

Feb. 2022

Dystopia Issue

phoenix



Dystopia Issue

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WORD OF THE BOARD

Tessa van Westerop - Secretary

Dear reader,

When I was asked to write the Word of the Board for this "Dystopian Novels" issue of the Phoenix, I immediately felt a surge in all of my book-related insecurities. Even though I chose the Intertextuality track in my second year, I have not been an avid reader for some time. Many of the "classic" novels, such as 1984 and A Clockwork Orange never drew my attention anyway. This lack of intense interest in literature has caused quite a bit of imposter syndrome over the past few years since I so often find myself surrounded by literature buffs.

However, whereas this imposter syndrome really bothered me during my first year at university, these days I feel much more comfortable admitting that I'm just not that into books anymore. And I think that that is okay. There are many types of book lovers and I do not believe that just because I would not voluntarily read Fahrenheit 451, I am any less valid.

Speaking of dystopian novels I would read though, let me tell you about this one novel that I do really enjoy a lot and which I can get quite passionate about: The Hunger Games. In my opinion, this series is wholly underappreciated in the literature world. It is often discarded as just one of those YA dystopian novels, whereas it is actually, in my humble opinion, the YA dystopian novel. Honestly, (re)read it and I promise you that it slaps!

Okay, that's it for me. If you are reading this and you recognise yourself in what I just wrote, even just a little bit, please remember that you don't have to pretend to like things that you don't actually like. Just be yourself! Enjoy reading the rest of this Phoenix issue!

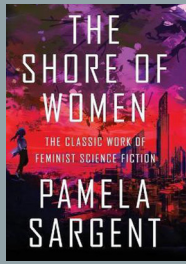
Love,
Tessa

WHAT IS DYSTOPIA?

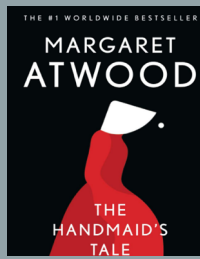
*Written by Helenie Demier, Edited by
Nina van Veen*

Disoriented, chaotic, hostile, suffering, a living hell—those are words which can be used to describe a dystopia. The opposite of a utopia—a happy world where everything is quite literally perfect—a dystopia depicts people that are controlled in every sense of the word. Their thoughts are a product of propaganda and their movements are regulated by fear. In many stories of this genre, the hero tries to destroy the government that controls the people and that encourages the horrible circumstances some communities are forced to live in. It is often set in a futuristic world where technology is vastly advanced. We've all seen what that technology can do in more modern stories like The Hunger Games and The Maze Runner, but there is a whole world of literature, ready for you to be discovered. Some classics in this genre are 1984 by George Orwell and A Clockwork Orange by Anthony Burgess. Many dystopian novels, films, and tv series will be discussed in this issue. All of these works are interesting because they offer a bleak view into the future of humanity and its loss of kindness, but at the same time they open up the conversation about themes such as governmental and environmental issues and the importance of individuality.

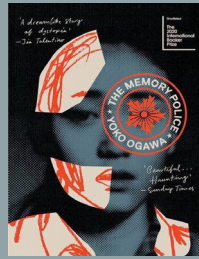
What we want to read



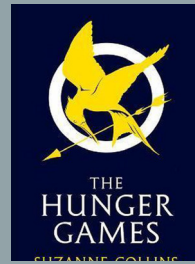
Anna: The Shore of women by Pamela Sargent



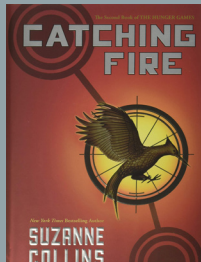
Helenie: The Handmaid's Tale by Margret Atwood



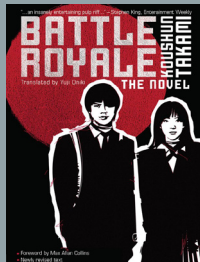
Zuzia: The Memory Police by Yoko Ogawa



Marit: The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins



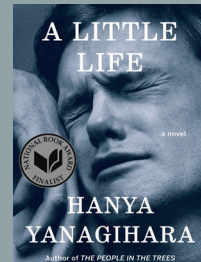
Cecilie: Cathing Fire by Suzanne Collins



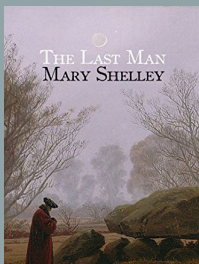
Emilie: Battle Royale by Koushun Takimi



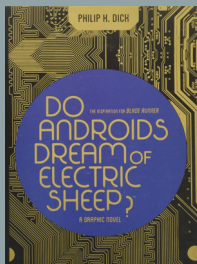
Anna-Maria: The Handmaid's Tale by Margaret Atwood



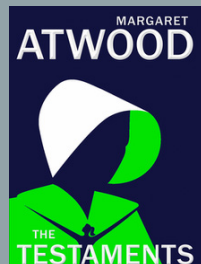
Noa: A Little Life by Hanya Yanagihara



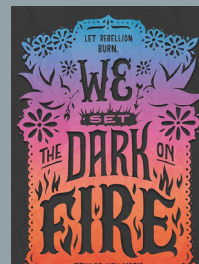
Thijs: The Last Man by Mary Shelley



Jamie: Do Androids Dream of Electric Sheep? by Phillip K Dick



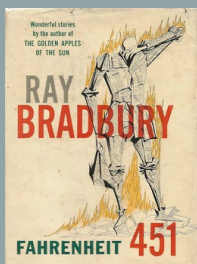
Mohana: The Testaments by Margaret Atwood



Hester: We Set the Dark on Fire by Tehlor Kay Mejia



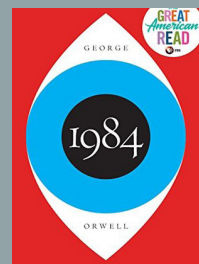
Marijn: The Last Girl Scout by Nathalie Ironside



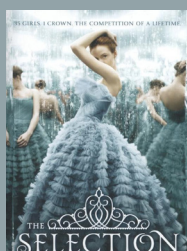
Luka: Farenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury



Eva: Mistborn by Brandon Sanderson



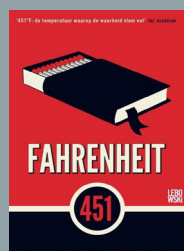
Julia: 1984 by George Orwell



Nina V.: The Selection by Kiera Cass



Leanne: Shatter Me by Tahereh Mafi



Elise: Farenheit 451 by Ray Bradbury



Nina C.: Oryx and Crake by Margaret Atwood



Tessa: All of The Hunger Games by Suzanne Collins



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THE REAPING

Written by Marit Vogels; Edited by Jamie Pilon; Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

It is nearing eleven o'clock when I finally reach the square, which is getting crowded quickly. The mood is tense and uncomfortable. Normally everyone around me would be nervous, sweating and fidgeting, now they're dead silent. With my heart pounding in my chest, I try to remain as calm as humanly possible on Reaping Day. I quickly join the part of the square where all the other 15-year-olds are gathered. Everybody is huddled together, except for me, I stand alone and try to ignore what is about to happen.

My head turns to the stage set up in front of the Justice Building. Memories made here were never happy ones. My mind turns to the whipping my little brother received a few years ago, right here. The only place of happiness found in Panem is my parents' farm. Secretly eating the vegetables and fruits that we grow, is the reason my family has been able to survive. Except for my little brother, who one day got caught eating a piece of a rotten apple. With him being only 10, the whipping was too harsh for him and he died only a few minutes later, his hands still tied to the pole.

The huge glass bowls on the stage give me goosebumps the second I see them. Two balls, each containing the name of a future tribute. Only this time, instead of hundreds of paper slips, each bowl now only contains one. A predetermined tribute, voted by the people of Panem themselves.

As the clock chimes eleven, Montana steps onto the stage. "Welcome to the twenty-fifth annual Hunger Games!" she gleefully exclaimed to the crowd. 'Oh, how exciting! The first quarter quell...' While she looks into the crowd ominously, I notice how several girls are staring at me with a pitiful look in their eyes. But not all, some are smirking, others try to avoid my gaze altogether. We all know whose name is on that paper slip. "Now, as it is the twenty-fifth Hunger Games, a very special one, the rules have been amended. Not me, not the capitol, but you, the people of Panem, voted in your own tributes! Well, District eleven, ladies first." Montana walks over to the almost empty glass bowl and my heart is pounding in my throat. The moment passes quickly, and I almost miss it: the reaping of the female name. A tear rolls down the side of my eye, when I hear Montana confirming my fear all along: "The female tribute for District 11 is... Aira Abera!"

With my heart still pounding, I realise that up until now I had kept my hopes up that any name but my own would be on that paper slip. Yet, unavoidably, it is still mine. No time for crying, now it's time to fight. Show Panem who I am and what I can do. I'll make them regret choosing me as a tribute.

And as they say: *may the odds be ever in your favour.*



THE TRAINING

Written by Eva Biesheuvel – Edited by Luka van den Berg – Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

“You can now start your training,” the slim woman in front of us said. She had just explained to us that the materials that were provided here were only meant for training purposes. Of course, this was a polite way of telling us that we were not allowed to slaughter each other yet with the provided knives. We had to wait just a little bit longer for that. How unfortunate, I ironically thought to myself.

I felt clueless and scared. Most of the other tributes seemed to know what they wanted to practice, and it scared me how excitedly they picked up the provided weapons. I realised that I would tremble if I were to pick up any weapons now, so I decided to walk to the wall furthest away from me, at which a trainer could tell me everything about plants. I knew I probably wouldn’t learn anything new, because I had been taught about plants ever since I was an infant, but I just wanted to go somewhere to calm down.

As I walked to the table at this wall, I saw another tribute, who I recognised as the boy of Eight, approaching it. Being 17, he was one of the older tributes participating, and his age combined with his strong physique scared me. As I approached the table, I could hear the trainer talking to him about edible leaves. And when I stopped to stand next to the boy, I was annoyed to notice that he didn’t even make the effort to see who had joined him. I decided to ignore it, and I had a peek to see which leaves the trainer was talking about.

The trainer said: “They are edible and very filling, you can recognise them by looking at their veins.” She then held up one of the leaves and showed its vein pattern to us by following it with her finger. As she was about to grab some new leaves, I couldn’t contain myself and mumbled: “They are also effective in preventing rabies.” At this, the boy from Eight turned his head to me immediately and took me in for a few seconds. I felt uncomfortable because I couldn’t tell if his certain interest in me was a positive thing. I knew that I did not want to have him against me already. I didn’t have a big chance of winning, but having one of the strongest tributes against me before the games had even started would assure me of my death.

Before I had the time to come to a conclusion about his way of looking at me, he said: “How do you know?” I tried to sound confident but felt myself shaking as I said: “District 11, agriculture, cats to keep the mice away...” I realised that rabies probably wasn’t as common in other districts, and therefore my explanation may not have clarified anything at all for him. After taking me in again, however, he nodded approvingly and then stuck out his hand to me. I took it without thinking, and he said: “I am Irden.”



LET THE GAMES BEGIN

Written by Noa Krimpton, edited by Julia Schuurmans - Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

"Thirty, twenty-nine, twenty-eight." A mechanic voice echoes through the arena. Seconds long, I keep my eyes shut, as if that would postpone the inevitable.

"Twenty, nineteen, eighteen." I take a deep breath and as I breathe in, I can smell the earthy scent of petrichor. In spite of the fact that it is obviously fabricated, it reminds me of home. Don't cry, I tell myself, not in front of Them.

"Ten, nine, eight." I take in my surroundings, a large expanse of trees as far as the eye can stretch. For just one moment, I try to convince myself I am at an advantage. I know forests, I grew up in one, I—

A loud, high-pitched sound interrupts my train of thought. Panic floods my system. What do I do? But my body moves on its own accord, sprinting away from the cornucopia as fast as possible. Stay away from it, Aira, the bloodbath is not worth it.

My feet thump against the earth, the soles of my boots sinking into the mud. I run. For what feels like an eternity, I run. Coughing and sputtering, I come to a halt, resting my palms on my knees as I catch my breath. "Okay," I mutter to myself, "Try to stay calm." In the distance, I can hear the sound of cannons going off. Nine in total.

For a moment, I allow myself to think of Jude, about whether or not he is amongst those nine. I wonder whether he is scared or whether he too thought to be at an advantage with the woods that reminded him of the orchards back home. I scoffed. Not so much as Jude as at myself. An advantage. It feels laughable almost. No one here is at an advantage. Within a week or so, all but one of us will be dead. I will be dead... I shake my head as if to rid myself of the sordid thought. No, don't give up just yet.

However, as I walk through the forests, I can't help but feel overwhelmed with helplessness. I have nothing that could possibly work in my favour. No weapons, no equipment, if someone were to find me right now, it would be over.

Stay calm, now. I force myself to stop walking, to take just one moment to breathe and look around. Surely —

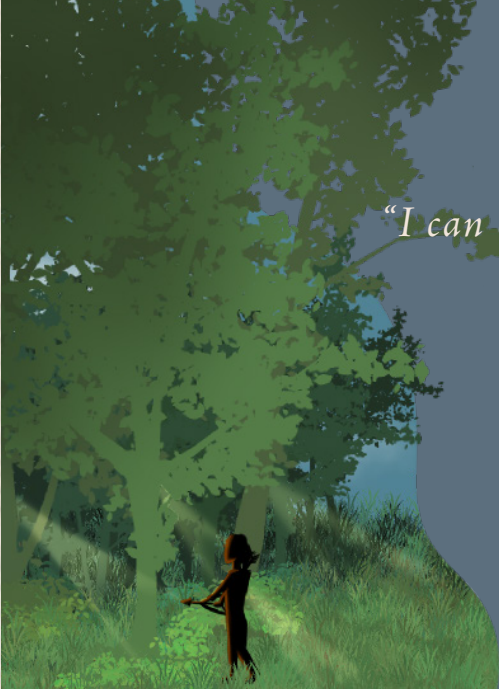
I sense the presence before it announces itself. Somehow, I could feel the displacement of the air. Instinctively, I turn around.

The girl before me, wide-eyed and nervous, draws a knife, pointing it directly at me with a trembling hand. "I'm sorry," she whispers.

I raise my hands in a pitiful defence, but before I can plead, something silver wooshes past me and the girl collapses. I can only stare as the blood starts flowing from the wound on her stomach. The sound of the canon draws me from my stupor and I whip around.

"You're welcome," Irden says. "Grab that dagger, we should get out of here."

"I can only stare as the blood starts flowing from the wound on her stomach."



THE ALLY

Written by Helenie Demir — Edited by Hester Schneider

They had walked to the south of the arena. The weather here was colder than in the mountains where Irden somehow managed to escape the landslide that killed two other tributes. The further they walked, the more he realized that there was a sea. The sound of crashing waves was evident to him. The smell, however... It seemed like a fantasy, something he thought he'd never experience: pure nature.

He and Aira agreed to separate to find food. They were still surrounded by trees and Irden was desperate to find some animals here, or at least an edible plant.

In District 8, Irden barely saw any green. Smoke from the factories clouded the sky and the fresh smell of nature was replaced with chemicals. In a way, being in this arena was a good thing. At least he'd die somewhere prettier than District 8.

But he couldn't die. He wouldn't. Not before those who'd chosen for him to be in the Games would see him survive.

He angrily walked around the forest when he heard a scream.

Aira.

He sprinted to where she was, jumping over tree roots, ducking under low-hanging branches. When he got to her, there was a girl on top of her, holding a knife pointed at her chest. Irden recognized her as the District 7 tribute. Aira tried to push the knife away before it plunged into her heart, but the other girl was stronger.

Without thinking, Irden tackled the girl and pressed his knee on her arm to keep her down. He grabbed the knife from her hand and was ready to slice her throat when an extreme wind hit them from the back.

He was thrown against a tree by the hurricane that came from the sea.

Aira was somewhere out of reach.

The other girl scrambled to her feet while clinging to another tree nearby, slowly making her way to Irden.

In her eyes, he recognized something. Determination, ambition, revenge... It almost made him want to let her live.

But only one person was coming out of this arena alive.

He rose to his feet, his back still against the tree. Water started to reach their ankles and Irden could feel himself slipping away in the mud, but he held his ground firmly and waited for the girl to come to him.

She suddenly rushed towards him, knife in hand. When she was close enough, he ducked and pushed her to the ground in the same position as he had before, but this time his hands closed around her throat. He leaned against the wind so it wouldn't blow him away and squeezed her throat so forcefully that he only stopped when the canon went off.

He got up quickly, not even looking back at the body, and went to search for Aira.

Somehow, they made it to another part of the arena that was unaffected by the hurricane.

"Thanks," panted Aira, catching her breath.

Irden didn't respond. He just looked into the distance, thinking to himself that when the time came, her canon would sound because of him too.

It's nothing personal Aira, not with you anyway.

"In a way, being in this arena was a good thing. At least he'd die somewhere prettier than District 8"

Tea Time

With Jochem Riesthuis

Interview by Anna-Maria Popo, edited by Nina van Veen

For this issue's Tea Time, we invited Jochem Riesthuis. In a Teams meeting, we talked about Jochem's studying experiences in Utrecht and in Chicago, his experiences in teaching at Utrecht University, and we got the chance to get to know him a bit better!

What did you study, and where?

Well, I did my undergrad in Utrecht, in what I would always translate as Liberal Arts. I think that's what it's called now as well. It basically meant that you could pick and choose from the entirety of the Humanities Division. We had a few central courses on things like Cultural Education, Linguistics, and Literary Studies which is still part of it. I did Modern Western Literature as my specialisation, which meant that I could pick classes from the Western European Languages from 1880 onwards. So things like Emile Zola in French, and some in German etc. That was really fun. I did my PhD at the University of Chicago, in Comparative Literature. The American system works a bit differently than ours, in a sense that, you first are given two years of study, then you propose your own research project, and then after those two years you take an oral exam, which was described at the University of Chicago as Beowulf to Virginia Woolf. Basically two thousand years of writing. You get like three hours where people ask you questions about it, and then you write your dissertation.



"I mean it's like you try something and then it works out. It's this idea of saying yes to everything, it really helps sometimes."

So about your PHD, how did you end up in Chicago?

I was working in marketing and then realised that I wasn't having much fun. I wanted to get back into the university and continue studying literature. I looked around and asked my supervisor, who was then the head of literary studies, and he said that it was unlikely that there would be any new places in the Netherlands for at least the next five to ten years. So, I needed to look outside of this country, and the easiest place to find an open PhD spot is the US. Besides, I was working on US literature. We scouted out a few places and then I applied, and basically you go in, you apply, and you take a few tests. You have this whole stack of tests and recommendation letters from different professors. I sent mine into Princeton, Cornell and the University of Chicago and I was accepted at Chicago. The experience was amazing, as Chicago is, because it is this Major League American university, always in the top ten, or in the top five lists in comparative literature. It's a really good school, where I met all these sort of amazing scholars, because Chicago is also nice for them, for visiting professors, because you stay there for like a semester but you're in the middle of the country so you can easily visit New York, and LA, or go to Toronto, and everyone wants to get a guest lectureship for half a year, for instance, because you get to do all this other cool stuff besides teaching.

What are your hobbies?

Well, we have a Disney plus subscription, and I always say that it's for my kids, but I also enjoy it. I do a lot of stuff with my kids, for example, we bike. I don't do anything artistic. It's not about having the time, but it's about having the sort of peace of mind that I don't have right now. So, most of my quote unquote free time is spent being passive. Although, I realised that I was becoming a Theory nerd when I was not feeling so well one of these days and I took out Adorno's theory and I found it relaxing. I love his work, I think he's good, especially now, with Facebook and Twitter etc. I think he would have really torn into social media, and I think his theory is very relevant to what we're all experiencing.

Would you go back, for example as a teacher?

I went back twice, once for a conference and once for a short trip, but with kids it's more difficult. But also, right now I'd be worried. I'm not entirely sure where the US is going in the next couple of years, certainly politically. I mean if I'd been given the chance, four or five years ago, to work at one of the many US universities for half a year to teach or something like that, I would have jumped at the chance. I mean I would have had to arrange something with the family and the children obviously, but generally I would have been very eager to do so.

But it sounds like a great experience, an experience of a lifetime!

Yes, but it's also just having the luck at the right time right. I mean it's like you try something and then it works out. It's this idea of saying yes to everything, it really helps sometimes. It doesn't always work and there are times that you don't get what you want, but it can be this amazing experience and if it doesn't, well you know, you have a little egg on your face and you go on to the next one!

What do you love most about teaching?

I enjoy the interaction very much and that's why I like the fact that we're teaching in person, I really don't like teaching online. I also like it when students realise something, it's moments where they go 'Oh, yeah, right'. Sometimes you know that is going to happen, and you can set it up, and that's really fun too. For instance, I often make students draw maps of the house of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde by Robert Louis Stevenson, because there are relatively detailed descriptions in the book. You draw the outside and the inside and then you realise that it doesn't fit, that the inside is bigger than the outside. So you see students drawing and get those epiphanies and then you can talk about it. This is partly why the book is so uncanny, because it doesn't quite fit there physically, or psychologically. That's why it's so cool to read, and those realisations are the point.

What genre in literature do you enjoy reading/teaching the most, because these can be two different categories?

That is difficult to answer, but I like teaching slave narratives, because I think it's really important. It's a genre that is highly interesting and there's all this stuff that people don't know. It's also probably the most difficult to teach because it's about really horrific experiences and so you often get students who leave during the class or who don't show up for the class or come to you afterwards with tears. However, I'm mostly interested in 20th century, but now I'm teaching 17th century and I discover how much fun Shakespeare is, or Lady Mary Wroth, or Ben Jonson, or 17th century poets who are so interested in these conceits and being clever, and again there are these moments where students sort of turn on like light bulbs. On the other hand, I really like the poetry of Ezra Pound, a 20th century modernist. I dislike the man profoundly. He is probably the worst person (a full blown fascist, follower of Mussolini, horrible anti-Semite) in literature, but he makes this brilliant poetry and he's a sort of central figure in modernism. He helped create *The Wasteland*, where basically TS Eliot is writing the poem and then Ezra Pounds comes by with scissors making an actual poem out of it. His work helps me to understand that great literature is not about making great moral choices. Of course there is great literature that is morally just, and helpful, and liberating. I mean there are authors now that are not great but their texts are great. So we do need to separate the work and then still punish them for the things that they did wrong. For example, Ezra Pound was given an award just after the war, the Bollingen Prize, for his poetry. That was the only time it was awarded by the Library of Congress, because of that controversy. Yale University now gives out the Bollingen.

"The one thing that life has taught me is to always say yes."

Do students change your perspective sometimes?

There are lots of times when students come from very different perspectives, perspectives that are personal. For example, things like gender. There are lots of times where, especially female students, will say 'Look, this isn't what is going on', or 'this doesn't work this way'. Different ethnicity perspectives work out too, there's lots of places where students bring in stuff from their cultural perspective or their personal experiences, and those sorts of things help in opening up. Also, in pop music. I mean I haven't really paid attention to modern pop music for years. The only thing I keep up with is R&B and soul, so when someone brings in new rock or new Latin music then that's interesting, because I don't know that stuff. So, the interaction with the students is important.

Would the reading list be different if it had your favourite books?

There's this book called the Singing Sands by Josephine Tey, which is a detective novel from the 1950's. It's this really cool book (because this detective goes to Scotland to be with his family and he takes the night train and when he leaves in the morning he sees this dead man in the other compartment. That's how the detective story starts, but it has these amazing descriptions of the islands out in the Highlands in Scotland and it's just amazing.) So, every time I don't feel very well, and I'm just stuck in bed, this is one of those books that really comforts me. It's not a really amazing book in other ways, it is very classist, very much the upper class, and mildly derogatory about Scottish people, and yet it's comforting. In that sense, I also like sci-fi. For instance, The Hitch Hiker's Guide to the Galaxy and I like Iain M. Banks, and I read Belgian comics like Robbedoes. It's interesting because it's about the Calvinist tradition in the US, and what happened with Puritans in the 19th and 20th century. This is the thing that we don't read in literature courses, but it's an important part of American culture. There's all this culture around us that we don't know about, and there are amazing things that you can discover.

What would you like to say to past and future students?

The one thing that life has taught me is to always say yes. I was doing theatre in high school, and we were doing a lot of improv and in improv that's the standard rule; to always say yes. If somebody has a weird suggestion you say yes, and you run with it, if you say no there is no improv. That might be a really good way of living your life. If you only do what you need to do, your life will get more boring. Same with teaching. I try all these new ways of getting material across and sometimes it works and sometimes it goes horribly wrong, but you get fun results. What I like about teaching at this level is that you, the students, are fully formed human beings, and you are fun. First year students are more fun three weeks in, than they are at the beginning. They had their first crush, or they've been rejected, or they got too drunk, or something happens somewhere along the way, and then you know that they're ready to read literature. One thing I tend to say to first year students is that not all of this is fun, not all is beautiful, most of the stuff we read is really dark, it's about depression and about loneliness and alienation but it is still amazing, and it's cool, and it's highly intelligent and insightful.

After the last question we continued our interesting conversation for a while before we wrapped up. We would like to thank you, Jochem, for your time and our great conversation!



Dystopia Protagonists

Written by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg – Edited by Anna Preindl

Before diving into the characteristics of dystopian protagonists, it is important to realize that dystopia is interwoven with utopia. It is possible for a world, real or imaginary, to be a utopia for some members and a dystopia for others. An example of this is Panem in *The Hunger Games*, where the citizens of the Capitol live in a utopia, enjoying wealth and eating all the food they can until they throw up. The districts, on the other hand, live in a dystopia, controlled by the Capitol, living in poverty forced to send their children to the reaping each year. While utopian protagonists often come from elsewhere and must be taught why things are the way they are, dystopian protagonists are already living within a system or imagined future and feel trapped by it. What you can often see is that the protagonist will be shoved out of the 'magic circle of humanity' and realise that the system they live in will have to change.

In pretty much every dystopia there is a moment where the protagonist begins to question the system as they start learning truths about their world or they start understanding the way power operates within their society. There is usually a moment where the dystopian protagonist feels alienated or is unable to adjust to this system, which then, in turn, allows the reader to understand the messed up system and the world the protagonist lives in. This alienation and need for change, in most cases, leads to resistance or rebellion. Although, this is not always successful... Another theme that returns in many dystopias is the use of language, personal and social memory, through which the dystopian protagonist is able to regain a little bit of power and control. Though in the end, after hellfire has rained down on their world and everything seems to be over, the protagonist may just end up replacing the original system, albeit in a slightly different form.

Now... think of a dystopia, ANY dystopia. How many boxes did the novel and its protagonist tick when looking back? Did you get them all? I know I did...

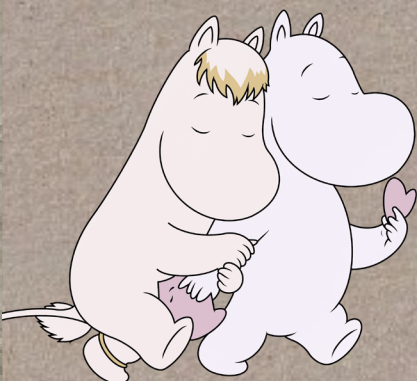
WORD OF THE MONTH

Written by Julia Schuurmans – illustrated by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg

Ardour /'ɑ:də/ - Noun

1. Fierce or burning heat; concrete fire, flame.
2. figurative. Heat of passion or desire, vehemence, ardent desire; warmth of emotion, zeal, fervour, eagerness, enthusiasm.

Ardour, a word very similar to the French amour, seems fitting for February. Valentine's day is just around the corner, even though you might think it more of a commercial stunt than anything special. Still, I think that love is something worth celebrating. Maybe not with your typical red roses and boxes of chocolates. But love for yourself, or for others, your loved ones or the things you love to do. It doesn't surprise me that words meaning love are often also related to fire and heat. Love is passion; love makes us feel, not just romantically. Love does something to us, that's why we should treasure it. Let us share our ardour this month.



The Power is in the Word: The Handmaid's Tale and Orwell's 1984

Written by Mohana Zwaga – Edited by Julia Schuurmans

As two of the perhaps most famous works of dystopian fiction, *The Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood and *1984* by George Orwell are likely to come up in discussions on totalitarian language. Published in 1985, *The Handmaid's Tale* was, according to its author, inspired by the language usage of Orwell's *1984*. Both novels present a similar warning against the threats of totalitarianism in a near future. They show how this totalitarian power controls not only the lives but also the thoughts of its people.

In *1984*, we're introduced to the principle of Newspeak, a language that the controlling power vaguely called "The Party" introduced as a required replacement for Standard English (Oldspeak). Newspeak would be in full use among the Party members by 2050. It was to have a simplified grammar and severely restricted vocabulary, designed to limit people's ability to think and articulate 'subversive' things such as self-expression, personal identity and even free will. These concepts, those that make us individual human beings, are criminalized as thoughtcrime, as they contradict the state's orthodox ideology.

In *The Handmaid's Tale*, we are also introduced to a 'changed' form of communication among the inhabitants of the newborn state of Gilead. Here, people are divided strictly relating to their task or rank. Some are renamed, as per example the handmaids, who are to birth children for the commanders and their wives. This is also the case for the novel's main character, June, who is now 'Offred' (Of-Fred). *The Handmaid's Tale* focuses mainly on the oppression of women, who in this society are not to read or write (or severe punishment will follow). Equally, they use greetings and conversations such as "blessed be the fruit" and "under his Eye". In the novel, 'the Eye' is the name of the secret police and as such the phrase is a reminder that people are constantly monitored by both a God, who has – essentially – forsaken them, as by the state itself. So, language and this phrase specifically become a fear tactic, used as frequently and simply as 'hello': a constant reminder, should citizens misbehave.

However, the stories differ regarding the ending and protagonists' position. Offred is pushed to the political margins of Gilead and is forbidden to read and write. Winston, on the other hand, reads and writes continually at the 'Ministry of Truth', as he is employed to destroy historical records and to forge new historical 'facts' according to the dictates of the Party propaganda machine. In terms of endings, Atwood's novel suggests Offred's escape, whereas Winston and his lover Julia will never, both brainwashed into loving 'Big Brother'.



Both novels show how language and names can be used to oppress and control. Orwell believed this to be a very 'real' problem:

"The great enemy of clear language is insincerity. (...) When the general atmosphere is bad, language must suffer. I should expect to find (...) that the German, Russian and Italian languages have all deteriorated in the last ten or fifteen years, as a result of dictatorship. But if thought corrupts language, language can also corrupt thought." (Orwell 1946).

What makes The Maze Runner Special? - A Look into the Themes of a Dystopian World.

*Spoiler alerts for The Maze Runner

Written by Anna Maria Popo, illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff, edited by Luka van den Berg

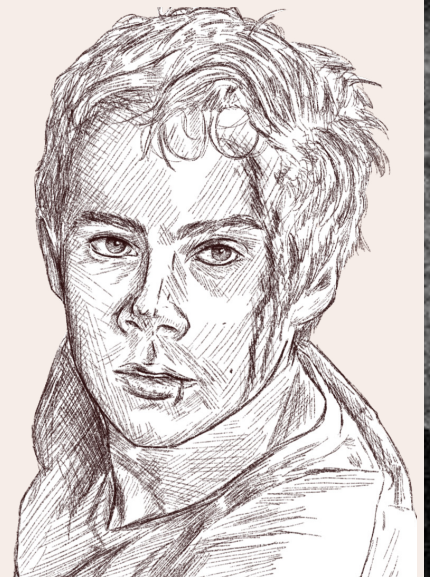
The Maze Runner has its own significant place in the genre of the young adult dystopia. The author of the popular novels has said himself that his books were inspired by his childhood memories, and more specifically when he watched Stephen King's *The Shining*, hence why towards the end of the movie there is a maze. And from his imagination, James Dashner brought forward a world that we, readers, and fans of dystopia, get to enjoy.

The Maze Runner feels like a flash-forward moment into the future, as a dystopia themed novel would do. It puts us in a futuristic world, where we see Thomas and the rest of the characters on their journey to fight injustice in the world they are in. However, The Maze Runner touches upon significant themes that are worth mentioning, which are what makes these books so popular.

The first thing that The Maze Runner brings to our attention, is the theme of memory and sense of identity. Thomas, like all the characters, loses his memory before he goes into the Glade. However, with no memories of the past, Thomas has no sense of who he is, or who he is supposed to be. When he sees Teresa, he has this innate feeling that he can trust her, even though he does not remember her. We see later on that Thomas and Teresa were close friends, as we get to see glimpses of Thomas' memories. What that shows us is that our personal relationships contribute a lot to who we are, and it is not easy to forget our true selves.

The novels also emphasise the two sides of sacrifice, one side being self-sacrifice. In their attempts to escape the maze, many Gladers lose their lives, in order for some others to succeed. One of them is our sweet little Chuck, who sacrifices himself in order to save Thomas. Thomas, at first feeling guilty, realises that it is his responsibility to not let Chuck's sacrifice go to waste. In contrast, we also see the theme of sacrifice of people who do not do so by choice. In their mission to create a safer and more sustainable world, the Creators, or WCKD, by erasing the memories of the teenagers that enter the maze, leave them no choice but to put themselves in danger as a sacrifice for this mission.

Last but not least, is the theme of hope. Every dystopia novel shows a world, either imaginable or prophetic, which involves injustice and suffering. However, hope is what drives our protagonists to get on with their journey. In The Maze Runner, the Gladers find hope in the face of Thomas. When Thomas arrives, he brings a new perspective as to how they should view the shifting of the maze. While the Gladers find it chaotic and start to lose hope, Thomas shows them that they should seek patterns in those changes. The maze itself is a symbol of chaos but also has a hidden order in it that Thomas shows to the rest. And with that, he brings hope that there is another end to this maze, and that is what makes the rest of our protagonists follow him. These are a few of the themes we get to see in The Maze Runner, which make the novels even more enjoyable to read over time.



Bookshelf

With Marit Vogels

Written by Eva Biesheuvel – Edited by Anna Preindl

When we decided that this Phoenix issue was going to be about dystopias, it was immediately clear who would have to be interviewed for this issue's Bookshelf: Marit, of course! Not only is Marit our editor-in-chief, but she is also one of the biggest dystopian novel fans out there. That was therefore the plan, on a very dreary day during the Christmas Break, when I called Marit to ask her everything about her favourite books.



What is your favourite dystopian novel and why?

The Hunger Games. It was the very first novel I loved. It was my steppingstone from the Dutch Hoe overleef ik series into young adult fiction, and it got me into reading. It was such a difference from the books I was reading at the time. I was reading books like Hoe overleef ik and Achtste groepers huilen niet and then suddenly I was reading about kids murdering each other. My mom initially even took the first Hunger Games book away because of my age.

What is your favourite book?

That would also be The Hunger Games trilogy. But I've started loving other books now as well. Girl, Woman, Other is also one of my favourite books. I also read a lot of sci-fi and I think The Hunger Games lead to that, for sci-fi Skyward is one of my favourite books.

Which The Hunger Games novel was your favourite when you first read it, and which one is your favourite now?

I think as a kid I really liked the first one because it got me started. Most people don't like Mockingjay, but I think Mockingjay is the novel you start appreciating when you get older. I think you have to grow up before you can appreciate it and can see how good the book is written. But for overall enjoyment, I would have to say Catching Fire. I think it introduces the most interesting characters in the series.

What dystopian novel should never have been written?

Oh wow, that is a very hard question, because I tend to love a lot of dystopias. I hated the last movie from The Maze Runner series though, but I loved the book. The Maze Runner books are really good and fast-paced.

If you would have to live in one dystopian world, which one would you pick?

I think I would like to live in the world of The Testing. In The Testing you go to this university and you have to take exams, but the exams can be lethal, so if you fail you die. I'd like the university part of it because if you do succeed you get a great education and a great future.

Who is your favourite dystopian character?

I do have to turn to The Hunger Games. I really like Katniss because of the way she grows, but I think the way she acts is quite problematic, yet that makes her character even more interesting. I also love Haymitch, I think he is a bit underrated. Haymitch goes through the biggest change throughout the series. He goes from the drunk "I don't care about life" person, to someone who wants to save Peeta and Katniss.

What was the last book you read for fun?

I'm currently reading *Take a Hint*, Dani Brown and I love it. I've been in quite a reading slump this whole year. I've had trouble finishing books a lot. I just wanted to have something light, funny and sexy in between and I think that is the best book for that.

Which book are you most ashamed of for not reading?

It used to be *Harry Potter*, but I've read that now. I think that would be either 1984 or the last four books of the *Throne of Glass* series. Thus far I've only read four out of eight books of that series.

If you could recommend me one of your books which one would it be?

Maybe *Phobos*, which is originally a French book. I've read it in Dutch as it wasn't translated to English at the time. It's about space, romance and a little bit of politics. It's actually the perfect combination for me. It used to be a trilogy, but the author wrote more books eventually. One book is to be read as the fourth instalment, the fifth book goes with more detail into the characters. The last book hasn't been translated to either Dutch or English, though, and my French isn't that good. I would also recommend *Red Rising*, which is also a science fiction book and it's very political. It's about this community that lives on Mars. I was so baffled by it. I kind of got the same reaction as I got after first reading *The Hunger Games*.

Which book are you looking forward to reading next?

Girlhood is one of the books I would really like to read. I'm really interested in gender roles, sexuality and feminism, and I've read that *Girlhood* captures that all really well. I'm really curious to learn more about it. I also would love to read *The Book Thief*. I've recently bought it because I've been recommended it so much recently. Death is the narrator of it, so it kind of fits what I like. And of course, a read that needs to be on this list, I am going to say it: a re-read of *The Hunger Games*.

What is your favourite film adaptation? (It's going to be *Catching Fire*, isn't it?)

I really love watching movies and comparing stuff and being critical about it. I've always said I love *Catching Fire* because it stays true to the books so much. Not a lot of book to movie adaptations are like that. That is why I do want to pick that one, I'm so predictable... I'm thinking if there is anything else. I know some books do have good adaptations in that they stay true to the book, but not in a way that I think: 'Wow it's the best ever'. I think *Me Before You* has a good adaption and *The Fault in our Stars* has a really good adaption as well.

Which author have you read the most books of?

I think Alice Oseman. I've almost read every book of hers, except for one. I do really enjoy her books and I think they talk about heavy subjects in a light-hearted way. You can learn about the heavy subjects, but it's not the main focus, so the characters have a life around that topic as well. I think she does that really well.

Which book are you most ashamed of for not reading?

I have to admit that I don't like a lot of the books that I've had to read for school. I'm such a mood reader and I'm often not in the mood to read particular books, so I just enjoy it less. If the books I've read for Phoenix count then it would have to be *The Secret History*. If that doesn't count it would be a short story we've read for one of the earliest courses, *Boys and Girls* by Alice Munro. I liked that story because it was a good story representing gender roles.

After that question, we wrapped up the interview by wishing each other a lovely New Year's Eve. Marit, thank you for sharing your love for dystopian novels with me, and for making me realise that I have to re-read The Hunger Games. It was a pleasure.



The Blip and the Great Crumble: Eco-fascism in Dystopia

Written by Hester Schneider – Edited by Marit Vogels – Illustrated by Marijn van de Visser

Many will be able to relate climate disaster to dystopian novels or films in one way or another, whether it be through *Wall-E*, *The Matrix*, or *The Hunger Games*. But do you know what eco-fascism is? And how it is related to dystopias? Although they stretch the boundaries of dystopian quite a bit, with less dominant but still present dystopian themes, I'd like to use the popular Marvel Cinematic Universe (MCU) and the successful Netflix series *Sweet Tooth* to explain. But first a more basic explanation: Eco-fascism has been defined as “an ideology [...], which blames the demise of the environment on overpopulation, immigration, and over-industrialization, problems that ... could be partly remedied through the mass murder of refugees in Western countries”. Climate change is thus seen as a “divine purging”.



In *Avengers: Infinity War* Thanos snaps his fingers while wielding the infinity stones, causing the extermination of half of all life in the universe. Thanos argues the population should be cut down to a manageable amount so he could rule properly. In other words, Thanos justifies his actions by allegedly ‘saving’ the universe from overpopulation. Sound familiar? Exactly, rather than fairly redistributing wealth, land, and resources, Thanos ventures into eco-fascism and kills many, indiscriminately.

Although *Sweet Tooth* presents a backdrop of many beautiful nature shots, it is essentially post-apocalyptic. In *Sweet Tooth*,

two things happened simultaneously: a deadly virus (H5G9) arrived out of nowhere, and every newborn became a human-animal hybrid. These two events lead to the Great Crumble, after which nature thrives but society crumbles. Many characters romanticise the apocalypse, see it as nature’s “punishment” for the mistreatment of the Earth, while ignoring the wealth-hoarding and subsequent inequality which lead to climate disaster in the first place. The plot twist, however, reveals that (spoilers!) the pandemic and hybrid births were man-made.

Sweet Tooth criticises the notion that human suffering is a result of overpopulation. Instead, it’s caused by an unequal distribution of resources, stemming from capitalism and colonialism, with the wealthy few profiting as the marginalised continue to suffer. *Sweet Tooth* also shows the disturbing, unfiltered reality of how the eco-fascist rich do whatever they can to protect themselves, ignoring the violence necessary to maintain that lifestyle. One of the main protagonists (Rani) contracts the Sickness, and she and her husband (Dr. Aditya Singh) do everything in their power to hide her illness from their neighbours. In this neighbourhood, one group decides to kill anyone in their wealthy community who is infected. Exploiting the poor and polluting their living environments wasn’t possible anymore, as the lower classes had been wiped out by the Great Crumble first. As a result, the rich turned on each other.

We won’t have to fear that Thanos’ Snap becomes reality (or will we?), but *Sweet Tooth* hits closer to home with its topicality of pandemics and ecofascism. If this article piqued your interest, you might like the newly premiered film *Don’t Look Up*, which, although not perfect, also strikes a nerve.

The Lorax: Once-ler Upon a Time

Written by Thijs Biezen; Edited by Jamie Pilon, Illustrated by Marijn van de Visser

Come closer, come closer, for only for the meagre price of fifteen cents, a nail, and the shell of a great-great-great-grandfather snail, I will tell you about Dr. Seuss' The Lorax. It's a story that starts quite dreary, with a boy finding himself on the Street of the Lifted Lorax surrounded by grey grass and an overall depressing environment, before he seeks out the Once-ler, who is almost reminiscent of the Grinch, with his fuzzy, green hands. But unlike his green thumbs would imply, the Once-ler was far from gentle with nature, as he goes on to tell. He had an idea, which led to the cutting of a tree, followed by the appearance of the voiced-by-Danny-DeVito creature called the Lorax. The world now appears in sharp contrast with what it was shown to look like in the first few pages, for now there are trees, fluffy and colourful, with happy critters playing underneath them. When the last tree falls, the Lorax lifts himself by the seat of his pants, and ascends, leaving the Once-ler only with one word to ponder: "UNLESS." When he finishes his tale, the Once-ler throws the last Truffula seed down to the boy, thereby sharing with us the message of this dystopian children's story: unless the generations of children who read this story growing up care an awful lot, nothing is going to get better. In the absence of the Lorax, we'll have to be the ones who speak for the trees, for the trees have no tongues.



A Clockwork Orange

Written by Anna Preindl, Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen, Edited by Anna Maria Popo

Those who are taking the Adapting to the Novel course this year, are surely familiar with Anthony Burgess' early 1960s dystopian work: A Clockwork Orange. This particular dystopia poses questions of morality and twists the portrayal of violence. Initially, a scene of a world with no law and order is set, as the houseless man perceives it. He utters this as a response to why his will to live ceased. Moreover, those who are interested in linguistics will also thoroughly enjoy the book, and the movie as Burgess anglicises Russian as an interesting layer of youth jargon, called Nadsat. Our protagonist, Alex, fills his free time together with his droogs, drinking spiked milk at the Korova milk bar, mixed with a selection of drugs. All fired up, they go out on the town and brutally hurt innocent people in the most senseless ways.

"If a man doesn't have the ability to choose anymore to act out of good or bad intentions, does he cease to be a man?"

The central dilemma presented in this version of a dystopian Britain is that if a man doesn't have the ability to choose anymore to act out of good, or bad intentions, does he cease to be a man? While protagonist Alex displays grade-A sociopathic behaviour, it is suggested that he is a victim of modern times, proposing that he might only be a product of the society he lives in. What is there to adhere to in a post-apocalyptic world with nothing to live for? For those who haven't watched it, be warned of gang-rape scenes, if that were something you would rather avoid. All in all, it sure is a captivating read and watch, yet ever so horrifying.



LAOCOON

Written by Thijs Biezen, Illustrated by Elise Brouwer

walking along the beach; waves lap at my feet
delivering driftwood like a dog playing fetch
carrying it like fire in gods' defiance

far off out to see, there I am, clutching a buoy
but I free a hand and wave to myself
in warning or greeting? I cannot tell



overhead there's seagulls flying
cawing merrily for a feast unlike any other
they have seen in their lives

it's not like prometheus and the eagle
there is no honour or grace about it
the gulls drop into a dive, one and all

I watch the antithesis of tantalus
chewed by the fruits of zeus' great tree
and swallowed by poseidon's roiling waves

snakes curdle out of the foamy tops;
avalanches from melting glaciers
engulf and pull me down to the sand

I am dragged into the current
as I shout my prophecy for all to hear
and the dogs build a horse of driftwood

they chain me to the buoy far out
I can see myself walk onto the beach
I shout and shout but no one answers

as gulls and dogs tear me apart.

Look Beyond the Surface: A Dive into Japanese Dystopia

Written by Anna Maria Popo, Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen, Edited by Hester Schneider

What keeps readers going back for more dystopian novels? For some readers, they are comforting, for some they might be a prophecy for a chaotic, yet near, future. However, for others, they can be inspiring, with their bold and rebellious heroes and heroines. We have all enjoyed them throughout time.

If you hear 'dystopia' and you immediately think of *The Hunger Games* or *The Maze Runner*, I will not blame you, we are thinking the same thing! But if we dig a little bit beyond the surface, there are more dystopian novels to discover. A part of the dystopian genre that is worth mentioning is Japanese Dystopia, which has its own gems. Let's start with *The Memory Police* by Yoko Ogawa: things disappear, and so do memories. Those who can remember, have to face the Memory Police. Through this novel, Ogawa suggests how one should remember their history to guide them in the future.

Second on the list, is Haruki Murakami's *1Q84*, a novel that deals with oppressive religious systems and abuse. With the title inspired by Orwell's *1984*, it is a novel that touches on harsh situations even in our reality. way.

Then, last but not least, this list includes *The Last Children of Tokyo* by Yoko Tawada. The characters are situated in Japan, where cities are abandoned, and the country has been isolated from the rest of the world. The author reflects on the concerns of an ageing population and on the nationalism of the country, in her own amazing way.

If there is something that dystopian novels have taught us, no matter how obscure and bleak the future looks like, there is always hope. And that's why we keep going back for more!

Finnick Odair, the Tragic Counterpart of Katniss Everdeen

Written by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg; Edited by Hester Schneider

We first meet Capitol Heartthrob Finnick Odair in *Catching Fire* during the Tribute Parade ahead of the Third Quarter Quell. The charming District 4 victor quickly found his way to our hearts, but have you ever noticed how many parallels there are between Finnick and our favourite dystopian heroine, Katniss Everdeen?

Both characters resist Snow's terror by joining the rebellion, but they do so in their own ways. Finnick by collecting secrets on Snow for later use, rather than accepting the gifts his so-called lover brought him out of guilt, and Katniss by becoming the Mockingjay, the symbol of the revolution.

Another parallel between the two can be found in their relationship. The two meet their soulmates through the Games. Katniss got to compete alongside Peeta in the 74th Hunger Games, whereas Finnick had become the mentor of the District 4 tributes by the time Annie had become a tribute.

Although these couples' relationships resemble each other, it is important to know that Katniss and Peeta's relationship was out in the open, for everyone to see. While Finnick wanted to keep his relationship with Annie a secret in fear that Snow might try to hurt her.

Katniss and Finnick went into the Quarter Quell reaping with the same goal, to save their significant other. In Finnick's case this seemed tragic when Annie's name was called out, however, this was resolved when Mags volunteered to go into the arena instead of Finnick's beloved Annie. Katniss on the other hand was not so lucky. A sign of relief came over her when Haymitch's name was reaped, but tragedy struck when Peeta volunteered.

The interesting thing is that even though they are quite similar relationship-wise and in their way of wanting to take care of and protect their soulmate, they initially resented one another. Finnick because he was convinced that Katniss was faking her relationship with Peeta, although this came to an end rather quickly when Peeta almost died running into a forcefield. Katniss on the other hand saw Finnick as an arrogant prick with an abundance of lovers. Luckily that view of Finnick changed once she saw how much Finnick cared about Annie.

When their beloved are taken by the Capitol, both are sick with worry. Finnick deals with this through tying knots to repress the trauma and worry, which he then teaches Katniss, who starts tying knots too. While their loved ones are held in the Capitol, Katniss and Finnick take care of each other as they are now both left without the person they find solace in during troubling times. The lack of their significant other ties them closer together.

Despite Peeta, after the hijacking, and Annie, after her first Games, being traumatised, Finnick and Katniss stick with them, no matter what. Both couples married their sweethearts and went on to have children.

This may sound like a wonderful ending, but Finnick's fairytale ended in a tragedy, while Katniss managed to get out along with Peeta despite losing many others along the way. Finnick never got to meet his son, while Katniss eventually still managed to raise a family. The only positive part is that Finnick is no longer suffering, whereas Katniss is trying to make lists in her head to cope with what she went through.

Finnick and Katniss mirror each other in a multitude of ways, despite ending up suffering different fates. Finnick's story is more tragic when looking at how Annie is left behind. Whereas for Katniss, Finnick's fate might have been easier as Katniss is still confronted with loss and trauma. Finnick and Katniss represent the two outcomes that either of their lives could have led to; one dead, and the other traumatised. There's no saying who ended up suffering a 'worse' fate. What is admirable about these two is their willingness to sacrifice themselves for the ones they love, no matter the consequences.

ALBIONEERS ABROAD: DUBLIN, UCD

Written by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg; Edited by Luka van den Berg; Illustrated / photos by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg

When looking back at my time at UCD, all I can do is smile. Spending a semester abroad in Dublin is honestly the best choice I've ever made. This is funny as, initially, I thought I would've ended up somewhere in a Nordic country.

I had my heart set on Helsinki initially, as I desperately wanted to be surrounded by and take courses on my beloved Moomins. But... there were no Moomin courses. Bummer.

Okay, Finland wasn't going to work, then where could I go? At this point, the idea of taking a course on Moomins was still in the back of my mind, although I figured that wouldn't really be an option outside of Nordic countries. So, I decided to look for children's literature, which had become a comforting thing throughout the pandemic, and I realised that that's what I wanted to learn more about!

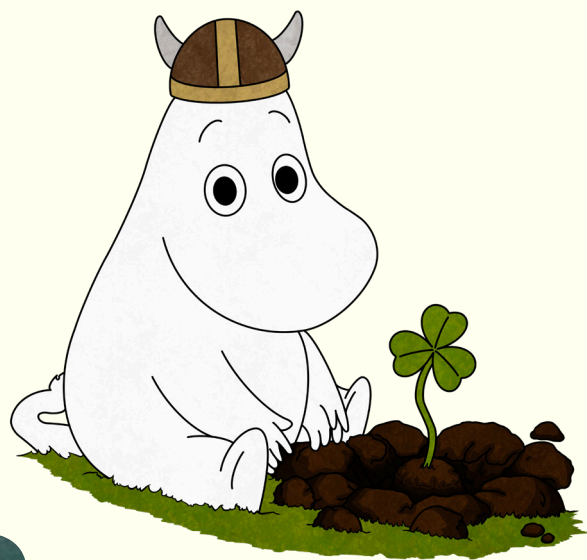
Up next is Apocalypse Then! If you're into literature that's dramatic, melancholic and contains a healthy dose of the looming threat of the end of the world - then you're in the right place. I've always loved studying medieval literature and for this one, we got to look at how the apocalypse features in medieval literature. It was so incredibly fascinating, especially as the Vikings were in 90% of the texts. And if you know me... well, then you'll know about my love for Vikings and Nordic mythology.

The final course I took at UCD definitely fed my need for wanting to learn more about the Vikings. Vikings in the Celtic World introduced me to the Celtic point of view and the influence of the Vikings on the Celtic world - which was cool and very different from the Scandinavian view and history I had encountered ever since I was little.

Of course, studying at UCD was not just studying. I met some amazing people, most notably Adin, Hannah and Galane. My favourite memory is probably playing beer pong (with water - stay hydrated kids) with Adin and Hannah while K3 and Lukas Graham were playing on speakers. A close second is rolling down a hill with those two in Blackrock Park which definitely fuelled my inner child.

I also did spend a fair amount of my time in bookstores. I definitely ended up filling a fair few Hodges Figgis stamp cards. But hey how can you not, considering Dublin is the city of literature?

Now that I'm home again I definitely miss Dublin itself, the charming city that I ended up falling in love with more than I thought I would have. The countless bookstores and their amazing selections - especially compared to most Dutch bookstores (books written in English that is!!). And of course, the people I've met. But that being said, I'm happy to be back home again, awaiting the next adventure!



“Dublin is a city full of good times”

PHOENIX RANKS: UNDERRATED DYSTOPIAS

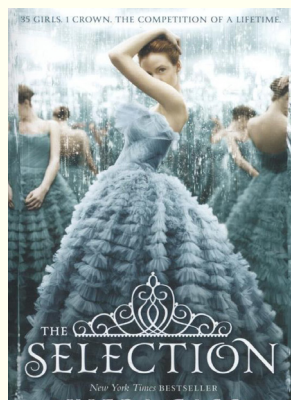
Written by Marit Vogels, edited by Julia Schuurmans

For this Phoenix Ranks, I chose some of my favourite underrated dystopias! I read these books in the years when I discovered my love for reading, so my reviews might be a little biased! Personally, I love books that contain some sort of truth, a piece of reality, yet still, feel like it is impossible in our real world. These novels all have in common that they suck you in, hold you tight and will make your head spin for a few days after finishing it. Proceed at your own risk :)



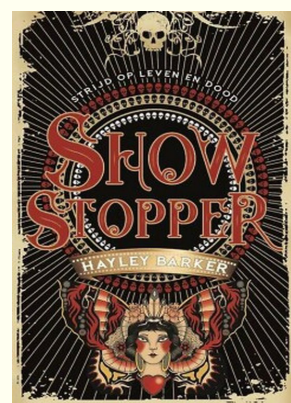
The Testing Trilogy by Joelle Charbonneau

It is a great honour to be chosen as a candidate for the Testing. If you pass the Tests, you will receive a prime spot at the University. If you fail the Tests, your wrong answers will be penalized with death. This competition for knowledge and death is a perfect dystopia for every student. This trilogy combines universities, knowledge, mystery, and death in a new and captivating way. These novels will be your best motivation to start studying and get that degree! It is full of amazing quotes about leadership, learning and not giving up! The tests in this book are somewhat similar to The Hunger Games and the Dauntless Initiation in Divergent, but these novels are still unique and intriguing on their own.



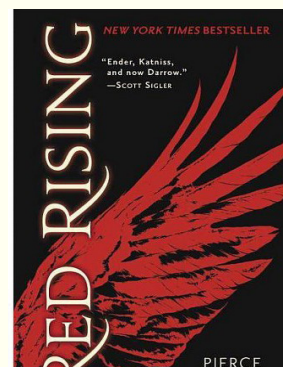
The Selection by Kiera Cass

If you like to be swept away by a romantic, mesmerizing bachelorette style story, then The Selection will be your escape. This book is a true guilty pleasure for me since the writing nor the characters were the best I have ever read. But this story was highly entertaining! I could not stop turning the page and ended up finishing it in a day. The book contains a new society, a prince romance, ballgowns and friendship. The novels are light, entertaining and full of plot twists. You will either hate it or love it.



Showstopper by Hayley Barks

Trigger warning: this book does address racism and talks negatively about immigrants. This near-future novel takes place in a new society where immigrants perform in a lethal Circus. Either perform well or die. This dystopia novel is super-fast-paced, combined with short chapters, thus making sure you never have time to catch your breath. While romance is part of the story, the true subplot in this novel is the friendship and family bond these characters have. It is truly heart-warming and inspiring to see how our main characters are able to show love in a very awful situation.



Red Rising by Pierce Brown

Science fiction, a new society, a whole different set of rules. Flashing forward to a few hundred years into the future, we meet Darrow, a mine worker on the planet Mars. An important element in this novel is the training and competition element. This competition revolves around strength, politics and military strategy. A lethal combination. The space/science fiction element makes this book extra interesting and makes you wonder if this could really be our future someday.

Margaret Atwood on Dystopia

Written by Nina Carsten - Illustrated by Tessa de Bosschere - Edited by Anna Preindl

If you hear the word dystopian, one would immediately think about the *The Hunger Games*, *Divergent* and *The Maze Runner*: trilogies that shaped the YA genre forever and made reading dystopian novels accessible for young readers. If you ask older readers, they might say Margaret Atwood. The eighty two year old author is one of the most influential authors of this day and time and has written the bestsellers *The Handmaid's Tale* and the *Oryx And Crake* trilogy. Both fall into the genre 'dystopian' and most likely paved the way for many dystopian novels written in the past 20 years.

Dystopian is a very interesting genre, and it basically means a futuristic state where there is great injustice or suffering. Most authors write about a world that does not exist (e.g. *The Hunger Games*) or write about this world in the very far future (e.g. *The Maze Runner*). However, the interesting part about Margaret Atwood's dystopian novels is how they seem so likely to happen. Let's take a look at *The Handmaid's Tale*, for example. The book is about a futuristic United States of America called the Republic of Gilead. In this Republic, women's rights have been brought down to reproduce. Now we hope that our society will never get that far but if you look at the laws on abortion in Texas, you will never look at *The Handmaid's Tale* the same without feeling a tad uneasy. What is even scarier to know, is that *The Handmaid's Tale* was only written in 1985. And 40 years later, we already see similar things happening as in the story. That same uneasiness can be applied while reading *Oryx And Crake*. In this post - apocalyptic world, the world as we know it is ruined by multinational corporations and only rich people who benefit from said corporations. Sound familiar? I would think so.

Many people are curious to know what makes Atwood's writing style so interesting. Her dystopian novels are for many the blueprint of their own novel. She stands out because her novels have that little hint of realism woven into the story. In an interview she did with *Broadly*, she tells the interviewer that "you don't write those books because you hope these things will happen. You write those books because you think they might happen. But you would rather they didn't."

Atwood is also famous for the amount of research that she does for these sorts of scenarios. For *Oryx And Crake* she talked to tons and tons of people about climate change, pandemics and genetic engineering. For *The Handmaid's Tale* Atwood talked to health care specialists and human rights. All this information she processes in her stories, and that is what makes them all so plausible. Comparing Margaret Atwood to young adult dystopians is not really fair, of course.

Not every dystopian book needs to be realistic to be fun to read. But it is interesting to see how Atwood's dystopian novels are so well thought out and so well received by the public.



Dystopia Playlists

Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauf

ANNA-MARIA



1. Atlas, "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire" - Coldplay
2. Who We Are From "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire" Soundtrack - Imagine Dragons
3. Section 7 - John Paesano, American Federation of Musicians
4. The Hanging Tree - Jennifer Lawrence
5. Holes In The Sky - From The "Insurgent" Soundtrack
6. Everybody Wants To Rule The World From "The Hunger Games: Catching Fire" Soundtrack - Lorde
7. Battle Cry - Imagine Dragons
8. Yellow Flicker Beat - Lorde
9. Victory - James Newton Howard
10. There Are Worse Games To Play The Hunger Games Suite From "The Hunger Games: Mockingjay, Part 2"

HELENIE



1. Cornfield Chase - Hans Zimmer
2. The Hanging Tree - James Newton Howard
3. Wicked Games - Ramin Djawadi
4. Please Tommy, Please - John Paesano
5. Rue's Farewell - James Newton Howard
6. Remind Her Who the Enemy Is - James Newton Howard
7. The Maze Runner - John Paesano
8. The Mockingjay - James Newton Howard
9. Hope (Xavier's Theme) - John Ottman
10. Wall-E - Thomas Newman

HESTER



1. The Hanging Tree - James Newton Howard
2. Sweet Tooth - Jeff Grace
2. Storm - Jeff Grace
4. Chased - Adam Taylor
5. Radioactive - Imagine Dragons
6. Where We're Going - Hans Zimmer
7. Just Look Up - Ariana Grande & Kid Cudi
8. Promenade of Stolen Children - Adam Taylor
9. Until We Go Down - Ruelle
10. The End - The Doors

Know Your Place

Written by Daan Reins — Illustrated by Tessa de Bosschere — Edited by Hester Schneider

The etymology of the word 'dystopia' is simple: it is the culmination of the prefix dys- (meaning bad) and utopia. Utopia comes from two words: Outopia, meaning 'non-existent place' and eutopia, meaning 'good place' (by the way, that's why the Netflix show *The Good Place* bears that name). Within the concept of Utopia lies its ethereality: the idea of the perfect society is understood as a fiction. In his book (aptly named) *Utopia*, Thomas More explores his ideal society with a clear understanding of this tension. There is no violence, no disagreement and everybody is equal. It would be hard to argue that you could call a society a utopia without these features. There is also, however, little to no personal freedom in this society. Most forms of personal expression (such as fashion and decoration) are disallowed, and citizens' 'free time' is carefully planned out for them. There is a palpable nervousness: everybody is expected to keep up with everybody else in every way. Deviation from the norm is considered barbarity.

In *Idea for a Universal History with a Cosmopolitan Aim*, Immanuel Kant argues that for progress to be made, it is vital that people are in competition with each other. Kant praises antagonism as a necessary part of rational nature:

Without these qualities of unsociability from which the resistance arises, (...) human beings, as good-natured as the sheep they tended, would give their existence hardly any greater worth than that of their domesticated beasts; they would not fill the void in creation in regard to their end as rational nature. Thanks be to nature, therefore, for the incompatibility, for the spiteful competitive vanity, for the insatiable desire to possess or even to dominate! (Kant 112)

“To make society at large morally virtuous and coherent by whatever account, the individual must be oppressed”

Kant does not argue for anarchy, nor does he claim that domination and spite are virtues: rather, it is the desire to defeat an opponent that ultimately drives a person to innovation. This is what is missing in More's *Utopia*: the egotistical drive to greatness, which gave us Michael Jordan, literature, universities, and chocolate milk (just to name a few personal favourites).

Typically, this type of antagonism is suppressed in a dystopia. For the dystopia to remain afloat, personal freedom and the voice of the people are suppressed, because the overlords of these worlds realise that freedom of action and thought leads to disobedience and revolution. The order of the masses is put above the desires of the individual. This is sadly also why the utopia is non-existent: to make society at large morally virtuous and coherent by whatever account, the individual must be oppressed. The question arises what the difference is between a utopia and a dystopia, aside from mere perspective.

A society must toe the line of this dichotomy: on the one hand peace and harmony, on the other fury and greatness. Social, cultural, and political experimentations and revolutions undermine the status quo, but they serve the interests of individuals. Therefore, utopias and dystopias cannot exist, or at least not for long: in order for a society to be healthy, it has to stay in flux, it has to keep fighting itself and morphing into the next brave new world.



Q&A Alumni - Jolien de Waard

Written by Hester Schneider - Edited by Anna-Maria Popo

On a sunny Sunday morning, I invited Jolien de Waard to join me in a Teams meeting to talk about what her career has been like so far. From studying abroad to doing an internship at a publishing house, she seems to have had a complete experience in studying English L&C.

Why did you decide to study English? Was Utrecht a given?

I moved to Utrecht to study at the Hogeschool Utrecht, as I knew I wanted to do something within the English field. I wasn't sure what I wanted to do, so actually, my mum suggested that I tried out to become an English teacher, so that's what I started out with. I very quickly realised that I liked the courses focused on English better than those focused on teaching, so I decided to go to university. After graduating secondary school with a VWO diploma, I thought I wanted to do something that was a little bit more practical. However, once I started studying at university, I realised that writing essays and giving presentations was a better fit for me, than standing in front of a classroom.



"I was able to find my own voice"

What did you enjoy most about studying English?

I think just everything, the whole package together. I really enjoyed the way things were organised. Everything runs very smoothly here—like with your exams—and the teachers are amazing. Besides that, my fellow students were a lot of fun, but the combination of these things was what really made me feel at home. And of course, I liked studying in the city centre!

What kind of master did you do?

I did the Literature Today master. I wasn't sure whether I wanted to go to Utrecht again, or maybe to Amsterdam, but I decided that I had enjoyed studying at the UU so much that I should just do it again. I thought Literature Today would be a good fit considering my BA and what I enjoyed about that. It just felt like a logical choice for me, and I didn't have to think about it for a long time. Also, knowing the teachers, how everything worked, how to write my essays, knowing what was expected of me, I felt that UU would still be a good fit.

I noticed that you did a semester abroad. How was it?

You're right, that was amazing. I went with a friend; we both wanted to go abroad but weren't sure where to go. Actually, my mum gifted my stepfather a trip to Cork for his birthday, years back. I always remembered that the university there was absolutely gorgeous. So, when I saw the list of available destinations, I was immediately sold on to Ireland, on Cork. It was double the fun, doing it with a friend. We accidentally ended up taking the same courses as well—mostly on Celtic and Irish history. It was really fun to immerse myself in the student experience there, because it's quite different from here in the Netherlands. I saw a lot from Ireland; we travelled all around the country and visited a lot of pubs. I really enjoyed it!

What has your career path been like?

I basically got my current job one day after I heard I passed my master's thesis. That was very weird, because suddenly I had a job, and I wasn't fully prepared for that. While writing my thesis, I got bored and couldn't always focus, so I spontaneously went to look for what kind of jobs were out there and applied to where I'm currently working: Instruct Uitgeverij. That is a publishing house focusing on education. We don't publish books but work online. We have our own platform that students can log on to. I focus on primary and secondary school students, specifically on their digital skills. So, how to work with a computer, how to find information online, how to recognise fake news and things like that. I'm an editor, so if one of our writers sends in new things like lessons, I check it and give feedback, and we discuss it together. I also develop my own lessons and make videos as well. I don't do anything with English currently, but I knew I wanted to focus on further developing my editing skills. I did an internship during my master's degree—at Singel Uitgeverijen in Amsterdam. It was for about six months, and so I knew I really liked editing. I wasn't able to gain much experience in that field there, so I wanted a job where I could further develop those skills!

Publishing is such an interesting field. At first, I found it quite intimidating, because, well, they publish the 'big' authors. But honestly, it's quite a small world; everyone knows each other. It's fun! I know a lot of people that do internships at a publishing house that also get a job there. So doing an internship is valuable in both finding out whether you like the field, as well as in building a network.

Do you have any advice for current students of English?

I think what worked for me was that I really enjoyed my studies. Not just because of parties, and the people, but because I was able to find my own voice. In the first year, we did both linguistics and literature, and I noticed that, although it's good to have the knowledge, linguistics wasn't my passion. I really liked the literature courses and came to find the topics that I enjoyed writing about. It helped me find my voice in the sense that I know what I like writing about. But also, just try to have fun. Of course, you want to have good grades, but—and this is a cliché—having fun is probably the most important thing. Those three years flew by, also because I just really liked doing it. Picking courses that not only help you develop your skills but also interest you on a more personal level is important in finding your way.

READY PLAYER ONE?

Written by Julia Schuurmans – Edited by Luka van den Berg

Bear with me because it's been a while since I read this novel, but I still remember enjoying it. However, it was the film – yes, I know, it's a sin – that made me love this story. It was action-packed and I really liked the visual effects.

Many people read books, watch films, or play video games to escape reality. However, what really intrigues me is the theme of escapism in creative works, like books, where we as readers escape into (does that make sense?). Ready Player One by Ernest Cline is the perfect example.

We meet Wade Watts, just a regular guy with a superhero name. The world he lives in is actually shitty. Like, I'm not sure if it's saveable. And yet, they found a "solution" for it, one Wade is eager to use on a daily basis. An online Oasis – it's actually called the OASIS. In Wade's dystopia of a world, they've created an online utopia, and it's such an original concept. But, and there's a big but, this utopia makes their reality even more dystopian than it already was (see Ready Player Two). How Cline uses these concepts makes us, the readers, aware of our own reality. Escaping reality is not a good way to solve our problems, however tempting it is. It can even lead to much bigger problems. The message is to get your head out of the clouds and live in real life. However dystopian your reality may be, you only live once.

Dystopia Recs

Written by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg; Illustrated by Tessa de Bosschere

We are all probably familiar with dystopias such as The Hunger Games, Divergent, The Maze Runner, the Handmaid's Tale and A Clockwork Orange. But maybe it's time for some other ones? Some you might've heard of whereas some are completely new. Perhaps you'll discover a new dystopia after this - or finally get the push you need to pick up that one book that's been on your tbr for ages!

How comes the question: do the opening lines of a novel convince you to read it? And if that's not enough, there's a few general pointers below. Don't worry - the recs are spoiler free! ;)

The State of the Art - Iain Banks (1991)

"The ride's a little bumpy on the famous Road of Skulls..."

- Collection of short fiction stories
- Ranges from science fiction to horror, dark-coated fantasy to morality tales
- Title novella: Chronicle of a Culture mission to Earth in the late 70s

Parable of the Sower - Octavia E. Butler (1993)

"All that you touch, you change. All that you change, changes you."

- It's 2025, and the world is descending into madness and anarchy.
- How will someone with hyper-empathy deal with the breach of her familiar neighbourhood as she's confronted with this harsh new world?
- Imagine how things will unfold with a president shouting who wants to 'make America great again'?

Station Eleven - Emily St. John Mandel (2014)

"The king stood in a pool of blue light, unmoored. This was act 4 of King Lear, a winter night at the Elgin Theatre in Toronto. Earlier in the evening, three little girls had played a clapping game on stage as the audience entered, childhood versions of Lear's daughters, and now they'd returned as hallucinations in the mad scene."

- Adult speculative fiction
- The death of an actor on stage ends with the outbreak of a deadly virus
- Shakespeare plays are performed by a nomadic group of actors who roam the wasteland of what remains.

The Power - Naomi Alderman (2016)

"The shape of power is always the same; it is the shape of a tree. Root to tip, central trunk branching and re-branching, spreading wider in even thinner, searching fingers."

Speculative dystopia.

- A world where teenage girls have immense physical power
- they can cause agonising pain and even death... All men have lost control
- shows what would've happened if the millennia of sexism had gone the other way.
- The Hunger Games meets The Handmaid's Tale



Revolution

The world has come to standing still,
But fighting on is what we will.
Unite, we fight, burn to the ground,
A paradise we never found.
Yet here we are alive and well,
And rise from the ashes we shall.



Poem and Illustration by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg