



The Langtonian

With a warm embrace, the editorial team of *the Langtonian* welcomes back its loyal readers!

We are delighted to say that – at last – you are reading the 8th issue of Simon Langton Grammar School for Boys newsletter. As a currently attending 6th form team, we faced with many obstacles in the last couple of months: Mock exams, predicted grades, EPQ submissions and presentations, open days, and more! But nevertheless, rallying all people together, we present to you the last issue of the years 2024-2025.

We do advise you not to relax too much before reading our issue – it is filled with politics, literature, traveling, poetry, science, and music! Instead, no matter where you are (perhaps you are enjoying the warm caress of the summer sun somewhere in Italy!) Please enjoy our very thought-provoking publication.

With love, editorial team of The Langtonian.

Anastasiia Shaforostova, Michael Worsley, Alex Reilly, Amana Nassor.

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Politics economics

Politics and economics stand as one of the most popular foundations for our articles, written by the talented students of Langton. We understand that since our newsletter is published only twice a year, some articles may feel outdated. However, we warmly invite you to explore our Politics section of 'The Langtonian'.

'How capitalism killed the world' by Gilbert Mattingly-Wales

What is capitalism? In short, capitalism is the idea of an economic system in which private owners control a country's trade and industry for profit, rather than by the state or the people. Capitalist industry has resulted in the production of a juggernaut of waste and needless commodities. Since 1751, according to studies by Our World in Data, capitalist production has pumped well over 1.5 trillion metric tonnes of CO2 into the atmosphere. If it were not for the relentless drive for productivity and growth of the early English capitalists, the use of coal would not have dramatically increased. Coal allowed capitalists to squeeze more from their labourers in less time, and this would ultimately expand their profit margins. It is no wonder

and

we have seen an increase in greenhouse gases, which coincides with the rise of capitalist economies. Fossil fuels being energy dense allowed capitalism to flourish by fuelling machines and allowing centralisation in factories. Moreover, in the conservative tradition, this was at the expense of workers and the environment. The core meaning of capitalism is to grow and produce, an idea that runs in stark opposition to the realities of what it means to live in balance with an entire planet. Capitalism encourages an unsustainable rate of extraction that the world cannot replenish. Today, the global capitalist economy has reached its final form, and the speed at which corporations and capitalist markets extract raw materials has reached extinction-level rates. Deforestation, fishery decline and even the terrible response to the Coronavirus pandemic all relate to industrial capitalist plunder, and guess what, climate change is the final nail in the coffin for capitalism's urgent desire for growth. Since 1988, 100 companies have created 71% of greenhouse gases, presenting the truth that capitalist behemoths are driving climate change.

Well, if capitalism is destroying the world, what alternatives are there? Anarchism is the idea that ownership becomes

collective ownership, not the individual and not the state.

Currently, companies operate on a hierarchical system: you have the owner who is everyone's boss at the top and tells you what to do, and if you don't do it, then you're sacked, and at the bottom, you have the workers. In anarchism, this company would become collectively owned, so the workers own it equally and there is no longer a boss; this means that the decisions for the company would be made by a collective decision instead of just the boss's orders. This would eradicate the extortion of workers and unfair pay because it's the workers who control the means of production. Anarchism would also stop a centralised state from controlling the country, because in anarchism, you have communes. Essentially, this stops one big government from deciding everything for everyone, I mean, who really wants one power in Westminster to be responsible for 68 million people? Anarchism is just total democracy; it's the people running society collectively. It's when communities decide on what should happen for their people together, completely democratically. However, anarchism must lead to lots of small communities and communes because total democracy couldn't be possible on a large scale. Anarchism is also the eradication of law, as

Proudhon says, 'they are spider webs for the rich and mighty, chains for the poor and weak, fishing nets in the hands of governments.'. Anarchism rejects three things: law, the state and property, all things which impose authority and restrictions on the people. Again, to quote Proudhon 'whoever lays his hand on me to govern me is a usurper and a tyrant; I declare him my enemy'...

'How has Elon Musk infiltrated UK politics?' by Amelie Mae Ward

Elon Musk had remained a man of mystery since the creation of *Twitter* in 2006 until recently he has sparked controversy after making himself a prominent figure in UK politics. Since the general election in July 2024, Musk has taken to 'X' to criticise UK politicians and generate anger from extremists' groups. What seemed to begin as harmless comments soon seemed to demonstrate potential danger. For many, it was unexpected how much traction these comments from Elon Musk would gain and the power he had over changing the opinions of the public. The situation worsened in August 2024 when Elon Musk engaged with far-right activists amid riots in the UK, suggesting that 'civil war is inevitable'. Not only did

he successfully manage to instil fear in the public, but he fuelled the fire for far-right rioters who were demonstrating acts of violence all over the UK. Musk also strained the relationship between the newly elected Prime Minister and the country by suggesting that Keir Starmer's handling of the riots were inefficient, damaging his reputation after only weeks in office.

What became evident at this time was that Elon Musk wasn't simply trying to express his opinion, his goal was to infiltrate our politics, incite riots and weaken the image of our government.

In December 2024, reports emerged that Elon Musk planned to donate £100 million to Nigel Farage's reform party ahead of the next UK general election, thereby directly influencing the political landscape by drawing on his wealth and fame. It raised concerns about foreign interference in UK politics; the donation would have the potential to completely sway the results of the general election, possibly leading to an extremist party (e.g., Reform) gaining huge amounts of power. Not only does this raise fears about the future of the UK but it is scary to think about the influence that this one figure can have on politics all over the world. It puts our system to shame, demonstrating to other countries how easy it is to influence our political system, especially since

nothing has been done to stop him. It also reduces voter confidence; the UK population can see the political infiltration occurring right in front of them and it is clear that their vote can't do much to stop his influence from unfolding. Faith in our democratic system has ultimately been reduced, and this only gives more power to figures such as Elon Musk.

By the start of 2025, it became evident that Musk's interventions had become increasingly more direct. He asserted that only 'reform can save Britain' and accused Prime Minister, Keir Starmer, of mishandling child sexual abuse cases, even going as far as to suggest that he should be imprisoned. As expected, the statements prompted strong rebukes from UK officials, with Keir Starmer calling them 'lies and misinformation' which are undermining UK democracy. Elon Musk's actions have even gone as far as to draw international attention with leaders from France, Germany and Norway who are expressing concern for Musk's future attempts to influence European politics.

However, after all of this, the question remains: why is Elon Musk so interested in the UK politics and what is he planning on doing next?

The impact of social media on political campaigns and public views.' By Evie Vincent

As modernity subverts traditionalism, social media has become a lifeline for extended areas of society: ecommerce, communication, and streaming, with now it seems even politics is heavily reliant on their online presence during campaigns, having profoundly changed the paradigm of interaction. This was undoubtedly seen in the 2024 GA, posing the idea that social media has revolutionized how political campaigns are run. Candidates can now communicate with voters online and utilize targeted messaging and appeal to a target audience who may not follow politics. At the same time, more concerns arise about misinformation and filter bubbles influencing political discourse. Acting as a platform for exposés, to a magnifying glass on past errors, politicians now sit precariously in the grasps of internet tycoons, for as they say, they really can find out anything and manipulate their findings to warp perceptions.

This 'social media movement' has provided an effective source of educating the younger population on political happenings, targeting the section of society suffering a participation crisis.

Many who may find interacting with the news mundane and often hard to find now have a simpler outlet to observe highlights and key moments in politics that they otherwise may be unaware of; as seen on sites such as TikTok and Instagram. Arguably, social media provides comic relief regarding current affairs and increases the accessibility of understanding complicated issues, such as tackling the issue of immigration.

Amid a political campaign, it is key for parties to access the largest possible population, and with apps such as TikTok having over 1 billion global users, with 23 million in the UK alone, reaching as many individuals as possible is key. However, big tech companies like Meta or Google have a certain level of control over online platforms and algorithms. Some people assume these companies can manipulate the flow of information and change political discourse, increasing the capability of coerced voting.

Being on a site entails high stakes for each party, with new phrases such as cancel culture regarding minor issues can hugely hinder a party's success, for in modern society, online presence often is a paramount over real life. For instance, just last week, the labour party had to publicly apologise for using an explicit song in

the background of a video.

The major emergence of deep fakes (defined as a video of a person in which their face or body has been digitally altered so that they appear to be someone else, typically used maliciously or to spread false information). This harrowing new AI tool can be used to 'mislead, inflame and divide', weakening our societies. In 2024, Channel 4 revealed that they "found 400 digitally altered pictures of more than 30 high-profile UK politicians on a sexually explicit website dedicated to the abuse and degradation of women". This terrifying reality can butcher a political career, destroy whole party campaigns, and eliminate all the good created by a party for it is always easier to focus on the negative. For example, Dehenna Davison, who stood down as a Conservative MP when the election was called due to her deep fake evoking such abuse onto her campaign started "that unless governments around the world put in place a proper AI regulatory framework, "major problems" loomed".

Politics relies on the scaffolding social media provides to campaigns; however, it has become a tyrannous place, inviting the idea that the government needs more measures to secure the safety of those involved and shield citizens from

explicit content. However, surely it is fair to say social media is an outlet for many, so should we keep our enigmatic political system separate from social media?

'How Much Longer Will the War in Ukraine Last?' by Charlie Den-Mckay

Since the 24th of February 2022, Ukraine has been locked in a war caused by a Russian invasion into their country. What was originally quoted by Belarusian president Lukashenko to be a '3 day' war, has now lasted almost 3 years, predominantly due to general incompetence from both Russian leadership and troops alike. However, we cannot ignore the fact that every day, more and more territory is being occupied. Already, many core regions have fallen to Russia, such as Crimea which acts as a vital link to the Black Sea. All this only begs the question, how long until this war ends?

Firstly, it is important we look at one of the main hopes for peace for both sides of the war right now, this being the handing over of the presidency to Donald Trump on January the 20th. Despite having a controversial history, President Trump has promised to end the Ukraine war as soon as possible. Whilst many doubt that he can fulfil his

'24-hour pledge', both Volodymyr Zelensky and Vladimir Putin have made clear the fact that they will be open to negotiations upon Trump's inauguration. However, this isn't without fears. Many worry that Trump is too sympathetic towards the Russian president and will allow the invaders to keep much of the land they have taken, resulting in an unfair deal for Ukraine. On top of this, the American right-wing have gradually started to feel a slight resentment towards Ukraine due to the amount of equipment that they are being given by the US government. This equipment leads many to believe that US taxpayer money is just being given to foreign countries, however, the equipment being given to Ukraine mainly consists of old armoured fighting vehicles that were being kept in storage and ready to be scrapped. Most vehicles consist of old Humvee Armoured Cars, Bradley IFVs and even M113 APCs, which date back to the Vietnam war. Although, as mentioned before, many US citizens don't realise this and thus their anger towards Ukraine builds. As a result of this, Trump, being a right-wing leader, might take too many of these views on board which could result in an unfavourable outcome for Ukraine.

A large factor included in peace deal plans is the idea of Ukraine joining NATO.

This has been a large want in the country as becoming a NATO member state would mean they are protected from any further Russian aggression. This is completely understandable as Ukraine has been dealing with incursions from Russia ever since 2014. However, obviously President Putin does not want this as it means he will not be able to take any land or invade Ukraine any further. In Trump's peace plan, it has already been stated that Ukraine joining NATO is 'off the table', creating fears for many from the country as this would allow room for future Russian invasions that will simply claim more lives and cause more problems.

From another perspective, this deal will be good because any peace deal is better than no peace deal. This leads us to a general conclusion. By estimates based on reasons, the war could be over before the end of January, closing a conflict that has caused over a million casualties consisting of both military personnel and civilians. However, if plans fail, it is impossible to speculate how much longer this conflict may last, and how much longer Ukraine can last under this extreme pressure.

'The Meaningless Death of the Conservative Party' by Alex Solway

To preface this article, I would like to first address the specious death of the *ideology* of Conservatism. Conservatism, in my humble view, is not dead; simply because this would imply that it was 'alive' to begin with. In fact, I dispute the fact that Conservatism was ever truly an ideology; at least in the way that it is referred to by modern conservatives. Conservatism is, and always has been, neither an ideology or a political approach, neither dogmatic or pragmatic. I believe that 'conservatism', as was outlined by Burke, was initially simply a philosophical extension of Hume into a political context, much as Marx (far more successfully) appropriated Hegel in the same way. Semantics aside, ironically, despite vehement claims that conservatism is some eternal constant of society, it was fundamentally a reactionary movement that, though it postured as the defence of the status quo in the 19th century, was a mere analogue of an established paradigm - in reality as nascent as the Liberal and then subsequently Socialist theory that forced it to manifest itself. Burke 'fathered' Conservatism as a misguided attempt at facetiously applying existing philosophy - particularly Hume's conceptions of contextualising the human condition by proximity to others - to models of society with which it is fundamentally incongruent as a response to the ideological threat to Judeo-Christian social hegemony posed by 19th century paradigm shifts. This manifests as an ideology that would emphasise collectivism, wisdom in tradition and an 'organic' society, so masquerading as a didactic and benevolent one, but in fact desperately attempting to preserve and proliferate a flawed social hierarchy it deems under threat.

To claim all of this is to claim that Conservatism is a flawed argument, but to do so is to give it too much credit, in my eyes. Conservatism is so far divorced even from the fundamentally flawed theories of Burke, that it cannot be considered an ideological constant at all. It exists in the modern age only in distortions of a non-existent central ideal, and even then, it is just a scapegoat. Something that you can claim was the factor behind the success of society - as if the eponymous protagonist of a tragic epic gaining pyrrhic victories against overwhelming odds in the face of pesky Liberals - and, equally usefully, something you can claim has been lost or misconstrued in times of failure (no True Scotsman would mismanage the economy!). Neoconservatives and neoliberals alike are returning to one idea of conservatism that is antithetic to both Burke's theory and so-called One Nation Conservatism - political pragmatists thinly veiled in ideological clothing - which itself cannot in right-mind be considered a continuation of Conservatism, as Rawls to Liberalism, so much as a complete departure from it. This begs the question of what ideology of Conservatism, are these 'Conservatives' returning to? The answer? They are returning to nothing. Conservatism is not an ideology, nor a political approach, it is something to postulate about and discuss instead of addressing the fact that the post-industrial Western society has been a failure.

Now, to address the meaninglessness of the death of the Conservative party itself. It is near-undisputable - if a hard-pill to swallow for many - that the startling trend of global politics towards democratic disillusionment and widespread right-wing populism would apparently perfectly set the stage for Farage's opportunistic rebrand project: the Reform party. Conversely, the political tides seem to have truly swung out of favour for the Conservatives. The conservative party is in the weakest state that it has been in recent memory, with a grossly underperforming leader, pitiful parliamentary representation, and near-total popular disillusionment with their fiscal policy, historically their sole saving grace.

There is no clear path for the Conservative party to regain the trust of the public, and Nigel Farage has not made a secret out of his aim to make his brand-new 'party' - which I think it is important to note is unique among British politics as not actually a party but a corporate entity; as well as being an arbitrary rename of the Brexit party, making the party over half a decade old - the premier right-wing party in British politics. The stage is apparently set for the centuries-awaited death of the ideologically challenged Conservative party.

However, the central axioms of conservatism - whatever it is they are (I challenge anyone to explain to me any unifying tenets of Conservatism that are not basic economic policy) - are so deeply entrenched in the British political sphere that even through years of endless failures, the British populace will still be open to a version of conservatism, seemingly regardless of the actual iteration in which it manifests itself. The British franchise, particularly within entrenched demographics in England, is so infatuated with nationalistic pride and economically Capitalist rhetoric - both distortions and misinterpretations of Burke's initial concepts - that the rubric by which

they judge their political opinions are foundationally based on a nebulous ‘Modern Conservatism’ - an individualist model that is diametrically opposed to Burckian collectivism. Even through the abject dystopia that late-stage Capitalism has forced us into, the British paradigm has consistently shown itself to remain defined by the status quo, even as the ebb and flow of parties and democracy has given it a fresh new coat of paint once every few years. Take the Blair administration, arguably the greatest modern success of any party. New Labour was a Labour administration that was paradoxically manifold as conservative as it was socialist, and yet this was the fundamental factor behind its success: the opportunistic adoption of the unchanging views of the democratic majority, which is rooted in conservatism. Just as we have a centrist, arguably conservative, Labour party now, this era of politics too will collapse, and the ‘return’ of conservatism will come, only to collapse again and so on unto infinity.

The political right-wing of Britain, the dominating demographic under the disproportion of First Past the Post, seems to be moving towards radical change, which certainly will not be found in either the Conservative party, or the Labour party, despite grovelling attempts to appeal to them. However,

change will not be found in Reform either. It will quickly become apparent that systematic disillusionment is, funnily enough, not an ideal foundation for a healthy democracy, particularly with a party so unashamedly half-baked as Reform UK. It may gain a great many seats at the next general, it very well may gain a majority, and Farage will certainly gloat incorrigibly and begin to posture as the benevolent autocrat he thinks he is. Then, within a term, it will fail, and will be quickly lost to the annals of history, remembered only as a ludic cautionary tale against populism instead of politics. At which point the Conservative party will return and reclaim its rightful place as the only option that isn’t voting Labour, as a geriatric phoenix rising laboriously from the ashes.

‘What will be the effect on socio-economic mobility of the UK government’s plan to impose value added tax (VAT) on school fees?’ by Edward Hunter

Private schools in the UK can be charities¹, so many are not legally businesses. As a result, they do not pay taxes, and there is no tax on the consumption of the service that they provide.

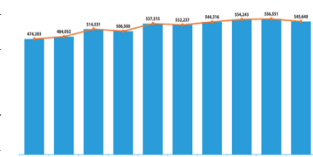
However, some private schools in the UK are structured as businesses instead. This means that they trade their freedom to remain untaxed in exchange for the freedom that businesses have. Charities, in contrast, lose the ability to fight audits and to maintain control of certain policies that the government cannot influence within businesses.

The Labour government, in their manifesto, pledged to add VAT to private school fees to raise revenue for the government and to attempt to raise the budget per pupil in the state-funded sector. The size of this gain was expected to be £1.725 billion². This could have a huge impact on the level and quality of education in the UK and its international image. The effects in the short term are apparently not large³. However, it is too soon to tell how large an effect it will have on the number of pupils who attend private schools; the future will provide these answers.

Social mobility can be achieved in a capitalist society in one generation by any worker who has the talents, the willingness, and a helping of luck. This is very uncommon, however. Generally, growth into higher social echelons is carried out by families over generations, which is why this essay has a considerable focus on the long-term effect of this policy.

In the UK, those who attend private schools have a greater chance of entering higher societal echelons, as seen with 23% of MPs privately educated⁴ and 63% of members of Rishi Sunak’s cabinet being privately educated⁵. They also have a higher earning potential, with students having a 12% higher chance of achieving managerial status by age 25⁶. This has a large effect on income potential, with average salaries for managers being just short of £43,000⁷ compared to £36,700 for an average worker in the UK⁸.

Fig 1: ISC pupil numbers since 1990 (selected years)

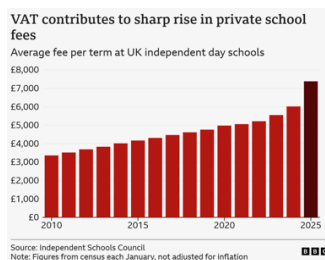


A graph from the ISC (Independent Schools Council) 2025 Census⁹

In the short term, adding VAT to school fees could easily encourage social mobility, due to fewer pupils attending private schools (Graph above), but a similar number of positions available in higher-paying jobs. The access for state school educated students could rise, as there are fewer highly qualified candidates for high paying positions that hold societal weight, such as lawyers or doctors. This assumption can be made because over 50% of privately educated students achieve A or A* at A-Level compared to 25% of state school students¹⁰.

There would be more places available for state school students at Russell Group Universities and Oxbridge. These are not the best signs of an individual's standing in society, but they are good representations. As a result of higher numbers of state school children entering these institutions, the poorer but able individuals can more easily rise in society.

These effects as described are assumed to carry a large weight but will not. All universities in the UK have programmes that come under the banner of 'Widening Participation'. These policies actively discriminate against those who attend private schools. This leads to Oxford's admission statistics having 68% state school children¹¹, already highly beneficial to those who attend state schools.



Created based on data from the ONS⁸ and Statistica¹²

The level of affordability of private schools is based on the ability of the consumer to pay for the education. The graph shows that the trend in real fees paid was stable. With the addition of VAT, the cost increased by considerably more than the average wage increase, revealing the increased unaffordability for the average individual. With an expected continuation of the trend in real wages, of roughly 1.8% increase year on year⁸, there can be the expectation that the fees will continue to rise at a rate greater than 1% per year, due to the increased costs to firms and the higher cost of keeping their standards to the same level, such as the 4% pay rise awarded to teachers¹³.

In the medium term, there will likely be some negative effects. These come from the lack of demand for private school places. The cost of school places is already 75% greater in real terms than in 2000¹⁴, and there is now a 20% increase in cost to the consumer from VAT. There are already 300 school closures as I write, as well as other schools using redundancy of teaching and administrative staff to alleviate the rise in fees and drop in numbers. Private schools employ more staff as they are open more hours. Therefore, they not only have much higher operating costs than state schools but are struggling due to government policies such

as the rise in employer National Insurance contribution from 13.8% to 15%¹⁵, compounded with the lower gross revenue that comes from fewer fee-paying students. This will lead to one of three potential courses of action in schools; either lower spending per child in schools which will lead to worse educational outcomes; higher taxes, which will lead to less people being able to afford to send children to private school; or more government borrowing which will have dangerous long-term consequences. All of these are poor options which damage the future societal mobility in the UK. The increase in national debt will increase inflation¹⁶, which harms the real incomes of almost all people, as well as those considering sending their children to private schools.

The 2,200 vacancies¹⁶ in the profession could mean that there would be a shift in employment towards the government sector from the private sector. However, this assumes that there is no continuation of the mass exodus of teachers away from the profession; 40,000 teachers left the profession in 2024 for non-retirement-based reasons¹⁸.

The long-term outlook is also bleak for the economy as a whole, not just the market for private education. For many international firms that are

interested in investing in developed countries, the UK is a good choice. We have a skilled and literate workforce¹⁹. This will be weakened by fewer students who attend the higher-quality schools that are privately run. As a result, the workforce of the UK will be less attractive to firms, and they will be encouraged to invest overseas instead. This is a crucial factor to the success of the UK, in particular in areas where high skilled workers live, currently the very people who may be able to send their children to private schools²⁰. As a result of this policy, they may not be able to do so, again weakening the social-economic mobility of citizens of the UK.

In the longer term, the effects of the policy become almost overwhelmingly negative. For individuals who are quite successful, one way to use that wealth is to send their children to better quality, private schools. However, the ability to improve your children's lives beyond your own, or others, is barred for you because their fees are now too high due to this 20% tax on private education. If there was no tax, in a successful career people might afford it. This policy, therefore, does the reverse of social mobility - it is the richest elite barring entry into the best institutions²¹. This fosters inequality, as there will be no in between from state schools to the most elite

schools, such as Eton or Marlborough²² who will survive. The old phrase of the 'rich get richer' will return, as the best institutions will not be forced to exclude many successful parents' children, due to the absurdly high price of fees. The government, with this tax, is effectively enforcing an oligopoly in the private market, harming consumers with a cartel of firms who might be forced to collude as they did in 2005²³.

Admittedly, the higher rate of taxation on the purchase of education may lead to more revenue for the government. This could easily be spent on a better level of education at state-run institutions, but at the same time, as this happens there will be a greater demand for education at these institutions. The reduction in demand for private education places will lead to much higher required expenditure on state school places, so no real effect on the quality of education. Also, the best state-run schools, such as grammar schools, will be in higher demand than usual, as many domestic private students attempt to move to these schools. This will likely lead to more students at a lower standard of school by rating, worsening results and again, undoing the idea of social mobility for the majority of people in the UK.

In the UK, one of our biggest exports is

education. Internationally, we are seen as having the pinnacle of private education, as seen with 61,750 overseas students attending private schools⁹. This will be in jeopardy if the tax on private schools decreases foreign demand. These people considerably increase the GDP in the UK, and those who do so do not use any services that are provided by the government so why do we not encourage them? As a result, employment will likely fall and there will be less money in the circular flow.

Economic mobility could be assumed to be entirely dependent on attending a private school, but many of the UK's top schools are state-run grammar schools.²⁴ Some of these schools can provide a similar standard of academic education and instead for future life than the rigid and controlling life of a private boarding school. In these cases, the economic mobility of individuals will not be as affected overall. The question of socio-economic status²⁵ often has more weight in how you speak and whom you know. Although this does heavily rest upon how wealthy you are, the level of wealth you can draw upon is not the whole picture. Many individuals such as Ben Francis²⁶, the UK based owner of clothing brand GymShark, who is worth more than £1 Billion, does not truly have

the same socio-economic standing as many

individuals who attended Eton⁴, such as 50% of the hereditary peers in the House of Lords; Ben was not traditionally educated.

In conclusion, the Labour policy of taxation on private schools comes from a noble and radical stance against the bourgeois elites in the UK, who constrain the workers' children from gaining a higher standing in society. However, the policy will have adverse effects for all. The policy prevents the hard workers in society who become moderately successful in the UK from giving their children the best possible start in life, whilst constraining socio-economic mobility. As discussed, the Labour Party may pride itself on its equality-driven objectives; however, taxation of school places will only increase the gap between the wealthiest and best schools in the UK and the poor quality of the average, state-run school. The practicalities of this policy are also illogical, as they encourage parents to depend more on state-run policies and more on government spending, reducing the government's ability to spend on more long-term, productive policies and the poorest children in society, which will be negative for future socio-economic mobility.

Literature

Moving into a slightly different direction, we

invite you to explore our literature section!

'7: Hamlet, Hermes and Alchemy' by Dr C J Taylor

Abstract

This essay argues that a close reading of the soliloquies in Shakespeare's play *Hamlet* reveals several themes and ideas linked to Hermetic beliefs found in the *Corpus Hermeticum* - the major repository of the teachings of the mythological figure Hermes Trismegistus. My main inspiration for the present work is Jane Nelson's compelling research on Hermetism in the Works, especially that undertaken in her recent *Shakespeare and Religio Mentis*, where, focusing on four plays at length (but not *Hamlet*) and subjecting them to detailed exegetical analysis, Dr Nelson demonstrates the presence within them of scores of Hermetic ideas and symbols. Inspired by her work, I offer here a modest addendum, intended to reveal some key Hermetic features of Shakespeare's most famous play.

I have also been inspired by the example of the late Alexander Waugh, whose research interests, as revealed by his extensive online catalogue of esoterically-focused video content, were similarly focused on the author of the Works as a devotee or

initiate of the occult traditions of Hermetism, the kabala and mystical numerology (cf. Waugh's extensive analysis of de Vere's personal number in Latin gematria, 1740). Armed with Dr Nelson's precis of Hermetism and its philosophical underpinnings (as distinct from its more magically-focused stable mate Hermeticism), I began to note Hermetic features in Shakespearean texts - many of which had already been adumbrated by Dr Nelson in her book. She notes, for instance, the many and profound Hermetic influences and features to be found in such texts as *Lear*, *Othello*, *Love's Labour's Lost* and *The Tempest*, and makes a powerful case for the author of the Works as having had a profound interest in, and possible practical experience of, the Hermetic ideas s/he details in the poems and plays.

enjoined to keep these hidden truths secret. As I will show, this same Hermetic methodology applies to *Hamlet*, insofar as this play also operates as spectacle (ghosts, sword fights and stabbings), symbolism (speeches, soliloquies and language used to transmit particular occult ideas), and secrecy (especially the relationship between the former level of signification and the transmission of Hermetic ideas).

work on the Shakespeare corpus, having seen, in the course of my research, a rather interesting link between the Hermetic tradition of spiritual alchemy and Shakespeare's play *Hamlet*.

Background and Chronology

In October 2024, I attended a De Vere Society autumn event at Regent's University in London called "Beyond Magic – exploring Shakespeare's profound knowledge of Hermetic Traditions", and was thrilled to see that Dr Jane Nelson, author of *Shakespeare and Religio Mentis: A Study of Christian Hermetism in Four Plays* (Brill: 2022) was to speak.

We begin by considering the number 7.

In the Shakespeare canon, there are some interesting uses of the number 7, as in Jacques' famous enumeration of the seven ages of man in *As You Like It*, the Witches' fixation on 'weary sev'nights', and the fact that the Sonnets may be read as 22 7-poem sections, or as 7 22-poem sections, forming chapters or numerologically-inspired divisions, with the potential for occult numerological signification. Indeed, Elizabeth poets referred to their poems as 'numbers', as did Shakespeare in sonnet 38, where he refers to his 'eternal numbers to outlive long date', and, although not definite evidence of Hermetic intent, the sonnets are clearly driven by a mathematical, as well as a thematic and figurative, quest for order, symmetry and completion (cf. the 17 so-called 'procreation' sonnets, with their obvious Oxfordian connotations). In the Pythagorean mystical number tradition, the number 7 is associated with deep thinking, introspection, seclusion

Having read articles by Dr Nelson in previous DVS newsletters, and her *Religio Mentis* book, I had focused my own private research and reading on those features of the Shakespeare canon which might be deemed Hermetic, which is to say interested in, and promoting ideas about, the purification of the human mind and soul, through the acquisition of knowledge (*sophia*) and love (*agape*), as part of a process of self-knowledge achieved through introspection and self-examination resulting in the attainment of a profound understanding of Man's status in the cosmos (*gnosis*) and ultimate reunification with the sacred monad - the One - or divine mind (*Nous*).

Dr Nelson had also, elsewhere, shown how close the works of Christopher Marlowe are to the occult Hermetic tradition, exemplifying the Hermetic resonances of *Dr Faustus*, operating as it does on three levels: *vide!* ('see!') - the play as simple spectacle (to satisfy Jonson's 'sluggish gaping auditor?'); *audi!* ('hear!') - the play's language revealing inner truths and transcendental ideas accessible only to those 'with ears to hear' (cf. the multiple references to ears and hearing in *Hamlet*), and 'tace!', ('be silent!') - the play as the site of textual transmission of ideas revealed only to the initiate, who is then

I must state here that I am not in any way an expert in Hermetic, religious or theological systems of thought, having completed my PhD in post-war British poetry, and professing here only a dilettante-enthusiast interest in Hermetic beliefs. With that admission made, I here offer a humble addition to Dr Nelson's pioneering

from the outside world, significant because, 'as study, privacy, reflection and contemplation: shaped like a shepherd's crook, the number 7 signifies an initiation into the world of mystery and higher spirituality.

This link between the number 7 and the shepherd figure resonates with the Hermetic tradition of the master intellect (Poimandres - 'shepherd of men') guiding the disciple on the path of Hermetic gnostic spiritual ascent towards deep knowledge of God-as-Mind (cf. Jung's belief in a Collective Unconscious - minds linked to minds to Mind), and given the association of figures such as Hermes Trismegistus, Moses and Jesus with this image of the guiding spirit or leader (Rabbi means master or teacher; teachers *educate*; *E Duco* in Latin means 'I lead') - it is instructive that, where the number 7 predominates, it encourages self-reflection, the pursuit of knowledge, and the seeking out of God, led by a shepherd or teacher figure who points out the way to and encourages mystical ascent to, for the Hermetist, Mount Olympus.

As Alexander Waugh pointed out (and as Jane Nelson also notes), the Shakespeare memorial inscription at Holy Trinity Stratford tells us, in Latin, that the author of the works has ascended to Olympus (*Olympus Habet*: Olympus has him). This is

significant because, 'as Hermes Trismegistus tells his son, Tat: 'This is the only salvation for man: knowledge of God. This is ascent to the highest abode of the gods. It is ascent to Olympus.'

Directly linked to these points about number symbolism and Hermetism is the fact that the founder of the Hermetic tradition, Hermes Trismegistus, is said to have invented alchemy - at one (simplistic) level understandable as 'the practical alchemical process, which transforms base metals into pure gold', but, vital to our purposes here, also functioning 'as a trope of the gnostic ascent of the soul toward spiritual purity.' Specifying 'seven stages of magical-mystical ascent along the same lines as the Pythagorean-Hermetic-Cabalistic sequences laid out by Trithemius, [Gerard] Dorn [fl. 1570] maintained that upon the completion of this upward spiritual journey "we at last will be enabled to grasp the knowledge of all the arcana, both natural and supernatural', and I see this as a fitting analogy for Hamlet's journey in the play.

And here we counter a rather serendipitous example of synchronicity, when we reflect on the following facts: first, the centrality of the number 7 in the Pythagorean mystical tradition; next, Hamlet, the Wittenberg student who reads

gnostic ascent as part of which a shepherd or master figure initiates his disciples or followers into the higher mysteries of the cosmos; lastly, the fact that Hermes Trismegistus himself is believed to have invented alchemy, which seeks both to transmute base metals into gold, but also to effect the spiritual transmutation or perfection of the human soul - taking it from base, impure or uninspired, to fully rarefied, pure and filled with divine inspiration via *seven distinct steps*: calcination, dissolution, separation, conjunction, fermentation, distillation and coagulation.

Hamlet, 7, Alchemy and Hermes

Hamlet is a play saturated with ideas adjacent to, or seemingly directly inspired by, the Hermetic texts and their ideas about spiritual growth, the love of knowledge, the purification of the human soul, and the mystical ascent towards oneness with God. 'What a piece of work is a man [...] how like an angel, in apprehension how like a god' [2.2] Hamlet observes - pointing to the Hermetic doctrine of God's presence within the human mind, an exemplification of divine order and symmetry formulated memorably in the observation 'as above, so below'.

Hamlet, the Wittenberg student who reads

voraciously in order to pursue knowledge for its own sake (the 'love of knowledge' or *philosophia*), constantly seeks to understand his world on a more profound level, and is constantly thwarted in this search for spiritual communion with the Divine Mind by the unnecessary and annoying intrusions of court life, with its attendant gadflies Polonius, Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, its problematic women ('frailty, thy name is woman') and its culture of Machiavellian duplicity - hence his obsession with the superiority of inward truth over outward seeming ("Seems," madam? Nay, it is. I know not "seems").

Hamlet, to be sure, is a tortured figure - torn between the need to play a public role as Claudius' successor, whilst simultaneously playing other artificially contrived social roles such as those of the warrior, the wooer, the madman and the melancholic, and yet also struggling to meet the expectations of his dead father, who calls upon him to play the role of avenger, dutifully fulfilling his filial role as loyal son and subject. Beyond, or transcending, these mutually excluding roles is the real Hamlet: a man of the mind, a scholar, a spiritual figure and a seeker of gnostic purity - as evidenced by the vitally important soliloquies in the play.

There are seven. Just as Hamlet is associated with affairs of the mind, with learning and with the pursuit of knowledge, so he becomes an obvious Hermetic figure in the play, or at least a figure whose life path and pursuit of higher levels of consciousness implies an Hermetic love of wisdom, and the seeking out of mystical truths. His soliloquies, taken one at a time, reveal his inner torments as he struggles with his self-recriminations and neuroses - occasioned by the conflicting social roles and expectations adumbrated above - seeking a state of intellectual and spiritual solace in his pursuit of higher things, abstract philosophical truths and the rewards of a meditative-contemplative life which would free him from the shackles of conformism and social pressures and allow him instead the mental liberation of the pursuit of knowledge and self-actualisation.

My contention is that these soliloquies of Hamlet mirror, to an extent, the seven stages of Hermetic-chemical soul purification, and bring to mind the Pythagorean numerological connotations of the number 7 (solitariness, seclusion, secrecy, silence, self-reflection) as I will now show. Whilst the speeches do not always map directly to each stage in the alchemical process, or mirror directly each phase of the process of transmutation, it must be remembered that these are speeches in a play, and serve as much to advance plot and the details of character as they do to illustrate Hermetic ideas and motifs. What is certain is that, by the time of his final soliloquy, Hamlet is a changed man - having moved from initial ignorance and fear to a state of beatific self-actualisation and acceptance of the will of a higher power.

The 7 Soliloquies as Steps in the Process of Spiritual Alchemy

The first step in alchemy is calcination, known as the 'black stage', and associated, in spiritual alchemy, with the idea of self-immolation: burning the self to ashes as a necessary precondition for later ascent and spiritual rebirth. This stage is also associated with the existential crisis or 'dark night of the soul': a torment of self-recrimination and a contemplation of the void of unbeing as one casts off one's earthly, mortal self in the pursuit of higher truth. Accordingly, Hamlet's opening lines in the first soliloquy envision his earthly, material self as a dross of compounded matter that must be cast off in order for spiritual renewal to occur:

O that this too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw, and resolve itself
into a dew!

- lines which immediately foreground the idea of alchemy as a process of distillation and transformation.

Later, he reveals his contempt for the leaden materialism of the fallen realm of human experience:

How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable
Seem to me all the uses of
this world!

- images which evoke Hamlet's melancholic temperament, whilst bringing to mind the black stage of calcination: both ideas reminding us of the etymology of *melancholia* as 'black bile', this being the humoral element with which Hamlet is most frequently associated, at least in the early stages of the play (cf. Gertrude's admonition to him that he 'cast [his] nighted colour off' in the opening act). Hamlet's opening soliloquy therefore establishes the ideas of blackness, nihilism and spiritual stupor which, although agonising, are the necessary first steps towards reunification with God.

The second step in alchemy is dissolution: dissolving the ashes of self and finding an outlet for repressed or traumatic emotions, as part of a cathartic stage which heralds later spiritual peace. Hamlet's second soliloquy seems to mirror some of these ideas, with its dramatic focus on the hero's intense emotional responses to his conversation with his dead father:

O all you host of heaven!
O Earth!

O most pernicious woman!
O villain, villain, smiling, damned villain!

- images inferring a purgation of emotion and a great release of psychic torment.

The third step in alchemy is separation: associated with a liberation from negative emotions as the individual moves beyond resentment and hatred of others. Hamlet's third soliloquy does not mirror this third alchemical step entirely, as he still obviously harbours a great deal of enmity towards Claudius as a 'bloody, bawdy villain! / Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain!'. That said, and these expletives aside, the third soliloquy does signal a shift in Hamlet's thinking, and a movement towards positive mental energy as he formulates the plan to undo Claudius and effect the revenge demanded by his father:

I'll have these players
Play something like the murder of my father

Before mine uncle.' nature of the human realm, Hamlet loving from these ideas of spiritual and a realisation on his introspection and reunion and self-

The fourth step in alchemy part of the need to prevarication towards actualisation with his is conjunction: the transcend this in order to determination and decisive declaration, to Horatio, recombination of the parts move towards cosmic action: 'now could I drink that: listed above into a new union with God: hot blood' and 'now to my whole, and a step in the recognising the need to mother' indicating at least We defy augury. There is creation of a new self - cast off the 'weary life' the beginning of concrete a special constituted of all those and its attendant petty steps towards the providence in the fall of a spiritual components not concerns. In other words, resolution of his earthly sparrow. If it be lost in the process of the fourth soliloquy might woes, and allowing for the now, 'tis not to come; if it purgation and self- well be a moment of necessary 'shuffling off be not to come, it will be immolation seen above. In 'conjunction': Hamlet this mortal coil' on the now; if it be not now, essence, this is the stage in bringing together the way to union with God. yet it will come. The spiritual alchemy where a pieces of his fragmented readiness is all. Since no new self - or sense of self - former ego and The final two stages of man of aught he leaves starts to emerge. assimilating his new alchemy are distillation, as knows, what is't to leave thoughts about mortality part of which we witness betimes? Let be [5.2]

In Hamlet's fourth and human existence self-actualisation and the - and here, we see the full soliloquy ('To be...'), it is before setting off in quest revealing of the new movement of Hamlet from not at first clear where his of final peace beyond the self/soul, and coagulation, self-doubt and self- new spiritual self is, or human realm. The fact which witnesses the loathing, through his whether he has actually that the speech is solidification of this new contemplations of what it reached the point at which interrupted by the arrival self - the healing of the means 'to be, or not to be', his spiritual rebirth is of Ophelia is also relevant: psychic wounds of all the towards a final, spiritual underway. His main had Hamlet not been cut self asserts its acceptance of fate and concerns in this speech, as off in the course of his identity. Again, Hamlet's destiny as he prepares for in the first, seem to be meditations, he might well final two soliloquies seem his death, and the ascent to death, dissolution and have contemplated the to mirror this shift in the Olympus. Note that, after decay, rather than the new version of self hero's sense of self, as he his death, it is Horatio, the emergence of a new required to move beyond determines how best to agent of (Ho)ratio-nal spiritual identity: witness his persistent feelings of avenge his father's death thought and philosophical his references to 'the self-doubt, loss, fear and by allowing Claudius no pragmatism in the play, outrageous fortune' and time to seek forgiveness of who recognises Hamlet's transformation - making 'the heartache and the tho The fifth step in alchemy is his sins ('O, this is hire and Hamlet a Poimandres usand natural shocks/that fermentation, as part of which the old self decays and the new emerges: a step often likened to the emerging of the phoenix figure, leading the ultra- predecessor, as a point of emerging of the phoenix from the ashes of its former, corrupted, spiritual transcendence. rationalist Horatio away from those things that are merely cathartic self-realisation, as the eponym realises his self. Hamlet's fifth - brief means of attaining 'dreamt of in [his] philosophy' [1.5], towards 'things as the eponym realises his self. Hamlet's fifth - brief means of attaining spiritual transcendence. in heaven and on earth' earthly predicament and self. Hamlet's fifth - brief means of attaining spiritual transcendence. that transcend earthly the need to work through - soliloquy, detailing his intention to talk to his Hamlet recognises that reality and which point he fear of mortal death if mother and berate her for Man cannot live merely to towards the possibility of he is to reach the point of her 'o'er hasty marriage' 'to sleep and feed', having gnostic ascent and balance towards which he to Claudius, does not at within himself the spiritual immaterial union with the is nonetheless first match this definition potential gifted by 'he that mind of God: moving. That said, the of the fifth alchemical step made us with such large Good night, sweet prince, speech might also be seen in spiritual rebirth, discourse' to attain gnostic And flights of angels sing as an acknowledgement on although there is certainly union with the thee to thy rest [5.2] Hamlet's part of the fallen, evidence here of a new creator. Later, in the fifth act, he will supplement corrupted and degenerate sense of self merging: act, he will supplement

Horatio states - driving home the fact of Hamlet's *ascent* towards Olympus, God, the Great Mind, Gnosis and self-fulfilment.

Conclusions

In this brief essay, I have attempted to show how Hamlet changes in the course of the play that bears his name, moving from a nihilistic victim of his own doubts and fears, to a final apotheosis as a figure of Hermetic ascent and divine self-realisation: doubts dissipated, fears and existential neuroses resolved in the hope of final reunification with the divine. Nous of cosmological and spiritual transcendence.

Hamlet, in short, is *transmuted*: his seven soliloquies and other speeches in the play bearing witness to his alchemical refashioning, each step in his spiritual transformation mirrored in the arcane practices of practical alchemy. As Nelson makes clear, the process of 'transmutation' refers to a process analogous to alchemy whereby men and women could learn how to perfect themselves, and also to choose to change or shape their own destinies, becoming 'spiritually reborn in fact,' and it has been my intention here to demonstrate this process as it occurs in the play - demonstrating that its author was conversant with the ideas of Hermetism, spiritual alchemy and the precepts

of Hermes Trismegistus concerning the soul and the process of its purification.

As Nelson again makes clear, 'the practical alchemy of the laboratory, involving the marriage of elements and a process which achieves purity through progressively driving off all impurities until the quintessence of pure gold is achieved, is clearly analogous to spiritual alchemy or the mystic ascent of the purified soul described as the Hermetic way to salvation' and this, I believe, is witnessed in *Hamlet*, as its hero finally achieves the bliss of angelic ascent to Olympus.

The number 7, with its many Pythagorean, numerological and Hermetic resonances, maps to the seven soliloquies in the play which, if not precisely and concisely corresponding to the seven stages of spiritual alchemy at every point, nonetheless track the eponym's spiritual and salvific journey to gnostic communion with the divine artificer of the cosmos - recalling Trithemius' definition of 'true alchemy' in these terms:

'a passage of the soul, on the model of alchemy, through a series of purgative stages to a state of godlike sanctity and "enlightenment."'

The Pythagorean connotations of the

number 7 are also hugely relevant to Hamlet as a figure: solitary, secretive, fleeing the company of other people and seeking instead the soliloquy (from the Latin *solus* - alone [Now I am alone - 2.2.575]) as a vehicle for abstract and spiritual contemplation, again recalling Trithemius' description of the man who wishes to seek and embrace 'heavenly philosophy' as one who 'must flee the tumult of the men, desert the world, and contemplate Heaven, *this not only with his eyes but also with his mind*'"

Seven soliloquies - seven stages of spiritual and practical alchemy - seven letters in the word 'alchemy': seven stages in the process of Hamlet's gradual dissolving and immolation of his former self, as he seeks his father in heaven.

CJ Taylor
Dec '24

Languages

We are excited to introduce a new section to our newsletter: Languages! This spring, we've welcomed some exchange students to our school while our Spanish A-level students had the opportunity to visit Spain. Our editorial team interviewed one of the exchange students about his experiences!

*'Interview with
Spanish Exchange
Student' by
Anastasiia*

*Shafirostova (James
Spicer-Hale)*

Q: What was your first impression of our school and how is it different to your school back in Spain?

"My first impression of the Langton was that it was much bigger than probably any other public school in Spain. I personally think that it is a good thing based on how diverse it is in its studies. What stood out to me immediately was that everyone in the sixth form only has between 3-4 classes per day and can just hang around the school the rest of the time, unlike schools in Spain, where it is mandatory to attend 9 classes a day."

Q: What interesting places have you visited since arriving?

"The most interesting places we've visited since arriving were Canterbury cathedral, the National Gallery in London, and Chinatown....We arrived at London's Victoria Station at 10:45, right after we went straight to Buckingham Palace to see the changing of guards, we then walked past Big Ben and the Parliament...[after seeing...] we headed over to the Trafalgar square next to the National

Gallery where we stayed for about an hour, afterwards we walked down to Chinatown where we had our first free time to explore the city in small groups and to have our lunch. Not so long after that, we had our walking tour of the south bank where we saw the London Eye, the National Theatre, the Globe, and the Tate Modern, where we had a short break before heading towards the Tower Bridge. We ended our tour with another half an hour break at the Borough market before heading straight to the train station to catch the train back to Canterbury”.

Q: What was the most memorable experience you have had during your stay?

“The most memorable experience I had while I was there was either the day we spent in London or the football match where we went to watch all the Spaniards and a couple of British that were around at the time”.

Q: What did you like the most about London?

“What I personally liked most about London was Chinatown (though I would've liked to have spent a little more time there) and the National Gallery.”

Q: What did you like the most about Canterbury?

“What I liked most about Canterbury was the river tour, mostly because our guide was very nice and I liked the explanation and brief history of Canterbury he gave us.”

Q: What local food have you tried? What did you like or dislike about it?

“Food, although I don't think this food is local specifically to Canterbury, but I've tried fish and chips and the full English

breakfast. I must say that I don't have any complaints. I liked them quite thoroughly, though I should also mention that I am not the pickiest eater out there and I can usually find a way to enjoy almost any food”.

Q: What was the most memorable experience you have had during your stay?

“The most memorable experience I had while I was there was either the day we spent in London or the football match where we went to watch all the Spaniards and a couple of British that were around at the time”.

Q: Would you consider coming back to stay or live here in the future?

“I would consider coming back to study or to visit, but not to live since the “early” lifestyle they have going on there can be dealt with while on a trip, but I don't think I could manage it over the long term.”

Q: Is there anything you will miss about England?

“What I will miss the most about England will probably be the people since I think most of the people that were or were not part of the exchange program treated us nicely and they were a great fun to be around while we were there.”

School life

‘Malta Through Langtonian Eyes’ by Amana Nasser

In March and April 2025, twenty-four other students and I set off on a school trip to Malta. Over the course of two weeks, we gained a valuable range of work experience, explored historic sites and took boat trips around Malta’s famous islands - all while connecting as a group.

As this was a work experience-centred trip focused on Business, we each wrote cover letters to agencies, pitching our strengths and interests in certain fields. Based on this, every student was matched with a company that best suited them, where we completed our work experience. For instance, as I had expressed interest in media and marketing, I was placed, along with three other students, in a busy hostel in the beautiful area of St Julian’s Bay, which is considered an attraction in Malta. While there, we were tasked with helping to establish the hostel’s new branding. To do this, our mentor guided us in using professional videography equipment, such as gimbals, to document a local artist painting large-scale murals around the hostel and film guided video tours around Malta and in markets. This allowed us to enhance the hostel’s online presence and new branding while

gaining hands-on experience in the world of media marketing and simultaneously exploring the captivating culture of Malta.



Separately from the main media and marketing tasks, our mentor at the hostel also imposed a rule where every morning during breakfast, we were encouraged to engage in daily conversations with hostel guests. We found that when pushed outside of our comfort zones to approach strangers who came from many different backgrounds, we improved our social and interpersonal communication skills.

To demonstrate the range of work placements we were offered, some students were placed at an estate agent, an environment completely different to the hostel I worked in. During this placement, they were involved in a variety of tasks that allowed them to understand that world of real estate. They re-listed a range of residential and commercial properties, including houses, restaurants, and office spaces. They were also given the opportunity to visit the properties at various locations in Malta, as well as interact with property owners and clients, helping to encourage potential

listings. The direct involvement in the tasks at the agency strengthened their professional skills by allowing them to see how properties are presented and how client interest is maintained.

Aside from work experience, we also had the chance to explore Malta as tourists. We wandered through the capital, Valetta, experiencing the scenic Barrakka Gardens and the electric atmosphere of the city's nightly live music. Personally, the cultural visit I enjoyed the most was the boat tours around Gozo and Comino (two other islands in the Maltese archipelago). The highlight of the trip was easily the Blue Lagoon on Comino, with breathtakingly clear waters that just didn't feel real. We swam in the Maltese seas, visited the signature markets in Marsaxlokk, Malta's famous cat park and toured Malta's medieval fortified former capital city, Mdina, as well as its stunning cathedrals that the country is famous for. We also visited Hagar Qim, a prehistoric temple that is depicted on Malta's €2 coins. Standing among stones that had been there for thousands of years was a surreal experience that brought us closer to appreciating the deep history of Malta. Finally, another part of the trip I really enjoyed was the sense of independence we gained through living in apartments and

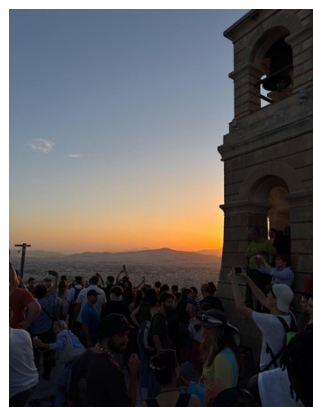
travelling to our work placements each day. We were quite lucky to have stayed in an apartment complex with three other friends, our own kitchens, bathrooms, and balconies that overlooked the city. Plus, our other friends were just a knock away in the same building. Being given the opportunity and money by the travel agency to figure out Malta's buses, buy our own groceries, prepare lunch for ourselves, and keep our apartments clean made it feel like we were actually living there, not just visiting. It was a small taste of what real independence feels like, making the experience even more memorable.



*'Athens Through
Langtonian Eyes' by
Alexander Sladden*

Additionally, there was a Turing Scheme work experience trip to Athens, Greece, between May 20th and June 2nd. This trip was aimed to be for architectural and artistic students who aspire to work in industries such as

design, construction and, of course, architecture, taking a total of 25 students. Athens is known for its vibrant, impressive and meaningful street art located throughout the city; this made it not only a suitable place to visit for educational purposes, but also the perfect city for developing world knowledge about one of the many different cultures throughout the globe.



Firstly, participating in the scheme offered a rich cultural immersion that reached far beyond work. Much of the population in

Greece is Christian, more specifically Eastern Orthodox, which means that churches are common to see all over the country, especially in Athens. Well-known monuments which are rich in history surround the city, such as the Panathenaic Stadium, which held the first modern Olympic games, or the Athenian Acropolis. In addition to this, we were encouraged to put ourselves in the shoes of a hard-working Ancient Greek citizen through a guided Virtual Reality experience that allowed us to explore the most recognisable places in

Music

*'A night at The
Musicals' by
Anastasiia
Shafarostova / Mrs
Gove*

This year, our school came alive with a harmonious blend of melody and spirit. The stirring notes of the choir echoed in the assembly hall; the vibrant energy illuminated the stage in colours. Students across all year groups gave us more than just performances: they gave us stories of people just like us, taking listeners on a journey through the Golden Age of Musical Theatre

We began the student band, featuring evening enthusiastically Jacob on Piano, Raffy on by welcoming our Drums, Gabriel on Bass, audience and briefly and Philip and Oliver on introducing them to our Guitars. Miss Thornton first performance: and Dr Easterbrook joined *Oklahoma!* the band to perform together 'I Want To Break

"Did you know that before he was famous, Hugh Jackman starred in a 1998 stage production of *Oklahoma?* – a year before his Hollywood breakthrough as Wolverine."

It is always remarkable how singing transforms as one single individual into part of something greater: community. How we not only forget to think of ourselves selfishly, but singing gives us 'relief from life without relieving from living'. Speaking of the community, our next Musical tells us the story of a Mowgli, a boy raised by wolves, and of the themes of courage, friendship, and belonging. *The Jungle Book* is nearly

Our fantastic pianist, Jacob Watts, was accompanied by a full choir and immersed our audience in the story of the great state of Oklahoma. A burning love between a cowboy named Curly McClain and a farm girl named Laurey sparks this story!

After such a captivating start we were mesmerized by the singing of our first soloist- Mrs Renshaw-Kidd, who took us to the imaginary Land of Oz and the story of Glinda and her roommate Elphaba (who, to Glinda's horror doesn't wear proper outfits, has never been a Homecoming Queen, and, worst of all...she is GREEN!). According to Stephen Schwartz, the composer of 'Popular', the song was "meant to be as shallow as possible" as well as political.

Moving away from fairies and witches, our next performance was a collaboration between staff and students. It featured our fabulous

our ear training, fostering collaboration, and boosting our confidence since we had to rely solely on our vocal abilities.

We were once more enchanted by our soloist Mrs Renshaw-Kidd. This time, she sang a playful parody of the Bossa Nova classic 'The Girl from Ipanema'. As popular critics mention "*The Mad Show* is an explosion of insanity; a carnival of idiots in fright wigs who sing and scream utterly ridiculous things. But they also make an unsettling

amount of sense. They satirise both parents who devour their children, or children who devour their parents. They sing The Hate Song in which do-gooders vow to stamp out hate and conclude by stamping out one another."

Moving into the 21st century, our band performed 'American Idiot', from the Jukebox Musical of the same name featuring the songs by the band Green Day. The story centres on three disaffected young men, who escape the constraints of suburban life in search of meaning and identity.

After a moving and emotional performance, our next soloist Sangive performed 'I'll Make a Man Out of You' from the Disney animation *Mulan*. The tale tells the story of

Mulan, who takes her father's place in the Chinese military. She cleverly impersonates a man and trains with fellow soldiers. Accompanied by

her dragon, Mushu, she helps to fight off Hun invaders and falls in love with a captain along the way. The song's title is considered ironic: *Mulan* relies on her intelligence and ultimately proves to be more competent than her male comrades.



Our next song, '*The Sound of Music*', was one of the most beautiful. The film was based on the true story of the Trapp Family Singers who fled Austria as the Nazis came to power. *The Sound of Music* is the rare combination of a powerful story, beautiful music, and breath-taking scenery of Salzburg! The musical tells the story of Maria, who takes a job as a governess to a large family while deciding whether to become a nun. She grows fond of the children and their widowed father, Captain von Trapp. He and Marie decide to flee from Austria with their children. We will be singing four songs in total from one of the most beloved musicals of all time: *The Sound of Music*, *My Favourite Things*, *Lovely Goatherd*, and *Do-Re-Mi*.

Our next song is featured in the Musical '*She Loves Me*' written by Jerry Bock and Sheldon Harnick. The story revolves around two

shop employees who, despite being consistently at odds at work, are secret pen pals. They have been sending love letters to one another through a 'lonely hearts column', but neither realises they already know each other— let alone the fact that they hate each other's guts! Harry performed a frantically fast song called 'Tonight at Eight'.

And of course, before our Grande finale, Manny and Sammy performed 'Dear Theodosia' from the hit musical 'Hamilton'. *Hamilton* is a musical by Lin Manuel Miranda about Alexander Hamilton, one of the Founding Fathers of America. The song blends an eclectic mix of genres: pop, rap, hip-hop, R&B, soul, and lots more.

To round off our show we performed our final song - 'Les Misérables'. The book was originally written by Victor Hugo follows the life of Jean Valjean, ex-convict who seeks redemption while being pursued for decades by Javert, his former prison guard. In his quest for absolution Jean Valjean agrees to take care of Cosette, the daughter of a tragic factory worker, Fantine. They struggle through the French Revolution with love and courage as their only hope. *Les Misérables*, affectionately known as *Les Mis* was originally written in French by Claude-Michel Schönberg, Alain Boubil, and Jean-Marc Natel. On that day

we performed *At the End of The Day, I Dreamed A Dream, Castle on a Cloud, Do You Hear the People Sing?, On My Own, Bring Him Home, and The Finale* (so, yes, basically the entire show!...)

Poetry

*'An emotionally inept
17-year-old's musings
on the theme of love' by
Alex Solway*

I
And as that yonder
Shepherd left his mark
Upon the breast that never
left his side
So I will sing the songs of
loving lark
To see if you and I are still
alive

Whoever loved that loved
not at first sight?
Well I, sweet muse, lov'd
many years before
For though our Earth hath
many sweeping height
In every face I mark'd
'twas yours I saw

'Tis true the night is dark
and winter grey
And flames that fade will
scarce return again
Yet so too seasons ever
last but days
And what is time to
pleasure and to pain?

Our fates entwined to
fickle stars above
A heart entreats a heart for
prickly love

II

In all the jades of Asia is
contained
A puny pittance worth
indifferent scorn
For out with jewels - all
riches I abstain
Before my love a humble
man reborn

Oh chastity art worthless
and absurd
Though scriptures mark it
holy to be sure
As foolish Faust had once
his lord abjur'd
My soul be ransomed,
though I die therefore

If passion comes in waves
and ebbs away
As widows, nuns and
spinsters would attest
Poseidon's fickle lust I
would obtain
And force the roaring
waves to come to rest

My wealth, my lust, my
soul be damn'd to hell
If you were in my arms I
couldn't tell

III

The melodies of sparrow
songs above
An autumn morn that
devils scarce could hate
Would bring the ruin of a
man in love
For though its sweet, a fox
decides its fate

A perch alighted far away
doth harm
The bitter heart of
wretched tyrants' kin
For such a little thing
could change and charm
And still a man will
choose not love but sin

Unwitting sparrows hold
the world on strings

They love to pluck and
twang to heart's content
It seems that every day
they screech and sing
Another fatal message has
been sent

And still a sparrow will
not ever learn
This love they hate is
more than hunting worms

IV

What love that penetrates
a lonely heart
When in its wake is left a
gruesome toll
We fantasise of lofty lives
and art
And spurn those sacred
dice that long hath roll'd

We spend a moment
bask'd in warming sky
And wander out from
under storms above
It feels to us mere
moments yet to die
But then again, pray tell,
what else is love?

If unrequited love were
firmament
Alone we'd cease in
aching swathes of space
But precious time remains
magnificent
For those whose life well
lived would leave in haste

If privately we knew love
scarce exists
Like wretched leeches
still we would persist

V

This thing it hurts; it digs
into my bones
That special kind of pain
that faintly burns
An ache for which a
single cure is known

A remedy the surgeon rarely learns	Though much of life was lost when we were met So surgeons say for life must blood be let	I wonder what the stars have taught you beneath the glimpse of solemn night; Where hollow eyes in wonder caught you in sweet and careless silver light.	Brute force and pride in storms are smothered, yet gold still wraps the hero's mighty form. We weave our monsters, one another And nightmares shape the mind's own storm.
I beg my darling hears my tender plight I beg her heart can stand to test its nerve	— VII		
A pauper I, for whom vain riches slight But still a man, a soul, who you can serve	In clotted blood whose thickens should attest To love for kin by broken words of God Is hollow'd oak where should be willow lest We lose the memory of paths we trod	A gentle hand, a touch of mourning, like song that flows around the dead. While moon-snakes twist in tongues with warning, And whisper of heroic deeds and songs of fate	So sing, O Goddess, of relentless rage, of wrath of man, the gods defied of faith Sing prayers lost to heaven's towering form, Of mortals bound to the Muse's control.
My time, it wanes; wears ever thin as straw Both time and space crash closer t'wards my doom I only wish my love I never saw Without a care I'd lose my life so soon	My kin be damn'd, I only want that thing That was ruin of a thousand Greeks But greater still I don't want us to sing For ought to annals of our fading weeks		
In peace I leave if it's my time to die My final breath shall earn my lover's sigh	So time and time anon we men shall fall In love, to hell, from sin, in love again This love is but a farce, a waste withal But god is cruel, and still it will remain	A chant of knowledge, low and fleeting Apollo murmurs, measured, wise— a hero's heart, with courage beating, falls prey to Fate that blinds his eyes.	They burned, they rose, their bonfire blazing a light to pierce the dark delight of sin; αἰὲν ἀριστεύειν— forever stiving, to stand, to fall, to chase the sun.
— VI			
In vain attempts of mine to reconcile I seek to quell obsession with critique But imperfections only make me smile Your perfect beauty so because it's meek	These feelings are as special as I think But to time they're just another blotch of ink	The savage beast, that underneath us hidden, unleashed repellent cruelty, so grim and wild; The beauty morbid, harsh, unbidden — like meek Cassandra's silenced cry.	And sing of him, of golden lyre king Apollo's wrath: the spear of his command. A city doomed; the walls set fire where silence strikes and Hope soon dies.
These other faces seem to pass me by I see no beauty but for symmetry Though still I cannot fathom why I only care to notice you and me	Abdominals can scarcely hide your sins P.S How brew? Well?	We crave for beauty, pain, and wonder, for gods we build, for youth we feign— yet time still rips our years asunder and burst our veins in reckless pain.	Like autumn leaves in winds they scatter, Like men who fought, yet none were saved. They bore the flame, yet lost the battle, They left their glory in their bed.
I cannot love for anything but you Although a man shan't claim to ever try I want for nothing when I pull you to And once you're in my lap I shouldn't mind	<i>Anastasia</i> <i>Shafrosteva</i> <i>'Stars'</i>	Billowing sea foams white, the stars reflected — perhaps their blood flows in our skin. From myth to man the history's projected— from war to love, from kiss to kill.	And under ivy wreath, the portal to god's token The Bacchants swirl around, voices high. A truth once glimpsed, the law is broken — They kneel before the thundered sky.

They gasp the feet of
Cronus' son,
They beg to spare their
tainted souls.
Yet in the fire, where the
flesh is spun,
And where they stand,
their bodies fold.

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Through revelry and
sacrifice of blood,
Jove sent them sorrow's
sweet embrace
The fruit has fallen –
youth in ruins,
Yet time runs on, and gods
erase the truth.

Shakespeare is dead,
We killed him.

With spear thrust deep in
dust and stone,
The hero asks in doubt
and fire,
Why every foe, by hand
alone,
Must perish in his heart's
desire.

When man has killed the
thing he loved,
His fate is set – his death
is nigh.
And when the earth's own
power's crushed,
The heavens, too, must
not survive.

The End!

Unfortunately, this issue
has reached its conclusion.
But...We welcome any
contributions for the
upcoming year!
Wishing you a wonderful
summer holiday, and we
look forward to seeing you
next year!

Sincerely,
The Langton Editorial
Team.