



The Scriptorium

Spring 2025: Journey of the Soul



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Spring 2025: Journey of the Soul
House of Humane Letters Student Journal

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear Reader,

We are excited to present the second issue of *The Scriptorium*! This issue was easier to put together, as the *Scripties* had gained some experience and found footing, and yet the making did not come without its own troubles and thrills. We spent weeks deciding on what to include, what to emphasize, and what there, sadly, was just no room for — and I think, at least, that the end result is wonderful: full to the brim with beautifully thought-out and executed pieces of art.

Many of the pieces in this journal were based on our theme. After we took the Harry Potter class last June, the House of Humane Letters was all alight with new knowledge of ring structures, tripartite souls, and — especially! — alchemy. We were enthralled by these literary symbols that represented the journey of the soul to God, and so we decided to have that as the theme for this issue. Such submissions, including Janie Fender's *The Boy Who Lived*, Emma Reiss' *A Journey of Virtue*, and Eliza Graham's *The Tripartite Soul*, illustrate this.

Other works included in this issue were unthemed. These include pieces of visual art such as *Map of the Wilderness* by Colson Turner and *Sherborne Missal Artist Study* by Kathryn Eaton; selections of *Student Life* such as an interview of Ms Angelina by Elsa Altschuler and *Veva and Jewel Jack*; essays such as *Terrible Mirth* by Gabe Chou and Elizabeth Eusterman and *The Florigelium* by Jonathan Jecko; stories such as *The Blind Man and the Bard* by Isaiah Snowden; and poems such as *Communion* by Clara Green and *Sonnet on the Imagination* by Asher McCall.

In short, these submissions reveal, more than ever, the philosophy of the House of Humane Letters and, more specifically, *The Scriptorium*. We believe in art that is beautiful, that preserves tradition, and that serves as a stained glass window through which to see God. And stories of allegory and irony, essays exploring symbolism and myth, and pictures based on well-known works of literature — all these express this philosophy to the fullest!

We hope that you love reading *The Scriptorium* half as much as we loved putting it together, and until next time, stories will save the world!

Yours,
Fiona Clare Altschuler
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Features

Terrible Mirth

An Introduction to Norse Mythology

*Take as your model the tall women with yellow hair in plaits
Who walked back into the burning houses to die with men,
Or him who as the death spear entered his vitals
Made critical comments on its workmanship and aim.
-C.S. Lewis, The Cliché Came out of Its Cage*

As with every great mythology, images and sounds surround the Northern myths: gods who can change form, sliding from one to the next like flickering flames; mighty serpents coiling deep beneath the storms of the sea, fell wolves, severed hands, ice, snow, dark fate. All these cumulate and crash together in a chaotic symphony of “northernness”, as C.S. Lewis calls it, not unlike how the Northmen related the creation of their universe, one that began with blood... and ended with blood. This flavour of mythology, so foreign from the flower goddesses and capering fauns of the Greeks, or spells and animal-gods of the Egyptians, is beyond merely “aesthetical” to Norse mythology. Rather it is the lifeblood of the mythos, an atmosphere that sets it apart on its own plane. If the Greek myths sang of cycles of death and rebirth and metamorphoses to gods, the northmen sang of doom, destruction and the wild comedy of humanity, often balancing a knife’s edge of dark humour and stoic nobility. And while many myths tell of a cyclical story that will go on and on repeating as far as the eye can see, the Norse firmly asserted that everything came to an end, and that the end is even known and fixed. Their mythology is one of destruction and doom.

The saga that opens and closes with blood is immediately foreshadowed with the story of the first living creature, Ymir. He was born at the beginning of time, from a swirling pit of fire and ice. After him more creatures sprang up, some hideous and stupid, but others beautiful and wise. The noble and glorious decided they had to destroy Ymir, who was himself wicked and horrendous to behold. They killed him, and from his flesh they made the ground, from his bones the mountains, and from his brains the clouds. Years flew by and life multiplied. Men, giants, monsters, dwarves, faeries, and gods populated the universe. Thus the death of the first being allowed the world to come into existence and life to truly begin.

The Norse world is a wonderful, terrifying, bizarre place. Underwater feasting halls, wind-lashed mountains, smoldering underground forges, as well as forests teeming with sorcerers, giants, and dragons, are the lesser oddities. Mimir’s Well, a pool of water that holds ancient secrets and knowledge, has an eye sitting at the bottom of it. Yggdrasil, the world tree, has roots that spread throughout the entire universe, and a dragon called Nidhogg lurks underground chewing at its roots. Bifrost, the prism-colored bridge, leads from earth to Asgard, the home of the gods.

In Asgard live the gods themselves, the Aesir. They are human in the most basic ways: brawling, warring, weeping, laughing and, above all, desperately seeking wisdom to understand it all. Among them are Balder the joyful, Tyr the fearless, Freya the beautiful, Skirnir the swift, and Heimdall the keen sighted. But most important is the trio of the wise Odin, the strong Thor, and the cunning Loki. Together they embody, drive, and define the Norse cosmos.

The king of the gods, Odin the Allfather, is not just lord of the Aesir but the supreme god of wisdom and knowledge as well. He watches the doings of men from up on his seat in Asgard, accompanied by two ravens, Thought and Memory (the second is his favorite). His entire tale is one of seeking wisdom and knowledge, at every awful cost. The eye at the bottom of Mimir's Well is Odin's. That was the price he had to pay to gaze into its waters, and the trade of visual sight for mental sight was not even a question for him. Perhaps the most famous tale in his quest for wisdom is when Odin spears himself to Yggdrasil, a sacrifice to himself. He hangs there in agony for nine days. As his life flickers and grows dim, Odin watches the falling branches and twigs of Yggdrasil. They land in patterns and form runes. While he is dying he learns their secrets and discovers their language reveals something very powerful indeed: magic. Finally Odin falls to the ground, half blind and near death, the wisest being in the world.

Odin set out to teach the humans of the world the wisdom he had gained. The *Havamal*, an old Norse poem that echoes Proverbs, consists of a set of guidelines and advice given by the Allfather to us.

Thus Odin seeks wisdom, gains wisdom, and gives wisdom as a reward to those who please him. We think of the gods in terms of action and battles, but many of the poems and sagas that surround Odin take the form of a dialogue in which riddles are exchanged and knowledge is tested. Those who boast to know more than Odin are always put to a test by the god himself. The price for the loser can be as severe as a beheading, and Odin never loses.

Odin's son is Thor. He is loyal, rash, and powerful; appearing in flashes of thunder, red hair bristling, beloved hammer Mjollnir swinging in his gloved hand. While Odin seeks desperately for knowledge and wisdom, Thor strides throughout the earth seeking to cleanse it of evil.

Thor's tale is one constant display of smiling while biting the bullet. When Mjollnir is stolen, Thor consults the scheming Loki and a plan is set. Through a series of schemes and bargains—some successful, some not—the conclusion is reached that the only way to get Mjollnir back is for Thor to disguise himself as Freya. He is to attend a wedding arranged between her and the very thief of the hammer—a gruesome ogre who fancies a goddess ought to be his wife.

There are a couple close set-backs. Thor fails to act his part and the groom becomes vaguely suspicious while his bride eats an entire ox and is evidently only winding up. But despite this and similar missteps, the marriage-sham miraculously succeeds. The hammer is

presented during the wedding as part of the ceremony to the supposed Freya, and Thor seizes his beloved weapon. The thunder god's indignation and strength uncoil like a spring and the entire wedding, guests and groom, are no more.

This combination of peril, strength, and—most prominently—hilarity, is what you find in Thor's tales. Norse mythology is not just a world of set-jaws and black horizons, it is often carefully woven with wit that we understand not in a scholarly distinguished-chuckle sort of way, but in a totally familiar feeling; these are jokes and the ones in further myths are what we would laughingly and simply proclaim as “dry” or “subtle” or “well-played”. And Norse mythology has an even more basic humor (basic in the Norse world does not mean inferior): the absurd and the slapstick. Thor wearing a wedding dress; the whole operation nearly ruined by an uncontrollable appetite; even—not mentioned in the description of the tale above but a detail worth recounting here—Freya being so furious at the suggestion of her marrying a giant that she snorts so indignantly and with such passion that the ground trembles and her necklace shatters.

This humor is in no way derogatory to the Norse frankness and way of taking the world as it is; it is characteristic of it. Norse myths are ultimately human ones, stories of both seeking wisdom to understand the world and laughing as you stumble through it. The grim desperation of Odin was matched with the noble goofiness of Thor; the barred teeth were combined with a smile. Alone they present two very different visions, together they combine seeming contraries: doom and laughter. But, remember the role of Loki in Thor's adventure. Though the role that Loki brings is not at first as clear as Odin and Thor's, perhaps only a cunning fox, that is but the tip of his nature. There is cruelty and evil in his heart. And the driving trio of Odin and Thor cannot be complete without him.

Loki is not a true god. Before he joined the Aesir, he was a giant, but one of unnatural beauty and intelligence. Odin was impressed, so much so that he became blood brothers with Loki so that he could welcome him into Asgard as one of their own.

At first all the gods were likewise taken by this new member, so beautiful, eloquent, and cunning. But as time went by, Loki's true giant nature prevailed in disturbing ways. He cut Thor's wife's hair off in a twisted sense of humor. He led one of the goddesses to be kidnapped to fulfill a bargain he had foolishly made. He set in motion a horrible curse that would wreck generations of humans, causing families to be torn apart, brothers to slay each other, wives to commit suicide—a tragic saga retold many times (immortalized in Wagner's rendition of it, *The Ring Cycle*). Loki was also constantly shunning the company of the gods, and turning back to the land of the giants. On one of his leaves he had three children with a giantess: Hel, a girl half alive and half dead, Fenris, a wolf, and Jormungundr, a serpent. Odin set Hel in the underworld to rule over it, but to the others he was more severe. Fenris was bound to a rock until the end of time, and Jormungundr was cast into the sea. They both grew to be behemoths, waiting to one day take revenge on the gods. When that day came, they would be led by their father. This would be the age called Ragnarok, and the final evils of

Loki would usher it in. The sly half-god had tricked Hod, the blind god, into killing his older brother, the warm-hearted Balder. No one could prove Loki had done it, but everyone knew. Yet Loki still had the audacity to invite himself to the feasting hall of the gods as if nothing had happened. There he became furiously drunk, insulting and slandering the gods, and finally losing all control and killing a servant. That was that. The gods chained him in a cave and left him there to suffer. But at Ragnarok, Loki will have broken free after a horrible earthquake. Then the seas will flood the world even as fires spread across it. Hel will open her gates and release the dead onto the world; Jormungundr will barrel onto land; Fenris will break his bonds and ravage the world; and Loki will be at the forefront, the Aesir blood in him completely forgotten as he ushers in the end of time.

This final act of the Norse drama is the defining piece of the mythos. Odin uncovered the universe, Thor protected it, and Loki destroyed it. The three of them discovered, built, and ruined the world. All the time they were running towards Ragnarok.

But this day of annihilation was not unknown to the gods. During his search for knowledge Odin learned of it. After learning the hidden secrets of Mimir's Well and the magic of Yggdrasil, he needed the knowledge of his own story, past and present. Odin had forced an old prophetess to reveal the future to him, and he had found the final chord in the world's story: doom and destruction, just like the beginning. But it is here that Norse mythology takes its signature peculiar route. Unlike other mythologies where heroes and gods battle the forces of Fate with all their strength, becoming further and further enmeshed in its webs, the northmen set their teeth and run *towards* the end; it becomes something to run hand in hand in. "Laughing shall I die", to borrow Tom Shippey's phrasing. The gods know the world will end in fire, and they know that try as they might, the wolves above will eventually run their course and devour the light. When bound by time, they cannot break their bond, only pour themselves out in the battle before them. This is illustrated by Jormangandr, framing, binding, tying the globe in his coils.

And Ragnarok does come, a raw explosion of chaos. All the fire, floods, and carnage that had been prophesied and discussed for eons suddenly became reality, all clashing together for a final symphony of "northernness". At the end of the time the wolf Fenris will devour Odin. Jormungundr will kill Thor. Unlike other mythologies in which the gods go on living quietly forgotten in their celestial halls due to the faulty memories of man, the Norse gods are brutally ended and the earth is plunged into darkness. The few survivors of mankind *do* remember, but they remember doom and darkness, and the final stand of the gods that, in the end, was not enough.

But was it truly the end?

J.R.R Tolkien writes,

"There are truths that are beyond us, transcendent truths, about beauty, truth, honor, etc. There are truths that man knows exist but they cannot be seen - they are immaterial, but no less real, to us. It is only through the language of myth that we can speak of these truths."

Mythology is the language of the human heart calling to the divine. Man is both body and spirit and while we may deny our spirituality, our souls are wiser than we and will seek the omniscient heights like a homing pigeon until satisfied. Though pagan, primitive mythology is resurrected and redeemed in the fulfillment of the One Myth, the Christian story of the God-Man, in which the Word becomes living story, a true myth for the entire universe. Christ did not come to abolish the myths of His fallen people, He came to fulfill them. He is not a contradiction or reinterpretation, he is the key to understanding them.

This is why Norse mythology is intentionally “unfinished”, filled with and ending in abrupt doom, death and an ultimate tragic demise. The sort of incompleteness of Norse mythology is not like a man who has abandoned his work overtime, but like a man who all the time knew that a more masterful crafter would be arriving soon and left the best of his work for him. Built into its fibre is the grave acknowledgment that, in the end, the old gods and heroes, though images and echoes of a higher Truth, cannot save the world. Norse mythology defines a yearning, and that is the first step to knowing that we need something outside of ourselves. But Norse mythology never tried to satisfy the homesickness. As Neil Gaiman puts it, “those who write stories do not always have good answers, but they often have good questions. It is not their role to satisfy but to make you aware that you need to be satisfied.” Myths are this on a grand scale, driving us from drowsy numbness to searching for a Savior.

These myths will tell you: pagan strength that smites giants and wrestles behemoths from the ocean is not enough. Pagan knowledge of the world’s secrets and magic runes is not enough. Odin will be devoured by the wolf, and Thor will be slain by the serpent.

Norse mythology declares that history is not linear. It may spiral, but it does not loop. Everything leads to an ending. It declares that the world will burn and that every man with an ounce of decency will burn with it and they would do this because there was something better than the present world and present life worth dying for. It declares the need for this darkness and doom to be properly met with grave wisdom and laughing resilience. It awakens a need and longing that brings resilience and joy. No mythology has better prepared the way for a God who can establish eternal golden halls, slay serpents and rise afterwards unscathed than a mythos whose gods fail in all these respects and whose doom is wrought from the beginning. For resurrection to come about, Time must be broken, shattered by that omniscient force all men seek: He who dwells outside of Time. With every failure of the pagan gods, the triumphs of a true God come more and more into focus. With every omen of doom the hope of truth became brighter. Every unfinished part of Norse mythology demands that something better than imaginable will be completed someday. It is, in a sense, the perfect pagan mythos.

There is one last prophecy about Ragnarok.

After the fires, floods, monsters, undead, giants, humans, and gods have destroyed each other, and the sun and moon have gone out, Spring will dawn.

A new sun more brilliant than the old one will rise.

Six gods will have survived. The two sons of Odin, and the two sons of Thor. Walking free from the underworld, fully alive, will be Balder and Hod, reconciled and joyful. And there will be one more. An old Norse poem says:

*Then comes another, a greater than all,
Though never I dare his name to speak;
Few are they now that farther can see
Than the moment when Othin shall meet the wolf.*

For the pagans, Norse mythology opened their eyes and showed that they were waiting for a Savior.

For us, Norse mythology promises that the second Ragnarok is coming. And that we will be in even better company than Odin and all the host of Asgard when it does.



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Reflections in the River

Water's Role as a Portal, Trial, and Catalyst for Renewal

In medieval literature, water is more than a setting; it is a character in its own right. Water serves as a portal to other worlds, forms trials, acts as a catalyst for transformation, and is the ultimate paradox of destruction and renewal, molding heroes in countless ways.

This analysis explores water in medieval literature as more than just a physical element. Water carries deep symbolism by functioning as a doorway into other realms, serves as a tool for trials, and embodies the paradox of destruction and renewal, transforming characters both physically and spiritually. Examples from *Beowulf*, *Sir Orfeo*, *The Faerie Queene*, and *Dante's Divine Comedy* will highlight its significance, along with its lasting influence reflecting ancient literature and influencing modern literature and culture.

Throughout medieval literature, water is frequently used as a portal. In *Dante's Divine Comedy*, water is a transition between life and death, marking the boundary between different spiritual realms. In *Beowulf*, water functions as a gateway for descent and ascent, particularly when Beowulf dives into the Mere to battle Grendel's mother, entering a space that is both deadly and transformative.

In *Sir Orfeo*, when Orfeo's wife is kidnapped by faeries, he must cross a river to reach the faerie realm, a journey that echoes Arthurian legends' Avalon. A mystical island accessible only by crossing mythical waters. These instances demonstrate water's recurring role as a threshold between the mundane and the supernatural.

Water's symbolism extends into modern literature and culture. In *The Magician's Nephew* from *The Chronicles of Narnia*, pools of water act as portals between worlds. In *Through the Looking-Glass*, Alice steps into a mirror—mimicking water's reflective surface—mirroring Narcissus' use of water as a mirror. Even in contemporary media, such as *Pirates of the Caribbean*, drinking from the Fountain of Youth transports individuals to another world, reinforcing water's use in literature as a portal.

Beyond functioning as a gateway, water often presents trials to test key characters. In *Beowulf*, immersion in water echoes baptism, marking a rite of passage. Beowulf's swimming match with Breca tests his endurance, foreshadowing his later descent into the Mere to battle Grendel's mother. Even the strongest warrior cannot pass the ultimate trial without divine intervention, highlighting water's dual nature as both a challenge and a purifier.

In *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Cross Knight faces a watery trial that tests his faith. He falls for deceptive waters, succumbing to illusion rather than truth—much like Odysseus facing the sirens or resisting the Lotus-Eaters. These trials are not just about survival; they test a character's moral and spiritual strength. Similarly, Morgan le Fay in Arthurian legend mirrors Duessa's deceptive nature in *The Faerie Queene*, using calm waters to lure knights

away from their true quests. These stories illustrate that not all dangerous waters appear perilous—sometimes the greatest threat lies in their deceptive tranquility.

Water's power extends beyond portals and trials- it is also a force of destruction and renewal. Many ancient flood myths share a common theme: a relentless storm that wipes away sin, paving the way for rebirth. In *Purgatorio*, Dante must be cleansed to leave his past behind, just as figures in myth and legend must endure the flood to create a new beginning.

Every watery trial serves as a stepping stone, leading characters from their old selves to a new, enlightened identity. Beowulf emerges from the Mere victorious, having not only transformed himself but also purified the land from its monstrous inhabitants. In *The Faerie Queene*, the Red Cross Knight undergoes physical and spiritual renewal at the healing fountain, restoring his strength and faith, enabling him to fulfill his true quest as the Knight of Holiness.

Similarly, in *Dante's Purgatorio*, souls are cleansed in the Lethe, allowing them to forget past sins and guilt, thus enabling true rebirth. Water, in these instances, is not just a means of renewal but also a force that erases the past to make way for transformation.

Recognizing these patterns has changed how I read and watch stories. I no longer see water as just part of the setting—I now consider what kind of water is present and what it represents in the story. A vast ocean might symbolize adventure or isolation, while a still, reflective pool could hint at self-discovery or deception. This awareness has deepened my appreciation for both medieval and modern storytelling, revealing how one of the oldest symbols in literature continues to shape narratives today.

Water's role is significant as it plays a crucial part in shaping worlds and heroes. Understanding that water is not just a setting, but a beautiful, complex character is necessary for a true understanding of medieval as well as ancient and modern literature. Water's portals can be a bridge between worlds- from puddles in mirrors to a forest full of ponds in your weird uncle's attic, or even passages between life and death in Beowulf or Arthur's Avalon. Water can use beautiful allure to trick knights and sailors on quests making them forget their purpose, but aggressive water won't hesitate to valiantly wash away entire worlds and past identities or force heroes to face tormenting waves and merciless storms. Water is an elegant paradox. It's essential for life and renewal, but don't be deceived by her beauty. A graceful and calm presence doesn't change the trickery and danger that lurks beneath.



Raeleigh Kirby

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From Childhood to Crown

Victoria's First 18 Years

Knock, knock, knock.

The princess was shaken awake. Her governess stood above her, a faint smile playing across her stern face. "Drina." The girl wrapped her dressing gown around herself and tiptoed out of the room; passing her sleeping mother and praying she wouldn't wake up. She slipped down the stairs and into the hall where the Archbishop of Canterbury and the Lord Chancellor were standing in wait. They bowed.

"The King is dead. Long live the Queen."

Nineteen years earlier...

On May 29th, 1818, the Duke of Kent was married to the Princess of Saxe-Coburg, not because of love, but because of the need for an heir. The Princess was a daughter of Francis, Duke of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld and the sister of Prince Leopold of Saxe-Coburg. The family was quite ancient, deriving from a branch of the House of Wettin, which in the fifteenth century had been divided into two branches. From one branch descended the electors and kings of Saxony, the other the Duchy of Saxe-Coburg.

The newly-weds settled down at Amorbach, Germany and it was soon learned that the Duchess was expecting. The Duke wished for the child to be born in England so a carriage was hired and in went the Duchess, her daughter Feodora from her first marriage, the maid, nurse, lap-dogs, and canaries. Off they drove through Germany and France, stopping in cheap inns and resting along dangerous roads. The Channel was crossed, London was finally reached, and a set of rooms were provided at Kensington Palace. Not long afterwards on May 24th, 1819, a baby was born.

Born fifth in succession to the throne of England, Victoria would be known during her earliest years as "Drina," short for Alexandrina. At her christening ceremony when one of her godfathers, the Emperor Alexander of Russia was asked what the infant's first name should be, he replied "Alexandrina." At this, the Duke was alarmed. For Victoria being half German was one thing, but having a Russian first name was quite another. He ventured to ask if another name might be added. "Very well." was the reply. "Georgiana? Or Elizabeth?" asked the Duke. There was a pause and the Emperor replied, "Very well, then. Call her after her mother. But Alexandrina must come first." Much to the disgust of her father, the child was christened Alexandrina Victoria.

When Victoria was eight months old, her father was walking in the rain and upon reaching home, neglected to change his clothes. He caught a cold, his lungs grew inflamed, and by the end of January, he was rapidly dying. The doctor ordered that a will be hastily

written up and soon after signing his signature, the Duke became unconscious and breathed his last on the following morning.

Because Victoria had suddenly become next in line to the throne (for George, Prince Regent (later George IV); Frederick, Duke of York; and Victoria's father, Edward, Duke of Kent had all died), her mother mandated a series of rules that the young child must obey as she grew older: She was not allowed to spend time by herself and must sleep in her mother's bedroom. She could not walk downstairs without holding the hand of an adult lest she fell; as well as not being allowed to visit with any strangers or extended family without her governess being present. These rules angered the young girl and she tried hard to avoid them. Once, whilst walking through the park with her mother, Victoria was stopped by the King of England who ordered her into his carriage "At once!" The young princess gleefully stepped up as her mother watched with distaste. She had never cared for the man. At times, the princess would distract her maid when they were about to descend the stairs so that she could run down by herself. Upon hearing about this, the Duchess was furious and reprimanded Victoria. Her mother's sight was by no means an easy thing to escape. Morning till evening, day and night, there was no rest from her watchful eye. The child grew into a girl, the girl into a young woman, yet she was made to sleep in her mother's chamber.

On Victoria's 14th birthday she wrote in her diary: "I am fourteen years old! How *very old!*" A children's ball was held in her honour at St. James's Palace, at which she formally opened by dancing with her cousin, Prince George of Cambridge who was also fourteen. The King had already made it clear to people that the Prince was his choice for a husband for Victoria. Not long after her birthday, Victoria's cousins, Alexander and Augustus of Württemberg, sons of the Duchess's sister Antoinette, came to Kensington Palace in June of 1833. Victoria described them in her diary as, "extremely tall" and "amiable." Alexander was "very handsome" and Augustus was "very kind." At fourteen she was beginning to understand that there was a purpose behind these events and visits.

At sixteen she was taken on a holiday to Ramsgate, England, where her uncle King Leopold of the Belgians and his wife Queen Louise would also be visiting. After the holiday, when Leopold and Louise were about to bring Victoria back with them to Belgium, she felt ill, but notwithstanding the impending fever, accompanied them as far as Dover. After being retrieved by her governess, Louis Lehzen, she was brought back to Ramsgate where she collapsed. Since her personal doctor who accompanied her on trips, James Clark, had been sent back to London, Lehzen asked that Clark be urged to return. The Duchess scoffed that such a summons would make a "noise" in London and was unnecessary; her daughter was strong. But Victoria became worse during the night and Dr. Clark was finally recalled. According to Lehzen's recollections, "the scales fell from his eyes" regarding Victoria's condition, and he "succeeded in restoring her to her necessary *peace of mind.*" With Lehzen in constant attendance, Victoria remained in her room for

nearly five weeks. Clark cautiously called her ailment a “bilious fever.” She lost weight and even tufts of hair, and she suffered poor circulation, especially cold feet which Lehzen rubbed every night for months after. When the household was able to leave Ramsgate for Kensington Palace, she was pale and weak, but later said, “I can bear more of it now.” She was under orders from her doctor to exercise more, to work at a standing desk, and to visit open spaces about London for walks in the colder air. The windows in her room were kept open even in her absence.

On May 18, 1836, Victoria met her cousins Ernest and Albert for the first time. “Ernest,” she remarked in her diary, “is as tall as Ferdinand and Augustus, he has dark hair, and fine dark eyes and eyebrows, but the nose and mouth are not good. He has a most kind, honest and intelligent expression in his countenance, and has a very good figure. Albert, who is just as tall as Ernest but stouter, is extremely handsome. His hair is about the same colour as mine; his eyes are large and blue, and he has a beautiful nose and a very sweet mouth with fine teeth; but the charm of his countenance is his expression, which is most delightful; full of goodness and sweetness, and very clever and intelligent.” The visit was spent playing piano, flipping through drawings, and walking through the garden. Both Victoria and Albert drew very well, particularly Albert, and were both exceedingly fond of music. Finally, after a long and joyous visit, it was time for the cousins to return to Saxe-Coburg. Victoria wrote to King Leopold that when she came down to say farewell, Albert was playing piano with her dog Dash at his side. The three cousins embraced and Victoria “cried bitterly, very bitterly.”

A year before the King’s death, he hosted his seventieth birthday party at Windsor, where he found that the Duchess had acquired, against his express orders, a suite of seventeen apartments for herself. He was extremely angry and publicly rebuked her. But this was minor to what would follow the coming day. The next evening was the birthday banquet. All one hundred guests sat around the table peacefully eating, until after a toast to the Monarch’s health, the King stormily stood up and in a long, passionate speech, poured out all his anger onto the Duchess. She had, he declared, insulted him. She had kept the Princess (his heir!) away from him in the worst manner. She was surrounded by *evil* advisors, and he was determined to let it be known to her that *he* was *king*, and no longer should the Princess be kept away from Court functions. He ended his passionate speech by stating that he hoped that his “old and feeble body” might be spared for six months longer, so that the calamity of a regency might be avoided, and the Crown might be passed directly to the heir-presumptive (instead of into the hands of the “*person now near him*,” whose conduct and attitude no reliance whatsoever could be placed). The flood of words went on for an unbearable period, while the Queen blushed with embarrassment, the Princess burst into tears, and the hundred guests sat aghast. The Duchess said nothing until the tirade was over and the guests had dissipated into the other room, then she ordered for her carriage and announced her immediate return to Kensington Palace

The King had prayed that he might live a while longer until Victoria turned eighteen, and a few days before her birthday, a sudden illness betook him and nearly killed him. He recovered and the Princess was able to enjoy her birthday festivities. But afterwards, on the anniversary of the Battle of Waterloo, the King was visibly dying. He told his doctor that he didn't want to die that day, but wished to see another sunset more, and sure enough he lived two more days. On June 20th, 1837, he died in the early hours of the morning.

At six o'clock that same morning, the Lord Chamberlain and the Archbishop of Canterbury arrived at Kensington Palace from Windsor. Victoria was awakened by her mother in whose bedroom she still slept. "I got out of bed and went into my sitting room (only in my dressing gown) and *alone*," Victoria wrote in her journal, "and saw them." That was her first decision as Queen.

The small child, who had been sheltered all her life and whose childhood playmates consisted of dolls, suddenly was Queen. Completely unprepared, she was thrown into the deep end. On that fateful day, she gave a speech to her Privy Council. None of the men in the room could have suspected that she, only eighteen years old, would (practically overnight) become beloved by thousands upon thousands of people, and would be for many years to come.



Jenna Turner

18 years old

New York

Ancient Literature, Anglo-Saxon 1, Latin 2,

Readings in Ancient History

The Telegraphic vs. Literary Mind

At the House of Humane Letters, students learn the tradition of reading the ancient, medieval, and modern authors in the symbolic model. They discover how all good books picture Christ and His church, and the story of sin and salvation. Studying the medieval conception of story and symbolism, they are given a love for history and the past, and the marvelous means by which God manifests his glory in the minds of men and their works. Their imaginations are reinvigorated, and they learn the proper ordering of the soul. However, there is another type of learning, another medium. Telegraphic mediums, like the computer, television, radio, and phone, by the very nature of how they communicate information, nurture a vastly different conception of the world and of stories.

The literary mind is one that is fundamentally rational. It sees metaphor, can operate on symbols, and does research on the historical background of a book. It links together the vast library of literature across centuries to identify how they communicate one to another, considering movements and authors, not just the individual chapter or book. It requires intelligence, the ability to categorize and retain information, and a love of, or at least devotion to, the subject.

The telegraphic mind, on the other hand, requires no semblance of reason. The prime attribute of the electronic means of communication, and especially those with a screen like television and smartphones, is entertainment. The prime question of a movie, television series or YouTube video is not, “was it meaningful?” or “was it instructional?”, but rather, “did you like it?” A piece of content may be chock full of insight; it may tell a wonderful and novel story; but it will not succeed or gain much notoriety unless it is entertaining. Of course, it is less entertaining to have to apply background research to a TV series or remember the context of a YouTube short. Therefore, the “best,” that is, the most popular pieces, require no intelligence, no recall of previous events, no investigation of symbolism. Everything is an eternal amusing present.

This does not only apply to fiction. Almost everything from news coverage to documentaries are now primarily based on and primarily watched for their enjoyment value. Why else do they have music tracks or celebrity narrators? Breaking news, important to the nation, is covered in a few sentences, with perhaps a five-minute interview. After getting this tiny fragment of the real situation, the focus zooms halfway around the world, to a story that has no relevance to anyone watching. News is disjointed, uncontextualized, and fragmentary. Biographical movies and nature pics are guided by people that, though famous, have absolutely no expertise about the subject at hand.

Not only is television corrupted. Indeed, everywhere that electronic mediums infiltrate, they degrade and water down the value of the content. In education, teachers are concerned that students are not learning or are not interested in the material because it is not

entertaining enough. To encourage participation and retention, they create games, interactive exercises, entertaining videos, everything they can think of to make teaching more accessible, less text and lecture-based, and more digital. Yet, as this proceeds, are American children becoming, on average, more intelligent, rational, and morally conscious? The clear answer is no.

Even technologies that do not utilize screens prove inferior to the old methods in terms of sheer ability to gain the user's attention and memory retention. Many people, including the author, like and use Audible for listening to books. However, no one can say that they pay more heed and remember more if they listen to a chapter via Audible alone than if they read a book alone. It can very easily become mere background noise. It is also more difficult to refer back to a section or find a quotation than in a paper copy. Whereas an actual human being reading a book to the listener is kind and pleasant, and easily snatches one's attention, an audiobook becomes commonplace and boring.

So far is the telegraphic mind from the framework that comes from learning and emulating the literary life that one is hard pressed to find any grounds of unity between the two. Indeed, the difference between the two forces upon one the decision of which to prioritize over the other. Since there is a limited amount of time given to each day, and man has only so many days in his count before he passes on, he is forced to decide what shall occupy the foremost position in his heart. It is a decision between sheer enjoyment value or all the depth of symbology and memory that lies in stories. Even in nonfiction, the one seeks entertainment at all costs, the other instruction. It is vanity versus wisdom, the base passions against enlightened reason. Only one of these can rule in the heart of a man.



Bishop Gilmore

17 years old

Alabama

Later Modern Literature

Woozle's, Heffalumps, and a Little Something

Winnie-the-Pooh and The Journey of the Soul

One way or another, everybody has been at one point quite familiarly a friend of Winnie-the-Pooh and Christopher Robin. Short, squat, and golden, with a simple heart and generous nature, Pooh has a home in each of our hearts, whether we know him from the effervescent words of A. A. Milne or from the Disney television specials where Pooh was given his trademark red shirt. But why is this? I think it is because the adventures of Winnie-the-Pooh make up the form of a medieval romance.

A medieval romance, or a medieval questing story, follows a knight on a quest, taking on the comic structure usually characterized by the letter U. Like a knight in a romance, Pooh must encounter a series of mini quests and obstacles along the way before reaching the achievement of his main quest.

The evidence that A. A. Milne wrote his children's story in the form of a displaced romance is substantial. Every chapter ends with either a feast or some other symbol of the restoration of order, an important aspect of a romance—usually Pooh returning home for “a little something” to eat after the adventure has been resolved. This is more obvious at the end of the first book when, after Pooh rescues Piglet from the flood (1.9, *Piglet Is Entirely Surrounded by Water*), Christopher Robin throws Pooh a celebratory party with which the book closes, (1.10, *Christopher Robin Gives Pooh a Party, and We Say Good-bye*). The flood has receded and he who could not Fly, Burrow, Jump, Climb, or Make a Loud Noise Until Rescued has been saved: order has been restored to the forest.

More often still, Pooh is set on a quest for an object, much like a knight of the Matter of Britain in search of the Holy Grail, magical swords, and lost persons. In 1.4 when Eeyore loses his tail, Pooh volunteers to find it, eventually doing so, Owl having misplaced it for a bellpull; in chapter six an object must be found for a birthday present for Eeyore; in chapter eight all seven animals (joined albeit with Rabbit's Friends and Relations) sally forth to discover the North Pole; while, in the second book, Piglet and Pooh search for a house for Eeyore, a breakfast for Tigger, one of Rabbit's cousins, and a house for Owl.

When Winnie-the-Pooh is not in search of an object, he is typically to be found attempting to subdue a dangerous and mythical beast, as in 1.3 where he tracks with the astuteness of Sherlock Holmes four Woozles, but never catches up with them; in 1.5 when he and Piglet endeavour to catch a terrible Heffalump; and much more seriously in 2.7 (*In Which Tigger is Unbounced*) when Rabbit wants to tame Tigger, who is as dangerous and mythical as you can get, having accidentally “boffed” Eeyore into the river in the previous chapter.

Looking closer, 2.7 shows itself to be the microcosm of Pooh's medieval journey.

After Tigger accidentally pushes Eeyore into the river with his bounciness, Rabbit persuades Piglet and Pooh that Tigger's bounces must be taken out of him. He suggests they do this by ascending to the top of the Forest and "losing" Tigger there overnight so that when they come back the next morning he will have been humbled. However, after they run away from Tigger they are unable to find their way home due to the fog shrouding the forest, and are soon going in circles around a sandpit. Pooh, with the whimsical inexplicableness that makes him so lovable says, "How would it be, if, as soon as we're out of sight of this Pit, we try to find it again?"

When Rabbit asks what good that'll do, Pooh replies, "We keep looking for Home and not finding it, so I thought that if we looked for this Pit, we'd be sure not to find it, which would be a Good Thing, because then we might find something that we *weren't* looking for, which might be just what we *were* looking for, really," and Rabbit, trying to prove how silly this is, walks away from the pit and gets separated from them.

Pooh then declares that he doesn't know the way home through the mist, "But there are twelve pots of honey in my cupboard, and they've been calling me for hours. I couldn't hear them properly before, because Rabbit *would* talk, but if nobody says anything except those twelve pots, I *think*, Piglet, I shall know where they're coming from."

By listening to the honey pots and being in tune, Piglet and Pooh find their way home. When Tigger, who is nothing if not a natural being, finds Rabbit later, ("Tiggers *never* get lost"!) it is Rabbit who has been humbled.

Fog and mist are images of labyrinthine spiritual wandering. Rabbit is both spiritually and physically lost.

Additionally, Pooh shows himself to be a medieval bard. Throughout the stories he composes myriad "hums", even immortalizing events of glory such as Piglet's bravery in 2.8 (*In Which Piglet Does a Very Grand Thing*). In the succeeding chapter he composes a hum with seven verses and sings it three times, displaying two medieval numbers of completeness.

It is at the end of *The House at Pooh Corner* that Pooh is at his height, and what is Piglet's poem ostensibly is undeniably its author's. Pooh has tried to be more like the other animals, but every time he has failed. Here, however, in the nineteenth tale he is exactly who he is supposed to be: Winnie-the-Pooh. He has become ordered. He has achieved medieval numbers of completeness. Thus, we find that Pooh's quest is really one of self-knowledge. And it is an identity quest, in fact, which is at the center of a medieval romance, which is allegorical of the Journey of the Soul to God. The knight has gone through trials and tribulations, finally reaching the achievement of his goal which, in the medieval imagination, would be communion with God.

This, then, must be part of why we are so fond of Winnie-the-Pooh. We too are souls on the journey to God, knights who must battle fearsome Heffalumps on our way to "a little

something” that will revive us. Before we even cast eyes upon the Neverland our minds scampered after piglets, and later when we came to live in the Shire, it was no wonder that we felt at home, having been boys and girls in the Hundred Acre Wood.



Natalia Testa

15 years old

Texas

Anglo-Saxon 1, Medieval and Renaissance

Literature, Out of the Depths, Readings in

Medieval History

A Journey of Virtue Through Allegorical and Classical Fiction

Two roads diverged in a yellow wood,¹ but which one will the soul take on its journey to purity? Will it take one of adventure and bravery; learning through moral choices and the right of free will? Will it take one of abundant generosity, and kindness, a spiritual path that progresses by giving to others? Which obstacles will it overcome? Greed? Jealousy? Temptation? Just as each soul takes a unique path, so does each and every one of the characters in both classical and allegorical literature. For although they all walk on their own separate roads, searching for faith, and trying to forage the right path, they all aspire, in the end, to reach the place that even turns agony into a glory.

In Robert Louis Stevenson's *Treasure Island*, the journey of the soul is depicted through the importance of friendship, faith, and trust. Stevenson especially centralizes the themes of loyalty, good versus evil, and fate versus free will. These are displayed through Jim Hawkins, as he starts his moral journey, and it is expressed throughout the novel that decision-making is one of the key factors on his path. Jim learns faith and free will by witnessing the death of a noble man on account of Long John Silver. This man believes in the afterlife, encouraging him to fearlessly face the threat of death; keeping his virtue in the process. He feels that the way he is seen in the eyes of God matters far more than surviving as a mutineer, and becoming rich by the means of evil. His life would be worthless to him if he loses his soul. Toward the end of the novel, as Jim makes the choice to keep his word to Silver, and stay with the mutineers, despite Dr. Livesey's offer of freedom and escape. At this point, Jim decides that his honor matters more to him, and his loyalty to God will prevail over all else. Overall, Stevenson shows that the soul grows and travels through moral ambiguity, and demonstrates how right and wrong are not always so easily distinguished; and sets up his characters to grow through making difficult moral choices.

Much like *Treasure Island*, J.R.R. Tolkien portrays the journey of soul in *The Hobbit* through adventure. Tolkien structures the spiritual paths of his characters by having them use their wits, as well as their courage, to strengthen their moral compass; and uses the main character, Bilbo Baggins. As one of the first steps on his expedition of virtue, Bilbo uses wit and strategy to cleverly fight the spiders in Mirkwood forest, overcoming Gollum in a riddling battle, and doing the same with Smaug, instead of revealing who he is, or angering him by a "flat out refusal."² Nearing the end of the story, Bilbo does give in to temptation when he chooses to pocket the Arkenstone, even though he knows it rightfully belongs to Thorin Oakenshield, yet in the end, he gives it to Bard and the Elven King. By the end of the novel, Bilbo has become increasingly braver, and far more heroic than when he first started out. Tolkien mainly demonstrates overcoming the evil of others, and resisting the evil within one's self as one of the staples to purifying the soul. We see characters give into

temptation — and overcome it. There are fierce battles, betrayals, and redemptions, all bringing the light of virtue into the soul, and the jubilation of adventure into the heart.

In Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, this journey is centered around the importance of virtue, especially, discovering the importance of abstract virtue over material possessions. At the height of the novel, Dickens creates a contrast between family love and warmth, even in bereavement, and the cold lonely end of a miser. While Scrooge's body is "unwatched, unwept, and uncared for,"³ Tiny Tim is still cherished and remembered, even after his death. As his nephew Fred says, they are all "fellow passengers to the grave,"⁴ meaning that everyone, in the end, is mortal, and they are same in the eyes of God; therefore, we are all traveling together on a journey to the same destination. Dickens also dramatizes two central themes of the novel: repentance and free will. For although he was a terrible "sinner"⁵ at the beginning, by the end Scrooge is distraught with the idea that he has a fixed future, and desires more than anything for the chance to change his ways. His change of heart is evident from the way he asks the Ghost of Christmas Yet to Come if he may "sponge away the writing"⁶ of his own gravestone; however, he is not only asking to redirect his own course, but also the paths of others, such as Tiny Tim and the Cratchit family. The trembling hand of the ghost symbolizes the possibility of change for Scrooge. This is the moment in the novel where he becomes completely convinced of the error of his horrible actions. Because Dickens was a Christian author, the themes of fate versus free will, as well as repentance and conversion, run strongly throughout the book; the message that even the most "covetous sinner"⁷ can make the choice to be different. In this story, Dickens uses one character to embody an entire population; in this case the rich and miserly population of Victorian England; and therefore, the purifying of his soul represents the possibility for redemption in all of us. He conveys that generosity, conversion, and repentance are the lights that spread warmth through a darkened soul, and by living in the past, present, and future, we enable ourselves to see through the moral fog of human blindness.

Perhaps one of the most impactful works of allegory, is C.S. Lewis' *The Chronicles of Narnia*. Lewis opens the beginning of each journey with an escape from a hard time or place, giving the both soul and spirit room to wander and err, before finally arriving to purity and faith. Lewis sets up the journey of the soul as a simple, yet interwoven path. As characters are tested on moral courage, the ability to do right, the ability to trust in one another, and in God. For because Narnia is heaven, they are learning the virtue that they will need for life until they can rest in heaven eternally. The soul journey of Edmund follows this path, as he starts out a traitor; corrupted by temptation and ambition, and blinded by his lust for power. He is led astray, suffers the consequences of his actions, and is betrayed by the White Witch. This leads him to repentance, until he is finally saved by the sacrifice of Aslan. Just as Charles Dickens uses Ebenezer Scrooge to represent an entire ideology inside of one person, you could argue that since the sacrifice of Aslan mirrors the one of Christ, Edmund

himself represents the sins of humanity. Therefore, the cleansing of his sins and the purification of his soul mirror our own moral journey.

Whether the soul grows and moves forward through adventure, bravery, courage, resisting temptation, making moral decisions, being generous toward others, or exercising the human right of free will, in the end they are all just stones on a great staircase as we climb the beautiful mountain of life, toward judgement, and full purity — as the soul reaches its most precious form of gold.

¹ *The Road Not Taken*, by Robert Frost, (Line 1)

² *The Hobbit*, Tolkien (ch. 12)

³ *A Christmas Carol*, Dickens (Stave 4)

⁴ *A Christmas Carol*, (Stave 1)

⁵ *A Christmas Carol*, (Stave 1)

⁶ *A Christmas Carol*, (Stave 4)

⁷ *A Christmas Carol*, (Stave 1)



Emma Reis
15 years old
Massachusetts
Latin 1

The Boy Who Lived

When we think of characters of the Harry Potter series by J.K. Rowling, most of us think of Harry Potter, Ron Weasley, and Hermione Granger. There are few, I believe, who would think of Neville Longbottom. However, when we examine Neville closely, he is an intriguing character, especially in his relation to Harry Potter. Neville is similar to Harry in his parentage, his alchemical symbols, and his role in the tripartite soul.

Neville Longbottom is a clumsy boy with a love for toads and Herbology, but more than that, he is Harry Potter's literary twin. Clues to Neville being Harry's double are laid all through the series, and that becomes steadily more apparent in the later books. We learn in *The Order of the Phoenix*, that Neville could have been the one Professor Trelawney predicted as the Chosen One, because the prophecy states: "The one with the power to vanquish the Dark Lord approaches... Born to those who have thrice defied him, born as the seventh month dies..." (p. 841) Neville, like Harry, was born at the end of July and had parents who had resisted Voldemort three times. The last time Harry's parents resisted and fought Voldemort was when they died and Harry was left an orphan. In a similar way, the last time Neville's parents defied Voldemort, they were cursed with the Cruciatus Curse and left insane. Neville, like Harry, is practically orphaned and is entrusted to his grandmother, just as Harry was left to the Dursleys. Unlike Harry, Neville's grandmother takes him in without begrudging him, and she raises him with full knowledge of the wizarding world, along with how his parents were taken from him. In

The Order of the Phoenix, Harry leads the students of Hogwarts against Professor Umbridge. He forms the D.A. or Dumbledore's Army, and they continually defy Umbridge, eventually driving her from the school. Neville follows Harry's example and leads the remnant of the D.A. in *The Deathly Hallows*. Neville leads the students against yet more teachers, namely the sibling pair of the Carrows. Neville keeps up the hope at Hogwarts, quietly defying the new regime until Harry can return and lead the D.A. for the last time. Thus Neville is nearly identical to Harry.

In *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, Harry has a dream about a Quidditch match, however the one performing the Seeker role is not Harry, but Neville Longbottom. This shows that Neville is on the same quest as Harry, the quest to become alchemical gold. Alchemy is a literary way to show the Journey of the Soul to God. Angelina Stanford says "The transmutation of lead into gold functions as a metaphor for the process of spiritual birth" (*Harry Potter, Gateway to the Literary Tradition*). Alchemists took lead and tried to transform it into gold by resolving opposites, like hot and cold or dark and light. J.K. Rowling uses alchemy in its literary form to show Harry's quest to become gold. Alchemy has seven stages of purification, that follow three main themes described by the alchemical colors black, white, and red. The black stage dissolves the lead back to its original form, so that it can be made pure in the following stages.

This is why Mircea Eliade compares alchemy to potter's clay, which is formed into something new by the potter, thus, Harry Potter. After the black stage is the white or albedo stage. This stage cleanses the lead, or the character. Following the white stage is the red stage which "carries you across into the gold." (A.S. Harry Potter, Gateway to the Literary Tradition) But what does this have to do with Neville performing the Seeker role instead of Harry? You see, Quidditch is a microcosm for alchemy, because there are seven players trying to get a red ball through golden hoops, while being pummeled by black Bludgers. But the most important image in Quidditch is the Golden Snitch. The Seeker is trying to catch the Snitch, which is also golden, and the game is not over until it has been caught. And it is important that the Seeker catches the Snitch, just as it is important that Harry becomes gold. If the Seeker didn't catch the Golden Snitch, the team would lose, and if Harry didn't become gold, he wouldn't defeat Voldemort. So, putting Neville in the Seeker role in Harry's dream shows that he is also on the quest to become gold, even though he isn't the Chosen One. We see Harry going through the burning off/black stage in almost every book, but perhaps the most in *The Order of the Phoenix*. John Grainger, in his book *Unlocking Harry Potter*, says "Harry, literally and figuratively, is burnt up, broken down or dissolved, and bled until everything that he thought he was... are taken from him or revealed as falsehoods." (p. 66) In a similar way Neville is burnt as well, when he faces Voldemort. Near the end of *The Deathly Hallows*, Neville steps out in front of the line of students, standing between them and Voldemort. All hope seems lost, the Chosen One is dead, his body at the feet of the Dark Lord, and the students of Hogwarts are outnumbered. But despite all this Neville still defies Voldemort. And he pays for it. Voldemort forces the Sorting Hat on Neville's head and "with a flick of his wand, he caused the Sorting Hat to burst into flames." (TDH p. 732) But then, something miraculous happens. As the students and teachers of Hogwarts are suddenly aided by Grawp and the centaurs, "Neville broke free of the Body-Bind Curse upon him; the flaming hat fell off him and he drew from its depths something silver, with a glittering, rubied handle- "(TDH p. 733). Only a true Gryffindor could pull the Sword of Gryffindor out of the Sorting Hat, just as Harry had done in *The Chamber of Secrets* when he vanquished the Basilisk, and now Neville followed his example, killing another snake. Neville has passed through the fire, and comes out a true Gryffindor on the other side. And what colors are Gryffindors associated with? Red and gold. Neville completed his journey, has been burnt, broken, and yet became gold.

As we see Neville appear throughout the books, he fills Harry's position in two other ways. Harry, Ron, and Hermione are part of what is called a tripartite soul. The tripartite soul is a literary device to show the Journey of the Soul to God. In it, the characters are three visible souls, each still being a flesh and blood character, but also symbolically representing a characteristic. The three facets of the tripartite soul are the Belly, Head, and Chest. The Belly (or Appetites) is usually shown as a character who is fiery, led by their passions, ready to stand up for their friends, and always hungry. The Head, understandably, is shown by

someone who is quite clever, usually with their nose in a book. This character is the brains of the operation, and lastly the Chest (or Heart). The Chest unites the Belly and Head, bringing all three into harmony with each other, thus becoming one united soul. J.K. Rowling shows this in Harry Potter, giving us characters that “are clearly visible souls, and yet at the same time, totally relatable as people...” (A.S. Harry Potter, Gateway to the Literary Tradition) Ron Weasley, the fiery redhead, who is always hungry, fulfills the Belly position in the tripartite soul. Ron is led by his passions; he doesn’t think through his actions and their consequences. Hermione Granger fills the Head role in the tripartite soul. She is smart, always has a book in her hand, and is a stickler for the rules. Hermione always thinks through every move she makes, which sometimes prevents her from taking action. Both Ron and Hermione need someone to bring them into balance and order. Harry, as the Chosen One, takes on the mantle of the Chest. When the trio is disordered Harry is the one who unites them, “The Chest has to harmonize the Head and the Belly,” (A.S. HP Gateway to the Literary Tradition), bringing them back into being one soul. Even though Harry is the Chest, he can still be disordered, especially when the trio is at odds with each other. This is shown throughout the majority of *The Prisoner of Azkaban*, where we see Ron and Hermione constantly fighting, and Harry is unable to bring them back into order, which in turn causes him to be dissonant, “Book three, they fall apart. They spend a large portion of this book not talking to each other. And that is gonna be reflective of the overall disordered state of Harry in this book.” (A.S. HP Gateway to the Literary Tradition) When Harry, Ron, and Hermione are not in harmony with each other, they are unable to see the truth. This is why Harry cannot see the truth about Sirius Black, because he and his trio are in discord. But at the end of the book, “the trio are back under the Invisibility Cloak again. Is that a picture of them coming back together? Yes, it is... we’re gonna finally have them reconciled.” (A.S. HP Gateway to the Literary Tradition) Ms. Stanford continues, explaining now that they are reconciled with each other, they can all finally see the truth. Like Harry, Neville is a part of his own tripartite soul that is comprised of Luna Lovegood, Ginny Weasley, and himself. With Neville filling Harry’s role as the Heart, Ginny filling her brother Ron’s as the Belly, and Luna completing the trio as the Head. This is first introduced in *The Order of The Phoenix*, when Hermione, Ron, and Harry are in the Forbidden Forest. They are about to fly to the Ministry of Magic to rescue Sirius, when Neville, Luna, and Ginny insist on coming along. “He knew that Ron was thinking exactly what he was: If he could have chosen any members of the D.A. in addition to himself, Ron, and Hermione to join him in the attempt to rescue Sirius, he would not have picked Ginny, Neville, or Luna.” (p. 761) Ginny, Neville, and Luna are an unlikely bunch, just as the original trio was, but despite this they insist on going with Harry, Ron, and Hermione to save Sirius. This tripartite soul is particularly highlighted in the last book, *The Deathly Hallows*. While Harry, Ron, and Hermione were off hunting for Horcruxes, Neville, Luna, and Ginny have been leading the students of Hogwarts against the Carrows. The trio, along with other students, speak out against the teaching, refuse to hurt the students in detention, and carry on

the D.A. Neville uses Harry's example when he spoke out against Umbridge's unfair regime, giving the students of Hogwarts a glimmer of hope. "The thing is, it helps when people stand up to them, it gives everyone hope. I used to notice that when you did it, Harry." (TDH p. 574) However, just like original D.A. was caught by Umbridge, Neville, Luna, and Ginny are forced to stop their efforts. One of the members of the D.A., Michael Corner, was discovered freeing a first-year student who had been chained. Michael was tortured for his action, scaring off the other students from their rebellion. To add to this, Luna Lovegood was taken by Death Eaters as a result of her father's outspoken support of Harry, "and Ginny never came back after Easter, and the three of us were sort of the leaders." (TDH p. 575) Neville was driven underground after the Death Eaters attempted an attack on his grandmother to force Neville's cooperation. This attack was unsuccessful and the Carrows "realized they had no hold over me, they decided Hogwarts could do without me after all... I knew it was time to disappear." (TDH p. 576) Even though Neville was a Pure-blood, the Death Eaters were willing to kill him because of his rebellious actions. So Neville disappeared into the Room of Requirement.

In *The Deathly Hallows*, before Harry faces Voldemort and his death he speaks to Neville. Harry tells Neville about Voldemort's snake Nagini, and how it needs to be killed. Harry has already told Ron and Hermione of this task, but if they fail, there must be another person who knows what has to be done. Harry ensures that there are still three in the secret, just as in his own trio: "now Neville would take Harry's place: There would still be three in the secret." (p. 696) Harry guarantees that the heart role in the tripartite soul, should he die, is filled by someone. At the end of the book, Neville uses the Sword of Gryffindor and beheads the snake, which in turn allows the now resurrected Harry to defeat Voldemort. Despite all the similarities we see between Harry Potter and Neville Longbottom, they have one fundamental difference. Only Harry is the Chosen One. Similar to the pagan myths in which we get glimpses and foreshadows of Christ, Neville shows the contrast between the Everyman and the Chosen One. But in the end, it is Harry who must conquer Voldemort. It is Harry who comes back from the dead, who defeats Evil, and who fulfills the Prophecy.



Janie Fender

16 years old

Arizona

Ancient Literature

A decorative border in a muted green color frames the page. It features intricate floral and vine motifs, with leaves and small flowers interspersed along the top, bottom, and side edges.

Student Life

De Bello Pullorum

By Latin 1

Preface

This "mock epic" with the content of an animal fable was composed in Latin collaboratively during Dr. Phillips' Latin 1 class. The translation was provided by Grey Spicer, one of the students in the class. This short tale, composed in Latin, uses the story tropes that the students at the House of Humane Letters learn in Good Books and all the other literature classes.

Combined with their growing knowledge of Latin and Roman literature, there are also a number of Latin-specific references. For example, see the opening line. The first line of the Latin text mirrors the metrical qualities of the first line of the *Aeneid*:

"arma virumque cano..." "I sing of arms and the man..."

Cf. "Boves pullosque cano..." "I sing of cows and the chickens..."

The character "imperfect sheep" may merit some explaining, as it is a reference to a particular form in Latin imperfect tense verbs that use the recurring infix "-ba-" which led to the "imperfect sheep" as part of the class mnemonic for the imperfect tense. The class also decided to make him a bit of a "trickster figure" in the context of this story. We hope you enjoy this silly, satirical animal fable from the Latin 1 class.

—Dr. Anne Phillips

Book I

*Wherein the sheep of imperfection doth imitate his heavenly master, that Holy Lamb,
and bringeth the murders and sins of Marius to cleansing.*

Boves pullosque cano, et agricolam ibi, cui nomen Marius. Is etiam uxorum cui nomen Silvia erat. Marius multos agros et multos pullos habebat. Haec Silvia unum bovem habebat. Marius etiam ovem imperfectum habebat. Ovis imperfectus caudus erat.

Iste Marius multos pullos necabat quia eos edere volebat. Marius in accipitrem mutavit quandoque pullos edit. Quandoque in accipitrem mutavit, Marius plus etiam pullorum necavit!

Pulli timidi erant. Hi pulli alatis verbis bovem adiuvere rogabant.

"Bos! Adiuva nos! Tu es magnus et fortis, et adiuvere potes. In magno periculo sumus quia agricola in accipitrem mutat et nos omnes edere vult. Age!"

Bos dixit, "Rogate ovem imperfectum. Nolo adiuvere quia mea domina Silvia multum cibum mihi dat et agricola me necabit si vos adiuvaro."

Pulli inter se dixerunt, "iste ovis nos non adiuvere potest! Est nimis imperfectus!"

Alii pulli constant. Omnes pulli desperant. O miseri pulli!

Deinde ad pecus porcorum veniunt.

Pulli porcis dixerunt, "Amabimus vos!!!! Adiuvate nos! Vos estis multi! Estis legiones! Vos adiuvere potestis."

Sed porci dicunt, "Rogate ovem imperfectum. Amamus nostras vitas in limo, et multum cibum habemus. Agricola tamen nos necabit si vos adiuvabimus. Et agricola lardum amat."

Pulli magis desperant! Tandem omnes pulli constant ovem imperfectum rogare.

Nolunt inviti pulli ad ovem imperfectum venire.

Pulli inter se dicunt, "Caprem mitemus! Hic caper imperfectum ovem rogabit."

Pulli ad caprem veniebant et dicebant, "O magne caper! Nulla animalia huius fundi adiuvere nos volunt. Rogamus te nos adiuvere. Veni! Dic ad imperfectum ovem pro nobis."

Primum, caper recusabat. Sed pulli ei dicunt, "Dabimus tibi multa ova pinnasque."

Caper ipse admodum invitatus ad ovem imperfectum veniebat. Hic caper deinde ovi imperfecto dicit, "Isti pulli me mittebant ad te ut auxilium rogem."

Ovis imperfectus ei dixit, "Videbaaaaam ipsos pullos et sciebaaaaam causam timoris eorum. Volebaaaaam ipsos adiuvere sed non me rogabaaaant."

Caper ipse "Age! Fac aliquid pro istis pullis. Ova mihi dabunt si eos adiuvabimus, et tandem nos solos in pace relinquent."

Ovis ad pullos veniebat. Dicit eis, "Agite! Consilium habeo. Si in agrum venietis, voca accipitrem. Quando accipiter vos necare incipit, veniam ad Silviam et ei dicam de accipitre."

Timidi pulli constant et in agrum veniunt. Vocant accipitrem, qui celeriter venit.

Ovis imperfectus surget et Silviam invenit. Silvia in domo coquebat ut cibum eius bovi daret.

Ovis imperfectus ei dixit, "Heu!!! Est accipiter et impetum in pullos facit!!!"

Silvia clamat, "Heu!!!"

Silvia falcem capit et ad pullorum agrum contendit.

Est enim accipiter in pullorum agrum! Nescit accipitrem suum maritum esse.

Clamat, "Heu male accipiter! Cur meos pullos necas? Te necabo!"

Cum magno falce, Silvia accipitrem necat. Ad humum mortuum cadit.

English Translation

*Wherein the sheep of imperfection doth imitate his heavenly master, that Holy Lamb,
and bringeth the murders and sins of Marius to cleansing.*

I sing of cows and the chickens, and the farmer there, whose name was Marius. He had a wife by the name Silvia. Marius had many fields and many chickens. Silvia had a cow, and Marius also had an imperfect sheep. The imperfect sheep was lame.

Marius killed many chickens because he wanted to eat them, and whenever he ate chickens, he turned into a hawk. And when he turns into a hawk, he killed even more chickens!

The chickens were afraid. They asked the cow to help with winged words: "Oh cow! Help us! You are big and strong, and you are able to help. We are in great danger because the farmer changes into a hawk and wishes to kill us all! Please do something!"

But the cow said: "Ask the imperfect sheep. I do not want to help because my master Silvia gives me a lot of food, and the farmer will kill me if I help you."

The chickens discussed this among themselves: "That sheep isn't able to help! He is too imperfect."

The chickens all agreed. They despaired. Oh, poor chickens! Then they go to the pack of porkers. The chickens said to the pigs, "please!!! Help us!! You are many. You are legion! You are able to help!"

But the pigs said: "Ask the imperfect sheep. We love our glorious lives in mud, and we have a lot of food. The farmer nevertheless will kill us if we help you. Moreover, the farmer loves bacon."

The chickens despaired greatly. At last, all of the chickens agreed to ask the imperfect sheep. None of the chickens wanted to go to the imperfect sheep. They did not like the imperfect sheep because they thought he was too imperfect.

The chickens discussed this among themselves: "We will send the goat! This goat will ask the imperfect sheep."

The chickens then went to the goat and said: "Oh, mighty goat! None of the animals on this farm want to help us, so we are asking you to help. Talk to the imperfect sheep!"

At first, the goat refused. But then the chickens said to him, "we will give you many eggs and feathers."

The goat went very unwillingly to the imperfect sheep. This goat then said to the imperfect sheep: "Those annoying chickens sent me to you to ask for help"

"I haaaaaaaave seen the chickens and knooooooooow the cause of their fear", said the imperfect sheep. "I wiiiiiiished to help them but they have not asked me."

"Go!" said the goat, "Do something for these chickens. They will give us eggs if we help them, and at last they will leave us alone in peace."

The sheep then went to the chickens:” Listen!” he said, "I have a plan. If you will go to the field, summon the hawk. When the hawk begins to kill you, I will go to Silvia and tell her about the hawk.”

The frightened chickens agreed and went to the field to summon the hawk who indeed came quickly. The imperfect sheep rose and found Silvia. Silvia was in the house cooking so that she might give food to the cow.

The imperfect sheep said to her:” Alas!!! There is a hawk attacking your chickens.”

“Alas!!!” exclaimed Silvia.

Silvia took up a knife and went to the chickens’ field. "Alas, wicked hawk!” shouted Silvia, "Why are you killing my chickens? I will kill you!”

With a large knife Silvia killed the hawk, and it fell to the ground dead.

The End

Forest Colors in Parnassus Grove

Afternoon Glow



Colossians 3:2 Reminder



Winter Beech Leaves



Lydia Ronk
15 years old
Indiana
Anglo-Saxon 1

The Fairy Tale of Soccer

I have discovered among the intelligentsia, a disgusting disapprobation for playing soccer. “What a boorish occupation,” they say, slouching in their chairs, eyes fixed on their online classes. “What damage Mr. Prizzi is doing to his intellect running after a ball three times a week during the months of August through October.” Yet why should I not run after a ball? I may run after professors after class and be commended for it. I may dance before the ark of the Lord without censure. I may run after a woman possessed of a tolerable face, (God help her and me) as a perfectly natural use of time. Yet I cannot run after a white and black ball once in a while, without the most shocking allegations being brought against my literary life.

What is it about a ball that offends my critics? It is round; so is the earth. It is black and white; so are the souls of men. It gets flat after extended use; so do most novels. Or perhaps is it not of the ball but rather of the leaping and running that my detractors complain? I refer them to the example of the father in the parable running to greet his son. Pants are not biblical, but running is. Maybe they fear for me lest I stub my instep, does not the church thrive on the blood of the martyrs? Alas, I must say that these objections carry little weight and stem from ignorance of the true nature of the beautiful game. I have no anger for my calumniators; they inflict on themselves their own punishment. If their love of fairy tales is as great as they say, it is a pity that they miss out on the fairy tale of playing soccer.

For what a fairy tale it is, the beautiful game! What cosmic significance attends on its most ordinary features! How well it teaches contempt for the world by mandating that we kick the globe, not fondle it. How well it reminds us to know our own point in the universe by commanding “thou shalt not go offsides.” The ball is a damsel in distress who must be brought to the safety of her father’s castle in the far net. What grim perils must be encountered on the road in the shape of eleven players representing evil tree spirits. What a fell enchanter must be won over in the person of the referee. A little imagination reveals the enemy’s home pitch as an arena, the onlookers as a howling mob gathered for blood and the rival coach as a pagan emperor. What can be done against such reckless hate, our team muses, attired in the white jerseys we wear for the road sacrifice. Not much to judge from our dismal away record, but every little helps. If we assail the fortress one by one, we will perish miserably, but if we trust in each other’s friendship as the youngest son trusts in his fairy helpers, we just might gain the victory.

For it is friendship that is at the heart of the best fairy tales. The dwarfs in Snow White come to mind or on a gloomier note, the ill-fated Mouse, Bird, and Sausage from the Brothers Grimm. So, in soccer, the team is nothing without friendship. The team has to stick together in victory, but even more so in defeat. The team has to believe in itself when it is facing a giant nobody else thinks it can vanquish. Every player on the pitch has chances to

ruin or win the match but every success or failure is on the shoulders of the team as a whole. Together the team has to do the best it can in the battle with the lions, and hope against hope for the happy ending. And when the happy ending comes, when the winning goal comes out of nowhere it is joy beyond description. A small thing to rejoice over, yet that is no reason to lack happiness. For in spirit at least, I have been in battle with the goblins of *The Hobbit* and with the winning goal comes the cry “The eagles are coming!”



Luke Prizzi

18 years old

Pennsylvania

Anglo Saxon 1, Early Modern Literature

The Florilegium

A Column by Jonathan Jecko

Our Debt and Duty

As I was reading through Dr. Jason Baxter's book "*Why Literature Still Matters*," I came across a term that I had never heard before. Then as I was reading another book that was totally unrelated to Dr. Baxter's book, the term came up again. A third time the term showed up in yet another book, so I realized it was time to pay attention to it. The term is "plant blindness". Plant blindness, in short, is when you overlook or fail to notice plants in your surroundings. When I came across this in the books, it baffled me a bit, and took me awhile to actually register what this means. How can we be so blind to something that is so accessible? Some might say that it is because we "see" plants every day and that is why they blend into the background. But seeing and noticing are different words and mean different things. You can see the grass and the trees, but they are more alive when you notice them. This seeing without noticing is concerning because we are losing the ability to observe and inhale all the beauty nature has to offer us, and the inspirations that result. Nature offers us her beauty, her natural healing (be it healing of the soul or physical healing of the body), and the metaphorical and symbolic meanings that she provides. We are separating ourselves from the natural world, and this is making us lose our humanity.

There are many distractions and excuses that keep us from the natural world. Things such as personal devices, TV, and the cyber world are obvious ones so I won't bang on about those. But there are many other things that are keeping us out of nature: namely temperature, weather, fear, bugs, machines, and even our homes. *"I should go outside for a walk for a change, instead of using my treadmill, but it's really hot and, ugh, the mosquitos are terrible this year. I read a story that the mosquitoes are carrying the ABC virus and it can really make you sick, and I don't want to risk it because it would be an inconvenience to myself and life. No, I think I'll stay inside and have a nice, safe, walk."*

Nature is boring; sometimes seen as an inconvenience in our modern world because she is too slow for us, too hot or cold for us, too buggy for us, too dangerous for us. So we do one of two things, we hide away in our homes and keep nature "out there," or we bring nature in with us in the form of houseplants so that we don't have to go bother with the outdoors. I am not against houseplants, but we cannot forget what is real and natural, where the ancestors of these plants live naturally. We have to reconnect to the living green right outside our home, no matter the "boring inconveniences" or dangers.

How do we reconnect to the living world and get beyond just observing nature? There are many ways such as taking time to contemplate and appreciate the seasons that nature goes

through, or that plants, even though we can't see it, are moving and communicating with each other. It takes time and patience to notice this. You may have heard people use the phrase, "Well, if you've seen one tree, you've seen them all" but this assumption is very far from the truth. Even though all these trees look similar, even if they are the same type of tree, they are not the same. Plants do have individualities. For example, I have nine amaryllis varieties that I have collected over the years and even though they are the same type of plant and require the same growing conditions, they don't all look or behave the same way. As I am writing this I am looking at two right now whose buds are just starting to poke through the neck of the bulb. One of them has many leaves starting to grow, while the other is just focusing on its blooms. The seven others are without buds that I can see, but I have noticed particularly this year, a very small sign of the promise of blooms. It is so slight that you would miss it if your eyes were not right up to the bulb. The neck of the bulb warps ever so slightly in a crescent moon shape, and a week later, the tip of the blossom has popped out. If you are "plant blind" you would miss this momentous event.

Nature wants us to be with her. Emily Dickinson tells us so in "The Bee is Not Afraid of Me."

*The bee is not afraid of me,
I know the butterfly;
The pretty people in the woods
Receive me cordially.
The brooks laugh louder when I come,
The breezes madder play.
Wherefore, mine eyes, thy silver mists?
Wherefore, O summer's day?*

We have an open invitation from nature herself, "The pretty people in the woods receive me cordially," and "The brooks laugh louder when I come, the breezes madder play." Nature yearns for us to come and be with her, and she is happy when we are one with her. We cannot live without her, and she suffers without us. We are commanded to be her stewards, and in return, she is our tuning fork. Unfortunately, we are too wrapped up in our devices, or indoor life, or even our safety concerns that we miss her calling. When we are too focused on anything, our surroundings blur and vanish. That is why we are blind to nature. This is "plant blindness."

Charlotte Mason says in "Ourselves" that, "Appreciation of nature is not a voluntary offering, but our debt and duty." There is no better time to honor this duty than now. Put the devices away, break through the fear of dangers, and enjoy the pure beauty that is all around you. Let it teach you all that it has and wants to show you, and don't forget to stop and smell the flowers! Spring is the time to witness the marvelous change from death to life, the awakening of God's critters from their winter slumbers, and to hear the spring anthems singing in the trees. Nature is inviting us to be a part of her and it is our duty to accept the call.

A prayer for joy in God's creation:

O heavenly Father, you have filled the world with beauty: Open our eyes to behold your gracious hand in all your works; that, rejoicing in your whole creation, we may learn to serve you with gladness; for the sake of him through whom all things were made, your Son Jesus Christ our Lord. Amen.



Jonathan Jecko

17 years old

North Carolina

Anglo Saxon 1

Male Bluebird



Emma Covalt
14 years old
South Carolina
Early Modern Literature

Commonplace Quotes



Veva Jack

15 years old

Tennessee

Early Modern Literature,
Latin 2, Out of the Depths,
Readings in Early Modern
History

"In imitating the exemplary
acts of a god or of a mythic
hero, or simply by recounting
their adventures, the man of an
archaic society detaches
himself from profane time and
magically re-enters the Great
Time, the sacred time"
—*The Sacred and the Profane*
by Mircea Eliade

"What nature-lovers -
whether they are
Wordsworthians or people
with 'dark gods in their
blood' - get from nature is
an iconography, a
language of images."
—*The Four Loves*
by C.S. Lewis



Bethany Hansen

15 years old

Massachusetts

Anglo-Saxon 1, Medieval
and Renaissance
Literature, Out of the
Depths, Readings in
Medieval History

Love (III) by George Herbert

Love bade me welcome. Yet my soul drew back
 Guilty of dust and sin.
But quick-eyed Love, observing me grow slack
 From my first entrance in,
Drew nearer to me, sweetly questioning,
 If I lacked any thing.

A guest, I answered, worthy to be here:
 Love said, You shall be he.
I the unkind, ungrateful? Ah my dear,
 I cannot look on thee.
Love took my hand, and smiling did reply,
 Who made the eyes but I?

Truth Lord, but I have marred them: let my shame
 Go where it doth deserve.
And know you not, says Love, who bore the blame?
 My dear, then I will serve.
You must sit down, says Love, and taste my meat:
 So I did sit and eat.



Penelope Palmer

12 years old

Wisconsin

Good Books, Latin 1 Plutarch for Kids

Interview with Miss Angelina

What book was your gateway to the literary life?

Oh, that one's easy. The Arabian Nights, when I was three years old. I never remember a time when I was not completely enamored with books. I played "library" as a kid, I made library cards for my siblings, I put library cards in all of the books so that we could check them out. I never ever remember a time when I was not madly in love with books.

My parents were students at the time they had me, and my dad's student job when he was in law school was at a book warehouse. It was the state book warehouse, so it sent all the books to the schools in the state, and anything "dent and scratch" he got to take home. My parents were broke students, but we had books and my dad would bring home these books for me. I had my own little beginnings of a library at three years old and one of those books was a complete hardback set of The Boxcar Children and another one was a children's version of the Arabian Nights. Even before I could read, I was just obsessed with the book. It was a beautiful book, it had great paper, I just thought it was really cool. Then when I learned to read, I read it over and over and over. I just could not get enough of it. Looking back on it, I have to laugh because I was obsessed with a story about a girl who tells stories to save her life. I feel like my life's mission was laid out for me at three years old when my dad came back with the Arabian Nights.

Why is literature so important?

Tolkien talks about story as a prism, and through that prism you have light being refracted to us. We're just getting bombarded with Light in the best possible way, and because of the Fall, we have a need to have that light shone on us all the time and in as many different ways as we can. I've given talks about the Music of the Spheres and it's the same analogy. We get out of tune, and stories tune us. We forget, stories remind us. We fall asleep, stories wake us up. I don't think anything is more important than literature because the light of the universe shines through it to us. That is why it is so important.

What brought you to learning about the literary tradition?

This will not surprise you, but I was a strange child. My desire to know things and understand things was much greater than a surface level. Some of my teachers loved that, but some of them thought it was annoying because I kept saying "But why?" I wasn't doing it in an annoying way, I really wanted to know. When I started to really understand literature and the literary tradition, and I started thinking I'd devote my life to this, I needed to know why it mattered. It seemed to me that most of the people who were teaching literature at the college level just taught these classes because they liked them, and I didn't think that was a very good reason. So I kept asking the question "Why does this matter? How do we know what these

things mean? Where do they come from?” and no one could satisfactorily answer those questions for me, but I never stopped looking for the answer. It was my own insane compulsion to need to know why this mattered that I found the answer, and the answer to why this mattered was found in going all the way back to the beginning, and the only way that books meant anything was if we connected it to the literary tradition, and so I became a very intense defender of that. Because again, going back to the prism analogy, it seemed to me that all the other ways that people were reading were them standing in front of the prism and blocking the light, denying that the prism exists, using the books as some kind of fodder. So the question ‘what brought me to the literary life’ is very similar to the question ‘why is literature so important’. The only way it means anything is in connection to the literary tradition.

What made you want to go into teaching?

Alright, here’s something you won’t know about me. My entire life, all of my teachers said I was going to be a lawyer. My dad is a lawyer, and I argued all the time in school, and I was really good at it, really good at debate. In my 6th grade yearbook my teacher wrote ‘To the future lawyer (for the defense of course)’. I loved reading and I loved books. When I started taking literature classes in high school I hated reading and I hated books. The way that they taught it destroyed the books for me. There was a huge disconnect between my experience with books at home and my experience with books in class, so I wanted nothing to do with that. But when I got to college, I met someone who ended up becoming my mentor all the way through graduate school. I met this professor pretty much my first day on campus, and she took me under her wing and through my relationship with her I was able to see that there is a way to study literature that does connect with my experiences reading as a child. It didn’t have to be this soul-crushing, book-destroying experience and I got very excited about that, and, long story short, I had a senior level class where I had to do this internship at the courthouse, because remember, I was going to be a lawyer, and I started spending time with lawyers and I said that there is no way I can spend my entire life with these people, this is horrible, I don’t like lawyers! At the same time as this I was really starting to understand literature, and starting to think, “I think I might be pretty good at this,” and so I thought, let’s forget about law school and I’m going to become a college English professor.

What do you love about teaching and what are your biggest challenges?

Well, for me, teaching is sharing what I love with other people, and so there’s a lot of natural excitement and pleasure and enjoyment that comes from just being able to talk about the stuff I love to other people who also love it. I feel like I’m supposed to say something noble like “I like watching children grow,” but no, that’s so cheesy, and it makes the teachers sound like they have some kind of control over you, but I don’t. Northrop Frye says that teaching is the transference of energy from teacher to student. When that moment happens is when I am my

happiest, I get a tremendous dopamine hit, I'm on a high after class, and that transfer of energy is when I have shared what I love and then there's this moment with you that I can see it's inside of you. You love it too. And it's become yours, and it's not mine anymore, it's ours. When we're both standing there looking up at the prism, and we're all looking up and now it's not just me saying "hey, look at that!" but we're all saying, "Look at that!!" together. It just doesn't get any better for me. That's my drug, that is my dopamine, that's my sugar, that's it. It just doesn't get any better than when I see that it is inside of you and that you love it too. Because I love to learn so much, my favorite teaching moments are when my students see something in the book that I didn't see. When they make a connection that I didn't make I get such a huge dopamine hit off of that, I'm so happy, I'm so excited. Because then it feels like it's not just me up here telling you a bunch of stuff, and you spitting it back, but you've taken it inside of you, you've mixed it with your own brains, your own literary food, and you have now joined in the prism gazing with me, and you've pointed out some new angle of the light that I have never seen before.

My biggest challenge is that I see all this stuff about literature, that I teach, so clearly and so intuitively that it's a real challenge to put it into words. I have had to work very hard at that and I think I've gotten better at it, but it's still a challenge. The things I see in stories are so self-evident to me that a lot of times I feel like I'm in class just saying, "grass is green, and water is wet," but then somebody will say "wait, but how? How is the grass green?" And I'm just thinking I don't know how to explain that the grass is green, just open your eyes and look. So that has been my biggest challenge, and that usually requires me to try to figure out what the stumbling block is, what the obstacle is, what is it they're not getting, what mistake are they making.

What are some projects you are working on?

The biggest thing on my plate right now is my conference talk. And as things usually happen with me I'm 14 steps ahead all the time, so I'm working on this conference talk at the same time I'm planning out next year's conference, and trying to get the conference speaker down, because it was something I was curious about while I was doing my conference talk. This is how everything works for HHL, I have a question I'm trying to answer, then I'm like, we have a conference, then I'm going to get the answer to this. As we continue to grow there is more and more for me to do. I've planned out the rest of the webinars and mini-classes for the year, we've got a lot of exciting stuff coming for you. We've been pushing back all of the fairy tale work because all of my attention has gone to Dr. Baxter's book and audio book that's coming out soon. We got the book and the eBook out and that took a lot of time, and we already have another project with him lined up. In my personal reading I have deliberately chosen insanely long books for 2025 in an attempt to force myself to slow down, and I'm making myself not listen to them fast, and it's helping. I'm reading *Vanity Fair* right now, because I'm convinced *Vanity Fair* and *Gone With the Wind* are the same book so I'm

reading them back to back. Ever since I told this to Mr. Banks, he also reread *Vanity Fair*, this is our couple activity, we're both reading *Vanity Fair* and stopping every few pages and he's saying, "you're right! This is totally *Gone With the Wind*!!" I just stand up and I jump around and get really excited. Maybe this will end up as a podcast episode, or maybe it'll just be what I did for fun, because you know how my brain works, I'm always connecting books to other books.

Who is one author or scholar that you would most wish to sit down with for tea?

Well, I feel like this is the obvious answer, but it's also true, I would love to sit down with Northrop Frye. I have a lot of questions. I have read his unpublished notebooks of all the ideas that he had for books that he died before he did, and one of them is his theory that every Shakespeare play is a romance. And I think that every Shakespeare play is a fairy tale and that's basically the same thing. So I would want to sit down with him and just work out that whole series of ideas.



Angelina Stanford

Teacher/Founder of the House of Humane Letters/Director of the Fellowship

Good Books, How to Read Literature,
Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Early
Modern Literature



Elsa Altschuler

13 years old
Maryland
Good Books



Jewel Jack

13 years old
Tennessee
Good Books, Latin 2, Plutarch for Kids



Veva Jack

15 years old
Tennessee
Early Modern Literature, Latin 2, Out of the
Depths, Readings in Early Modern History

Student Announcements

Please join the Scriptorium Staff in congratulating our fellow classmates!

House of Humane Letters Latin 2 Students National Latin Exam Results

Advanced Latin Prose

Summa Cum Laude

Oliver Garber

Intermediate Latin

Summa Cum Laude

Owen Regn

Maxima Cum Laude

Fiona Altschuler

Natalia Testa

Magna Cum Laude

Mikayla Caldwell

Neva Garber

Josiah Mullins

Grace Gerardot and Natalia Testa have been accepted into a summer abroad program through Hillsdale College called *Western Civilizations: Visions from Italy!*

For two weeks in July they will be travelling to the Hillsdale campus to take introductory classes and then flying with their group to Rome, Pompeii, Florence, and Venice!

They will have the chance to see locations such as the Sistine Chapel, the Vatican, the Colosseum, the Pantheon, and works of art including those by Tintoretto, Titian, Michelangelo, and Botticelli.

The application process included a transcript, a resume, two recommendation letters, and an essay. There were over 300 applicants, making the admission of two of our students even more exciting! Grace and Natalia are excited to share about their trip once they return!

Art



Angels to the Shepherds



Clara Green

18 years old

Washington

How to Read Literature, Later Modern
Literature

The Forest



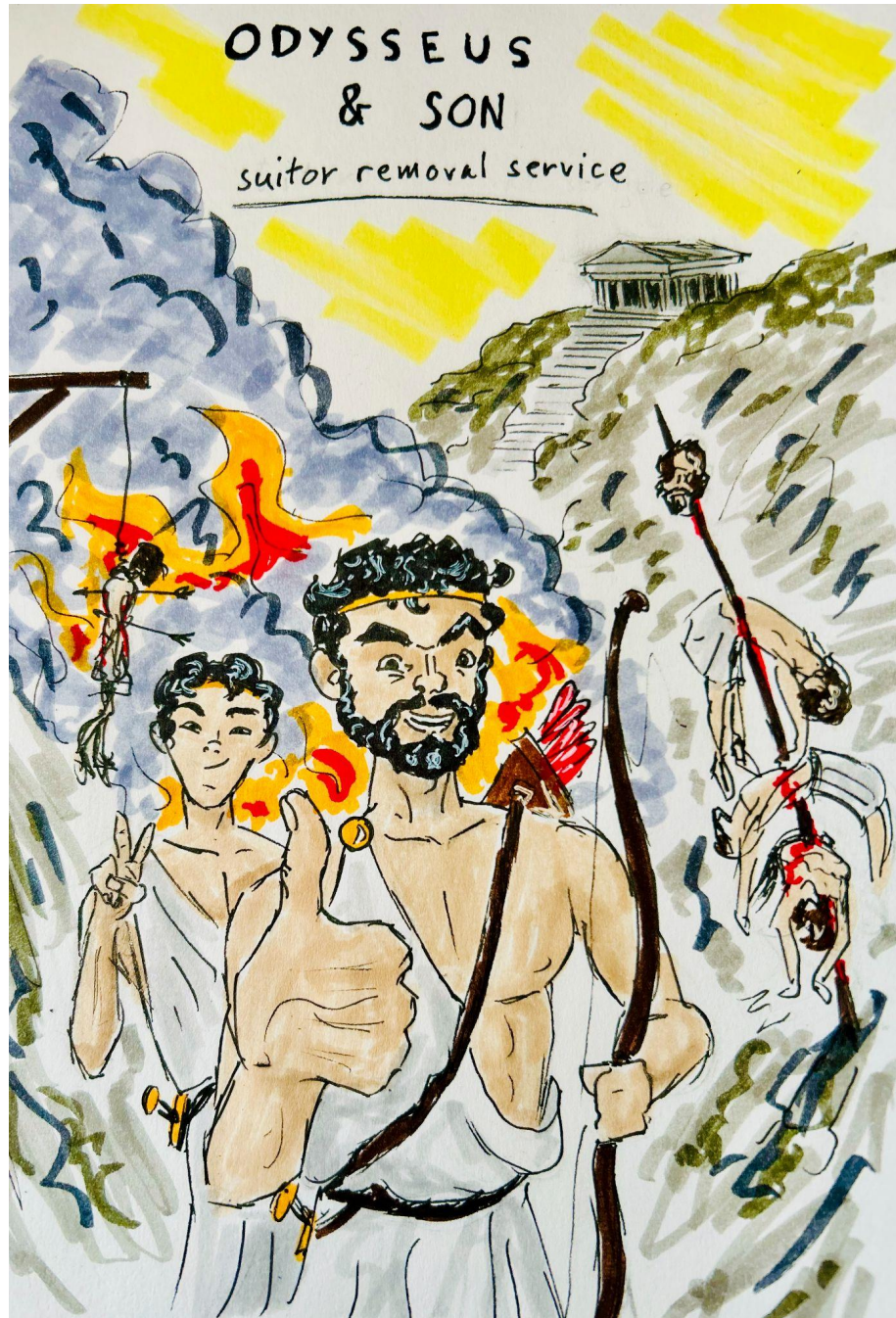
Miriam Box

14 years old

Tennessee

Plutarch for Kids

Odysseus and Son Suitor Removal Service



Jonathan Berns
15 years old
New Jersey
Ancient Literature

The Lady of Shalott



Ava Morris
15 years old
Georgia
Early Modern Literature

Map of the Wilderland



Colson Turner

14 years old

New York

Anglo Saxon 1, Early Modern Literature,
Readings in Early Modern History

In a Hole in the Ground there Lived a Hobbit



Kate Kever
16 years old
Tennessee
Early Modern Literature

The Tree of Life



Asher McCall

17 years old

Ohio

Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Out of
the Depths

Thomas Cole Artist Study



Elizabeth Knight

16 years old

North Carolina

Anglo Saxon 1, Early Modern Literature,
Latin 1

Sherborne Missal Art Study



Kathryn Eaton

18 years old

Florida

Anglo Saxon 1, Later Modern Literature

The Candle



Jillian Aro

11 years old

Texas

Good Books, Plutarch for Kids

The Tripartite Soul



Eliza Graham

18 years old

Oklahoma

Latin 1, Later Modern Literature, Out of the
Depths, Readings in Later Modern History

A decorative floral border in the top-left corner featuring green vines, red and orange flowers, and small red berries.

Fiction

&

Poetry

A decorative floral border in the bottom-left corner featuring green vines, red and orange flowers, and small red berries.A decorative floral border in the bottom-right corner featuring green vines, red and orange flowers, and small red berries.

Communion

By fruit forbidden, Eden's feast was flawed.
By fruit consumed in secret came the Fall,
Man split from wife, the Church estranged from God;
A single meal has rent and severed all.
A single meal has left our lives disgraced.
And now we lift in need our starving hands,
For we remain diseased until we taste
The antidote, arranged in swaddling bands:
Another fruit, born of the Virgin's womb
Is freely given, unforbidden, shared,
Who is the real manna, wine and lamb—
The Choice Lamb, without flaw, for us prepared.
Communion is restored, our curse released,
As we consume our Christ, our better feast.



Clara Green

18 years old

Washington

How to Read Literature, Later Modern

Literature

Stories Shall Save the World

Into its second childhood, the world has descended
Despite the efforts of those who us defended.
"What has happened!" cry the poets with voices aghast,
As they watch their books be into the attic cast
Along with the books of the authors of old,
Shall their stories ever again be told?
In their place as comforters comes therapists and tech,
Will the world ever wake and realize that it is in a wreck?
"But look!" someone shouts, "We are not yet forgot,
Over yonder is a lad reading Sir Walter Scott,
And a group reading Dryden, Keats, and Longfellow!"
An old Roman laughs after spotting a girl with the works of Plato.
The two blind poets, sitting in a corner, agree that there is hope still,
As the professor of Beowulf describes to them a grassy hill,
On top of which stands a tower overlooking the sea,
Being rebuilt by people like you and like me.
Using the building blocks of stories to make it sturdy and tall,
So that one day it shall be seen by all.
Never again to be torn into disarray.
Stories, my friend, shall save the day!



Olivia Wetzel

15 years old

Virginia

Medieval and Renaissance Literature

Merlin and Viviane

What dream can tell, the work of Vulcan's might.
That towered hall, raised from a misty night.
How can we stay our footsteps and not hear-
The long bewailing cry and saddened tear.
Calling for Viviane, Viviane of the Lake,
Whose magic only could that fortress break.
Heard only, by the forest, Merlin's groans,
Translated to the wood in eerie tones.
The white thorn bush, dead pale beneath the moon,
Aroused by Viviane's wild, chanting tune.
Thus here in slumber, did mute Merlin sleep,
Too strong, Viviane's enchantment and too deep
For Merlin's art, were made too weak to break
For he loved Viviane, Lady of the Lake.
And when Merlin awoke, he heard her strain
And knew that his endeavors were in vain.
For thrice around his head, Viviane wove
Enchantment's winding round, which Merlin strove
To break that tower, made by his Viviane,
Endeavoring to break her fatal chain.
Thus lulled to sleeping Viviane's lyres numbers
Hath soothed Merlin into his weary slumber
Wove she, enchantment's cord, false Viviane.
The winding chain, where slept her lover Merlin.
Let pass away no image of his dreams
Let Merlin sleep, sweet morning's golden beams
Shall never pierce that long enchanted tower,
Merlin shall slumber, by the white thorn flower.



Adelaide Oliver

14 years old

Maine

Good Books

Song of the Sea

I wade along the seashore
Only ankle deep
And listen as around me
Earth settles into sleep

The sky fades to a mixture
Of purple orange pink
That reflects upon the water
Of the softly singing deep

I think I see eternity
As I walk along the shore
I hear in the salty breeze
A tale of happy ever more

I feel an aching sadness
A longing for unknown
A loss I did not realize
A song not yet my own

I wade along the seashore
The sky is darkening fast
The awe and wonder of the night
Are coming, peace at last

I feel a smallness, an unimportance
Loved, and yet, a peace which comes
From knowing I am small
Beside the sea

I wade along the seashore
The stars shine cold and bright
I feel the glory of the Lord
The awe and wonder of his word
In the newness, in the oldness of the night



Nēva Garber

15 years old

Louisiana

Latin 2, Medieval and

Renaissance Literature

Sonnet

The poet, like a bee in summer mild,
Sips nectar from all kinds of flowers bright,
Which compass him as he pursues his flight,
Rejoicing in them like a little child.
With all the nectar which in him is piled
He mixes up a cup of riches quite
As sweet as all those flowers in the light,
Dispersed throughout that spreading meadow wild.
And when a reader takes a drink of it
He gets a glimpse of all those colors rare
And inwardly with sight is sweetly lit
By that rich vision of that other where
Which he of his own reason or quick wit
Can't figure out, to in those glories share.



Asher McCall

17 years old

Ohio

Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Out of
the Depths

Sonnet on the Imagination

What are the depths of art? What can it do?
Is it a mere container for a thought?
A pretty shell to bring to you what's brought?
A film of dust for Reason to sweep through?
Or does rich art aim at a broader view?
Indeed, it will reveal a vision caught
Within its prism depths, a pattern wrought
Within a poet's mind of what is true.
And this the artist sees with distant sight;
It flows through his imagination and,
Reflecting in his art, makes dark things bright;
It's not so much the artist's daring hand,
But more the power of the glowing beam
That's coming through him like a flowing stream.



Asher McCall

17 years old

Ohio

Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Out of
the Depths

The Blind Man and the Bard

There once was an old man who was blind and had forgotten everything, even his own name. He had hidden himself deep in a cave, cold and devoid of all life, where he couldn't hear the songs of the birds or feel the sunlight on his skin. He could not remember the time before he had come to the cave. When he was awake, the darkness around him was limitless. There had been a time that, whenever he slept, his dreams had been full of light and color, but when he had awoken and tried to remember them, they had slipped away, leaving him once again lost in a land of darkness. For a while, he would fight to regain his dreams, but eventually, he ceased his efforts. He thought that if he ever succeeded in his quest to remember, it would be too painful, and he would be reminded of something he would never again see. So he gave up entirely, and his dreams ceased to come.

Each day blended into the next, and years passed, the man never paying any heed to time's passage. He waited there, longing for the day he would die, yet finding that his own hand was too weak to put an end to his life.

So he waited.

Then, after years of lying in his cave, something happened which he did not expect. Something—or perhaps *someone*—touched him on the arm.

“Who’s... there?” he asked, his voice ragged, worn down by time like the stone is by the wind. “I am a bard, and I have come to bring you out of here.” The warm touch of the bard’s hand on his arm was something strange. Warmth was one of the many things he had forgotten, in the ever present cold of his cave.

“What... is a bard?” the old man asked. Whatever it was, he suspected it must be very wonderful.

In answer, a sound rang out, vibrating the air and the man’s soul. Another came after it, similar yet beautifully different from the first. Soon they came fast and overlapping, like a gentle drumming of rain. They were each unique and wonderful, weaving together to form a tapestry of sound that was completely unlike anything the man had ever heard. It moved him to tears as he lay there in the cave. Once the sounds faded back into the darkness, he found that he could not recall them. They were so beautiful that his memory could not, as it was, hold onto them. “This is what a bard is— I make music upon my harp, and I tell stories that make you hear the same music, but not with your ears. Come, and follow me.”

“Where will we go?” the man asked, and now his voice was stronger.

“On a journey.”

They left the place where the man had been lying for so long, the bard guiding him by his arm as they strode down the slope. It was a long walk, for the man had gone very far into

the cave, and as they walked, the bard told him stories so that he marvelled greatly, though, like with the music, the man forgot them once the bard had told them.

The ground began to rise again, and at last they came out of the cave's mouth, into the open air. They paused, as the man felt the wind's breath on his face and warmth upon his skin. "What is this place, and what is this warmth that I feel?" he asked, his voice hushed with awe. "This is the land where the sun shines, giving warmth to all that it sees," the bard answered.

"I do not understand."

"Continue the journey with me, and at the end you will find warmth beyond what is here; then you will understand."

They continued on, the bard guiding the old man with a lighter touch, for now he could walk better and he stumbled less. That night they stopped beside the road and settled down for the night once the bard had made a fire, the warmth of which made the old man sigh in contentment. Then, before either went to sleep, the bard set something in the man's lap. He said that it was his harp, and then he asked the old man to play it. "But, sir, I know not how to do this thing," he answered, running his hands along the cool frame of the instrument, and gently prodding the long strings stretched from top to bottom.

"Then I shall teach you," came the simple answer. Long into the night the bard guided the old man's hands along the strings of the harp, trying to coax a melody out of it, but in vain. "Do not be angry," the bard said when he saw the frustration on the man's face. "This harp is made of gold, and only one who has been made pure can draw forth a song from it." And then, they retired for the night.

When they awoke the next morning they continued on their journey, the bard telling stories which far surpassed the ones from the previous day, and today the man found that he could remember some of what the bard had said.

It was not long before a coolness washed over the old man and he heard something not far ahead in their path, burbling and rustling both like the music and the rain at the same time. He also heard many songs ringing out from above him, each of which captured an aspect of the music that had drawn him out of the cave. "What are these sounds, and what is this cold that I feel, like in many ways to that which I felt in the cave and yet so unlike it?" "You feel the shade, which is caused by trees, which grow upwards to reach the sky, catching the sunlight on their many leaves. The song above you is the music made by the birds, which sing to capture the melody which I played for you in the cave," the bard replied. "I do not understand."

"Continue the journey with me, and at the end you will find song beyond what is here, and then you will understand," the bard said. "Ahead of you lies a stream, which is where much water flows together on a journey downhill. Go now, and clean yourself in it."

The man did as he was commanded, feeling along the ground until he found the stream. When he stepped into its depths, he felt the water wash around him, a sound like that

made by children giggling with joy surrounding him until he too laughed. He could feel the grime and soot covering him fall away in the stream's pull, and when he emerged again he felt reinvigorated. They continued to walk, surrounded by the echoes of the birdsong. The path sloped uphill but nonetheless, the old man found that now he was able to walk with the lightest touch on his arm and an occasional guiding word from the bard. They rested again that night, and the bard continued to teach the ways of the harp to the man; though his fingers smarted after much strumming, he found he was beginning to learn how to play the golden instrument.

The next day they arose and continued the walk up the mountainside, and, though the slope continued to grow steeper, the old man's legs were stronger now.

"Tell me of the land around us," he asked. "How it appears to those that can see?" "I have spoken to you already of the trees with their green leaves, and the birds, in every shape and size and of many colors, all flying on feathered wings amidst the canopy—" the bard began, but before he could continue, the man interrupted him.

"What is this thing, this *color* that you speak of?"

"You know of the darkness that surrounds you? Its opposite is light, the former being called black, and the latter white. These are colors. They have a range from black to white, and not only do they possess this shading, but also a hue, such as the green of the trees or the blue of the water, and there are so many of these *hues* that to name them all would be an impossible task. You are surrounded by color; everything has a color. The world is painted with them more brilliantly than any artist's canvas," the bard answered.

"I do not understand," the old man said.

"Continue the journey with me and then your eyes shall be opened so that you shall see this color for the first time; then you will understand." And as they continued their journey, the bard told stories which were so wonderful that the man hardly breathed so that he would not miss a word. This time, the old man could remember most of what the bard said. For the third time they stopped that night and made camp. Once the fire was blazing, the bard continued to teach the old man the ways of the harp. He was becoming better with it, but still needed the guidance that the bard had to offer, and the melodies he made with the instrument were halting and took him an incredible amount of effort. At last, he slumped back, impatient at his difficulty in playing the harp.

"This is the last time that I will teach you. Tomorrow I will leave you to continue the journey on your own," the bard said. "You will come to the side of a lake of fire, and there will be a boat. You will get into the boat, and it will carry you across to the other side, where you will find a doorway. You will take this harp with you, and you must play the song I played in the cave to make the doors open."

"But I am not ready for such a feat!" the man responded. "I cannot remember the melody that you speak of, and I have little skill with the harp!"

“Nonetheless, you will manage it. You will have received all that you need to enter through the doorway into the land where you shall see again— you have heard the song of the birds, have walked among the trees, have bathed in the clear depths of a mountain stream, you now can play the harp, and you have heard the stories that I have told. All these things echo the song that you heard in the cave, and once you have passed over the fire you will be capable of playing the music.”

This comforted the old man somewhat, but when he fell asleep that night, it was still with a troubled mind. That night, he had a dream.

In his dream, there was light and color, and he could hear the song he had heard at the start of the journey, but it was all distant, hidden on the other side of a veil. He hungered to see and hear truly, and he reached out a hand to pull aside the veil, but a voice called out to him. “You are not ready. Not yet. Soon you shall be, and then you shall see the light and hear the music which you have forgotten, but you must wait.”

At those words, he awoke. He felt that it was morning, that the sun had risen, and, though he still felt trepidation at the thought of leaving the bard, he also felt a measure of courage and hope after his dream.

He arose and said farewell to the bard, and then, taking the harp with him, he continued the journey, taking a staff the bard gave him to feel the road ahead of him. It was a short walk, and he soon felt an immense warmth like that of the fires that had kept the cold away at night when they had slept, but far greater. He almost turned back as he drew nearer the shore, but he continued on. He came to the border between the ground and the fire, then groped along until he found a small boat, which he thought only seemed big enough for himself and even then hardly large enough to bear his own weight.

Fumbling, he drew himself over the boat’s rim and sat down. Slowly, it moved away from the shore. As it travelled farther, the heat grew more and more difficult to bear. His skin burned, but there was nothing to do besides stay sitting, so he waited. At last, the boat hit the other shore and he climbed out. The harp, he found, was still cool to his touch and had not melted in the flames. Trembling, he knelt down. He touched the ground, and felt stone under his fingers, polished so that it was perfectly smooth. The area the stone occupied was small, surrounded by the fire, and on one side there was a doorway that had a texture like that of the harp he held in his hands; perhaps it was made of gold as well.

He prepared to play the harp, and thought about the journey he had taken— of all the things he had heard and that the bard had taught him, and then he thought of his dream. He set his fingers to the strings, and began to play the melody that had called him from the shadows of the cave. Now, he found, he knew the song; rather, he had always known the song, but now he had remembered it. Now he *remembered*.

Once he was finished, he paused and listened as the door before him swung open. He stepped forwards.

And, for the first time in his life, he *saw*. He saw the light, the color, the life, beyond anything from his journey, as the bard had promised. And, above all, there was the sound of the music which he had played, surrounding everything.



Isaiah Snowden

16 years old

Indiana

Medieval and Renaissance Literature,
Readings in Medieval History, Out of the
Depths

A Tower of Babble

Nimrod thought himself an accomplished man. He could read, and kept in his library what he considered to be the building blocks of Western Civilization: for instance Homer, Shakespeare, and Freud, among others. He had once had a copy of the King James Bible and a couple volumes of Jane Austen, but he sold them for a good bargain, because he had a Low Opinion of Women and Religion. He read each book in his bookshelf exactly one time, for he had a great gift of memorization. He didn't need to reread any of the books, and after all, what a waste of time that would be, when he had already memorized practically the whole book!

He could play as well, naturally. Piano, not games. And he could do calculus in his head, recite Horatius at the Bridge, and draw a vase with flowers in it.

Oh, yes. Nimrod thought himself a very accomplished man.

Until, that is, he came across a copy of *The Libation Bearers* in a dusty, musty old bookshop. He opened it, flipped through, and gasped. The whole thing, start to finish, was written in GREEK. Nimrod could not read a page. He could not comprehend a word. Even the alphabet was strange to the poor man.

Nimrod felt demoralized. He felt tragic. He felt a strong sense of outrage.

He felt, in short, UNACCOMPLISHED.

He put the book down in disgust. But then, after a moment of contemplation, he picked it back up. It might, after all, be exciting to have a book in Greek to grace his humble library.

But of course there was always the danger that someone might see it and say, "oh, you know Greek?"

He might reply in tones of unconscious superiority: "Merely in passing."

But what if the aforesaid someone were to say. "Well then, what does that say?"

And he, Nimrod, would have to shrug, blush, avert his eyes, and murmur, "I don't know."

In that moment, Nimrod realized that he was not so accomplished after all. Out of all the thousands of languages in the world, he knew only English. An accomplished man, he thought to himself, would know at least three or four languages, so he could drop sophisticated foreign phrases into his conversation. But Nimrod did not know what "vox populi, vox Dei" meant, and "je ne sais pas" was gibberish to him. And he could not read the book before his eyes.

He would NOT rest content in his unaccomplishedness. He would buy the book, and what's more, he would learn Greek.

And yet, he ruminated, still the problem would not go away, for what would he do if he happened to find a good copy of *Crime and Punishment* in Russian? Would he then learn Russian? By King Arthur's left sock, he would learn Russian!

And if he found the works of Petrarch in Italian? What then? There was only one option open to him — that is, to learn Italian.

Why not go further? Why not learn every language ever spoken? He would then be the most accomplished man ever to tread the earth. Yes, he would learn every tongue: From Spanish to Sanskrit, Gothic to Gaelic, Nimrod would conquer the world through language. He would read *Les Misérables* untranslated, *Don Quixote* in the original, he might even overcome his Low Opinion of Religion to read the Vulgate in Latin.

Alight with the prospect of his plan, Nimrod strode to the front desk, bought the Libation Bearers, and marched to his little flat in London to execute his idea.

Later that day, Nimrod called his brother-in-law. Nimrod did not have a high regard for Intimacy, but occasionally relations came in handy.

“Hey ho, Nimrod!” said his brother-in-law, whose name was Christopher. “How’s life?”

“Christopher,” pronounced Nimrod without preamble. “Have you ever attempted to Learn a Language?”

“Sure,” said Christopher. “Tried to learn Spanish a couple years back. Didn’t work out too well. I can’t never finish anything I start. Why do you ask?”

“I simply think that language is an abominable curse, don’t you?”

“Sure it’s a curse. Don’t you know the story of the Tower of Babel?”

Nimrod was flabbergasted to hear a story he didn’t know about. But when Christopher told him it was from the Old Testament, he understood.

“You know I have a Low Opinion of Religion, Christopher.”

“Yeah, I know.” Christopher’s voice sounded sad through the telephone (the man had a tendency to become sentimental).

“I have decided,” Nimrod paused, “to learn every language ever spoken.”

There was a long silence.

“Pardon,” said Nimrod. “I think the service must be faulty. . . . I cannot hear you.”

“Sorry, man,” said Christopher. “I didn’t say anything. I mean, that’s pretty ambitious, trying to learn every language, huh?”

“Every single one,” Nimrod declared.

“Listen, Nimrod, you do what you want to do,” said Christopher. “Best of luck with your project.”

“Thank you very much, my friend.”

Once Nimrod hung up, Christopher turned to his wife (who was Nimrod’s sister).

“Well, amazements never do cease,” he said.

“What’s the matter, darling?” Evangeline said.

“I just got off the phone with your brother,” said Christopher, for all the world as though it was Evangeline’s fault for having an accomplished brother, “and he told me he

wants to learn every language ever spoken.”

“Sounds like something my brother would say,” said Evangline placidly. “Coffee?”

“Sure,” said Christopher. “You know how many languages there are spoken now?”

“How many?”

“7,000. And then you add in all the languages that are dead as doornails. . . .”

“If anyone can learn all the languages in the world, it’s Nimrod,” said Evangline with a shake of her head. “He seems like a fool, but he’s got a knack for memorization, and he’s stubborn.”

“I know,” said Christopher. “I’ve been trying to convert him for eight years. And all I get is —”

Evangeline scrunched up her face and imitated Nimrod. “Christopher, you know I have a Low Opinion of Religion!”

“Yep,” said Christopher.

The next day Nimrod started on his plan. He decided that he would first learn the Romance languages, as a high percentage of the books that made up the building blocks of Western Civilization were written in Romance languages. So he bought some books on learning French, Italian, and Spanish. It was harder finding books on how to learn Catalan and Neapolitan, but apparently those were Romance languages too, so after several hours and several hundred dollars, he purchased books on all eleven Romance languages. He brought them home. It was almost eleven o’clock at night and he hadn’t eaten all day (and he had a throbbing headache besides) but he sat down and pulled out the book on French.

“Le garçon. . . la fille. . . je. . . tu. . . il. . . nous. . .” he started muttering to himself.

Nimrod prided himself on being a fast learner. He studied all night and the next morning he went to a bookstore and bought an easy chapter book in French. He could read it like a Parisian.

Within two weeks he had mastered all the romance languages (except for Venetian, which was causing him some trouble). He could read The Divine Comedy as well as if he had written it, and Sicilian verbs were like a second nature.

Learning eleven languages in two weeks made him feel extra accomplished. He took out a piece of paper and wrote down the languages he knew. The list would grow and grow, on and on and on. Soon the number of languages that he knew would fill a scroll as tall as any tower. The tower would go up into the clouds. . . the tower of languages that he knew.

Nimrod didn’t take a rest, but dove straight into learning Germanic languages. He spent an incredible amount of money on the books necessary to learn Danish, German, Swedish, Afrikaans, and Norwegian, and had mastered them all within a week. He was now able to read the works of Sigrid Undset and Hans Christian Andersen in his sleep.

Now that he knew so many languages, he began to be well-known. One day he awoke early in the morning to a knock at the door. He arose to a groan, as his constant headache had become worse and he had only slept a couple hours, having made some headway into the Afro-Asiatic languages last night.

He shuffled over to the door and opened it to see a tiny reporter beaming up at him.

“Good morning, Mr Nimrod! I was wondering if I could interview you on the art of learning languages!”

“Of course, dear sir! What an honor!”

As Nimrod led the interviewer in and sat him down, he looked around rather nervously. He hadn’t cleaned up since — well, when WAS the last time he’d tidied his little flat? Perhaps he hadn’t since he had started learning languages! And his flat DID look exceedingly messy: books everywhere, clothes on the floor, the kitchen cabinet open to reveal that a pot of soup had fallen over and emptied its contents everywhere.

The reporter didn’t seem to notice, but immediately asked, “Mr Nimrod, what would you say to someone who wanted to learn multiple languages?”

“I would naturally tell this person that they will have to invest much time and energy in it,” Nimrod told him, “but more importantly I will tell them that if they don’t have the right temperament, time and energy don’t matter. The real thing to consider is, am I clever enough to learn languages quickly? If not, this person might be better off working at a post office. Only the very wise can store this much information in their heads.”

“And are you very wise?” the reporter whispered.

Nimrod smiled indulgently, and that was answer enough.

“Mr Nimrod,” the interviewer went on, “why do you want to learn this many languages?”

“I am moderately interested in language itself,” said Nimrod confidently, “the grammar and the syntax, and such; and I am slightly more interested in the works written in different languages. But, if I am to be blisteringly honest, I am most interested in the way language raises you above others. To give an example, I am more knowledgeable and therefore more admirable than you, because I know forty-three languages and you only know one.”

“Begging your pardon,” squeaked the reporter, “but I know five languages.”

“My point still holds,” said Nimrod. “Have you any other questions for me?”

Nimrod’s interview made the front page, as did a rather flattering picture of himself with a stack of books beside him. People began to stop on the streets and look at him. When they did this, Nimrod would casually call out, “Hej, bønder!” and they would stare in wonder. Nimrod began to feel, not only accomplished, but MAJESTIC. He felt like a king.

“Have you seen the paper, Evangeline?” Christopher called. He had his feet propped up on the

table and a steaming coffee in one hand.

"I don't believe so," Evangeline, coming in with their new baby in her arms. "What's up?"

"Your brother."

"My. . . brother?"

She walked up and looked over Christopher's shoulder at the paper he was holding. The picture of a grinning man covered nearly the whole page, and below the bold black headline NIMROD LEARNS HIS 70TH LANGUAGE.

She shook her head.

"He's going to run himself to death if he keeps on going like this!" she said. "He looks awful!"

"He always looks awful."

"Christopher! I mean. . . look at the bags under his eyes, and he obviously hasn't washed in a while, and the state of his suit. Oh my gosh!"

"Look, Nimrod might be a little nuts, but he's not going to kill himself for the sake of languages."

"He just might. He's taking this all dreadfully seriously, darling. You know what he told me, last time I saw him? He said he wants to be the most accomplished man in the world, and that when he has learned all these languages, he will be the most admired and the most powerful person in the world. My brother, he wants everyone to look up to him."

"People already do. Papers last week said he's had a meeting with the president."

Over the next year, Nimrod mastered the Dravidian, Uralic, Altaic, Balto-Slavic, Indo-Iranic, Austro-Asiatic, and Austronesian languages, as well as all the other kinds. Some of the languages were easy to learn, but others were harder, and he spent nearly all his nights awake in the dark, bent over his book with his head thundering, tearing out his hair over the complexities of Finnish. Some of the languages were so rare that it was hard to find material on them, so he spent thousands and thousands of dollars finding the perfect books on Bikol, Zhuang, and Berber. One day he woke up to discover that his suit was threadbare, and that he had not the money to buy another, and that he could not afford more medicine for his head.

But after one or two panicky moments, he shooed the thought away. It didn't matter; none of it mattered, food or clothes or aches and pains, as long as he mastered EVERY LAST LANGUAGE. And he only had two languages left now: Welsh and Rundi. He could master them in a couple days, easy.

He was walking slowly over to his bookshelf when there was a sudden knock on the door. Nimrod jumped, but after a moment he reluctantly went to the door. It was Christopher.

"Hello," Nimrod said grumpily.

"Nimrod, my friend!" Christopher said, walking into his house before Nimrod could object. "My good chap, you look awful!"

“It doesn’t matter,” said Nimrod. “I’ve only got two languages left to learn.”

“And then what?”

Nimrod looked up at him quizzically but seemed too tired to say anything.

“What will you do when you’re done learning languages, Nimrod?” said Christopher. “You’ve put all your efforts into this language-learning. . . . Don’t you think you’ll feel a little lost when there’s nothing left to learn?”

“You’ve missed the point entirely,” said Nimrod. “I didn’t learn the languages simply to learn the languages. That would be a complete waste of time. I learned the languages so that I could know more than anyone else in the world, be more powerful even than the kings of old, be wise and esteemed by all. In short, to be ACCOMPLISHED.”

“Now,” said Christopher, scratching his head. “I can’t quite put it into words, but that doesn’t seem like a very good reason to learn 7,000 languages. Seems like there’s a better reason out there somewhere, if you take my meaning.”

“I don’t,” said Nimrod. “Now if you’ll excuse me, I’m rather busy at the moment. . . .”

“Come now!” said Christopher. “I came over to have a nice long talk. I feel like we haven’t had a decent chat in months — years, even! Isn’t there somewhere I can sit down?”

“Really, Christopher,” Nimrod snapped, “you know I don’t have a high regard for Intimacy! I have two languages left to learn and I want to master them today! Be on your way!”

“Don’t blow up at me, mate!” said Christopher, holding up his hands. “I’m going, I’m going. Only I feel bad, Nimrod. I wish we got to see each other more. And you haven’t even met the new baby.” “By King Arthur’s left sock, how many babies are you and my sister going to have?” Nimrod said wearily.

“This is only the second,” said Christopher, looking hurt. “But,” he added proudly, “we hope to have as many as possible — six or seven, at least!”

“Please just go away,” said Nimrod, turning his back on his brother-in-law and shuffling to the bookshelf.

“Goodbye, Nimrod,” Christopher said sadly.

Nimrod heard the door close behind him, as he picked up his book on Welsh.

That night, Nimrod has completely mastered Welsh and Rundi. He could read the Mabinogion with ease, and although he couldn’t find any books in Rundi, he could recite all the paradigms perfectly.

He walked slowly to his tiny balcony, overlooking the city of London. The cool evening wind soothed his headache a little. Pride filled him, pressing on his heart, growing so great and intense that he felt he couldn’t bear the feeling of self-satisfaction. He had done it, he had finally done it: He had mastered every single language in the world. He knew more than any other person ever to live, he was the most accomplished, the most majestic, the most powerful being in the world. Standing on his little balcony, he felt at the top of the world, as

though he had climbed through the clouds to the height of the very highest tower. He no longer felt like a King.

He felt like a god.

Nimrod leaned over the balcony railing, thinking of how tonight, he would finally get a good night's sleep, and how tomorrow, he would walk all over town, basking in the admiring gazes people would shoot at him. Maybe a couple people would even ask for his autograph. He rested on his elbows, and lowered his head, closing his eyes against a sudden, intense throb of his head. Then, slowly rocking back and forth, bursting with pride, he leaned farther over the balcony.

All of a sudden, the world turned upside down. Nimrod felt a sickening spin, a tremendous rush of air, and a last throb of his head.

"My God!" Christopher cried the next day. He had been drinking coffee and reading the morning paper, but now he leapt up and clapped his hands to his forehead as though he could not believe what he had read. "Oh, God!"

"What's the matter?" Evangeline said, coming in. She was holding both babies and looked terrified. "Something in the paper?"

"Lord have mercy," Christopher said, his face pale and his voice trembling. "Your brother's in the hospital. Looks like last night he fell off his third story balcony. He hit his head, and now he can't speak a word of any language except Gothic!"



Fiona Altschuler

16 years old

Maryland

Anglo Saxon 1, Early Modern Literature,

Latin 2, Out of the Depths

The Grey Dragon

There was once a man named Camillus. His dwelling was clad in new wood, but the name of it lingered from ages past, as Theseus's ship did it remain. Mountains had crumbled to dust, and hills filled the beds of valleys; and yet his lineage endured withal. His eyes were of his fathers, and he saw many hidden things, for his was a storied house.

It happened that the weary earth was encumbered of a new burden – a city tall and wide, whose foundations festered in her depths. Beneath it the gold of the caves grayed, the streams of the water ran dry, and the fruits of the earth withered, for an evil king was on its throne.

Slowly Camillus's crops failed, and at last his arts were exasperated by the barrenness of the land. Then he girded on his sword and besought the king saying: "Surely the king will recompense me for the failing of his soil, else I shall slay him and a better man take his place."

So came Camillus to the city and found neither walls nor gates to guard it, but it was vast and the bustling roads turned and recoiled upon themselves. A fog also was over the city, and a mist lay stagnant upon it that neither abated in the night nor fled before the sun. Therefore he was lost, and he went inquiring after strangers saying, "Where shall I find the king?"

But they answered him saying, "We have no king, leave us alone."

And he saw that the souls of the men were faint and their spirits despairing within them. Furthermore, they knew not their way in the city but went aimlessly through the streets and sought after unworthy things. So he wandered in that place three days, until at last he came upon a great tower in its center. Taking this to be the dwelling of the king, he entered it and came by winding stairs to its summit. There he found a man in a grey coat seated at a narrow, empty table. The man's eyes were also grey and glazed over with death, as if even in waking he was asleep. This Camillus observed at once, though the people of the city found the grey man unremarkable.

"Take a number," he demanded abruptly in a dull voice.

"What?" Asked Camillus, looking about him again to reassure himself that they were alone.

"Take a number," he repeated, if possible less clearly than before.

"Why should I when there is none before me?"

"Why? Identification. Regulation. How do you expect me to run a city if just anybody can come bothering me any time of day?"

"The same way you manage to spare the time spent giving numbers out to all of them," retorted Camillus boldly, but found that far from offending the stranger, he had fallen

asleep. At least his head drooped on his chest, and he made no response, though his eyelids never closed.

“Wake up!” Camillus commanded.

At once the grey man’s face flew up like a jack-in-the-box, and his whole frame returned to animation like a wind-up toy being let loose.

“Take a number.”

“Are you the king?”

“No, I am his secretary. This isn't a monarchy anyway.”

“You can’t be secretary to the king if there is no king,” Camillus explained reasonably.

“I absolutely refuse to talk to you until you take a number,” the stranger responded with a sardonic sneer.

Camillus was all for having his head off then and there, but deciding he was unlikely to obtain audience with the king after dispatching one of his servants, he restrained his wrath and took the tattered piece of paper offered him. On it, written in a spidery hand, was a strange, illegible character of which Camillus could make nothing. Looking up from this a few seconds later he found the man unconscious once more. He gave the soporific secretary a shake, upon which his head swung up at great peril to both himself and Camillus, declaring emphatically as he did so: “Have a number?!?”

“Haven’t you just given me one?”

“That was what I was asking you?”

“If this is what you call a number, then I certainly do have one.”

“Please sir, I implore you not to make a fuss about nothing. Now fetch it here.”

Camillus handed over the paper he had received only a few seconds before, but the deportment of the secretary was such that the whole procedure looked very business-like and important.

“Ah,” he said without even looking at the slip of paper, “You will be wanting to see the king.”

“Why do you waste your own and my time?”

“I am an administrator, wasting other people's time is the most productive task I know... Come on now.” he said, turning towards the window and beckoning Camillus: “Here we are, keep up.”

The grey-coated man gestured him to look out, and he did. Peering over the nearer buildings, he saw that the edge of the city far away was round, and along the rim of it where a wall might have been in the days of his fathers, a thick grey mist slithered like a snake about the city.

“Where is the king?” Camillus asked.

“Some place out there. He is quite big, you can’t miss him”

“Point him out to me then.”

“Oh, I can’t see him of course. When I look into that glass I see only myself. He doesn’t like being seen anyway. It is only for very particular circumstances he lets you see him, and if I am quite honest, I think it’s a mistake.”

Camillus was about to ask another question when he found the man next to him was speaking again.

“Despite the momentous occasion it was in all respects a customary meeting, and the senate was of many minds. Our scouts had returned informing us of that settlement so lately formed, whose maturity you see before you. Such a rare opportunity notwithstanding, the general feeling was agitated by the thought of a fresh population being cast all over a perfectly good pagan continent. Human society, albeit deplorable, had taken so many useful forms in the past it was difficult to agree what plan to try next. The strife being irresolvable, the consulate decided to contact an expert, a descendant of the spoiler of Rome. I was entrusted to serve as envoy to the ancient house of Tarquin. His land was isolated somewhat from the inner-most rings, but near enough that the glow of the furnaces still lit its reddened bricks. The wrought iron gates lifted to admit me, and down the winding drive I went until I found the renowned politician awaiting me. We exchanged no greeting, but as is our custom I began at once:

“A new nation is rising in the West – born of an exiled people and destined, if the oracles be believed, to be the last the hills shall suffer. I have been sent from our Senate to ask of you in the name of your illustrious ancestor, how we shall proceed. In what manner shall we conquer this last race?”

Tarquin made no reply, but beckoning me to follow, he drew a spindly cane from behind his front door, and closing it, led me to the garden. It was encompassed in high stone walls and filled on every side with poppies. A haze swelled amid the walls, and red light sullied the air around and burned upon the flowers. In the middle of the garden was a tree, and entwined with its trunk a brazen serpent glared through ruby eyes.

Still silent, Tarquin raised his ashen stick, and strolling down the winding path lopped off the heads of the tallest poppies, so that all were brought to one level. Thus he processed around the whole of the garden, not leaving a single flower to exalt about the rest, until at last he came to the center and the tree. Staring with an unsearchable expression into the eyes of the snake, he lifted his cane once more, and cut the hissing head of the statue clean from the body. As it was rent, the sculpture poured forth a stream of boiling blood. It ran down the tree and despoiled the earth about the flowers, drenching their sucking roots with the fatal draft.

I stood paralyzed with fear, for the figure of the snake was a sacred symbol among us, and blasphemy against it was punishable by the most miserable of torments. Tarquin however grinned as the head fell away and the flowers wilted with

the drying blood. Finally as the stream thereof was quenched, a choking fog flew from the severed neck and closed above us.

“So shall you do unto this nation. Behold, a dragon is born of the ashes of Ilium, brought to life by Hades' dying breath. He is not descended from any of the ancient houses, but he shall be greater than the heirs of Ares ever were. This new nation shall be the dominion of his inheritance. This people shall fall beneath his blank banner, for he is the Grey Dragon.”

Camillus looked once more, and now saw the Dragon splayed around the city, breathing a fog through its streets – like a wyrm of old guarding hoarded treasure.

“This city is made of stone, and it's men are base – why then does the dragon guard them so jealously?” asked Camillus, a shiver running through him.

“Will such a city as this be bought by a few pieces of gold, or by any slight measure of silver, or shall an army of ten noble warriors overcome a horde of the cowardly?”

“I do not know, but today we shall see if a man may overcome a dragon,” said Camilus stepping towards the door, but the sleeping man heard him not.

If Camillus had expected to make his way out of the city as he had entered it, he was mistaken. For when he left the building he found himself confronted by the dragon, scarcely visible amid the gray streets and rushing exhaust of engines. The beast's body wound through the buildings disappearing behind them, and its horned head and clawed forefeet were spirits before the carts and men that passed through them, no one seeing but Camilus what monster vaunted over the city.

“Why do you trouble me?” it whispered in a hiss.

“On account of my land which is barren, and this people who suffer beneath your hand.”

“You can not liberate what has never been imprisoned. My fathers in their foolishness entrapped maidens by force; see how I surpass my kind. I have seduced these souls with ugliness, and they lie in the squalor of their own free will. Let the prince come harrowing and they will reject him, they will say they need no saviour but themselves”

“Then I shall rally them to rebel against you, else I shall slay you myself.”

“My fathers fought in wars and reaped their zealots through battle. See how I have overcome them. For no man can defeat me while I abstain from the fight, neither can the sword find me whilst I remain invisible.”

“Then I shall rouse you to anger. Your breath, the fog that blinds this city, shall rekindle with Ares' flame, and you shall bring your claws to bare against human flesh. For it is the destiny of the sword to turn against you, and the honor of man to steer it.”

“At the point of triumph, my Trojan fathers received their doom into their midst, thus did Ilium fall,” cried the dragon, his voice rising. “But I am greater than they! I will not forsake death to kill. I am sleep, wrath will not awaken me. I am darkness, fire will not dispel

me. I am death, death will never take me.”

Tarquin rose from his chair, for a knock had sounded at his door. Walking slowly across the room, he had not quite reached the hall before the visitor entered of his own accord. Leaning leisurely on his crooked cane, Tarquin acknowledged the distinguished guest with a nod of the head.

“Do you know why I have come?” asked the visitor.

Tarquin confessed that he did not, resuming his seat and gesturing to his guest to sit also. The visitor declined, rather coldly, and remained standing.

“What business brings you here then?” inquired Tarquin, propping his cane against the wall and feigning to relax.

“Oh nothing, I was just walking in your garden when I thought I would drop in and make a test of your hospitality,” he answered, staring at his host intensely, his head slightly cocked to one side.

“What business brings you to my garden then?” pressed tarquin, a little rudely.

“Just a rumor.”

“What?”

“That your plan has gone farther than I approved.”

“I have taken some slight initiative, but nothing that hasn't turned you a profit,” Tarquin assured him, trying to keep his fingers from tapping nervously on his leg.

“I am hungry,” was all the visitor said in response.

Tarquin rose at once and made for the pantry, sensing that this was not a time to test his superior's patience. Quickly producing from his larder the best of his stock, he returned to the sitting room, finding as he entered it that the visitor had taken up his cane and was toying with it idly.

“You see, Tarquin, this simply isn't good enough. You will forgive an old aristocrat his fastidiousness.”

“But we discussed this, the quality of the fare is temporarily suffering, but when you remember the charts-“

“I no longer care for charts and graphs, Tarquin. I am ravenous for flesh. It is time for the great war, time for the reaping, the hills groan for release, Tarquin.”

“Do not let pride impair your judgment master,” Tarquin burst out, “the grey dragon will-”

The visitor had raised the cane, and in one swift motion rent the speaker's head from his shoulders.

“Pride, Tarquin? Has your generation forgotten already how we came here? Why do you call prideful the harbinger of pride? I confess that I had hoped your plan would give me satisfaction, but I found your excitement about the project far more obnoxious than it was profitable. Besides, how good you do smell, Tarquin. Even a swine could not eat such filth and die so fat.”

And the grey dragon said, "I am king over this city and death is my throne."

But Camillus mocked him saying, "If you are the king, come down and command your subjects. I cry unto the king, let us see if the king will answer me. If he is king, let him command but a hair of the head of his servants. Where is the king? Either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." This did Camillus say, and he laughed in the face of the grey dragon.

As all this transpired, the men of the streets grew uneasy for they neither saw nor heard the dragon, and took the traveler for a mad man. Yet as Camillus laughed, a great roar broke on the ears of all, and the snarling jaws of a terrible snake grew up out of the mist, which flung itself upon Camillus, with all its flames and its claws and its fury. Camillus drew his sword with haste, and the fire of the dragon's breath alighted upon it, and he ran the dragon through the heart with the might of its own fire.

The bulk of the beast fell as it appeared and caused great destruction, but the mist lifted from over the city, as a curtain being drawn aside, and as paper burns in waves of running flame, so it vanished before the sun.

Those who had seen Camillus slay the monster soon spread the word so that all were humbled, and they elected him ruler while the damage was repaired. They moved the corpse of the dragon out of the city, his meat being unfit for food, and burned him one great pyre.

Camillus ruled over them well for seven months and took a wife from the city, and then departed in the night with her to his farm where no man found him. There he had many children, and they lived on the fruits of the earth. The grey-coated man was never found, and many say he works mischief somewhere unto this day, but I think the cane of Tarquin trod another neck before it was laid aside. In any case, Camillus never heard of him again, and he and his family lived happily ever after.



George Shaw

16 years old

South Carolina

How to Read Literature

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