

Afterword

Paul Ostroverhy's literary project aims to not only preserve, but revive the increasingly disappearing tradition of the diary novel which is steeped in both English and French literature, rooting his writing in the very foundations of his own life. Contained within these pages are the beginnings of a much larger enterprise which spans over five years, documenting, for the first time in the history of Stowe School, the day-to-day trials, tribulations and experiences of a twenty-first century boarding school boy. Diligently chronicling each day of term in his dorm every evening, Paul's diaries unfold, for the author, in real time. Herein lies the uniqueness of this young aspiring author's project. Rather than being from a retrospective point of view, *Diary of a Stoic* delves deep into the authentic and unadulterated thoughts and experiences, documented candidly the very same day, of a fourteen-year-old boy during his first term at Stowe School.

The very diligence such a project has required is testament to both the remarkable self-motivation and self-reflection the author exhibits at the very beginning of his teenage years. For Paul, the diaries have become a way not only to document, but to reflect upon his own development, emotional state and interactions with the world. Through this sincere, daring and wide-eyed testimony, the reader thus builds a distinctively intimate relationship with the author's thoughts, daily rituals and relationships, stepping into both his mind and his world. For Paul, the next part of the process consisted of typing the raw diaries up, editing as he went along and adding notes where he saw fit. These notes, predominantly composed of retrospective comments concerning particular moments add another layer to this already complex and stratified work. Paul not only re-reads and re-writes, but dually reflects in his initial writing process and his editing, enabling the diaries to exist somewhere between spontaneous stream of consciousness and constructed, studied creation.

It cannot be denied, however, that the very process of writing has also served as an exceptional stylistic exercise for the author. Striving to continue his account throughout the entirety of his school years, Paul's writing develops yet remains uniquely his own, whilst his ritualistic process allows him to develop his expression and grasp of the English language. Inspired predominantly by the atmospheric settings of Evelyn Waugh and the eccentric humour of Oscar Wilde, Paul's literary influences animate the soul of his writing, which is saturated with humorous and precise character studies, set against the minutely described architectural and pastoral background of Stowe. Complementing these detailed studies of his surroundings and his peers are sketches, spanning from his environment, to faces, to particular details that have struck him. Paul follows in the footsteps of great literary figures such as William Blake, who understood the intimate and often essential relationship between the word and the image, the linguistic and the visual.

Although the impact of this project upon the author cannot be underestimated, its reverberations will also certainly be felt by the school itself. Dedicated to Dr. Anthony Wallersteiner, Stowe's Headmaster, Paul Ostroverhy's literary project presents an invaluable, unique testimony of Stowe as an institution from an insider's perspective which may be used as a reference point for years to come. A snapshot into daily life, covering everything as seemingly small as uniform and professedly large as relationships, *Diary of a Stoic* is a delicate illustration of a century old institution, striving to create a landmark testimony which might conceivably be employed as a reference point for Stowe's next hundred years of existence, providing the most detailed account of the life of a Stoic to date.

For myself, the two weeks Paul and I have spent editing the diaries together have emerged as a uniquely rewarding and fascinating experience. Although I have known Paul since last summer, I believe that no other project than painstakingly reading and editing his diaries together could have developed such a relationship between us. Spending three hours with Paul every evening, I became an observer of Stowe and its characters over our time together, recognising names, envisioning settings and remembering the order of events such as stance and supper. Paul's deeply evocative writing has undeniably supported and sustained the very vivid picture I have been able to fabricate of Stowe life. It has, moreover, been deeply gratifying to watch Paul's writing flourish and develop over

this short yet tremendously intense period of time we have spent together. As a trilingual student, Paul's English is deeply entangled with Russian and French, which has presented itself positively for the most part, providing fascinating cultural references and humorous interjections in other languages. Gallicisms, however, were peppered throughout the whole 70,000 word-long project. Our time together was therefore not only a matter of editing and refining the diaries themselves, but provided a stylistic exercise for Paul, in the aim of refining and developing his understanding and employment of the English language. *Diary of a Stoic* has thus been as much an academic exercise as a creative one for its author. By the end of our joint editing project, a considerable difference in grammatical errors and initial syntactical clumsiness has certainly become discernible. I was deeply impressed by the speed at which Paul was able to recognise his own mistakes and implement changes himself. Our shared editing process thus only increasingly picked up speed, as less and less changes had to be made.

It has been captivating to see first-hand and to understand not only the innumerable ways in which this unique literary project has impacted Paul, but also the potential it has to flourish into a wider influential and unique work. Reading the diaries, the positive influence Stowe, its education and its people have had on Paul is evident everywhere. In a sense, therefore, *Diary of a Stoic* is itself dedicated to the institution without which it would not exist, providing the inspiration, the setting, and the stories for each entry. This literary enterprise indeed seems to be as much about Stowe as it is about Paul Ostroverhy. As such, we hope that the school will both recognize and appreciate the deep dedication the author has exhibited to painting a landscape of Stowe with his words, and that the school and its staff will implement concrete support for the continuation of this project.

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