

The BEVIS HILLIER Creative Writing Award 2016

This award recognises the creative writing talent of the 5th Form and celebrates the importance of creativity beyond the constraints of a curriculum. We are all writers – how far on the journey have you travelled, and where will you go next?

Thank you to all of those who entered the competition this year. Keep writing!

Mr Chevalier

Awards

1st prize **Oscar Subuh-Symons**

Joint runners-up *Ailsa Clark / Oliver Woolgrove*

Highly commended *Camille DuBuisson / Isaac Osterreicher / Charlotte Buckle*

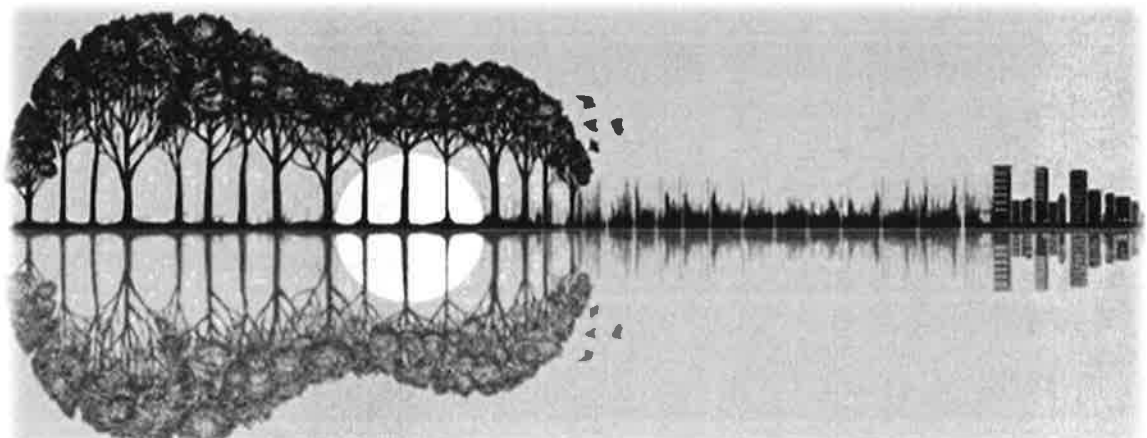
The Judge: Mr Hillier

The annual competition is judged by renowned English art historian, author, journalist and Old Reigatian, Bevis Hillier. Entries spanned a wide range of subjects including stories from terrifying murder to sophisticated philosophical twists. Mr Hillier spent a generous amount of time providing full annotation and feedback on the submitted pieces and said of the entrants “all of the contenders could become writers”.

Following his education at Reigate Grammar School and Magdalen College Oxford, Bevis Hillier became a well-known published writer and a columnist for The Times, the LA Times and lead reviewer for The Spectator magazine. He established his reputation as a biographer with a three volume exploration of the life of Sir John Betjeman.

Contents

Oscar Subuh-Symons	The Secret	“Stay away, I warn you...”
Ailsa Clark	The Musician	“The piano ached to be played...”
Oliver Woolgrove	Followed	“after the uprising the Followers seized control...”
Camille DuBuisson	Followed	“Every year I am petrified of this day...”
Isaac Osterreicher	The Secret	“surrounded by a snarling rage, the immense glacier...”
Charlotte Buckle	Followed	“I struggled to drag open my sunken eyes...”



Bevis Hillier Creating Writing CompetitionThe Secret

Cornell University
New York 14850
United states
Earth (as displayed pulsar periods)

September 5, 1977

Dear Extra Terrestrial Life Form,

RE: Human race (as depicted on reverse of pioneer plaque) and their filthy secret

Stay away, I warn you, from the planet classified as 'Earth'. Do not intervene as a result of pity whilst humanity's destruction erupts from their corruption. I advise you to stay away.

On this giant scrapyard even orthodoxy that is synonymous with purity, is characterised by paedophilic vermin. Here even white is yet another shade of black in disguise.

A single species dominates all. Such status of divinity gave birth to the tyrannical autocracy that murders vitality leaving a guttering, choking, drowning lapidarian lump. Only death lives on.

Saturated with the id, humans mutilate what was formerly pristine Eden. Trees are massacred as their arms are lopped off, and clouds piss down a corrosive broth. Here life is merely a sadistic game in which creatures are engineered to shred flesh like humans do paper. Formerly flourishing rainforests mutate into incarnadine carpets, painting great tapestries of twitching corpses plastered to the ground with their own blood. The air is no better. Over one billion hydrocarbon gorgers spew putrid fumes, asphyxiating the earth in a sea of carbon dioxide.

However, for humanity, desecrating the earth simply isn't enough. Every animal must be tortured in a frenzied annihilation. Battery farmed chickens are genetically fabricated so that they cannot even walk, yet slump suffocating in their own faeces escaping to a pleasanter hell. All this so that one wretched species can pulverise the adulterated bodies in their criminal jaws, for their own sick satisfaction. Yet still more suffering is necessary. Aimless invasive vivisection is conducted, and so the countless killings continue. Mice are designed to develop cancer, drowned underwater in wire nets, and paralysed to become vegetables. Still, more blood must be purposefully spilt.

More, more, more!

But whose? Of course that of humanity itself. It strides towards death, ingesting an infinite cocktail of chemicals. Now the incessant wailing and screams resonate from the ubiquitous madhouses, from the hospitals and from the whole accursed world. Even among their own society humans persecute themselves: 'he's black', 'she's fat', 'they're Jews', 'you're poor'. Among such a barbaric breed, the omnipresence of war is a certainty. Terrorists lurk, their knives ever thirsty, their 'chatter' never in the form of speech. Masochistic Humans will most enthusiastically dive into the hangman's noose, to join the lynched Negroes of the south, swaying in a jittering dance like washing drying in the wind.

Upon meditating the taxonomy of the human race, I fell upon a revelation. Humans, are not even mammals. Mammals, all mammals on this planet, intuitively establish an equilibrium with the surrounding environment. However, humans do not. They move to an area and then they multiply and multiply and multiply, until, every organic resource is consumed. The only remaining means of survival is to spread like a cancer of the earth, to another functioning area. There is one other life form on this planet which shares these peculiarities: a virus. Humans are a disease. There is no cure.

Humans highlight the purpose of life on this planet; the purpose of life is to end. This planet is past saving; there will be no vaccine for this disease. I propose that you just gas flush the atmosphere like a giant Nazi shower room, terminating the host, to exterminate the infection.

But why listen to me? After all I am just another virulent contagion.

Yet I will not try to cover it up, the secret we try to keep from ourselves, the revolting truth I have illuminated to you in this message, the 'secret' that this world is dead, because we the human race have killed it.

The Musician

The Musician looked upon the dusty piano with burning envy. Unable to face the glaring reminder of his lost youth, he hobbled into the kitchen.

Outdated grey and brown plastic units awaited, once white splash backs were overwhelmed by the dense thicket of cobwebs overhanging from the extractor above the crippled AGA. The wooden breakfast table was old, it creaked under its own weight like an aged man trying to sit down. It smelled of mothballs and must and stale air.

The Musician couldn't breathe. He couldn't stand it. He rushed to window above the unit like an old dog with a gamy leg. He knocked over the fine glass picture frame on the table. Clearing the unit with a heavy swipe of his right arm, he reached for the window. His arthritic fingers disputed, his tight forearms screamed and his muscles were unyielding and brittle. But the Musician persevered. It was a battle of centimetres. Then millimetres. Then the size of the dust particle between the handle and the Musician's yellowed fingernails. He grabbed the handle and pushed it with the little defiance he had left.

The cold air rushed in - dogs released for a hunt, the air nipped the Musician. The rain continued to fall, the sound a dull reminder on the deaf ears of the Musician. The anger dissipated, washed away and puddled with sorrow in the pit of the Musician's being. The wind bellowed and the weighty clouds complied, one by one like elephants trunk to tail, they trampled across the sky. The Musician was reminded of his insignificance. He craned his head to the mess he had made in the heat of the moment. A hefty sigh escaped his chapped lips and condensed on his wire frame glasses. The rain pattered on. Limping to the table, the Musician would have regretted his actions, if he had any more room for regret left. Tenderly he cupped the broken glass to move it away. Even these tiny actions niggled the Musician, a constant reminder of what he had had. The picture had fallen face down. The Musician tried to pick up the picture. His wrists turned like uncoiled cogs scraping against his skin. The frustration simmered, the Musician was not known for his patience. Conceding, the cog revolved its final fraction and the Musician turned the picture over.

His stiff cheeks tensed and slowly a smile etched itself upon his face. Waves of nostalgia washed over his vision changing the bleak grey into sepia tones. His nostrils replied to the memories of cigarette smoke and single malt whisky. He remembered the warmth that they both gave him, the comfort that he longed for. The lights were softer then, the air less cold and the people's melodic voices flitted between his ears. It was like syrupy fluid loosened his joints. The corners of the Musician's mouth twitched and his fingers traced along the invisible keys of his memory as the soul sung through him. The club was dark and buzzing. The keys were cold and hard. The piano ached to be played. Next to him, a woman bathed in golden spotlight; it made her dewy and caressed the curves of her body. It gilded her every feature. Wisps of smoke danced around her and the humming of the club diminished. She stood poised and waited. A sly grin veiled in professionalism. Her cherubim face lit up. The microphone grazed full-bodied lips. Her eyes flicked open. A sharp intake of breath. And then she was gone.

The woman looked back at the Musician. The vibrance of Technicolor was no longer there, the smells had returned to mildew but she was still smiling. The corners of her eyes had

The Musician

creased and the laughter that passed her lips was faintly audible. The Musician encompassed by the photograph saw his own reflection. A hot tear streamed down his face. The rain pattered on. The house continued to creak and wail. He shuffled into the hallway.

The Musician looked at the piano and the piano looked at him.

Followed

Immediately he leapt from under the blanket, knife in hand, his muscles quivering with adrenaline, like tightly coiled springs ready to explode with violence at a moment's notice. His blood shot eyes darted around the room scrutinizing every detail, as he hunted for that which awoke him from his slumber. The room was bare; cream wallpaper hung from the walls, faded with age and neglect. The desks and cabinets that once furnished the proud office stood empty and broken, their draws and contents stolen by scavengers either for fuel or sale in the ember markets. The silence was again broken by a faint rustling sound, Tate's head snapped to its origin just in time to see the rat scuttle back under the pile of crumpled newspaper. Reassured by this he crawled across the room to check the barricaded door, avoiding the shattered glass and his trigger mines. Everything appeared safe but this did little to ease his paranoid mind. Tate returned to his makeshift bed and shrouded himself in the blanket, being careful not to catch it in his body armour again. Although uncomfortable to sleep in, it was a small price to pay should the time come when he needed it.

Come dawn Tate was prepared to move location, he had packed his bags with the essentials and sharpened his blades. Tate was not a tall man, he stood at five foot ten with scraggly yellow hair and a small stubby nose, the lack of exposure to sunlight left him remarkably pale, by the same token his once well kempt stubble had developed into a fully-fledged beard. Tate was a man who once prided himself on his image, but ever since the uprising the constant fights and lack of nutrition left him thin and mostly skeletal. His exposed flesh was either scarred or wielding bloody wounds. He stretched his body, cracked his knuckles and prepared to leave. He knew that civilisation was near, but they were getting closer and closer by the day. Regardless he snapped his goggles over his eyes and wrapped the remainder of his face in a rust stained cloth. He replaced his knife in the sheath by his ankle and picked up his pistol; although he was out of bullets, sometimes the threat of a gun is enough should he run into scavengers. Finally he threw on his backpack and picked up the fireman's axe he had so luckily found not two days before. He chose this time to leave the door barricaded and instead to abseil out the window with using little rope he had left. Making sure the rope was secure, Tate clambered out the third storey window of the empire state building, and dropped down to ground level with an all too audible thud of his military style boots. New York was once the place that so many called home, but after the uprising the Followers seized control overnight, in one vicious attack known as the culling; thousands were slaughtered, but those that survived fled to the country or the desert, where the sun could protect them from the sun-susceptible Followers. We call them Followers because of the way they hunt. Once their prey is chosen they mark it. Marks have three stages. The first is a laceration, this is usually after a fight with a Follower or if they mark you in your sleep, as soon as they wound you you're marked. The second stage is an infection, the wound becomes septic and the surrounding skin takes on an almost scale-like texture. Finally there's paranoia. Followers secrete a fluid called psychocide, it flows from every pore on their body, it's what gives them such a shiny reflective colour, but if it gets into your blood stream it induces incredible paranoia and fear. A Follower

will follow the marked for up to three days, until they either kill themselves through fear or the follower chooses to end the life itself. Tate was all too familiar with Followers, he'd been running from a pack for a month now but he knew they were getting close. Tate was running out of time. He had to make it out of the city before nightfall or at least to somewhere safe, or he would be marked for sure. He headed off across 34th Street and up towards the Lincoln Tunnel, he knew he couldn't use the bridge as the decrepit and rusting shells of the cars blocked the way, so he headed into the tunnel; it was pitch black down in the depths and unsettled dust limited the effectiveness of his torch. Nevertheless he paced forwards careful not to step on anything that could give away his position. That's when he heard them, the noise was faint at first but the clicking was unmistakable, it's the sound Followers make when they smell food. They rattle their teeth together so vigorously it almost forms a continuous sound. Tate knew he had no choice, he could count a least five so he ran. He ran as fast as he could, the torch doing little to light the way, causing him to collide with countless cars and other discarded objects. The Followers bounded after him, Tate had never seen one before and he did not intend to. The sound of their claws rattling on the ground echoed throughout the tunnel, invoking a fear in Tate that he had never felt before. Suddenly his calf exploded in pain and he fell to the dusty floor hugging his leg to his body, the crimson blood trickled down his shin where they had marked him, soaking his socks and leaching into his boots. Tate looked up to face the Followers, it was as if he stared into the face of death itself. The light from his torch illuminating their obsidian black eyes, all five of them stood before him. They were crouched on all fours their blood stained and grossly overgrown claws digging into the ground at Tate's feet, their humanoid bodies bristled with thin amounts of bright white hair, leaving their dirtied and pale skin exposed and glistening with psychocide. They stared at him cocking their bald heads side to side, clicking their fully exposed jaws, vibrating the surrounding ripped and loose flesh as they skulked back into the darkness, initiating the following that was to come.

By Oliver Woolgrove.

Followed

You can't escape being followed when your stalker has been dead for ten years.

Plastered behind the antique oak desk, I attempted to control my whimpering. My mind was a colossal cyclone. Visions of her made my sight hazy as I concentrated on staying conscious. My hands were trembling and my veins pulsating from the pressure beating throughout my body. The screeching white noise drilled into my ears.

I made a mistake. I shouldn't have stayed alone tonight. Not on our anniversary. But it's too late now- I'm trapped here, in the office, where we would chatter for hours about the latest patient or successful surgery. We made a great team. Didn't we? I liked to think that. But she didn't. All I think about now is us. Two unique characters united by chance through a common passion. Sometimes I wonder what life would have been like if you hadn't been taken from me. Maybe I would still be a doctor. Maybe we would have had a family. Maybe...

My head snapped to the left as soon as I heard the faint padding- that familiar uneasy transfer of weight. She was here, I could sense it. My lungs jolted into a seizure as I gasped for air. I willed the air through my oesophagus, but it wouldn't come. I couldn't get air. I couldn't breathe. Just as my ribcage felt as though it would concave inwards, I dug vigorously into the little medical knowledge I could recall while my head was oscillating with anguish.

Relax, I instructed myself.

As my muscles softened, I retracted my nails that had gouged into my thighs, leaving a cluster of crescent-moon indentations. My throat gave way and the air cascaded into my lungs, caressing each corner and crook. I would be safe here. As long as she didn't come to this end of the house, I would be safe.

Every year I am petrified of this day. Every year, on the date we got married, the date that should be a joyous time, she returns enveloped in her shroud of jealousy and envy. She never believed she had lost you- not until she saw me with you. People used to say she went mad. She went mad after... You know. And that's why she killed herself.

I buried my head into my knees and pushed myself further into the corner behind the desk.

Why you? How much pain did she want me to suffer? Of course no one believed me: "it's tough losing someone as close as a husband" they would say, "you're bound to imagine things".

The ancient flooring abruptly gave a course groan from outside the office. My head shot up as the heavy door began to edge forwards. My stomach somersaulted and lurched forwards. Scrambling to get onto my feet, I let out a throaty howl. The familiar surroundings of my home suddenly appeared foreign and alien. The office began to revolve. I felt sick and weightless simultaneously. In the frantic chaos I lurched towards the other door. I grabbed the handle, it turned, and I yanked the door ajar and stumbled through the small gap. Thump, thump, thump. I could hear the blood my heart was hectically pumping rush into my ears. Along the corridor, through the kitchen- I felt like I was wading through water. Was I moving forwards? Up the staircase, across the landing and into the bathroom- I

slammed the door shut and jammed the lock across. I left my hands and forehead pressing against the door.

A brief moment of relief: Still disorientated and shaken, I regained my balance and caught my breath. I felt the silence cloak me once more. But this time it was an eerie silence. I sunk to my knees and turned cautiously to rest against the bathroom door. Glancing upwards I saw the cadaverous figure.

There stood before me the woman who killed my husband.

Words: 670

The Secret

Surrounded by a snarling range, the immense glacier lay motionless, emanating a savage chill and an enigmatic mist which threatened to engulf the celestial bodies of the night. Gazing down on this timeless tableaux, an ancient albatross, pierced by the inevitable temporal arrow, issued its final shrill cry and began its forlorn descent into the abyss. Slowly, slowly it fell, spiralling in an inanimate expression of morbidity. The eternal waltz which lasted only seconds was terminated as the corpse pounded the unforgiving ice before my feet.

A pinprick on the frigid plateau, I gazed out over the arctic expanses of the wilderness. As I scanned the landscape for traces of life, my militant eyes became radars. My mechanical concentration did not falter as the biting wind brutalized my exposed flesh, tearing away fragments of my soul and hurling them into a hollow void. In a trance, I neglected to pull my coat tighter; my colourless visage was almost as still as death, despite suppressed shivers, as I welcomed the exquisite torment. Even the magnificence of the infinite heavens above could not tempt my solemn heart to mellow. Suddenly, my pupils flickered with an unholy, wretched flame as they spotted him.

Instantaneously, my parched blade was upon him, my friend, my foe. "What are you doing?! Who-" The first organ to be ransacked was his gullet; it nourished my weapon so the world could be free of his blasphemy. A crimson nectar spraying from his knees, the traitor plummeted; the euphoric scent was birdsong to my Wrath. His head sluggishly turned as defiant eyes rose and met mine. Recognition, morbid fear and a ferocious burst of regret were the ballads of his soul. I knew those pupils, they were my ally's, my foe's. The extremity of my steel violated each soft orb, preventing the vulgar ghoul's deception. Ultimately, my ecstasy culminated in a macabre orgasm as my dagger became an interloper in his chest; his warm blood iced over, his relaxed muscle tensed, his vivacious heart slowed, slowed, stopped.

My opponent lay crumpled on the floor, ambrosial rivers flowing from the mouths of fate on their mortal body; the virgin snow was despoiled by its darkness. Intoxicated by fantastical possibilities of mutilation, I released a shrill cry that was sweet as honey to my ears but turned my belly bitter. On its distorted face it wore, like a serpent, a mask of agonized despair, concealing a fiend subservient to Mephistopheles. How many innocents must that illusionary veneer have enticed? Soon, the corpse was faceless. On what was left of its obscene embodiment I stamped, once, twice, thrice; more of the pristine snow was converted to diabolism as my ravenous Wrath was satisfied.

Once, I had a friend, as close as a brother.

I never wanted to hurt my comrade, but how could I have resisted the relentless indoctrination of opposing factions which pervert every innocent mind? This psychedelic realm blurred my vision. As our juvenile innocence was confiscated, simple reality became mystery; childhood friends became mortal enemies; life became a game, an abominable recreation, in which we were pawns. The omnipresent cult of society, wielding eternally perpetuated, cancerous memplexes mimetic of human inhumanity, taught me hate; I hated. They initiated me into their world; I accepted. They told me something estranged from what they told my companion; he metamorphosed into an archfiend.

Previously, when my friend hurt me my Wrath was soon quelled. Yet now, when my enemy hurts me, my Wrath rises, unchallenged and dominating. My resentment is a fire which engulfs its furnace. Falling into a sadist's playground, I grew transparent, fading, fading, fading.

Deceived! Like the six hundred, I failed to grasp the veiled axiom of humankind: every antagonist (every "Filthy Hun") is a paladin, every paladin (every "Christian Crusader of Justice") an antagonist. Therefore conflict shall always be synonymous with anthropology.

Followed

I struggled to drag open my sunken eyes as the sun streamed in through the glass pane, glistening from the joy of the world. I just laid. Although I was enveloped in light, my world was still dismal. I eventually was able to pull myself out of bed, determined to leave *it* behind me, assuring myself that today would be different. I clambered across the grey room and faced my mirror. In it there was a grey girl, her face sallow, her blonde hair dulled, her green eyes showed she was just hanging on. This girl was a stranger now. I stepped away from the mirror in disgust then I heard *it*. "*Look at yourself. You're pathetic.*" This familiar voice knew exactly where to hit me, how to pick on my deepest weaknesses.

I ambled down to the fridge, longing to make myself pancakes. As I fried the butter, allowing it to go its own way around the metal surface, I desired to live my life like this piece of butter, free, alone, nobody to tell itself what it can't do, that it's never good enough. The ball of wet, escaped my gloomy eyes and trickled down my face. I thought for a second *it* hadn't followed me here, but I knew I could never escape its strangling grasp. "*You didn't really think you could leave me behind did you?*" A large puff of air escaped my parched lips. The smell of buttery, golden pancakes with a fluffy, soft centre filled the room as I sat at the table. I immediately reached for the rich taste of Nutella but *it* commanded me away and to the fruit.

Eventually, I tore out of the small house, running to pull away from its cold, grasping hands. I inhaled the warm, comforting air, breathing out the frozen air from *its* remains. The outside was glowing, and surrounding me was the simple tweeting of birds – a noise that sounded so soothing. The heat from the sun created a protective layer around my skin. I glanced to the heavens, the sky was empty of the white marshmallows in the beautifully blue expanse. A cyclist passed me, the groceries in her wicker basket that was tacked onto her Pendleton bike, the whistling wind brushing through her hair. Everyone around me was joyful and jubilant, and, for a moment, I forgot *it* existed.

It had finally abandoned me. My heart rose, flying up to the middle of my chest, where it belonged. I ended up carelessly promenading to 'Gigi's Teashop'. I picked a baby pink table with matching chairs and the most gorgeous, bright orange tulips that ever existed. Finally my world was full of hope. The table was sat assuredly in the sun. I placed myself down onto the plump pillow and breathed out – a sigh of happiness that I was finally alone. Today was finally different. I reached into my bag for my favourite, dog-eared book, pulling it out as the tea landed at my table, with a large double chocolate muffin. I bit into the muffin, the vivacious, indulgent chocolate filled my mouth. I softly closed my eyes, feeling the joy and relief fill my every being, similar to that Hermione must have felt when The Golden Trio finally defeated Voldemort in my dog-eared book.

I glanced up from my book, a smile spreading across my face. As I saw that *it* was sat opposite me, the sun fled behind the clouds, protecting itself from my demon. I dropped my chipped teacup into its saucer. The girl in front of me had stalked me here, the same girl I saw in the mirror earlier. "*Did you really think you could leave me behind?*" she smirked, proud as she saw my face drop and my eyes sink into my head. I supported my head in my hands. I'd stupidly underestimated her. She would always be with me. My depression made me.