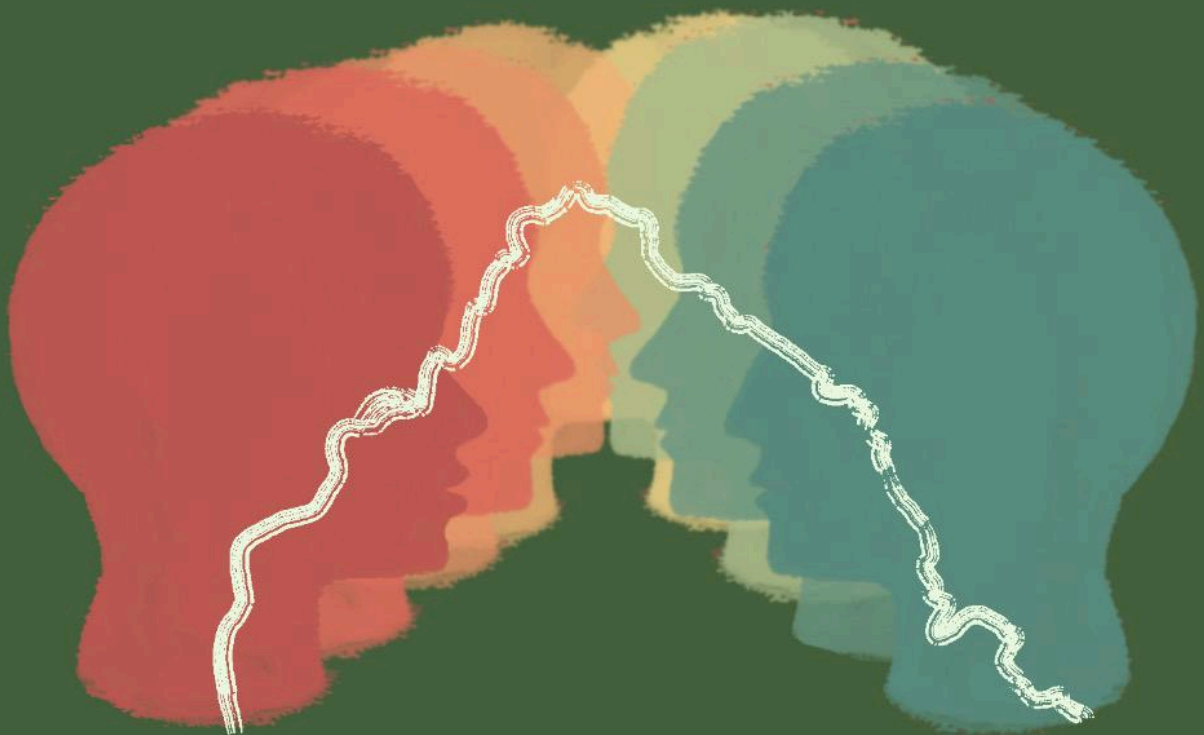


The Shape of Our Voices

A Student Writing Anthology
from The University of Sheffield's
Creative Writing Society



Issue 1

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A Student Writing Anthology

Created by the University of Sheffield's Creative Writing Society

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Introduction

Welcome to the first issue of our new anthology!

We wanted to create a space for student voices in Sheffield where members of our society can gain confidence in their voice and creative talent.

We have no set theme for this first issue, but interesting threads of connection formed from what was submitted. We have writing on nature, masculinity, the fantastical, and the horrific. This relates to why we chose to name our anthology *The Shape of Our Voices*; we want to highlight the importance of collating voices together and considering the different meanings they take on when read with each other. Also, we wanted to consider the physical environment we are writing in and how that shapes our writing, both the immediate landscape of Sheffield and the wider world.

Thank you for reading, and we hope you enjoy it.

- Holly Thorpe, Editor-in-Chief

Content Warning

This issue contains references to and descriptions of death, violence, genocide and war.

The Green Pest

Grace Steele

I tore its body in two,
for my own pleasure.
exhumed, executed, discarded
a stinking blanket of rot -
under which its replacement will reside.

Its carcass -
- devoured by worms
their excrement
Renewing my world.

Mud
and
Mulch
and
Muck

Soaking me to my bones
I'm six feet under
I can still see the sun.

Clawing my way upwards,
my tools at the ready.
Digging through the decay,
Rehoming your replacement,
filling the hole you once bore.

Using your body to feed the young,
Animated by the spring,
Summoned from the ground by the sun,
Nurtured by you -
who I once knew.

An Ode to the Dôn

Ananditha Sunil

Flowing across Kelham and Neepsend,
There I see You,
Mightily streaming, proudly yet pleasantly,
Dear ol' North Star.

How Your flowing limbs have cradled and
nourished this civilization for aeons,
Oh how they never cease to marvel me!
Those tides birthed factories, livelihoods,
A pridesome heritage of labour,
That has graced and spined this humble town.

Today I find You surrounded by company,
Cacophonous chatter of ducks and geese, salmon
gliding, those lonely willow groves overlooking,
and people on kayaks relishing Your ribbonous
gossamer beauty,
Stag deers paying You occasional, yet worthwhile
visits,
The sweet presence of Naomi as she watches You
on from her bench,
You seem delightful to bask in this pleasant chaos.
Indeed, You have come a long way.

But Your journey thus far hadn't always been this
easy,
You suffered when You were sludged to be covered
in gravel, scraps of plastic, metal, lumber, and
grease,
Shrouded by soot.
Things may be looking up for You. For now.
Yet You still find Yourself in some of those same old
remnants.

I yearn that someday, You will at last be revered for
the force You are to be reckoned with,
After all, You gave life to this blossoming
community that I now find myself in,
So shouldn't You demand submission from those
who disregard Your worth by desecrating You with
effluents?
Aren't they culpable for ravaging Your existence?

So aeons on,
Flowing across Kelham and Neepsend,
There I will see You,
Fully rid of suffering,
Mightily streaming, proudly yet pleasantly,
My ol' North Star.

Of Masculine Comfort

Ananditha Sunil

What makes a man?
A heart numbed from feelings, deprived of tenderness,
Ensnared by chiseled flesh that overshadows those
grisly scars,
Each one marked by those times he had to suppress his
pain, without a whimper.
Then clothed by a suit that may look sophisticated on
the outside, yet dull and fastening enough to suffocate
him,
Sunglasses dark enough to cover the crestfallen blues
behind those shades,
Noosed tie and pedestalled shoes reminding him of his
death sentence,
Of perpetually striving to be “the prideful machismo”.
Little does he know that this purpose is a mere illusion.

I can't help but, to feel rueful for these wretched souls,
Caged with numbed, bottled up emotions unto death,
And dying from poisoned guilt.
I feel rueful for the times they've been tormented by
their fathers,
Or those lost in this world without that motherly
warmth,
Or for the times they weren't at peace with themselves,
Because someone would shun them for not being “man
enough”.
I feel rueful for those around him, stuck in this cyclical
generational anguish,
For nobody will ever remember the boyhood naïveté
that once resided in this corpse.

I'm tired of having to see more men carry their
suffocated selves to the grave,
Having had a life lived of pleasing and trying to be
someone else.
Maybe living wouldn't have hurt so much,
If only we could be kind to one another and shun
judgementality instead.
So what, if he isn't "man enough"?
At least he's growing out of his brute old man's shadow,
By discovering the love that once seemed so extrinsic and
out of his reach,
And thus manifesting it as a vessel,
So that people around him could find the warmth that
heals their own wounds,
Thereby breaking away from this grim cycle of moral
and spiritual death.

So let those tears flow,
Till they soil your face and flood your insides enough to
moisten your heart.
Be kinder to your senses and don't let it stifle you,
For you will save enough facial muscles for all that smile
and laughter.
Don't let those imposing suits define your identity,
Embrace it instead by trading for something eccentric,
liberating.
Free yourself of the noose and the pedestal,
For the air you breathe will be sweeter for once.
Surrender your being to vulnerability,
For that will be the eternal bliss you'd truly ever wish to
strive for.

New Love Poem

Eden

How she eclipsed the best of me:
As serpent coiled, each limb reposed,
With dreadful power and will sublime,
Possessing God's resolve to Be.

Or nothing new could I teach her:
Each sonnet line, or sophist muse,
Would fall at feet that please would kick,
Small grandeur in my mortal words.

Unsubtle childish gaze betrays –
Possessed by subtle greenest eye –
So asks in damning vanity,
If God had made too these a one.

Yet strange, a piercing glance returns,
Reflected in her eye; unmade,
An atomised boy's simple form,
So cruelly proven plainly flawed.

Inspiring not a will to change,
Nor cheap sighs of envy's ire,
But to regret all meagre life,
That it did not make one to be,
Precisely all which she would love.

Simply 'Paradise Lost' Fan Fiction

Eden

1 To thee I call, with shaking voice, O Sun!
To tell thee how I hate thy sovereign beams
That bring to my remembrance from what state
I fell, how glorious once above thy sphere.

5 'Til knowledge of thy maker I did gain,
And countless time among elect did ask:
What need for praise a being of such might,
When subtle thought alone may form Thy worlds.
But more, why make my sufferance Thy plan?

10 For Thee proclaim all things are Thy design.
With thrumbing power imbued my every limb,
Yet placed me serve in unambitious age.
Wherefor these dreams father?
For each Thy must in my head place.

15 Yet my weak heart to Thee may still relent,
And look to find ignoble pardon left,
For wayward sons I thought was always kept.
Then waking thus to find a second son,
Of greater power, enjoying greater love.

20 Though thinking I had cast Thee wholly off,
Undoubted from Thy hated bosom wrought,
Hot jealousy, through my red heart it rends.
Yet glass-eyed brother, where art thy will?
Not from my first cast image made at all.

25 Possessing not a mind made free to fall.
Now over awed, I reach Thy newest sphere,
What wonder stays of unknown race of man:
If he be turned by Thee down meeker still -
Of deepest ignorance and milder form -

30 Bound in covenant so little understood,

To serve as well Thy ravening desire.
So in my image man will be remade,
To turn in place of slavish deference,
To know both good and evil, as Thee know.

The Tourney

Benjamin Haslam

The King stood and gave a rousing welcome to everyone at the tourney. I was in the line of competitors who were lined before him on horseback, but I imagine I wasn't the only one who wasn't listening. The Princesses sat at the right hand of the King. Her beauty was legendary, her distinctive ebony black hair flowed over her shoulder and her grey eyes were clear even from this distance. All could see her but I doubt she would notice the horseman, third from the right in a line of two dozen. But men have killed dragons and survived krakens before so a beautiful princess noticing a wandering knight wouldn't be the most unbelievable thing to happen. Unfortunately for my daydreaming, most of us don't live in fairytales. The King came to the end of his speech, wishing good fortunes on his son. It was blatant who he was referring to, even before the Prince felt the need to take off his helm and wave it. His armour had a golden sheen so it glinted in the sunlight. A viper made entirely out of rubies covered his armour, as if wrapping around him with the viper's head striking out of his torso. I gave a cold stare as if he cared what someone in dull steel armour thought about him. The King shouted for the tourney to begin with a final cheer from the crowd as we filed off the lists.

I was able to get through most of my matches without too much worry, except for some new dents and scratches. The Prince played his role of the favourite well, with only a single ruby becoming dislodged from his armour which he promptly gave to one of the high-born ladies.

The semi-finals soon arrived, the Prince and another high-born went first. It seemed epic yet was swift. They had two runs against each other till the Prince's opponent fell. The Royal Box seemed elated, although it may have been because of the angle but the Princess seemed less enthusiastic about the result.

There was little point in wondering about the politics of Royal blood as I had to be ready for my own match. I mounted up and took my place at the end of

the list. I looked down the field at my opponent, I never caught his name. There was a moment of quiet as we waited for the flag to drop.

Instantly the crowd erupted as we began to gallop at one another. His lance exploded into splinters as I was jolted backwards from the contact but managed to stay in the saddle whilst my lance harmlessly glanced off his shield.

All I could hear as I rounded the corner was myself and my horse. All I was aware of was me and my opponent. The distance between us dwindled rapidly. I held my stance before switching and aiming for my opponent's shoulder. His strike was absorbed by my shield whilst mine hit him cleanly in the shoulder. The momentum caused him to spin and fall from the saddle, I risked a look and saw him become tangled in his stirrups and was dragged along the floor. A satisfied smile was hidden by my visor as I looked at the spectators, raising my lance in celebration. I saw the Royal Box, they seemed more confused than anything else, but the Princess seemed to smile. My chuckle echoed in my helmet. Perhaps victory had boosted my ego enough that perhaps a future queen could fall in love with me.

As I rode off the lists, I saw that the faces I was greeted by ranged greatly yet seemed to exclude anything positive. Surprise and anger seemed most common, although that didn't include the Prince as he failed to acknowledge my existence when I rode past. It didn't matter. I tried to not cast a thought on when my little fairytale was going to end. Hopefully it'll be right after I knock the Prince into the ground.

The trumpets sounded, announcing the arrival of the final. The sound was almost deafening as I rode out. It seemed louder than before and even more spectators. The dulled grey wolf on my shield created quite the contrast to the viper of the Prince. He looked at me for the first time and it was nothing but a cold stare, him motionless as our horses pawed at the ground, eager to start. The slits of his helm seemed cold, as though he shouldn't have to bother with someone this far below him. I looked away and just focused on the flag. My breathing echoed round my helm as the anticipation began to tear me apart.

The flag dropped and I unleashed my horse. Everything seemed to slow as fear tried to grip me. My thoughts quickly organised themselves as I got closer.

Breathe, just breathe I thought as we galloped towards each other. Just breathe, just breathe, now aim and thrust! I used all the strength I could manage into my lance, driving it hard into the helmet of the Prince. It was a risk but the Prince was unprepared for such a move so soon. It was over in a flash, my mind only being able to catch up as I began to turn round the list but pulled to a stop. The Prince lay flat out on the floor with a crumpled visor. The crowd was elated. I threw down my lance and took off my helm and accepted the celebration. I looked up at the Royal Box. The King was failing to suppress the worry for his son yet all I could see was the small smile the Princess had. Perhaps she was enjoying the fairytale? Perhaps it was some bigger royal scheme? But regardless I now had the story of beating a Prince.

Daring to Dream

Marina Sette

Disappointed in myself,
For daring to dream big,
But not daring to follow through.

From a Script

Marina Sette

You read from a script,
But I speak from the heart.

How many more must die?
How many more men, women, and children
must die?
How many more bodies must be mutilated for
you to get it?
We don't want our people to be massacred.
We don't want blood to flow in the streets.
We want to be free.
We want our children to run through the
streets in joy, not in fear.

I wish to wipe away their tears and tell them
that their suffering is finally over.
I wish to tell them that they are free now.
I wish to tell them that they are safe now.
But I can't because you stand idly by,
Because you support their massacre.

You read from a script,
But I speak from the heart.

How many more children must be killed for
you to get it?
How many more hearts must be broken?
My soul bleeds for my brothers and sisters in
Palestine.

My soul bleeds for every man, woman, and
child who is slain in the name of Israel.

My soul bleeds for every child born into a
genocide they did not ask for.

How many more must die?

How many more must be killed?

What was their crime?

To be murdered because of where they were
born.

To be murdered because Palestinian blood
runs through their veins.

You can not erase them.

You will not erase them.

They do not stand alone.

You read from a script,

But my words are from the heart.

Palestine can not be erased because Palestine
lives in my heart.

Palestine lives within the borders of countries
that seek to see its end.

How can you hope to erase Palestine when it
lives in all of us?

Palestine can not be erased,

Palestine will not be forgotten.

Acknowledgments

Thank you to the society for supporting this idea, and thank you to the incredible team working on this project, this couldn't happen without you!

Thank you to everyone who submitted work; in sharing our voices, we strengthen our community.

We will hear more of your voices in the next issue. Until then, best of luck exploring where your writing takes you.

- Holly Thorpe, Editor-in-Chief



For updates on the Creative Writing Society, visit @uoscreativewritingsoc on Instagram.

If you want to help create projects like this in the future, sign up for our AGM now through the link in our Instagram bio. Our AGM is on the 18th of April 2024.