

Banging the drum for music contest

Success for Mrs Gove, which saw Mackenzie performing the Proclaimers’ classic and Hardman crowned victors, pg 2.

As ever, plenty of arts and culture content

Presenting experimental poets, innovative, short stories, and album recommendations, pg 4.



From the editor

As with every editorial introduction I’ve been tacitly tasked with writing, I’m kept frustrated and procrastinating by an inability to challenge myself to write anything beyond the standard self-perpetuating spiel aggrandising the Langtonian to appease the only guaranteed readers of this publication among the senior staff. Deadlines and a lack of sufficient self-belief have seen me failing in previous issues to break this mould, producing facile and inoffensive propaganda pieces, rushed out in one sitting and ultimately forgotten, unattributed, unloved. Because it’s easier to write nothing than to write something bad.

I’ve placed myself in a similar situation this time round, despite having a protracted period of five months to work with, but now “nobody’s perfect” has finally been hammered in enough times for me to begin to turn it into action, and understand that the best version of yourself is the honest one. While this hasn’t liberated me from the fist-clenching and face-scrunching of attempting to write well, I can trust that if I try to remain true to myself, the right people will appreciate it. One fear I have in communicating my genuine effort to encourage sincerity is a fear of its dismissal as the trite clichés of naïveté, pseudo-intellect passed off as profound insight. Unfortunately, the reasons these annoyingly simple maxims of love and hope still persist, regardless of the downwards trend in their reception through the cynical age, is both for their foundation in banal truth, and that few seem to have gotten the message yet. This editorial therefore serves less as a revolution than a reassurance of significance, and a request to be fearless; it takes courage to expose yourself, risk your reputation for the sake of writing barefaced.

I can’t pretend to be perfect, including in living up to my own words, but nobody else can either. As I understand it, most things are not as significant as you’d imagine them to be, especially in this new age of hyper-transitory media that has almost entirely crushed any metric of assessing value, in favour of rapid novelty. The Langtonian has always fallen into this virtual casket of on-line media since I’ve been editor, coming with the double-edged sword of people caring less and forgetting quicker: the anonymity that comes with being buried means you won’t win the Pulitzer, but you won’t be judged either—you can write free. I think if I said there’s no meaning to life it would start sounding like Rick and Morty nihilism.

This irregular periodical’s condemnation to cyberspace, along with the silver lining of the Cloud (pun), will hopefully/unfortunately be a thing of the past soon, as a result of substantial efforts to see us once again in physical print—you may even already be reading this in the real world!

Regardless, my ethos to any reader remains, one best summed up on “Momma” by Kendrick Lamar (whose new album I review on pg 8):

“I know if I’m generous at heart, I don’t need recognition
The way I’m rewarded – well, that’s God’s decision.”

There is one recent addition to the Langtonian staff I do need to recognise. Jacob Fisher, our new graphic designer, and his incredible efforts have made the Langtonian a better place to write in. It deserves to be printed for his sake alone.

Macron holds the fort amid extremist battle

Jacob Fisher

This year’s French elections mark the furthest a far-right candidate has come to securing the presidency. It was a tense race between the four realistic candidates, Jean-Luc Mélenchon, Emmanuel Macron, Marine Le Pen and Éric Zemmour. The second tour, where all candidates but Macron and Le Pen were eliminated, saw voters swayed by the lesser of two evils; they were now voting to keep Macron or Le Pen out of the Élysée.

Mélenchon is the most radical left-wing candidate. He narrowly missed out on moving to the second tour, receiving 22% of the vote to Le Pen’s 23% in the first tour. Mélenchon’s most daring plan is doubtless to move on from

with young people, and is the most popular candidate for people aged 24-35. He supports gay marriage, the right to abortion and the legalisation of cannabis. He is also an anti-capitalist, wanting to place a 100% tax on any earnings over €360,000 a year, raise minimum wage to €1,400 a month, freeze the price of everyday essentials, and lower the retirement age to 60. He would also reinstate the wealth tax that Macron



Signing his essay, Éric Zemmour appears at the March 2010 Salon du Livre de Paris.



Pécresse, president of Parisian public transport, speaking in 2019.



Paying tribute to Joan of Arc, Marine Le Pen (front left) and her father, Jean-Marine Le Pen (front right) walk in the National Front’s annual May Day procession.

the Fifth Republic and to create the Sixth. Currently, the president (head of state) has executive powers to rule and appoint the Prime Minister (head of government), alongside enjoying criminal immunity while in office. These are powers which were given to the president by de Gaulle in 1958 after the Algiers putsch. Mélenchon wants to give the people the right to recall the president if they don’t follow through on their mandate in the Sixth Republic. He resonates

withdrew upon being elected.

It was as a result of this wealth tax’s removal that saw Macron’s immediate decline in popularity; repealing the wealth tax symbolised a growing economic inequality in France. His subsequent welcome was the yellow-vests riots: many felt alienated and robbed due to austerity measures, and in typical French fashion, the French went on wide-scale strikes and protests in response. They were often violent and enduring. The

president only fuelled his opponents with his *pass sanitaire*—a Covid pass for exclusive admittance to most hospitality venues, such as cafés, restaurants, shopping centres, and public transport. The people shouted on the streets “*liberté!*” (freedom) and “*non au pass sanitaire*” (down with the Covid pass).

However, Macron now boasts about reaching record-low unemployment while being heckled by voters living hand-to-mouth in a time of economic instability. Macron found himself campaigning in a time when it is more and more common for French people to sleep in their cars. Under Macron’s reign, 25% of French youth remain unemployed. Yet still, members of Le Pen’s party seem to believe that immigrants steal jobs, and therefore slashing immigration is the only solution, something the Langtonian explored in its last issue. Many far-right French thinkers have taken to praising Britain for Brexit!

Le Pen has reworked her effect in the past decade, undergoing what commentators are calling her ‘de-demonisation’, alongside rebranding her party from the National Front to the National Rally’ in an effort to appear more united and less antagonistic. However historians only associated the name with the National Popular Rally, one of the main parties collaborating with the fascists in the Second World War. The Le Pen (the name literally meaning ‘the peninsula’ or ‘the chief’) family is well established on the far-right scene; Le Pen’s father founded the National Front and there was a period where Le Pen’s niece toured for the party. A spout of family drama divided the family, however, and Le Pen stripped her father of his perennial president title in 2015. This decision was part of her deradicalisation scheme, cutting out a spokesperson who defen-

ded the Vichy regime, who wrote off the Holocaust’s significance, and was most displeased with the party rebrand. The niece truncated her name in 2017, leaving out the ‘Le Pen’ and defected to Zemmour’s party.

The National Rally utilises religion to fuel its party. France is founded on being secular and indivisible: that is the second article of its constitution. The National Rally notoriously wants to ban the wearing of the Muslim headscarf entirely to remove any affiliation with religion in public. In 2007, the party protested against the building of the Mosque of Marseille, and raised the rent on the land from €300 to €24,000 per annum, while shortening their lease by half a century. However, Le Pen’s party’s mascot is the Catholic saint, Joan of Arc. The National Rally organises an annual march to Joan of Arc’s statue in Paris: a relic kept from the time of her father’s reign. Le Pen muddles the meaning of secularism; it is not the abolition of religion, but the removal of it from public affairs. Indeed, the French mantra of liberty, equality and fraternity promotes the inclusivity of all people, regardless of their faith. Nevertheless, Le Pen vehemently campaigns against Muslims and compares their prayers in the street to the Nazi occupation of France; she sees Islam as an ‘oc-

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New student leadership announced

New student leaders have been chosen comprising 28 Year 12s. The Head Students unveiled were Niccy Busuttill and Calypso Newman, and deputies Jacob Couzens and Lameya Karim.

Niccy Busuttill thinks that this year group is ‘more proactive and engaged with school issues’ than those before. He pointed out the need for mental health awareness. He asks students to ‘trust in what we’re saying, as we’re only a few years

older than you, and struggling with some of the exact same pressures you are’. He told us, ‘the only thing we want to do is help you.’

Calypso Newman told the Langtonian that she aims to ‘improve the well-being of the student body by raising awareness of mental illnesses and provide a better support system for those who are struggling, and to destigmatise the LGBTQ+ community’. She said, ‘this school has provided me with so many amazing opportunities (whether it’s the research projects, or the opportunity to play sports)’. She implores students, ‘if anyone has any ideas on how to improve the school, or has any personal issues, please don’t hesitate to ask me or Niccy for help—we’re here to support you.’

Jacob Couzens has been a student at the Langton since Year 7; he said he has ‘seen how those before me have and haven’t made the school an environment where people want to come and learn and enjoy themselves’, the goal, he said, is to ‘make the school a fun, safe environment where everyone can be themselves’. He ‘looks forward to representing you all this year’ and wishes students a good summer.

Lameya Karim put herself forward because she wanted to ‘come up with or receive ideas and actually carry them out’. She wants to make the school a more fun environment; stating that students’ ‘hard work should be appreciated by allowing them to have a good time at school and not only outside of school’. She tells students to ‘complain as much as they want to me if they aren’t happy with something’.

Bella Mitri, the House Captain for Hardman, said ‘everything can be improved’. She has a brother in Year 7, and wants to represent that link to the lower school. ‘People need to change and I personally wanted to be a part of that change’. Grace Tonkin, Mackenzie House Captain, cites her inspiration working with Calypso Newman in setting up the ‘Women in STEM’ society. She would like to inspire people to ‘solve the issues they recognise within the school’.

The Langtonian welcomes a new leadership and sues them to effect desired change.

Full list of new student leadership

Scarlet Barwell
Eric Buscall
Niccy Busuttill (Head Boy)
Sam Clarke
Jacob Couzens (Deputy Head Boy)
Emilie Corcoran
Andola Crowley
Serena Davidson
Miriam Dodd
Sam Easterbrook
Joshua Emptoz
Emmett Holdsworth
Amelia Hurst
Theo Hutchings
Hannah Johnson

Lameya Karim (Deputy Head Girl)
Bella Mitri
Calypso Newman (Head Girl)
Tom Panteli
Finn Pollard
Emilly Rodrigues
Jacob Sebastian
Jaffar Shirazi
Jacob Strouts
Abi Thompson
Georgia Tonkin
Grace Tonkin
Albert Wroe

Hardman glory in debut music contest



▲ Hardman stole the crown singing the Communards’ “Don’t Leave Me This Way”. With chorus masters Mrs Wells and Mrs Renshaw-Kidd, pianist Joe Cobb, and bass guitarist George Fisher. ▼ The Four Sharps performing “I Feel Good (I Got You)”. From left to right, Tom Guest, Clement Thurston, Oli Guest and Emmanuel Sleight.



Rogues’ gallery



◀ Mr Head is stunned at Young house’s performance of “Forever Young” by Alphaville led by Isabelle Davies-Wolfe and Becky Creighton.

Ms Berry ▶ (left) and Mrs Smith (right) performing with Sharp, singing Starship’s “We Built This City”.



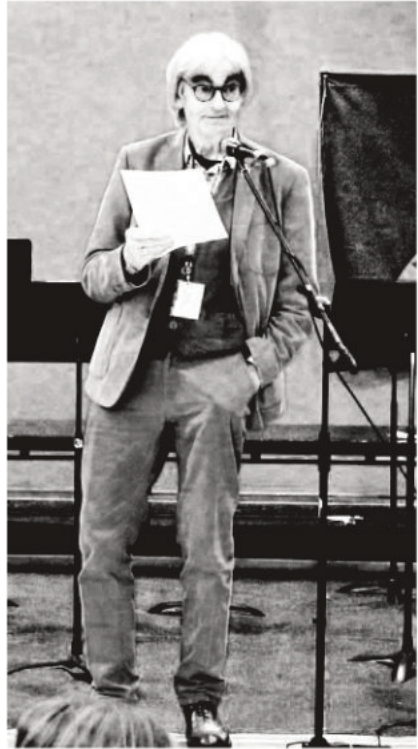
Langton’s first house music competition was a success all round. A unique perspective examines.

Rufus King

31 March 2022, House Music Day, had a pretty good description to me in the days leading up to it—missing all lessons, belting out the same 80s song repeatedly for the entire morning, and I get to play a Megadeth song at the end of the day on guitar! It will be fun.... Right?

Well it most certainly was. I live in the 80s, so chanting an 80s hit for the entire morning seemed like a piece of cake to me. Although “Don’t Leave Me This Way” by the Communards (our house song that we performed on the day) is far from bands such as Slayer, Iron Maiden and Anthrax that I usually associate the 80s with. I hate

Grenville Hancox announces the winners of the event.



▲ Mackenzie house performing the Proclaimers’ classic, “I’m Gonna Be (500 Miles)”.

to admit that the 80s actually had some above-par pop music (and yes, that is a comment on modern pop music), so singing this was far from painful. However, I was put in the falsetto section to sing, and reaching Halford-esque highs is no easy task. Don’t try it; it hurts.

After a morning of rehearsing our House song, we promptly ate lunch, and then me and my buddy, Sinan from Young, carried my amp and guitar—while it was raining very heavily, I may mention—over to the sports hall. We had to put the amp in a plastic bag to save it from exploding if any of the rain got into it. After we (finally) transported it into the sports hall, the soloists were up first. It was a strange mix of Toy Story, Bastille, Chuck Berry, Chopin, and, um, Megadeth, on my part. I came on second to last, and busted out a cover of “Tornado Of Souls” by the one and only Megadeth. I was feeling a bit too shy to do a Dave Mustaine vocal impression though. (Sorry.)

Obviously I didn’t *absolutely* do Marty Friedman’s solo justice, but then actually I won the soloist section, so it must have been OK.

The House Ensemble competition had some more great bands and performers. In no particular order, the Year 9 Hardman band most certainly did the house justice with an original song that in turn reminded me of Pearl Jam or Soundgarden, which is a good thing, because those bands are amazing. I never understood why people hate bands for sounding like someone else. Unless you don’t like the band that they sound like, of course. But I did like 9H’s song.

Anyways, the Four Sharps performed a great cover of James Brown’s “I Feel Good”—the band was very together and were very deserving winners of the Group category.

Young’s group (or, aptly christened the First and Only Brass-Based Rock Band—this is slightly exaggerated as they had three

bassists and two guitarists) played a brass-based cover of “Sweet Child O’ Mine”, which was good, but they lost the title of best House ensemble to Sharp, as mentioned earlier.

Burgess played a really cool Brazilian Percussion-type thing. There was a very loud whistle that came from the back of the hall to start, and we all thought that we were in massive trouble when it went off! It turned out to be an incredible performance, but lost out to Sharp for the title.

Mackenzie played a great cover of “Carry That Weight” by the Beatles, which, again, was brilliant but didn’t garner them a win.

The House Song performances were an odd sonic maelstrom of Young singing a serious, heartfelt song, Mackenzie winning by having some great fun that was good to watch, and Burgess rickrolling the entire school. Mackenzie played a fantastic cover of “500 Miles”, which won them the title (and saw Dr

Easterbrook playing a *very* nice Fender Stratocaster). Young stood as brothers-in-arms while singing the aptly chosen “Forever Young”, which was the best one in my opinion, however Mackenzie won. Sharp had some good fun, with “We Built This City” by Jefferson Airplane (or Starship, I can’t remember). Burgess then rickrolled the entire school—I felt attacked... in the best way possible. Then Hardman (*us!!!*) performed our House Song (in case you need reminding, “Don’t Leave Me This Way”) and it was all over. There was

much rejoicing in the Hardman Camp when we found that we had won the entire thing—especially as it was the first ever House Music competition—the celebrations were extremely noisy, considering we *are* the loudest house.

Before I conclude this article, I just want to apologise to Ms Shepherd (Year 7 Head of Year) because in the awards assembly the next day, I accidentally blanked her when I was collecting my award for best soloist—sorry, Miss!

Thanks for reading, have a nice day!

Contact

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Red Island

The constituency of Canterbury holds a world record for the seat longest held by a single party, the Conservatives. Why does it now find itself in red hands, yet beset by blue neighbours?

Mr Haste

When interviewed for the BBC’s excellent ‘The New Labour Revolution’, George Osborne described Tony Blair as a ‘Tory-despoiling machine’. The New Labour machine propelled Blair to become the first Labour leader to win three parliamentary majorities, the first of which is a post-WWII record. If Johnson’s 2019 victory was a landslide, Blair’s in 1997 was an avalanche. Perhaps Blair can even be credited with completing the construction of the famous ‘red wall’. In 1992, it was a red picket fence; in 1997, it resembled a red fortress with ramparts that stretched from coast to coast. Winning votes from Middle England, and seats in the Midlands, Scotland, and Wales, while encouraging the Liberal Democrats to run riot through the South West, helped reduce the Conservatives to 165 seats. That’s 37 less than Corbyn’s Labour in 2019. They also performed remarkably well in Kent, taking Dover, South Thanet, Sheppey (and Sittingbourne), Gravesham,

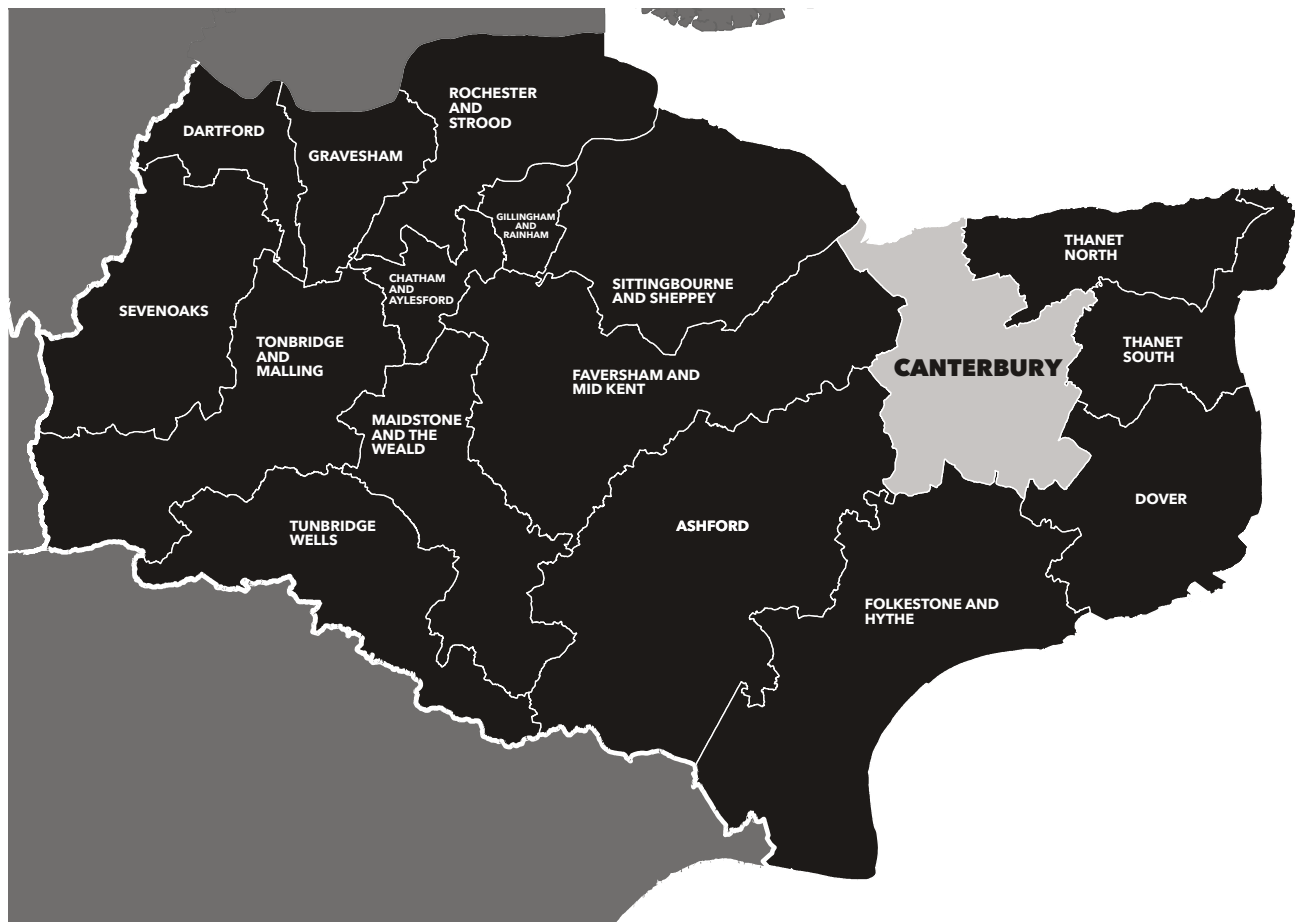
Gillingham, Rochester, Chatham, Gillingham and Dartford. But while the New Labour academies still stand, the legacy of their moderate electoral success in Kent leaves no discernible trace. The constituencies listed above all elected Conservative MPs with comfortable majorities in 2019.

Canterbury is a red island in a sea of blue—a red island that didn’t exist during the Blair years. In 2017, Rosie Duffield became the first Labour Party member to represent the city. As Kent has swung towards the Conservatives, Canterbury has swung towards Labour. This makes it highly unusual: a standout result locally, although perhaps not completely anomalous in the 2017 national context. Labour did take an impressive 25 seats directly from the Conservatives in England that year, but as Canterbury had been Conservative since being briefly Peelite in the 1850s, the surprising result still featured on the headlines reel as the final constituency results were reported on that hot, sunny morning of 9 June. It was mentioned in the same breath as Kensington at the time. Like Canterbury, Kensington had been won by Conservative candidates since its creation - although it has only existed in its current iteration since 2010. Another similarity is the margin of victory: they were both close races. Rosie Duffield won

Canterbury with a majority of 187; Emma Coad won Kensington with a minuscule majority of 20, involving Florida-style recounts. They were also bundled together in the reporting because they were

separate story of Labour progress in London—further reinforced by recent local council election results. Canterbury is in a club (or a Student Union bar) with Portsmouth South and Bristol North

prices, or a growing student population. If any of these factors single-handedly solved the riddle, the Canterbury result would likely have been replicated on a much larger scale. Maybe Canterbury is not



Kent constituencies after the 2019 election, showing the ‘Red Island’. ■ CON ■ LAB

both viewed as being ‘affluent’; a slight generalisation as average house prices in Kensington are about eight times more expensive than those in Canterbury. However, despite the perceived similarities, there is one big difference: while Duffield increased her majority in 2019, Kensington went back to blue.

Of the 25 English constituencies that flipped from Conservative to Labour in 2017, only 11 are still Labour-held today. Of these, only six saw an increased Labour majority at the last election. Enfield, Battersea and Croydon are part of an interrelated, but

West. This is an extremely exclusive club. I want to find out why this is the case.

There is a realignment taking place in British politics. Understanding more about the behaviour of voters in Canterbury may begin to unravel wider mysteries at the heart of contemporary society. If you gazed out from a hot air balloon floating high above our school, you would not be able to see another Labour constituency. This can’t be explained by the Brexit effect alone. Maybe it can’t exclusively be explained as a result of rising house

the odd one out. Should we be more surprised by the rest of Kent? Why have so many Southerners voted for a platform of ‘levelling up’ the north? Are Canterbury voters more akin to London voters than their Kentish neighbours?

At the Langton Symposium on 5 July, I’ll be launching a new, student-led Politics research project with the aim of investigating this fascinating constituency.

For more information about the new Politics research project, or to share your views on the above, please email Mr Haste: ehaste@thelangton.org.uk.

Macron holds the fort amid extremist battle

Jacob Fisher

PAGE 1 cupation of territory’.

Éric Zemmour, the convict, is the quintessential extreme-right candidate. He inhabits a world where immigrants are ‘thieves’, ‘assassins’ and ‘rapists’—a comment directed to child migrants which landed him a hate-speech conviction. To him, LGBT people ‘disintegrate society’, while #MeToo is the ‘eradication of men.’ Zemmour is a man facing incessant legal battles from the likes of *SOS Racisme* and *STOP Homophobie*. For years now he has been under round-the-clock police

protection. It makes little difference for Zemmour; his convictions are proof of suppression in a leftist justice system.

Even the conservatives don’t favour the extremists, such as Le Pen or Zemmour. The leader of liberal-conservative party Les Républicains, Valérie Pécresse, urged voters to keep Macron instead of Le Pen, citing Le Pen’s ties to Putin. Le Pen still maintains that a huge loan she received from the Kremlin was ‘purely commercial’ and not for supporting Russia’s annexation of Crimea. In her 2017 party campaign, however, she said she intended to swiftly lift sanctions placed on Russia had she been elected, although this

time around, she admits that Russia has gone too far in invading Ukraine.

Pécresse now has bigger fish to fry, however. She received a disappointing 4.8% vote. She relied on at least 5% to be eligible for state reimbursement of her campaign. She said on 11 April that she was ‘personally indebted to the tune of €5 million’. Had she won the taunting 0.2% extra, the state would have paid out up to €8 million of her campaign expenses. She is now launching a donation campaign to clear her debts, but it may prove fatal for her and her party—if not for the books, then at least their image. She practically begged for money, tugging at heartstrings of ‘all those

who have given me their vote, but also to all French people who are attached to political pluralism and freedom of expression.’ The candidate for the Green party also put out a similar dispiriting plea, saying the party could be sustained if all who voted for them donated just €3. Essentially, voters are being told that they will need to pay should their chosen party lose; an image that will need to be quickly shed for the sake of pluralism.

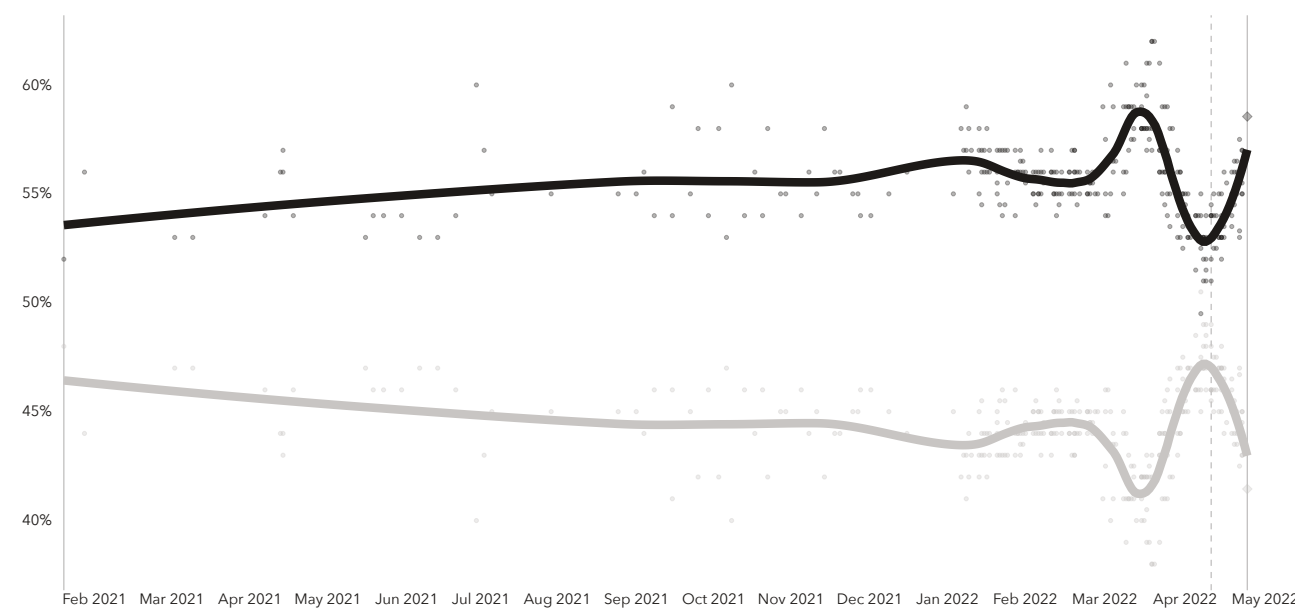
Macron and the right wing in France both share similar economic policies. The biggest factor polarising France is parties’ attitudes to discrimination: seemingly you vote left for *égalité*, and right to protect

your culture.

What determines the next term for Macron is the impending legislative election. He has already named his Prime Minister, Elisabeth Borne, who is the second woman to hold the office. Being a centre candidate, Macron needs to secure a cross-party coalition in order to avoid a ‘cohabitation’ in the National Assembly, where the president’s political party differs from the Assembly majority’s party. This would lead to political paralysis for Macron; his term in office will, in fact, be promptly decided by the elections on 12 and 19 June this year.



▲ Official results of the second-tour French election. ▼ Opinion polling for the 2022 election. Dashed vertical shows day of second-tour election. ■ MACRON ■ LE PEN



Jokes department

What are the A-Level students collectively called on May 4? Sith form.

A tall and skinny student at the school is also known as what? A lanky-ton.

Students were annoyed that English lessons were so Taylored to Byron.

There’s a Langtonne of things to do at this school.

All the Year 12s were gearing up to their first driving lessons.

Students rated the headteacher Ken out of Ken in the polls.

What would you call a tall, German-Italian gangster if he joined the school? A Lang-Tony.

Don’t blame the new house for not having as many students—they’re only Young!

Which house has the best knives? Sharp.

I asked the Langton skater dude how the test went, and he told me, “It was Hard, man.”

Which Prince of Denmark enjoyed pork? Ham-let.

Which painter had a truck-rental service? Van Gogh.

Stamp replacement using Shaun the Sheep

Royal Mail has recently announced that ordinary stamps will no longer be valid after 31 January 2023. Instead, a ‘new generation’ of stamps are being sold that include a barcode next to The Queen’s portrait. Stamp-holders are being offered a ‘swap-out’ to replace their stamps.

Royal Mail has marketed the unprecedented change to the consumer in two ways: receivers of post can now open the Royal Mail app on their phones and scan the barcoded stamp. Doing so will display an animation of Shaun the Sheep. Otherwise, they say it will help Royal Mail get post around faster.

It means going back on stamps holding their purchasing power indefinitely. This radical change poses questions about our privacy: sender and receiver could now be tracked for every postal communication. For Royal Mail to suggest that seeing Shaun the Sheep when receiving a letter would appease us is pure patronisation. As with the cashless society, this is just another step to everything in our lives being tracked around the clock. Consider paying in cash.

5 The Journey

Will Gulliford

6 A Loved Grave

Anonymous

7 Fantasy inspired by Alice in Wonderland

Rufus King

8 Mr Morale and the Big Steppers review

Niccy Busuttill

The *Langtonian* proudly exhibits some of this term’s submissions. For the first time, dedicated album recommendations and reviews have been included. We have also included puzzles for your foxing (perhaps vexation), dipped into the *Langtonian* archives and put many students’ work into print this term. Thank you to all the submissions that made it into this copy. The editorial door is always open; submit anything! Compile a crossword, pen a poem, start a serial, paint a portrait, and bag the byline. The *Langtonian* is communal; it’s yours. Who knows, maybe one day you could be the editor... (pg 1)

Otherwise, we hope you enjoy this issue’s compilation of pioneering wordsmiths and hope to see you at the end of the year for another instalment of this periodical—many hours have been invested, and the editor (though stressed) is passionate as ever.

Arts and culture

Longing

Miss G C Grant

Here is my painting called 'Longing'. My character's story is one of hardship, but hope for her future. The gold in her outfit represents her desire for more 'golden' times and she is looking out towards the South African landscape: a place that fills her with joy, as well as being a reminder of where she stands in her society. I painted this so that the gold is reflected differently depending on the lighting because I have used pearlescent acrylic.

I painted this for my friend from South Africa, who moved to England decades ago when her mother unexpectedly died. My friend has African figurines in her house, alongside cultural reminders of the place she loves.

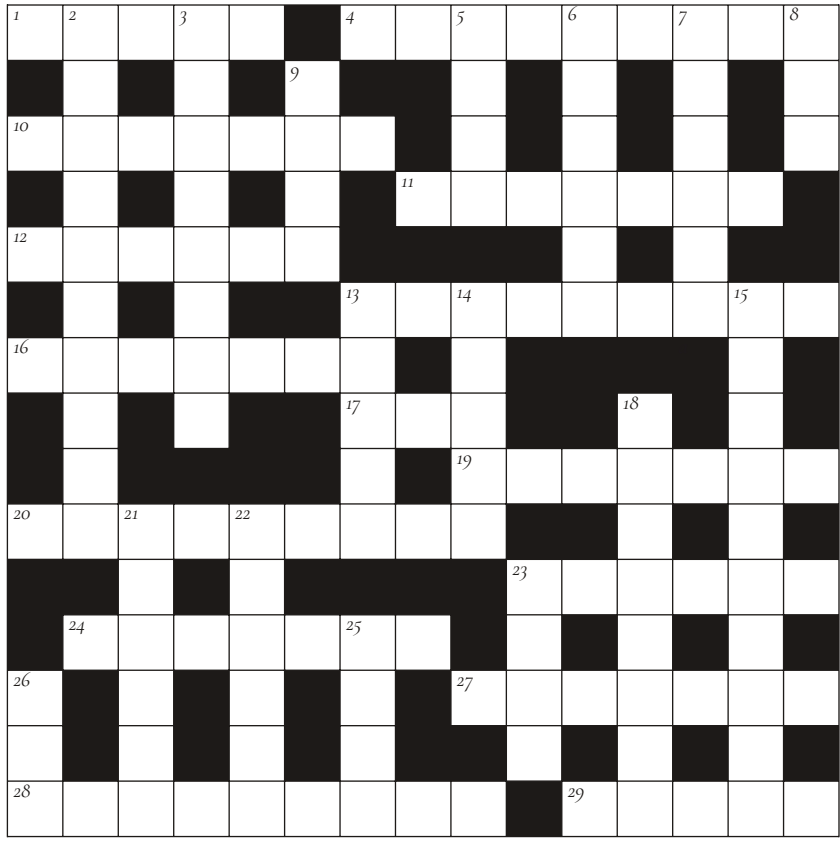
Although I have used acrylic paint as my main medium, the sun is water-colour, as I wanted it to be only just present.



WOMAN BUILT ON WORDS

Still driving lumpy, with the same candour as the bracelets and bangles chinking round each other, splitting a finger to crack the sound of fast ads, then mangling out the car door, the arm’s umbo jouncing on the edge as she rises, akimbo through flowered dress across the carpark, fumbling again for a pen, for a purse, finding art in inefficiency. Free in expanded eyes, “is my daughter using up too much water? Am I keeping my son clean-faced, himself too busy to care, with prose he’ll never promise to finish?” Before boredom, he’d perform acrobatics on his bag straps, lacking dexterity made up for by love wrapped in hands hugging laps, only a four-by-four now fitting the long legs of an innocent foregone. Never knew there’d ever be not enough room, that assistants would query his colour of clothes, that I’d get silence from ones I love the most, that the way I was raised would now sound out of tune, that horrorshow bathrooms were the new hills of green. Stacks of postal-cracked tiles staying unbalanced, horseflies sleeping in windows to die in the lights, smoky handymen halting into home invaders on site unseen, while neighbours fished for wit creating a challenge for an honest woman driven by her own car, cradled on gravel or fat pebbles, untouchable to the culture of grey blocks and slick capsules; it only falters after a cleaved absence to father John. As lonely matches make fires unavoidable, it's more the miracle that the house still stands, and that red expression wasn't given a chance. Sleeping on the trees, sunlight found itself loyal, matching a plane for height in her true wisdom, knowing her enclave could only surely be herself and her music, the one only she could hear, until you stopped.

© Niccy Busuttill MMXXII.



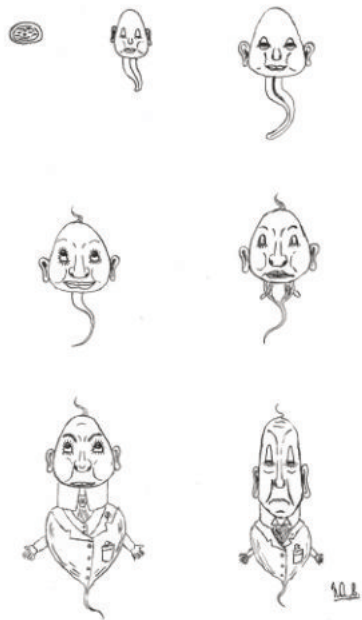
Crossword 1

Across

- 1. Ebb all round inside a priory (5)
- 4. Lady after dark in horrifying experience (9)
- 10. Haphazard or confused criteria (7)
- 11. Checkup with gold beak (7)
- 12. Big cat held by ninja guard (7)
- 13. Mined going west after droopy jeans (4,5)
- 16. Dodgy note added to a solvent (7)
- 17. Apprentice secretly underpaid (3)
- 19. Issue coming from addition on the telephone (7)
- 20. Hospital equipment tax against The Queen (9)
- 23. Paul making regular sacrifices with desire for tree (6)
- 24. Case of torchwood contains riff and a sci-fi plant (7)
- 27. OAP told chaplain secretly (3,4)
- 28. Supervise first worker with guard (9)
- 29. No end of stable cock-ups. Damn! (5)

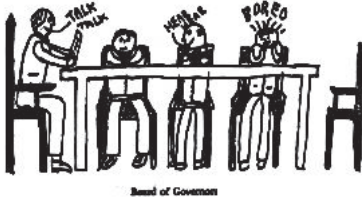
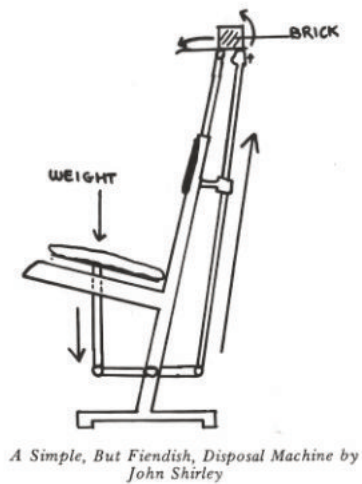
Down

- 2. Desk and short crate for civil servant (10)
- 3. Empty Hoover found in Europe before antre oddly (8)
- 5. Pundit, or augur (needing no introduction) changes sides (4)
- 6. Cab with journalist that’s chauffeured (6)
- 7. Head up and down after cat decapitated at midday (2,4)
- 8. Briefly earn on the side? (3)
- 9. Knave having a heart transplant in lair (4)
- 13. Seaside contract worker associated with endless ache (5)
- 14. Cow organ central to stud derby (5)
- 15. Night owls at home above sacs surrounding intoxicated Naomi (10)
- 18. Ace as usual—peculiar! (8)
- 21. Most valuable red steak on street (6)
- 22. Ten pocket endless flow of possibly non-stick (6)
- 23. Al and topless Ely conjoin (4)
- 25. South-American tribe gets popular and short car (4)
- 26. Cell info did not advance initially (3)



Tommy's Dream - Tadpoleitis.

From the *Langtonian* archives, ▲ April 1907, ▼ 1975.



BORN AND BREAD
The gardener told his apprentice: "When you've finished your sandwiches, Hovis."

PRO PACE EC CONTRA BELLUM

Dr C J Taylor

The famous ‘Waterloo stanzas’ of Byron’s *Childe Harold’s Pilgrimage* Canto III are justly famous.

Harold, whose first two cantos were published in 1812 (making this Byron’s own 1812 Overture), was the poem that transformed George Gordon from the limping 6th Baron Byron into a pan-European celebrity. As he put it himself, ‘I awoke one morning and found myself famous.’ Harold, the archetype of the Byronic hero, was once again thrust onto the world stage in Canto III, published in 1816 – that’s just one year after Waterloo, where

PAGE 7

Review of The Great Gatsby

Tyler Hawkridge

Fitzgerald writes with such meticulous description that he almost forgets to add a compelling story.

The Great Gatsby is principally set in Long Island, New York. The novel follows the seemingly innocent perspective of Nick Carraway as he is dragged into the affairs of his upper-class companions, specifically Jay Gatsby—the titular character.

Captivating lines, such as the likes of “[there] are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired” add a sense of profundity to wistful descriptions: “they were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house”.

Fitzgerald’s writing is beautiful. He succeeds in perfectly depicting every aspect of the wild world of West Egg, yet this craftsmanship is wasted on such a mundane plot.

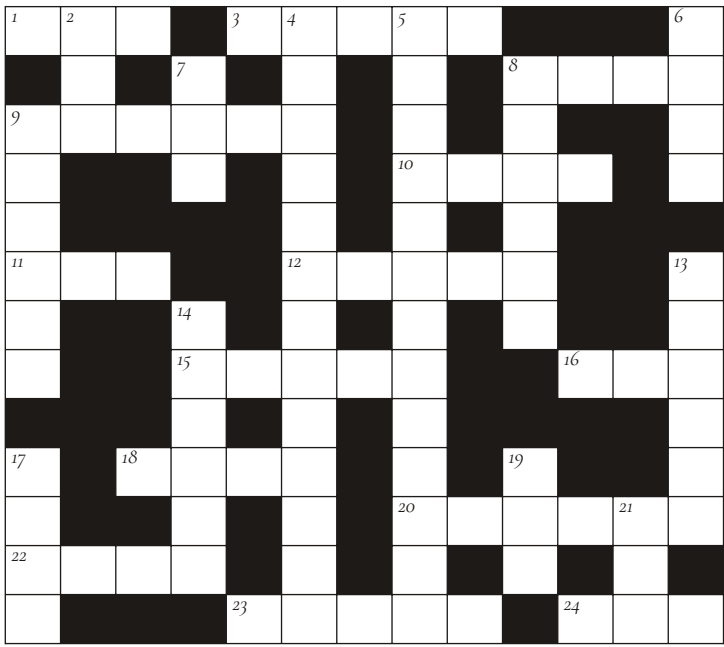
Whilst *The Great Gatsby* is certainly worth the read, be ready to stick with it. It is a recommended read for those who want to be calmly immersed, rather than being left in suspense at every turn of the page.

Express your voice

If this review stirred you, or you have your own book recommendation, please write in! We accept submissions on absolutely anything; it is our mission to help you find a literary voice.

How?

Email the editor
16nbusuttill@thelangton.org.uk



Quick crossword 1

Across

- 1. Attractive (3)
- 3. To iron (5)
- 8. Wharf platform in France (4)
- 9. To vex another (6)
- 10. Head of kitchen (4)
- 11. French denial (3)
- 12. Jane’s pupil at Thornfield Hall (5)
- 15. Storage space under roof in house (5)
- 16. Swedish cooker brand (3)
- 18. Loutish young person wearing sportswear (4)
- 20. People in high social stratum (6)
- 22. Vehement passion (4)
- 23. American soda-lime

- glass kitchenware (5)
- 24. Intestines (3)

Down

- 2. The [20] are well ____ (3)
- 4. Communication of intense energy (13)
- 5. Securities market (5,8)
- 6. ____ the gap (4)
- 7. Spherical green seed (3)
- 8. Multiple waiting lines (6)
- 9. William of ____ (6)
- 13. Framed counting tool (6)
- 14. Pop-art printmaker (Marilyn Diptych) (6)
- 17. Fine cloud in the air; mental confusion (4)
- 19. Outdoor grill (3)
- 21. Australian flightless bird (3)

Album recommendations



Interpol
Turn On the Bright Lights
2002. The first track outshines all others, a bassline that haunts, like 9/11 haunting NYC (and “New York Cares”). This album’s mood swings, such as the “Hands Away” interlude, or the humorous “Stella was a diver and she was always down”. The Killers cite this album as their biggest inspiration for Hot Fuss.



Santana
Abraxas
1970. Includes three covers, and even the artwork is an antecedent painting. “Incident at Neshabur” slides into jazz more than the sweeping Latin-rock theme, but is the best track here. Sporadic vocals on this album are not jarring, but fitting and cohesive, and the Fleetwood Mac cover is an opportunity well seized.



The Chameleons
Strange Times
1986. The pinnacle of *Strange Times* is “Swamp Thing”. Lyrically, this album is frustrated with the menial: ‘Half alive in a nine to five, vacant eyes/Primal scream at the TV screen’. An ominous outro to the album has Birdy proclaim ‘you’re dead out there’. Calmness is embodied in “Tears”, no less nihilistically.

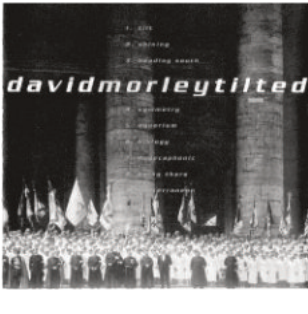


Men I Trust
Untourable Album
2021. Indie-electronic band that exemplifies itself in “Lifelong Song” or “5am Waltz”. It’s perpetual, insofar as track 1 ought to be put at the end so that earlier tracks work you into the more serious ones like a growing mist. This is a laid-back album that you can steep in many times over.

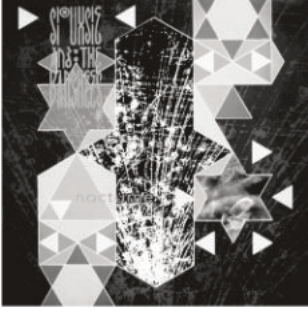
Bohren & der Club of Gore
Sunset Mission
2000. You’re plunged into something more noir than *Taxi Driver*; this melancholy album is part of the doomjazz movement, with heavy downtempo and ominous synths that bind the record. The rain and cityscape on the cover encapsulate the intended sound brilliantly. This is not a party album.



David Morley
Tilted
1992. Starts like a TV montage for a drug den, but give it a chance and explore the layers developing through the tracks. Some tracks roar, such as “Biology”, while “Heading South” lulls you. It’s a dizzy, German electronic album showing hints of ambient. If you know the background image, email the editor for prize.



Siouxsie and the Banshees
Nocturne
1983. This live album features Robert Smith, and two covers from the Beatles’ White Album. Siouxsie Sioux’s performance does not falter across the four sides; “Pulled to Bits” and “Night Shift” are clearly the peak of their night though. The second night carries a different atmosphere, which is more reckless.



Wolf Alice
Blue Weekend
2021. Lovey pop tracks such as “How Can I Make It OK?” contrast against numbing rock tracks immediately after, like “Play The Greatest Hits”, Wolf Alice present two juxtaposed types of romance. The album finishes with a dreamy atmosphere, ending the album’s romantic cycle with platonic love.



The Journey
Will Gulliford

She was so young when she left the village that she could hardly remember it. All that remained were flashes, mere glimpses of a life lost to the annals of time; the men with their gleaming weapons leaving, the worried mutterings of her parents, and, most vividly of all, the day when she had to choose what to leave behind. At the time, she struggled to understand why they had to leave their beloved home. She understood now. The men that would soon arrive in the village would not let her mother work, or let her go to school. They would not be allowed to leave the house on their own or even speak too loudly in public, and if they broke the rules they could be flogged or even killed. It did not seem fair to her, and she was right. It wasn’t. Their voyage had to be the hardest part of the journey. Her father

tried to keep her and her brother’s spirits up by telling jokes and stories as they trudged along the dusty paths that passed for roads in the land around their home, and for a while they were able to step out of reality and into the land of their father’s tales. However, the novelty soon waned as her father ran out of stories, and the weight of their baggage seemed to increase with each passing day. It took weeks to reach the sea, but to her it was worth the cramps in her legs from walking, and the ache in her back from carrying her things. The raw majesty and power of the surging waves was entirely new to her, and an inspiring sight if not wholly intimidating, for she had not seen the ocean before. The scent of the brine rekindled within her the flame of a long forgotten feeling, the sensation of hope. Their voyage had to be the hardest part of their journey. It was

The Strongest Man in Ireland, 1985

Noel.
Aged 34.
16 and a half stones.
Hands like shovels.
My wife, my ma and my pa and my kids look at me like I’m the strongest man in the world.
But I’m the strongest man in Ireland.
So I am.
I carry beer kegs and breeze blocks and drag equipment around the farm as part of my training.
Squinting with the strain, my mop of black fringe partially obscuring my eyes as I heave another engine block towards the East Donegal sky.
The Giant of Killygordon and no mistake.
Eggs boiled, or drunk raw for my breakfast.
Porridge chaser.
Then my routine of keg, block, bale and barn door.
So it is.
My eye’s on the title: the next competition to be held at the Sligo Sports Complex.
I shoulder press eight-year-olds as part of my training.
In the olden times I would have fought the English.
At night I’m awake as my little wife sleeps, and I’m thinking:
What if I win?

EMBERS AND ENDING EMBRACES

A dark light now unnights my soul.
A bare interior within
Where grey walls now entrap me in
Blinding depression. Yet I see
No windows, no doors; I had screamed,
Stuck in stagnation, sinister
Past.

Why can't it be more peaceful?
And future feels funeral for
Ever. You both could make my presents
Playful. My gaiety should
Not be culpable, but from the
Gallery.

'Encore!' it's justice
Ruled my prosecution, upon
Whom I have so much relied so
Inexorably, tightening
Nooses.

Mine in a dim bathroom
Has become surrounded by an
Everest of balsam. I am
Desolate.

In the water-room,
I feel escaped from my dead bed.
Twist.

Violently; thrust different
Yesterday. Now my home is.
Wretched.

The Cumberland Slider

So you got me cheap and brought me home
to a bland mid-terrace in Toddy.
Your kids liked me and tried to stroke my head.

The set-up was good: full rig.
UV, check. Pond with water pump, check.

And I liked that you thought of a name for me,
although writing it in Sharpie on my shell was...
a little too much.

But however.

I see the plan you hatched: an easy way to sate
the demands of a blond-haired, blue-eyed daughter clamouring for
a pug or a French bulldog. One they would dub ‘Dave’
with anarcho-comic intent.

I’d sit and bask, then slide into the water.
You’d watch, and count the days until
I hid for winter.

No, bastard.

I’m out and about, intend to crap in every sock drawer
I can find and – mark this – I won’t be playing ball,
roll over, or show claw to the likes of you.

I’ll bloody outlive you all.

© Christian Taylor MMXXII.

A Loved Grave

Cupid’s contagious compassion has struck me,
So that endless love may drown out my sorrow.
The arrow is so catastrophically devastating
that whispers of my soul still feel its figment.
With vengeance my soul is buried with thee.
I will wake from the clod, dark earth if only to look at you
It could be some demonised delusion,
how the angelic light has cast upon you.
My soft lover, with whom I bloomed.
Your honey-suckle eyes are glazed now
but they still outshine the fierce, fiery sun
and encapture my attention
So that every bone in my body answers to its call.
Wake, so I may see what lies under those pillowed lips
to the pearly cage of your teeth.
So you can hold me, cocoon me in your omnipotent glow.
I crave more now God himself cannot share your beauty.
So I must lay back down, devoured by your side
and die with thee.

An anonymous submission. © Langtonian MMXXII.

‘Man Jailed for Battering Stranger with a Seagull’—News Report

the canon’s littered, fit to burst
with birdies ranked from best to
worst:
poor Johnny Keats’ feathered fowl
(the nightingale and downy owl)
perched wing to wing with ravens
twain
(the one’s that nevermore-ing
swain,
the other’s hoarse and out of breath,
a-croaking done-in Duncan’s death)
and then there’s Shelley’s skylark –
hail!
transcending leaden hill and vale
and Hughes’ brooding crow, who
eyes
this wanton of the summer skies
and execrates him as he flits,
and silently-satanic sits;
and then DH’s frozen chums
(though lorn and lonesome, never
glum)
who sits upon his gelid bough
released from fitful fevers now
and, though expired, still able to
inspire a semi-Stoic few!
and so we come to fiercer fowl,
or birds that in the air do howl –
the crooked eagle, raptor wild
Lord Tennyson’s demonic child

and other sundry flying foes
the harpies and the Furies – those
who terrorise and plague the land
the bats and pterodactyls, and
immortalised by STC –
the albatross. the seagull. me.

there isn’t really much to say:
it started as a normal day
(a spot of muting, followed by
some screeching in the summer sky
then strafing toddlers, thieving
sweets,
cavorting in the squalid streets
and floating on the scummy tide
where fishes in the foam reside)
so nondescript, run-of-the-mill
I nodded off. that is, until
the laddo with an axe to grind
unable, so it seems, to find
a missile fit to lob or hurl
a sword to swish or mace to whirl
in lieu of all of these, take note,
he grabbed me roughly by the throat
and used me to assail a tyke
yes used my sainted head to strike
and lacerate another man
then dropped me to the ground and
ran
and left us both a-panting here

as inky night and death draw near
besmeared with guano, guts and
gore
(and o my little tail is sore)

alas! alack! and woe! perpend!
my race is run, I see the end!
avenge me brothers! mark my name
(and do not let it die, for shame)
I’m fading fading fading fast
this
inhalation
is
my l

© Christian Taylor MMXXII.

Response to ‘The Cumberland Slider’

This is what they get?
Is this my punishment
for lights left on,
heating too high,
biscuits crushed into carpet?

I smile, make the right noises,
extend fingers, ginger, stroke its sandpaper
skin.

At least it’s in a tank,
glass cage, staring daggers.
Dark eyes. Judgement.
terrorarium.

I name it. A name takes away
some of its power.
Written down to take control,
permanently.

I wanted a cat, nature’s greatest killing
machine,
to affix a bell and see its impotent rage -
The antithesis of this
lump
That sits behind glass
Scaled.
Staring.
Planning.

Eagerly, I await the winter.

Little bastard.

Home from school,
bag on table,
heating on high,
light on.

McVities stops halfway to hanging,
slack mouth.

Crumbs hit the carpet.

It’s out.

© Joseph Payne MMXXII.

Fighting the tide

"Write, write, write!"
The emails themselves seemed to carry
the same bearded intensity of he,
The passion for a project,
The language-love, lore-lust,
dialect-devotion, word-worship
becoming a word-warship
battling lexiconographic misdemeanours
in an ocean of mediaocrity
where the truly literate
is the new Demosthenes
railing against the sea.

But the sea? It cares not
for the whim, the jottings
of we thin red-pen line
that stands against it,
turning from demonstrative
Demosthinians into just
a bunch
of
Cnuts.

© Joseph Payne MMXXII.

PRO PACE ET CONTRA BELLUM

Dr C J Taylor

PAGE 4 and von Blücher famously routed the up-start Corsican, who would survive the battle and finally expire, aged 51 (and almost probably not poisoned), on St Helena in 1821.

So much for all that – back to Harold/Byron. Indistinguishable from his literary doppelgänger, Byron visited Waterloo in 1816, partly to commemorate his cousin, the Honourable Frederick Howard (1785-1815), who was killed in the battle, and partly to indulge his inner Byronic hero – the ‘mad, bad and dangerous to know’, mysterious, brooding persona who surveys humanity with disdain and mocks their pretences to glory and immortality. To be sure, by Canto III, Byron *is* Harold, and shares his committed misanthropy: ‘soon he knew himself the most unfit/of men to herd with Man; with whom he held/little in common’; and so, ‘self-exiled Harold wanders forth again,/with nought of hope left, but with less of gloom’.

Despite, like Beethoven, having once idolised Napoleon (and despite driving around Europe in his own Napoleonic carriage), Harold-Byron is candid about the ugliness and waste of war – and Waterloo in particular, where, in contradistinction to the scene in Brussels on the eve of the Battle where ‘there was a sound of revelry by night’ as ‘bright/the lamps shone o’er fair women and brave men’ whose ‘thousand hearts beat happily’, destruction and death annihilated thousands of young men. The Waterloo stanzas track the transition from the initial bustle and excitement of battle preparation (‘and

there was mounting in hot haste’; ‘Ah! then and there was hurrying to and fro’) to the carnage of the battle itself, pictured in these shocking terms in stanza 28:

‘Last noon beheld them full of lusty life,
Last eve in Beauty’s circle proudly gay,
The midnight brought the signal-sound of strife,
The morn the marshalling in arms, - the day
Battle’s magnificently-stern array!
The thunder-clouds close o’er it, which when rent
The earth is covered thick with other clay,
Which her own clay shall cover, heaped and pent,
Rider and horse, - friend, foe, - in one red burial blent!’

Here, it’s the images of earth ‘covered thick with *other clay*’ (human remains) and the ‘*red burial*’ mingling together both heroic Brits and their enemy (Death making no distinction between them whatsoever) which hits home hard. Clearly Byron’s intended effect, and informing his critique of the vain and pointless search for earthly glory, there is a gut-punch reaction from the reader as the buoyant joie-de-vivre of the eve of Waterloo gives way to the actual, sodden reality of war. Because, and make no mistake about this, war means death. War *is* death.

Limping away, Harold-Byron justly laments the bright young things who waved swords, raced horses into battle and screamed ‘HUZZAH!’, only to be snuffed out like candles – those ‘thousands, of whom each/And one as all a *ghastly gap* did make/In his own *kind and kindred*’. That’s how alliteration should be done, by the way – socking you in the gob, making you think about

He landed face down on a pavement, wondering what the hell had just happened. He got up and realised his head was bleeding again. He dusted himself off and realised he was looking at that jagged version of himself again. He trembled when he realised that he wasn’t looking at anyone else...it was his own body. He ran as fast as he could to the nearest hospital (he couldn’t see one yet, but it was a city landscape, so he was sure there must be one somewhere). People frowned at his unusual shape, but he ignored them deliberately. He also deliberately ignored the homeless and suffering, the crying children, while he continued to wonder why he was so jagged.

By now he had been running for hours, and has still not found a hospital. He sat on a park bench and he cried. He cried and cried and cried and cried. It got to the point where he didn’t know if it was raining or not. Enter here a cyclist falling off his bike. He stands as the cyclist cries out in anguish, clutching his knee. Our jagged, panicked hero lends him his hand. The cyclist gets up as our hero is no longer jagged. That reality fades as he enters real life again, and leaves the mirrors.

The Journey

Will Gulliford

PAGE 5 agonisingly slow, and the waves reached terrifying heights. The ocean boiled like some angry god had ignited a furnace deep below its surface, and every passenger turned green with sickness. The one thing that sustained her was the newfound hope that across the furious water there was a better life for her, a place where she would not face the discrimination that she would have experienced had they stayed.

Towards the end of the voyage the waves calmed,

and the skies seemed to clear. They turned from a dark and angry slate colour to a still bleak, but much lighter canopy of grey. As they drew closer to their destination, she picked out a lifeboat, rimmed in orange rubber, upon the horizon. In that moment, when the sound of the diesel engine came into earshot, that now familiar sensation of hope welled within her, and despite the many adversities that she knew this new life would inevitably throw at her, she felt that she would soon be safe once again.

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FIRST THREE SESSIONS FREE

	9		7		3		4
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3					5	6	
		9		6			
7			3		1		8
				8		7	
		5	6				3
2	7			3			
1		3			8		7

From Our Dictionary

(some new definitions)

Edinburgh : looking for rabbits
dogmatic : clockwork canine
hygiene : mode of addressing one's girlfriend
July : a Hebrew resting
Boatswain : effect of a storm at sea

children : to secure a lady
cardon bleu : a circle of police officers
bulthead : a stupid person
bullfincher : hovine hulahey
pullinaton : referendum
purpose : contented cat
ecclipse : barber
atlas : sigh expressive of relief
laundress : a grass skirt

From the *Langtonian* archives, 1974.

the words behind the sounds.

Like Wilfred Owen several generations later, who cried out his anti-war verses even as the shells fell (*‘the poetry is in the pity’*), Byron here is attacking the rush to war, the concept of heroic sacrifice, and the insanity of armed combat between brother humans. Like Jesus too, in whose Olivet discourse we are told ‘blessed are the peacemakers’, Byron is urging his readers to see recent history (Waterloo) and history generally as a warning - telling them to avoid war and seek peace, or at least stop thinking that war is glorious and worth the loss of human life. It isn’t.

In our own time, it seems the peacemakers aren’t blessed. They don’t get the air time, and they don’t have much traction: witness the unconscionably stupid attack on Jeremy Corbyn and Diane Abbott this week [21/2/22] by LBC pundit Iain Dale, who called them ‘fifth columnists’ and left-wing weirdos, just because, as members of the Stop the War Coalition, they called for a peaceful resolution to the Ukrainian crisis, and because they rightly pointed to NATO (chiefly American) sabre-rattling as one cause of the current, potentially thermonuclear, impasse.

I hope there will not be a war with Russia over Ukraine, not least because this might trigger a conflict that no-one can win. In my view, and despite all the chest-thumping and alpha flexing going on right now, the really macho position to hold, the really brave and heroic posture is to advocate for peace: *pro pace et contra bellum*.

Peace. Peace be with you. *As-salamu alaikum. Shalom. мup c moбoй.*

Modern interpretations of Chaucer’s Canterbury Tales

George Marais

The Charlatan's Tale

This charlatan, he strolls right along,
Down the platform, humming a new song.
Dressed in fresh, fashionable designer
His criminal convictions only minor.
Ray-Ban sunglasses sit upon his nose
His Bluetooth wireless headphones made by Bose.
If you require a negative flow test
Come to this man, he’s quite simply the best.
His passports and tests lie in his pocket-ic
As he deals to Novak Djokavic.
His two bodyguards fill people with dread
As towards first class this charlatan heads.
A toothpick sticks out the charlatan’s mask
Selling fake vaccine passports: the man’s task.
All kinds of fakes in his leather briefcase
If you need him, he’ll get you to any place.
Citizens of Canterbury fear him
As he walks down the platform, face all grim.
The seeds of illegality he sows
As onto the train the charlatan goes.

BoJo's Tale

This prime minister, he stands at the top
His hair reminiscent of a kitchen mop.
He isn’t really the biggest smartie
But adamant it was not a party.
The prime minister’s old suitcase clinking
But he’s adamant there was no drinking.
He says it was just a business meeting
Because he wants his parliament seating.
He had better beware of old Sue Gray
If he has sinned, findings will make him pay.
Silly billy, the old prime minister
But in December, nothing ‘sinister.’
Everyone knows that a party went down
Still he denies it, our elected clown.
He enjoyed Peppa Pig World,
How secure he felt as around he whirled.
As prime minister sits in Downing Street.
But he’s adamant there was not a meet.
Bojo would be better as a farmer
But he’s still better than Keir Starmer.

Sudoku 1

Fill in the grid blanks such that each row, column and 3x3 box has each number 1-9 appear just once.

Answers appear in the next issue.

Cypewriter

Call me a Luddite—a type-writer just works. It doesn’t need power; it needs you! It’s that distraction-free writing software you’ve been looking for. Your mark is permanent, but your 1s and 0s on a machine change in a timeframe shorter than you can comprehend. You learn that editing strictly comes after synthesis. You’re never ‘multitasking’; you’re writing.

An impression struck in ink is not replicated on your inkjet.

While everyone overlooks them as mechanical (inferior?), for you and me they’re bloody cheap at the charity shops!

Love me for me: Mr Morale & the Big Steppers

Niccy Busuttill

Kendrick Lamar has found his final master-stroke in his own martyrdom. Where his former studio albums were exhaustively perfected by producers and a rapper at the zenith of their game, *Mr Morale & the Big Steppers* is ugly, a cumbersome title combined with an invasive, almost penetrative cover, depicting Kendrick as Christ in an apparent exercise in egoism. But in this depiction, Kendrick returns to the original intention of the crown of thorns, as a mocking by Jesus’ captors: while his fans and the media idolise him in such superlatives, Kendrick believes the perception to be absurd—he is his own heretic. This self-reprimanding is nothing new: since professing “I am a sinner, who’s probably gonna sin again” in 2012, Kendrick has always addressed his continuous potential for a regression into vice. But it has always only been a potential: by the end of

every album’s arc, Kendrick is cured, redeemed into the prophet for you to worship. He goes so far as to imply that he has always been flawless, the ‘good kid’ merely observing the issues he sees around him through a persona, from the holier-than-thou objectivity of the writer. The fabricated piety of Kendrick’s perspective created a deception, built a wall of celebrity between him and his fans, preventing us from really getting the message, as Kendrick wasn’t being entirely real himself. It’s suggested in his stage name, apparently his ‘real name’ but actually only his first and middle name; if he was telling the whole truth, he’d go by Kendrick Duckworth.

Mr Morale is the first album where we see Kendrick Duckworth, as Eckhart Tolle refers to him as ‘Mr. Duckworth’ on “Count Me Out”, the *good kid, m.A.A.d city* rapper married to Whitney Alford with two kids: not Kung Fu Kenny, not K-Dot, not even a homonymous persona. We know this because the album is a moral and sonic hellscape, featuring the f-

slur and Kodak Black, a rapper convicted of first-degree assault and battery. Meanwhile, “United In Grief” is abrasive in its lack of cohesion, setting the tone for a project that throws every sound at the wall. Kendrick knows that he will be received negatively in some quarters, and it’s not that he doesn’t care—he wants to see himself crucified.

It only legitimately works for the immense efforts Kendrick goes to avoid his martyr behaviour being misconstrued as saintly, as he less deconstructs his flaws than tears himself apart. “Worldwide Steppers” sees him publicly flagellate himself as a serial adulterer, while “Auntie Diaries” exposes his transphobic biases, as he simultaneously continues to uphold the biases in his deadnaming and misgendering of the song’s subject. It entirely delegitimises the purity of previous releases “LOVE.” and “LOYALTY.”, and completely overturns any perception of his moral superiority or certainty, let alone his divinity.

It also makes him a real human being. Kendrick is



attempting to entirely purge himself, not of error, but of dishonesty. The message is delivered concisely on the hook of the closer, “Mirror”, declaiming ‘I choose me, I’m sorry’. It is an inevitably flawed conclusion, as reflected by the issues with the album, but it sees the artist at his most genuine.

As initially disagreeable as *Yeezus* and *Kid A* were in their times, *Mr Morale* bares a new and unrivalled clarity of conscience between its lines, beneath the superficial revulsion we feel at hearing Kendrick’s brutal confessions. For some, this album will mark the abandonment of a hip hop legend

as a false prophet, but that seems to have been Kendrick’s point—he would rather fall short of your graces than live in the Matrix. The essence of the album’s beauty is found in its failings, as that is where the truth is.

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