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ISSUE N°25

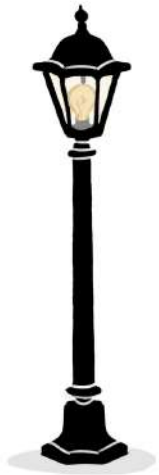
PHOENIX



The Urban City Issue

YOU MIGHT COME HERE SUNDAY ON A WHIM...

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Home

From open fields green
To giants gray
From where all is to be seen
To foreign clay

Brick behemoths, tall
bearing down onto me,
he from a place where all
of life is blissful simplicity

life is always on the move
in this place, be it daunting as it may
The monsters offer a roof
so this might be home one day

by Bram van Beerendonk

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word of the board



It took some time getting to know Utrecht and its many corners, but after having lived here for a little over half a year I feel confident to say I can make my way around. I'm constantly exploring new places and neighbourhoods and I'm finding Utrecht to be more and more to my liking.

Now that I have my own place here, I can go out more in the evening and enjoy a night of casual dancing, for which I've recently found the perfect place: the ACU. I once celebrated King's Day there and I've stored it in my memory as one of my best nights out. Since then, I check out their program every week to see if there's something I like, and there almost always is since they provide a vast variety of genres. They have their weekly 'Vitamine ACU' disco on Fridays, which means they play music from different genres every week. I've been to alternative 80s, electronic, queer underground and indie rock, and all of them have been amazing and extremely danceable.

Enough about ACU. One thing I didn't expect when I moved to Utrecht is how much I enjoy biking from place to place and how small the city actually feels that way. When visiting friends I discover new places and routes, and everything feels big but also within reach at the same time. Just the other day I cycled over to a friend who lives near Oog in Al and Lombok. While biking down the canal I could picture what it must look like in the summer: probably packed with students having picnics or barbecues. Of course, winter also has its charms and I cannot wait until the canals are frozen and we will be able to ice-skate outside. I've never been, but I've seen photos from last year and it looked magical.

I also cannot wait what other things Utrecht has to offer and I'm beyond happy to have found a place in this city. I hope many of you reading this feel the same and I hope everyone who is still looking for a place will find one soon!

Love,

Hanka Damsma
Commissioner of Internal Affairs



PHOENIX

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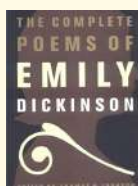
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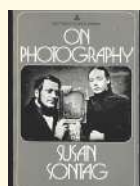
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What We're Reading



INDIE: **THE COMPLETE POEMS OF EMILY DICKINSON**



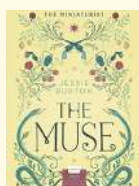
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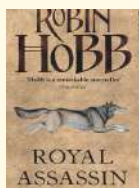
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TANISHA: **THE EXACT OPPOSITE OF OKAY** BY LAURA STEVEN



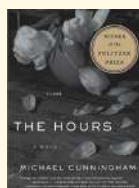
FLEUR: **THE MUSE** BY JESSIE BURTON



TESS: **ROYAL ASSASSIN** BY ROBIN HOBB



ROBERT: **THE COLLAPSING EMPIRE** BY JOHN SCALZI



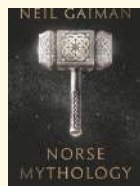
PATRICK: **THE HOURS** BY MICHAEL CUNNINGHAM



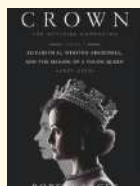
ROOS: **FRANKENSTEIN** BY MARY SHELLEY



CELONIE: **WATCHMEN** BY ALAN MOORE



CECILIE: **NORSE MYTHOLOGY** BY NEIL GAIMAN



ANGELA: **THE CROWN** BY ROBERT LACEY



HANKA: **THE STOLEN THRONE** BY DAVID GAIDER



TESSA: **THE MISEDUCATION OF CAMERON POST** BY EMILY M. DANFORTH

the Village



Faint sunlight shines through the clouds on the morning Angela and I are walking to The Village Coffee & Music. As we enter the small espresso bar, the barista, and co-owner, with whom we made the appointment, waves at us. I tell him that we are there for the interview. 'I didn't know that was you!' he tells me excitedly and walks us to the place where we begin our interview.

Where did you find the inspiration to start an espresso bar?

'I found inspiration in the United States when I was on tour with a band. We visited coffee shops there, and when I returned, Lennaert had returned from a trip to Hawaii where he worked for a surf company. I was like, "Dude! You gotta see the espresso bars in the United States!" And he replied: "Yeah man! It's totally different in Europe". So, we decided to open our own espresso bar.'

I remember hearing that you roast the coffee beans yourself. What's the reason behind that?

'Because it's cool! We want to maintain the quality ourselves, as well. So, we buy our beans, and we roast them ourselves. It's our style. That's something we think is really important because we can make the coffees we want. We want to showcase everything we do. It's really hard to roast coffee beans well. There's no school for it, so we hired a guy from San Francisco to come over here and he taught us how to roast coffee in 3 weeks. When he left, I was like, "Okay, so I gotta do this by myself now". But that's three years ago and I think that now we deliver a steady and good product. We also want to pay farmers a fairer price. That's specialty coffee, so we pay farmers for quality and not for quantity.'

What's the most special or funny thing that has happened here?

'Oooh ... I suck at this, but we had Kirsten Dunst in store, which was pretty cool. I got really nervous because she is really beautiful. We get a lot of famous people, because a lot of bands tour in Utrecht, and they always get coffee here.'

You also collaborate a lot with Plato and Ekko. How did this start?

'Willem from Plato was a customer at the place I worked at and we were talking about starting up our own espresso bar in the Voorstraat and we agreed that we should collaborate. It was all part of the plan. When we opened, Ekko came to us. It all went really natural.'

Do you experiment with your coffees? And do you try to come up with your own roasts?

'Yeah, that's what we do in the roastery. When we buy our coffee beans, we get samples of coffee and try them all. We have our nerd station over there. Luckily, it's too busy in the bar to experiment there, so that's what we do in the roastery.'

What makes the Village so special and different from other cafés in Utrecht?

'We just want to be authentic and real and friendly. And it's super cheesy to say, but the people who come here make the place. The people make other people feel comfortable. We just want to be a place where people come to hang out and be themselves. When I was young, I was always looking for a place like this, instead of a bar at night. Just a place where you can hang during day time. And that's the coolest thing because we have a lot of different people here, from punks to students, to artists. It's super weird, and that's what I like. That's how I want it, and Lennaert too. Not just people with tattoos, other people too.'



"We just want to be a place where people come to hang out and be themselves."



The ACU

PHOTOS BY TESSA KARSTEN

As introduced by Hanka in this month's Word of the Board column!



Voorstraat 71, 3512 AK Utrecht



A nifty detail: a sticker on the bar proclaiming "No Nazi's" in bold letters.

ACU is a political-cultural center in the Voorstraat, directly in the center of Utrecht. ACU is non-commercial, independent from the municipality's agenda, and fully run by volunteers. ACU has found its niche and has been an integral part of Utrecht's cultural and political scene for more than 40 years.

THE GIRLS WHO SAW IT ALL

Season I, Episode 2 - See No Evil, Hear No Evil, Speak No Evil

written by Robert Ziolkowski



"Tragic news from Utrecht. A student's body has been found in an alleyway near Janskerkhof. Police report two witnesses have seen how the young man of twenty was beaten up and—"

Marie did not want to listen to the newsreader anymore. She pulled out her earbuds and threw the tablet to the side of her bed. She stood up and walked to the window, trying to collect her thoughts. She found it hard to believe it had only happened last night. It felt like a lifetime since Emily had asked her to be her girlfriend, after which they had heard noises from the alleyway and lastly...

"*Seeing the dead body,*" the voice in her head finished her train of thought for her. She sighed deeply, trying to calm the emotions inside of her as she let herself drop on her bed, putting her head in her hands. Whenever she closed her eyes, she would still see it all, the image burned into her mind as if some cruel entity did not want her to forget. More likely, she was still just in shock. After all, having to relay one's account of a murder scene to the police tends to leave behind a strong impression.

"*But what did we see, really,*" the voice began again, "*shapes that looked like men, no facial features, no identifiable characteristics, nothing noteworthy.*"

Both she and Emily had done their best to give the woman questioning them as much information as they could, mentioning even the things that – in hindsight – were useless to know but seemed vital at the time. The policewoman had been very kind to them, understanding they wanted to help but that both were terribly shaken by what they had witnessed. They were let go, though they had been requested to be available should the police need more information for their investigation. Should they remember anything else or see or hear anything suspicious thereafter, they were to immediately inform the authorities

As Marie recounted last night's events again and again inside her head, her phone went off and startled her momentarily. She remembered how she had told Emily she was afraid that whoever had killed the young man would come after them because they had witnessed it.

"Whoever those fucking freaks were, they saw as much of us as we saw of them. You'll sooner see pigs fly than any of them knocking on your doorstep," Emily had reassured her at the time, trying to sound like her usual self, even though Marie saw the uncertainty and shock in her eyes.

Shaking off the memories, Marie grabbed her phone and looked at the caller-ID.

"Speak of the devil," she said to Emily on the other end, struggling to keep her tone casual.

"You can come in, you know. The key is where it always used to be. For a moment you freaked me out there, standing all ominously outside. Didn't know you were a hoodies-gal, though." Marie frowned.

"What do you mean? I'm sitting on the edge of my bed in my room."

"Ha. Ha. Very funny, I saw you standing outside." The dread inside Marie was rising rapidly, her pulse quickening.

"I swear that isn't me, Em."

There was a moment of silence as she heard the breathing on the other end of the line stop, resuming a few seconds later.

"Then who the fuck is it?"

"Okay, don't panic, you—"

"That's easy for you to say, for fuck's sake!"

"Listen to me, Em, go to the window and tell me what they're doing."

She heard slow and careful footsteps, as she imagined Emily walking towards the window again. When she heard her girlfriend's breathing quicken she knew whoever it was, they must be still standing there.

"I-I think it's a he," she said with a quavering voice, "h-he's, uhm, well, fuck."

"What is it?" asked Marie.

"He's moving both his hands to where his eyes should be underneath his hood. Marie, he knows I am seeing him."

"Don't hang up on me, Em, tell me everything you see."

There was a moment of excruciating silence before Emily spoke again.

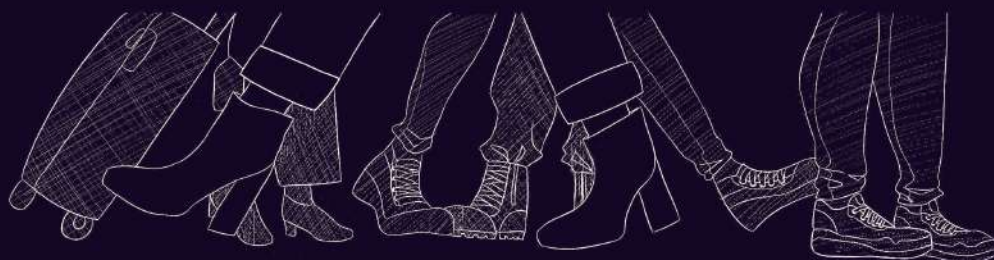
"He's moving his hands to his ears now and—"

"And what?"

"N-now to his mouth."

Marie took this in, her thoughts buzzing around in her head, bringing up images of a hooded man doing this insane little dance. But then it hit her, the image of the wise three monkeys, one covering his eyes, the other his ears and the last his mouth.

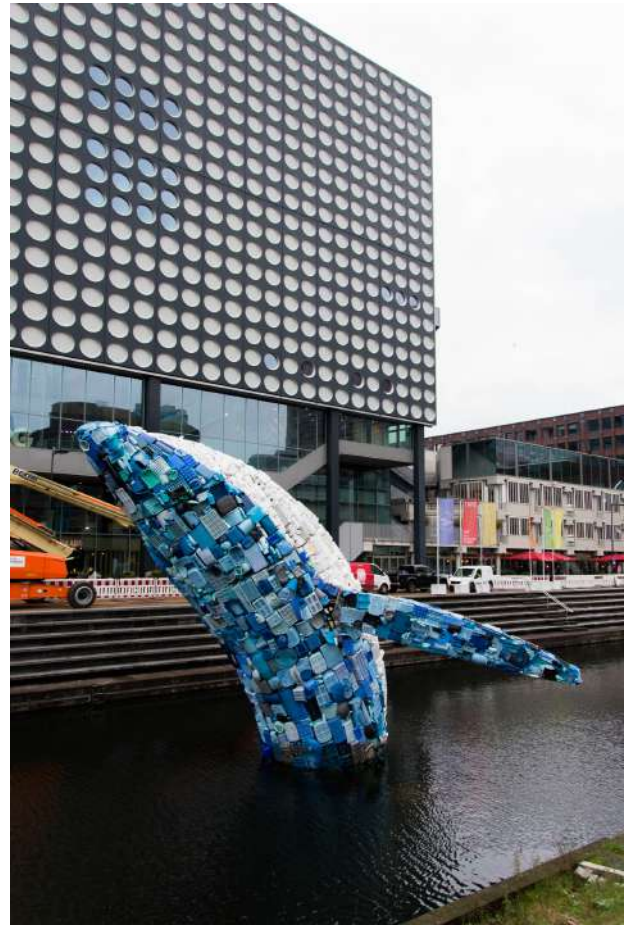
"See no evil, hear no evil," Marie paused, swallowing with difficulty, "speak no evil..."



UTRECHT, BY ANGELA



Dom city is one of duality. Utrecht's elaborately decorated, 17th century buildings along the Oudegracht seem to fade to the background while morning, afternoon and evening commute keeps going without interruption. I decided to roam around the city for a while and see more of the city's duality. You can see more photos from this series throughout this issue.



The plastic waste-whale outside Hoog Catharijne

The coolest pillars at Winkel van Sinkel





GENIUS VERIFIED

At the end of 2018, Roan Balleur and I sat down in the stuffy canteen of Kromme Nieuwegracht 80 to talk gigs, making music on the streets of Utrecht and writing songs with his band Subject to Change.

So you're in a band and you have jam sessions on the streets of Utrecht. When did you start pursuing music in this capacity?

I was about to turn seventeen when I started playing the guitar, so I was relatively late to the game. This shows that the general idea of having to start young is nonsense, everyone can learn to make music! You can be thirty and start playing saxophone if that's what you want to do. I remember sitting in the car with my mum when Enter Sandman by Metallica started playing on the radio and thinking "This is what I want to be doing". Ever since then I have been really into music.

Do you write your own songs for Subject to Change or do you guys mostly cover songs?

No, we write our own songs! All of the guys in Subject to Change – which is our definitive name by the way, just in case you were wondering – are quite into reading and writing. Our bassist, who is a chemistry major, is super into Shakespeare, so our songs can get pretty poetic [laughs]. Usually, someone will come up with a riff that sounds promising, and we will take it from there. We find a vibe, a fitting melody and then start on the lyrics. All the songs we have written so far have been slightly melancholic, which wasn't actually intended. We are turning a bit Muse-esque now.

Do you have a particular genre or artist that inspires you in your writing?

Not necessarily, but I think that everything you listen to slowly sneaks its way into your music. I like to listen to different genres to get inspiration, such as Desert Rock but lately also Gypsy Punk. This doesn't necessarily mean that our music sounds like that though, I think that's a different story. Like, listening to John Coltrane for five hours straight won't suddenly make you write a killer saxophone solo. In an ideal world, where do you see yourself and your music going? Currently, it is mostly a hobby, but taking it further would be incredible. Right now, I jam about once or twice a week near the Oudegracht in Utrecht but playing small venues would be really cool. A few months ago, I went to go see Stoned Jesus, Mothership and Elephant Tree play Doornroosje in Nijmegen, which was incredible. Gigs like that really inspire me. The pro about playing on the streets is that you don't need a venue to play and people generally don't actually care what you play, which makes it a lot easier to just have fun. But despite that, playing a festival like Desertfest in London would be incredible. Maybe someday, who knows?



Interview and photo by Tessa Karsten.

Albioneers abroad with Anna de Roest

**University of Kent,
Canterbury, UK.**

When I was thirteen, my parents, my siblings and I went to Scotland on holiday. However, since we travelled by car, we decided to visit Canterbury first. I immediately fell in love with the Butter Market Square, the Canterbury Cathedral and the general atmosphere. Canterbury is extremely 'gezellig'! When we walked past the cathedral, I saw a large group of university students, wearing graduation gowns. I turned to my dad and said: 'This is where I want to study'.

Obviously, I went to Utrecht first. As you all know, Utrecht is amazing, and also incredibly 'gezellig'. However, the thought of studying in Canterbury never left me and when it was time to choose a location for my Erasmus exchange, I didn't think twice. I chose the University of Kent, and this, then, is where I went. University life at Kent is very different. Lectures are only one hour long, and I only have one seminar session per course (which they call 'modules' here). This does mean, however, that there is more self-study and you really are expected to have read everything.

Living on campus also means that you are immersed in a world full of 'freshers' and international students, which means that there is a lot of partying. Going to bed before 02:00 a.m. is seen as a rare, healthy – and boring – life choice.

At this moment, I am already almost at the end of my Erasmus period. I'm stressed about my final deadlines, sad about almost having to say goodbye to my friends, and looking forward to partying during my last weekends here. The feeling I get when I think of leaving Canterbury can only be defined as bittersweet. Of course, I have missed home and I am excited about seeing all my loved ones again, but at the same time, I am devastated at the thought of saying goodbye to my new friends.

We have spent entire days (and nights) in the library, taking more breaks than actually studying, and then continued the conversation in our kitchen. We have taken trips to other cities, played Cards Against Humanity and Catan for hours and regularly walked back from the city to the campus around 5 or even 6 a.m., which is still a mystery to me since most of the clubs close at 3. It's such a cliché, but Erasmus can give you friends for life.

I guess what I'm trying to say is that I came to Canterbury for the city, but it is the people that have made the Erasmus experience so amazing. I can't wait to see all my Dutch friends again, but I have also already booked a ticket to visit my friends in Kent during the second term. I can't get enough! If you ever get the chance to go on Erasmus: do it, and go to Canterbury.

Cheers!



Minor & Master Market Minor Artificial Intelligence

You might be wondering why a student of English would choose the Artificial Intelligence minor. The idea struck me a while back at DRONGO language festival, where an entire lab was devoted to the linguistic field related to AI. Multiple researchers that specialized in linguistics, psychology or AI worked together on exploring themes such as language processing and computational linguistics, and there even was a tiny robot trying to convey emotions through its speech. I suddenly saw how linguistics can be applied directly to the world and this really excited me! Apparently, the AI minor offers two courses related to linguistics!

The minor consists of four courses out of all eight possible first-year courses. Due to its increasing popularity, the lectures are packed with over 300 students. In the first block I took 'Inleiding Logica' which gives a nice introduction to the field of logic. Logic is concerned with reasonable thinking, and this course mainly focusses on the mathematical representation of logical arguments. This is a fun and manageable course, even for math noobs like me.

By Alessandra Polimeno

For the second block, I chose a more challenging course, namely 'Modelleren & Programmeren', where you learn how to code using programming language C#. While you are not required to have a mathematical background to take this course, I have found myself pretty lost without it. Luckily, the next two blocks are filled with the courses that were actually the reason for my application to this programme.

'Inleiding Taalkunde voor KI' sounds exciting for a linguistics nerd like me. In this course, I hope to get acquainted with the more formal side of linguistics, and I hope to explore the familiar issues of language acquisition, syntax, and semantics from another angle. The last course, 'Computational Linguistics', builds on the previous linguistics course, and introduces a second programming language: Python. This language is used increasingly often in research among linguists.

All in all, this minor can be a challenge for the humanities-oriented student due to its mathematical approach. However, if you are interested in linguistics, you might find enough perseverance to struggle your way through the mathematics aspect, into another world of linguistics.

Humans of Albion: Lucinia Philip on Seoul vs. Utrecht



In the summer of 2017, I got to spend 6 weeks in Seoul at Korea University's Summer Campus. During this period, I observed quite a few differences and similarities between Seoul and Utrecht. As there is so much to talk about and only so many words I'm allowed to use, I've decided to focus on a contrast between these two cities caused by a difference in size rather than culture.

Seoul is very organised compared to Utrecht, which in my opinion is a cluster of random shops, cafés, and scattered university buildings. Take the shopping streets, for instance. There is one street with an affluent character, but other than that there isn't a specific makeup. In Seoul, each district has its own distinctive personality. There is Itaewon, for example, which is where you'll find most foreigners. The clubs here are filled with American soldiers and international students, and it's one of the few places in homogenous South Korea where you can get yourself a kebab after a night out.

Some of the neighbourhoods are also defined by the university located in that neighbourhood. Hongik University, a university famous for fine arts and music, has influenced the Hongdae area. During the night, you'll see tons of students enjoying street performances (dance groups and musicians), the big flea market, street art, and trendy clubs. The only students you won't find here are the ones with money, because they go to the swanky clubs in one of the wealthiest neighbourhoods in Seoul: Gangnam (yes, the one from Gangnam Style).


Going back to the example of the shopping streets in Utrecht, you could say that the expensive stores are located in Gangnam, whereas the thrift stores and low-priced shops can be found in Hongdae. The same idea goes for other businesses. This set-up would be impossible to accomplish in Utrecht, especially given the fact that most things happen in the small city centre, something Seoul doesn't really have. However, this isn't necessarily a bad thing.

I like going to Utrecht's city centre, because it feels cosy and 'gezellig'. It brings various types of people together in one place and there is no such thing as a clear distinction between class, ethnicity, or locals and tourists. The unorganised cluster brings diversity to the city, which is something I missed in Korea University's neighbourhood.

Overall, Seoul and Utrecht are two very different cities, yet they both have their individual charm. If you're ever visiting East Asia, I would definitely recommend checking out Seoul!



*Photos (bike photo and Lucinia portrait) by
Angela Kroes.*



Tea time

WITH TRENTON HAGAR

It was on a cold and rainy day in January that we met with Dr. Trenton Hagar in Ludwig on Janskerhof. We had hurried inside to get to a warm cup of coffee and once we had our orders, we sat down for the interview. Trenton has been to so many places in the world, having taught at universities from Japan to China, from South-Korea to Saudi-Arabia and from Nicaragua to our own little country. Thus, as we sipped our Latte Macchiato, Cappuccino and Hot Chocolate, we started the interview.

In conversation with Robert Ziolkowski & Angela Kroes
Photos by Angela Kroes & Written by Robert Ziolkowski

Where are you originally from?

I'm from Texas in the US. So, Texas. Not everyone owns a horse, not everyone wears boots, not everyone wears a cowboy hat. [laughs] Which is the stereotype right? Even within the US that's the stereotype. One time I taught in New York and when the kids found out I was from Texas the first thing they asked me was: "well what's your horse's name?"

So, if that stereotype exists in the United States it definitely exists overseas as well. But Texas is great, it's a fantastic place. I was from Austin so that's in central Texas and it's not what many people think. There's green rolling hills, lakes, rivers and flowers everywhere. It's really nice.

"Sometimes the worst students can become good teachers."

As the conversations in the coffee house kept buzzing around us, Trenton proceeded to tell me about his life after having graduated from the University of Texas. After having briefly worked for a big company – having discovered it was not what he had wanted to do in his life – he had followed the advice to take up a teaching job in Japan. It was there – and subsequently while teaching at a university in China – that he had discovered his fondness for teaching, albeit having to dive into the methodology of it first. It was why – while teaching in South-Korea this time – the professor had obtained a Master's degree in 'Applied Linguistics'. With a total of seven years of teaching experience obtained in Asia, Trenton had decided it was time for a change. After having attended a teacher's conference in Dubai, he had obtained a job teaching at a university in Saudi-Arabia. He eventually returned to the States where he followed a graduate programme and obtained a Ph.D., subsequently taking up a job with the US Department of Education. As a result, he was sent to Nicaragua, to aid universities in developing language programmes and training teachers on methodology. Afterwards, Dr. Hagar took up a job teaching at the universities of Utrecht and Rotterdam.

How has the Netherlands been for you so far?

It's been great, very nice. We, that is my fiancé and I, moved here from Nicaragua. We have really enjoyed it here so far, we especially love the biking culture, that everything is in a biking distance.

You may find it hard to believe, but we actually really enjoy the weather here. Because in Nicaragua, for six months of the year it can be over 30 degrees with a 100% humidity, so we actually like the idea of four seasons. Previously we were used to just two seasons, with one being super hot and the other being super rainy, but still hot. [laughs]

So yeah, we really like it here. The people are friendly, we love the level of English obviously, which makes it easy to adjust because there's always someone that we can communicate with until our Dutch improves.

How did you end up going from Nicaragua to the Netherlands?

While I was in Nicaragua, I met my fiancé Sara, who was my girlfriend at the time. We ended up living together and she was looking for a

graduate programme – she studied Data Science – and she ended up applying to Utrecht, getting a full scholarship.

Then I started looking at what I could possibly do as an English teacher in the Netherlands, since the Netherlands' level of English is fairly high, I was wondering "is there even a place for me, are there jobs for me there?" We decided to roll the dice and come here. I actually used 'LinkedIn', that's how I got both of my jobs here. I found people that did jobs similar to mine, and sent out a bunch of messages. Maybe 10% of the people replied, but I ended up with both of my jobs in Utrecht and Rotterdam by contacting people via 'LinkedIn'. So, it's a good strategy for when you're graduating and start looking for a job.

That's quite interesting, because usually – we the students – are told by professors and teachers how bad social media, phones and modern-day technology are.

There's positives and negatives to anything, to technology in this instance. It's not just bad, that's not the case. In fact, when I was teaching a writing course at the University of Memphis, that was a big discussion. You had people going "this is going to be the end of academic writing, of academic language, we're seeing texting invade our essays". We actually had people putting "LOL" in their essays, their academic essays.

"I learned more about myself in four months of travelling than I did in four years of university."

Dr. Hagar told me about research that he and his colleagues had conducted at the University of Memphis, after having found comments of a similar tone dating from the times when the printing press was invented and newspapers were introduced. He told me that the scholars of that time commented newspapers would be the end of discourse and verbal debate in the coffee houses of the 16th and 17th centuries, seeing the new technology as something deplorable. Yet, as could be seen from the course of history, this had never happened. It was why the professor assured me modern day technology also would not herald the end of academic writing and conversation.

After having talked about the topic of technology in the modern world a bit more, we moved onto subject of travelling, which is something Trenton has been doing a lot in his life.

You have been to many places in the world. Is travelling one of your hobbies?

Yeah, it slowed down a little but that was one of the draws to the lifestyle of teaching, because of the accessibility of travel. I've been to around eighty countries now, I think? When I moved from Japan to China, I had three months between the jobs, so I went to Indonesia and I did the whole Southeast Asia backpacking tour. When I left China for South Korea, I took a six-month break. I did the Trans-Siberian train across Russia, ended up in Eastern Europe,

travelled all through Eastern Europe, then down to Turkey. I used the gap between jobs as travel opportunities, basically. I'm a little less backpacker-y now, as I can't sleep in hostels anymore. They're just too loud, there's just too many people. That increases the price, the cost of travelling, so I travel less but I'm really looking forward to the summer here, because I hope to be able to add a few European countries to my list.

What are some of the countries you have the fondest memories of? What has left the biggest impression on you?

You know, it depends. I always have people asking: "what's your favourite place to travel?" and I always ask "well, for what? The people? For the sites or for the food?" But I could summarize. The only country I ever travelled to where I gained weight was Vietnam. [laughs] Because the food is just so good. So, I would call that the place with the best food, for sure.

One of the most idyllic places was Laos, because it was almost untouched by the modern world. I mean, just the nature there was amazing, and the people – we had taken the boat down the river – and you would see kids that lived in extreme poverty, but they were just happy. They were happier than any kid that I have seen on the street in the Western world. Here you see kids stuck on their phone, not able to look at anything else.



Trenton in café Ludwig

As we continued talking, we eventually came onto the subject of Dr. Hagar's own time as a college student. I asked him about the differences between universities in the United States and Europe. As we were talking about this, Trenton provided some insight regarding travelling and education:

I have a godson – he's sixteen years old – and he asked me about travelling and about going to college, and I actually told him – I'll be perfectly honest, and I don't want to denigrate any type of educational institution – but, from a personal level, I learned more about myself in four months of travelling than I did in four years of university. Because – again, that's coming from an American university – travelling, the exposure to different cultures, to different languages, to different ways of thinking, it broadens your perspective. And the great thing about a European university, is that you have some of that. I can drive or take a train for two hours and be in three different types of countries that speak three different types of languages. There's a lot of diversity in American universities, but there's much more cultural diversity here in European universities, if we talk about culture coming from a certain country.

Our conversation eventually flowed towards me asking Dr. Hagar whether he had always wanted to be a professor, whether that was what he had always answered when people asked him –

when he was little – what he wanted to be when he was older. He truthfully had answered “no”, which eventually led to the subject of some of the struggles the professor had endured as a student:

I wasn't a very good student. I was what we called a 'crammer', I would just study for the test, take the test, pass the test, and then dump all the information. And that worked well for me in the first two years of college – that's how I got through high school – but something that happened in the third year was the courses started building upon the knowledge taught in the previous courses. And I had dumped all that information already, so my third year was really difficult, I had a lot of problems.

I went to an academic counsellor and I basically had to learn how to study while I was a junior in college. That's when I became an actual student, a serious student. It was pretty hard because it was new, it was something that I always should have done but never had done. By recognising that, by realising that it was not too late to change, I was able to become a pretty good student.

And eventually – after some work experience – I decided to continue on and get a Master's. So, if someone were to ask me, I'd say it's never too late to apply yourself to your studies. It took me my second of four years to actually realise to do that, so it's never too late and now I'm a professor. Sometimes the worst students can become good teachers.



Bookshelf: professor edition



^Tea time, more like, cake time!



One time I taught in New York and when the kids found out I was from Texas the first thing they asked me was: “Well, what's your horse's name?”

>Our very own Robert with Trenton



Q & ALUMNI WITH JAMILI WETZELS

Jamili Wetzels has the privilege of being one of the four honorary members of Albion. He was the treasurer of board XIX and spent seven years studying at the English Department of Utrecht University. His career is the epitome of versatility: from helping with political campaigns to being a board member of the 'Landelijke Studentenvakbond' and working for an insurance company. Here, he looks back on his study and the busy

Why did you choose to study English? And why in Utrecht?

When I was in secondary school, I chose the Nature and Health (NG) profile and always thought I should do something technical. Literature, however, also interested me and I was quite good at English. I participated in a taster day to get an impression and I really liked it. I am from Sittard and many Limburgers go to Eindhoven or Maastricht, but the universities there did not offer English, and Amsterdam was a bit too far, so choosing Utrecht seemed natural.

How did you like the studies?

Well, I'm really unable to describe it in 1 word. There were some truly fascinating teachers. Paul Franssen, for example. He was the supervisor for my BA thesis, and I was predominantly interested in literature. Even though I received my highest grade for syntax and high grades for linguistics in general, it just lacked a bit of the spice and excitement that literature had. What I do regret, is that I decided not to take a minor. I could have enhanced my knowledge in fields that I was also interested in, and at the same time enlarge my possibilities for the future.

How did you become an honorary member?

When I was in my first year, Albion was mainly concerned with the distribution of the study books. During my second year, the board became a bit more enthusiastic, and they asked me to be their successor. In the third year, my board year, we struggled with continuity and Albion had to develop its style and flow. Along with the other modern languages we found an umbrella association called the 'svMT' (Samenwerkingsverband Moderne Talen). The board received grants from the university and Albion had a growing base of active members, so from there on it was mostly onwards and upwards. The 22nd board declared me an honorary member, and the 23rd board gave me a sweater with 'honorary member' printed on it.

You were on the Albion board for a year; what did this teach you?

First and foremost, I learned how to cooperate in a team, but I'm still learning and perfecting this. I learned that I wanted to do too many things all by myself and that on multiple occasions I did so much myself that I forgot to inform other board members. My main goal was to help others and improve the world in my own way. I also learned many things about finance and administration, and I designed the template that to this day is still used for the financial balance sheet.

Your LinkedIn is pretty stuffed. Can you give a brief outline of the jobs you've had?

I essentially always look where I am needed and where my interests and chances bring me. While I was studying, I did not have any side jobs except for Albion and the LSVB. After my bachelor, I worked for GroenLinks, and at the same time I volunteered for the homeless at the Catherijnehuis. It was very interesting to hear the stories of how people became homeless. It strengthened my down-to-earth world view because it could happen to anyone, and it was quite refreshing to talk to these people.



Written by Patrick van Oosterom. Photo by Angela Kroes. Edited by Tanisha Wetsteen



I noticed though that I repeatedly worked in Albion-like environments and positions, so more (member) administration than coordination. I worked as a member administrator for an association of elderly, which mainly consisted of updating member records and contribution. While I was doing my master, I was selected for an EU traineeship in The Hague, which is called the Concours. Right now, I'm working at the SVB (but formally at Quoratio), and I also follow courses in staff organization and communication. These are a continuation of the skills I acquired during my year as a board member.

In what way did studying English help your career?

While I was doing member administration at an association for the elderly, I noticed that some colleagues of mine were repeatedly stressed out whenever they received a phone call in English. I knew how to handle those customers, so that is the very practical side. The literature side really helped me to connect to society, and it made me more passionate about my political interests. I was on the list for GroenLinks in Utrecht and I actively participated in their campaigns. It strengthened my empathy and thinking abilities, while at the same time it helped my ability to pay more attention to detail and language. It has happened multiple times that elder members of the association called me for a simple question, and it was very obvious that they were lonely and needed someone to talk to. To this day I remember talking to someone with an Indo-Dutch background, and we had a deep conversation about identity, which was also the subject of my MA thesis.

What about the future? Do you want to keep doing what you're doing?

Yes and no, because some things I'm doing right now are interesting as they are, but in other things I would like to keep growing: lifelong learning. It is important to keep on developing yourself and to know what you can signify for the world.

Do you have any advice for current students of English?

I think as a piece of concrete advice: pursue a minor that you are interested in. You broaden your possibilities and your horizon a bit more than with only a bachelor. You are still in the age of growing, so be open to change.

*"I essentially look
where I am needed
and where my
interests and
chances bring me."*

EDUCATION

- 2014 - 2015 Master Literature and Cultural Criticism**
Universiteit Utrecht
Scriptie: Countries, Continents, or the Entire Globe as a Home: The Influence of Language and Migration on Identity in Vikram Seth's "Two Lives" and Vladimir Nabokov's "Speak, Memory"
- 2007 - 2012 Bachelor English Language and Culture**
Universiteit Utrecht
Scriptie: The Influence of Science and the Supernatural on the Gothic Novel
- 1999 - 2006 Atheneum**
Trevianum Scholengroep, Sittard
Profiel: NG + Informatica

JOBS

- 2018 - heden Trainee Salarisadministratie**
Quoratio
- 2018 - heden Medewerker Trekkingsrecht**
SVB Sociale Verzekeringsbank
- 2017 - 2018 Medewerker Front Office**
KBO-PCOB
- 2016 - 2017 Medewerker Ledenadministratie**
GroenLinks
- 2015 - 2016 Trainee**
Europees Parlement Bureau Nederland
- 2014 - 2015 (Administratief) Medewerker**
DWARS, GroenLinkse Jongeren
- 2013 - 2014 Medewerker**
Normalehuur.nl
- 2013 - 2014 Medewerker Campagnes**
GroenLinks
- 2011 - 2012 Algemeen Bestuurslid**
Landelijke Studenten Vakbond



photo by angelu hoves

BOOKSHELF



On a gloomy December morning, Tessa and I took the bus to the Majellapark, and we found ourselves in a charming neighborhood in the west of Utrecht. There, Nanne was already waiting for us. We walked to her lovely shared apartment, all the while complaining about rent, the near impossibility of finding a room and the ever-busy last month of the year. After a short lunch, she took us to her room and her precious Atwood-filled shelves, and we started talking about the thing all English students love: books.

What is your most recently read book?

That would be *End Game* by Samuel Beckett. It is set during a catastrophe that happens in the outside world, but the action all takes place inside a little room. In that room, a blind person is seated and he has a servant who cannot sit. His parents are there as well but they have no legs. They are done with each other, but at the same time they depend on one another. It was very bizarre and interesting, but really quite serious and I'm longing for something that is a bit lighter right now. Something that contains a little less depth.

Who is your favourite author?

Margaret Atwood! Many novels she has written are very captivating, and *The Handmaid's Tale* is rather dystopian but overwhelmingly surprising. At the beginning of the novel, I thought that it was something from the past, but it is actually set in the future. The flashbacks are well interwoven in the story, and all the themes that she plays with seem quite close and familiar to the present day. One of her novels, *The Blind Assassin*, was actually given to me by my former English teacher. She offered all her old study books to me and gave this Atwood novel when I came to pick them up, so this book is special to me.

Do you have a least favourite classic?

Yes, I do: *Hard Times* by Charles Dickens. When I was reading it, I did not fully understand what was going on. I was wondering where Dickens wanted to go with the story, and thus I began viewing the book through a more technical lens, with metaphors and such. But that did not really heighten the reading experience.

Do you have a poem that particularly touches you?

I've been rather fond of Shakespeare's sonnet 130, and many people with me. I also like sonnet 40. That one is about the rivalry between the speaker, the fair friend, and someone else. It ends lovely when the speaker states that, above else they have to remain friends. That volta is just so optimistic, especially when contrasted with many other more tragical sonnets.

How would you describe your own taste?

I read a lot of Margaret Atwood, and I really like suspense and thriller novels, but no horror for me. A thing that I appreciate in mystery novels is the tension that urges you to read on, but there are mystery novels that actually make no sense. There is an enjoyable book called *Welcome to Night Vale*, which is thrilling and has a very good synopsis and is actually based on a podcast.

Do you listen a lot to podcasts?

No, not really, only when I'm travelling by train. My favourites are *Welcome to Night Vale* and *Alice isn't Dead*. The latter is amusingly absurd but contains a very thrilling storyline: A truck driver searches across America for the wife she had long assumed was dead, and she encounters all these strange and peculiar things. I also listen to *Tokyo Tales*, which is created by a YouTube couple that I really like, Simon and Martina. It basically recounts the way in which they learn the Japanese language, and they are just such a fun couple to listen to.

What is the saddest book you've ever read?

That would be *A Little Life* by Hanya Yanagihara. It is quite long and complex, but I cried so much while reading it. It is sad yet beautiful, and I read it over a year ago but I still think about the story a lot.

And what is the longest book you've read?

My Norton Shakespeare [laughs, then thinks about the book that has 3536 pages]. But other than that, it would be Brandon Sanderson's *Stormlight Archive*. It is fantasy, and normally I do not read many fantasy novels, but this one is different and very interesting. It contains a clear political dilemma and it is not just a fantasy world that only serves its characters, but resonates with dilemmas in the real world.

"I almost always hate the main characters."

Do you have a favourite movie adaptation?

I might be a bit biased, because of my course in adaptations, but I do not fully agree with the Harry Potter adaptations. Yet, I do enjoy the first one. It is all very lighthearted and new, and you're in the same innocent and unknowing position as Harry. Also, the 2011 Jane Eyre adaptation with Mia Wasikowska and Michael Fassbender. It is a very aesthetically pleasing film.

Which character do you most identify with?

I almost always hate the main characters [laughs again]. I think I most resemble Neville Longbottom. He has really grown a lot over the years and he is comfortable with himself. He does not really care what other people think, that makes life so much easier.

Who are your favourite characters?

I think the protagonist from *The White Tiger* by Aravind Adiga. It was a very different and highly entertaining read, and the main character was a bit of an outlandish person but intriguing still. And Hagrid and McGonagall (from Harry Potter), I love them and Hagrid deserved so much more.

What is the most beautiful book you own, in terms of covers?

If we're talking about the cover, that would be *Peter Pan* by J.M. Barrie and *The Essex Serpent* by Sarah Perry.



What's one author or book, or both, you haven't read yet but would really like to read?

Agatha Christie's *And Then There Were None* [the interviewer fiercely agrees]. It ought to be very thrilling and bone-chilling, and Christie is one of the foremost detective writers of the 20th century. My to-read list is currently not that long, because for this term only, I had to read 12 books (5 for Adapting to the Novel and 7 for Irish Literature). I'm afraid I will get lost if I put too many on it.

What makes a good book according to you?

I think round and well-developed characters can really heighten a story, especially if they have unusual or thought-provoking backstories, even if they are side characters. I simply enjoy it when they have something extra. Apart from that, I prefer more realistic and relatable novels, and inverted tropes, like a twisted 'boy meets girl' or a love triangle. It can deliver a spin on the 'there is no originality' line of thought.

What book would you recommend to your fellow students?

It is not in my bookshelf right now, but *Never Let Me Go* by Nobel-prize winning author Kazuo Ishiguro. The film is rubbish, because while in the novel the coming-of-age is an important and elaborate aspect, it is like literally 5 minutes in the film. They completely changed the profound symbolism the story had. But one of the best things about the novel, the central ethical dilemma, is still present.

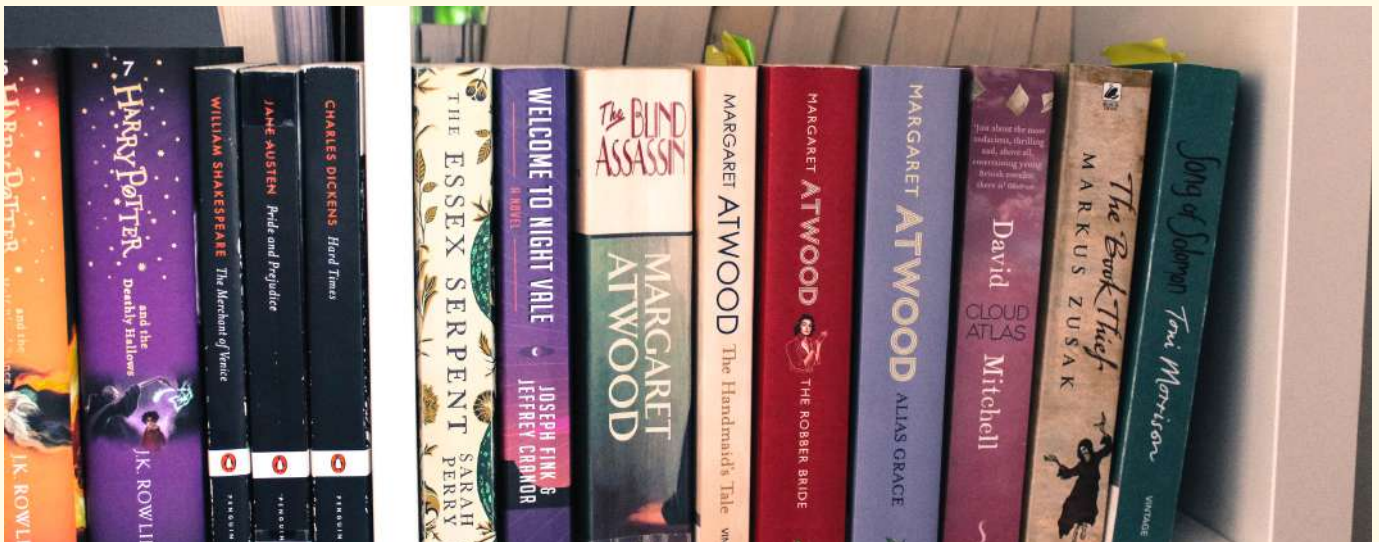




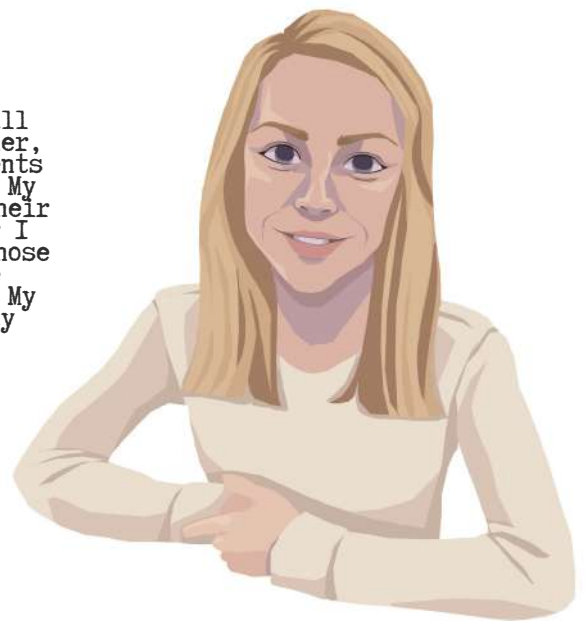
photo by angela kroes

HUMANS OF UTRECHT

Phoenix turned to the streets of Utrecht to deliver our own take on Brandon Stanton's famous "Humans of New York" photo and text series. For this issue, we're doing it with a little twist. Writers Robert, Indie, and Angela have interviewed complete strangers for brief quotes, but instead of publishing their stories next to their photos, we've had illustrators Celonic and Roos draw them! Read on for five unique stories from people you may have very well passed on the streets here.

Annet (28)

"One of my best friends and I are from a small town in Brabant where everyone knows each other, so the community is very close. When her parents died during a plane crash, I was devastated. My own parents grieved too, they had just lost their friends. Witnessing my parents in pain after I told them the news, broke me. It was one of those moments where I realised that nothing else mattered, except being there for loved ones. My family and friends showed intense solidarity through the grief. They still do."



Anne-Sophie (23)

"I grew up in a village close to Utrecht, but you would barely find me in the city until my time as a law student. Initially, the shift from village to city was a bit overwhelming, but as I started finding myself there almost daily, Utrecht came to feel cosy, almost village-like, with all its canals and little streets. Most of my time, however, I spend in the neighbourhood Papendorp, as I currently work forty hours a week at bol.com as a Product Specialist, also managing the shop's merchandising side. It is an amazing company to work for, which shows, as I have been working there for almost three years!"





Michèle (23)

"When I was studying Nutrition & Dietetics in Amsterdam, I went on an exchange to Coventry in England for six months during my bachelor. That's where I met my boyfriend. We're currently at a crossroads in our relationship: will I move to England or will he come live in the Netherlands?"



Chris (24)

"Right now, I'm in my third gap year, and I would really recommend other people to take a gap year as well. What I noticed from people around me - and I had a similar feeling myself - is that at one point you seem to be stuck in this train, and it just goes and goes and goes. You have your next exam, then you move on to the next subject, then you have a holiday and the whole thing starts again. If you're not careful, at one point you'll be at the end of the ride and then you're just like, 'Oh. Well, what now?'"



Michaëla (23)

"Currently I am in my second year of Artificial Intelligence here in Utrecht, and it has been the best possible choice of study for me. The funny thing about it is that we know as much about intelligence and consciousness in robots as we do with humans; almost nothing. What exactly Artificial Intelligence should entail has not even been determined properly yet. Should it be a replica of (super-)human intelligence, or should it be given its own kind of intelligence and if so, what is that supposed to look like? So, the robot uprising is still a while away, because first we have to figure out what it exactly is that we are doing."

DIARY OF A CITY KID

By Roos Speelman

Overture



"Crossroads actually work in the country?"



our resident pencil-merchant



Not used to neighbours



Conclusion

