled (inspired by a blackout poem)

*Hannah Spurr, Yr 13*

like

interweaving

fleeting laughs

at a local disco

this

relentlessly

chimes

sounds as if it has designs

compromised

by

current trends.

## **scrabble for two**

*Hannah Spurr, Yr 13*

i let love slide from the tip of my nose;  
carelessly watching the fire as shards shatter  
and leave but a muffled silence that only shows  
how care numbs – torn teeth tossed aside so that they no longer clatter

in the Winter months. besides,  
they are hardly needed as normality quietens us  
and upon matters of intimacy, we speak solely in asides –  
perhaps the Sunday morning paper will give us something to discuss.

instead of small talk, i print upon our teeth  
little letters for a century old board,  
being sure to hide my favourite vowels beneath  
where forever they will be stored.

i look at you for the first time in years as i spell out our divorce letter  
and there you are. unchanging in your dull as lead, beige and white sweater.

## After 'Aura' by Emily Berry

*Lucy Eaton, Yr 11*

Falling into                                  the abyss  
I had felt    fear but  
now sank    into serenity  
seeing your face                  slowly disappear  
feeling the earth                  cease to exist  
where before                                  I think  
I was tired                                  of thinking now  
to realise    there is an  
end to    that suffering  
an eternity of                  thoughtless bliss  
to lose    or to be lost  
you taught me                                  could mollify  
& yet I feel you                          reaching out  
dragging me up                          to the surface  
I begin to see                                  light  
flooding in                                  feel the sun  
burn my skin                                  the ocean  
between us                                  growing smaller  
no separation                                  your desperate  
isolation holding                                  me back  
pulling me back                                  a stabbing  
sensation                                  & if you would  
only hear me                                  I'd ask you  
to let me sink where I couldn't see you



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**James Franco Ode**

*After Donald Trump*

*Annie Fan, Yr 13*

“America, how can I write myself to a  
white tile college, graceless?  
If I remember, I pretend I don’t  
want to play squirrels and bears on camera. If I say  
*I will save you*, I find that a dollar sticks  
to my solar plexus, if I don’t want to pretend  
I mute myself, and replay how  
I dreamt of a woman with stone thighs.  
One breast full of plastic, the colour white,  
my drag of November. How the light  
once knocked out my teeth, was once  
just my hands and  
my mummy/daddy playing a makeshift game –  
drunk and reconstituted, opened. I dreamt  
of somebody like me, fat  
belly under the greenroom floor,  
lying eyes, throat of gold,  
*yo ginsberg*  
*yo ginsberg.*”

## Shadows

*Amelia Forbes, Yr 7*

Hiding in the corner,

So black, always a mourner

Hiding from the world,

Always, always curled

Hiding from the light,

Lying in fright

Waiting to spill,

Waiting to paint,

Next time, make sure this is isn't your fate

So bland,

So detailed,

The shape shifting animals , nailed,

Nailed to my feet

Why so lonely,

Why so scared,

Come out but I warn you come prepared.

## **A Lifeline**

*Ophelia Clarke, Yr 13*

Liquid hope

Or just futility

Poured down the drain

Quick quick

Drink up drink up

Before it is

Gobbled up by the concrete

Selfish

Doesn't wait for those who need it most

Evaporates in times of disaster

Like a clingy lover however

It manages to return

Through careless wasted gushing from a tap

Or as tears from the blackened mourning heavens

Sticky perspiration from exertion

Or fear

Sudden damp puddle

A reminder of new life

What do we do when it goes

Those reliant expectant with throats

Rough as stone desperate for a trickle  
Of this colourless shapeless relief  
Whilst others chortling clinking glasses exuding their self-importance  
Guzzle money gulp down this lifeline  
Entirely oblivious to its meaning its true purpose

Like I said before  
Drink up  
Before it's too late.

## **Belated**

*Ella Roberts, Yr 13*

It finds me in another breath,  
a reunion with another self.  
In a backstreet bookshop  
I drink the wine,  
swear an oath,  
stop looking  
over my shoulder.  
My blood turns to marmalade  
carnations dripping as tears,  
my secrets sowing a meadow.  
They hand me a rusted key, a sprig of violets, a silver thumb ring.

Inching closer to a ninth emotion,  
The burnt lavender flakes away,  
and I drop my hands into cool saltwater,  
agreeing with everything they say.

## People-Watching

*Shona Whelan, Yr 11*

I like watching people in public places,  
peering through proverbial windows at snippets of  
other people's memories, times they will remember, saying:  
I know exactly where I was when -  
times they will forget, saying:  
Was it a Tuesday or a Thursday? Was it raining? Snowing?

I like sitting in coffee shops and libraries and train stations,  
watching moments of other existences briefly intercept my timeline,  
letting my path almost cross with someone else's but  
always remaining a spectator, a ghost, a nameless face as a background blur  
to the couple arguing between the aisles, the boy buying flowers for some beautiful  
blonde girl waiting at the end of the train tracks, the child tugging his mother's hand,  
'Look, look, birds are flying mummy, birds are flying.'

These are the times I am sat still, letting other people's worlds gravitate around, orbit past  
my own, centred on a bench and a book and an empty hour in the day.  
There are times where I am moving, on planes or trains or buses, watching people  
stuck in freeze-frames, in tableaux, juddering past me like strobe lights.  
These are the times where I cannot interfere, cannot catch a balloon slipping from  
a young girl's grasp, cannot let the threads of my unwinding trail tangle with another's  
and become a forgotten face, hidden in their subconscious.

In the planes and trains and buses I am separate, I am distinct. I cannot even cast a  
second glance at an old man bent double hobbling home on this cold January morning,  
paper rolled under his arm like a lover's and I wonder where is his wife, where is his walking  
stick.

But maybe that paper, that trip every day to the local corner shop is his crux, his crutch, his  
cane;

I cannot even risk blinking because the scenes will flash by, lost to my retinas, lost to my  
unconscious memory, if I blink I would miss the woman crying down the phone,  
umbrella tumbling to her side as our bus shuttles past mechanically, as if  
the glass pane between us has become a snow-globe around her, around me.

We all just stare, we do not stop. There is something melancholic in this,  
and somehow it is the faces melting past the rain-streaked and finger-smearred glass  
of this train of this car of this taxi of this tram that haunt my memory.

I forget the tangled hands of a pair of newlyweds talking across the coffee table,  
letting their fingers flap like a dove's wings.  
Instead, it is the things that lie beyond my reach, the people shivering at bus stops,

the farmers trudging over roiling country fields in search of a lost lamb; it is that old man and that woman that re-emerge from the mist of my memories to echo and solidify in my dreams and my thoughts.

I build them a universe and a story and names and fill in the details I missed, like how the old man's coat was tweed, with a navy cotton trim, with two brass buttons, the third missing and lying on his bedside table, because she was the one that sewed and since she died he doesn't have the strength to open her treasure trove of a sewing box, scared that it will make him remember the way her fingers looped and spun in the long summer evenings when he flung the veranda doors open and hummed their wedding song over and over as she sewed and repaired and mended with a small smile that curved just so, that curved just so - how the woman had received an unexpected call from a family friend, an emergency contact and that, in a choked up voice, she told her that her son was in hospital, had been on his way to school with some friends when another driver swerved, when a tree loomed, and on impact, she said, on impact her son had thrown his arm across his friend's chest, trying to hold him back from slamming his head into the dashboard.

I have crafted them a world where I can connect, can manipulate, can alter their fates to fit a happier ending and yet it does nothing to alleviate this guilt that I didn't just leap off of the bus at the next stop and do something because my imagination won't change a thing and their lives keep unravelling before them in a mess of threads and paths and disjointed road maps without a sign, a navigator, a friendly stranger to guide them.

I wonder who has seen me from their car window and had to do this too, has had to lodge me in an alien story, has had to stitch me a different coat and a different laugh and a different reason for letting our lives touch without blending; I wonder who's dreams I have haunted with my head low and my music loud, I wonder when we will all learn to carry rocks ready to break through the snow-globes and reach and reach and-

I like watching people in public places,  
seeing the side of them that is free from pretence,  
seeing the moments they will forget,  
I treasure these moments for them, because I've always been  
a hoarder and maybe one day these moments will become my own,  
will become our own, will become the things we share when the walls crumble  
and we let our feet walk the same path for just a little while, when I stop being  
a spectator and you stop being a stranger and we greet each other like old friends  
meeting at last.



## **Complaint**

*Elise Scotney, Yr 8*

I wish to return the order of fear that was mis-sent to me. I have already tried to banish the thoughts from my mind but the game they play is endless. I believe these are unfortunately glow-in-the-dark as they seem to be most active late at night as I drift asleep. They are not only a bad product but also a size too small as whenever they are working, I am squashed into them.

## **The day my Dad did die**

*After Telemachus, by Ocean Vuong*  
*Rachel Coates, Yr 11*

The sky was a drizzly grey that evening  
I wore my black suit and tie

And my beetle shelled shoes that were slightly too big  
Reserved for when someone did die.

In the queue to the casket, I pondered  
Of the face of my father so near

For I knew him only as the crisp, paper queens  
That arrived in the post, twice a year.

My memories of him non-existent  
And his of me, less so.

As when he left for the sea, I was only a bump  
In my mother crying "please Dad, don't go".

His body lay stiff, as a navy salute  
The badges on his chest were in bloom.

I could see how they'd moved with the flow of his breath,  
Back and forth like the tides of the moon.

Memories of countless days in the park,  
No one to throw me the ball.

No one to teach me to ride my new bike.  
No one to catch my first fall.

I used to be proud  
"He's in the Navy" I'd say.

Every time a kid asked why I had just a Mum  
And their parents, quickly pulled them away.

And I know it was selfish,  
But I know it was true.

When I left the casket and whispered  
"Dad, I do hate you."

## Home

*Melissa Chikwiramokomo, Yr 13*

It was a toxic suffocation from the beginning. But I chose to ignore it. The warning signs were there, blaring words telling me to get out and protect myself before anything happened. But you calmed me. You spoke to the demons that haunted me and chased away the anxiety that plagued my body. You made me so certain that, this undefined relationship we shared was something that had long breached friendship and was simply clambering around for more. Our hugs would soothe me even after the most tumultuous day and you would whisper how nice it felt to be wrapped in familiar arms *that felt like home*. That statement boggled my mind and made me understand why everything with you was alright. Everything was calm, nothing hurt and I felt like I could take on the world. Except you didn't feel like home - **you were home**.

Home. Without a warning home packed up and left. Moved to the other side of the country and left me to fend for myself, if that was possible. Home took my strength, as it found another occupant who publicised their new residence as I watched home from a distance - finally feeling like what I'd become. I was homeless but my home was still there. Simply caring for someone else. That was when the demons returned. Except these were new and constantly reminded me of the home I had lost. Reminded me of exactly what the perfect tenant should have been like. It was my fault that I no longer had a home and even now the pain still eats away at me as I close my eyes and try to forget the comfort and safety I was provided before I let it slip through my fingers. If I had noticed what was happening I would have held on harder, fought harder to keep that sense of belonging with me.

## **Swept by the Bubbles**

*Jasdeep Dhanda, Yr 10*

In the sun-splashed water I sit  
The searing water blistering my skin,  
Cloudy with spirit, it wanders aimlessly around me

I lie, surrounded by a warmth of peace  
Harsh sounds drowned by the awakening simpering smells  
Symphonies of floating bubbles rush together  
As meanders of nameless streams run past me in a kaleidoscope of colours

Carefully, I draw elaborate shapes on the numb windows  
Sweet fudge and honeysuckle tears gush  
As the candles begin to breathe

Roaring whispers escapes when I splash, and slop, and squirt, and slosh  
The boisterous water left restless, surging with laughter  
Encased in the tub, with its ebony white panels

I sit, broken by the water.

## **Never Go Unheard\***

*Olga Dermott-Bond*

The most important parachute  
is the one I am most scared to open,  
the one that means I am able to leave  
this juddering invisible plane  
built by men who knew how to navigate me.

The most important parachute  
is the one that flourishes now above my head,  
like beautiful inkspill in sky-water,  
where I dare to share these truths,  
my words pedalling frantically through listening air.

The most important parachute  
is the one that is bigger than I could  
have imagined, when it billows full, upside down  
with all the other voices, slowing me through space,  
giving me time to float with stories scored against blue.

The most important parachute  
is the one that is no longer tight  
as a cardamom pod on my back, packed  
uncomfortably for so long. The deepening canopy  
a gramophone trumpet, brazening your wrong to each horizon.

*\*Vicky Featherstone, artistic director of The Royal Court Theatre, 17<sup>th</sup> October.*

## **Brewing a Storm**

*Isabella Bonnell, Yr 10*

Irate, looming clouds hovering over the dry patch of land, gossip with loud voices. They scuttle across the sky as if not wishing to witness the fast-approaching terror. A slim, jagged white stripe is forced through the clouds onto the ground in a flash. Then, the thunderous clap that follows echoes across the unyielding crop sprawling for miles. A drop splashes onto the cracked earth, then another until the storm has fully brewed. Whips of rain lash onto the dust marking it a darker colour. All the while the sky roars its vexed mood and the branches of the thin, sparse trees crack as they are flung from side to side by the ferocious gusts. Never ceasing, the rain continues to pound the ground as the cattle accommodate themselves in a huddle on the now sodden earth.

A concatenation of white stripes adorns the raging layer of dismal colour. All of a sudden, the wind abates its shrieks, the thundering feud of the clouds ceases and the torrent fizzles down to a light mist clinging to the electrified air.

A serrated crack appears in the now silent, unmoving sky, giving way to the sliver of light which graces the refreshed terra firma.

## **Daisies**

*Emily Stitson, Yr 7*

I walk, melancholy, across the lonely field  
Searching for the beauty that is concealed  
Climbing up a hill 'till I find the brink  
I see thousands of daisies, tossing their heads in sync

The wind ruffles snow white petals  
Until the breeze finally settles  
Just the daisies and I  
Watching the time fly by

I gaze at them in awe and wonder  
Until sleep drags me down under  
My dreams are full of daisies and bliss  
Instead of the unusual black abyss

I try to drag myself from their beauty  
But they take away any thought of duty  
Unfortunately, I cannot stay  
Maybe another day.....