

The Newsletter of  
Brockwood Park School

*founded by J. Krishnamurti*

# THE BROCKWOOD OBSERVER



[www.brockwood.org.uk](http://www.brockwood.org.uk)

Issue 54, 2021



## LIVING IN UNCERTAINTY

MULCHING ● EXPLORING LANGUAGE ● BUILDING A BARN  
STUDENT MENTAL HEALTH ● SIZING UP THE WILD ● LOCK-DOWN LIFE

# ONE YEAR AND COUNTING

Written by Noor Tuytens. Illustrated by Hattie Greenwood.



When the relentless march of life suddenly stops there is time to consider the direction and nature of steps to come. It is unequivocal that the Covid-19 pandemic is leading to a total disruption of our day to day life: no more family gatherings, Laser Quest or visits to museums or theatres. In the words that follow I want to describe how, through observing the events of the last 12 months I have developed a new understanding of words like sensitivity, connection and resilience.

Sensitivity grows from connection so the constant flow of bad news from far flung places is hard to care about. We all remember where we were the first time we heard the word 'Covid-19' during the first days of January 2020. I was with my friends in Madrid during a break from school. Just a regular uncomfortable silence until somebody filled it with news of a virus infecting thousands of Chinese people. 'It's because some guy ate a bat,' she laughed. A strange disease in the city of Wuhan. Like other news items happening miles away, such as the fires in Australia in 2019 or thousands of refugees drowning in the Mediterranean, our Euro-centric instinct is to gasp or giggle and then forget about it.

This news story, however, seemed to spread quicker than the virus itself. On 13th of March, 2020, the Spanish government announced they were going to lockdown the country to reduce the spread of the

virus. The announcement was made on Friday and the lockdown would happen on Sunday. Thousands started to pack and travel to the beach. As a result, the number of cases sky-rocketed and the government imposed a State of Emergency. A few days later, on social media, images emerged of the Gran Vía, one of the most crowded avenues of Madrid, completely deserted. Images of the airport filled with grounded planes invaded our phones: it seemed as if the world had suddenly stopped.

The numbers of deaths increased day by day and the news stories came with a dose of sheer horror. They also brought me a new connection to people from the

Like a movie you  
have seen one too  
many times

past, reminiscent of dramatic images from the world wars. Instead of grainy photographs there were HD television screens full of traffic jams of ambulances transporting patients to collapsed hospitals. Rows of black vans bringing white body bags to the ice rink in Madrid, a makeshift morgue filled with coffins.

Day to day living was a science fiction movie. My father was the only one who left the house to gather groceries. He would return, undress at the entrance,

take a shower and clean all the products one by one with bleach.

Weeks of strict quarantine followed and, forced indoors, I could only watch the world from my window. I could see people walking their dogs. My sister and I spent much time painting, sewing and even setting up a little tent in the garden. We created a shop on the platform Redbubble and produced videos together... My situation mirrored that of everyone else. In the face of boredom, people used their imagination to pass the time. Still, sometimes it was monotonous and frustrating not being able to go outside. I looked outside the window again. I wanted to be a dog owner.

One day, four police cars with their sirens blasting and blue lights flashing abruptly stopped in my street. My neighbour's 8 year old son stormed out. Simultaneously, eight masked policemen headed toward him, leaving their patrol cars in the middle of the street. The sirens stopped and a disco version of 'Happy Birthday to You' came from the speaker system. The police officers started to dance wildly and the kid laughed his head off. The conduct of the policeman, moving quickly between handing out fines and clowning around seemed to symbolise how we all felt, individually and as a society.

And then suddenly we were free again. On June 28th, Spain announced that lockdown measures would be lifted. Like rabbits out of dens we returned to the streets. Seeing hundreds of masked people shopping together in the main avenues had such an impact on me. It was such an unnatural sight, it felt much more claustrophobic than my confined life at home. I wanted to head straight back into my den.

The government launched an alarmist campaign. At the bus stops, there were big posters plastered with aggressive messages: 'Now it is too late, don't come crying to me, I told you, wash your hands and keep social distancing!' 'Family reunions without protection are equal to burying your grandmother!' The government was accusing young people of murdering their grandparents. I felt this was a step too far, as if we were living in a dictatorship of fear.

The overstep continued into what seemed like opportunistic exploitation of people living in uncertainty. Mobile phone providers were asked to share personal information in order to monitor lockdown compliance. It made me feel as if we were heading to a world without freedom: when the pandemic ended the government could continue to use these special powers.

In the midst of all this madness came Brockwood.

In August 2020, I arrived in the UK to start my first year as a student. We isolated together for 14 days to form a Covid-19-free bubble. After the quarantine we were able to live a normal life, as if Covid-19 didn't exist. Once a week, Tom, the Covid-19 coordinator, would give us a debrief about the current global situation. Several students completed a project that explored potential economic and social solutions to the impact of Covid-19 which was later sent to the Council of Europe.

Brockwood gave us all freedom and space; space to process what had happened to our lives. I was still restricted in movement but had gained the freedom of going back to a more humane way of living, without seeing others as a possible threat. Brockwood became an island of well-being, free of the atmosphere of mistrust and uncertainty that has invaded the daily life of most people.

## Gained the freedom of going back to a more humane way of living

Looking back now, to be honest, I'm completely sick of Covid-19 like a film you've seen one too many times. But the Coronavirus situation has changed me completely. It took me through despair to an evolution of myself. I no longer see a need to live life fast. During all those months in lockdown, I couldn't do much and it was fine. I feel more resilient because I lost the urge to grab things I don't really need and gained confidence to act when I do. From the most inconsequential thought of, 'I need a pen', to the most profound, 'I need to see Grandma'. What I wanted was less important than what was the right thing to do.

Through crisis, there is opportunity for learning. We have had to adapt. Brockwood is concerned with the effects of technology on young minds but suddenly all lessons are online. Students used to value their trips to the local villages at the weekend but now stay on campus. I have seen so much solidarity and perseverance.

Through everything, the most fundamental thing I learned was that the world will not change until I do. In this world of uncertainty, my only response seems to be to experience intensely what I have, to loosen expectations and frustrations, to be ever more flexible, accepting and patient. In a difficult world, this mindset may be the one thing we have to hold onto •

# EDITORIAL

Written by Chris Lewin



When we told the English Writing group we were going to edit the student magazine I was completely certain of one thing. They would be tired of talking about the pandemic.

'We need to talk about the pandemic.' A chorus of approval.

Life has a way of destroying our certainties.

When I first arrived at Brockwood Park School I wanted to make a difference. I wanted to arrive at some place in understanding the teachings of Krishnamurti, to create engaging classes, direct spell-binding school plays. I was certain I could make a difference.

Two years on and something big seemed to drop. A realisation that everything I just explained was blocking me from arriving at the school in any meaningful way. I had reduced Brockwood to an image, a stage in the narrative of myself.

Being here has shredded away these layers of certainty. The mirror of relationship revealing the harms caused by any motivated action. I haven't managed to

drop them -Chris still operates in his same old bungling, energetic way but simply being aware seems to have changed their nature and limited their scope.

There is no longer interest in 'making a difference'. My role, the role of all staff members at Brockwood is to create a sane and safe space for learners to explore their interests. This magazine is an extension of this; The students have been given a space for expression and filled it with what currently resonates.

These pages will give snapshots of Brockwood life, glimpses of the various learning pursuits of students and, at times, place us into the crosswinds of fear that unsettle their minds. A student will meet you on the other side with the second editorial.

Reality flows without effort or certainty. When we attach to our pleasures and wants through nostalgia, expectation or identity, life becomes an effort. I walk from my flat to the main house on a crisp spring morning for another English class. The honesty, agility and spontaneity of the young mind, like the dancing of light across the Brockwood garden, demand to be met with fresh eyes each time, or never met at all •

## 'Is there security? Is there permanency which man is seeking all the time?

As you notice for yourself, your body changes, the cells of the body change so often. As you see for yourself in your relationship with your wife, with your children, with your neighbor, with your state, with your community, is there anything permanent? You would like to make it permanent.

The relationship with your wife—you call it marriage, and legally hold it tightly. But is there permanency in that relationship? Because if you have invested permanency in your wife or husband, when she turns away, or looks at another, or dies, or some illness takes place, you are completely lost....

The actual state of every human being is uncertainty. Those who realize the actual state of uncertainty either see the fact and live with it there or they go off, become neurotic, because they cannot face that uncertainty. They cannot live with something that demands an astonishing swiftness of mind and heart, and so they become monks, they adopt every kind of fanciful escape. So you have to see the actual, and not escape in good works, good action, going to the temple, talking. The fact is something demands your complete attention. The fact is that all of us are insecure; there is nothing secure' •

Jiddu Krishnamurti, What Are You Looking For?





Leavers Hike, Dartmoor



Cricket match, Brockwood vs West Meon



Football, Brockwood



Winter trip, Lake district

# THE BROCKWOOD LEXICON

Written by Luca Niness. Illustrated by Eva Lopez.

¿You're vegan, no?

How do you call....?

Things grow in a Brockwood student's room. Micro-cultures fester in dank corners and crevices. Yet it's the off-comment, rather than the off-milk, that we might want to pay attention to. The following essay is definitely about Brockwood and not a stealth attempt to teach linguistic concepts!

At Brockwood, we often talk about the 'culture' we want to create and few things better reflect how unique and diverse a culture is than the language it uses. As it turns out, taking 60-75 teenagers from various countries and locking them up on a hill in rural Hampshire lends itself to some interesting linguistic phenomena. Linguistic oddities surround us and they have evolved as a direct result of our isolation.

This unorthodox use of the English language is, first and foremost, due to the fact that most students' native language is not English. Having learned English through the lens of their first language, the differences between people's idiolect (individual ways of speaking) are exaggerated. There is a great variety of languages at Brockwood. One of the most common is Spanish. This is reflected in several grammatical structures used here that wouldn't be considered 'correct' English. People ask the name of objects by saying, 'How do you call...' or confirm dietary preferences by asking '¿You're vegan, no?' Though these structures are less than traditional in English, you'll even hear the staff use them. Even native English teachers start to forget the proper rules.

Brockwood-specific  
slang is much  
less con-  
sistent

Thomas, are you  
On Rota today?

Ah, not sure  
not sure



and largely only used by students. This can include re-hashing previously common slang, giving new meaning to existing words (e.g. moist: meaning 'good' or 'cool'), or creating words that have the same meaning and similar sounds to existing words (e.g. may-ssive: meaning 'massive'). These terms start out being used ironically until they enter the school vernacular and do the rounds within the student body. Each word peaks within an academic year as the student turnover is high. Those that weren't around to see it evolve create their own words and feed into the cycle.

Phenomena that do not fit into either of these categories are generally either Brockwood-specific jargon or inside jokes. Jargon is technical language, which is different from slang as it is less colloquial and relates to a specific work field or activity. An example is how if you're 'on rota' (it's your turn to do the washing up) you dry the 'rota' (plates and cups) after they've been cleaned by the 'rota machine' (big dishwasher) in the 'rota room'. You may find yourself complaining that there was too much rota because the rota coordinator didn't find a pre-rota team. In-jokes often come from students making fun of people. For example, teacher Thomas and student Vincent used to say, 'Not sure, not sure,' to poke fun at each other but then it wormed its way into everyone's vocabulary without us even noticing.

All of these examples will come in and out of fashion, evolve or be replaced. This is the beauty of language - as static as it may seem, it is a living, breathing creature and essentially, the foundation that society is built on. We all contribute to it all the time without even noticing. Not only does how we speak reflect our native language, socio-economic background and our character, but also that of those around us. Brockwood is just a microcosm that demonstrates language's constant shift to accommodate the changing tides of our surroundings, our beliefs, everything. It shows the profound influence

we have over one another, the constant connectivity, especially in a tight-knit community like Brockwood •

# MULCHING IN THE GLOOM

Written by Tom Power. Illustrated by Gemma Cameron-Turner.



Swinging a shovel; the feeling of coordination in the body; the weight of a shovel of chips in the arms, back, legs, feet and the quickening of heart and breath as the work builds naturally. It was Human Ecology at Brockwood on a day where the whole earth seemed lifted to the clouds. I was given the task of mulching our bed of autumn raspberries with wood chips. It had snowed the week before and then a blanket of warm Atlantic air drifted over the land, releasing micro-mountains of snow into the air. It was warm, steamy and totally still with members of the community drifting by, their identity obscured in the soggy gloom. These are magical times when simple work allows the burdens of the mind to be gently laid to rest on the compost heap.

There's an eagerness in life that one can see when one gets to know a plant living outside. They may be knocked back by the receding sun or the frost-grip of winter, but when the tilt of the earth begins its great shift back towards the sun, one can almost feel the great rising of energy from deep in the soil to meet it. And so it was that day with the raspberries. Some had thrown out tiny fists of new leaves, right next to the earth. Others ignited the stumps themselves with a fluorescent glow.

We have learned that this flow of life will bring us food if supported and nourished with our attention and so we direct our efforts to both the plants and to

passing on the lessons we have learned in our own experiences of growing food. We prepare the soil, replace the nutrients lost to previous years, step in when the gaps between rain become too long


Spreading the wood chip onto the beds will cast darkness onto the seeds and weeds beneath, giving the raspberry stumps a headstart. These green shoots and tiny leaves made me think of our students. I could not simply dump barrow-fulls of chips all over the bed. What was required was obvious. I had to look carefully and find areas where I could pile wood chips with a shovel, near to, but not on the new raspberry leaves. Then, with care and attention, the pile needed to be spread out around the leaves, stems and stumps with my hands. And beyond that, there was nothing more to do. The leaves and plants had everything they needed, most of it inherent in their very nature.

Such is the parable.


In these times of uncertainty, we can learn from the autumn raspberry bushes. There is no guarantee that these inklings of growth will result in what we want (juicy, sweet raspberries! Yum!). Nor does it seem unreasonable to seek some certainty. We've planted raspberry bushes and want juicy raspberries to stir into cookie dough, mmmm. The mistake is in the choice of where we look for certainty. What is certain is that these little plants or little humans will flourish given our gentle attention. A little more

**Anything will flourish  
given extra attention**

water here, a little gentle weeding over there, a stake to support that stem that's about to fall under its own race to the light. So let's look for what we can do simply in our daily lives: calling that friend or relative you know you've been avoiding; asking a loved one if you can help them with some simple task; taking some time to just stop and be still. If we can open our eyes to what's going on around us, what is good to do is obvious. And everything else takes care of itself. Just like the raspberries •



# FROM ANOTHER POINT OF VIEW



Written By Eva Lopez. Illustrated by Eva Lopez.

In 2015, my brother went to Brockwood Park School and I stayed home. I don't actually remember him leaving or saying goodbye, only the new opportunities that opened up with him gone. I could use his computer whenever I wanted. No one would try to stop my up-to-no-good schemes. I was happy. I didn't realise what would leave with him.

I was 12 years old when Alex left. At the time, I thought I disliked him. We had a typical sibling relationship where we annoyed each other playfully for entertainment. On our annual vacations to France we would throw stones at each other under the dinner table. If I did something bad or stupid, I would

## He hid my slippers in high places

beg him to share the blame to lessen my scolding. He would hide my slippers in high places that I could not reach. I'd enter his room just to annoy him and as I was the younger sibling that happened a lot. He made funny bird noises to convince me to give him pieces of my croissant. My brother was also the only one I felt comfortable to be really angry with or to blame. In turn, I think he felt he could be more

childish and joke around with me.

As expected, our relationship wasn't all rainbows and unicorns. Sometimes the lines got blurred when trying to get a reaction out of the other. We could be quite evil, focusing our jabs at each other's insecurities. He hit every sore spot I had and even created some new ones. I, on the other hand, had no idea how to upset him, seemingly unable to affect him at all. Due to this, I've seen him as emotionally invincible for most of my life. Even now, I feel very frustrated by him winning at everything we did. Since he was my older brother, I looked up to him, so naturally I wanted to spend a lot of time with him and naturally a teenage boy's priorities were not hanging out with his younger sister. A lot of the attention sought was not given. The four year age gap created a barrier in communication and I wasn't yet aware of a lot of my thinking processes and feelings. There was probably a lot left unsaid.

I kept up the facade of not caring about him even when he left. When I complained about one of his stunts to someone, it would be accompanied by a hollow, sad feeling. It made me confused since I didn't expect those extra emotions. Before I knew it, I felt sad every time he was on my mind. I always dutifully said I missed him, but to realise that, beyond the words, this was actually true, came as a shock. It hit me like a train.

I couldn't hold on to the lie of not liking him anymore. I realised how nice it was to have somebody that has your back in every situation. It took him going to Brockwood for me to recognize that he was that person. That year I was starting my first year of middle school and I realised that I was going to experience all these new, intimidating experiences with no one to tell me what to expect, or how to not be scared. Of course, my parents guided and supported me the best they could, but it wasn't the

## I stuffed feelings in a safe that I didn't have the code for

same. Alex and I were always a team, especially in situations where we needed each other. His absence left me with the knowledge of how dependent I was on him. It was like someone ripping away your scarf on a cold winter day.

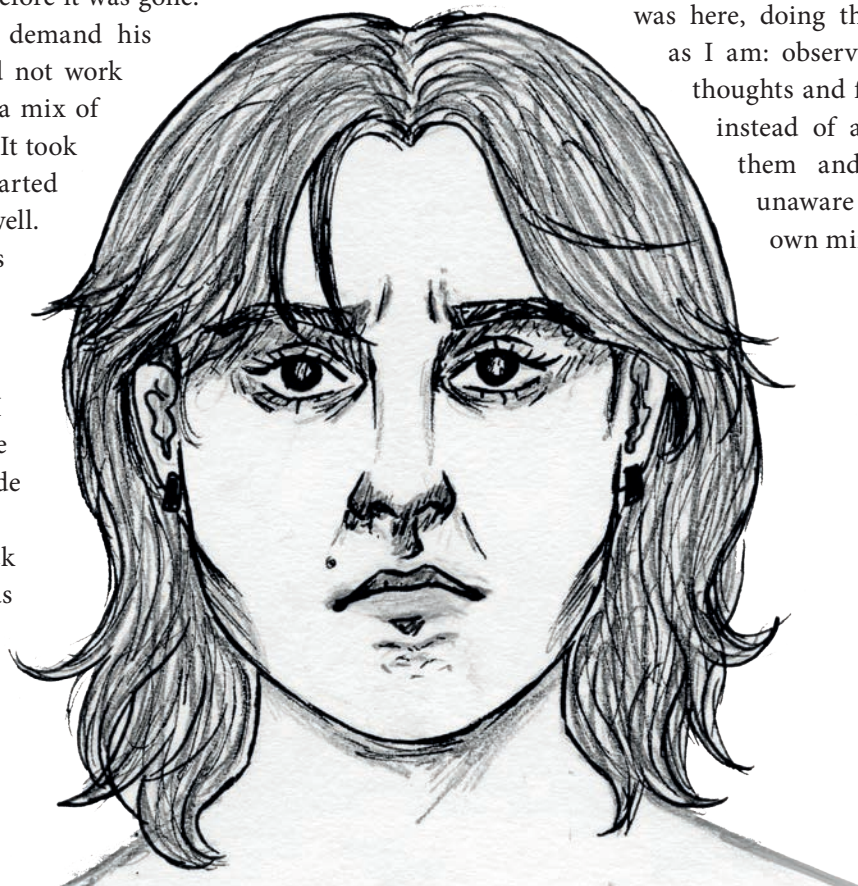
It was around then that I started to act differently towards him. Whenever he was home for the holidays I would have a sense of urgency, that I had to take as much as I could before it was gone. I'd cling onto him and demand his attention 24/7, which did not work out in my favour. It was a mix of intense sadness and care. It took a while before anger started to rear its ugly face as well. All these strong emotions mixed together made me confused and I unconsciously refused to acknowledge them. I stuffed them into a safe that I didn't have the code for.

It's only in looking back that I can see that I was angry because I felt abandoned by him; that him leaving meant

he wasn't going to be in my life anymore and it was his choice. When unpleasant stuff happened, especially within our family, I felt betrayed by him for not being there. I was angry but in a desperate way, and I couldn't tell if that's what I actually thought or if it was the easier option. If not angry, what would I feel? Sad? No, thank you, I'll go back to blaming my brother because that's easier to deal with.

He ended up studying at Brockwood for four years. Here I am, in my second and last year at Brockwood. The most difficult thing to accept is that I can't blame him for anything that happened in the span of the four years he was away. It is unfair to hold it against him, which is what I've been doing. Being at Brockwood myself has unexpectedly brought me face to face again with the feelings that happened back then, but with the ability to look at them, to explore them, to write about them. He was offered a unique chance to come here, to study and learn more than just academic subjects, and I'm so glad he experienced that. Getting to know the life he had here, while I was grieving his absence, is comforting, therapeutic even. Brockwood, the place itself, has indirectly connected us. He

was here, doing the same as I am: observing our thoughts and feelings, instead of avoiding them and living unaware of our own minds •



# EDUCATING UMA

Written by Uma Mann-Ramirez. photos by Meher Vepari & Aarit Aggarwal.

I've never been to school before.

Until the age of eight, my only source of learning came from grandmother briefly teaching me to read and write. My parents never believed in conventional education, so nestled in the small town of Manali in the high Himalayas, I learnt from the people, animals and nature that surrounded me.

With such an out-of-the-box early education, even when I enrolled in places with school in their title, I still felt as free as in the little town of my infancy.

In 2013, my world changed. We moved to Chandigarh, a city in the foothills of the Himalayas. Walking through streets of giant houses and fancy cars, I was absolutely baffled by how people lived their lives.

We moved so that my siblings and I could join a learning community called coVeda. A decision made by my

parents that has profoundly impacted my life.

coVeda was unique from day one. Its name has a fascinating etymology: 'co' meaning together, and 'Veda' derived from Sanskrit meaning learning. The idea of coVeda came in 2006, when a couple couldn't bear the idea of putting their daughter in a 'learn by rote', pressurised education system.

They made a new school and found many people shared their disillusion with the status quo. There were 25 children originally enrolled and the number kept growing. 'Learning' at coVeda meant no one being forced to do anything against their will and each child finding their own path, using their own curiosity. As a result, we never had teachers only facilitators. The role of a facilitator was solely to support each individual's learning if they ever needed it.



Those eight years of my life were filled with surprises. We never followed a pre-planned curriculum. There were small groups of students who designed their own schedules based on each child's interests and need.

coVeda philosophy is quite simple: 'a holistic approach to education, incorporating the well-being of mind, body and emotions.'

coVeda has really helped me overcome a number of my challenges and turn them into learnings I have grown from. I would go even further and say that, during these key years of development, this style of education helped me discover who I really am. I learnt a lot about myself, my mental states and how to deal with my emotions.

Last year I left coVeda. I felt I needed more exposure, to know myself in a different context and I didn't think coVeda was the best place to support my education anymore. I didn't want to just stay there because it was familiar and comfortable.

I came to know of Brockwood through the founders of coVeda. Four other students from co-Veda applied alongside me. In its own way, knowing that a sense of familiarity would travel with me all the way to the United Kingdom was extremely comforting.

The change of environment from coVeda to Brockwood was quite drastic. coVeda is really small, and the Brockwood campus is relatively huge! It was so exciting to land in a strange country and, simply put, start a new life. It took time and effort

to adjust, and honestly, in the beginning, I felt like an absolute stranger. This unfamiliarity and uncertainty made me feel anxious and homesick. Now I see these feelings come to each one of

us at different points in

life. Knowing I can deal with them makes me feel less limited when considering my life as an adult. At both schools, questioning has always been the key to initiating your own learning. If you ever have a question in your head or heart, only you can figure out the answer. Questions are usually about something that interests you, and are a starting point from which interest leads you deeper and deeper into exploration

I feel like the idea of doing things differently has worked for me. There are certain skills that I have acquired that will help me all of my life: most importantly, saying and expressing what I really feel and think. That is one of the hardest things to do in a world where millions of individuals don't give their opinion simply because they fear judgment and rejection from their loved ones, friends or society at large.

With this in mind, looking back at everything I have done- the projects, essays, presentations, discussions, debates, etc- what I am most grateful for is my ability to rationalise problems, give them their proper space and always be connected to 'the bigger picture'. Reality is always somewhere between and beyond the many perspectives we bring to it •



# THE EYE OF THE STORM

Written by Anousha O'Malley. Illustrated by Anousha O'Malley.

I could give you numbers and statistics. Another bunch of words to do with mental health that you have no connection with. Endless facts and more information. Numbers, graphs or words, they never touch the real thing.

I want to try a different way. I'm going to describe how days used to be for me and sometimes still are. As you read this, I'm in a better place. I hope this can be a little door into my experiences, and if they're also your experiences, maybe it'll make you feel less alone.

You wake up in the morning and wish you didn't have to get out of bed. You look at yourself in the mirror and hate what you see. You feel hopeless. You have no idea when it will end. It is just there; for weeks and months and it affects every single thing you do.

## There isn't enough energy to be bored

You go downstairs, you try to eat but there is no pleasure in the food. You remember you used to enjoy eating and feel guilty that you no longer do. As you swallow down a strong coffee, you worry that your friends have decided they don't like you anymore. That thought stays in your mind.

We've all felt exhausted before; when muscles hurt and your brain can't make a decision. Then the next day you rest and you're back to normal. Now imagine that feeling doesn't leave. It's with you all the time. There isn't even enough energy to be bored.

Do you know how many parts there are to a daily routine? Some days there is no energy to think about, let alone do, these things. It is hard enough to turn the light on. Eating something is impossible because you are too tired to feel hungry. You are so fragile that moving too fast will reduce you to tears. If you say the wrong thing to the wrong person, they will judge you forever so there is no point in talking. It is a fog between you and the world attached to a constant cloud hanging over your head.

The Anousha you think you know is always laughing and chatting, though, right?

This is the most important thing to understand. Mental health conditions are mostly invisible. The effort that goes into maintaining that 'I'm fine' appearance is huge.

You've managed to get up and smile at your mum so she thinks you're ok. You are getting dressed when an overwhelming feeling comes out of nowhere. Your heart is racing, you can't breathe and your hands begin to tremble. A wave of heat comes over you and that trembling takes over your entire body. You are



looking through a window to the world as somebody slowly draws the blinds. You see stars. Head in your hands, uncontrollable tears fall from your eyes. You have no awareness of whether you have been in this state for 30 seconds or 30 minutes.

You just had a panic attack because you didn't know what trousers to wear.

An internal debate ensues on whether it's safer to walk outside the door or stay in your room. Halfway through your first step you start fiddling with the zip on your coat, feeling like there has to be something vital you forgot. You stand in the hallway staring out the window. When you do get outside it feels like everyone is watching you.

Every conversation comes with fear. Do you try to explain that something's wrong or does that make

you weak? You muster what sounds like a normal conversation, one the other person would quickly forget. Unremarkable. For you, it stays for days, as you think how you went wrong, what you wish you had said. You conclude that they won't want to talk to you ever again because you didn't mention something you probably should have. It is not that you don't like people, but socialising has the potential to make you uneasy. It is just easier to withdraw.

You feel completely alone in the world, truly believing you are a terrible person. There's a simple answer: just get help. Well done, Einstein. It is not that easy... remember you are pretending to be ok, you smiled at your mum in the morning and nobody is a mind reader.

Evening comes and you stay on the sofa, without eating, until it's time for bed. Back in front of the mirror, you look worse than this morning. Your outfit choice was criminal.

In bed now and it's already 12:53. How did all that time pass? The way you brushed your hair out of your face in class today looked really weird. You should never have joined that conversation, it was clear they didn't want you there. You looked at him awkwardly. You've lost a friendship now.

Imagine this is you. Feeling nothing and over-

## You need to lock us up, we get it

thinking everything. Living with the mind's projection of the worst potential outcome to every single situation.

Then add a lockdown.

The loss of social interaction has had a big impact on my mental stability. Like most teenagers I find it easier to open up to my friends than my parents, but this is difficult when our lives have been put online. It is assumed that most students have experienced a mental health problem in their lives. We are vulnerable to being swept away by the currents of anxiety currently circulating the world. It seems obvious that so many of us turn to unhealthy coping mechanisms to get through the day. I'm scared of getting swept away again.

One unique thing I have in my life is Brockwood. This is my second year here. During my first year, I had great difficulty staying positive and motivated. The place has a habit of bringing certain raw parts of yourself to the surface and that can be uncomfortable. I often found that it was only when I left for a break that I'd realise how much I take the place for granted. I was healing. By the Autumn term in my second year, I felt I had begun to turn a page in recovering from my struggle with mental health.

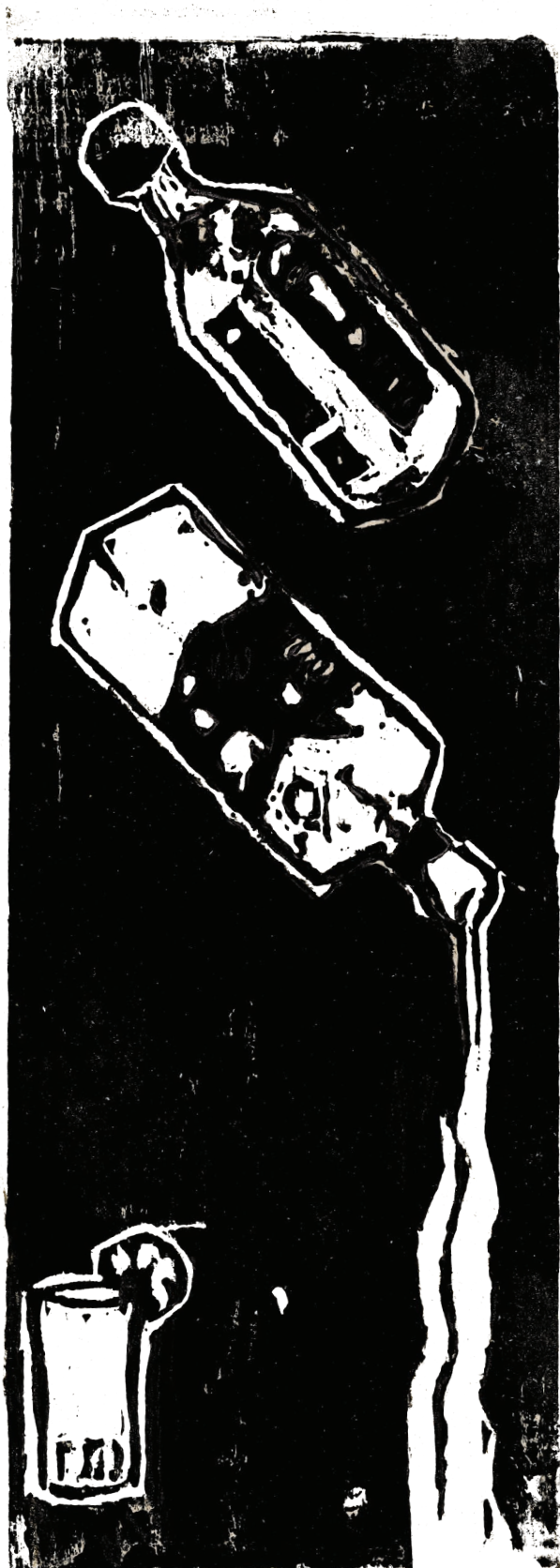
Then came a second lockdown.

As we try to control this pandemic, I understand that being completely isolated from each other may stop the virus. You need to lock us up. We get it. But for those of us whose thoughts are tormentors, be aware that you are locking us in a room with them. If lockdowns are to become a part of normality, governments need to have strong support plans in place to avoid a pandemic of loneliness in young people because we are already beginning to break •



# HINDSIGHT

Written by Meher Vepari. Illustrated by Abhisheka Dinsmore Tuli.



Simon felt different. The entire world felt different now. In reality nothing had changed the radio next door blared as loudly as before, and downstairs the violinist was about to start her practice, as she did each evening. Everything on the countertop remained in place. The people he knew still knew him, and those who respected him before his realisation, ten minutes ago, respected him still. Unless, that was, they now knew. The words had lingered restlessly on Simon's tongue for months and, three weeks ago, finally escaped the safety of his mouth. From the very second they were uttered they became a menacing whisper of latent havoc. They had swum straight into Bert's greedy ears. Simon shivered. He

## His mouth inched towards a smile

lurched towards the window and pulled it shut. The shelves rattled, and he heard the crisp chime of glass. Turning back around, he grabbed two bottles of gin from one of the cupboards and poured them down the sink. They were the remainder of the crate that Bert had given him. He mumbled in agitation as the liquor gugged in the drain. He decided that one day soon he would take the empty bottles to the nearby junkyard and hurl them with as much force as he could against one of the eroding shipping containers. His mouth inched towards a smile. His mind returned to Bert. 'I'm going away,' he had said the next morning. 'Back in a few weeks.' No explanation. Nothing about what Simon had told him the night before. The terrible secret he should've pushed down into his heart. That was then - only now did he realise that his integrity, his entire identity, was in danger.

Downstairs, the violinist began to play her familiar tune. Most nights, the song brought a kind of reverie upon him, but today the sound only sharpened his mind. He shook his head vigorously and sat down, replaying the evening. Bert had come over. Why had he come over? There was no specific reason; he came over like he always did. But there must have been a reason. A motive. Simon rubbed his temples. Bert was asking questions, lots of

them. Probing questions, now that Simon thought of it. He shivered again. Bert had poured the drinks, as always. He knocked himself on the head with his fist. 'Stupid, you're so stupid,' he grumbled. 'Stupid, stupid bloody idiot.' He got up and went to the wall, pressing his forehead against the plaster. He had to think back further,

## Shallow Shallow Shallow

to when the two first met. But his memories were a liquor-laced blur. At first, Bert insisted that they drank every time they met; after a few weeks it wasn't normal if they didn't. He groaned, and sat back down once more. The smell of gin from the sink lingered at the base of Simon's nose. He frowned. Something about that smell. He pictured Bert pouring the glasses, toasting. But when had he, Simon, actually seen him drink? He strained his mind, searching for a memory in which Bert took more than a sip. It couldn't be. Bert must have been drinking - what about the delirious jokes, the strange anecdotes? 'No', his own voice said to him, louder than before. He was the one laughing, telling stories. When had Bert ever come close to saying anything remotely personal? The more he strained to think, the more abstracted his memories became. He focused on the potted plant right next to him, and pictured Bert tipping his glass into it. He scrambled closer to the pot and stuck his face by the base of the stem, sniffing furiously for the slightest bit of evidence. It smelt like soil. He scrunched his eyes. Did that happen? He thought of all the times he'd looked into Bert's eyes. He focused on those eyes. Crisp, dark brown, alert, barely a trace of intoxication in them. He groaned, seeing it clearly now. That evening, he had glowed with sympathy. But sympathy is shallow, Simon reminded himself. Shallow, shallow, shallow. And the more he recalled Bert's expression, the more it changed from one of understanding to one of amusement. 'Of course,' he muttered. There'd been a smirk on Bert's lips the whole time. He'd failed to notice. All those murmurs, the tell-me-more nods - why hadn't he noticed? He wished he could forget his confession; he detested the words. But they howled at him inside his head. 'Why,' he thought, pressing his temples, 'why had Bert done this at all?'

There must have been a reason. His mind raced

through scenarios, grasping for answers. Bert needed him under his control - this was a good way to keep him there. Admittedly, Simon had admired Bert - he was so successful, so clever, so smooth. So much more than him in every way. So he did everything Bert asked of him, not as a friend or a colleague but as an inferior. Hatred brewed in his stomach now; he could taste it at the back of his throat. His whole life couldn't just come to this - to subservience. Downstairs, the violin shrieked. He wanted to scream. If Bert had told anyone - if they all knew - that would be too much. He clenched his fists. Bert was meant to return in two days. There was a way - really only one way - to make sure no one found out. The thought hushed Simon's frantic mind and, for a few seconds, the violin was all he heard.

Bert would never suspect it - he'd think Simon was too meek. Poison - but that would be too obvious. The junkyard - there was potential there, surely... or the river or - but what about the others? Bert had people he worked with. They would know something was wrong. It would have to be an accidental death. Something, Simon thought, with a hint of relish, to do with alcohol. If only he could get Bert drunk - not impossible, but not easy either. He went to his window. The road glistened with people, half-blended



It treads lightly,  
 Silent footsteps trampling all over every  
 fragile ember of self-assurance.  
 Hot coals of aspiration fizzling out,  
 Weak tendrils of smoky desperation climbing  
 into the air.  
 Rich blood pumping monotonously, thick  
 with fear,  
 Penetrates the skin,  
 through cold sweat and clammy hands,  
 They're worn, bearing the marks of arduous  
 labour and the tight grip of relentless second-  
 guessing.

Written by Isha Chawla



into the cold night, moving across the tarmac like lethargic ghosts. So many people. He pictured everyone he knew on the road below. They stared back up at him, waiting. Expecting something. The violin downstairs had stopped. He felt a dull pain growing around his temples. The people on the road disappeared. He sunk back down into his chair. It was no use. Murder? Murder?? He was pathetic. He couldn't keep a secret - how was he supposed to kill someone? And he couldn't kill Bert, despite how much he hated him, because he couldn't kill anyone; he didn't have it in him. He started to cry, each sob jolting the pain in his head. He sat like that for a while, in a salty pool of pity, shoulders heaving.

Eventually, he scrambled towards the bathroom. The grating bulb highlighted every detail on his face. Two swollen, red eyes glowered back at him. It was no use. Perhaps Bert had kept his secret after all. Perhaps he had laughed about it to himself after. Perhaps he'd laughed at it with others too. He stared vacantly at his urine as it trickled in the toilet bowl. He didn't want to have to look at his reflection again, so he turned his head towards the bathtub as he washed his hands. The porcelain curves looked soft and inviting. He wanted to touch them. He climbed into the tub and felt the cold press against his neck. Two days, two days, two days. The voice was too loud now. His voice. "Think it through. What will I do." Lying there, eyes wide open. The bathroom light cast a white beam across the dark, stagnating flat •



'Earthlings'  
 They get drunk off rotten fruits,  
 Fill their lungs with smoke from dried leaves.  
 They listen to sounds from instruments carved out of trees  
 And let their voices buzz like bees.  
 They pageant their love by the giving of flowers  
 And for pleasure they join their lips in a fit of passion.  
 They fly high with iron feathers  
 And dig as low as they dare to scour.  
 They free echoing shouts of rage  
 and bleed red when in pain,  
 Leak clear droplets when insane  
 And joyful howls when content.  
 They nurture some animals in their homes  
 And fill their stomach with others' bones.  
 They bathe in rays of sunlight.  
 And hide from raging storms.  
 They swim the mountainous oceans  
 And travel yellow land and burning seas.  
 In search for something they cannot see.  
 They dream and plead for something they cannot be.  
 And when they find it  
 They grasp it tightly  
 And vow to one another  
 Until their hearts beat no longer.

Written by Elizabeth Brunner



The Paradox  
 Certainty.  
 There is no space for anything else.  
 When you are unsettled you can't settle.  
 You cannot be both things.  
 Then I look at trees and rivers.  
 We convince ourselves life fits into how we see it  
 And that fate will come.  
 It never does.  
 It goes on forever unless a good question comes.  
 This comfy place. This sweet spot.  
 Certainty and Uncertainty clasp hands like me and my best friend.  
 An image with meaning invisible,  
 yet there.

Written by Aurelia Jones



# TOMATO SOUP

Written by Nils Hadamovsky. Photographed by Joe Wolf Joseph.

4 cloves of garlic 1 onion 8 tomatoes 1 teaspoon of oregano 1 teaspoon of rosemary  
250ml soya cream 2 and a half teaspoons of sweet paprika powder 1 lemon  
3 teaspoons of sugar 2 teaspoons of salt

## The taste of a journey.

Everything starts in the Brockwood garden with a tiny seed.

It grows into a tasty tomato which holds within it the sun, the soil and the gardeners hand pinching and potting. To bite its soft flesh is an explosion of taste, a fresh experience every time. The whole process of preparing food can be felt when it arrives on your plate.

It is easy to tell when something isn't done with passion for the process or care for the ingredients. Here is a tasty little chapter for you. I invite you to try it. It is the warm after-taste of a midsummer day. It is a recipe for delicious tomato soup.

## Method

Peel the onion and garlic then dice them. Take your oregano and rosemary and chop them into small pieces. Juice the lemon. Steam your tomatoes until the skin comes off easily. If you don't have an oven with a steam setting you can steam them in a pot. Fill the pot halfway with water and add a sieve to the pot. Bring the water to boil and then add the tomatoes in the sieve.

Put a lid on the pot and make sure the water doesn't evaporate before the tomatoes are done.

Peel all your tomatoes and chop them into small pieces. Fry the onions, garlic, rosemary and oregano in olive oil until caramelized. Add the sweet paprika powder and fry them in the pot for a minute. Add the chopped tomatoes and fry for another 5 minutes, then reduce the heat and let it cook for 5 more. Add the soya cream. Blend everything together until it is a smooth paste. Add sugar, salt and/or lemon juice according to your taste.

From plant to pot to plate. I hope you enjoy a little taste of Brockwood.



# BUILDING A TIMBER FRAME BARN

Written by Abhi Dinsmore-Tuli. Photographed by Finn Cameron-Turner.

You turn the lights on.

Four identical, white, plastic switches, flipped consecutively right to left in quick rhythmic succession. A familiar action that will be repeated in reverse order when you close up at the end of the day. You swing the door shut and walk through the workshop. You open the door in the back wall into the black barn.

You turn the second set of lights on in here. One switch, usually activated by a sharp tap with the knuckles of your right hand. The striplights flicker on.

You stand and look around. This whole building is more than 200 years old, and it sits solid, low and immovable at the edge of the school property. This is where you spend most of your time – this is where the new storage barn is being built.

Taking up most of the space are the huge saw horses. They're laden with hundreds of kilos of timber. Four huge posts. Rough hewn bearers, the great long timbers that support the second floor of the new barn. And largest of all, the six metre long central crossbeam.

Straddling the gap between two timbers sits the new barn in miniature – the size of a doll's house, and fixed onto a small plyboard floor. You can grasp the tiny rafters and pick it up with one hand. It's used in place of a set of blueprints or plans. A three dimensional guide scrawled over with pencil marks illustrating joinery and measurements. Scribed neatly on the small structural pieces, the beams, the joists, the posts and purlins are dozens of names – the names of people here at the school. Most builders would identify the individual timbers they work with by scribing Roman numerals onto them. Andrew, the woodwork teacher at Brockwood and the leader of this project has always named the timbers of the structures he has

built. Because of this, each timber is personified and familiar and the idiosyncrasies of the timber become synonymous with those of the namesake.

This barn is timber framed.

Timber framing is a 2,000 year old building method. The technique is characterised by structures formed of large timbers that are fitted together with precise joinery and secured by wooden pegs. In essence, it's simple, but the craft has produced some of the most beautiful and long lasting structures in the world - with appropriate maintenance, frames can stand for many centuries. Jokhang monastery in Tibet is believed to be the oldest example of the craft. It was built in the 7th century and still stands. More than 1,400 years now elapsed since its first timbers were cut.

Timber framing was predominant in times when buildings were required to last for many generations. Due to the massive amount of labour required of historical builders working only with hand tools, there was no time to waste on inferior craftsmanship that would have to be replaced within years or decades. The craft of timber framing evolved with durability and precision at its core. What you are building now will stand for more than a hundred years, and, in all likelihood, much longer.

When all the timbers of the barn are cut and fitted, and the pegs that fasten them are made, the raising will take place.

Historically, frame raisings were great social events. The size and weight of the frames necessitated large groups of people to lift the timbers, and whole communities would come together to assemble a new house or barn. Afterwards they would share food or play music. Most raisings take place in a day or hand-



ful of days, depending on the complexity and size of the frame. But the brevity of the raising process is preceded by several months of cutting out complex joinery in a workshop.

The raising of this structure is months away. You look at the model barn, at this miniature replica and you count the number of timbers finished and the number of timbers yet to go. There are many of both. But the ratio is slowly shifting and soon the scales will have tipped in favour of the complete.

Against the back wall of the black barn is a small desk upon which the tools are laid. On an old green and white checked tea towel are the chisels, arranged by size with the ends of the blades aligned.

You pick out a chisel of middling dimension and take it over to the timber that's being worked on. It's another crossbeam, long and heavy and the sides of it are rough and irregular and punctuated by the distinctive vertical lines made by a felling axe. This timber was hand hewn.

To convert a large tree trunk into a square-sided piece of wood suitable for use in a building, you have two realistic options.

First – you can process it at a sawmill. The timber would be laid out flat, and passed through a motorised saw blade four times. The result would be a relatively uniform square timber.

Secondly – you could proceed along the traditional route: hand hewing. This is the method that's been used for several of the timbers in the new barn: the bearers, two crossbeams, the doorpost and all of the joists that support the second floor.

Once your tree is felled you mark out the size of the timber you want to be left with on either end of the log and join these markings up by snapping a chalk line along the length of it. Then you stand on top of the log and, at regular intervals, cut wedges into it with a felling axe – a two-handed axe with a long curved handle.

Cutting wedges is achieved by slightly alternating the angle of your axe swing left and right, leaving you with a neat v-shaped cut. Once wedges are cut along the length of the log, the remaining material between the wedges is chopped away down to the depth of these cuts. This gives you a relatively flat but still rough face on one side of your timber.

Next, a broad axe is used to clean up that face. Broad axes have short handles and heavy heads with a large cutting edge. They are, by necessity, kept incredibly sharp. A few months back, when we were hewing the second floor bearers Andrew honed his axe to a state in which it was sharp enough to shave

the fine hairs off your forearm.

The hewer stands astride the log and carefully cuts away the excess timber and flattens the face. To gauge how much is left to be done, you can check the flatness of the timber by holding a plumb-bob – essentially a weighted piece of metal hung on a string that when held up will give you a perfectly vertical straight line – against the side you're working on. This process continues until the face of the timber is finished, with the hewer making small careful cuts and minor adjustments, even holding the axe by the head and scraping away minute amounts to ensure flatness.

The entire process is repeated again until all four sides are flat. At that point, the timber is ready to be carried into the black barn and have the joinery cut out.

Mortises and tenons are the two essential joints of a timber frame. A mortise is a hole cut into a timber and a tenon is the piece of another timber that fits into that hole.

These joints, and their variations, are cut out with a motley and many-coloured assortment of tools. An arsenal of serrated and bladed instruments - saws and planes and routers both manual and battery powered. A long, bladed and hand-forged framing chisel. Forstner drill bits and elegant Japanese pull-saws. Whatever is to hand that works well.



The process of creating each unique joint-type is distinct in the specific methods and tools used. But the principles are the same, repeated and altered to fit the situation.

Once the timber is prepared, planed flat and the corners at 90 degrees to each other, the joint to be cut out is marked, in fine HB pencil lines or black ink. The marks are checked, and checked again.

Next power tools are used to quickly remove a large amount of timber. They leave you with a rough cut surface, or unfinished corners and a small amount of timber still to cut away to reach the line. Power tools speed up the process of timber framing but are used in close relation and confederation with fine hand tools.

The chisel is what you use to pare away the last half millimetre of timber to reach the line and ensure a tight joint. You make careful gentle cuts, holding the tool in both hands and listening to the fine sharp scraping sound the chisel makes that speaks of its sharpness.

A chisel is a simple, ancient tool: nothing more than a blade and a handle, but you use them more than anything else.

Once the joint is cleaned and finished up the entire process is repeated. Some of the longitudinal beams have only two joints in them, a tenon at either end. Some of the vertical posts have as many as fifteen joints. But no matter the timber, the essential processes are the same.

The work is rhythmic and the joinery is recurrent. You might cut out the same joint several times, each version improving upon its predecessor. Over the months, the pace at which you work increases.



Now joints that once took you half a day are completed in an hour or two. Still slow, but better.

A pigeon lands on the roof of the black barn. You can hear its claws scratching



on the red clay tiles above you and then an urgent flapping of wings and it's gone.

You stand there and look up from the tenon you just finished. You set down the chisel carefully. You get your bottle and sip some water from it. You look up from the timbers of the barn yet to be and stare at the timbers of the barn that is – that which you stand in now.

This building is hundreds of years old and the timbers have been fulfilling their structural purpose for many times longer than you have been alive. They are curved and checked and roughly hewn and two of the crossbeams have already buckled and are held together by great rusted iron sleeves that are bolted around the timbers in the area of their defects and are themselves ancient.

You imagine what the barn you are constructing will look like in a hundred years. When the timbers have checked and cracked and shrunk marginally in the process of drying. When the smooth-planed surfaces of the great cedar posts have patinated richly and their dull sheen reflects the morning sun through the windows on the south-east face. What will it look like when you're dead and gone and your imprints on the world are long faded and perhaps only evident in something like this?

In 200 years, someone could stand there and look up at the frame and notice the wedges that were cut too deep the first time you hewed and the distinctive curved marks along the timbers from the profile of the broad-axe. They would look and see the softened curves on the inside faces of the posts where the rot was cut away and then sanded smooth, now existing in contrast to the flatness and sharp corners of the rest of those timbers. They might stand under the second floor and see where one of the long bearers was hewed to accommodate the natural curve of the tree and now rests there, beautiful and distinct from the other timbers around it and yet still as functional.

To build traditional frames with timbers is to partake of a custom and a craft that is older than Christ. Countless thousand structures have been made with this method and so will thousands more. The joints

you cut today are essentially unchanged in design as those cut lifetimes ago by the builders and craftspeople of a hundred different nations and ages whose only record and testament of the work they created is the work itself •



# THE SEAGULL

Written by Ana Chaparro. Illustrated by Ana Chaparro & Hattie Greenwood

A human appeared Submerged in loneliness, surrounded by fear, it raised its head looking for an escape and swam towards the light.

Its head rose out of the thick, salty water, taking its first breath of air. A seagull flew over him and he followed it with his eyes, spotting the island it was headed for. He followed.

When close enough for his toes to touch the wet sand on shore, he screamed. It seemed there were millions of small ants eating the skin of his feet. He swam back into the safety of the sea. His eyes darted around the beach, looking for another way ashore. The sun was setting, the whole day had gone by and the water was getting thicker. The more he tried to swim the more the thickness spread. Each breath became shallow, quick, and he felt himself sinking into the freezing fear of the dark sea.

As he descended, the surface of the water drifted further and further away. He spotted a dark oval on the surface. A glimmer of hope that was powerful enough to thin the water and allow him to swim to it. He reached the surface breathing heavily, examining the oval from afar. It was much bigger than it looked under water, larger than his torso and hollow in the middle. The bottom of the shell was light yellow and the top had dark brown, geometric shapes with yellow spots. Assured by its beauty, he decided to climb over it to stay afloat. As soon as he was stable, he hugged the turtle shell and found himself falling asleep.

Seagulls screeched, awakening him with such disturbance that he sprang to his feet. There was dry sand under him, yet he didn't seem to be bothered by it. He looked wide-eyed at the group of seagulls fighting over a fish that was still trying to wiggle his way back to the sea. He sat back down next to the turtle's shell and watched the struggle unravel; another creature walking the tightrope between life and death. He laid his hands to his side, running sand between his fingers.

One of the seagulls finally ate the fish by scaring

the other seagulls away. The winner, raised its wings and screeched so incredibly loud that the human wanted to crawl back into the sea.

Seeing the seagull devour the fish made him want to do the same; a hunger that seemed to go beyond the need for food. He headed out to the shore and tried to catch a fish by hand. As he stepped into the water, a group of fish swam right by his leg, their blue-ish purple scales reflecting the light, and the crystalline clear water exposing every beautiful detail. He didn't want to hunt them anymore. He wanted to observe them, and watch how their tails swayed lazily from side to side, like a thin cloth moving slowly underwater.

At that moment, the seagull finished eating his fish and decided to screech again, rudely snapped out of a dream for the second time. The man had had enough. He ran towards the group of seagulls and caught the one that was screaming. He struggled to keep it in his arms, beaks and feathers flying, he grabbed the seagull's neck and...

The seagull stopped fighting. He laid it on the ground and took a few staggered steps back. Its feathers pristine white and light grey in a delicate formation, its peach coloured legs stood straight, pointing to the heavens. He didn't want to look at it. Now that it was silent he had no reason to hate it. The sand began to burn his feet again •



# RUNNING IN CIRCLES

Written by Ayla Czimmek. Artwork by Ayla Czimmek.

**M**y mind is empty, my voice hesitant. What could be important enough for me to say?

There is so much I'm interested in. I seem to have opinions on a lot of different things and there are so many emotions. But right now, what is there? It seems so hard to grasp.

I love to read. Reflecting on a book is something I could do but it doesn't seem like something I'd enjoy, nor do I think I'd be very good at it. But to assume that in advance is probably the worst thing I could do. Stopping myself before I started.

The possibilities for this piece are overwhelming me, there seems to be no end to them. And no place to start. The necessary questions. What is relevant to my own life? What am I passionate about? They confront me like a giant wall of fog.

If I don't know what's going on inside of me, how can I describe it to anybody else? And even if I could, I don't want to bother people with my mental breakdowns, laying my deepest insides on the table for people who have their own stuff to deal with. A lot of the time, I feel I need to sort through things alone first but, as humans, if we speak openly and share what's going on inside us, we may be able to help each other and see that we are not alone; that there is somebody out there feeling just the same.

Sometimes I feel this urge. This urgent need to open up, to spill open, let everything out. I don't because I'm scared. I'm not even sure what of. Their reaction? Rejection? That everything might become too much and I won't be able to handle it. Underlying everything is this fear of getting hurt.

I'm sure I'm not the only one who feels like this, but what qualifies me to write about it?

I seem to keep asking questions as a way to avoid the answers. Answers that might be so ridiculously simple that everything I have put and am putting myself through is so stupidly unnecessary that it's hilarious.

I can't work out whether my hesitancy for certainty is a self protection mechanism. I am very uncomfortable making statements. Don't expect things. Don't assume. It's best not to know. I expect disappointment just so I don't get negatively surprised.

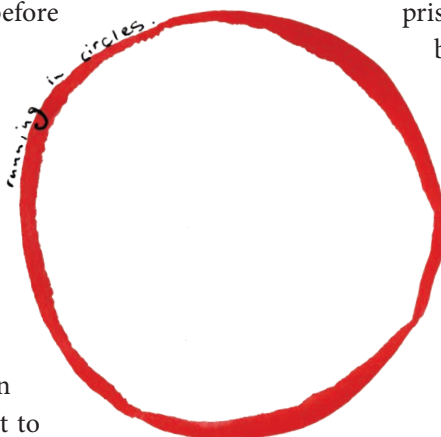
But this mechanism also seems to be one of the most impactful ways I constantly hurt myself. And I suspect it's the same for others. We block ourselves from truly feeling fulfilled, from truly feeling at all. Blocking ourselves from loving unconditionally with everything we have or from trusting deeply in others just as much as our own instincts and intuition.

Trying to hold onto that sense of security, the security of what we know. It keeps us from encountering, let alone freely experimenting with, the unknown. When it comes to letting myself feel and open up emotionally, I get very insecure and this is when the mechanisms set in. It is so quick. It feels like I don't have any control over it. Whether I fight it or not doesn't seem to make a difference. I still end up unhappy.

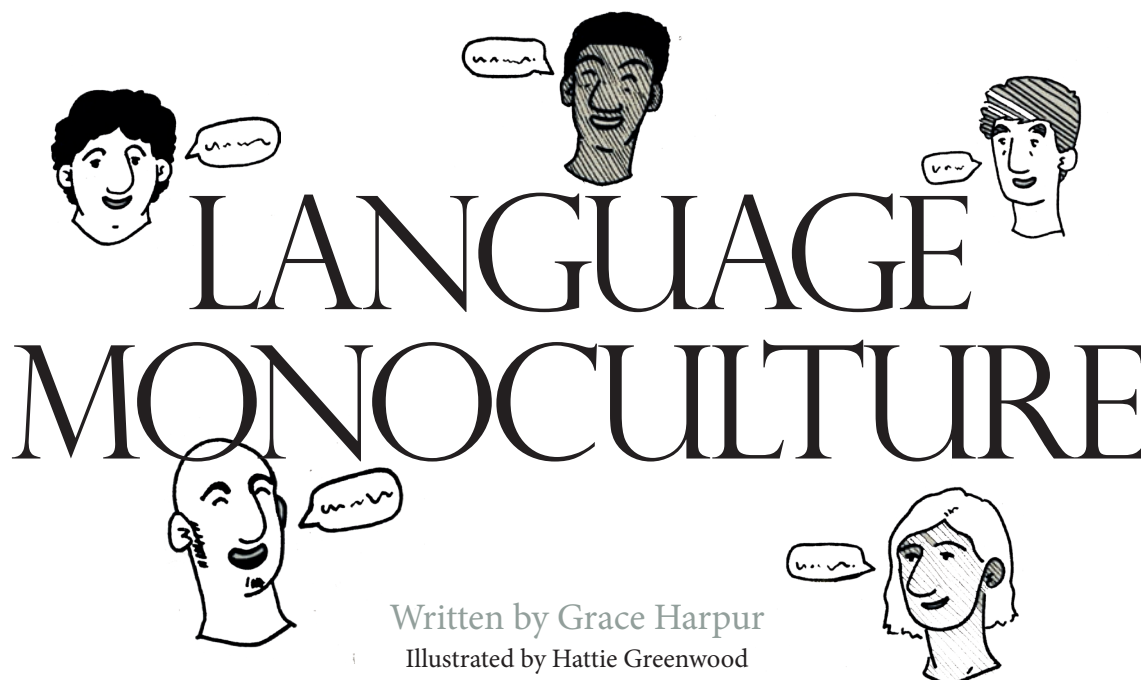
But maybe that's just me. Or maybe not even that.

If I ever had a thread to what I was getting at, I lost it. The feeling of wanting to cross out what I've just written or rip out the page has overcome me many times since I started.

We've come full circle. My mind is empty again. Whether it was important, whether it helps or not, it feels good to have shared •







# LANGUAGE MONOCULTURE

Written by Grace Harpur  
Illustrated by Hattie Greenwood

I live in Ireland, where we speak English, not Irish. I never thought anything of this growing up. Lately, though, I've been questioning the current linguistic state of the world, and something doesn't sit quite right.

This year, at Brockwood, I launched a linguistics project and ended up developing a passion for dying languages. Language death is when the last native speaker of a language dies and it ceases to be spoken. It has a much greater impact than we see on the surface level.

Language Monoculture is a term I use to describe linguistic diversity being pushed to the margins or lost completely -and what is left is homogenised into a few standard ways of speaking.

In agricultural terms, monoculture defines the process by which one single crop is grown in large quantities on a given piece of land. It is convenient for farmers, requiring less resources and effort, but simultaneously results in the crop being more vulnerable to diseases, pests, soil degradation and fertility loss.

I see this as a direct parallel to the linguistic world wherein the diversity of tongues, dialects and accents are being replaced by one standard language, and more and more local quirks and intricacies are perishing.

Most of the time, languages die because they are deemed unnecessary. Parents don't see the point in teaching their ancestral language to their children

because it has less relevance in the 'real' world.

Colonisation has been a potent agitator of this language-squashing: 176 indigenous American languages are still alive today, about half the number there were pre-colonisation; estimates say only a tenth of that number will still be spoken by 2050. Other former European colonies, such as Australia, Brazil, Mexico and Canada also have astoundingly high rates of decline. In most of these places, indigenous languages and their speakers were actively stifled, with white government authorities believing that it would help the native people to become 'civilised' into society if they spoke the 'proper' tongue.

We can trace the journey of global languages through the movement of power in human civilisations, but I believe it is on a personal level that the true scale of this loss can be felt.

I realised that a language is a lens for viewing the world. Within my project, I excavated language fragments of all shapes and sizes, wanting to demonstrate the phenomenon of losing a language and consequently losing a valuable lens.

I came across articles about an Australian language called Guugu Yimithirr, which requires speakers to think like a compass. There are no words for ecocentric directions such as left or right, instead, they use only cardinal directions such as north, south, east and west. This means that a speaker of Guugu Yimithirr has to be aware of where they are in relation to compass points at all times. A famous interview in the 1980s



with indigenous poet Tulo illustrated it perfectly. Tulo had been in the middle of speaking and abruptly stopped to warn the interviewer, 'Look out for that big ant just north of your foot'.

This language is a lens for an utterly selfless outlook - you revolve around the world, not the world around you.

Of course, this way is as natural to them as egocentricity is to us. They don't need to think before declaring that a friend has chocolate on their easterly cheek.

I sent out a survey to the Brockwood population asking people for their favourite words and phrases from different languages. Words that are quirky, or show a unique perspective.

I received many heart-warming and hilarious responses - ranging from a Brazilian Portuguese phrase 'vai catar coquinho' that can be used as '\*\*\*\* off', but literally translates as 'Go pick little coconuts', to the German word for mnemonic, 'Eselsbrücke' - literally 'donkey bridge', all the way to a Rapa Nui (Easter Island) word 'tingo': to borrow items from a friend's house one by one until there's nothing left.

We all relate to our languages in this personal way and we are all, whether aware or not, part of this motion. We all speak a language that is either dominating or being dominated.

As I said, I live in Ireland, where we speak English not Irish, as a result English is the language I relate to first and foremost. For the past two hundred years, the Irish language has been losing its grip on the culture it went hand-in-hand with for thousands of years. Nowadays, its only native speakers are found in little pockets on the west coast, known as 'gaeltachtaí'.

I recently found a book about long-lost Irish words: '32 Words For Field'; the author included examples he had learnt growing up in the Kerry countryside. There really are 32 words for field:

*Tuar* - a field for cattle at night.

*Réidhleán* - a field for games or dancing.

*Cathairín* - a field with a fairy-dwelling in it.

...just to name a few.

A language has words for things it needs words for, and the rich array of Irish words for squares of green land keenly reflects the life of rural farming communities of the past, closely bonded with the soil that they tend; so close that they have nicknames for fields. I have never visited one of these Gaeltacht communities. I'm not even sure, with the spread of extensive agriculture, that any

still exist. I wonder if these 32 words are still in use. People these days are probably less bothered about whether a field has a fairy fort. I, for one, would love to look at a field and think, 'Yes, this is a great place to frolic and dance.'

Another favourite Irish word of mine is 'scim', which, depending on the context can either mean a thin covering of flour or dust, a fairy film that covers the land, or, my favourite, 'to succumb to the supernatural world through sleep'.

Throughout the course of my project, I sometimes developed a nagging feeling that there is no use in chasing after disappearing languages, trying to save them from extinction.

If chunks of your ancestral language have been missing for a couple of generations and replaced with foreign words, that altered form is the way you know it, and that is your language.

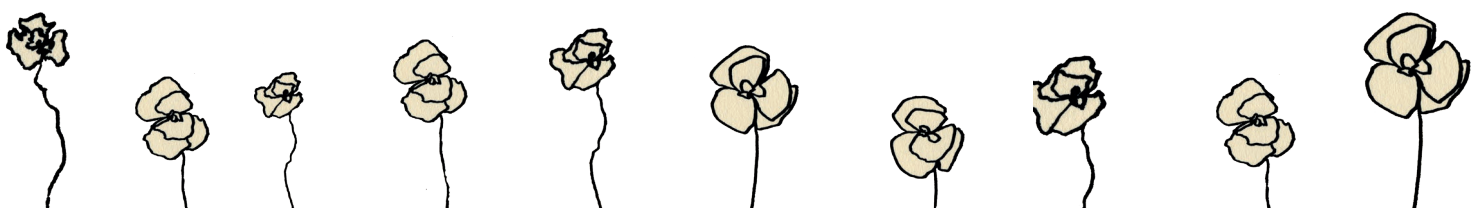
A culture will always find a way to express itself in a unique way, even through the language of an oppressor. Indian-English, Irish-English, Mexican-Spanish, they're all beautiful. English itself is made up of influences from Germany, Scandinavia, and France - yet it couldn't be more English.

Language death is a natural process, a language doesn't last forever. Latin receded over time and regenerated into Spanish, French, Italian, Catalan etc.

But linguisticide - the forceful destruction of languages- isn't natural. I believe if we make the effort to preserve bits and pieces of the rich languages we have left, it would have a far more reaching effect than we would envision.

Evoking the joy by helping people bring their mother tongue back to life matters in a brutal world. It is indeed possible to revive an entire language: in 2011, an Israeli linguist named Ghil'ad Zuckermann made it his mission to help the Barngarla community of Southern Australia resurrect their ancestral language, which died out in the mid-20th century. Zuckermann reached out to the Barngarla people and was greeted warmly with, 'We've been waiting for you for 50 years.'

My hope is that, in the future, people who care for a threatened language will speak out, if it feels right. If we end up losing more precious words, phrases, and languages we could end up with a very soulless way of describing the world. Just like a monocultural cornfield succumbing to disease, resilience would be lost. Those quirky ways of expressing ourselves are the spirit of a language, and they sustain it •



# A CUP OF COMPLEXITY



Written by Néa Ranganathan  
& Lorena Magdalenas

Illustrated by Ariadna Perez



The whole concept of reality blown away in one hour. This happens to me like clockwork, 11:30 am on a Monday at Brockwood Park School, just after Patterns and Complexity class with Lorena. I walk back to the main house with Ari and Bran, trying to grasp everything I have just learned, observing every detail and pattern. My perspective is shifted as I notice my relationships to the people around me and my effect on my surrounding environment. It can be a lot to take in.

I decided to sit down for a cup of tea with my teacher Lorena to help me comprehend my learning and if the freedom from mental models experienced in this class could be open to everybody.

**Nea:** Hi Lorena! What was your main idea for starting this class at Brockwood? Do you think anyone could do it? Is this the purpose of the class?

**Lorena:** I had no expectations. I think if you are open to challenging your mind, there is only one requirement for this class: paying attention to the uncomfortable feeling of not knowing. The class environment allows us to leave the questions 'in the air', which in turn helps us to slow down thinking and prevents us from jumping to any conclusions too quickly.

**Nea:** It's interesting because before I started the class, I thought the Complexity part meant that the class was very complicated.

**Lorena:** Well, the word *complexity* has a bad reputation. It is often related to something over complicated, which naturally makes people run away from it. However, a root of the word *complexity* stems from the Latin *plexus*, which means 'interwoven'. In a complex system, the individual elements are interconnected and interdependent, the relationships between them are essential to the system, from which novel qualities can emerge. Isn't it what happens all the time in life? This is commonly expressed as 'the whole is more than the sum of its parts'. To dig into the complexity of systems, our perception needs to be tuned, our senses honed and our mental models temporarily disabled. This is not easy to carry out, but we try it through Systems Thinking. This way of thinking offers a wider outlook, so that we can become aware of connections we haven't seen before, mental blockages that limit our points of view and underlying conditioning that may shape the perception of our reality. And it is fascinating how systems thinking can be applied at different levels of our life experience. Néa, do you connect to the class on a personal level?



'Have you heard what happened? Have you seen the news today? They're trying to control us, They're leading us astray.' 'I believe in Boris Johnson' 'Support the NHS.' We need to try and save the world, We need to stop this mess. Countries put in lockdown, Outside just once a day. Lovers, friends, and family members at home, we all must stay. What is it that we really need, Always reaching for the top? Is this nature's way of telling us we all just need to stop. Torn

**Nea:** I relate to the class personally through emotional patterns. I can often feel disconnected from my emotions and not understand why I react to painful situations in a certain way. I have panic attacks or go into shock and I feel I should be able to control myself. By learning about my emotional patterns and their interconnections with my past experiences and environment, I can understand what traumatic moments in my young life could have caused me to be emotionally sensitive now. By understanding the intentions behind my reactions, by connecting all these moments, it has been incredibly healing and has allowed me to view my feelings from a new perspective.

What have other students experienced in the class?

**Lorena:** The class is really flexible and Systems Thinking can be applied to a diversity of external topics. However, this year has been very special to see you guys direct the exploration inwards. You take your vulnerability on and look at yourselves from this systemic perspective. When our systemic thinking is turned on, our viewpoint expands. It is like having a wide panorama in front of us, full of interactive information. Often, we tend to observe the outside world from our own standpoint. Every decision, opinion, argument, reaction comes from that position. Isn't that very limiting? Is there any particular topic with which you resonated with the most?

**Nea:** The system view of health caused my viewpoint of my body and what it means to be healthy to change significantly. I have seen how doctors, psychologists, sociologists, traditional healers and scientists could work together, looking at the patient's family history, mental health and every internal organ as all connected. It just makes sense, but why wasn't I being taught this before Brockwood? Back then, my subjects were fragmented. I was told that the separation of disciplines was necessary to learn. I was constantly exhausted as my internal, instinctive system was fighting with the school's ideal of learning. It was unnatural. It didn't make sense. Why isn't Systems Thinking broadly taught?

**Lorena:** The emergence of Systems Thinking hasn't been straightforward. One of the key features of traditional science is its tendency to divide the object of study in small little parts. Would that approach help us to understand Nature as a whole? Doubt it. Think, for example, about how physicists explain matter. They literally break it apart in tiny bits that they called atoms. The model of atoms works, the theory, too, the mathematics, as well... However, what we actually experience as matter are unified pieces of stuff, not a bunch of invisible and untouchable particles. There are qualities that cannot be explained with this limited scientific model, like softness, texture, shape, beauty, brightness... It took about 400 years for science to realise that they might have missed the big picture.

Unfortunately, this fragmentary -also called reductionist- mindset has extended to other social areas like politics, sociology, psychology, etc, and has been dominating the modern way of thinking. No doubt that it has achieved a lot of technological and academic progress. However, we are now realizing that to solve the major global issues, this is not enough. A complex systemic view is needed urgently.

away from loved ones, Societies going mad, Can we survive this vulnerability, an invasion of what we once had? We try our best to struggle through but mental health is breaking, Eager for a word of love, To stop our hearts from aching. The coronavirus outbreak. The skies are dark and grey, The cold blue light of television, Have you seen the news today? *Written*

by Anousha O'Malley



# SIZING UP THE WILD

Written by Finn Cameron-Turner, Illustrated by Gemma Cameron-Tunrer

I rolled over, sighed, and opened my eyes. From that moment, lying in my bed and looking at my room with overwhelming lethargy, there was conflictual thought... whether to act or not act.

Pulling oneself from the bliss that deep sleep touches is hard. A state of complete unknown where thought is not churning, where muscles are not straining. The moments after waking I instantly seem to disconnect with what is. I toss and turn, open and close my eyes, wish I could sleep a bit longer, swing my legs over the side of the bed and ultimately deny an amicable parting with the night's rest. I want more.

## A numbed relationship to nature

The comforting stillness of early morning would normally be swallowed by a day filled with modern comforts and the distractions but not today. Today I will leave chairs, walls, floors and folding tables behind and head into wild land, where there is no indoors to hide from the elements.

Today I have a trip with Global Issues, a class exploring our connection to nature and wild places. We drove 45 minutes away from Brockwood's comfortable house and manicured gardens, to Knepp, a place entirely different. Knepp is a rewilding project started by a couple who realised their commercial farm was not profitable. Intensive agriculture was digging them into debt and a change was needed. They decided to rewild the three thousand five hundred acres estate and breathe new life into it. Intensive agriculture relies on huge amounts of input, which can include fertilizers, chemical pesticides and GMOs. These practices are unhealthy for soil health, biodiversity and contribute to large amounts of pollution. The degradation of the land at Knepp meant that even after all this, they weren't turning a profit.

Stepping out of the car, the cold air hit me. I pulled the zipper up on my second jacket and knotted my scarf tighter around my neck. Knepp's old cow fields are now brambles, tree shoots and grassland. It looked dull. As I walked on through thick

foliage, climbed a tree, saw a herd of deer and heard the birdsong that encompassed the whole property, I noticed the abundant diversity of natural activity.

But none of this really connected as I wandered around aimlessly. It wasn't until I was far from the beaten track that something unexpected happened.

As we peered through trees and rounded corners, we caught a glimpse of an immense red deer. We were walking through a field when I saw its outline lazing in the sun. Out in the open, steam rising from each breath, it shrugged an acknowledgement of our presence. It had massive antlers, strength, vigour, and an air of authority. The deer looked both like it owned the land it was on and belonged to it.

I felt something strange that I hadn't experienced before. I had an urge at the back of my head, like something important but no longer needed, telling me to take this red deer on. I was sizing it up. I told another student as we looked to the field the red deer dominated. We played out the scenario - how we would grab the animal. We agreed we had a good chance. We were both almost certain the other was joking.

In the moment of seeing that deer and of feeling that thing, there was no longer a need to interact with the land further. I didn't have to find food or water, and walking over Knepp was just a leisure activity. Soon we would be sitting in car seats, on top of engines, driving home.

And during that drive home, head slumped against the window, I had plenty of time to ponder. During the walk, I noticed my need to grapple, conclude and understand. I had brought qualities from my modern environment: a lack of patience, trying

## I never solved anything with pure effort

to quantify the unknown, over-emphasis on intellectual thought and excessive attention on social interaction. This was all blockage to connection with the environment. Walking through Knepp, I had become a simple observer. My breathing was shallow

and my strides were aimless. This superficial relationship must be the same for most modern humans.

It is estimated that the average Westerner spends 22 hours a day indoors. Generation Z are the first to feel the effects of indoor living and screen technology combined. This must be a contributing factor to a numbed relationship with nature. This change from predominantly outdoor to indoor living, has happened drastically fast. 99% of human history was nomadic. For millennia we were soaking up the fresh air, feeling the cold wind, stoking fires, while rising and sleeping with the sun and moon. Meanwhile, rates of depression, suicide and poor well-being have sky-rocketed. It seems that a first hand connection with raw planet earth is vital.

At Brockwood, it's cold and classes are predominantly indoors. Doing anything, in the lashing rain or biting cold is too much effort. However, even if I did apply my will and get outside more I am not sure my mindset would meet the wild differently. I'm not sure I have ever solved anything with pure effort.

Maybe idealising the prospect of pushing myself to interact with nature creates the first conflict. Observing my life and relationships I notice that I don't have any clue what the driving force of the interaction is. I do notice that I gravitate towards comfortable living. I am not changing that but I am questioning it, and I don't know if that questioning alone has an impact.

Some part of me still wants to go back to that field. To be compelled to wrestle that red deer, to



forgo the choice of it altogether. I want to know what it's like to follow the deer and to be a part of whatever the outcome would be, to my favour or not.

Knepp is a unique pocket in England's clear cut, densely populated landscape. Despite the conflicts, I notice that if I spend enough time in nature I actually, properly wake up.

Since Knepp, waking up has been that little bit easier. I am completely awake in the daytime and completely asleep at night •

## Running from uncertainty since 2004

As a rule I refuse to run — that's why I have a horse. But if I really think about it, all I do is look for ways to escape the risk of failure. Clinging onto thoughts and emotions I'm scared to leave behind because uncertainty is worse than changing coffee brands.

I miss Ayla. I feel so unoriginally sorrowful. Which makes it almost boring to have to drudge through the feelings like a predictable

little... reminding me of the tiring relentlessness of the everyday.

I guess it's about balance. I struggle with balance cos I'm a 'more is more' kinda gal. Fritjof Capra explains this balance as stability and change but it's talked about in almost all philosophy and religions: yin and yang, chaos and order, female and male.

'I feel if I love myself again *everything will be alright*' - don't you see I'm lying to myself? So are you. I can't just not know how it's going to end; is this a fairytale or a Black Mirror episode? I'm upset at the lack of clarification. I struggle with letting life just be because I quite strongly believe in manifestation. I think if you're going to have any strange illusion, having it be you getting everything you want all of the time is better than most. I just want to be right all the time about everything, but not too right that it's annoying. Please distinguish obedience from morality. Frosties are cornflakes for people who can't face reality. Smoking is a mild form of self harm that I believe humbles you. And I'm saying *you* instead of one to not sound pretentious. It is a conscious choice and I have decided to do everything consciously from now on, to stop hiding behind the blind actions of the subconscious.

Fairy lights are excellent, bacon too but more controversial.

I think it's important to have the ability to be able to flex between subtle concepts and trivial narcissism. Will truth solve all problems? The law of reality is flux. Staticity is death. Life's too short to be able to spell. Don't believe in statistical forms, it will make you sad. You, the observer, will have this tendency to crystallise flux and label it static. I want to explain what's going on in the now; past ideas are irrelevant. I do not think you should live *completely* in the present. This is a ludicrous idea and very impractical; gather nuts for winter.

This essay is meant to be about uncertainty, but I'm sitting here sipping lemon tea in the computer room rambling. The underlying thing is that everything is uncertain and that is why I must speak of everything. All of it is both pointless and completely valid at the same time. Wave-particle duality? More like point-less-relevant duality. At a subatomic level there is complete uncertainty. All of the securities we have attached ourselves to are completely invalid. Certainty at this point is a mere illusion. Guitar is excellent. Spoons = brilliant. Don't tell God what to do. Come out of the pool with brown eyes.

I want ruthless tender excitement, not nothingy numbness. I want... spaghetti •

Written by Branwen Clay. Illustrated by Marina Salarich.



### NOOR'S EDITORIAL

When I first arrived at Brockwood Park School I wanted to do A-levels but I had never even written an essay in English. I needed to have the capacity to write properly therefore I decided to join English Writing class. I was completely uncertain how I would build these skills. The first time Chris and Dolf, our English Writing teachers, asked us to write an essay I remember I just did it freestyle, without knowing what was expected. I was then given an essay structure based on an introduction, three paragraphs with their own imposed structure and a conclusion. I realised that every language has its own way. French is romantic, playing with words to explain even the most simple concept. On the other hand, written English seemed more direct. We practiced writing in a way that goes straight to the point.

At first this all felt impossible, I could barely follow anything due to my poor English vocabulary. During lockdown I had to read a lot and constantly write essays in order to improve. I would email each one to my teachers and they would correct it. They would email it back for me to learn from my mistakes and then I would rewrite the essay in a more structured way.

With time, I have seen my efforts reflected by increasing clarity in my writing. I finished all my exams and am able to write properly; Straight to the point and clear. With regards to the class, each one of us were drawn towards different types of writing. Some wrote articles, others poems which you will have seen throughout the Observer.

We chose uncertainty as the main theme because it is connected to our current situation with co-Vid in which everything can change in a matter of seconds and it gave the chance to dig deeper into what uncertainty means and how it is directly related to fear •



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Brockwood Park School  
Bramdean, Alresford  
SO24 0LQ United Kingdom

[brockwood.org.uk](http://brockwood.org.uk)  
[observer@brockwood.org.uk](mailto:observer@brockwood.org.uk)

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