

In May, two St. Stephen's students, Leila El-Zabri and Isabella Todini, won both prizes in the Upper School category of the Keats-Shelley Poetry Contest. This year's judge was Jackie Kay, award-winning poet, author, and the current Scots Makar (the Scottish Poet Laureate). Ms. Kay was extremely impressed with the technical facility and emotional depth of our students' work.

WINNER

1ST PLACE, KEATS-SHELLEY HOUSE POETRY CONTEST, 2019

Selene

by Leila El-Zabri, Grade 11

•
The ephemeral lullaby of the moonshine,
My huckleberry friend;
The stroke of metal on metal is a sharp twist.
Quiet, it is all quiet, be quiet! You bathe in the silence.
You bathe in the expanse of billowing melodies,
And the barks resonate. It is no longer silent, but it wasn't before either.
Your breath was loud.

••
The crescent is riddled with lines,
Unfolding, mocking Dedalus's efforts. It is a beating heart,
An elegant howl, a Mother of Pearl cocooning Venus in her whole, womanly figure.
The face of wisdom reflects upon a shard of heart
And she draws courage from it; a stray soul sucking the luscious
blood from the fabled horse.
She thinks she will paint her body with it.

•••
Magia della Luna:
He calls her, she turns.
He sees a woman at night, she is reaching for the moon.
Her body cradles the stampeding beat of the bull-skin drums,
The feathers on the drumsticks sweep across the raw planes.
The jade slips through her hair, the silk flares onto the threaded wood
Of the basket of the womb of the woman-
The naked power that she encloses.

••••
The tang of shrill metal.
You could carve the jagged patterns into the moon with your tongue.
The incense is swallowed with Sweet Medicine,
Myrrh, cedar, lavender melded with echoing sage.

— —
North-Star Flower Woman watches over her,

A mother to the moon. Her petals unfurl in protection of the bare life
she guards, but the purity of her love is new.
Love, what love? She gives nothing less.

HONORABLE MENTION, KEATS-SHELLEY HOUSE POETRY
PRIZE, 2019

Isabella Todini, Grade 12

Scrape and Scrabble

PDF. attached in other document.

Ms. Egan is proud to present work that has been done in her Creative Writing Classes in the Spring and Fall Semesters. Enjoy!

???

My head spins in a chromatic vortex as I stare into nothingness and my glowing eyes turn black.

I hear the rippling sound of the second dimension, struggling to stay sealed between thick, rusty cages of void, and its heated atoms shiver as they crave to escape. Shrieking *white* radiates and echoes off the sheer fibers of lifeless wood, the marble underneath fusing and twining with its thorn edges ablur. My trembling hands trace its cold silhouettes, silver and jade, as perfumed clouds of lime juice and wine grasp onto the light particles of time and space, climbing their way to the sky.

*The sky is nothing but crystalline “zero”,
oblivion masked by fog and starry nights.*

My lips tremble, my nose burns, and my alert ears turn red.
I desire to make something of that nothingness before me- warp its utter shape and give it essence through my essence itself.

“l’Existence précède l’Essence”

Its mere existence has expired
and it now longs for purpose.

!!!

We are the only creators of our “destinies”.

We are the only ones who can truly decide
*if to turn left or right in the fork of life,
lost in the chasm of the infinite possibilities that shape our humble beings.*

I stare at the hundreds of thousands of question marks poised before me.

I want to eternally stain this blank sheet with intense hues.

I want to splash its hollow veins with life, with shades of cherry red and grassy green and midnight blue; condemn it with the image of the spiraling thoughts wrestling inside my straining mind.

I want to break its faded heart and tear its feeble limbs apart.

I want to feel the frothing heat against my fingertips ablaze, as I rip its seams and curl its shredded parts.

My quivering hand is a magnet’s northern pole, attracted to the luring south of a shiny purple ink.

The impulse is to carve chaotic graphemes sprouting and blooming from my contorted thoughts, and pour my soul into cups of senseless letters.

Dots, curves and oblique lines would dress them- hats, coats and shoes to abstract forms of life, trapped between the cement layers of what is and what is not.

A shimmering droplet of salty water gracefully falls from my left eye, itching with excitement and startling confusion.

I suddenly feel the urge to soak that candid rectangle in gallons of boiling tears;

Force it under the surface and watch it fall to a thousand fragile pieces, bound to dissolve into pools of atomic nullity.

I want to splash it with warm mugs of coffee and frigid cups of fresh iced tea, so to draw an amber halo along its delicate pleats.

As my mother spreads melting butter onto freshly baked wholegrain bread, I yearn to cover the smooth plain with sticky squares of glue and bound it forever to a crystal coffee table, a hardwood chair, a thick strand of hair; press it, suffocate its pores, thrusting it against the wall and breaking its unbreakable barriers with a spiraling nail, hammered deep into its soul; smear it with pomegranate, blueberry, orange and peach, turning it into the canvas for the concrete, sugary art of mellow fruitfulness; crumple our frustration into an unknown, unique, shape: an irregular gem in a world of boxy rocks; and pierce a hole so deep it penetrates air itself, opening its Pandora's box and freeing the third dimension, hungry for a taste of *all*.

o o o

I want to fold the sheet and swallow it,
erasing it from my vision forever.

"Forever", though, doesn't exist.

Forever is a social construct, a seemingly logic idea created to shape our lives based on an infinite time range, a human invention trying to answer one of the un-answerable questions of being.

In reality, there is no "time,

no "space".

And nothingness casts us into an engulfing state of ecstasy and anguish, fueled by the deepest fear of the unknown.

The human mind can't possibly fathom what lies within the secrets of essence and life.

My senses awaken and numbness overcomes me as I try to unveil the truth, truth which cannot be reached by the only available dimensions of 'present' and 'past'.

The sole purpose of our actions is to shape this oblivious being,
seeking for solution, and it is ultimately determined by us.

Our intellect is the blank sheet

As its two dimensions clash to prevail, it awaits our will to be stained, to be written over, drowned and dissolved, crumpled, and freed from its restraining barriers once and forever.

Only so will our essence be fully complete.

"We live to create" -Maddalena Luberti

Tales will never get old if you don't read them: a sonnet/haibun

by Luca Di Cicco, Grade 11

Once upon a time, there was the Tree.
He was the monument to life:
His roots were intricate streets
Of thoughts. He was wiser than human minds.

Thousands of books you can't read. Will you resist the call of knowledge? I'm not your conscience nor a temptation. I'm the Numb Beast. I'm your true nature.

His branches were endless pages.
The black lymph yearly put gold
Letters in the ringed-cages.
Everything I described now is old.

You just have to cut that trunk. You will be wiser, safer and richer than any other man. I'm not forcing you but think about your family.

The silent historian wrote
Down the conclusion of his book.
He was sad. The ink gently drooled.

Do you want to know why is He sad? He didn't show everyone the beauty of life. You should know that. You're the wisest man on Earth after all.

The letters were finally free.
However, the Tree's absence drew
more attention than its pale content.

Since you're so wise now you'll realize how foolish you were. It's a little price to pay to comprehend that you didn't want the Tree's knowledge. That became immediately old. You just liked the idea of having it.

That is the difference.

And everyone lived happily ever after.

Line emission spectrum

by Daisy Joy Halliwell-Woods, Grade 11

A wall of rainbow,
Speckled by black lines,
Lines the paper sitting in front of me.

The thick vermillion pours out behind the black surface,
and waves at me,
slowly,
dignified in its seeping,
blood like,
through the black paper.

656nm

Its fleeting companion,
blue like the icy rooftop of the sea,
shines through the darkness with a thin burst of an aquatic breeze.

495nm

A darker,
deeper,
plunged into the darkness of a midnight sky-- blue,
peeks out from a mound of speckled darkness.
its wave shorter,
faster than the rest,
beating its rays up at me.

450nm

Finally a royal purple bats its eyelashes behind the long wall,
calling out,
its voice fleeting.

410nm

All that matters

by Maisie Rae Spencer, Grade 9

Dark and grey and tall,
Bricks crawl higher and higher.
Climbing to the clouds.
A new horizon imposed on a blue sky.

When the world was young there weren't many walls,
We didn't need them.
Now we build them.
To keep us safe, they say.
To protect us from the world?
To protect the world from us?

Brown dust is on my shoes.
And in my eyes.
And in my throat.
Lots of walking today.
But now we are here,
And that's all that matters.

Lots was left behind to get to this wall.
Friends deserted.
Family abandoned.
Memories lost.
Lives sacrificed.

But now we are here,
And that's all that matters

Crystal Indigo Beaches- A Time Capsule

by Emma Cardillo, Grade 9

Tender basil trees.
Grains of rock molded into one
Guiding us, leading, hands.
Streams of leaflets reach out to cream and cherry butterflies

A Memory

Warm bread has just been sliced,
The friendly flavor of jam's bronze shine.
The gentle knocking of cotton-sew clouds, just awakened at that hour,
The whispers of crimson watercolor on ivory skies.
Peaks reaching out to the cerulean panel,
Yearning for shade.
Waves rolling onto the shore, tickling infant grains of golden sand.
Fresh mountain water, springs of utter quiet.

A Reminiscence

Abyss cushion, to drop all my pains down at night.
Polished little ladybugs on ornate plants.
Bumblebee paint brush strokes dipped in lemon juice,
Hands joining, owls gathering.
Rustic cheese, reflected,
An iris moon.
Unlit blooming eclipse
Harvest-gold afternoons
The smell of beach salt and rays of sunlit shores
Glazed with summer's sea breeze,
One last second

Serendipity

the tides of past tunes

by Sofia Peng, Grade 10

Harmonic notes twirl in the nights of middle-ages
shielded with cobblestones and roughness.

Darkness, plagues, and famines,

How they've described.

But they don't know for real.

When a breeze fondles our cheeks,
I glance up at the light pearl of immensity,
as always
it shines along melodies. The stars
blink and smile at me.

Tip, tap, tip, tap...

We hold each other's curled up fingers,
hand-to-hand

we hum the antiqueness in rhythms.

Few steps forward, others backward
and merry-go-round;

Jumps of ballerinas appear in sight.

The musicians tingle the fidula,
(grandfather of the contemporary),
the sublime of violins
and the calabash-guitar. Old classics
blow along the undulating winds that follow.
The firm thumps on handmade drums
sketch rough tones of giggles.

Why define it as ages of darkness, mistakes?
When beauties of such tunes were created.

Natalie Silver
Fall 2019

Roseus Solis Occasum

The woman walked towards the window, her dress sweeping the floor.
Her feet were not visible,
She was floating.
Two slabs of marble jutted out from either side of the window,
Divided by a small, simply decorated column,
With flutes running down it, and a moustache sitting on top.
She sat down with great difficulty
Her large poofy dress obstructed her from making simple movements
She was used to it now.
She stuck her hand inside an invisible pocket,
Hidden under the layers of fabric.
She felt around, and pulled out a book.
As she opened it, her skin scraped the edge of the parchment.
A drop of scarlet blood fell on the cream-colored pages
It spread in all directions, till it could no more
The page had turned light pink.
She ignored the pain as she began reading
Soon the only thing she was conscious of was the story,
and the pink hue of the sunset behind her.

I look out the window at the sky above.
Streaks of pink and red paint the sky.
An hour ago, the clouds were on fire.
Now they were almost edible.
I pull out my light pink journal, and start writing
Someone comes and sits across from me.
We write and talk, and laugh
Until the sun goes down,
The delicate notes of the piano,
Still ringing in our ears

Remembered

by Verónica Téllez, Grade 10

As I pack, I try to convince myself that the touch of sand will stick beneath my toes,
and that my eyes will forever preserve the colors that these sunsets have known to show
me before.

I try to convince myself that the smell of sea breeze will fit in my bag,
and that maybe,

just maybe,

my senses can maintain this bliss,
a bliss that has shown me what it means to have a taste of the simplest pleasures in life.
With strength, I wish to maintain this ache that reminds my stomach of how I've laughed,
and I hope that my cheeks will remain numb, from ever avoiding to hide a smile.
As I pack, a bitter taste fills my mouth,
but with a grind I remind myself that this kind of beauty,
is meant to be remembered for life.

Ambrosia

by Bianca Todini, Grade 9

Crisp gusts of sharp winds whip my hair in circles
Flushed faces and noses, red from cold.
As I walk home, my eyes linger on a wooden crate of pomegranates:
A guarded gate to the shop behind them
I carefully pick two.
Deep cherry-tinted skin
Unscratched and pure of imperfections.
Cold hands exchange a few coins for the cherry-tinted treasures
I gently place them in my bag, as if they were made of fragile porcelain
And I continue to escape the cold.
Upon arriving home, I sit down and reach for the pomegranates
The sharp knife slices cleanly through the tough skin, as if it were butter
Two sides pulled apart
Drops of blood spills out onto my hands and down my arms
The cherry-tinted skin reveals its yellow underbelly
As the bloody fruit gets pulled apart to expose its treasure
Shimmering, crimson rubies all stuck together
A conglomerate of wine-colored sweetness
To my pleasure, the jewels release with ease
Persephone's downfall has become my nectarous treasure.
Garnet-stained fingers bring a handful of precious stones to my lips
The fruit bursting in my mouth
I lick my lips, searching for more sweetness remaining from the crimson rubies
My lips are now stained along with my fingertips
Permanent color, equal to the permanent urge for more
Neither recede, even after soap and water douse my garnet-stained hands

Nothing can compare to this heavenly fruit
Godly Ambrosia sent down from the clouds
To bless our lips, and hands, and anything they touch.