

THE OVERCOAT

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EDITORIAL

Dear Readers,

We've missed you. Did you enjoy winter?

Did you know that August was poetry month?!

No problemo if not. That's why we've published eight poets' work for you here – straight up! Haikus, free verse, rhyming, wandering melodies and a few sentiments that settle in your soul.

We've even got an Indonesian poet in this issue – Joel Sebastian Chang – who visited our school on exchange earlier this year. Perhaps fried rice for dinner?

For our prose lovers we've got historical fiction from Molly Trotter and a new chapter from Nylah Holbrook's series.

We hope you enjoy all the student works in this magazine, and that you might think of contributing some writing or artwork of your own in future!

Until next time...

The Overcoat Team

THE OVERCOAT

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A Drop

By Annabelle Hughes

A drop
Its singular, effortless descent
When everything else seems calamitous
The calming continuation brings composure.
In its own clear state, it is peaceful;
Refreshing my soul and purifying my mind.
But when the drops meet in great magnitude,
The danger lurks.
Above my head the rough waves roll,
Inescapable surroundings
Like a blanket they suffocate me.
The seas, flushed with rage, change colour
Unable to view the light through it,
Trapping freedom and robbing serenity.
My trust in the lone drop flees;
The power is all too mighty to face.
Yet one steps out onto the surface of the sea,
The storm does not shake his slumber,
His authority commands the seas to be still.
My soul has no reason to fear,
For my Lord is greater than all.

Two Haikus

BY SARAH LOUGH

They still remain

Settling like ash — urn.

Lonely, upon a mantle,

left with fallen dust.

O' to be loved

O' - to be craved. Love

Silhouettes dance as one, Love.

Am I capable?

Timeless Passage

La Gerche Walking Trail

By Ciara Feeney

Wandering down the wet, mucky path
—Footsteps squelching in the drenched leaves;
Whispers from the wind pacing in the distance—
 I am surrounded,
Surrounded by a dense, lush landscape

Guided by the strong, red Ponderosa pine
Standing tall and brave like soldiers,
Extending and reaching towards the clouds
While the silver wattle embraces me
And the English oak holds a family of moss,
 Comforting and welcoming me

The patter of soft rain falls
Lighting up the forest like fairy lights
—Glistening like tiny diamonds.
Gazing up above
As the faint sun breaks through the trees' guard,
Casting tranquil shadows,
Dancing and flickering like magic
While fallen logs rest in their posts
 I'm lost in a hidden world.
Time staggering,
Enveloped in a never-ending path,
 Unaware of the direction
 Or distance
As if forgotten by the world
But embraced by the woodland,
Leading me and enticing me to continue
Before a torrent of rain falls

The once magical oasis
Collapses under a foreboding darkness,
 Surrounding us...
 Blinding us...
The wind's strong gusts boom loudly
As if a storm is about to engulf us
While the cracking of branches threatens us to leave...



The Four Seasons

By Evelyn Hendropurnomo

Summer:

Sun baking the earth,
Laughs and squeals from the sand,
Water cools our feet

Autumn:

Wind pulls tree branches,
Playing with the browning leaves,
Freeing the tree's burden

Winter:

Rain beats the window,
Our country has lost all snow,
As ice melts to rain

Spring:

Seeds sown in winter,
Soil coaxing the seed to sprout,
New life from the dirt

Fried Rice

By Joel Sebastian Chang

Joel is a student from Smak Penabur Gading Serpong school in Indonesia. He visited Bayside Christian College on exchange this year and kindly left us with this poem.

Poured on a bowl, some fried rice
Some spring onions, we gave it a dice
A shared meal in a lovely home
So that we don't feel much alone.

The meal's got eggs, rice and lots of spice
The type of meal that makes you feel nice
Could this meal have just been fried rice
Or could it be a blessing in disguise?

As we finish munching on the plate
We were full with all the meal we ate
The end draws near for this meal like thin ice
Ohh how nice it is to eat fried rice.

Thoughts

By Emily Buchanan

Thoughts scatter in my head,
only coming back when I'm peacefully blind.
They try to disappear,
but only leave a permanent stain.

Thoughts scatter in my head,
regrets and scares.
They get lost in the chaos,
but never truly fade.

Thoughts scatter in my head,
it's my choice to make.
Happy and excited,
or full of mistakes.

Thoughts scatter in my head,
what will I choose.
Will they judge,
will they create a thought just for me.

Thoughts scatter in my head,
I think I have chosen.
But is it right,
will I regret it.

Thoughts scatter in my head,
It's perfectly clear.

Flinders Street, by Ciara Feeney

That Door

By Alexandria Cardona

We hold the door open for each other,
I won't dare make eye contact
Fleeting words I can't control nor contract
Just my hand to pave your safe path and
nothing more

You hold the door open for me
And I have to act and ignore
Acting like that gesture doesn't mean
Anything anymore

How that kindness hurts my heart
I wish we didn't have that door
For we could've been so much more
If you only hadn't held the door

It's this silent "respect" I can't stand
I don't know whether to say thank you
Or to say sorry to you
life is now so utterly bland

You could've come with me
I was holding the door open for you
But unfortunately we were something we could never be

Heresy

By Dane Nolen

*Was I the true glory of God, if everyone
told me otherwise?
The lives we be the deaths we
breathe, aren't they all the same?
I wish I was different*

And thus, I became.

*Now different, I fit in.
Ostracised by the different, it was the same.
My existence felt hearsay,
Hear I say, why?
Because that you are.*

*How can that be?
There is no how, you just are.
Can I change?
There is no way to change, you will forever be the
same.
Don't you feel ashamed, you and I, we are the same.*

Yes.

*And why don't you change?
I do, but there is one thing we can't, and thus,
I say, there is no change, it all remains the same.
We live a life called taboo, you and I, we are
Heresy.*

In the Sewers

BY NYLAH HOLBROOK

Alice was giggling as the sewers ate the three of them whole.

Willow and Sadar had agreed to Alice's "hang out"...tentatively. She had insisted that it would be fun, that they would enjoy it, and no, no one would end up with a rash this time, with that cheshire-cat smile on her face all the while. Unfortunately for the two of them, they had decided to trust her. Which, if they were nearly as smart as they liked to give themselves credit for, was a decidedly poor idea.

The Nilto sewers were dark green from... something. There was neon graffiti all over the walls, yelling out which direction to go every time a fork in the river appeared. The stuff beneath them seemed perfectly still, and constantly restless at the same time.

"My pants are gonna smell," Sadar spat as they waded through the sewer water. Alice in front, him and Willow behind. The former seemed far more comfortable skipping and splashing the others, though.

"I didn't tell you to wear good clothes," Alice said, turning around to give them a smile, dark red lipstick on her teeth and blue eyes shining in reflected water patterns.

"Didn't say to wear bad ones, either." Sadar said, immediately groaning as the substances beneath him made a decidedly unpleasant sound.

Willow hadn't talked for most of the journey, although her scrunched face said plenty, and she had tied her long, pale hair up to keep it safe from the liquids. "Where are we going, Alice?" She finally asked, her voice earning a glance from Sadar.

"A very fun surprise," Alice winked. "A magical wonderland of fizz and po- oh?" Her phone was vibrating in her pocket, the high-pitched, very repetitive ringtone echoing throughout the metal tunnels. "Oh, it's Myles! Hey, you disgusting gerbil sack, what's up...!"

Alice was absorbed in her phone call almost immediately, talking and laughing as she kept walking ahead, the other two completely

forgotten.

"Are we serious?" Sadar murmured, watching her. "She can't take us here, not give an explanation, and then not even talk to us, that little piece of-"

"It's Alice," Willow shrugged, taking a large step over a bubbling section of water. "She took us to a McDonald's playground, last time."

"At least that was sanitary..." Sadar trailed away from his statement for a moment, before sighing. "No, fair point."

Willow smiled, before bursting into laughter when Alice started belting Frank Sinatra to Myles over the phone, with all passion and very little skill.

Sadar didn't laugh himself, but he had to catch himself when Willow eventually turned to look back at him. He hadn't realized he was staring, but he did know that his heartbeat was a smidge faster. He concluded it to be a reaction to the awful smell.

A moment passed.

"I didn't think we would meet again in a sewer," Willow mused to herself, looking at the graffiti. She turned to see Sadar's dark skin shining in green light, stringy hair falling over coal eyes. He looked...well, sad was the wrong word for it. Contemplative, frustrated, a little grossed out...they all worked just fine to describe his expression. But Sadar was, in Willow's experience, hard to put a label on. "It's only been a month. Not a long time to not see someone, in the grand scheme of things."

"It's a twelfth of a year. A sixth of a semiannual. Still feels like a while."

Alice was yelling out in frustration now, saying something about helicopters.

Sadar finally smiled a little, kicking something solid in the water as they took a left. "'Semian- nual', ok, ya highbrow."

"There aren't many words for half a year!"

Willow protested.

"Coulda just said half a year."

"Coulda, shoulda, woulda, all that jazz."

"Jazz... is Jayla still doing dance classes?" Sadar asked.

"She felt like she had cankles, so she stopped. She even got Jace to measure them." Willow smiled, a little whisper of a giggle on the corners of her lips and eyes. Sadar didn't understand - honestly, he wasn't sure if he ever would - why Willow loved her protectee so much. Jayla reminded Sadar of Alice, in a way. Short, loud, overly excitable and friends with too many odd people to count. But all those traits gave Jayla a beloved fanbase online, and gave Alice multiple criminal charges. But Willow loved her nonetheless. In fact, Willow seemed to love most people she encountered, most places she was in, no matter how rude or dirty or gross. She hadn't even complained about the sewers, yet. She hadn't complained about Alice, either. Sadar wasn't like that. He was harsh, critical, a bit of a jerk, and a very quiet part of him longed for such a magical perspective.

Maybe it was one of the reasons he adored her company so much.

"You're..." Sadar stopped himself. But she was looking at him now, with those soft eyes of hers, and Alice's voice seemed quieter, the liquid cleaner, the graffiti sparcer.

"You're very... nice, Willow."

Willow could almost visually see Sadar grimace, just a bit. She didn't blame him - it was gross down here. But it was a lovely thing to say. Simple, sure, but Sadar wasn't a fan of lacy decorations anyway.

"Thanks," she smiled at him, moving a bit of his hair that was sticking out a strange way.

"Your roots are coming in again. They look nice!" Sadar looked at her with those lovely, dark eyes of his, now wide and slightly softer than usual. Probably zoning out, Willow thought. We have been here a while.

A moment passed.

This time, the moment was cut very short, by both of them grunting as they collided with one Alice, who had stopped at a ladder.

"We're here ~!" She sang, looking at them with her Cheshire cat grin and a strangely knowing look. "Have you two youngins' had fun so far? Rate it out of ten squishy tomatoes."

Another moment, before overlapping speech

broke the sewer's quiet gurgling.

"Listen, not my ideal location, but new experiences are always interesting."

"If you take me here again I am going to get very violent, very fast."

Alice raised a thin brow, leaning against the rusty, moldy ladder casually enough to make both of her friends flinch.

"Neither of you rated it out of squishies. Ah well. You both seemed to enjoy the company, if nothing else, hah?"

Sadar felt his stomach drop. Willow tilted her head a bit. Alice smiled even wider. The sewers kept smelling awful.

"What? I'm a whole lot of fun!" Alice giggled. No one could know if she was joking, or if she really was that clueless. Either way, she was looking up at the sewer lid with nothing short of wonder. "Now, let's climb up this ladder and get to a Macca-donalds playground, baby-girls!"

Willow started snorting, shaking her head with exhaustion and letting her eyes crinkle with joy. Sadar was already snapping something about taxis, the consideration of other peoples' time, how much he wanted to go home. But Alice didn't care for either reaction, and was climbing the metal bars like someone with experience.

When she looked down, both of them were still going on, either still laughing, or still refusing to move, their figures sketched and glowing in the reflection of water, rainbow graffiti circling them together. Alice bit her lip happily, letting herself roll her eyes. They were sweet, and very, very odd. Not quite at her level, but she was sure they would learn. Maybe she could teach them the ways of romance, or crime.

Her first lesson, though, would have to be how to completely fake a phone call.

Gallipoli

BY MOLLY TROTTER



I've never been one to listen to the cries of the living. They only weep for their own losses and what they don't possess. I've never found it worth my time.

For as long as the Lord has watched over this world, I have been there, carrying those daring enough to challenge my will. They've approached my waters many a time, each with new idealisms and fears. I've let some pass through without second thought, but for others, I've given sanction to my resting place down below, allowing them to call it their own.

I've been given many names, but the one I've grown to love is 'sea'. I'm unsure as to where this title originated, but I hope that it refers to the time I have spent seeing over the earth.

I've no perspective of time so to say. Centuries blend in with the millennia, but it's all the same; people are people, some are good, some are bad, but everyone is only existing like all else in this reality. Connection and emotion are out of my grasp, but I've never considered that a loss. 'Feeling' has always sounded painful and crushing, so the freedom from it has always been a blessing in my eyes.

As sailors and travellers come and go, I watch and learn their stories. Some search for adventure, while others look for freedom in the isolation. Usually, I can differentiate between those who stand at the wheel and those who are along for the journey, but this time feels different.

Loads this large have been an unusual but familiar experience, just as wars are of my knowledge but significant ones are rare. But recently disquietude has hung heavy with the morning mists, and despair has made obvious the worry of the world.

The boat felt heavy with the innocence within as the hundreds of young soldiers prepared for what I can only describe as an uncertainty. Captain felt just as unsettled as passenger, experienced just as uneasy as novice as they approached the shore of a cliff-bordered region known by the locals as 'Çanakkale Savası'. I've heard the name scarcely repeated by its inhabitants, but recently it has carried an ominosity, a lingering taste on the tongues that speak it. Something is different.

Nothing about the area was particularly special. The cliffs hang from the earth, the sand yearns for shelter from me, pointlessly stretching across the land as an attempt, and little to no flora fights the battle to the surface. The climate is unpredictable, with blizzards, heatwaves, and storms taking their chance to challenge the terrain, slowly wearing the cliffs away. Even with the austerity of the landscape, it is beautiful in its simplicity.

Dawn is rearing its head over the horizon, giving definition to the scattered clouds and the glint of the steel boats looming. As the distance between the sand and the ships shortens, the unrest of the soldiers only grows and the darkness melts into the shadows of the cliffs.

Smaller wooden rowboats are stealthily released into my care as soldiers descend the sides of the larger ships and cram themselves into the new ones. Only half a dozen rowboats are released, while the rest of the soldiers wade through my waves. I attempt to calm the undercurrent so as not to make obvious my assistance, not that they would suspect me anyway.

Light begins to flood the beach as the first soldiers reach the shore. Dripping wet, they all crouch low and attempt to blend in with the scattered shrubbery, motioning for their comrades to join them in different nooks of shade. Just as the tenth soldier's boots crunch against the sand, a deafening

repetition of blasts takes over everything. All sound and all feelings are erased, sight is blurred, and safety seems to evade the panicking soldiers as they scramble for shelter.

One after another the naive soldiers are shot down, the guns screaming with the agony of their rain. They duck and dive, attempting to take the lives of those who took the lives of their friends. Back and forth, back and forth it goes until the last gunshot echoes through the silence of the twilight, piercing the sky with a bright flash rallying that of the stars.

Silence blankets the beach, suffocating the few remaining soldiers left after the attack. The Turkish people had taken the high ground at the top of the cliffs and the guns were like nothing I'd ever seen. They fired bullet after bullet at the clueless soldiers, and all but two were killed in the strike, and even they were slowly suffering from their injuries.

I know I should feel sorry for these poor people, for their loss and their families, but I don't know how to do so. These soldiers were shot down without a chance of fight or survival, and they'll never return home, but I can't feel sorry for them. I feel no sadness.

The bright rays of sunlight from the morning before having vanished. As dawn rises again, a dark storm brews in the distance, bringing with it the brave winds and swift rains that I can feel already on the horizon. No one came to retrieve the bodies of the fallen in the night, so the perished remain on the sand, welcoming the morning, and the Turks prepare for another strike, seeing only the storm approaching.

I thought the boats would have disappeared into the night, escaping the terrors and unnecessary deaths of the impossible fight that awaits them on the shore. But they're still here. I don't understand! They just lost a hundred soldiers to one day in Çanakkale Savasi, and now they're sending another battalion? No. I can't help them. I can't care. I can't 'feel'.

The sergeant stands on deck, confidence glowing off his fake agenda as he addresses another group of soldiers, younger this time. Most of them look no older than seventeen, and I can feel their uncertainty and inexperience through their shaking knees and false calm. I scan across the neat rows, knowing that each and every one of these soldiers isn't going to make it home. It's better not to have hope for those this innocent than feel for their loss when it comes.

I listen to each of their stories. The best way I can describe it is that everyone has a story to tell, and it almost radiates from the deepest part of their souls. I can read these stories and get to know someone on a deeper level than their own family. I have access to all of their secrets and thoughts, so nothing can be hidden from me.

I sift through the stories briefly, not wanting to get to know those about to be lost too well. As I reach the end of the row, something catches my interest; I can't hear him. I can't hear his story.

A young man, maybe sixteen years old, with cropped blond hair and slim, toned limbs stands tall and proud near the back of the battalion lineup. His hat (what the soldiers keep referring to as a 'slouch') is slightly crooked, and no badges or medals adorn his uniform. His grip on his rifle was slanted and he clearly hadn't held one before, so there was no chance that he had any idea what he was walking into when he signed up for the fight and there was no chance that he would survive this war.

But maybe... no. No connection means no feeling. It must stay that way.

Usually, when I listen, I hear first about home and family, followed by love and friendship. But if I dig deeper, I hear fears and worries and all the darker parts of someone's personality that they never want anyone else to know. But he is different. I hear nothing of family or friends, nothing of love or hope for the future, nothing on the surface. On the outside, this young soldier boy is nothing but his anticipation and determination regarding the battle ahead.

As I attempt to dive deeper into his mysterious tale, I feel a great change in pressure about the boats. Similar to the night before, soldiers are plummeting into my waters as the bullets did their brothers, willingly welcoming the undeserving death to be their own. While some men are obediently plunging into my currents without a second thought, others are questioning the authority and their judgement as to whether or not they are ready for what lies waiting patiently on the shore.

One man, maybe nineteen, stands slouched, trying to disappear from his reality. His gelled amber hair is swept to the side hastily, and his face is dotted with freckles, while his physique is large and muscular in contrast to his meek features. Another soldier, around the same age, stands tall with an arm around his mate, as if to defend him from the coming conflict. His dark hair is too short to be styled, sitting atop the rich brown of his skin, and his uniform seems to be on the small side, leaving his wrists and ankles exposed.

With them stands the young soldier, seemingly trying to encourage and comfort his comrades. I can feel their fear and disarray as they explain their situation to the young soldier, and though I am unable to listen to his story or hear the conversation between the three of them, his next words seem to glow against the dark clouds surrounding them and the shadowy silhouette of Çanakkale Savasi.

"The end is near, and we can't elude it, whether it be coming for us today or years from now. And yet, we don't give in to it until we must. The will of people is often considered weak and mouldable, but the fact that we are standing here today proves otherwise."

Without further explanation, he turns and walks away, hurdling the barriers of the boat and diving into my waves, and not even moments later, the others follow his lead.

Sunrise has brought with it the hope and prayers of the soldiers as they set foot on the beach. The clouds are approaching with great agility, sunlight peeking through the gaps in the storm, taunting with hints of blue sky and bursts of brilliance. I see the young soldier briskly run for cover, his back against the cold rock as he waves towards another soldier to join him.

There it is! His story, I can hear it! This soldier he feels a special connection to, a certain dedication to keep him safe and help him return home to his wife and newborn son. It seems they shared quarters in the barracks back when they were training and developed a friendship, helping each other to practice and supporting each other on the journey here. I wonder what it must be like, to feel for someone you've only just met and have that undying connection to them. But I know I can't have that, so I let the thought melt into the stream of dread, just like the soldiers.

The blast of gunshots pulls me out of my thoughts as the soldiers scramble towards the cliffs for safety. They're dropping left and right as they try to find shelter from the fatal shower, the Turkish soldiers again giving them no chance to even fight back.

Hundreds of soldiers already lay dead on the beach, the sand wallowing in the wake of their innocence and obliviousness, as the others continue to fight. The young soldier joins his friend out in the storms of bullets, rain and lightning as they shoot at the Turks manning the machine guns with their rifles. They manage to take one out, causing disarray up upon the cliffs and a moment of relief for the remaining soldiers. The young soldier sprints for shelter before the gunfire starts again and calls out for his mate to hurry. Just when he's only ten metres out from the cliffs, the young soldier's friend reaches out and freezes partway.

He's been shot.

The young soldier yells out for him and runs into the gunfire to help his friend. Adrenaline pumps through his body as he lifts him, supports him with his shoulder and carries his friend back to the haven of the cliffs, telling him he'll be alright and that it's all going to be fine. But it's not. I've seen injuries like these before, and no one, even the strongest, ever lives to see the next day.

Rain pounds the sand as the young soldier lays his friend on the cool bed the beach offers, clinging to his hand as both men begin to breathe heavily. The young soldier begins to dry-sob uncontrollably, not allowing a single tear to join the rain as he tells his dying friend how he's going to be alright and that he'll get him some help back on the boat.

Blood cakes the friend's uniform to his skin as it blooms across his back and leaks into the sand, mixing with the bitter rain. He reaches up for the young soldier's shoulder and holds it tightly along with his hand, whispering something to him before falling limply against the rough beach. I can't quite make it out through the blurry veil of rain, but it looks as if the young soldier bows over his comrade and thanks him for everything, praying to the Lord that He make a special place for him and all his fallen brothers in arms in heaven.

The young soldier stands and salutes each and every man lost to the battle, a silent tribute to the lives lost in the chaos of the battle. Paying his respects and thanking them for their service and sacrifice, he falls on his knees and prays to God that He watches over their families, as the ones they are awaiting will never return. Leaning against the rock for support, the young soldier stands by his friend, taking his rifle and throwing it at the ground. Madness clouds his vision as the rain clouds mine, making it hard to believe when the young soldier collapses by the shore.

I listen and feel the adrenaline fade from his system, causing him to realise a pain that he didn't recognise was there before. Clutching his chest, he feels warm, sticky blood sink into his skin and the front of his uniform. Dropping his rifle, he removes his coat and lifts his singlet underneath to reveal a gunshot wound directly through his chest.

No. No. He can't go. God please, answer me now! Please save this man, this young soldier from his death and let him live the time he deserves! Let him go home to his family and be with them until his true end! Please. Please...

I know the boy has no chance. If the Lord wanted him saved, if He didn't know it was his time, He wouldn't have allowed him to be shot. And yet, even with that knowledge, I cry endlessly into the heavens, past the storm and into the sky, where God is telling me it is his time.

But what about his family? What about all of the good this young soldier has done? Just from his time in this fight, I've seen him restore others' faith and bravery and sacrifice his life for a man he met only a few weeks before. Surely a man such as this deserves everything? Surely a man such as this deserves to survive a war when thousands of evil people will?

Just then, just as the young soldier is at his weakest, his soul draws me in with his story. He's finally showing it to me, in his final moments...

Back when the war had just begun, the young soldier had lived in London, where he had grown up with his mother, father, and younger sister. They had

heard the air raid sirens blaring in the middle of the night, and their neighbourhood had been one of the first targets. He had been the only one to survive the attack, and so evacuated to Australia on his own where he saw the enlistment posters by the place he was staying. His determination to fight for his family was like nothing I had ever felt before, and after all of that, he lost his life, and I couldn't save him...

Stop! I won't feel. I can't feel! This is just another of millions who will be lost to the tragedy of war, why is he any different? You promised never to make a connection, and now look at what it's done to you! You've broken.

I look back to the shore and see the young soldier lying peacefully on the sand, a small smile on his face. A ray of pure, golden sunlight breaks through the fading storm and mantles Çanakkale Savasi in silent mourning. I see the young soldier's body, covered in beautiful sun, but I can't see the light. All I can see is the darkness of the clouds around me and the hundreds of soldiers who will never return home.

A cold veil blurs my sight, my hearing, my thoughts as the sensation floods through me. What I can only describe as a shiver rattles through all that I know as the soldiers seem to sink further and further into the sand that will be their graves.

Everything from there is a haze of forbidden feelings and connection. I can't shake what happened to the young soldier, and the deeper I dive into those feelings, the more I think about the other soldiers like him. And the more I think about that, the more I seem to blame myself. If I'd just put my stupid rules about feelings and connections aside, I could have flooded the damned cliffs myself and ended the battle before it even started! Then none of those innocent soldiers would have died and they would all be at home with their families right now instead of rotting on the sand where they should have a proper burial. For the rest of the war, I'm stuck in my own head, unable to focus or pay attention to anything going on around me. Gunshots and grenade explosions rung and soldiers, both ANZAC and Turkish, were losing their lives. All the time I spent focused on these deaths and the death of the young soldier who put so much into the world and never got anything back.

...

Hindsight is a dangerous game to play, but I've been playing for so long now that it's all I know. The battle ended a few hours ago, and the number of bodies littering the once-pristine beach is disgusting. Only a few hundred soldiers are left and they all suffered injuries, both physical and mental. I'm not all that sure that the soldiers returning home are at all better off than those who lost their lives. The war will stay with them forever.

The ships seemed to drift further away as the war went on, making the distance they were closing seem much more significant now. Injured soldiers are loaded onto stretchers and then the small rowboats from the beginning of the attacks, while those who are able wade to the boat.

Looking back on Gallipoli, it is no longer what it used to be. The land is tainted with the war and nothing will ever be the same there. But now that the war has finished, the quiet leaves it eerie in its peace.

As sunset approaches, the clouds seem to dissipate into nothingness, as if the burden of the war is nothing but a memory now. But it is much more than that. These soldiers will see the gore, hear the gunshots, and feel the fear and pain for the rest of their lives, and there are no words to describe what they've been through. Only those who were there with them will have even a small understanding of how they feel, and even that will never be enough. They can't reverse what has already happened and they can't bring back the ones who have been lost.

A soft breeze whispers a song of old, one I haven't heard in centuries, carrying the fragile lyrics across the skies. I don't know how or when or why, but someone knew I needed these words and sent them to me, and I can't thank them enough.

"And at Gallipoli he'd fight for you and me. The unknown hero, the young soldier man."

The memory of the young soldier at first weighed on my conscience, but now it all but floats with me. He is a reminder that there is good in everything, even where there is war, and that is a lesson I hope never to forget.

As the final soldiers struggle up to the deck, I wish I could see the young soldier amongst them as the captain starts the engine. They are ready to leave this all behind, and so am I, though we will never forget.

The dusk carries with it a reminder of the first dawn when the soldiers arrived at Gallipoli, and how much has changed since then, how many soldiers missed seeing the morning when the war was over. The moonlight shines on the soldiers, thanking them for their service and their bravery, but they don't pay attention. Nothing will ever return to the way it was before, and they can't be the person they were prior to the battle. So they settle for what they have: they're going home to a war-free country, even if they're returning with a war-stained soul. So, I carried them home, while their brothers lay sleeping on the sand.

...

I've never been one to listen to the cries of the living. They only weep for their own losses and what they don't possess. But maybe I can make some time to understand them before I decide it's not worth it.

Opportunities!

Immerse Student Essay Competition

It's quite involved, but the basic requirements are very simple:

500 word academic essay on one of their prompts. There are over 20 prompts, so if you're interested please consider writing!

The winning entries are offered:

- Prize money
- A 2 week summer intensive in their discipline at the St Paul's College, University of Sydney.



Mr Balint-Smith is on the look out for extraordinary puns for his growing collection. If you discover or recollect one, please do share it with him.

Rattle Ekphrastic Poetry Competition

Rattle Magazine runs a monthly poetry competition based on poems in response to a particular artwork. You can find this month's artwork here:

<https://rattle.com/page/ekphrastic/>

Entries close at the end of each month.



We are looking for some submissions on the theme of 'Christmas' for our next issue in addition to our usual open call. If you've got a carol, a story, a memoir or an artwork on Christmas, please consider sending it to us!

NEXT ISSUE:
CHRISTMAS 2025



SUBMIT YOUR WRITING/ARTWORK TO:
THEOVERCOATZINE@GMAIL.COM