

## From the South Hampstead High School Magazines

1964-69

edited by Joie Macaulay

### Growing Up

We fought in a  
Padded world of sunlight and sometimes snow,  
Over pencils and schoolfriends and smooth-coated guinea-pigs,  
The elements of life;  
Until our bitter self-righteousness,  
Or desperate thoughts of imminent humiliation,  
Escaped in delighted waves of scornful laughter  
At the men who thought the world was flat;  
And we heaped our savage contempt  
On fools other than ourselves.  
We played in a  
Vivid, sweet-sour world of grass and pavements and dusty railings;  
Loud-voiced, but hiding our secret life  
From adult intrusion.

Children learn to dress themselves  
While adults learn to think.

Green, drifting, writhing thoughts,  
That will not be caught and classified,  
Like mists at dawn  
That hide the day's true character.  
I curl up in a  
Shell, and glare unnoticed, distrustful,  
At other lives,  
Thinking.  
Hoping that no-one understands my thoughts.  
I argue in a  
Vacuum; I know the world is bigger than the moon, it is smaller than the sun;  
But I cannot see how big it is  
Yet.

*Lower V (age 15)*

## Gold

The sky was split in two by a cloud; across the fields it shouted a ferocious blue, and above the house the sinister brightness of shimmering poplar-leaves reflected the sun against the furry foam of dark grey – rustling gold flakes articulating easily in a trembling mass.

Below in the garden, his mother's hair shone gold in the sun when she bent over the flower-beds. It was wound round till it looked like a metal doughnut, but when you patted it down, it moved up again very slowly; all the little strands arched their backs again, but they weren't angry like the cat. Elastic did that sometimes; it was a property of elastic, said Tom. Tom and he had each held one end of the elastic string and they pulled it out carefully, very slowly; an involuntary laugh burst from David and choked in his anticipation. Plitt-ping! Suddenly it lashed itself round his arm and then dropped, limply swinging from his pressed white fingers. A cruel elastic. But his mother's hair just made a very faint whispering silky sound and nestled back into place.

Why did she pack it all on top of her head? Tom said because it was a nuisance when she did the garden, and 'she wants to get sunburnt. Golden brown like a bread advertisement.' Mummy laughed when he said that but David was angry and puzzled because he said her hair looked like bread. 'You're childish, Tom', he said gruffly but leniently, as he knew it should be said. David climbed the fence to the warm nook in the fruitless apple-tree in order to meditate from a more suitable level, his arms hesitantly reaching out for the support of the grey cracked branches.

He knew why his mother had long golden hair. When she unravels it more and more comes down, falling and flowing in thin undulating sheets, spreading out like the wake of a sailing-boat. It spills over the windowledge, where little golden star-flowers have sprung up between the sombre warm grey slabs of stone, and slips coolly down the castle walls, pouring over the twiggy parched ivy. The princess has sat at her high tower window for a hundred years, gazing in despair over the impenetrable forest planted with evil shiny poison weeds and sharp red thorns around the powerful oaks. Prince David, leaping on to his golden steed rides over the distant plain, –

'Davy!' –

hearing only the whirr of surprised wind currents whipped into disarray by his swift passage; seeing only the slipping, shining golden fall of hair which pierces the blackness of the trees –

'David!'

'David', said his father, lifting him up, 'you mustn't climb over this gate till I've fixed it another hinge. You might fall and hurt yourself.'

'Why-y?' he murmured, blushing sullenly with humiliation.

'Why!' mocked Tom. 'It won't stand your weight, that's why.'

'You're getting a big boy now, Davy', said his mother absent-mindedly.

'He is a dreamer. Let him pass.'

*Upper V (age 16)*

## Abraham and Isaac

In their arms they swept the joy of all life,  
Isaac in angular eager step, and Abraham  
In pain and hope for Isaac's independence.  
In harmony with nature and each other  
They budded from the ground,  
And with their palms stroked God's sky.

To Abraham alone, bowed under the night sky,  
God sent five messengers stately walking:  
'Surrender all your doubts to me.  
Sacrifice your son to me.'  
Like organ pipes they pierced the air, serene.  
But silently into his mind there stole  
A second force, as smoke stirs leaves,  
Which quietly stood in defence of his love for his son,  
And treachery laid hold upon his head;  
As father and son he bore fire and a knife in his breast  
And spinning like a wild globe between poles, it  
Grazed the membrane of his inner heart.

Then openly on the hot mountain-side  
The fire burst forth within his heart  
And hammered him to the ground.  
And as he knelt the string  
Snapped, which bound him through his son to God;  
For Isaac's eager limbs, brushed with green youth,  
Had captured a glance of godliness,  
Son of his old age, a bond with every chafing seed.

Miserable in eddying chaos he hung with his knife  
Until he heard God calling, 'Abraham',  
And he replied, 'Here am I!'

To Abraham, whose strength wrenched nature from her socket,  
God gave as sons the people of the earth for evermore,  
His seed as the stars of the heaven and the sands of the shore,  
Which rang in the stones and sky as father and son  
Whirled down the hill like leaves star-spinning.

*Upper Sixth (age 18)*

## Spring

Teach me to suffer faithfulness on this station bench  
In this approximation to silence,  
This meaningless soundlessness of everyday noises  
Which stray about the leaves and echo in reality.

I had not noticed the twofold source of spring,  
Its spontaneity hid the sepia wash of weariness;  
Such heaviness  
Beneath the green shadows trembling round your eyes.

The tunnel eastwards leads to the fiery town,  
Westwards lie open marshes under a white sky;  
Today in the station the days wash over me  
In constant revolution till they melt in the pastel distance.

*Upper Sixth (age 18)*



*School photo detail, 1966*

Margaret Harris, First Trust Scholar 1967–1969  
South Hampstead High School, GPDST, London

Joie Macaulay, Head of English 1954-1976  
<http://www.marjorie-blanche-macaulay.co.uk>