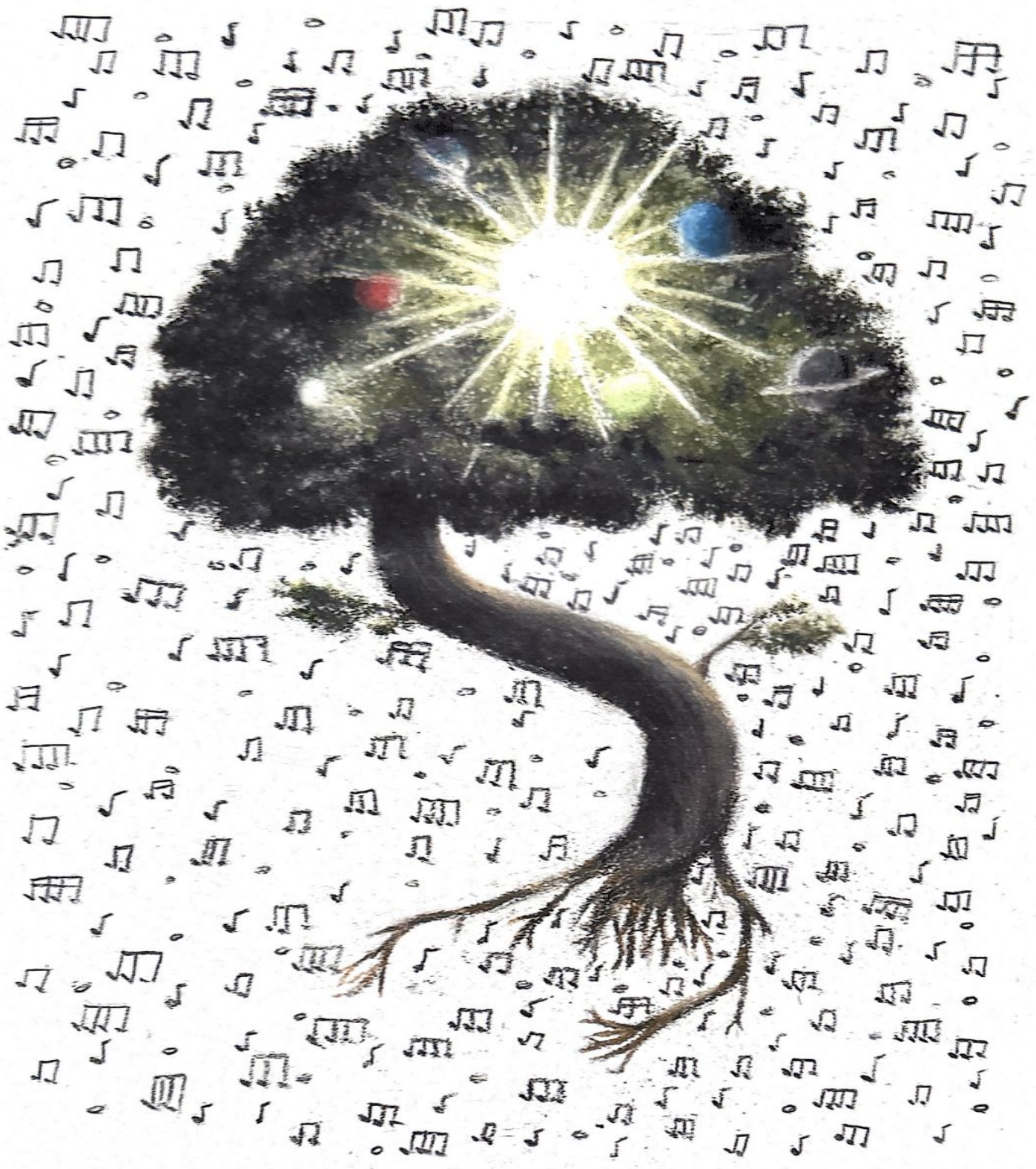


The Scriptorium

Fall 2026: The Music of the Spheres

The Scriptorium

Fall 2026: The Music of the Spheres
House of Humane Letters Student Journal

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Letter from the Editor-in-Chief

Dear Reader,

Growing up I was never exposed to much mainstream music, as I was raised on a healthy and eclectic diet of Irish folk songs, Broadway musicals, and fantasy movie soundtracks. But after several car rides with friends where they knew millions of songs I didn't, I decided to learn the types of songs that my peers knew.

As so often happens, once I got hooked on more modern music, the pendulum swung perhaps a bit too far, so that I neglected *Les Miserables* and "The Wild Rover" for One Direction and Benson Boone. I really don't want to be snobby about these mainstream songs, some of them are really incredible, but most of them are not the kind of music that we are talking about when we say "The Music of the Spheres".

Just a couple days ago, I realized that it had been a while since I listened to my "instrumental songs from movies" playlist and put it on while walking on the trail by our house. It was a cool rather gray afternoon, the only color the leaves of red and gold adorning the trees, and as I listened to the Shire theme in *The Lord of the Rings*, the melancholy tune of "This Land" from The Lion King, the sheer epic grandeur of "Test Drive" from *How to Train Your Dragon*, I felt as though my spirit had been revitalized, my soul brought closer to God. This is the kind of music where the very bones of it, beyond the words or the tune or the story it's telling, are sanctifying.

Because as I walked and listened, I could hear the music of the spheres. The satisfaction of rhythm and rhyme entwining, the perfection of a dance where everybody knows the moves, the polyphony of every different piece of creation singing their own separate tune which comes together to form the most beautiful work of art imaginable.

This is the theme of this issue: The Music of the Spheres. This medieval concept is thoughtfully explored through Natalia Testa's beautifully written essay on polyphony in *Gaudy Night*, Eleanor Ting's commonplace quotes from *The Magician's Nephew* on the song that brought Narnia to life, and many others, including our first ever alumni submission: "Heavenly Harmony" by Ann Elizabeth Jecko, a lovely article describing how dancing — such as English country dancing or swing — is the perfect image of the cosmic dance.

There are many other works of art in this issue not directly tied to the theme, but which still, as all good pieces do, adheres to the same harmonic structure and rhythm and which still reveals the same well-ordered beauty of the music of the spheres. From Jonas Daughtery's beautiful drawing of an Italian town to Jewel Jack's translation of an Ancient Greek poem, this might be our loveliest issue yet! I hope you enjoy reading this issue as much as we enjoyed putting it together and until next time, stories will save the world!

Yours,
Fiona Clare Altschuler
Editor-in-Chief

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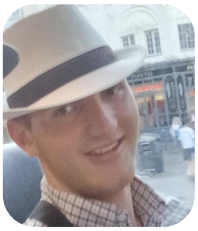
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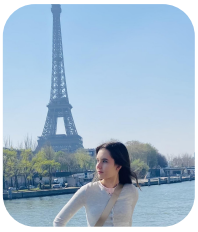
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The heavens themselves, the planets, and this center
Observe degree, priority, and place,
Insisture, course, proportion, season, form,
Office, and custom, in all line of order.
And therefore is the glorious planet Sol
In noble eminence enthroned and sphered
Amidst the other, whose med'cinable eye
Corrects the influence of evil planets,
And posts, like the commandment of a king,
Sans check, to good and bad. But when the planets
In evil mixture to disorder wander,
What plagues and what portents, what mutiny,
What raging of the sea, shaking of Earth,
Commotion in the winds, frights, changes, horrors
Divert and crack, rend and deracinate
The unity and married calm of states
Quite from their fixture!

Troilus and Cressida
William Shakespeare
Act I, Scene III, 89-105

Features

If They Will Leave Us the Counterpoint

Music and Polyphony in Gaudy Night

Dorothy L. Sayers' 1935 novel *Gaudy Night* is a tapestry of themes and symbolism. A curious mixture of *Through the Looking-Glass* and the classic detective story that was being innovated by Sayers and her contemporaries in the period between the world wars, it's a story of Oxford, *Love's Labours Lost* and *Much Ado About Nothing,* and the endurance of order in a fallen world. It is all of these things and more, and despite the words of critics deserves its place as the magnum opus of the Wimsey novels. But first and foremost, it is a medieval story. Readers may remember my previous essay, "The King of Nonsense and the Queen of Crime", published last autumn in *The Poetry of Nature*. There I wrote about the remarkable influence of Lewis Carroll (and his poem "Maggie Goes to Oxford") on Sayers' canon, and the ensuing parallels between Alice's adventures and Harriet Vane's. Given this issue's theme, *The Music of the Spheres*, I thought it appropriate to discuss the theme of music in the novel.

We first see music properly in chapter nineteen, when Peter sits down to the spinet in the antique shop. What looks like only a moment for the two main characters, and easily missed, is an image of the fundamental tension of the story and the relationship of the two main characters. Peter plays a couple Bach pieces, "Greensleeves", and "When Lo! By Break of Morning"–the latter two are Elizabethan, tipping us off to the themes of constancy and appearance vs reality[1]–before he says:

[1] Bach is famously a master of counterpoint. Cf. Peter's question in Ch 23. Peter's devotion to Bach is consistent through the series since the first Wimsey novel and both Harriet and Sayers were in the Bach Choir at Oxford. (Sayers had a contralto voice. It is perhaps also worth noting that, like Sherlock, she was a violinist, and that her father was a very competent musician.)
Harriet joining in "Greensleeves" with Peter is also its own symbolic moment, for obvious reasons.

> "This kind of thing," said Peter, as tenor and alto twined themselves in a last companionable cadence, "is the body and bones of music. Anybody can have the harmony, if they will leave us the counterpoint."[2]

Counterpoint, as defined by Steven Laitz in *The Complete Musician*, is "the relationship of two or more simultaneous musical lines (also called voices) that are harmonically dependent on each other, yet independent in rhythm and melodic contour", while harmony, according to Britannica, is the "sound of two or more notes heard simultaneously".

Over and over again, ever since her entrance into the Wimsey canon, Harriet Vane has been trying to figure out what a relationship with Lord Peter might be like. Overall, she is afraid of being completely lost and overrun, figuring that his fascination with her is only that of the rescuer, that of vanity and nothing more. He is the superior intellect, which can "always make rings round her own more slowly-moving wits"[3], "the familiar intelligence that lived and moved so curiously behind an oddly amusing set of features"[4]; "to him she was, of course, only the creature of his making and the mirror of his own magnanimity"[5]. And yet Peter puts them in the position of equals in his letter of April 1st[6]. Harriet is astonished (as the popular saying goes, "thrown"). Her idea of him goes out the window, and finally she is beginning to see him as he really is.

> Even in the five years or so that she had known him, Harriet had seen him strip off his protections, layer by layer, till there was uncommonly little left but the naked truth.

---

[2] *Gaudy Night*, Ch 19. Peter then plays two more Elizabethan/Jacobean songs: "Go to Bed, Sweet Muse" (which Harriet joins him in) and "Fain Would I Change that Note" (which she lets him sing alone).
[3] Ibid., Ch 14. (Cf. Ch 4: ''Nobody,' said Harriet, 'could deny your brain.')
[4] Ibid., Ch 14.
[5] Ibid., Ch 12.
[6] Ibid., Ch 11.
[7] Ibid., Ch 18. Cf. Eustace in *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. (I do not imply that Peter and Eustace are the same person..)

Harriet becomes more and more conscious of this theme in their relationship. This comes out in conversations like these:

> 'And yet, if anybody had asked me, I should have said you had a passion for balance and order–no beauty without measure.'
>
> 'One may have a passion for the unattainable.'
>
> 'But you do attain it. At least, you appear to attain it.'
>
> 'The perfect Augustan; No; I'm afraid it's at most a balance of opposing forces. . .'[8]

We learn that Peter does not want to "forget, or to be quiet, or to be spared things, or to stay put"[9] but a central stability and a balance such as that of a top on a spindle[10]. He loves Harriet, not because she is an achievement, a damsel he saved from distress, but because she has a "devastating talent for keeping to the point and speaking the truth", his same chronic honesty but without his inhibitions and self-doubts. As Dorothy Sayers put it in her essay "Gaudy Night",

> On the surface he is a comedian; his dislocation is at the centre: she is tragic externally, for all her dissatisfactions are patent, but she has the central unity which he has not.

She is his complement, the moon queen to his fire king, fundamentally to the point even when practically spiritually blind. She can't help it[11]. She is a scholar, and unlike him, "the creative artist"[12].

---

[8] Ibid., Ch 15.
[9] Ibid., Ch 18.
[10] Cf. the Petrarchan sonnet of Ch 18, "her beautiful, big, peaceful humming-top turned to a whip-top, and sleeping, as it were, upon compulsion."
[11] I suggest that Harriet is basically Alice, if Alice was a grown-up writer novelist when she went to Wonderland.
[12] "Gaudy Night".

> For some reason, obscure to herself and probably also to him, she had the power to force him outside his defences. Perhaps, seeing in a trap of circumstance, he had walked out deliberately to her assistance. Or perhaps the sight of her struggles had warned him what might happen to him, if he remained in a trap of his own making. Yet with all this, he seemed willing to let her run back behind the barriers of the mind (...) provided she would make her own way of escape through her work. (...) He did recognize that she had an outlet which he had not.[13]

Students of Sayers' *Mind of the Maker*, Coleridge's *Biographia Literaria*, L'Engle's *Walking on Water*, and Tolkien's theory of subcreation will recognize this as a familiar theme. Sayers was interested in examining this figure of the creative artist, and how it related to academic integrity, sticking to the facts, and the faith. It is this she examines in her religious play *The Zeal of Their House*. Some of its passages could be taken straight from *Gaudy Night,* but the novel is much more well-known, and perhaps, in its displaced form, a better vessel for showing it.

Therefore, when Peter uses the metaphor of counterpoint, he is telling her that she doesn't need to be worried about being overrun and lost in the relationship. Nor do they need to be the "sound of two or more notes heard simultaneously", which everybody could have. Instead, he is proposing something much more special and much more attuned to who Harriet is personally. It's tenor and alto "twining" themselves together in cadence, and the "body and bones of music"[14].

Thus, at the end of the book, when Peter takes Harriet to a performance of Bach's Concerto for Two Violins in D Minor, we are given the following brief but powerful sentence. Peter is going to hear every side of this proposed relationship and how it works. He will hear the whole pattern, and care that it is both of them together[15].

[13] *Gaudy Night*, Ch 18. Having read *Strong Poison* and *Gaudy Night*, we know that this is true.
[14] Cf. *Gaudy Night,* Ch 4.
[15] *Gaudy Night*, Ch 23.

Harriet sees his suggestion for what it is.

> 'Peter — what did you mean when you said that anybody could have the harmony if they would leave us the counterpoint?'
>
> 'Why,' said he, shaking his head, 'that I like my music polyphonic. If you think I meant anything else, you know what I meant.'
>
> 'Polyphonic music takes a lot of playing. You've got to be more than a fiddler. It needs a musician.'
>
> 'In this case, two fiddlers — both musicians.[16]'

Harriet's still worried that she isn't "much of a musician". But Peter knows that she is: 'I admit that Bach isn't a matter of an autocratic virtuoso and a meek accompanist. But do you want to be either?'

We're brought back to *Have His Carcase:*

> "But I don't want any [emotional] situation. I want to be left in peace."
>
> "Oh! But you are not a peaceful person. You'll always make trouble. Why not fight it out on equal terms and enjoy it? Like Alan Breck, I'm a bonny fighter.[17]"

Dorothy Sayers uses the theme of counterpoint masterfully and intentionally to tell the story of Peter and Harriet. She was a medieval scholar, and well did she know the image of the ordered cosmos presented by the medieval imagination: that of the celestial song, the ancient song of creation, reverberating throughout the heavens, audible to soul attuned, and to the well-ordered pairing of the heart and the brain.

---

[16] Ibid.
[17] *Have His Carcase,* Ch 13.
Peter is referring to Alan Breck's line in *Kidnapped*: "am I no' a bonny fighter?" (Ch 10)



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They have told us that our atmosphere is what they call opaque, so that the stars are not visible, and then they are surprised that we know stars, that we know their music and the movements of their dance far better than beings like you who spend hours studying them through what you call telescopes.

A Wrinkle in Time
Madeleine L'Engle

Everything that happens within the created Order, no matter how small, has its effect. If you are angry, that anger is added to all the hate with which the Echthroi would distort the melody and destroy the ancient harmonies. When you are loving, that lovingness joins the music of the spheres.

A Swiftly Tilting Planet
Madeleine L'Engle

Of Earth and Fire

A Study of the Four Humors in Hamlet

Hamlet has long captured the interest of literary critics. Readings such as Freud's lean towards Hamlet having "suppressed emotions" and "childhood trauma," causing his fall to be inevitable, while others maintain that it is instead Hamlet's melancholy temperament leading him to madness and thus his demise. Contrary to these popular ways of analyzing the text, this essay will present the idea that it is Hamlet moving away from the melancholic humor to the choleric that drives his descent.

For a quick summary, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* is the story of a prince whose father has died and whose mother, Gertrude, has remarried Claudius, Hamlet's uncle, now king. Hamlet was angry at his mother marrying so quickly after his father's funeral and suspicious that Claudius had killed Hamlet Senior to gain the throne. The speedy marriage made him wonder if his mother had been in on the plot. Early on, what is supposed to be the ghost of the deceased king (we never know for sure), appears to Hamlet and entreats vengeance against Claudius.

As the play unfolds, Hamlet painstakingly plots his vendetta, pretending to be insane as cover for his strange behavior. He instructs a play to be put on before an audience of several people, including Claudius, that loosely follows the outline of Claudius's crime. Finally, Hamlet gets the perfect opportunity to kill Claudius. At the last second, Hamlet gives it up, using the excuse that Claudius is praying and, if killed, might end up in heaven instead of hell. Hamlet then meets his mother in her room. A short way into their heated conversation,

a figure who has been hiding behind the arras spying on them, cries out for help because he fears Hamlet will kill Gertrude in anger. Hardly waiting a second, Hamlet rushes and blindly stabs the figure, assuming it to be Claudius, but who turned out to be Polonius, the counselor and father of Ophelia, a girl Hamlet was in love with. Hamlet then continues to berate his mother and gets so heated that the Ghost appears for the fourth and final time and gives him a stern warning.

After the death of Polonius, Claudius no longer felt safe with Hamlet around and ships him off to England to be quietly killed. Along the way Hamlet comes upon Fortinbras, the prince of Norway, who is making plans to regain control of the lands his father lost to Hamlet's father. Hamlet admires Fortinbras' determination and makes an oath that he will try even harder to fulfill the ghost's requests. He manages to escape the ship to England and returns to Denmark where he finds that Ophelia has died by drowning. Passionately wrestling with Laertes in Ophelia's grave, Hamlet makes a speech about his love for Ophelia, even forgetting to appear mad in his outburst. Later Claudius devises a plan with Laertes to kill Hamlet. A duel is proposed and, unbeknownst to Hamlet, Laertes' rapier and a goblet for Hamlet have been poisoned. In the subsequent chaotic moments, almost everyone dies and the crown goes to Fortinbras, who has just arrived.

Applying knowledge of the four humors to Hamlet we see Shakespeare emphasizing the play's melancholy nature early on. Hamlet is described wearing an "inky cloak," wrapping himself in the color of melancholy, and Gertrude pleads "Good Hamlet, cast thy nighted color off." Not only in Hamlet's choice of wardrobe do black and darkness pervade the play.

The beginning scene and several important ones leading up to and including Act III take place at night.

Several characters comment on how cold it is, giving a sense of a cold and gloomy setting of this world.

Intentionally building a melancholic persona for Hamlet and allowing it to steep into the play's atmosphere, Shakespeare also encourages us to perceive Hamlet as a character prone to overthinking and being indecisive, thus inactive. Because of this, it might come as a surprise to the attentive reader, if they even notice the shift, when Hamlet goes against his character at the end of Act III, turning away from his inactiveness to a much more active, choleric, temperament.

In Shakespearean drama the last scene of Act III holds the crux of the play and the point of no return for the main character. Understanding this is often crucial for comprehending the play, especially one as complex as Hamlet. Queen Gertrude here calls Hamlet into her room. Shortly into their conversation a figure cries out from behind a curtain. Hamlet wastes no time in stabbing who he presumes to be Claudius only to discover that it was Polonius instead. Moreover, throughout the ensuing conversation with his mother, Hamlet grows gradually more flustered and Gertrude is once again worried that he will kill her. Hardly a scene before, Hamlet had passed up an opportunity to kill Claudius, his excuse being that Claudius was praying and killing him would send him to Heaven instead of Hell.

From thinking and overthinking through every step, Hamlet has gone to rashly stabbing the wrong person and almost killing his mother in anger, as well. This doesn't sound like the actions of a melancholic. This shift in humoretical language continues into Act IV. Claudius, after a long search for Polonius's body, with no help from Hamlet, who is back to playing the aloof madman, gives a short soliloquy.

Talking to himself, he beseeches England to take Hamlet and do away with him.

"Do it, England,

For like the hectic fever in my blood he rages."

(Act IV, Scene III, 74-75)

Neither "hectic fever" or "rages" are words usually used to allude to a melancholic. Scene IV then begins with Fortinbras discussing with his army their plans to attack Poland. Hamlet, overhearing while on his way to the ship, takes encouragement from Fortinbras, and ends the scene, saying,

"O, from this time forth

My thoughts be bloody or be nothing worth!"

(Act IV, Scene IV, 68-69)

Thus making an oath that he will take action and be determined in his thoughts of revenge. Soon after his return to Denmark, Hamlet finds out that Ophelia died, and in a burst of grief and desire to prove how strong his love for Ophelia was, he wrestles with Laertes (once again going against his melancholic nature). He even speaks in verse about his love for Ophelia, instead of the prose he usually uses for pretending to be mad in front of everyone.

When Claudius ascertains that Hamlet has returned to Denmark, he convinces Laertes to fight Hamlet in a duel. Hamlet is told that it is a simple duel with blunt foils, however Laertes is given a sharp, poisoned rapier, with which to stab his opponent. In case that doesn't work, Claudius also tells Laertes there will be a poisonous drought, remarking:

"When in your motion you are hot and dry

(As make your bouts more violent to that end)

And that he calls for drink, I'll have prepared him."

(Act I, Scene VII,179-182)

Of course, Claudius is talking about the duel, but it applies to the entire play.

In Hamlet's "motion" (fighting to avenge his father), he becomes "hot and dry": the qualities of a choleric. In case we need further convincing, the courtier, Osric, sent to inform Hamlet about the duel, comments on the heat. Four acts before this, characters had commented, "Tis bitter cold," (Act I, Scene I, 8).

To prevent us from missing Osric's remark, Shakespeare turns it into a back and forth between the two.

> "Osric: I thank your Lordship; it is very hot.
>
> Hamlet: No, believe me, 'tis very cold; the wind is northerly.
>
> Osric: It is indifferent cold, my lord, indeed.
>
> Hamlet: But yet methinks it is very ⟨sultry⟩ and hot ⟨for⟩ my complexion.
>
> Osric: Exceedingly, my lord; it is very sultry,"
>
> (Act V, Scene II, 107-113)

Owing to the fact that the melancholic temperament is associated with autumn and thus the cold, as shown in our table, Shakespeare has multiple characters comment on the cold in the beginning of the play. Summer, and heat, however, is the season associated with the choleric humor, and it is not only interesting but important to note the shift in atmosphere. The soul is a microcosm of the cosmos, and as Hamlet's soul changes, so does Denmark.

The problem that arises is: what provokes Hamlet's change in temperament? Whether we choose to think of the ghost as Hamlet's father or a spirit in disguise, it is in the scenes where it makes an appearance and is discussed, that we can ascertain the answer. Horatio remarks early on that the ghost is wearing armor, the same, in fact, that Hamlet's father wore into his battles.

> "Such was the very armor he had on"
>
> (Act I, Scene I, 70).

A few scenes later when the ghost appears to Hamlet, its message is one of revenge, egging Hamlet to not rest until Claudius is killed. Indeed, the more we learn about Hamlet's father, the more we associate him with war. He was a dreaded warrior, for example, and had killed Fortinbras' father in a duel over land.

It is also likely, however, that the ghost is not Hamlet's father at all, but instead an evil spirit attempting to cause chaos in Hamlet's life. Commenting on this later in Act II, Hamlet says,

> "The Spirit I have seen
> May be a devil and the devil hath power
> T'assume a pleasing shape; yea, and perhaps
> Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
> As he is very potent with such spirits,
> Abuse me to damn me."
> (Act II, Scene II, 627-632)

Even Hamlet has the suspicion that all is not as it seems. Summarizing the thoughts of his time, Robert Burton in *The Anatomy of Melancholy* written in 1621, a few years after Shakespeare's death, quotes two authorities on the topic of spirits and melancholics:

> Agrippa and Lavater are persuaded that this humor [melancholy] invites the devil to it, wheresoever it is in extremity, and of all other, melancholic persons are the most subject to diabolical temptations and illusions, and most apt to entertain them, and the devil best able to work on them.

If it is a spirit from sulfuric Hades to damn Hamlet, it still follows that it is associated with thoughts of war and action. Although war isn't explicitly connected with choler, the complexion is known for being fiery and rash, and the planet Mars is named after the god of war. In brief, the ghost is choleric and can quickly "work i' th' earth" (1.5.83), thus turning Hamlet choleric as well.

It is not hard to imagine Hamlet remaining in his state of inactive melancholy if the ghost had never appeared, sulking forever in the past, or at least until some other large matter occupied his thoughts. The ghosts' interference and command for action caused Hamlet to act outside of his nature.

It is necessary to clarify that the choleric personality is not bad. In fact, fire is the highest element and in its pure state it is the closest to the ethereal heavens. In its corrupted form, however, it destroys instead of purifies and becomes like sulfuric hell. Choosing revenge over forgiveness is far from a pure pursuit, thus Hamlet, by listening to the evil spirit and obeying its advice, falls prey to this destructive fire.

Hamlet is the allegorical story of a soul that obeys an evil force, acts against its nature, and procures not only its own downfall but that of its community. Shakespeare conveys this by using the four humors and its web of symbols, dropping important clues into lines that we often don't give a second thought to, and filling the play with rich meaning that often isn't apparent the first, second, or even the seventh time through. Popular ways of reading this play are problematic because they strip away the allegorical meaning and miss the point of Shakespeare entirely. often reducing Hamlet to no more than a mere a product of trauma and suppressed impulses, mastered by his subconscious, fated to end as he did. The conclusions reached by ignoring medieval allegory and symbolism take away the transcendental meaning of the play. Leaving it flat and one-dimensional, the furthest thing from Shakespearean drama.

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Later Modern Literature

The heavens are telling the glory of God;
And the firmament proclaims his handiwork.
Day to day pours forth speech,
And night to night declares knowledge.
There is no speech, nor are there words;
Their voice is not heard;
Yet their voices goes out through all the earth,
And their words to the end of the world.

Psalm 19:1-4, RSV2CE

Heavenly Harmony

The Music of the Spheres Meets the Mambo

An Alumni Feature

Anybody can have the harmony, if they will leave us the counterpoint. . .

~ Lord Peter Wimsey, Gaudy Night, ch 19 ~

This is going to be an ambitious article. It will be so primarily because I am venturing out of my normal traces of thought and will attempt to write about music and the Medieval mind with some semblance of coherency. I am not a music expert by any means, but it doesn't take long to learn that every discipline connects in some way, shape, or form; a Science of Relations, as Charlotte Mason would say.

The idea for this article came while I was listening to a friend give a conference talk about the Lord Peter books by Dorothy L. Sayers . She used the quote above to illustrate the idea of harmony that runs throughout those books. But the principle of counterpoint stuck with me and I've been thinking about it ever since. I learned that counterpoint (or contrapuntal music) is what we call a piece of music in which two or more voices are heard. But it is different from the simple polyphony of melody and harmony. In counterpoint, each voice is a melody that needs to make sense and be able to stand on its own, but when it is blended with the other voices, it creates a rich tapestry of sound, each voice playing in and out of each other, combining to form beautiful notes of harmony. There are many other rules that get into the weeds of music theory, but that is the general idea. So what does that have to do with the Medieval mind and dancing?

I have been dancing for as long as I can remember. But about five years ago

I learned how to do English Country Dancing (think what Jane Austen would have done) and went on to learn how to do ballroom dances like waltz, cha cha, and even swing. I fell in love with all of it and even now I am never happier than when I'm dancing. But having done it all these years I have had a lot of time to mull over the connection between dancing and the Medieval conception of the Music of the Spheres and the Cosmic Dance.

The Music of the Spheres is a beautiful image of harmony in the universe, from the smallest ant to the far reaches of the universe; God has created all of it and when it is in tune with Him, there is harmony. The Medievals had a lovely image of angels sitting on each planet, singing their own tune as they revolve throughout space which, when they all blend together, makes a harmonious whole. Related to that, the Cosmic Dance is another image of the universe being in harmony, in which the natural wonders are seen as being in a kind of dance as the world turns on its axis. The waves obeying natural order are dancing as they crash on the shore as well as the starry heavens above them. E.M.W. Tillyard's wonderful little book *The Elizabethan World Picture* has more on the Medieval idea of harmony, and I highly recommend it.

Just as Paul describes the Church as a body, with each part having its own individual function, while also contributing to the whole, the Medievals saw each man as having his own part to play, his own purpose on this earth given by God, but that he also was part of God's bigger story and contributed to something larger than himself. And yet he was always in his place, and an ordered man did not attempt to transgress his given lot by trying to be what he was not purposed to be. To try to be what you are not results in chaos.

And now we can put the pieces together.

Anyone who has done any sort of dancing knows that the choreography must be followed or else chaos ensues. Whether you are dancing with a partner or are part of a ballet troupe, you must keep your own place in the dance. I recall a time when I tried to teach a group of friends the very fun and slightly complicated dance the *Irish Washerwoman*. Not being particularly skilled in the art of dance calling, the dance was a mess because I did not know how to coherently convey the steps (though it was of course still good fun). However, it serves as a wonderful picture of what happens when each person is not dancing their own part: chaos follows and the dance is not completed or done well.

This brings us back to counterpoint. In counterpoint, each voice is a distinct melody and can stand on its own. In dance, each dancer is his own distinct person. When I am dancing the waltz, for instance, I have my own part to do. My partner has a different part to play, but it is just as important as mine. If I decided that I did not want to waltz anymore and just stood in the middle of the dance floor, well, my partner would look rather silly dancing by himself. Likewise, if I decided I wanted to dance his part, or vice versa, there would be chaos. We can't both lead or both follow. That would be like playing the same exact tune on two different instruments. We must complement each other, play our own part and then come back together to create a satisfying harmony.

And so in life. The Medievals saw all of creation as working together in harmony. But in order to form harmony, we need different parts. A tree is not a river, but thank goodness we have both! I am not living the same life as my neighbor, but God created both of us to do His will in our own ways and bring honor and glory to His name in the way that He formed us to. f I try to transgress my given station; in dance, if I want to be the head couple instead of the

the bottom or if I want to play the trumpet's part instead of the violin's, I am transgressing the natural order that God has created and it will not end well. We are all in a dance, an orchestra, a harmonious universe created by God, though it is suffering from the Fall. And yet though it is imperfect because of that, and though we are sinful creatures, prone to disorder, we can still hear the music of the spheres and can enjoy dancing and music and be recalled to order knowing that it is a microcosm of the glorious harmony that God has created. We can look forward to the time when all shall be made whole again and the true fullness of harmony will be made known and we can glory in it forever.

> From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
> This universal frame began.
> When Nature underneath a heap
> Of jarring atoms lay,
> And could not heave her head,
> The tuneful voice was heard from high,
> Arise ye more than dead.
> Then cold, and hot, and moist, and dry,
> In order to their stations leap,
> And music's pow'r obey.
> From harmony, from Heav'nly harmony
> This universal frame began:
> From harmony to harmony
> Through all the compass of the notes it ran,
> The diapason closing full in man.
>
> John Dryden "A Song for St. Cecilia's Day, 1687



Ann Elizabeth Jecko
House of Humane Letters Alumna
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A Score to be Settled

"Neue Musik" and the Battle of the Ancients and the Moderns

Following the first World War, a new style of music emerged. Called variously by the names of "Neue Musik" (a German term given by Paul Bekker in 1919), Contemporary Classical music, or Modernism, this music is distinctly different from what came before it in many ways.

Contemporary Classical composers are intentionally breaking the rules in their music. For example, a modernist piece might change time signatures every other measure, instruct you to play tones with your instrument that aren't even real notes, add extra notes into a measure that do not fit into the time signature, and so on. Sometimes the time signature is even in parentheses–a suggestion, but one which the composer certainly won't hold himself to. In the Modern era, rules are seen merely as holding us back. Despite this, Modern composers often do create their own rules, many times including a page or two of notes on how to play their contemporary piece. But these rules only apply to their singular piece of music.

Contrast this Modern idea of rules with an earlier idea of structure and rules. Rules keep us safe. We are told not to run into the middle of the road when we are young, not because our parents don't wish us to have fun but because we might get hit by a car. Likewise, in a dance, everyone must follow the pattern or it will fall apart very quickly. Imagine if a group of people were trying to dance a polka, and then all of a sudden one couple started dancing a reel.

In order for everyone to have a good time and be safe we must follow the rules, because those rules give us structure. And structure grounds us in what is real, not just what we are feeling in the moment but pointing us upward to the ordered heavenly things.

Another thing that often occurs in Contemporary pieces is the attempt to make the instrument sound like something that it is not–a cello trying to sound like a guitar or a flute trying to sound like a train whistle. And just like if you asked a baker to help you with a plumbing problem, it often does not have very good results. For somebody or something is being asked to do something that they are not supposed to do.

In early music, the composers and musicians were very interested in the *affect* of a piece—the influence you have over your listener's emotions. They believed that music should *delight* the listener. Modern composers and musicians think about this rarely or not at all. This is a problem because music does have a strong influence on people's emotions, and these chaotic and disordered pieces that are being created can have a very negative effect on people emotionally and spiritually.

Contemporary Classical music often doesn't even have a melody–something that you think would be quite fundamental to a musical piece. It is more of a soundscape–a jumble of different sounds that have very little relation to one another. Sometimes they are about a specific thing, like a painting or a church. But unfortunately it often gives one the impression that rather than being given a poem or narration about that object in musical form, one is merely being given a heap of unconnected adjectives.

The Modernist definition of music is also quite disturbing. I was once told that "music is anything someone listens to with the intention of it being music." With that logic, I could stand by the side of the road, listen to the noises of traffic as if they were music, and they

would be music. And whatever else traffic noises may be, they are not music.

So then this begs the question, what *is* music? Music is audible art. Music must have some sort of structure or form. It should have a melody, like a painting has a subject, and most importantly, it should be beautiful. One note by itself is not music. But when you string some well-chosen notes together in a phrase–like a poem–*then* you do.

Modernist music is usually filled with dissonance (the opposite of harmony) which often is not resolved. This is not to say that music written in an earlier time does not have dissonance. It does. But it does not leave us with the dissonance and tell us that it is something beautiful that we must appreciate. It shows us the dissonance, and then contrasts it with harmony. It shows us the horizontal *and* the vertical. The dark *and* the light. It does not merely reflect our suffering on this earth, but points us higher and out of it.

The structure of early music shows us not only disorder but also order, and when we listen to good music, it helps us more rightly to order our souls when we feel lost. It tells us that yes, there is dissonance on this earth. But that is not all there is. There are higher things too.

There is harmony, and there is beauty. By the latter, I do not necessarily mean something pretty or charming on the surface level, but deeper and sometimes even terrible. This deeper beauty might not always make us feel comfortable, but it is different from that discomfort which arises from listening to Modern music.

When we are given a vision of something higher, it gives our souls a desire to seek higher things. What the Contemporary Classical composers have created is a mirror under the name of "self-expression" merely pointing us back to ourselves, leading our souls further into chaos and further away from Heaven.

If music was only self-expression, I would not be a musician. Music brings me out of myself so that I can see things anew, not in an escapist way but because when we experience beauty it helps us better apprehend the world we live in and ultimately come closer to God.

Is then Contemporary Classical music freeing? I think not.

It is lost, and being lost is not the same as being free.



Bethany Hansen
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And first of all, that which we call cosmic is to be contemplated mainly in the celestial phenomena, or in the structure of the elements, or in the sequence of the seasons. For how can it possibly be that so swift a machine as the sky be moved in a soundless path?

But if that sound does not reach our ears–and there are reasons for this–it is impossible that so swift a motion of such enormous bodies be soundless, all the more so since the courses of the stars are blended with so fine a harmony, that we can know of nothing equally combined and harmonized.

Boethius
De Musica
trans. James Garceau, et al.

Student Life

Ode to the Grasshopper - Anacreontea Poem 34

Original Greek text:

μακαρίζομεν σε, τέττιξ
ὅτε δενδρέων ἐπ᾽ ἄρκων
ὀλίγην δρόσον πεπωκὼς
βασιλεὺς ὅπως ἀείδεις·
σὰ γάρ ἐστι κεῖνα πάντα,
ὁπόσα βλέπεις ἐν ἀγροῖς,
ὁπόσα τρέφουσιν ὕλαι.
σὺ δὲ τίμιος βροτοῖσιν,
θέρεος γλυκὺς προφήτης.
φιλέουσι μέν σε Μοῦσαι
φιλέει δὲ Φοῖβος αὐτός,
λιγυρὴν δ᾽ἔδωκεν οἴμην.
τὸ δὲ γῆρας οὔ σε τείρει,
σοφέ, γηγενής, φίλυμνε·
ἀπαθὴς δ᾽, ἀναιμόσαρκε,
σχεδὸν εἶ θεοῖς ὅμοιος.

English Translation:

We bless you, O grasshopper!
When, having drunk a little dew
From the tall trees
You sing like a king.
All these things are yours:
As many things as you see in the fields,
As many things as the forests nourish.
You are honorable to mortals,
A sweet prophet of summer.
The Muses love you
And Phoebus himself loves you,
And he gave you your whistling song.
Old age wears you not,
Wise one, earthborn, lover of songs;

Unsuffering, unforgetting,
You are very nearly like the gods.



Jewel Jack
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Caedmon's Hymn

Original West Saxon text:

Nu sculon herigean heofonrices weard,
meotodes meahte and his modgeþanc,
weorc wuldorfæder, swa he wundra gehwæs,
ece drihten, or onstealde.
He ærest sceop eorðan bearnum
heofon to hrofe, halig scyppend;
þa middangeard moncynnes weard,
ece drihten, æfter teode
firum foldan, frea ælmihtig.

English translation:

Now, we shall praise the Lord of the Heavenly Kingdom,
The powers of the Measurer, and the purpose of his mind,
The work of the heavenly father, as he, eternal Lord,
Established the beginning of every wondrous thing,
He who first created heaven as a roof
For the children of men, holy creator;
Then the guardian of man-kind, Eternal Lord,
Afterwards created middle-earth,
The Lord Almighty made the earth for men.



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Arromanches Beach



Big Ben





Natalia Testa
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Neverland



Elegance





Olivia Hornstra
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How to Read Literature

Catullus 13

Original text:

Cenabis bene, mi Fabulle, apud me
paucis, si tibi di favent, diebus,
si tecum attuleris bonam atque magnam
cenam, non sine candida puella
et vino et sale et omnibus cachinnis.
haec si, inquam, attuleris, venuste noster,
cenabis bene; nam tui Catulli
plenus sacculus est aranearum.
sed contra accipies meros amores
seu quid suavius elegantiusve est:
nam unguentum dabo, quod meae puellae
donarunt Veneres Cupidinesque,
quod tu cum olfacies, deos rogabis,
totum ut te faciant, Fabulle, nasum.

English translation:

If the gods favor you, Fabullus,
You will dine with me;
But you must bring all the food,
And the wine and the gaiety.

You will indeed dine very well,
If you, Fabullus, don't lag.
For I have holes in all my purses,
And cobwebs in my bag.

In return, I'll give you, friend
Perfume that my girl chose.
It smells so sweet you'll ask the gods
To turn you into a nose!

Catullus 5

Original text:

Vivamus mea Lesbia, atque amemus,
rumoresque senum severiorum
omnes unius aestimemus assis!
soles occidere et redire possunt:
nobis cum semel occidit brevis lux,
nox est perpetua una dormienda.
da mi basia mille, deinde centum,
dein mille altera, dein secunda centum,
deinde usque altera mille, deinde centum.
dein, cum milia multa fecerimus,
conturbabimus illa, ne sciamus,
aut ne quis malus invidere possit,
cum tantum sciat esse basiorum.

English translation:

May we live, my Lesbia, and may we love;
And may the murmurings of all judgemental old men
Count as nothing more than a penny.
They are able to fall back and die alone:
To us, when the brief light dies on the first occasion,
Night is but one perpetual sleep.
Kiss me a thousand times, followed by a hundred,
Then a thousand more, and then again a hundred,
Then another thousand right on, and a hundred;
Then, when we have kissed many millions of times,
We will confuse them, lest we know,
Or lest someone is able to envy evilly,
When he knows just how many the kisses were.



Fiona Altschuler
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Maryland
Advanced Latin Elective

Hence to look out on the night sky with modern eyes is like looking out over a sea that fades away into mist, or looking about one in a trackless forest–trees forever and no horizon. To look up at the towering medieval universe is much more like looking at a great building.

The 'space' of modern astronomy may arouse terror, or bewilderment, or vague reverie; the spheres of the old present us with an object in which the mind can rest, overwhelming in its greatness but satisfying in its harmony.

The Discarded Image
C. S. Lewis

You Are Old, Father Cato

A Rendering of Cicero's De Senectute

"You are old, Father Cato," young Laelius said,
"And your wisdom faultlessly great;
Yet I have heard old men in their stead,
Who said that their age was a weight?"

"You are right," Father Cato replied to his friend,
"That the thing is not easy to gain;
But if men with chests will on virtue depend,
Then happiness they're sure to attain."

"You are old, Father Cato," the youth did reply,
"And that is the main point of that,
But what say you of those who espouse
That age comes quicker than wit?"

"When they're old," said the sage, "and see their grey hairs,
They're always complaining of fate;
But ere they should swear of four score's despair
They should think of hundreds of eight."



Natalia Testa
17 years old
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How to Read Literature, Later Modern Literature,
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Commonplace Quotes

The whole world is a series of miracles, but we are so used to them that we call them ordinary things.

Hans Christian Andersen



Ruby Teague
17 years old
Oklahoma
How to Read Literature

Fantasy remains a human right: we make it our measure and in our derivative mode, because we are made: and not only made, but in the image and likeness of a Maker.

On Fairy-Stories by J.R.R. Tolkien



Emma Jane Upchurch
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Latin Grammar 1

Then two wonders happened at the same moment. One was that the voice was suddenly joined by other voices; more voices than you could possibly count. They were in harmony with it, but far higher up the scale: cold, tingling, silvery voices. The second wonder was that the blackness overhead, all at once, was blazing with stars. They didn't come out gently one by one, as they do on a summer evening. One moment there had been nothing but darkness; next moment a thousand, thousand points of light leaped out—single stars, constellations and planets, brighter and bigger than any in our world. There were no clouds. The new stars and the new voices began at exactly the same time. If you had seen and heard it, as Digory did, you would have felt quite certain that it was the stars themselves which were singing, and that it was the First Voice, the deep one, which had made them appear and made them sing.

The Magician's Nephew by C.S. Lewis



Eleanor Ting
15 years old
California
Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Latin Grammar 2

Waxing Gibbous



Avril Lake



Fiery Sunset





Rhome Smith
17 years old
South Carolina
Ancient Literature

The Florilegium

A Column by Neva Garber

The Cajun Prairie

Butterflies and bees, apparently with no thought of hard times to come, are hovering above the late-blooming goldenrods, and, with countless other insect folk, are dancing and humming right merrily in the sunbeams and shaking all the air into music.
~ John Muir ~

Insects dancing and humming in the sunshine and shaking the air into music. In this beautiful picture, John Muir shows he knew well that nature and the seasons are one sublime symphony: one not played on man-made instruments or heard in polished concert halls, but seen, felt, and breathed. Take one walk in the woods or meadows, by the ocean or in the desert, and you will realize that you too have been hearing it all your life, although perhaps dimly, in the songs of the birds and the sound of the wind, but also in the colors of the flowers and trees.

In many places, this music has been replaced by concrete jungles and huge skyscrapers, and the seasons are no longer marked by the blooming and fading of flowers, but by posters outside clothing shops announcing in bold, all caps that tweed season has arrived, 25% off for all members! But butterflies and birds still migrate over these gaudy cities, and flowers and trees still show the changing seasons, not merely 25% off, but free to all.

An example close to my heart and home is the Cajun Prairie. Throughout the year, it changes drastically from blossom-filled splendor through spring, summer, and fall, like the glorious beginning of a symphony in C major, to a cold, dead field in winter, which, especially on a rainy day,

could well have inspired one of Chopin's gloomier Nocturnes. For the indigenous people who inhabited the Gulf regions, and for the more observant of the settlers, the prairie's changes served as reminders of the seasons, setting the tempo for their lives and farms. These changes are so specific that an experienced observer can tell not only the season, but also the month and week by which flowers bloom or which seed pods ripen.

Even today, when the prairie that makes up most of my backyard explodes into golden glory, the four to seven-foot-tall swamp marigold temporarily overshadowing all the other plants with its bright blossoms, I know it is time to get out my shovel and rake and plant my fall root vegetables, and if I wait until the cypress trees begin to turn from green to rusty red, I know frost is fast approaching, and I have procrastinated too long.

The Cajun prairie fall is very different from the stunning reds and oranges of a New England fall, for even into late October and November the landscape is full of vibrant green and bright gold, as if all the summer sunshine had gone into the petals of these prairie flowers. These are the autumn colors of the south, and if this new fall palette clashes with your tweeds and knitwear, do not take it up with me, but with He who clothes the flowers of the field in all their glory.

Later in the fall, the bald cypress trees that grow in the swamps bordering the prairie change their summer coats of green to autumn coats of beautiful rusty red, which soon fall and carpet the ground beneath in velvety splendor. It is a fine sight indeed to see the cypress knees rising from their rich carpet, looking like little gnomes wading through a red sea.

All too soon, the dry leaves lose their color and melt into the dust from which they came, leaving the trees to sway nakedly in the chill winter winds. The swamp marigolds are

dead now, their bright gold replaced by the bland yellow of the dead bluestem, the dead winter grass of the prairie, called “Paille Jaune” (yellow grass) by the old Cajuns. Some prairies have different varieties of this grass that take on a reddish hue in the winter, earning the name “Paille Rouge.” Now the landscape is dull indeed, with bare cypress and dead prairie grass, and only the majestic Live Oaks and Pines to keep alive the memory of the former beauty. It is almost enough to convince you that you really should have bought those nice Christmas ferns that were on display, along with fat little Santa Clauses, at the local nursery. But this is not yet the bottom of the U. Oh no. For now, in the dead of winter, is the time all your neighbors decide those homeschoolers really are crazy, and you thank your lucky stars there is no Homeowners Association on the outskirts of the little town of Iota, Louisiana.

It is the burning time.

As soon as the wind is right and the ground dry, the entire family, decked out in face-covering bandanas and with shovels at the ready, heads out to the prairie. The lighter touches a tuft of dead grass, and flames lick eagerly at the dead stems and dried flower heads. Soon the entire prairie has been reduced to a charred field of blackened stubble, and it looks completely dead. But only the above ground growth has been devastated; the roots which constitute up to 70% of the plant’s biomass remain, an entire underground prairie untouched by the flames.

But why must the prairie’s entire above ground growth be reduced to a charred ruin every winter? Why this annual desolation? The answer is beautiful. The prairie plants' sturdy root systems enable them to survive these apparently catastrophic fires, while the invasive

weeds that creep deeper into the heart of our lands are swept away by the flames. The prairie must undergo this purification of fire so the dross is consumed, and the gold refined. For each year, the native plants spring back more vibrant than ever, new life bursting from the ashes in a rebirth as beautiful and dramatic as that of the phoenix. Hidden roots send up new shoots, shockingly green among the blackened grass, and seeds that were scattered by the flames spring into plants that could not have grown through the tangle of weeds and undergrowth the fire removed.

When spring arrives, she finds a reborn prairie waiting for her, ready to be decked with flowers, butterflies and sunshine. Soon Louisiana irises unfurl their delicate petals in the marshy areas, often at the feet of the cypress trees covered again in lacy green leaves. The spring face of the prairie blushes pink with purple coneflowers, patches of woods poppymallow deepening the pink to scarlet, and lightened by black eyed susans and yellow false indigo. Soon the summer months will steal gently in, a new melody blending with the music of spring. In a few weeks, the bright blazing star will seem to shoot, cometlike, through the tall grass, leaving streaks of purple and pink in their wake, and the ashy sunflower will join with the compass plant, the favorite prairie plant of Aldo Leopold, to take the place of the swamp marigold and touch the prairie summer with gold.

The purple passionflower also blooms in these summer months, its exotic blooms looking strangely out of place among the other prairie flowers. Yet they hold their place among the rest, for one of the prairie's staple butterflies, the bright orange gulf fritillary, feeds primarily on their blooms. I must mention one more plant that blooms in late summer: the big bluestem.

This grass has suffered from cattle grazing, but it once grew so tall that all you could see of a man riding through it on horseback was the top of his hat. This grass does not grow to such heights in modern day prairie restorations, but it still reaches much higher than my head, and in the late summer it turns almost purple, creating a lovely backdrop for the smaller flowers, like sweet low notes from the cello undergirding the bright, wildflower melody of the violin.

And now we have come through the grand dance of the seasons and back to the prairie fall, full of the still fresh green of the cypress trees and the explosive gold of the swamp marigold. The symphony has come full circle, and the C major theme has returned to bring us, with a flourish of trumpets and golden blossoms, back to where we began. And even as I kneel in the dirt of my garden patch, bringing forth beets by the sweat of my brow and muttering maledictions on every mosquito ever born, my heart is full of poetry, for the very air I breathe sings with gold.



Nēva Garber
17 years old
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Later Modern Literature, Advanced Latin Elective

There were planets of unbelievable majesty, and constellations undreamed of: there were celestial sapphires, rubies, emeralds and pin-pricks of burning gold . . .

A nightmare, long engendered in the modern mind by the mythology that follows in the wake of science, was falling off him. He had read of 'Space': at the back of his thinking for years had lurked the dismal fancy of the black, cold vacuity, the utter deadness, which was supposed to separate the worlds. He had not known how much it affected him till now–now that the very name 'Space' seemed a blasphemous libel for this empyrean ocean of radiance in which they swam. He could not call it 'dead': he felt life pouring into him from it every moment.

How indeed should it be otherwise, since out of this ocean the worlds and all their life had come?

Out of the Silent Planet
C. S. Lewis

An Interview with Addison Hornstra

An interview with HHL speaker, teacher and former student Addison Hornstra on the form of Eastern stories and their connection to the literary tradition

The first question we'd like to ask you is, what book was your gateway to the literary life?

Oh, that's an extremely hard question. I feel like I have to go all the way back in time to my very early childhood. I'll answer in two stages. There's one book in particular that I remember very, very vividly from my childhood. I must have been maybe six, perhaps, when my mom was reading it aloud to me, and that was *The Voyage of the Dawn Treader*. I still remember her reading it aloud to us as we were all lying in bed together in the early morning. My sister and I would always wake up extremely early, and one of the things my mom would do most mornings was read aloud to us during that time. I can remember the great delight with which we read that book, and still, many of the images and the structure of that story remain very present in my imagination to this day.

Another addition to that, funnily enough, would be to go one generation back to the man who inspired C. S. Lewis. The first book that I really remember reading after I had started listening to The Literary Life podcast, and from which I felt this deep connection and great inspiration, was *At the Back of the North Wind* by George MacDonald. So I think both of those stick out in my memory as gateways into this giant imaginative tradition of which I desperately wanted to be a part.

That's a beautiful answer, thank you. Our next question we had was: why do you think it is necessary to preserve the traditions?

That's a very complex question because I think there are many reasons. I'm going to refer back to perhaps one of my favorite metaphors, which I think really expresses what we're trying to do when we're preserving the tradition. I always think about preserving the tradition, what we're doing here at HHL, what Miss Angelina was doing when she started HHL, and why we're studying. Why are we reading these books? Why do we care?

And obviously, many of us will think back to Jenn Rogers and her wonderful Tolkien webinar, where she talks about building the tower by the sea. And yes, that's part of the answer. The other image that I think of comes from the very end of *The Odyssey*, where Laertes is off in the hills planting trees because he's too old to fight.

He's no longer the king of Ithaca. He's waiting for his son to come home, and the only thing he can do is go out beyond the bounds of the city and plant trees in the hope that these trees will one day shelter and give fruit to the coming generations. And I think, in so many ways, what we're doing when we're preserving the tradition is carrying on the work of Laertes and planting trees for the coming generations, so that they can know what has gone before them.

Thank you so much for sharing that. Who is one author or scholar you would most wish to sit down with for tea?

Well, for me, it would absolutely be the fantastic sinologist who studies China and all things Chinese, Arthur Waley. I love Arthur Waley, and any chance I get, I'm reading something by him, whether it's essays, poetry, translations, or book reviews. One of my favorite things is to read the arguments he had with other scholars of his day, including I. A. Richards. If I were going to sit down for tea, I would most definitely sit down with him,

and I have a whole list of questions. For instance, why—"why did you say that William Blake is most definitely a Daoist? And what would you have to say about this? And why did you not translate *The Three Kingdoms*? I would have preferred it if you had translated that."

Chinese culture is known for storytelling through film dramas. Can you share a little bit about this medium of storytelling?

You're referencing Chinese dramas, correct? It's very true that they're known for that. I think one of the greatest story forms that they've exported to the U. S. and other countries outside of Asia has been through these dramas or films. Even a lot of the older generation who aren't familiar with the more recent dramas are probably familiar with the Hong Kong film scene. I know my dad is.

One of the interesting things I think about is that, for instance, the great work of Edmund Spenser, *The Faerie Queene*, was once a popular storytelling form. What we mean by *popular* is not that everyone loves it, but that it's available to all people. You don't have to have a specific level of education to be able to enjoy this kind of story. The great romances are all popular storytelling forms in the sense that they're available to all the different echelons of people.

Now, Northrop Frye would say, to give you an example of what is not popular, *Paradise Lost*. You have to have an entire biblical background, probably some knowledge of, you know, a lot of big words that you would have to gain through education. Northrop Frye calls that elite literature, just in the sense that you have to have some education to be able to read it. But these other stories—you don't need an education to be able to take them in.

They're available for everyone to enjoy. A lot of the books that we now think of as something you need an education to understand because they're so serious, like Spenser's *The Faerie Queene*, were actually popular ones.

I think that, in modern-day television dramas, the shows coming out of China are playing the same role. They are very popular forms; they're available to everyone. They're very easy to understand, and yet they're carrying on such a deep tradition of Asian stories. One of the things I've most delighted in while watching them is seeing what literature they're drawing from and what they are inspired by. Of course, we know this because a lot of the literature in Chinese education was brought back into their educational system about two to three decades ago. And now it's all showing up in their dramas. It's absolutely wonderful to see.

That's amazing. The next question we have for you is: How do you think the storytelling tradition from China reflects or connects to some of the literary traditions that we are more familiar with?

I feel like I'm going to spend my life's work explaining that. That's a very packed question. I think there are a couple of ways in which it connects. One of the most obvious ones, which we still perhaps don't realize, is how much Eastern stories have inspired the authors whom we know and love. And I think that's something that I've been investigating a lot recently: How has Chinese literature, or Eastern thought in general, been an inspiration for and guided the work of authors such as C. S. Lewis, Lewis Carroll, or Aldous Huxley, all of whom were deeply inspired by Eastern literature, especially following the age of Orientalism?

During this period, stories from Japan and China were being brought back to England, and they played a significant part in the literature of the time. So that's one surface-level way in which they connect.

But in another way, Chinese stories are part of the same tree of stories as every other branch of stories. And, believe it or not, when you read them, you're not wandering in a completely foreign land. It looks very different. The landscape is totally different. The buildings look different. But you're still on the same imaginative ground. And I think part of the great work that HHL is doing is showing that diversity doesn't mean separation, that these things are not cut off from one another, sitting in isolation, but are all part of a unified whole, unique as they are in each part.

When did your love of literature begin?

It's kind of funny because it's almost like it's always been there. Even before I could read, my mom was always reading to me. I learned to read rather early, I think. I can't even remember when. I can still remember the first day I read an entire book in a day. I was absolutely delighted with it, and I just read absolutely all day and loved it. So when did my love of literature begin? I don't know if it began. It began when I began.

What led to your love of Chinese stories?

Let's see. I must have first learned about Chinese stories at least four years ago, possibly closer to five years ago. We had just moved from the place in my hometown where I grew up, in Houston, Texas. I was eighteen. For a very long time, we had not been watching anything on television. I was kind of bored with everything. I thought, you know, I don't like American shows. I haven't seen anything in months.

So we moved, and my reading life went belly up, as so often happens when great life changes come.

I know that Angelina and Thomas have just talked about this in their recent Q&A episode. It's so true. The reading life isn't, at least for me and so many other readers, consistent.

I know there are some marvelous people out there who just keep on reading, but every time I have a giant life change, every time something exciting happens or something distressing happens, I don't read anymore.

We had moved, and I was bored. I was trying to read, but I couldn't focus. And someone on The Literary Life Discord had said we needed to try the Chinese drama *Love Between Fairy and Devil*. We had watched the trailer, and we thought, this is possibly the weirdest thing I've ever seen. I have no clue what's going on here. This is very odd, but why not give it a go? We should just try.

So, one evening, we started watching it, and I absolutely adored it. I think what struck me about it—and I was completely, completely besotted with it—was that I'd never seen anyone tell a story like this on screen. In fact, I didn't even know it was possible. How can they tell this kind of story? This kind of structure shows this redemption story on a screen so well. And that question sort of inspired me.

We had been watching it for a couple of days by the time I decided that I really had to figure out what was going on. What inspired this? Because they can't be drawing from nowhere. This can't be coming from nothing. It has to be coming from its own tradition. What is the foundation that they're building on? And so I began to do some research, but where do you even start with Chinese literature?

At that time, of course, I had no clue. I knew almost nothing. I looked it up and realized there were four famous novels in China. And one of them, the first one, is called *Sanguo Yanyi*, or *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*.

So obviously, I did the only sane thing that you can do in that situation, and I bought it. And, of course, I sat down to read it.

I still remember it being a summer evening as I sat down to read it.

The second I read the first couple of lines, I thought, *This is different. Something's different about this.* It captured my imagination, and I believe the first section is a poem from a much longer and much older collection of poems that the translator, Moss Roberts, had put at the beginning of the book.

The scene at the beginning is a bunch of old fishermen sitting around a wine jar, telling each other stories of great heroes of old who have come and gone. They're saying, "All of these heroes have come and gone, and the great river of time rolls on, and yet the stories remain." The old men are still telling these stories. And here I am, about to read this extremely old Chinese novel, and I'm going to hear the story again, even though this time has long, long passed me. Something about that just captured my imagination and didn't let go. I love literature; that much is obvious. Until I had read this book, I did not know you could have a love affair of this level with any singular book.

I get asked what my favorite book is, and that's impossible to answer. But if I had to give an answer, it would undoubtedly be *The Romance of the Three Kingdoms*. That was the beginning of my love of Chinese stories. My whole investigation stemmed from this glorious work of literature that I wanted to understand.

I wanted to know the language that lies behind it, the imagination that has given inspiration to it, and the rest of the years have unfolded from there.



Sarah Jane Solomon
Student Life Editor
17 years old
Maryland
Ancient Literature, Readings in Ancient History, Advanced Latin Elective



Veva Jack
Student Life Reader
17 years old
Tennessee
How to Read Literature, Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Readings in Medieval History, Advanced Latin Elective

Up He rode
Followed with acclamation and the sound
Symphonious of ten thousand harps that tuned
Angelic harmonies: the earth, the air
Resounded, (thou remember'st, for thou heard'st)
The heav'ns and all the constellations rung,
The planets in their stations list'ning stood,
While the bright pomp ascended jubilant.

Paradise Lost
John Milton
Book VII, 557-564


Art

The Road to Rivendell





Hannah and Aliyah Del Valle
14 years old (twins)
Arizona
Good Books, Plutarch for Kids, Latin Foundations

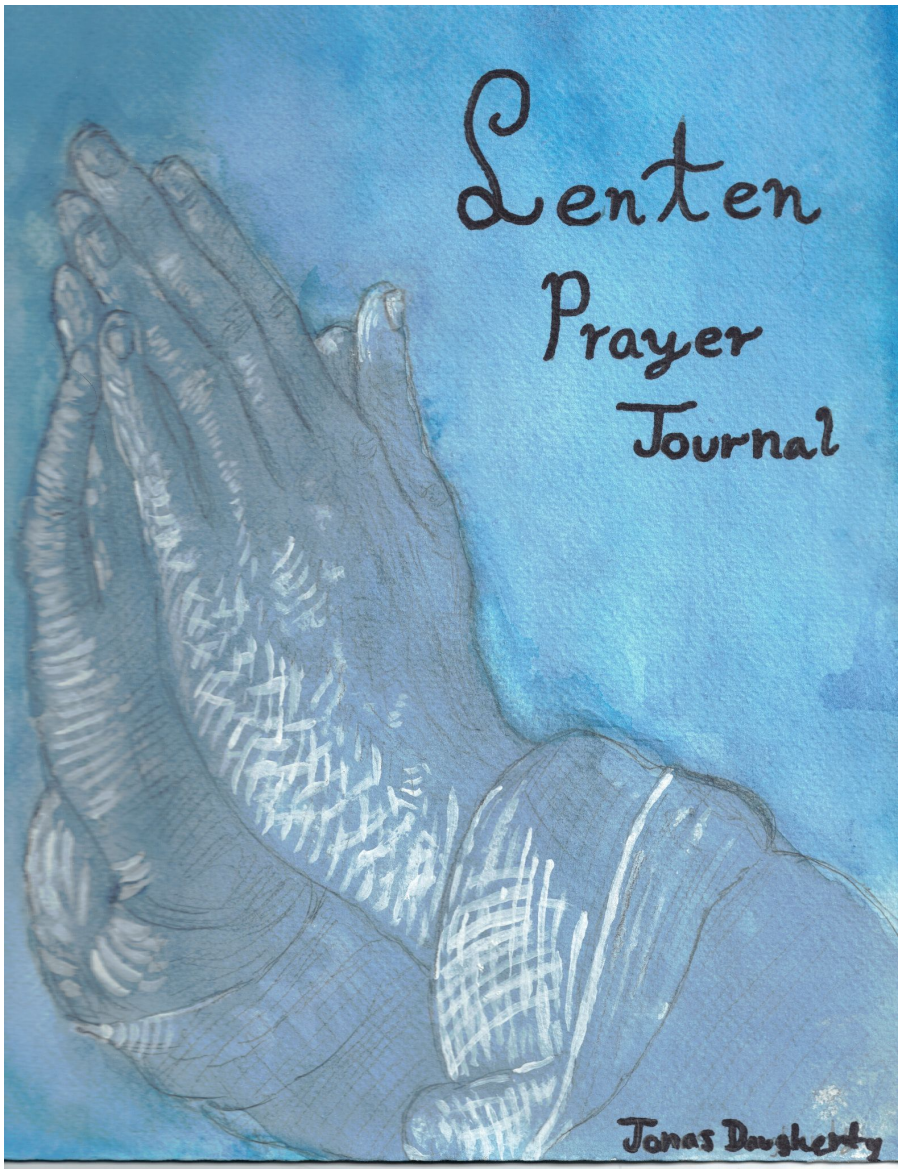
Midnight View by Lantern Light





Ava Morris
16 years old
Georgia
Medieval and Renaissance Literature

Lenten Prayer





Jonas Daugherty
16 years old
Georgia
Later Modern Literature, Readings in Later Modern History

Amalfi





Jonas Daugherty
16 years old
Georgia
Later Modern Literature, Readings in Later Modern History

Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart





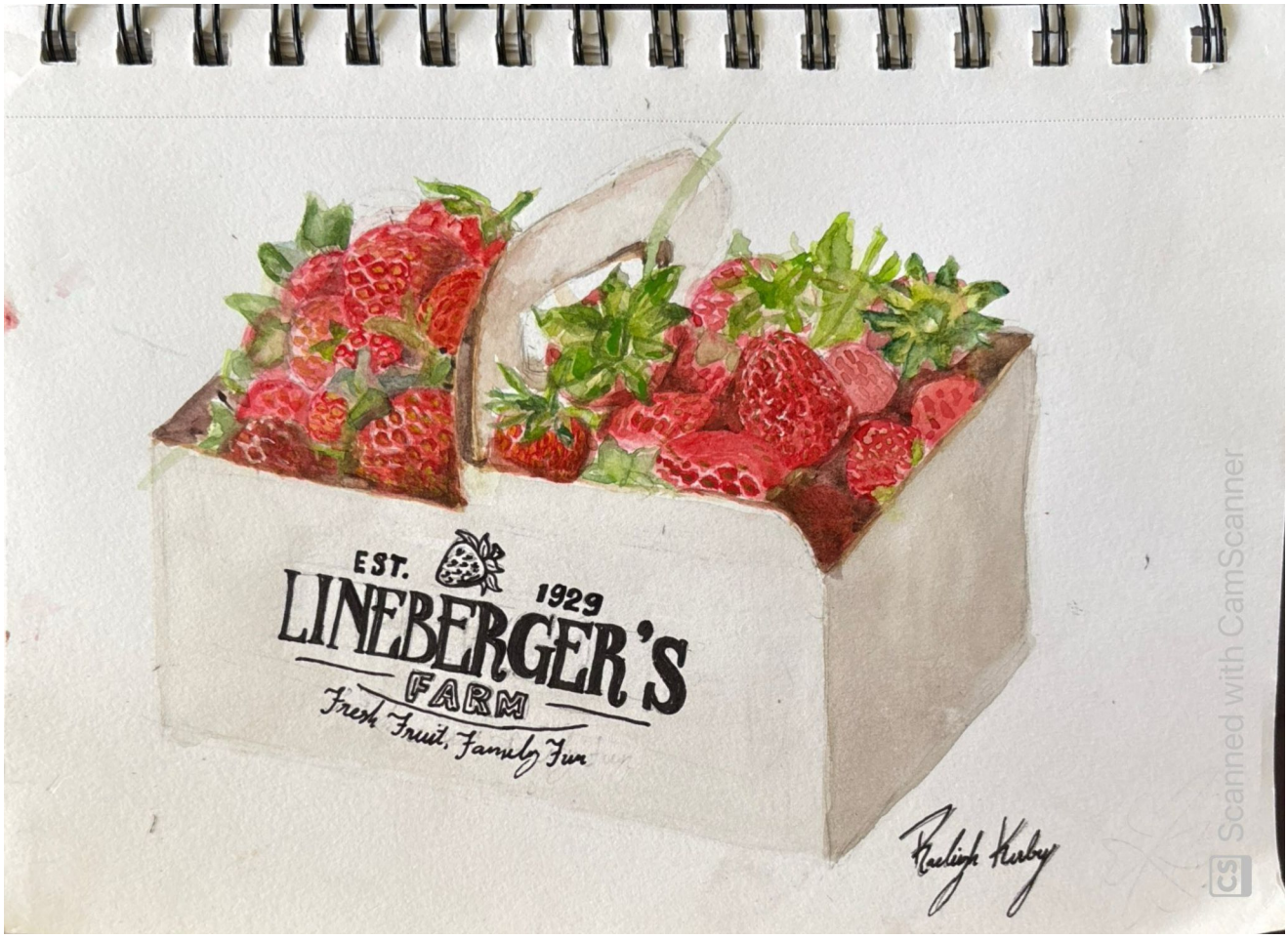
Mckenzie Brambila
11 years old
Idaho
Good Books, Fundamentals of the English Language

“In our world,” said Eustace, “a star is a huge ball of flaming gas.”

“Even in your world, my son, that is not what a star is, but only what it is made of.”

The Voyage of the Dawn Treader
C. S. Lewis

Lineberger's Strawberries





Raeleigh Kirby
17 years old
Puerto Rico
Early Modern Literature, Readings in Early Modern History, Advanced Latin Elective, Classical Greek Grammar 2

William Morris Inspired Holiday Bookmark



Sophia Card-Lopez
18 years old
California
Later Modern Literature, Readings in Later Modern History
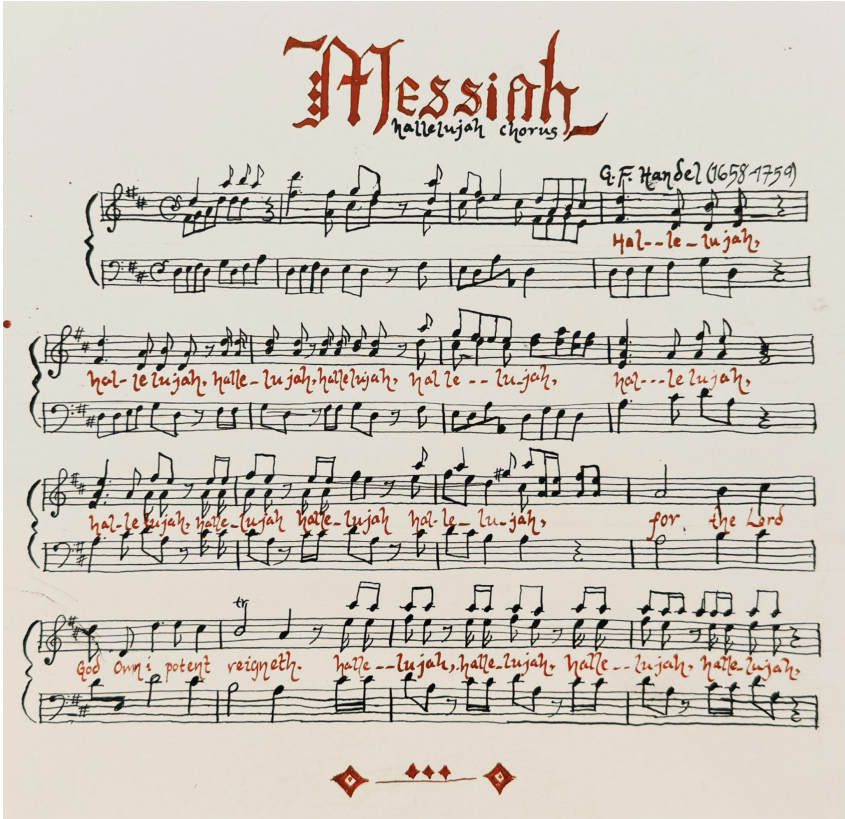
Carolina Wren





Chloe Davenport
15 years old
Arizona
How to Read Literature, Later Modern Literature

Messiah



In Psalm 148 all the cosmos are called to praise God, הַלְלוּ יָהּ "Hallelu-Yah!" Every part of creation is to join in the symphony that is the music of the spheres in praise and honor of their creator.

In Hebrew, "Hallelu-Yah" הַלְלוּ יָהּ is an invitation or command to "Praise (Hallelu) God (Yah - short for Yahweh)." Today we join the chorus by using the word as a praise, itself. "Hallelujah" has become the song by which we add our hearts and voices to the music of the spheres, alongside all creation to praise God who created and nurtures us.

Hallelujah, hallelujah! Praise God, Praise God!



Jewel Jack
14 years old
Tennessee
Medieval and Renaissance Literature, Readings in Medieval History, Classical Greek Grammar 2, Advanced Latin Elective

Fiction & Poetry

May Zenith

By Natalia Testa

May had come to the small town on the edge of the lake. Lady Spring had left her mark everywhere. In the carol of the small house finch her note of celebration could be heard, and on the downs of the grassy hills was the trace of where her green cloak had swept, leaving cascades of wildflowers in its wake. Asters, violets, daisies, and lilacs, which the children loved to play in and from their swathes weave crowns of earnest honor. With May had also come the holy day of May the first with all its trappings of happy gaiety.

On that bright morning, the children were all gathered on one of the hills on the edge of the forest, around fourteen in number. Present was Thomas, the eldest, a well-looking lad of nineteen who had been given a holiday; the brothers Benjamin and Charles, aged seventeen and fifteen; Vera, Evelyn, and Nadia, three first cousins of fifteen and fourteen; Emma, who was twelve; Matthew and Paul, Thomas' younger brothers; and Peter, Cordelia, Mary, and Barnabas, the last of whom was nine years old.

As Nadia had obliged the year before, the party had elected Cordelia as their May Queen, and she was now holding court.

"Lady," said Peter, looking and acting very important in his role as Chief Advisor, "what is your will on this fine holiday?"

Evelyn Martin was doing all she could to stop herself from giving up entirely to laughter. She was in charge of the picnic basket.

"Knight," was the impressive reply to the advisor in flannel, "it is my will we should play a ball-game on this hill, if the court is agreeable."

"Is the court agreeable?" demanded Charles, the Right-Hand Man. The boys and girls conferred and made answer that it was, and for his initiative the Queen dubbed him Sir Charles on the spot.

"What will be the game?" asked Mary.

"We are to see who can throw it the farthest," said the May Queen.

"And what will we have for a prize?" Ben inquired.

"Ices will be had for the best knight and lady, and cookies handed round for the rest!"

"Here is the ball," said Peter, the Chief Advisor. "Who is to throw first?"

"I will have Barnabas throw first."

Nodding to his sister for this impressive honor, Barnabas went to Peter, who gave him the globe.

"Pitch it, Barnabas!"

The Queen's Favorite took the globe to the edge of the hill and tossed it with great force. The rest watched as the sphere rose into the air, turning, turning, turning, and the sun glancing off of it.

It flew, falling like a sun setting, and disappeared as it rolled down the hill.

"We will after it!" cried Peter. The children were up and after the ball like a shot–or rather a long parade. Barnabas had bounded after it first, and the rest followed at his heels, Peter, Mary, and the May Queen at the front.

The hill descended into forest, which turned eventually into the shore of the lake. Drawn out from each other, the party began to separate, until it was only Charles and Thomas with the three vanguard.

"I've got it!" came a cry. It was Mary. They could not see her in the denseness of the trees.

"Where are you, Mary?" called Thomas, peering left and right for his young cousin.

"Right here, by the shore!"

"Come, Peter!" Cordelia had forgotten her romantic manner in the excitement in the game. She dashed forward, Peter at her side and the two other boys falling behind. Their footfalls fell *pit pat pit pat pit pit pat,* echoing throughout the wood, and they were flying, up and up and down again and over root and stone and fallen branch, the May Queen and her squire. With a crashing stride they came out on the other side, and immediately began to lose their footing; they had reached the sandy, uneven terrain of the beach. Tripping on roots again they nearly tumbled out of the bracken, and there was Mary, on the edge of the lake where the cherry blossom trees were.

She was standing beside the stone bench, and on it was the shining globe. What happened next unfolded in a single moment. Barnabas came charging out of the trees and reached the spot; Peter dove forward; the May Queen grasped the ball with her finger; Mary made a quick movement; all four touched the stone. There was an instant cracking noise and everything went black.

The stone bench disappeared, and with it the cherry blossom trees, and the lake, and all that Cordelia knew. She had a feeling that she was falling, and falling for so long that she did not know when she would stop. However, she could discern the forms of three other persons beside her; all four Farraguts would be together, whatever happened.

Then there was another crack and an overwhelming flash of light. The children ceased their fall and found themselves standing upright. Upright on what? Gone was the sand of the shore–instead they seemed to be standing on a sort of grassy knoll. It still must be close to May the First, however, for the same cool warmth of the springtide breeze still blew through their hair. The sky was blue and cloudless. Lake Museca had vanished, and the only wood in sight far away, much farther than the one the children had just left.

"I say," said Peter, "where are we?" He was no longer the chief advisor of a queen. He was only Peter Farragut, and all of fifteen years old.

"No clue," said Cordelia, looking frightened.

"This doesn't look like home," said Mary.

"We've got to have come *somewhere*, though," Barnabas said thoughtfully, "and there must be people here too."

“Good idea, Barn,” Peter replied, looking braver and casting an anxious glance at his sisters. “We may be able to find somebody who can tell us where we are.”

“Mother and Father will miss us,” said Mary.

“So we will move quickly, Mar. Down we go.”

Steeling his face, Peter began to walk forward. The four formed a line, Barnabas taking Mary’s hand and Cordelia’s bright white dress billowing behind them. It was not an unpleasant journey. The strange land seemed possessive of a radiant happiness. Birds could be heard, chirping high golden notes so much lovelier than they had ever heard before; the grass was lush and green, and populated by wonderful but foreign flowers; the sun was warm, and much warmer than it had been in Massachusetts. Continuing on their traipse, the children became used to these sounds, so much so that when, after half an hour, a shrill cry interrupted them, they were very much startled. The sound began low and then went high and then left off entirely. It was not quite like a trumpet.

Peter had only time to say, “What’s that?” when it sounded again, and then they could hear the sound of hooves clapping on the ground, getting louder and louder with it. The four children clung to each other, paralyzed by the sound.

Out of the wood at the edge of the knoll came a party of horses and riders: strong finely built horses and colorfully dressed riders. There were three pairs, and not a pair of them alike. Three of the riders were men and two were women, on palfreys. The man at the front of the parade held a curved object, which he blew. It was the sound they had heard.

“It’s a horn,” breathed Barnabas.

“How splendid they look!” said Mary, for the first time surprised out of fear.

The party of people were coming closer, zig zagging this way and that across the field and laughing a good deal. At last they came so close that the boys and girls could hear what they said.

“Lady!” cried the first male rider, riding close to his fair companion and her steed, “what is your will on this fine holiday?”

The lady smiled. She was extraordinarily beautiful. She was wearing a long white gown with a golden belt, and a cone-shaped hat with a veil pinned to the top.

“Sir knight,” said she, “I would that we might settle on this field, and make merry with our bread and wine.”

“Lady Elinor has pronounced,” said the man to the rider, with an air of hilarity. “Brother Edmund, have you the bread and wine?”

“Indeed,” said Brother Edmund. “I have all that we have brought from Cair Isidore.”

“Is it our lady’s pleasure to settle on this heath?” asked one of the younger ladies.

“Hold,” said the first man, perfunctorily. “I spy four coming our way: two men and two maidens.”

Lady Elinor followed his gaze. “Are they revellers such as ourselves? If so, we might ask them to join our band, Sir Brunor.”

“We will go forth and inquire of their history,” said the latter.

The four children had been standing transfixed all this while, and were still off guard when the party of knights and ladies changed their course and came up close to them.

The man who had been called Sir Brunor spoke first.

"Sirrah," said he, "who are you, and what is your business?"

"Sorry, sir," was Peter's rejoinder. "We've lost our way. I'm Peter, and this is Cordelia, Mary, and Barnabas."

"Wherefore are you from?"

"Massachusetts, sir," said Barnabas, who was not ten years old yet but who had been told what to say when lost. "Ofiliae, Tinkshire county."

"Mortal man never heard tell of such a place," said Sir Brunor, "for I traveled with Balthazar the Old to the four corners of the world and never saw it."

Lady Elinor had been looking at Cordelia's white dress. Suddenly, she spoke. "Sister, your robe puts me in thought of my own. Have you been a-Maying?"

"Yes, Lady," said Cordelia, "I was the May Queen."

"We were chasing our ball," said Mary, "one moment we were *there*, and next we'd touched the bench and we were *here.*"

"I have heard tell of such magic," said Brother Edmund for the first time, "It has been sung of in the songs of Magdalene for many moons. Stone hewn in the Beginning of Times and endowed with old and ancient magic always remembers its starting-place: thus the veils of worlds might for a moment be drawn aside, when the stars are at their zenith here."

"Then you mean by your words," said the third and last man, who was older, "that these two men and these two maidens have stepped through the divide on this morn?"

"Sir Elrond, that I do. It is what I have been expecting. Our ambassadors to our kingdom's shores and the lands beyond have brought back tales of similar things happening. It has been happening in Eldia, on the other end of Gar Rand."

"Magdalene, then, is where we are?" asked Cordelia.

"Yes, child," said the second of the three ladies. She looked very kind and smelled of roses. "A land endowed with many blessings."

"The Lady Muriel speaks true," said Lady Elinor. "Our king and queen rule us well; my father Sir Elrond is received in their court."

"Excuse me," asked Peter, "do you know how we are to get back to—where we came from?"

Everybody turned to Brother Edmund, who looked intensely thoughtful.

"You say you came by one of the ancient stones from the Beginning of Times—thus must you return to your home country. There are several such left in Magdalene, but as a novice I do not know all their names. If the stars are to keep their zenith, we must not tarry."

"My godfather would know, Brother," said the third and last lady.

"The lady gives good counsel," said Sir Brunor. "Balthazar the Old is the greatest in the land on this account, and he is yet in court."

“This must be the way forward,” agreed Brother Edmund. “He knows the way of magic.”

“The sun will not be much higher before we can reach him,” said Sir Elrond.

“I am aggrieved for your sake that our Maying must be put off,” Sir Brunor addressed Lady Elinor. She smiled at him.

“This must merely be part of our Maying. This young queen shall have her holiday, and these her vassals, while we wind our way to the wizard.”

Sir Elrond, Sir Brunor, and Brother Edmund descended from their horses and helped Cordelia, Mary, and Barnabas onto them. Peter, being older, walked alongside, and the party took off across the plain. Sir Elrond was possessed of a lute, and he played as he walked. As the group became comfortable, he strummed it lightly, beginning a happy but serious tune.

Lady Elinor lifted up her voice, and began to sing a beautiful song, words floating upwards through the trees and weaving a tapestry of sound. It was a song of the far off times, when the world was made, and of Harol the Just, who was made first king of Magdalene by the prince across the sea; of Magdalene’s early triumph over Reunden on its southern shores, and how the lords of Eldia and Terasea had come bearing gifts of peace. And then it turned into an elvin song about the people who lived in the forest, the tall and fair people who lived longer than mortal men.

Barnabas leaned closer to Brother Edmund and asked him to explain it. He smiled through his beard and told them how the stories had been handed down through bards and minstrels for thousands of years, especially through novice monks like him who studied in the service of the ancient magic.

At last the song ended and the party turned to conversation again.

“And what line are your families of, O son of man?” said Sir Brunor to Peter.

“We are brothers and sisters, and our mother is a Kingsley and our father a Farragut.”

“But I mean what noble duties is your family guardian to?”

Peter thought hard.

“The Farraguts are men of the sea,” he said. “They protect the oceans. The Kingsleys are protectors of all land that is beautiful. They were stewards of a great lord and his family. They even had a castle.”

“There are great things said of men whose name is King here in Magdalene,” said Sir Brunor. “You speak well. You must be heir to much to be the son of such noble lines.”

“I must have some holidaying,” said Lady Elinor, as if making up her mind, and turning to Cordelia. “Majesty, we must take up the custom.”

“But what am I to call you, when you already have a Mayish kind of name?”

“Call me by my own name, and your princely brethren by those you had before. I see in your world that you make division between the name and the thing itself; but this must be a sign of the division in our stars.”

“What do you mean?”

Lady Elinor smiled sadly. “It is said in the old stories that Father Time works his craft differently here than in other places, but many centuries ago your world was knit with ours—for I believe you must come from the place we call the Quietlands. That was long before my father’s time—even Balthazar the Old might not remember it. We were united in the crusades for truth, and beauty, and serving the One.

“But then the Quietlands became greedy, and as then in the dark of the night, the guest in the house of the king awoke and slew the king in his sleep. The faerie lands immediately took up arms at this betrayal, and there was a bitter war, where many were killed. The king’s son called together a council, where it was agreed that the Quietlands should be cut off from us forever. The greatest wizards in the land put up a barrier, so there would be no more commerce between them.

“The elves and men of the One wept greatly to leave behind such a place as your world, which at that time was supposed to be the heir of the faeries, and exquisitely beautiful. But the Quietlands had gone in for war, and not a holy war, and broke with the Chain that is our covenant. After that—silence, which is why it became known as the Quietlands.

In Magdalene the name and the thing itself are one: your name is Cordelia, thus you *are* Cordelia, and the names you have will be with you always. Children are not named on whims here; nor, I think, were you.”

“In the game, Peter was my Chief Advisor, and Barnabas my Favorite.”

“And what of your sister Mary?”

“I was going to call her the Lady of the Ball.”

“Queen, are we to have a ball thrown?” asked Lady Muriel, who was very quiet.

Lady Elinor looked to Cordelia, who nodded uncertainly.

“Brother Edmund, if you will oblige.”

A wonderful thing happened: Brother Edmund seemed to weave something in the air, pointing to the sun (were there two suns, Mary wondered). A bright orange ball materialized in his hands and he handed it to Lady Elinor. The little girl stood awestruck.

“All balls are suns, and all suns are marks of the king,” said Brother Edmund. “It is right that the descendants of kings should cast balls.”

Peter nodded. He was beginning to understand. He looked much older than fifteen now, while the air of Magdalene had been breathing on him and the words of the lords and ladies struck his ear. Mary was surprised, but thought he really must be a Chief Advisor, after all. It seemed that the truth must really be in the game.

Lady Elinor threw the sphere, and it turned in the air like a golden crown. It was caught by the Queen’s Favorite, who threw it to Lady Muriel, who threw it at the May Queen, who could catch much quicker now. Far from being just thirteen, Cordelia had somehow mastered poise, and there was something noble in her countenance. Sir Brunor passed it to Brother Edmund, who twirled it on his finger and sent it in a perfect parabola to the Advisor. This gave Mary an idea, and she thought of triangles when she touched the ball next. It leapt like a joyful thing at her grasp, and bounced in a triangle in the air.

“The Lady knows the forms,” said Sir Elrond, pleased. “Something of the old ways is still taught in the Quietlands.”

The game was paused by the halloing cry of Sir Brunor. He had seen the king’s castle. The lords and ladies, young and old, followed his shout. They had been much absorbed in their game, and now they saw a magnificently built story-book castle before their eyes. Grey stones rose up in gloriously high towers, from which flew gaudily colored banners.

“I will ride forward,” said Sir Elrond. “We will have an audience with the king and queen, and Balthazar the Old.” He urged his horse forward and was soon swallowed up in the picturesque scene.

May Day was also being celebrated at the castle. There was a crowd of people on the spinney just outside of it, making merry. Fools juggled balls and cracked jokes, merchants sold candies, children chased each other. A gigantic May pole was being raised on the lawn by a group of men. As the party reached the doors of the castle, which were wide open to let in the breeze, they saw a guard coming up to them.

“Your audience is waiting in the throne room. Come in.”

They were ushered in. Far from being like the dark and drabby castles they were used to seeing in books, the castle was firmly lit and adrape with garrish color. Arms and shields and trophies hung on the walls with tapestries of ancient stories and portraits of famous people. The throne room, just ahead, was long and wide, and at the end were two thrones in which the two most royal-looking people the children had ever seen were sitting. The king was middle-aged, with shining, twinkling eyes, and his queen looked very kind indeed. Their raiment was astonishingly pure and simple, while remaining elevated and regal. On the sides of the long carpet at their feet stood courtiers chatting agreeably with each other. Sir Elrond was standing near the throne, and an ancient, ancient old man who was obviously the wizard.

The guard marched forward and then fell away. Sir Brunor, Lady Elinor, Brother Edmund, and Lady Muriel bowed and curtsied, and the May Queen and her party followed suit. The king nodded.

“Your Majesties,” said Sir Elrond, “these are the men and maidens I told you of.”

“You spoke truly, Sir Elrond, when you told us of these four,” said Queen Carrie in her sweet voice. “They look very well, and are fit for the honor that the magic has visited on them.”

“Tell us your names, children,” said King Stephen.

“I am Peter Farragut, Your Majesty,” said Peter, “and these are my sisters Cordelia and Mary, and my brother Barnabas.”

“Worthy names,” said the king, “and we have heard how you have crossed from the Quietlands into Magdalene, by means of stone hewn in the Beginning of Times and the May zenith. We have also heard Sir Elrond’s request, and Balthazar the Old has agreed to aid you.”

“The stars have smiled on you, sons and daughters of men,” said the wizard, in a slow, mountainously deep voice. There would be no rush.

“Nothing is done without reason in magic. I have looked into the Past—I know the name of the stone which sent you here. Its sister stone is in the unmarked glade not a mile from here. It has long been unknown, which is why Brother Edmund knew it not. This day will be the first it has looked on mortal men since Magdalene broke with the Quietlands.”

“I understand that it must be found without delay, for the stars will regain their natural course soon. Otherwise I would have you join our revels today, but know that I give you welcome,” said the king. “The kingdom of Magdalene will smile upon you. Now, follow Balthazar and let it be done as it is willed.”

“Lead on, goddaughter,” said Balthazar the Old to Lady Muriel. “You know the path to the Forgotten Grove. I have traced its memory on your heart while you slept.”

It was but a short walk from the castle, which the children were sad to leave. Lady Muriel seemed to find her way easily through the bracken. The lords and ladies followed with the wizard. At last they came to a shadowy orchard of trees which the sun seemed to have forgotten. The air was misty. Balthazar led them into the middle of the foggy clearing, and after blinking several times and getting used to the darkness, they saw a stone semicircle. It was identical to the one on the shore of the lake.

“You see that the stones were once one,” said Balthazar. “One stone from the Beginning of Times. It was carved into two so one could be a gift to mortal men, a thousand years ago. Not mortal men of Magdalene, but the men of the Quietlands, before those lands went silent. It was brought through into that other world as a sign of fellowship. As Brother Edmund well knows, such stones do not forget their starting-place. Their magic is more ancient than that we cast to protect the sanctity of the Chain of Being from corrupted hearts. The other heartbeat of each bench has always remained, and it would be outright foolery to suppose the one in the Quietlands has kept its magic to itself before now. Look within the heart of the stone, young daughter of man,” he said to Cordelia.

Cordelia went and inspected the stone. Finally she found a little hole on the edge where it had been cut. A round white object, extremely tiny, was sitting in it. She had an undeniable feeling that she was to hold it. She picked it out and held it in the palm of her hand.

To her bewilderment, it inexplicably began to grow, inch by inch, larger and larger, growing in volume until it was a round white ball, and she knew that it was the exact same ball from the game back home.

“I know what to do,” said Mary, suddenly. She came up beside her sister, who dropped it into her hands. “The name and the thing itself are the same.”

The Lady of the Ball cupped it, grasped it tightly, evidently concentrating, then threw it up into the hair. It made a fizzing fireworks sound and exploded into a bright orange color. It floated above her head, growing in size, and then ascending sharply to the top of the grove. There was another pop and the wood came into bright illumination.

“The people who have walked in darkness have seen a great light,” said Barnabas, breathlessly.

“I think we can go back now,” said Peter.

The wizard did not argue with him. “It will be as you say, when you choose.”

“Goodbye, sons and daughters of men,” said Sir Elrond.

“Thank you for keeping us company on this holiday,” said Lady Elinor.

“May you be blessed and kept in the spirit of the One,” added Lady Muriel.

“Always a lord or lady reveller here, always a lord or lady reveller,” pronounced Brother Edmund.

“Farewell, it will be as it is willed,” said Balthazar the Old.

Peter, Cordelia, Mary, and Barnabas took hands and approached the stone. Peter stretched his left hand and Barnabas the right, almost making the stone a perfect circle again.

“Goodbye,” said the children, and then Peter and Barnabas reached out. There was a crack, and Magdalene disappeared. They fell into darkness—the second crack—light again—and then they were sitting on a stone bench in a grotto of cherry blossom trees, on May Day, in Massachusetts.

Voices could be heard—it was their playmates. No time had passed at all.

“Have you found it?” called the voice of Charles.

“Where are you?” Thomas’ shout.

“It’s gone!” said the May Queen, pulling herself together. “Let’s have a new game.”

It was not every day one played with the sun.



Natalia Testa
17 years old
Texas
How to Read Literature, Later Modern Literature, Readings in Later Modern History, Advanced Latin Elective

The Music Few Can Hear

By Anna C. R. Starling

Once upon a time, in a kingdom far away, there lived a young man named Eason, the son of the great King Elyon. This king was always praised as powerful, wise, kind, and ever mindful of the poor. Besides being much like his father, the young prince allegedly heard music that others were unable to. It was believed that he walked about, hearing heavenly voices constantly singing in harmony.

One day, as Eason strolled about the village, he noticed Nifi, one of the village maidens, carrying a heavy burden.

"O maiden, why do you carry such a heavy load all alone?" Called the prince.

"My mother is old and sick, and we have no servants.", replied the young girl.

"Then, good maiden, let me help you carry this heavy burden." And the prince lifted the load off Nifi's back and carried it to its rightful place.

That day, Eason and Nifi fell in love and could only be truly happy in each other's presence. Henceforth, Eason began teaching Nifi to hear and see the music of the cosmos.

Unfortunately, one day, Ramay, an evildoer, returned to the village after a long banishment. He sneaked into the garden singing enchanting tunes to Nifi as she slept. When she awoke, she thought she had finally heard the melodies described by Eason. But when she saw Ramay sitting nearby and asked if he had heard the beautiful voices, he replied,

"You thought you heard the voices which our prince hears, did you not? But I tell you, you will soon be glad that they were not, for if you let Eason teach you his songs, He and his father will surely enchant you and take you into the castle to be his prisoner and slave forever."

As he spoke, Ramay cast an evil spell over her, enticing her to accept every word he uttered. At that crucial moment, Eason entered the garden, and Nifi became greatly angered against him.

"Eason, prince of our land, son of the king and of every other foul thing there is, did you think you could entrap me in all your evil schemes? Did you truly believe that you could curse me as you almost have? Did you think you could make me love you blindly to the point where I would not heed any warning given by man or woman? If you did, you were wrong. This man who respects a woman's heart and does not try to deceive her has warned me against you. I now know who you truly are: beautiful on the outside but black as death on the inside. This day, I shall leave you and go with a real man, to a place that you will never discover."

Thus, Ramay took Nifi by the waist and disappeared with her into the wilderness. He took her to a hidden cave where he believed no one could ever find them.

Despite this betrayal, Eason would not give rest to his limbs or sleep to his eyes until he found them.

After three years of constant searching, Eason found the cave and its inhabitants. Ramay seemed to be stronger than ever, but Nifi was a wreck, all but dead in the living nightmare where she unknowingly resided. When Eason appeared, she screeched and ran to the furthest corner of the cave. Despite the girl's wretched state, Eason loved her more than ever.

"Ramay," ordered the prince, "I am your prince, and I command you to let the girl go."

"You, Eason, though you are my prince, can never get past me to her," replied the man, drawing out his sword.

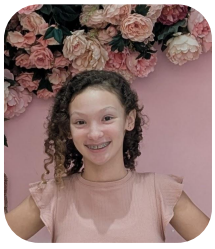
The two fought for three hours, but suddenly Ramay stabbed Eason in the side. As Eason fell, Nifi cried out, for she was disenchanted and could now hear the music Eason had spoken of so long ago. However, Ramay turned and declared,

"See, I have defeated the man who tried to enslave you. Now rejoice, for you are no longer in danger of being enchanted!"

Nifi paid no heed and instead ran to Eason, where he had fallen, and, lifting him, ran far, far away from the place of her enchantment. Then she laid him down amidst the bushes, as she heard a most mournful tune all around her, and wept for him for three days. On the third day, however, King Elyon himself appeared and spoke to Nifi, saying,

"Do not be afraid, for though your lover has died, he only died that you might be set free and perceive that he was a virtuous and honest man, whereas Ramay was a scoundrel. But rejoice, for the son of the true High King cannot be defeated by death. Instead, through him, all death shall be defeated." Having spoken these words, the King put his hand upon Eason's head and upon his wound. Then the wound was healed, and Eason's eyes were opened. Jumping up, the prince seized Nifi by the waist, embracing her with love, and both heard all of creation singing with joy. Thus they celebrated and were married, and all the world sang for joy.

When Ramay heard the news, he rushed to the castle to curse the lovers, but as he ran, a multitude of doves picked him up and threw him into the dragon's pit. Providentially, no man or beast ever heard of him again.



Anna Starling
13 years old
Georgia
How to Read Literature

An Oak's Trust

By Scarlett Kauthen

What was this oak once?
Leaves rustle and shadows dance.

How has this oak grown?
Here a twisted bole, arms coil,
curve, reaching high for the sun.

You walk in dirt, soft
and dry, where birds' feet have left
tracks, printed in shade.
Filtered light upon the ground,
glimmers on stiff leaves,
fallen, as if strayed from home.

The growing flora
seeks out the sun, embraces
the life-giving light.
Gaze up to view it yourself,
your eyes weary of the dark.

Has the oak trusted the sun,
as the web-spinning spider
trusts the sturdy branch?
Now, unfurl your withered leaves.
Open, drink in the sunlight.

The once small, slender,
lank tree trusts the light alone.
The oak's now solid.



Scarlett Kauthen
16 years old
California
Medieval and Renaissance Literature

Ode to Keats: An Accusation

By Elizabeth Eusterman

O poet who wooed the darkling
O courter of spectre death
Thou hast left in your wake, a lover
Who worshipped thine every breath.
Wounded, the heart thou left behind
Now quakes in a fev'rish dream
Pining in vain again to hear
Thy tender, melancholy theme.
O cruel man! to abandon
That which thou at first bestirred
With wonder, glories and delight
Word upon each melodious word.
Thy gift is such, my poet wild
Thou givest and thence depart!
Thou playest the faerie's henchman
Making changelings of every heart.
Transformed in verse, the human face
Ah, what thou hath done to me!
Awake O sleeper and arise
The nightingale hath called for thee.
It is thus the soul rejoices;
That thou hath pierced her dearly
Or perhaps an ancient wound re-open'd
That Psyche may now see it clearly.



Elizabeth Eusterman
18 years old
Colorado
Later Modern Literature, Readings in Later Modern History, Anglo Saxon: Further Readings

Ants

By George Shaw

Our hunting parties issued on a field of moss at morn,
The forest loft was sounding with a many-throated horn.
The oaken timbers timbraled to a lilting summer breeze,
and pine cones fell to shake the plains forsaken of the trees.
The leaves were ancient ruins where they crumbled in the dells
The walnut rattled hollow like a belfry with its bells.
The woodland rose in Gothic arches skyward out-of-sight
and through the shifting gold-leafed panels, trickled golden light.

But the Titan sat on iron legs, which bit into the sod.
An idol of his pedestal, too big to be a god.

The beatle beat its stalwart path across a sea of grass.
The praying mantis danced upon a rooted mountain pass.
The snail processed across a branch, exulting in its power.
The cricket kept a lookout with a sapling as his tower.
The aphids grazed on curving meadows hanging in the air.
The spider picked a patient tread across his deadly snare.
No fairyland had ever so much wonder as does this,
and we are yet too small to see the smaller sphere's abyss.

But the titan stands on iron feet, unfeeling of the sod.
An idol of the world apart, too big to be a god.

Lazarus

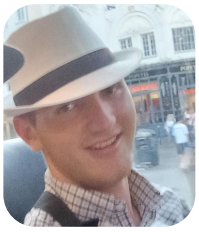
By George Shaw

Four days the faithful friend of God had lain within the tomb.
Four days the clay of Adam's mold had moldered in its gloom.
Four days the gates of sight were shut in more than mortal sleep.
Three days the spirit floated, and the fourth sunk in the deep.

Four corners of the world were tucked in Hades' yawning maw;
Four books yet wanting to unclasp its claim within the law.
Four nails would stitch the cloven halves of earth and heaven rent.
Three days, and on the fourth, He runged the spheres for man's ascent.

Four crowns times ten descended on the martyrs at Sebast.
Four days times ten for men to be refashioned in the fast,
Four nights times ten the deluge fell and reformed all the earth.
Three days, and on the fourth, Christ called the dead man to rebirth.

Four the bestial legs on which our fallen souls have bended.
Four the rash, irrational hands untimely grasping wit intended.
Three days had death upheld its claim to him, but on the fourth,
The master tread the threshold saying, "Lazarus, come forth."



George Shaw
18 years old
South Carolina
Later Modern Literature

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