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PRIDE SPECIAL

Written by Nina van Veen - Edited by Anna Preindl

Our last issue of Phoenix of the year has finally arrived and will revolve around the theme Pride! Our team was beyond excited to tackle this complicated, but important, theme. In a world where diversity is not always celebrated, we are planning on doing exactly that. We want to bring attention to how beautiful the world can be, but also which problems we are still facing today. This final issue is meant to celebrate Pride, Diversity and POC. You can't have one, without the other, therefore you'll find all these elements throughout the issue. In this issue, you'll find a variety of articles related and inspired by Pride Month. For example, you can read all about queer anthems, books and films that centre around pride and queerbaiting. Celebrating pride is important for many people around the world, and this issue hopes to bring you some positivity and love. We're proud to present the Pride issue and hope that you will enjoy the last issue of this year, filled with articles that are – hopefully – diverse! Happy Pride Month!!

WORD OF THE BOARD I

Wobke Ballast - commissioner of internal affairs

As we are currently in the middle of Pride Month, I am beyond happy that the final Phoenix issue will talk about just that. This year was actually the first time I attended Canal Pride in Utrecht, and needless to say, I was covered in glitter, rainbow and most of all, love. In my eyes, Pride is not simply only showing support to queer people: it's much more than that. It's the support and embracement of love as a whole, whatever form or shape that may have. The tremendous amount of people attending Pride and showing their love and support each year is one of the most wonderful things to exist in this sometimes grey and sombre world.

Everyone and everything are welcome and accepted. If anything, corona, and these crazy times we live in have shown us that people love people. We love the hugs, the touches, the kisses. For a long time, we weren't able to have that which also impacted the celebration of Pride. Luckily, this year we were able to make up for the lost years where feeling the love and touch of other people wasn't always possible. Standing there alongside the canal, I was overwhelmed with the love and safety I felt around everyone. Growing up, I've always been a big ally and eventually I grew into accepting my own sexuality, as bisexual. Though, I've never experienced any form of hatred or discrimination, I am very aware that this is a major issue in our world. Therefore, seeing the amount of love and acceptance on the day of Pride itself and the smaller things such as this lovely Phoenix issue gives me an incredible feeling of pride and love that we should spread all around the world.

Love, Wobke

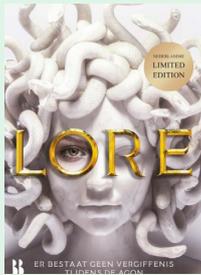


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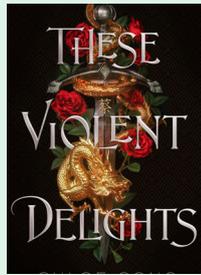
What We're Reading...



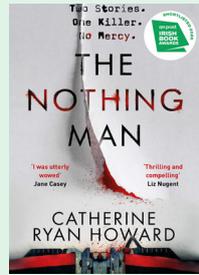
Anna: No One Is Talking About This by Patricia Lockwood



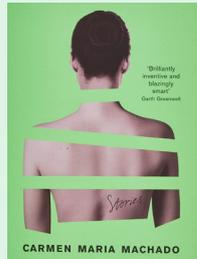
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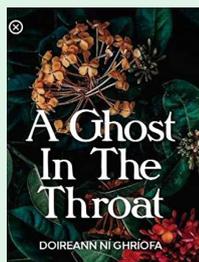
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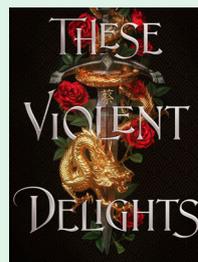
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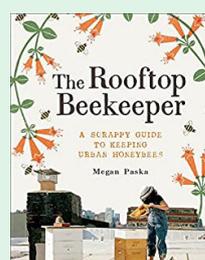
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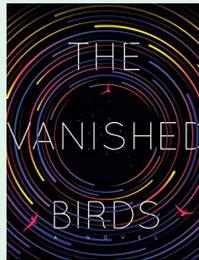
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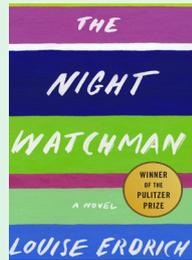
Hester: These Violent Delights by Chloe Gong



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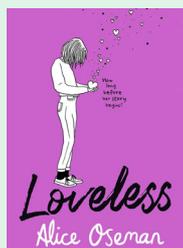
Elise: The Nightwatchman by Louise Erdrich



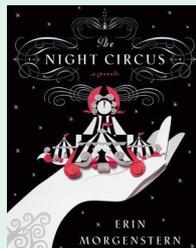
Julia: so this is ever after by F.T. Lukens



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Nina C.: The Night Circus by Erin Morgenstern



Tessa: Heartstopper volume 4 by Alice Oseman



PHOENIX

Magazine for students of English Language and Culture at Utrecht University.

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GLOSSARY OF LGBTQ+ TERMINOLOGY

Written by Jamie Pilon— Edited by Hester Schneider — Illustrated by Żuzia Gelauff

Assuming your English is good enough to read Phoenix, you probably don't need to look up what "gay" or "transgender" means. However, there may still be terms you're not familiar with. This glossary should help, but don't be afraid to ask questions (respectfully)!

LGBT/LGBTQIA+: Lesbian, gay, bisexual trans, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual. The community of people who are not straight or identify with a gender different than the one they were assigned at birth. Not all intersex people consider themselves part of the LGBT+ community, but many do.

Split-attraction model: A way for asexual and aromantic people to define their orientation more specifically. It splits sexual and romantic attraction. I.e.: someone may identify as asexual biromantic, because they don't experience sexual attraction, but do fall in love with people of all genders.

MLM: Men-loving-men

Bears: MLM who are bulkier, hairier and typically "ruggedly masculine."

Twinks: MLM who are slimmer, lacking in body hair, and typically have a youthful appearance.

WLW: Women-loving-women

Butch/femme: Gender expressions and dynamics from the WLW community. Butches express themselves in a traditionally masculine way, femmes in a traditionally feminine way. Not all WLW identify with either butch or femme. Originated from early, working class lesbian communities.

Lavender marriage: A marriage where (typically) a lesbian and a gay man genders enter into a marriage together to conceal their sexuality. Archaic terminology now, but very popular pre-WWII.

Friend of Sappho/friend of Oscar:

A way for lesbians and gay men to subtly communicate to each other who they were, after the ancient Greek poetess Sappho and Victorian writer Oscar Wilde. Archaic, but "sapphic" and "achillian" (from the Greek legend of Achilles) are still sometimes used by WLW and MLM to refer to themselves.

TERF: Trans-exclusionary radical feminist.

A subset of feminists who are against the progression of trans rights and inclusion of trans people in feminist issues.

Gender-affirming care: Healthcare for trans people that helps them transition to the gender they are.

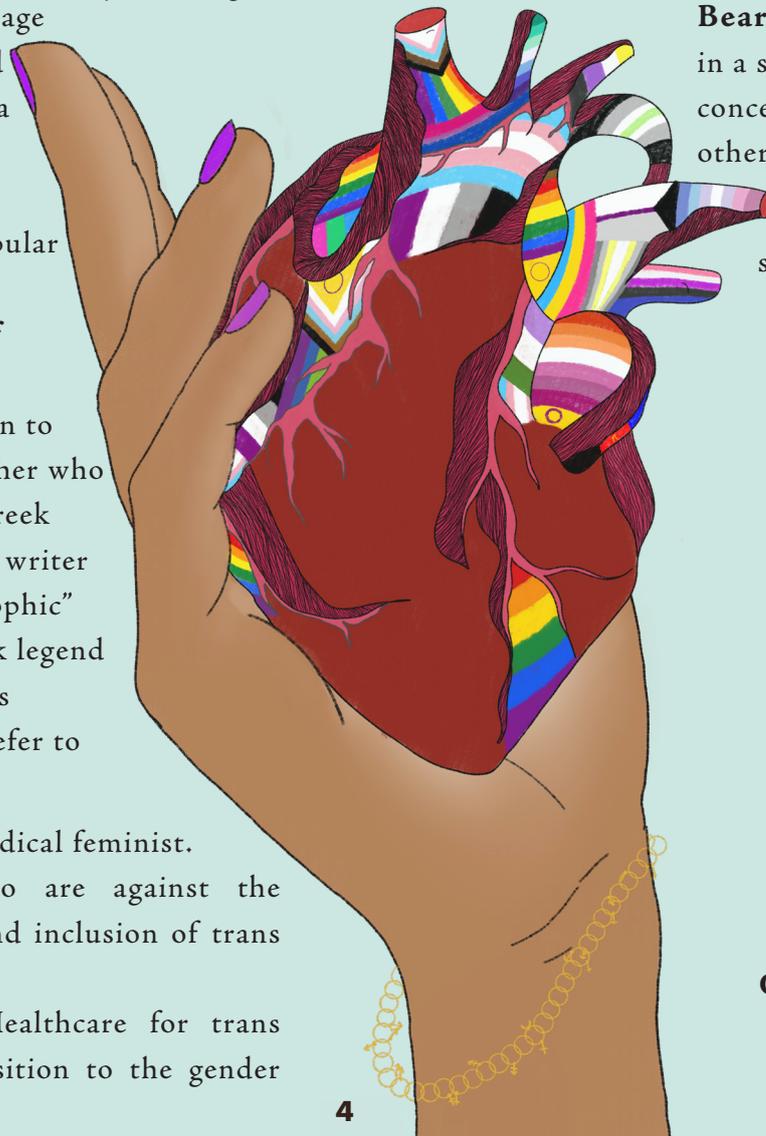
Beard: When someone is in a straight relationship to conceal their gay identity, the other person is their beard.

Outing: Forcing someone to come out of the closet against their will.

Neopronouns: Pronouns that are not she/he/they. Often used by nonbinary people who do not feel comfortable with traditional pronouns. Examples: ze/hir, xe/xem.

HRT: Hormone replacement therapy.

Cisgender: Identifying with the gender you were assigned at birth.



T and E: Testosterone (masculine hormones) and Estradiol (feminine hormones).

SRS: “Sexual reassignment surgery” – a gender-affirming surgery that changes a person's genitals. There are multiple types of SRS, such as vaginoplasty, phalloplasty and metoidioplasty.

FFS: “Facial feminisation surgery” – a gender-affirming surgery which can make a transfeminine person's face look more typically feminine.

Mastectomy: A gender-affirming surgery which gives a transmasculine person a flat chest.

Deadname: A trans person's name before they came out as trans. It's considered very rude to ask someone about their deadname!

Allyship: Straight and cisgender people can be allies to LGBT+ people by standing in solidarity with LGBT+ people, lifting their voices, and defending them from hate speech and violence.

Word of the Board II

Dear reader,

After being in denial for much too long, I finally had to resolve myself into writing the closing “Word from the Board” and admit that this wonderful year is coming to an end. A small comfort to the sadness I feel at the thought of not being board any more, it seems the stars aligned to offer me a spot on the Pride issue.

I have this friend who we will call John (I would give you his real name, but it is very, very French and the rest of the board teases me relentlessly about my Frenchness, so I don't want to give them more material, you know?). I have known John my entire life, we met on the first day of kindergarten and immediately became inseparable. Much later, in our early teens, he came out to me as gay. After he came out publicly, I remember my parents commented that “of course, we should have seen it coming, he always wanted to wear your princess costumes when you were little.” That day I realised two things were wrong: firstly, why did I only have princess costumes? And secondly, why did the fact that he was wearing my dresses have to mean that he was gay? There is no one way to be gay, or straight. There is no one way to be human. And I am grateful to have a spot on the Pride issue and tell you that I believe literature helps combat these harmful ideas by providing more representation of all sexualities and genders.

Diversify your readings. Don't believe you need to be or act a certain way because all you have access to is white cisgender literature. Find books that represent you. Be yourself. Be proud of who you are.

With much love,

Victoria

Diversity or Performative Activism?

Written by Noa Kimpton – Edited by Anna Preindl

If you follow award season which, granted, was a couple of months ago, you may remember Chris Rock getting sucker-punched by the Fresh Prince of Bell-Air, Will Smith. As funny as it was, it casts a shadow over this year's winners. Can you remember who won? I'll give you a second...

If you guessed CODA, you guessed correctly. The term CODA stands for Child of Deaf Adult(s). The movie features a young woman, Ruby, the only hearing person in a deaf family. When her crush signs up for choir practice, she impulsively does the same and this sets the story in motion. Ruby has always been an outcast in both the hearing world and the deaf world but then, she finally finds her place.

However, entrances were hard to find, with doors often being camouflaged as other objects or walls. Even if you knew where to knock, you still needed a password. The only way to get in was through whispering the right words to the right person at the right place and time. Whispering law enforcement would lurk around the streets in the hopes of catching illegal drinkers in the act.

The "speakeasies", as they came to be known, were one of the first non-gendered, non-segregated venues, and many communities took them as an opportunity to showcase their specialities. With a high demand for live entertainment, black Jazz bands and musicians such as Louis Armstrong would often perform at the bars, advancing their careers. Immigrants also took the chance and started serving their cuisines paired up with the felonious wines and spirits.

Let's talk about representation.

Let's talk about representation. In theory, it sounds nice, a movie about a marginalised community winning one of the most prestigious awards. However, the movie itself was not particularly liked by the deaf community. The responses were mixed and mostly spoke about how they got sidelined by the protagonist who was not deaf.

Marlee Matlin, who portrays Jackie (Ruby's mother) was the first deaf performer to win an academy award back in '87. Until this year, when Troy Kotsur won, she had been the only one. So sure, the Academy gets brownie points for representation. Let me ask you all one thing, though. Where were the interpreters? Not a single segment, other than the ones that were CODA related, had proper interpreters. Due to this, the deaf audience at home was unable to properly follow the event. As it was a live event, subtitles of course are not available. So much for accessibility!



It is not a secret that the Academy does not go well with diversity. Take *Green Book*, for example, the 2019 Best Picture winner. The movie was described to be the biopic of Don Shirley, a black pianist back in the fifties, and his chauffeur Tony Vallelonga. The funny thing? Mahershala Ali, who played Don Shirley himself, was nominated in the category Best Supportive Actor whereas Viggo Mortensen, who played Tony Vallelonga, received a nomination in the Best Actor category. Imagine that, a movie about racism and not only does the black main character still get sidelined, the cast was still largely white. But I digress. Back to *CODA*. Let's go a little further back in time. In 1979, Jane Fonda had requested captions for the deaf community but she was told that the Academy would not provide this. Her solution? She signed her speech. "Over 14 million people are deaf," she said, "They are the invisible handicapped and can't share this evening, so this is my way of acknowledging them." Having said that, in spite of the Academy being disingenuous when it comes to their activism, *CODA*'s win did cause a vast increase in people wanting to learn sign language. It's not a lot, but it's a beginning.

PARIS IS BURNING

Written by Anna Preindl – Edited Anna Maria Popo – Illustrated by Ceclie Balemans-Højberg

Paris is Burning, produced by Jennie Livingston is one of the most important documentaries of the New York ballroom culture of the 1980's. As for representing Black and Latinx Transsexual people and drag culture of the time, it allows us to have an important glimpse into this part of their history. Ball rooms were a safe space to be who you wanted to be and to perform in a set category, dazzle and feel yourself, as judges evaluated your performance in the

"Black people have a hard time getting anywhere and those that do are usually straight. In a ballroom you can be anything you want. You're not really an executive but you're looking like an executive." - Dorian Corey

Be warned - things take a sad turn at the end, highlighting the dangers transsexual people unfortunately, have to face over the years. Controversies have arisen over the way that Livingston has treated the people she has interviewed - as a white, middle class lesbian woman, she profited off of the filming of the documentary without giving a fair compensation to the community that she has filmed, even though promised differently. Further criticism includes the white perspective on this scene carried by Black and Latinx people. Personally, I found it very interesting to see that slang terms like "shady," "queen," "serve" and "tea" originate in this subculture. It's a definite recommendation but be ready to see it take a cruel turn - trigger warnings be spoken for violence against trans people.

PARIS IS BURNING



JK Rowling's Bigotry and Death of the Living Author

Written by Jamie Pilon – Edited by Hester Schneider – Illustrated by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg

Even in 2022, many people still love the intellectual property of Harry Potter, they want to spend their money on Harry Potter-related merchandise, and talk about books, plays, video games, and movies based on the world of Harry Potter. It seems that many people seem not to care about the unsavoury aspects of the woman who created the world Harry Potter lives in, but what if you belong to the small fraction of people who do take issue with transphobia and antisemitism? Can you separate an artist from the art?

December 19, 2019, was the first day the public got a taste of JK Rowling's political stance concerning trans people. Dear Joanne tweeted a message of support to Maya Forstater, a researcher whose contract at an international development think tank was not renewed after multiple employees raised concerns with Forsaters activity on Twitter, calling attention to her persistent transphobic statements. Following this incident, the megarich Harry Potter author liked tweets from TERF creators and followed proud anti-trans feminist Magdalen Berns (1983-2019), a woman who compared trans women to blackface actors. While at the time some people (including Rowling's own publicist) characterised it as a "middle-aged" moment, it was, in fact, a mere vision of awful things to come.

My first draft for this article included a massive timeline of JK Rowling's "TERF journey," so to speak, but I've decided not to promote her horrendous book "The Casual Vacancy" or her infamous essay, nor will I painstakingly trace the roots of her bigotry to the racism, antisemitism and blatant fatphobia present in the Harry Potter books. Anyone genuinely interested in her journey, and the exact things she has said, done, and created, can find it easily. Her transphobia, her racism, and her antisemitism have been extensively documented by people who are more patient than I am. Repeating the obvious is tedious, and that JKR is a bigot is obvious at this point. The facts have been so thoroughly established that it would be a waste of time to go over them again.

"Fight the hate, but most of all, spread the love"

So, now what? Can't we just pretend she doesn't exist? The impulse to do so is understandable but misguided. We cannot erase JK Rowling from Harry Potter. Part of this is the aforementioned bigotry that extends into Harry Potter (for example, the house-elves: a race of enslaved peoples, in the text said to be justifiably enslaved because they like it. In fact, the only character who advocates for the end of house-elf enslavement is relentlessly mocked for her "ridiculous" ideas), but a more important aspect is JK Rowling's monetary and political power. Her money and influence have real-life effects which make it hard for me, as part of the group she targets, to allow her and her works to stay popular. Hype for Rowling's work creates a revenue stream for her, revenue which she then donates to anti-trans organisations. Hype for Rowling's work in turn makes Rowling more famous, too, fame which she can then use to further her anti-trans politics. Transphobia from British radical feminists is a growing problem for trans people, and Rowling is a core part of this problem. Under trans people, Britain is also known as "TERF Island," alluding to the sheer size of the wave of transphobia washing over the country. TERFs see the presence of trans people, in particular trans women, as a dangerous treat to the cis- sorry, the system. Moreover, they see trans people as lying cheats overdue for a culling. I say it this harshly because I believe many people don't have a proper grasp on the sheer scope of the transphobic garbage Rowling is pushing into the media consciousness of Britain. In the UK, you will be hard-pressed to find a media outlet that publishes anything positive about transgender people at all. Pinknews writers have extensively documented the rise of the Trans Moral Panic, and TERF influence on political decision-making. Of course, JK Rowling is not necessarily at the centre of this cesspool, but her fame trickles down to the more virulent transphobes, who then ride the clout wave all the way to Parliament.

Transphobia from British radical feminists is a growing problem for trans people, and Rowling is a core part of this problem. Under trans people, Britain is also known as “TERF Island,” alluding to the sheer size of the wave of transphobia washing over the country. TERFs see the presence of trans people, in particular trans women, as a dangerous treat to the cis— sorry, the system. Moreover, they see trans people as lying cheats overdue for a culling. I say it this harshly because I believe many people don’t have a proper grasp on the sheer scope of the transphobic garbage Rowling is pushing into the media consciousness of Britain. In the UK, you will be hard-pressed to find a media outlet that publishes anything positive about transgender people at all. Pinknews writers have extensively documented the rise of the Trans Moral Panic, and TERF influence on political decision-making. Of course, JK Rowling is not necessarily at the centre of this cesspool, but her fame trickles down to the more virulent transphobes, who then ride the clout wave all the way to Parliament.

Make no mistake: this is only the beginning of a rise in transphobia, and you can’t opt out of picking a side. For TERFs, there is no middle ground, no way to mediate, no compromise to their proposed “solution” of a problem they created in their own minds. Truth hurts, but, the logical endpoint for anti-trans feminist ideology is this: trans people need to stop existing. By any means necessary. Overturn the Gender Recognition Act, make hormone replacement therapy illegal for under-16s, shut down gender clinics and spread lies that cast transmasculine people as confused girls suffering from internalised misogyny and transfeminine people as sexual predators. This is the ideology Rowling is peddling. Ideology that earned her a shoutout from world leader Vladimir Putin! What honourable company, no?

That’s the crux of it: we can’t pretend JK Rowling doesn’t exist, because she does exist, and very actively so. Rowling uses the money and fame and you grant her to further a transphobic political agenda. Closing your eyes doesn’t make that problem go away. You cannot cry “death of the author” when the author is actively making the world a worse place for marginalised people. This is the answer to the question we asked ourselves in the beginning: no, you can’t separate Joanne from her art.

By and large, Rowling and her more famous associates are political grifters: they peddle garbage because it generates power and money for them. Grifters who deeply believe in the evil of trans people, but grifters nonetheless. If we simply stopped giving them so much attention, they would eventually experience the harshest punishment imaginable in their minds: fading into obscurity. A quick and efficient way to do this is to send love and support to trans-positive storytellers. Spend your money with them, allow them to flourish, let them break the cycle of trans angst and despair. Instead of spending all your energy discussing the merits of various bigots, spend your time on doing something positive. Don’t create hype (not even hateful hype) around stories told by fundamentally transphobic people. Spread the hype for trans-positive authors and creators. Yes, fight the hate, but most of all, spread the love.



Tea Time

With Christophe Declercq

Written by Hester Schneider – Edited by Julia Schuurmans

On a windy Friday morning, I met up with Christophe Declercq in a lovely courtyard in Utrecht. Having recently joined the translation department, Christophe was invited for Tea Time to get to know him a bit better.

What and where did you study?

When I studied, there were no master's or bachelor's degrees yet – instead you had 'kandidaat' and 'licenciaat'. I studied in Antwerp, and I'm a trained translator. As for languages, Dutch was compulsory, but I chose English and Russian (which were very popular). I had already been doing some freelance professional translation, but as soon as I graduated, I went straight into an academic post. This still allowed me to continue with what I was doing before. My dissertation focused on a specific and typical grammar structure which I researched using an online (and at the time CD ROM-based) database of English literature. I looked for the particular 'of a' string in quite some literature. You will know the phrase 'hell of a woman,' or 'hell of a man.' This 'of a' structure was a binomial noun phrase according to a scholar called Bas Aarts. I used technology to get access to data, which was quite new in the mid-90s. After experimenting with tools some more, I made it into the 'proper' world where I became part of a company overlooking the translations of specific customers (Shimano Europe). I've also been responsible for technology support in relation to translation, which I've done in several companies. At some point, there was an advert for a position at Imperial College in London (which is quite a renowned one) where I applied and got asked if I also wanted to do a PhD with them. Naturally, I said yes. They also asked me whether I would consider doing a PhD in translation technology. I said I did not, because if I were to do something like that, it would be with the company I was already with. Anyways, I did the PhD at Imperial on the social-cultural history of identity and exile.

How did you end up here in Utrecht?

The two key languages I've always worked in are Dutch and English. Most of the assignments I get are translating Dutch into English though, which is unusual. I was familiar with some of the people who worked here, by name and their work. At one point I needed to move closer and got a temporary position at KU Leuven. I had already been a senior lecturer at University College London, and this was not really my thing. Then I saw an advert for the position that I eventually got, where I thought I could still bring something new to the group. I'm a middle-aged white man, which means I am privileged, but ultimately, I did end up getting the job.



“Translation means accessibility. Everybody has the right to access information in the way they want. It is about trying to make voices heard, that otherwise would not be heard. I do believe that that’s a very important aspect of it.”

I know some parts of Utrecht from having visited the Jaarbeurs (the place to go) with my mother when I was young. The city reminds me of Flemish cities, like Gent for example. As Belgium is supposed to be the 'beacon of surrealism', I think coming to a city where the key attraction is a cathedral that is no longer there is quite interesting as well... I've lived in London most of the time for nearly seventeen years, and some of the streets have a very similar feel to what is often referred to as the villages in London, the pockets. But then usually the owners of coffee shops, tiny supermarkets or any other shops are not as white as those in Utrecht. It's as if Utrecht is sort of a reserve of the old touristy city centre and then anything more diverse and more real is kept from it. That is something I kind of still need to find my way in.

What inspires you in writing?

I think as a student there is always this attraction of doing things with a motto of the least possible effort with the maximum reward. Part of that really appealed to me in that I paid a lot of attention to what I liked, and I didn't do as much for what I particularly disliked. My marks would go really high for modules I loved to bits, for lectures that were really inspiring, and they were rather average for the others. I shouldn't have chosen Russian as a language; I should've gone for Spanish or Italian. Nonetheless, I sort of spearheaded the Russian club for several years. We had lots of parties with huge profits. If there was, for example, a screening of an old Russian classic at the local old film museum, we would just hire the venue for an additional streaming, including a live piano. And if we needed money, we just threw a party. We did lots of cultural outings, and I liked that balance.

What do you like most about teaching in the translation department?

I think translation is magnificent. It's something so rich and all-encompassing. People often have a traditional, old-school view of what translation is, or they hold the view that it is no longer needed because of machine translation. But there is so much more to it. Translation is a concept that is very well known in the medical world, which should already indicate that translation is a process as well as a product. Translation means accessibility. Everybody has the right to access information in the way they want. It is about trying to make voices heard, that otherwise would not be heard. I do believe that that's a very important aspect of it. And then we are all subscribed to online streaming services, and that's where people start realising that subtitling is also part of translation. When it comes to translation at Utrecht, a lot has already made it feel like home. When you're told that you are invited to come to work with the likes of Haidee [Kotze], Onno [Kosters] and Gys-Walt [van Egdome], you settle for something really enriching. I still learn a lot from these people. One of the reasons that I came to Utrecht, is that students are more collaborative, open, and more like colleagues. That has been my experience in the UK as well. To that extent, the student, staff, and colleague experience is very similar to the UK and much less so to Flanders.

Do you have a favourite film or series?

I quite enjoyed *After Life* recently, again because of the timing. I don't think I'll watch it again. The second series of *Broadchurch* was good as well, and I recently saw *Manhunt*. I do binge-watch because I don't have the time to sit and watch regularly, so I watch these things for two or three nights. I don't sleep much anyway. And as for films, as long as it's either a very good story or really well made, I'm happy. I used to go to the cinema a lot, but I kind of stopped in 1999. There is some entertainment factor added or duplicated there.

What advice would you like to have been given, either as a student or teacher?

Let's start with the teachers. I don't pretend to have any advice, because there are so many different approaches that ultimately together make up a solid team, whether it is within translation or entities of the department. Perhaps empathy towards the students should be in place. Accept that students have a right opinion too and be in touch with the outer world in case it might benefit the student. That's something very typical for someone from a translation department, to claim that if we aren't in touch with (translation) companies, (European) institutions, or our alumni, we become isolated from that world, which is not beneficial to students. As for students, post-corona, I'm still proud of those that come to class, because the world is your oyster right now. I still hear virtually every day that a student says this is the first time they have done something in two years, or that they have never been to a classroom like this. It is still very tangible that the legacy of this horrible period is still there. So, my advice is to find your feet in the world. Then of course, in terms of study, read the world, read as much as you can.

When the interview was done, we chatted some more and said goodbye to each other. Thank you again Christophe for the lovely conversation!

The Lack of Representation in the Publishing Industry; A Mini Essay.

Written by Julia Schuurmans – Edited by Anna Maria Popo

Diversity in the publishing industry is lacking. Still lacking. For the longest time, people have discussed and criticised the Western literary canon. However, despite these critiques, the canon still favours white, male authors. This lack of representation continues in the current publishing industry. Different studies show that people of other ethnicities do not receive the same representation in the publishing industry as opposed to white people. In 2019, research showed that only 13% of the survey respondents identified as black, Asian or minority ethnic (Saha & Van Lente). Furthermore, this study showed that “writers of colour are not afforded the same industry access, creative freedoms, or economic value as their white counterparts, and each stage of the publishing process was generally set up to amplify the voices of white and middle-class people” (King). In addition to this, writers of colour also are paid up to 10 times less for having a following of the same size as a white author. Similarly, only 3% of authors or people working in the publishing industry do not identify as cis men or women. Furthermore, in executive and leadership positions, over 50% (52-56% depending on the positions) is accounted for by women and around 38% by men (Lee & Low Books; The Publishers Association).

This lack of diversity in the publishing industry directly transfers into a lack of representative literature. The target audience of most publishers is still white and middle-class. This has the effect that publishers show restraint in looking for more diverse authors and books. Publishers fear that books by authors of colour and/or with disabilities are too ‘niche’ and will not appeal to their target audience (Saha & Van Lente). Yet, this fear is only based on traditional publishing processes instead of their actual audience. Sadly, the consequence of this is that it has created an unequal industry, with authors of colour and their books being treated as ‘niche’ instead of worthy of publishing.

“Literature has the power to shape people, diversifying the literature available is a gateway to creating a more inclusive culture.”

Many studies show that reading allows people to step into another person’s shoes. Literature gives people the ability to cross the boundaries and limitations of their own identity and, in turn, learn about someone else’s. Reading makes people more aware of the struggles of others, and it can improve people’s ability to understand others (empathy). Literature has the ability to teach, especially children: “Extending our reach for literature (...) can amplify and enrich students’ literary experiences while both affirming students’ own lives and engaging them in worlds very different from theirs” (Zapata, Kleekamp & King). Reading diverse literature is an effective way of learning more about the diverse nature of our world. It can give us a view into different cultures and perspectives that would otherwise have stayed unfamiliar to us. Getting different perspectives can also mean that stereotypes and prejudices are broken down. Literature has the power to shape people, diversifying the literature available is a gateway to creating a more inclusive culture. Besides, having a more diverse array of books will mean that more people can find books and protagonists that they can identify with. As this has also been lacking, as a consequence of the underrepresentation in the industry.

Change is happening, but it is going at a slow pace. Even though more and more publishers are willing to diversify the industry and the books they publish, most don't know where to start or are unwilling to take a risk. Luckily, studies like these mentioned here show that the industry is getting more diverse and inclusive. The more diverse people working in the industry will result in a more diverse arrangement of books being published. But how can we, as individual readers, help support this change? Well, you can support publishers that do promote diversity like Lee & Low Books, Interlude Press, Second Story Press, and many more. A quick Google search can show you lists of publishers focusing on diversity, LGBTQIA+ books, authors of colour, etc. Besides, social media is an effective way of giving minority authors a much-needed voice. Supporting authors of the LGBTQIA+ community or with a disability can make sure that these authors have a higher chance of getting published. This can spread their message even further. But you can also focus on the books on your shelves. When searching for books, try to spend more time looking for ones by minority authors. And share these with friends as well! To conclude, if you want to learn more about this topic, you might be interested in the sources I have used to write this essay. I will leave them here for you to discover.

WORD OF THE MONTH - June

Selected by and illustrated by Cecile Balemans-Højberg

IVY

/ˈaɪvi/

Noun

1. a widely cultivated ornamental climbing or prostrate or sometimes shrubby chiefly Eurasian vine (*Hedera helix*) of the ginseng family with a woody stem and evergreen leaves, small yellowish flowers, and black berries, grown as ornamentation on buildings, walls, etc.
2. any of various other climbing or creeping plants, such as Boston ivy, poison ivy, and ground ivy.

Adjective

1. often capitalised: an Ivy League college, of or characteristic of the Ivy League.

With summer approaching and people going out in search of the first rays of sunshine to feel the heat of the summer beams on their skin, I notice myself doing the opposite. Like ivy, hiding away in the shade, enjoying the golden rays once in a while, but never for too long. Too much sun and I'll shrivel, trading in the evergreen leaves for a paler shade of yellow. I like the idea of ivy in summer, because whereas other plants and other people thrive off the warmer weather, I will be hidden in the shade with the ivy on the walls, or most likely clinging to my airco for the coming months. Looking on at the outside world as I'm waiting for the pretty greens to be traded in for the fiery reds and oranges, welcoming the winter sun once more as we're able to rejoin the outside world again.



HEALTHCARE FOR TRANS PEOPLE

Written by Jamie Pilon – Edited by Marit Vogels

Recently, conservative American politicians have launched a new wave of anti-trans policies which make it systemically harder or impossible for trans teens, young adults and adults to have access to the healthcare they need. Governor Ron DeSantis of Florida is trying to effectively outlaw gender transition for minors by scrapping trans healthcare from Medicaid coverage. Florida would be joining eight other states who also deny trans minors medical treatment if the bill passed. The situation is not much better in the United Kingdom- in fact, in 2017, New Zealand granted residency to a trans woman from the UK on “exceptional humanitarian grounds”. A tribunal ruled that forcing her to return to the UK would be “unduly harsh” because of the transphobia she suffered from in her country of origin. The Netherlands has a reputation as a safe place for the LGBT+ community- and certainly, the majority of us have it better here than the majority of LGBT+ people in other countries. But how deserved is all this ego-stroking, really? Let’s take a look at the state of healthcare for transgender people in the Netherlands. Case study: the biggest and most well-known provider of gender-affirming care, the VU Amsterdam hospital.

First: what is meant by “trans healthcare”? Primarily, it covers healthcare that trans people need to transition- think hormone replacement therapy and, if the person wishes, surgeries such as a mastectomy, facial feminisation surgery, and genital surgery. Secondly, it includes legal matters. It may sound unrelated to include legal transition in healthcare, but in the Netherlands, trans people still need a declaration from a psychologist to change their name and gender marker. Lastly, a related aspect is a gender-affirming treatment in other areas. Imagine what it would be like to show up for your pap smear with a full beard. Or to get checked for prostate cancer after having been on feminising hormones for years. If your specialist doesn’t understand how to “handle” your gender identity, important check-ups like these can be scary, even traumatising, leading trans people to fear and avoid doctors. This behaviour, induced by transphobic or clueless specialists, can have devastating consequences for trans people’s health.

The diagnostic phase is where a lot of trans people face immense hardship. It is the phase of transition where you’re trying to get medical professionals to believe you’re trans, to get a diagnosis which you need for hormones and surgery. It feels like a never-ending, Sisyphean process of proving yourself. A specifically awful provider is the Amsterdam VU hospital. The Instagram account, @VUgendermistreatment, shares stories of trans people who were (mis)treated at VU. I will share one especially heartbreaking story but encourage you to take a look at more, if you can stomach it.

“[Lora] was 15 when she applied to VU, in 2012. She had to wait 2 years before that because she was diagnosed with PDD-NOS (overturned in 2019, because it was a misdiagnosis). She was not heard. At 17 years old, in 2014, she was prescribed puberty blockers (much too late – she was already near the end of puberty by then). When she was 18, near the end of 2014, she was prescribed 1mg estradiol?! [an exceptionally low dose]. She had to use this dosage until 2015, even though the levels in her blood were way too low. We managed to get her a higher dosage via a GP because VU was still unreceptive.

VU made Lora wait for a very long time, even though her father was fully supportive of her and would put down his signature when asked. Even when Lora cried and asked for help, she was told to just wait, otherwise, she would not be helped at all (abuse of power). In 2018 she wanted FFS [Facial Feminisation Surgery] with (Doctor's name) because I had my FFS done with (Doctor's name) in Belgium and she had always wanted that for herself as well. When she was on track for FFS, health insurance denied her claim. According to the doctor, this didn't have to be a problem because she could pay for it out of pocket. That way the wait would only be 3-4 months. She'd saved up the money so she went for it. Subsequently, she heard nothing and kept phoning VU again and again. It turned out, all of a sudden she had a waiting time of another year, even though we were now at the start of 2020 and the doctor had promised her at the start of 2019 that the method of paying for it herself would work.

Finally, she lost hope. She could not go through the same misery she experienced when she was 15 and preferred death. Lora killed herself in the summer of 2020." Translated from Dutch to English and edited briefly for clarity.

A young person died at the hands of a neglectful healthcare system. VU Amsterdam also happens to be the main gender clinic providing surgeries and requires patients who wish to get operated on by a VU doctor, but have already gone through the diagnostic process with a different provider to start the diagnostic process all over again, at VU. Some surgeries are practically only available at VU or through them because they give off referrals as well. This practically means that the VU holds a monopoly on trans healthcare in the Netherlands.

As any trans person can tell you, the Netherlands is no paradise for LGBT+ people. We briefly went over one big clinic, but there are more out there, and we didn't even discuss history. Did you know that, up until July 2014, it was mandatory to undergo a sterilising procedure before getting your gender marker changed? The bodily autonomy of trans people is fundamentally not equal to that of cisgender people. We are not trusted to know ourselves well enough when we want to take steps that will help us recognise ourselves in the mirror.

I hope to see you at the next protest for trans healthcare.

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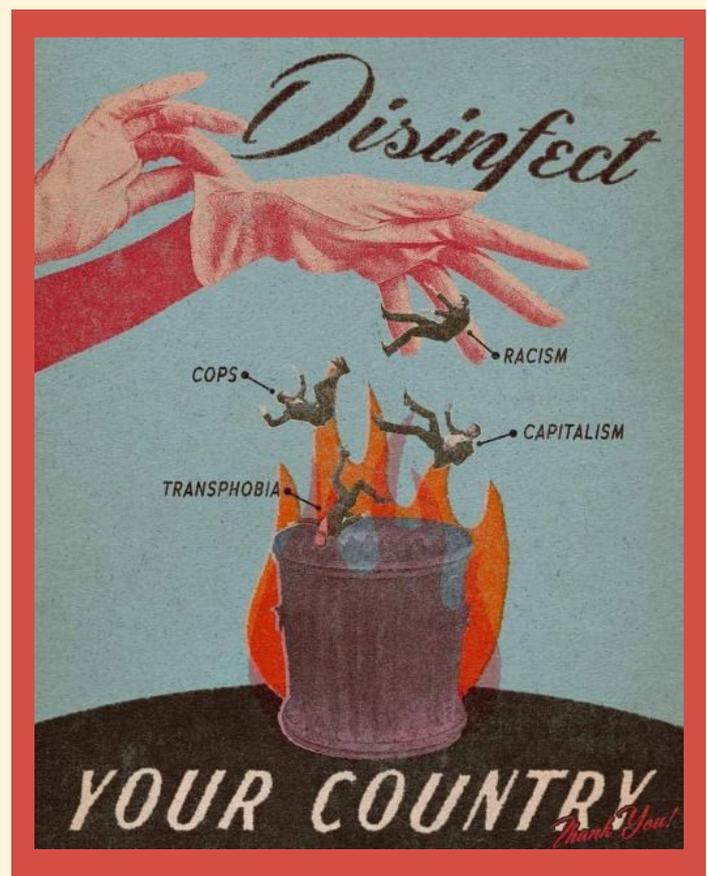
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Committee Market

AcCie

The Activity Committee is a very active committee within our association. We organise a variety of activities every single month. This makes the committee perfect for those who don't have a lot of experience organising big events (like the travel committees) or are a little hesitant about their capabilities to do so. We have active events, like bowling, laser gaming, etc. We also create our own fun and free activities. These activities include, for example, movie nights, artsy stuff (Bob Ross!) or even a dropping. Last but not least, we organise each year's pubquizzes! If this has made you all excited, please, sign up to be part of this year's Activity Committee!

FeestCie

Looking to join a fun committee? Well, let's stop the clichés here. Albion's Party Committee is one of the most diverse committees out there. Albion collaborates with a lot of other study associations to organise different theme parties. So, you will meet a lot of different students! Moreover, being a part of Albion's Party Committee means that you may have benefits such as free entry and/or consumptions. Besides, Albion hosts a lovely party uniquely for Albion members in May called the Night of the Professors. Teachers of the English department will DJ for us Albioneers during that party. It is the perfect chance to get to know teachers on a different level. Next to that, being part of this committee is unbelievably fun. You get the chance to come up with fun themes and dance the night away! If you like organising, dancing and drinking, then this is the committee for you!

IntroCie

The Introduction Committee is the committee that organised your introduction to the world of Utrecht University. The committee begins planning all activities in the second half of the academic year so everything is ready for the new batch of firsties. If you want to help those scared youngsters settle in, do join the Introduction Committee! The Introduction days are very important for our lovely fresh new students: they will be led through the streets of Utrecht, meet their fellow first year students, and get to know the English department of the UU as well as Albion of course.

AC

The AC mainly organises events that focus on the orientation of the labour market and events that tie in with education. Throughout the academic year we organise some field trips for the students of Albion to let them get to know the labour market. Past field trips have been to, for example, independent publishers and high schools. Apart from that we also organise pub lectures and a poetry reading where the teachers and creative writing students of our bachelor can read us their work. Together with the department of our degree the AC organises thesis workshops for the students and for the firsties there will be an information night at the end of the year where help will be offered about the second year courses. AC has started a Buddy Project that connects Alumni with current English students. This project is tremendously helpful for students who are in doubt about their career!

AlumCie

This committee was only launched two years ago, but has already accomplished a lot thanks to its excited and enthusiastic members. It has started a Buddy Project that connects Alumni with current English students. This project was and can be tremendously helpful for students who are in doubt about their career. Apart from running this project, the AlumCie also tries to actively engage with and keep track of all the Albioneers that came before, and thus forms a great way of meeting lots of different and unique people!

GroteReisCie

This is a call for the travellers amongst you. One week each year, Albion leaves for the British isles. The trip can go to anywhere in the UK or Ireland, and will be full of interesting activities and adventures. You can turn this experience into something even more special by joining the Big Trip Committee! As a member of this committee you become a travel guide for a week and you plan the trip from beginning to end: from choosing the destination to making sure everyone gets back home safely.

PHOENIX

At Phoenix Magazine, we strive to document the life and the culture of the English student in Utrecht. It's an encouraging space where aspiring writers, photographers and designers can channel their creativity into an end product every academic quarter, under the guidance of an editorial board. We value commitment and originality, and encourage taking initiative - and we promise that the deadlines don't negate the enjoyment. After all, the fun is in creating something together as a team. So, if you're looking to improve your already acquired skills and develop some new ones on the side, be sure to sign up and hopefully we'll see you at the first meeting!

SUDS

Welcome to the Students of Utrecht Drama Society! SUDS was founded in 1969! Every year we have a one-act festival (with four student-written one act plays) and a big play, and we do drama, comedy and everything in between. The only constant is that they are incredibly fun to do every year, and you will laugh, work and sweat, but the result is so worth it! Visit the SUDS Theatre-Group Facebook page for more info.

KleineReisCie

Near the end of the Academic year, the Short Trip Committee organises a weekend for all Albioneers to just relax, make campfires, drink beer and talk about the ins and outs of life. This camp will be somewhere in the Netherlands, and it will be full of fun activities organised by the Short Trip Committee.

Sympocie

The task of the Symposium Committee is to organise interesting symposia for everyone who's interested throughout the year. These symposia consist of lectures and talks on a large variety of subjects, for example, dystopian literature or forensic linguistics. As a member of this committee you brainstorm on a theme, approach possible speakers and make sure the event will run smoothly.



CampCie

Every year our introduction camp for first year students is a weekend full of fun activities, laughter, and, of course, making new friends. Being part of this committee means being in charge of choosing the theme, activities, location, food, basically everything. So whether you want to relive your own introduction camp because it was amazing, or if you didn't like it, make it even better than the year before, this is your chance to sign up!

SportCie

Every year the SportCie organises various sports-related activities, ranging from mini-golf to the autumn fall hike. We are a bunch of the most fun and energetic people of Albion, and are always in for trying new sports and niche games! Apart from the development and strengthening of your organisational skills, joining this committee will be a great outlet for your own sports-related desires and a lovely way of sharing your passions with your fellow Albioneers.



BOOKSHELF

With Hester Schneider

Written by Nina Carstens - Edited by Julia Schuurmans

It is a grey and stuffy day as I get to sit down with Hester to discuss her bookshelf, or maybe I should say bookshelves. After half an hour of just admiring and talking about these bookshelves, we both remember we have an interview to do and get started immediately.



What is your favourite book of all time?

That is a very good question, especially because my taste has changed a lot recently. But I would say *The Fever King* by Victoria Lee. It is a brilliant fantasy and I really love it because it is a duology and I often feel that fantasies are so long and very daunting, but this one is great. It's queer and it's just amazing. You have to read it.

What is the worst book you've ever read?

Oof, that is a difficult question. I guess it would have to be a book I have read for school. I feel like usually I research my books quite well so I know I'll probably like them when I buy them. But I think it might be *Bleeding Edge* by Thomas Pynchon. I just could not get through it, it was so dense and the topic did not interest me at all and the writing was just not for me.

What is your favourite queer book?

I would say *The Truth About Keeping Secrets* by Savannah Brown. I have a lot of queer books and I like them all. But I feel like often with queer books, it is about them being queer. But with *The Truth About Keeping Secrets*, they just exist as such. It's not a hyper-focus on that and I really like that. The sexuality of characters should not be exploited, I mean that's kind of a strong word, but it is basically what it is sometimes. But for a cheesy queer book, I really enjoyed *The Henna Wars* by Adiba Jaigirdar as well. Oh! *Crier's War*! How could I forget that! It's a queer fantasy, it's just great!

What is a book that you would like to see adapted to a film series?

I would love to see *An Ember in the Ashes* by Sabaa Tahir get adapted. That would be amazing! Like, it's such a great fantasy. I'm thinking of *Moon Knight*, that Marvel series? I think it has the same vibe and I could just see it come together. Half a year ago I probably would've said *Heartstopper* by Alice Oseman, but that already happened! also read very easily and I think I have read most of them.

What do you think the important part is of queer representation in books?

Quite a question! I mean, everyone needs to have a chance to read about themselves. Especially in books because you enter a world, all by yourself, you're in there alone and seeing queer characters can make you feel so validated. And especially when you're surrounded by people with whom you're not comfortable. It kind of is a form of escapism and everyone deserves that chance.

What is the most recent book that you gave five stars on Goodreads?

Let me look that up. *The Wrath and the Dawn*, by Renée Ahdieh. I borrowed it from a friend, and I turned out really grateful because you have good books and GOOD books. Again, it had Moon Knight vibes, like *Middle Eastern*. The characters are everything you want from them, the worldbuilding is great, and the writing is amazing. I just can't wait for the sequel.

What is a book you think everyone should read at least once?

I'll stick with the queer theme and say *The House in the Cerulean Sea*. It's a middle-grade fantasy and it's just so wholesome. The characters really make the book. The blurb says that it feels like a blanket wrapped around you and it's true! It's very heart-warming and makes you feel validated.

Which author have you read most books of and why?

I think that would be Sarah J. Maas, but simply because the *Throne of Glass* series was so long. And then I also read *A Court of Thorns and Roses*, just the first one though. Or Alice Oseman would be a good contestant because I read all four *Heartstopper* books and standalone novels. They were all great.

What book are you looking forward to reading?

The sequel of *These Violent Delights* and the sequel of *The Wrath and the Dawn*. I just love them both a lot so I can't wait to get my hands on them. Also! *Raybearer* by Jordan Ifueko. It is a fantasy novel with asexual representation and I'm just very interested to read that and it is also a very pretty book.

What book do you think is absolutely overrated?

A Court of Thorns and Roses! I hated the first book and people say that the second book redeems some of the flaws of the first, and then I started it but I just cannot get through it. Like I thought the first book was very predictable and I hate the relationship between the main characters and the ending was just so cheesy.

Who is your favourite fictional character?

That is such a hard question because I tend to forget a lot of a book the minute I finish it, but I would say Laia from *An Ember in the Ashes*. She is so fierce and cool and I just love her.



What book are you ashamed of not reading?

The Lord of the Rings. That was a quick answer, but yes I'm ashamed to say that I haven't read them. Yet, that is, because I really want to read them but I just haven't.

If you were to write a book, what would it be about?

I don't really have any writing aspirations, but I do remember that as a child in primary school I wanted to write a book set in Iceland, about a dog. So maybe something like that and maybe it would include a queer couple travelling around or something.

What was your favourite book growing up?

The Madicken series by Astrid Lindgren. Pretty much anything by her, though. I love *Pippi Longstocking*. I also love *The Six Bullerby Children* series. I just love those books. She is just amazing.

What is your favourite English word?

Miscellaneous! It is such a random, miscellaneous if you will, word. It is a great word, it just sounds beautiful.

What is a book you have read halfway through or less?

I'm ashamed to say a lot of classics. *Emma* by Jane Austen, for example. *Jane Eyre* even. I didn't finish *High Fidelity* either. They just weren't for me.

Queer Representation in Video Games

Written by Emilie Wiingreen – Edited by Marit Vogels – Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

Being different has always come with its share of struggles in terms of representation in media. However, as the world becomes more publicly diverse, so does the representation we see on TV, in movies, in songs, and literature. Just like any other type of media, games are no exception and a rise of queer, BIPOC, and disabled representation is more and more prevalent in current video games. Queer representation in video games has especially seen a rise throughout the last five years with a plethora of games expanding over multiple genres to fit the needs of any gamer. When talking about the most impactful queer video games some of the most impactful titles that cannot be excluded from the conversation are as follows: Dragon Age, Life is Strange, Monster Prom, and Stardew Valley.

Dragon Age has in particular been known as being ahead of its time as it was an action RPG which offered its players unlimited romance possibilities, regardless of their chosen gender. Even though it didn't offer its players the opportunity to be non-binary, it was quickly adopted by the LGBTQ+ community as a step in the right direction, especially considering that the first Dragon Age game was released in 2009. But if action games aren't for you, then there are plenty of other fish in the sea, like that of Stardew Valley, the perfect game for casual comfort, a simple game about moving far away, buying a farm, and living the perfect cottage core lifestyle. Once again, like Dragon Age, Stardew Valley offers its players unlimited romance options.

“As the world becomes more publicly diverse, so does the representation we see on TV, in movies, in songs, and literature.”

Besides the big classics, the last few years have also been a big year for LGBTQ+ indie titles with it. When covid hit, a lot of people were left with a lot of time on their hands, which opened up an almost completely untapped market for queer indie games by independent game designers. One such title is one of my personal favorites; Unpacking. Unpacking is a very simple game in which the whole objective of the game is to unpack the main characters' boxes and scrapbooks, as they move throughout their life. Not only is the game incredibly satisfying, but it also tells the beautiful story of a woman finding herself and figuring out her sexuality. If you were to ever consider buying an indie game and supporting an independent queer video game producer, I can highly recommend Unpacking, which can be found on Steam.

Another important step for queer representation is also the fact that many big game companies, like Riot Games, Origin, and Hi-Rez studios, are showing their support for the LGBTQ+ community by releasing pride related cosmetics for their player base. Not only are these cosmetics free, but at the same time, companies will hold a promotion in which a percentage of the money made from sales of certain in-game cosmetics will go towards charity. For instance, when COVID-19 hit in 2020, Riot Games donated 100% of their sales of promotional skins towards a COVID-19 help fund to aid those who are heavily affected by COVID, and who lack the funds to deal with their respective situation.



Queerbaiting in films and series

Written by Hester Schneider – Edited by Jamie Pilon – Illustrated by Emilie Wiingreen

Trigger warning for homophobia and queer-erasure

I'm sure you know the feeling. You start watching a series or film with the expectation of a queer love interest and keep waiting and waiting until it comes (I love BBC Sherlock but sadly the series is guilty of this too). But you've reached the end of said series or film and are left with crushed hopes because your anticipated love interest did not develop, developed but got little screen time, or one of the interests was killed off right after (remember that one vampire show...?). These are just a few examples of queerbaiting, a harmful marketing ploy that has found its way into the media more and more in recent years. No matter the medium, promises of LGBTQ+ inclusivity are made and not fulfilled.

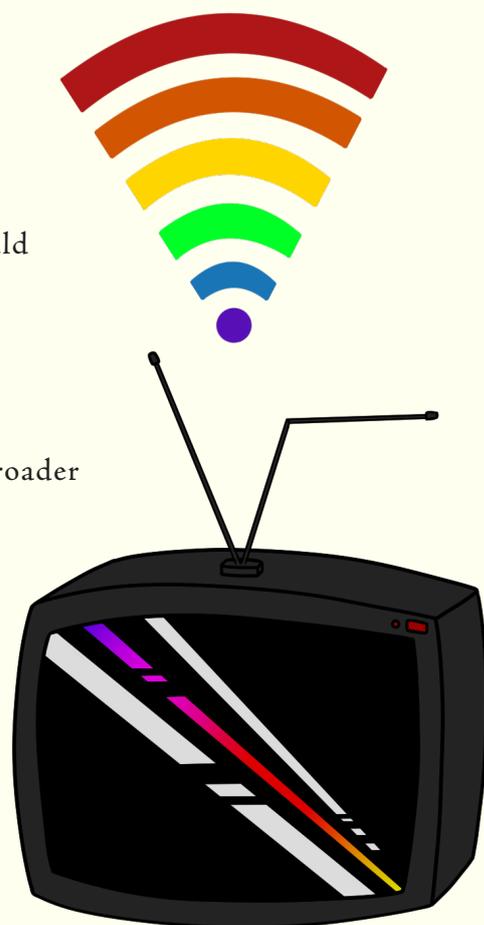
Queerbaiting has evolved, which makes the modern-day understanding differ from a historical perspective. In the 1950s, queer people were part of what is now known as the Lavender Scare. US citizens in government positions that identified as queer were believed to be untrustworthy or even a threat to national security, which caused them to have to hide their sexuality if they wanted to keep their jobs. A horrible practice came into place where people would "bait queers," so they could expose those who identified within the LGBTQ+ spectrum. They would pose as allies and trick people by seemingly providing a safe space, only to turn them in after.

In contemporary society, queerbaiting is generally done to attract a broader following by including queer viewers in the audience base to make money off them.

It all comes down to capitalism again. Queerbaiting is harmful because it adds to the stigmatization of the LGBTQ+ community. Namely, it can cause queer people to be alienated when a supposedly queer series or film barely includes any queer representation. It implies that there is something not worthy of showing, not valid about the expression of queer identities.

Some well-known examples of queerbaiting in series include Tara and Willow from Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Stiles and Derek from Teen Wolf, and Betty and Veronica from Riverdale. In films you could think of Bucky and Steven in Captain America: Civil War, or Dumbledore and Grindelwald from Harry Potter (see the other article in the magazine for a more elaborate talk on this!).

To end this on a positive note, here are some amazing tv shows or films with LGBTQ+ representation! Some recommendations for queer series include The L Word, Pose, RuPaul's Drag Race, Wynonna Earp, One Day at a Time, Dear White People, Euphoria, The 100, Sex Education, Sense8, Our Flag Means Death, Steven Universe, and The Fosters (and Heartstopper of course). As for films, the following are classics: Moonlight, Disclosure, Uncle Frank, Alex Strangelove, Portrait of a Lady on Fire, Carol, and Paris is Burning. There are more to be found and hopefully many more to come!



VISIBILITY MATTERS

Written by Noa Kimpton – Edited by Hester Schneider – Illustrated by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg

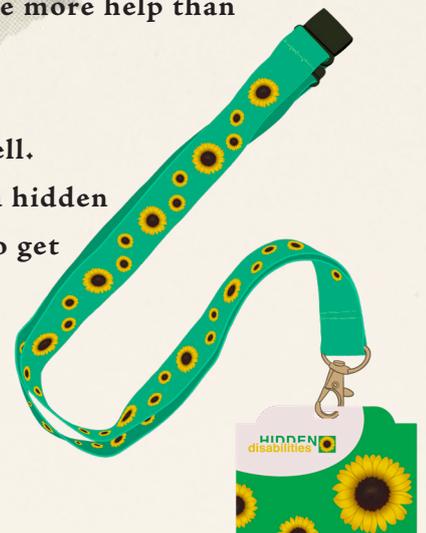
Oftentimes when we think of the word “disabled” we have a certain image in our minds. Most of the time, this image is rather simplified. Or rather, limited is perhaps a better word. Our minds don’t tend to go any further than the disabilities that we can see, whether it is a mobility aid user, a person with a service dog or anything akin to that. In doing so, we forget about the less visible ones.

If you can’t see it, it’s easy to ignore. If we allow it to be ignored, we will keep getting denied the help we need.

A solution to this came to us in 2016. It started at the London Gatwick Airport when someone wondered how they could make the invisible visible, and they came up with the sunflower lanyards. These lanyards could easily signal to the staff that someone needed a little more help than others.

Nowadays, these lanyards are gaining popularity outside of airports as well.

While these lanyards may not be a cure, they can help a lot. People with a hidden disability often have to explain themselves over and over again in order to get the help they need. The lanyards, while they are not an official way to get accessibility, can do the explaining for them. If anything, it can save us a whole lot of anxiety, energy and frustration.



The Doves of Guinevere

Doves fly to and fro
with their feathers like brushes,
leaving streaks of colours in the clouds like
bushes.

Nesting in that heavenly wood,
the dovine artists work their paint
in the miraculous ways of a saint.

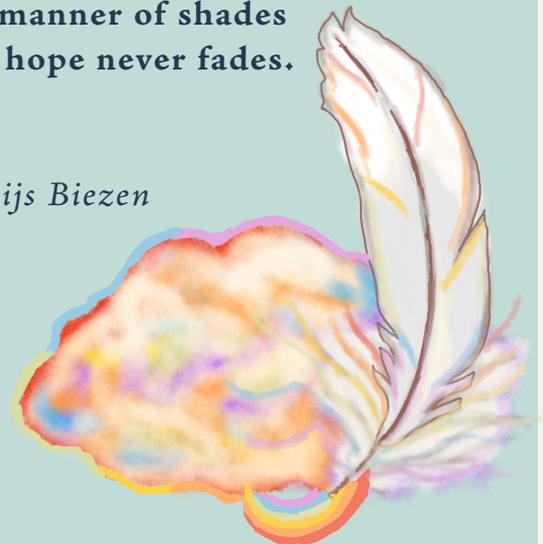
They gather in squares
and gorge themselves on man’s horn of
plenty
in numbers of six, ten, twenty.

The payment is the silver lining
—or yellow, green, red, or blue— of those
clouds
put there by those dovine crowds.

But the exchange rates for lines
are quite awful really.
It should be one line for a couple bucks,
ideally.

Yet the doves keep painting
the sky in all manner of shades
because their hope never fades.

Written by Thijs Biezen



Minor Market: Kaylee Buitenhuis

Interviewer: Julia Schuurmans – Edited by Nina van Veen

For this minor market item, I interviewed Kaylee, a third-year English student, now finishing up her last course of the minor 'Gender Studies'. To give you an insight into the minor about what you can expect, I asked her a few questions. Besides, Kaylee is also thinking about doing the master 'Gender studies' at UU, so, you will read about her interests in that too.

Why did you choose to do the minor Gender Studies as part of your English degree?

Well, mostly because I find it interesting to see how gender intersects with our society and how it plays a role in more aspects of our lives than we probably think it does. The topics of race, religion and class also really spoke to me since this also impacts how people see themselves and each other.

Which topics did you discuss during the minor and what was most interesting to you?

I guess how different genders are presented but also different ethnicities and religions. It is a very inclusive course, which also talks about communities one might have never heard of before, such as the Hijras. On the other hand, I also remember an interesting article by Joseph Boone about Western travellers and their association with male homosexuality in the Middle East. Westerners saw it as a place where one could experience sexual encounters unavailable in Europe. Right now, we are discussing the influence of visual images and how they are for example influenced by different aspects of gender and power. During this minor, I also really delved into topics like racism and feminism. You get a lot of freedom in choosing topics for essays, so you can focus on what you find most interesting.

For whom would you recommend this minor?

Mostly for people who are interested in the workings of gender relations and the role of feminism in our society, different cultures and religions and the influence of gender on different aspects, such as visibility. For literary English students, such as myself, I see this minor as a way of specialising in topics we have discussed in some Intertextuality courses. For example, in the course Literary Toolbox, we looked at the short story Eveline which dives into the topics of agency and feminism, topics which the minor addresses in more depth.

Why are you considering doing the master's as well?

Mainly because of the job prospects with migration, which I'm very interested in. I've also read that this master's allows you to specialise in different elective courses and that draws me as well. To be able to study whatever you find interesting. Besides, the master's also gives the opportunity to do an internship and to gain experience within the work field.

How do you see yourself implementing the knowledge you have gained from this minor, and maybe also the master's as well after you've finished your studies?

I think it would be cool to have a job that focuses on trying to overcome certain differences between people with different backgrounds, and in that sense also to be able to understand where those certain differences come from. Therefore, working with organisations that are concerned with migration and refugees seems like an interesting career prospect to me. I've followed a lot of other electives which helped me gain a basic understanding of people with different backgrounds, and I hope to get the opportunity to keep learning about different cultures and people. For those interested, I did electives such as Mohammed Past and Present, Migration and Diaspora, Racism in the Western World: A Cultural History, and Radical Redemption.

ALBIONEERS ABROAD

Written by Rose Özüm – Edited by Jamie Pilon

Winston Churchill once pointed out that: “To improve is to change; to be perfect is to change often.” While I can honestly say that I don’t believe in achieving perfection, I do very much agree that in order to improve, we must change. About a year and a half ago people were already asking me what it was that I wanted to do for my third year of my Bachelor. At that time, I was incredibly introverted, kind of a loner, and spending most of my days either studying, reading, or gaming. My first reaction was panic, as my second year had just started, so how the hell was I supposed to already have decided what I wanted to do the next year. Fortunately, the first choice you have to make only exists out of three choices: you either do a minor, an internship, or you go to study abroad. While the latter of the three sounded absolutely adventurous, it also sounded completely terrifying. Going to a whole different country, moving there, living there for over five months, maybe even speaking a different language, etc. The cons were piling up and (especially due to covid) I started doubting if I should even apply for a position abroad. But, I had this inner voice telling me to go for it. I mean, even if I got in, I could still decline anytime I wanted!

To make a long story short, I got accepted at Trinity College in Dublin, Ireland. Let the adventure begin, I suppose. You know that scene from the Hobbit where Bilbo runs off with his signed contract and yells “I am going on an adventure” with sparkling eyes? Well, that is what ran through my mind when I got the news. And with every adventure a personal change is often involved (at least from almost every story that I have ever read or watched anyways). So, to feel like my own true protagonist, I decided to make a commitment to change. I wanted to be more open, to say yes more often, to actually go to student parties for once, and just to really take advantage of the fact that I was in a foreign country where no one knew me. Basically: to discover who I wanted to be. I am not going to lie, I was terrified going on that plane. All these nightmare-ish scenes were going through my head: what if Irish people aren’t as welcoming as they’d said? What if I fail at everything I do there? What if I can’t escape my introvert bubble? What if no one liked me? I could go on and on about all my insecurities that were running through my head while I was already seated in the plane not-ready for take-off.

However, the most indescribable feeling came over me when we landed in Dublin. I later discovered that it was a sense of feeling home. There are so many things that I could talk about of what I did in Dublin, of all the people I met, of all the new experiences I gained, but in the end all I have to say is this: Dublin changed my life, changed my perspectives on humans and on life, changed my behavior, changed me. Maybe I was just very lucky or this is just one of those things in life that some of us are meant to do.

And when I took the plane back to The Netherlands my mind wasn’t running through all of my insecurities or any other negative emotions that I entered the country with. The only thing my mind was set upon was that it knew, that I knew, that I had gained a feeling of knowing what it felt like to belong, and knowing what it felt like to be me.

By Rose Özüm

Playlist of my Life

Illustrated by Żuzia Gelauff

ANNA - MARIA



1. Im Coming Out – Diana Ross
2. Boys Keep Swinging – David Bowie
3. Born This Way – Lady Gaga
4. Same Love – Macklemore & Ryan Lewis feat. Mary Lambert
5. i wanna be your girlfriend – girl in red
6. MONTERO (Call Me By Your Name) – Lil Nas X
7. Boyfriend – Dove Cameron
8. Pussy Is God – King Princess
9. Girls in Bikinis – Poppy
10. I Like Boys – Todrick Hall

Pride month is here, parades are ensued, and partying is at an all-time high for the queer community! What goes perfectly with parades? Music! Obviously, this playlist couldn't be made without the iconic song I'm Coming Out by the lovely Diana Ross, not only known as a well-loved queer anthem, but also as one of the first openly gay songs made as a dedication to her gay and queer fans. For someone who is a part of the LGBTQ+ community, it is incredibly powerful to have so many artists being able to freely make music for queer audiences, and it is something I personally think we should be highly appreciative of. Especially considering that generations prior to ours probably didn't have the same freedom.

CECILIE

1. Treat People With Kindness - Harry Styles
2. Shake It Off - Taylor Swift
3. Voulez-Vous - ABBA
4. Girls / Girls / Boys - Panic! At The Disco
5. No Shame - 5 Seconds of Summer
6. Take the World by Storm - Lukas Graham
7. Love Don't Hate It - Duncan Laurence
8. Lover - Taylor Swift
9. HEAVEN - Troye Sivan
10. Rainbow - dodie



When I think of my Pride playlist, I think of non-stop bops, songs that make me want to get up and dance, but also some slow or sad songs. While there are definitely some queer artists in the mix, I have added some of my personal all-time faves to cry or scream the lyrics along to, or songs whose message I feel like are good to hear again during Pride Month. Troye is an artist I listen to a lot during Pride month. Picking just one song of his is hard, but despite that, I chose HEAVEN as it deals with the anxieties LGBTQ+ people might deal with "without changing a part of me how do I get into heaven? / if I'm losing a piece of me maybe I don't want heaven" - which I felt like was important to highlight. The final song of this playlist is dodie's Rainbow. It's about the shame LGBTQ+ people go through and therefore the importance of 'Pride', thus, the perfect closer for a Pride playlist.

Realm Breaker: A Modern Take on Lord of the Rings

Written by Helenie Demir – Edited by Nina van Veen – Illustrated by Mohana Żwaga

“What happens when Lord of the Rings meets Guardians of the Galaxy?” Well, according to the author, Victoria Aveyard, you get Realm Breaker. The first book in an epic fantasy series has the best of both worlds: a quest, rich world-building, chaotic dynamics, and much more. However, what stands out in Realm Breaker, are the characters and specifically, their appearances. Aveyard promoted the book, which was released in May 2021, as something she wanted to see as a little girl. It was Lord of the Rings, but with fewer white men. The result? Out of the five narrators of the novel, three are female characters, and three are people of color.

As iconic as Tolkien’s world may be, the lack of diversity is visible. Aveyard made clear how obsessed she has been with the books and movies her entire life, but couldn’t quite cancel out the voices that told her she wanted to see something more in the story: female representation. The main character, Corayne an-Amarat, is not only a woman but also a person of color. She is biracial since her mother is described as having a bronze skin color and her father as being white. Though there is some fanart of her depicted as leaning more towards white, in my head she is a light-skinned woman of color. As for her personality, Corayne is as clueless as any person might be when confronted by a brooding immortal and an impatient assassin, but Aveyard’s storytelling shows Corayne as a teenager who tries her best, fails, and learns.

Andry, a black aspiring knight, is probably the sweetest character you’ll ever meet. He loves to make tea for his partners at the most unconventional times, and for that reason alone, I see him as the Uncle Iroh of the Realm Breaker world. I would read the book for him and his tea alone. In all seriousness, though, Andry is driven by honor and family, and the team can count on him if they’re looking for loyalty. And tea.

Sorasa is half Ibal, our world’s Spain, and half Rhashir, our world’s India. In my opinion, she is the best character, though I might be biased because I love borderline immoral assassins who are introduced to the story by slicing a man’s throat. If you’re in the search for morally gray characters, consider this to be your answer. Her humanity does come to show, though, throughout the novel as she interacts with the other characters.

Domacrihan, or as everyone likes to shorten it: Dom, a main character, who is simply white, but even he has something that we don’t often see in stories: masculine vulnerability. He is an immortal and one can imagine there’d be some issues worth a lifetime that are weighing him down. Dom is tormented by his own demons and he is not afraid to show his feelings when it comes to, what he considers to be, his failings. In other words, you want to give him a hug and a blanket. Perhaps also a cup of Andry’s tea.

Erida is the final narrator who is also white, but it is incredibly interesting to watch her unfold as a character. Without spoiling why that is, I would kindly direct you towards the book itself. There is definitely a gray area of morality to discover here as well.



There is also the case of, what I like to call, hidden representation. The name 'an-Amarat' sounds very Arabic to me, the places surrounding the country Rhashir also sound very Indian—Jirhali, Bihar, and more. There is also a spice trade that very much resembles that of the Middle East. Aveyard has done a phenomenal job of creating a fantasy world that is unique yet still recognizable as something of our own. In a Tumblr post, Aveyard explained that Allward is inspired by a flipped map of the Mediterranean. So, the countries of the real-life map are reflected in the places we see in *Realm Breaker*, which results in a detailed and stunning fantasy world.

The sequel to *Realm Breaker* is coming out this year! Catch *Blade Breaker* in your bookstores on June 28.

LGBTQ+ Representation & Greek Mythology

Written by Anna Maria Popo – Edited by Nina van Veen – Illustrated by Elise Brouwer

LGBTQ+ representation has been and is more important than ever. LGBTQ+ representation can be found in literature, in movies, in series, in any form of art, in all its shapes and forms – you name it! But one more amazing way of having LGBTQ+ representation is through the narration of Greek mythology.

We all have enjoyed through time reading Greek mythology, reading retellings of Greek myths, or even just briefly hearing about it, getting lost in a world of gods and mortals, of love, and tragedy—it never gets old. And for those who want to dive into the endless worlds of myths, and enjoy a good podcast in their free time - do I have something for you? In the podcast – “Let’s Talk About Myths Baby!” – the stories are told in a casual, entertaining, and sarcastic way. Liv Albert focuses on the Greek and Roman myths and reminds us that there is more to just the *Odyssey* or Zeus. She reminds us of smaller myths that might have been forgotten or myths that haven’t got their fair share in the spotlight. Her episodes dedicated to PRIDE are a few of them.

So, for those who enjoy an entertaining podcast, and wish to hear more stories of Greek mythology this one is for you! And don’t be alarmed by the number of names thrown at you, just enjoy the ride.

PRIDE – LGBTQ+ Episodes (from most recent to oldest)

CXXXI: Queer as Hell! Stories of LGBTQIA Characters in Greek Myth

CXXVIII: The God of Many Names and Many Lovers, Dionysus & Ampelus (PRIDE!)

PRIDE! Revisiting Iphis & Ianthe, Apollo & Hyacinthus, and Caenis/Caeneus

Mini Myth: All the Best Heroes Have Boyfriends, Heracles & Hylas (Plus More LGBTQ Stories)

Mini Myth: When Apollo Met Hyacinthus, A Frisbee Tragedy.



The Queer Life of Oscar Wilde

Written by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg – Illustrated by Cecilie Balemans-Højberg – Edited by Anna Preindl

It was no secret that the beloved author, poet and playwright Oscar Wilde was gay, but sadly this caused many hardships throughout his life. Wilde was slandered, beat up and even sent for prison for his crime: homosexuality. These events eventually led to his untimely death in 1900.

Now back to the beginning. Oscar Wilde was born in Dublin, Ireland in 1854. Wilde was born to a set of intelligent parents who were already writing books. So, considering there was already a lot of writing going on in the Wilde household, whether they were plays, novels or books about Irish archaeology or peasant folklore, it is not so strange that Wilde ended up with an affinity for writing as well.

When it came to Wilde's private life, it is notable that he was openly gay to close friends and colleagues. But due to the state of the world he lived in, he tried to stay as much in the closet as he could in the eyes of the public. One way in which Wilde tried to hide this was by getting married to Constance Lloyd in 1884 and ended up having two sons. Despite the 'being married to a woman' idea functioned more as a cover story of sorts, Wilde had gotten very protective of his children and he was afraid of losing them. Wilde thought that writing children's literature had made him a better man. Wilde felt like he was more free and there was more clarity without being self-absorbed by writing children's literature. From this came *The Happy Prince and Other Tales* in 1888, which today is still widely read by people of all ages.

Wilde was a big proponent of the aesthetic movement. This was a movement against Victorian prudery and dry moral sense of utilitarianism and associations with industrial culture. Wilde sought to elevate good taste and pursuit of beauty as a guiding principle of art and life: "in all unimportant matters, style, not sincerity, is the essential." The aesthetic movement was all about the pursuit of beauty of art and life but not in a way you talk down to people. Wilde's main interest was to construct aesthetic details precisely, and convey social issues in his works while doing so. He was a real stylist, took a lot of time perfecting things. By 1890 Wilde had become the most sought after playwright in all of London, being known for *The Picture of Dorian Gray* or *The Importance of Being Earnest*.

While Wilde was married and even had children, he did eventually start having sexual affairs with men. He had supposedly confessed to Constance that he couldn't have sex with her because he had gotten syphilis somehow and he was afraid of giving it to her. However, Wilde allegedly picked up rent boys and working class gentlemen to have sex with them - geez, I wonder how he got it...

Again, almost everyone knew he was gay, but no-one really minded. What did end up getting Wilde in trouble though was his affair with Lord Alfred Douglas. Before I go into that though, it is important to know, context wise, that The Criminal Law Amendment Act of 1885 in Victorian Britain had just been implemented which criminalised all sex acts between two men. (Although weirdly enough, for some reason, sex acts between two women were never made illegal in England - strange...)

Anyway, back to the story. Lord Alfred Douglas was a young poet and aristocrat and his father was the Marquess of Queensberry. Sadly for Wilde though, Douglas's father wasn't too happy when he found out about the two (to put it mildly).

At the opening night of *The Importance of Being Earnest* the Marquess threatened to pelt Wilde with rotten turnips. He kept harassing Wilde to the point that he eventually left a calling card at a private club that Wilde was a part of which said "For Oscar Wilde, posing sodomite" - charming, I know.

Wilde's friends immediately urged him to flee to France until everything cooled off. France was suggested as they had actually decriminalised homosexuality in 1791. But instead of fleeing Wilde decided to sue the Marquess for defamation.

Considering it was pretty well known that Wilde was gay, it became hard to prove the allegations were not true, because they were... The Marquess got a private investigator to look over the case and well, as we can imagine, there was 'proof'. One thing was used to prove his guilt were the love letters that Wilde had written to Douglas. Other than that, he got chambermaids and hotel maid's to testify about seeing men in Wilde's bed and they even went as far as to comment on the state of the sheets that they washed - fun. Besides that, they questioned Wilde on premise of his controversial 1890 novel *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, suggesting that Wilde had used the novel's homoerotic theme to seduce Douglas. During the trial Queensberry's defence basically accused Wilde of soliciting 12 other young men to commit sodomy. Due to 'indisputable proof' Wilde's lawyers pulled the lawsuit, except this was unfortunately understood to be an omission of guilt and the court issued a warrant for Wilde's arrest and he was convicted for gross indecency.

In 1895 Wilde was sent to prison and sentenced to 2 years of hard labour. And let's just say that Wilde wasn't really too big of a fan of working hard, so this was pretty much a nightmare. There was an instance where Wilde refused to get out of bed, so a guard was sent to get him. And as he tried to yank Wilde out of bed, Wilde ended up cracking his skull. As you can imagine, this combined with the hard labour, caused Wilde's health to worsen quite badly during his time in prison.

When he finally got out of prison his life was pretty much ruined as he had no career, no money and he had to prove to the outside world that he was 'straight.' So to prove the latter, Wilde decided to go to a brothel. After giving 'trying to be straight' a go Wilde came out of the brothel noting that the experience was like chewing cold mutton.

Wilde left behind a huge catalogue, and almost all works featured homosexual characters, which brought the topic of homosexuality to the public eye. In 2017 he was eventually pardoned for his conviction. Which may sound good until you realise that being pardoned implies you did in fact commit a crime, whereas being gay is not and should NEVER be seen as a crime.

Be yourself, everyone else is already taken.
Happy Pride <3



Review: Tell Me I'm Worthless

"Where were you when we lost the culture war?"

Written by Mohana Zwaga – Edited by Hester Schneider

Some time ago, three girls – Alice, Ila and Hannah – entered a corrupted, haunted House named Albion. One of them never came out, and the two that did leave, came out less themselves than before, covered in the scars visible and invisible to the outside world. Can you ever really leave such a house, once you've been in it?

In her novel, *Tell Me I'm Worthless*, Alison Rumfitt masterfully illustrates the conditions of being queer, female and trans in the United Kingdom, and in the world as a whole. Through the horror genre, she lays bare the horror of this world, and the dark, fascist way of thinking that, perhaps unknowingly, seeps into everything. Rumfitt writes:

"Albion, not compassionate, not sane, stood ringed by a tangled forest, holding inside, however messily, its overpowering ideology [...]. [...] Now, if three girls enter a house and only two leave, who is to blame? And if both girls tell a different story, but you read online that you have to BELIEVE WOMEN, what do you do? Do you decide one is a woman, and one isn't [...]? Do you take the side of the woman most like you? Or the most intersectional one? [...] In the end it's so hard to choose where your sympathies settle. So, you go online and find an 'intersectionality score calculator' on the internet."

The house becomes a character, as well as a place – a physical manifestation of fascism and cruelty in the UK. But it isn't contained to just the house. It seeps out, and reaches into the world and different people. The horror of this novel goes beyond its genre, regardless of its explicit gruesomeness. Be warned, the novel has a trigger warning for good reason! The horror questions the existence and meaning of safety all together, because the safety of one, always comes at the expense of another. It functions to remind us of our own complicity in our society and our systems and structures that fester in this 'fascism' we so easily overlook, creating systemic violence that thrives on our structural denial of it.

How close are you willing to look?

Review: Heartstopper

Written by Marit Vogels – Edited by Hester Schneider

I read the first comic of *Heartstopper* long before Alice Oseman became the name that she is today. Her previous novels I already loved, now it was up to the comic to steal my heart again. And it did, over and over again. With each new comic that got published, the story of Nick and Charlie got better and more important in today's society. What Alice does like a pro, is create characters and a universe that many young people can relate to. The comics feel like a love letter to the queer community that tells you that everyone is welcome and accepted. Even as an ally to the LGBTQIA+ community, this comic is still relatable to you, as a young adult, as it also highlights the ups and downs of being in high school.

The new Netflix series based on the comics, *Heartstopper*, promised to be perfect. And it delivered. This series captured the essence of the comics the right way and even made it better with the cast. This diverse cast almost seems as if they are not even acting, which makes the show all the better. Of course, the show changed bits, but the fact that some scenes are an exact copy of the comic makes everything okay. *Heartstopper* is the perfect show to watch when you love 15 year-olds navigating High School, accepting their sexuality, learning to self-care and finding love.

Review: The Song of Achilles

Written by Anna Maria Popo – Edited by Hester Schneider

Achilles – A Greek demi-god who fights to honour his name, and builds his reputation in one of the best-known wars of mythology. We have all heard the story of the young hero, made into a legend fighting in the Trojan War. We have all heard of the “wrath of Achilles”, or Homer’s epic Iliad. Madeline Miller takes this story and creates one of the most enchanting retellings of Greek mythology.

Even though the title might suggest that the novel is going to be about the popular young demi-god, The Song of Achilles is narrated by Achilles’ closest companion, Patroclus. In Homer’s Iliad, Patroclus is part of the action, with an emphasis on his friendship with Achilles. But he lives in the shadows of Achilles’ glory. However, Miller puts him in the spotlight, and gives us a beautiful, yet tragic love story. The story starts with Patroclus’ and Achilles’ childhood, and depicts their coming-of-age with a focus on the close bond between them that cannot be denied. Miller depicts a strong love bond between two humans, and not just as a mortal and a demi-god in the time of war. Through the eyes of Patroclus, Achilles becomes more than a fighter, he is humanised, with as much flaws as strengths, a human who wants to connect, to eventually love and be loved.

More or less, we all know that the story ends tragically for the two lovers. But we can’t help and shed a tear or two – or in most cases even more – for them. Miller provides the comfort of love even during times of death and war, and gives us a unique and unforgettable retelling that deserves to be read again and again

Review: Six of Crows

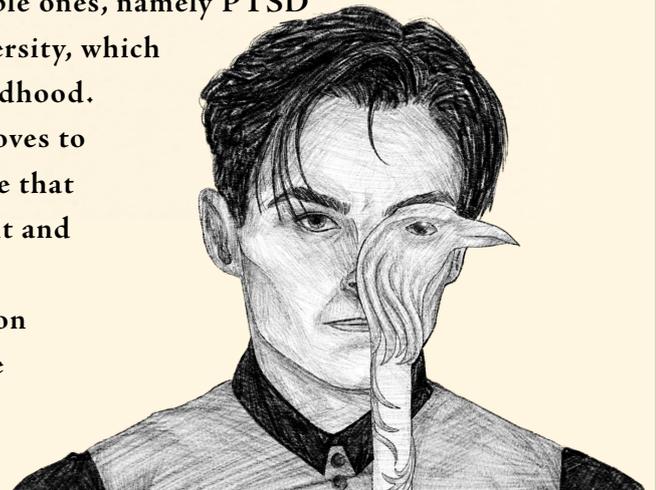
Written by Tessa de Bosschere – Edited by Hester Schneider

Diversity in all its glory is present in the YA duology Six of Crows by Leigh Bardugo. The six teenage protagonists all have their own characteristics and backgrounds that make them diverse. The diversity stretches from people of colour and queer people, to body positivity and religion. However, I will for now focus only on the diversity in the main character of the story: Kaz Brekker.

Bardugo has put her own disability (osteonecrosis) in her story by giving Kaz a limp. Both causes lead to them needing a cane while walking. A cane which would originally make a young person stand out, and feel vulnerable, is now turned into a weapon. Kaz’s infamous cane with its crow’s head as a handle has become a part of his terrifying and powerful reputation. Whenever people hear the tapping of a cane against the street, they prefer to take a detour if that means they can avoid this limping teenager.

Next to his apparent disability, Kaz also suffers from non-visible ones, namely PTSD and an aversion to touch. These are types of psychological diversity, which he has gotten through a horrendous experience during his childhood. His aversion to touch has led to him always wearing leather gloves to prevent accidentally touching someone. His trauma is so severe that the feeling of his skin touching someone else’s makes him vomit and sometimes even faint.

Kaz Brekker’s dynamic disability is an important representation for people with physical mobility limitations, whether they are always visible or not.



Home Is Not Just a Place...

Written by Noa Kimpton – Edited by Anna Maria Popo

She waited there.

With tears in her eyes, she waited. Staring out of the windows of the airport, watching the planes depart. Her child fussed in her arms, and she sighed. He sensed her; she knew. He could always sense her emotions in some type of way. Softly, she hums the song. “*Pero si te hace llorar, A mé me puedes hablar, Y estaré contigo cuando triste estás.*”

The truth was, Elena did not want to leave her home. She did not want to leave her family. She did not want to be a single mother. At moments, she was not sure if she could do this. How on earth was she to raise three children? Something had to change, she knew that. She knew it was for the best, she knew she could always come back home after she had gotten her degree. After she had earned enough to give her children the future they deserved. The one she had never gotten.

“Mami?” Beside her, Mirasol yanked on the hem of her floral dress. “I want to go home.”

“I know, mija,” she said, *so do I...* “*Home is not just a place. Wherever we will go, we will stay together. All we need is each other. When we are together, it does not matter where we sleep or eat.*”

Mirasol pondered on this for a while.

“But why is Tia Rosita not coming with us? She also belongs to our family?”

The woman sighed again.

“Maybe soon, Tia Rosita will be there. Right now, Tia Rosita has to stay with your abuela.”

“I will miss her,” Mirasol said somberly.

“I know you will. I will too.” Elena replied.

She stood there.

Eyes focused on her reflection in the mirror, she stood. A pale ghost of who she once was. She missed her family. She missed the food her abuela used to make that she cannot seem to replicate. She missed hearing the familiarity of Spanish voices around her. She even missed the loud church bells every morning that, all those years ago, she had loathed with every fiber of her being. She missed not being the odd one out. Here, she was that one Black Woman, that Single Mother, the Woman who struggles with the language, the Immigrant who is stealing everyone’s jobs. Back home, she was Elena. Just Elena. Back home, people knew how clever she was. But here? Here, most people hardly gave her the time of day, writing her off the second she pronounced a word wrong. With her sleeve, Elena wiped the condensation off her mirror. Frightened brown eyes stared back at her. She had to do this. She had to. If she was able to land this job, then maybe Rosita could finally come to her, and finally, she would be less alone. And so, with a big sigh, she wiped her tears away and reapplied her make-up, and again.

“Think about the kids, it’s all for them,” she mutters to herself.

She sat there.

With her glassy eyes staring out of a window, she sat. Shortly after Rosita died, she moved into a home for the elderly. Her mind is racing, she has so much to say, but she is unable to fathom it into words. No English ones, for that matter. She closes her eyes. She can feel the soft wind that she had held so dearly when living in Mexico. She can almost smell the salty air of the beaches where she would take her children, where Oscár had taken his first steps. Where Julio had made the prettiest sand sculptures. Where Mirasol had been collecting shells hour after hour.

She was not quite sure, but lately, more and more memories from the past have been resurfacing, so much so that sometimes she gets stuck. Lost in time. Hovering between two worlds. While her memory may not be what it was when she was younger, the one thing she does remember is when her children visit. Mirasol would always bring her her favourite homemade Ropa Vieja. Just like her mother had made her.

Mirasol knelt beside her, with a plate full of food;

“Here you go, mami, enjoy.”

Elena smiles, reaches a fragile hand, and rests it on Mirasol’s cheek for a minute.

“Gracias, mamá.”

Mirasol smiles too, but it does not quite reach her eyes.

“I’m Mirasol,” she said, but Elena had already stopped listening, too busy with chattering with the lady beside her in Spanish, scraping tiny bits of food on paper plates to share with the others.

She lies there.

In the big, white hospital bed, she lies. It has been a very long time since she moved here. She misses her cousins, and her old friends even though they had lost touch years ago, she misses her sisters and aunties and uncles. Most of them have left this earth years ago. For a fleeting moment, she hopes to see them when it is her time. Money had been tight, and she had not been able to attend all of the funerals. The thought alone brings guilt to her eyes. Her children sit beside her; Mirasol curled up as a little child in her arms, Julio and Oscár on the end of her bed. With tears in their eyes, they force smiles on their faces. They play games together, they talk about the past, reminiscing of what once was, they listen to music, Elena’s all-time favourites. Softly, Julio sings along.

“You sing so well Pedro,” Elena says, “Can you sing me another song?”

“Which one would you like?”

“Oh, I keep forgetting the name,” Elena sighs, “Just a nice one.”

Julio smiles softly, manages to hide his tears. Then he begins to sing.

Elena closes her eyes contently. She feels the soft breeze, she smells the salty air of the beach. She smiles as she listens to the familiar language that fills the room.



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Autobiography, Love and Queer Allegory in *Finn Family Moomintroll*

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

Tove Jansson preferred to keep her life private, but at the same time, she felt a need to hide parts of her own life in her stories for herself and people she knew to discover. For children, the Moomin books were a way of discovering Tove's 'own inner self'. The elegant allusions and secrecy became a way for them to unconsciously be confronted with some of the hardships that one might face in life.

While there are a lot of allegories hidden in Finn Family Moomintroll, the one that had Tove referencing her life most is through the characters Thingumy and Bob. The characters Thingumy and Bob are based on Tove Jansson and Vivica Bandler; these two characters represent their story as well as their relationship. This link may not seem too obvious at first glance when looking at the English version of Finn Family Moomintroll, but when looking at the original Swedish version, you will notice that these two characters were originally called 'Tofslan,' referring to Tove, and Vifslan, referring to Vivica. Tofslan and Vifslan were the nicknames that Tove and Vivica used for each other in real life.

Thingumy and Bob have their own language; they were the only ones who knew what they were talking about. Thingumy and Bob show a lot of affinity and closeness for each other, never leaving each other's side. Their language could perhaps represent homosexuality, as it is close to the 'normal' language all the other characters use but still harder to understand. The standard language would represent heterosexuality, as that is seen as the norm in the real world. Similar to the real world, there are also people that want nothing to do with homosexuality, and they do not care to learn about it. Sniff might represent that tragic part of society as he does not want anything to do with Thingumy and Bob after meeting them. Sniff takes it to the extreme by fighting the court case in favour of the Groke solely because he is against Thingumy and Bob.

Throughout her life, Jansson noted that she felt a lot of pain due to being unable to be open with her parents about her sexuality. Sniff could not only represent the homophobic part of society, but his inability to want to understand Thingumy and Bob could also represent Tove's inability to talk to her parents about these topics. What is important to note is that homosexuality was illegal, and there was a lot of active censoring of things that were not deemed right or proper. Luckily, there are also characters that are very open to the idea of creating an open and accepting society for everyone. The Hemulen is, at first, the only one that is able to understand Thingumy and Bob, and although Moominmamma does not understand them, she still welcomes the two to her home. The Hemulen and Moominmamma could represent people in society that were willing to learn about homosexuality and were welcoming it into society instead of exiling queer members of society. Even though Thingumy and Bob are not from Moominvalley, they still belong there.

Another allegory that is featured in Finn Family Moomintroll is the idea of the King's Ruby representing love. Throughout the book, it is constantly mentioned that the contents of the suitcase are secret; only Thingumy and Bob know what is inside. This might refer to the fact that homosexuality was illegal at the time of writing and that they had to keep their love secret to the outside world. In a letter Vivica wrote to Tove, she tells her that they have to be careful, perhaps in fear that they might be discovered. For Vivica, being discovered to be with Tove would be even more scandalous as she was married at the time. This could be represented through Thingumy and Bob desperately trying to keep the contents of the suitcase hidden for the other characters; the affair **34** hidden from the outside world.

As a result, the others see all the wonderful things they had ever done, and they longed to remember and to do them once more; everyone was far away, lost in wonderful memories. Sadly, not much later, Thingumy and Bob feel threatened by a certain gloom that crept over the valley, and as they become more anxious, they put away the King's Ruby. This threatening image could represent the people in society that want to bar queer people from being together. In other words, they try to take away their love. The coming of the Hobgoblin might symbolise the threat that the illegality of homosexuality and the secretive nature of Tove and Vivica's affair poses. Eventually, Thingumy and Bob grow and want to help the people that threaten them. They use their one wish to wish for a new ruby for the Hobgoblin, the Queen's Ruby. This maturing attitude of the opening of the suitcase and making its contents known could also represent how Tove grew after her breakup with Vivica, which led her to end up with Tuulikki Pietilä. Tove and Vivica's relationship was secretive and intense, whereas Tove's relationship with Tuulikki was calming, comforting, and reassuring. Tuulikki features in later Moomin works through the character Too-Ticky, who gives Moomintroll advice throughout the winter on how to take care and look out for himself.

Another message that features heavily in Finn Family Moomintroll is the idea to not judge a book, people, by their cover, but to treat everyone fairly no matter what your biases towards that person are. A character who immediately comes to mind when thinking of this concept is the Groke. Everyone is scared of the Groke. Thingumy and Bob immediately create a negative bias towards the Groke by telling the other characters that she is 'Tig and brim and gerrible!' before the other characters have even seen her. The immediate response of the Moomin family is to protect Thingumy and Bob from the Groke. Even though she was not necessarily big and dangerous looking, they had already decided that she was 'terribly evil'. Yet eventually, they decide that there should be a trial to determine who is able to get the suitcase, a trial that would be fair. Sniff notes that it is unfair that the Groke does not have a Council for the Defence. Sniff continues to defend the Groke, calling upon their empathy to imagine how lonely the Groke may be, and that the contents of the suitcase might be all she has. The witness of the Moomin family notes that it would be a shame to give the Groke her contents back. However, eventually, they come to the conclusion that 'Thingumy and Bob have reasoned correctly but acted wrongly' and that they, therefore, cannot just hand the suitcase to Thingumy and Bob. If like previously discussed, the King's Ruby indeed represents love, then the Groke coming for the suitcase can symbolise her search for wanting to be loved. Everyone is scared of her before they even get to know her, which results in her being very lonely. Luckily, later on in Moominland Midwinter Too-Ticky is finally standing up for the Groke, saying that she is not mean; she is trying to get warm, looking to find warmth among people, trying to find love, but she is often misinterpreted even if that is not the truth. The message of being kind, trying not to judge someone for what they look like or what someone else says about them, and treating everyone fairly repeats throughout all of Tove's works.

There are a lot of allegories hidden in Tove Jansson's Finn Family Moomintroll. Tove's own life and relationships are featured through characters like Thingumy and Bob. These characters help the reader explore the hardships that they face, and quite possibly help them prepare for what is out there waiting for them in the real world. And perhaps the most important message in Finn Family Moomintroll is that it is important to treat others fairly, even if you like others more or if they may seem scary to you.



Bound by Blood: Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald

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

By now we may all be familiar with Rowling's infamous note from a 2007 interview, stating that she imagined Dumbledore to be gay. Despite being a big advocate for more queer representation in literature myself, at the time it seemed to come a bit out of the blue. Upon rereading the Harry Potter works with this in mind, I can kind of see it, I guess, but with the release of *The Fantastic Beasts* films, it seems that Dumbledore as a queer character has indeed become canon.

To know what happened between Albus Dumbledore and Gellert Grindelwald we have to start at the beginning...

Gellert Grindelwald was a wizard who attended Durmstrang, though he got expelled after performing twisted experiments and causing near fatal attacks on students. At this time Albus Dumbledore was studying at Hogwarts, aspiring to become one of the greatest wizards of all time. After Grindelwald got expelled from Durmstrang, he started his quest to take over the Wizarding world. And this began with acquiring the Deathly Hallows, which eventually led him to Godrick's Hollow where one of the three brothers from the tale originated from (if you are unfamiliar, this is where the Dumbledore family lived). Grindelwald turned out to be Bathilda Bagshot's nephew. For context, Bathilda lived next to the Dumbledores. She was also the one to suggest that Gellert and Albus should meet. Both Albus and Gellert had a mutual obsession for power, recognition, and a drive to improve the world for the greater good, which they believed they could achieve through possessing the Deathly Hallows.

Grindelwald believed that the wizards should rule over the muggles, as that would be for the muggles own good. Dumbledore went along with that plan, as he thought seizing control over the muggles and exposing them to the wizarding world would benefit the greater good, though it is speculated that Dumbledore might have pursued this out of blind love. This is supported by the opening scene of *The Secrets of Dumbledore*, where Albus tells Gellert "I went along because I was in love with you." Or it might just have been Dumbledore's weakness for power that drove him to follow Grindelwald in his quest, as Dumbledore in his later life tries to stay away from positions of power (such as Minister of Magic) as he knows he can't handle that much power.

While they travelled the world and gained a following, the Deathly Hallows were always at the centre of the plan. The Elderwand would lead them to power and the resurrection stone could help Grindelwald create an army of inferi and return Dumbledore's parents from the grave. Only the cloak of invisibility was not as useful to them, as they were already able to disguise themselves without it - both were highly skilled wizards.

During this time Dumbledore had become rather resentful towards his siblings. Albus and Gellert wanted to bring Ariana, Albus' sister, along, but Aberforth, Albus' brother, refuses to let her go. At that point Grindelwald told Aberforth that he was standing in the way of their path to greatness. Eventually this quarrel turned into a battle that amid all chaos ended with Ariana dead - and no one knew whose curse had hit her.

A distressed Grindelwald went back to Bathilda, who set up a portkey for him. And with that, he vanished, along with his plans for world domination. The dreams he and Dumbledore had pursued together had left him all alone. Aberforth always resented Albus for his sister's death. It is only after Albus' death that Aberforth learns about his brother's regret about that awful night, in a conversation with Harry Potter.

After leaving Albus, Grindelwald kept on pursuing their dreams. He used Albus' slogan "for the greater good" as if it were his own, and he eventually got in the possession of the Elder Wand which allowed him to raise a powerful army.

It was during their quest for power that Albus and Gellert eventually made a blood pact with one another. This meant that they swore an oath to never fight one another, likely to assure that no one would turn against the other ruining their plan. The blood pact worked two ways though. Neither could hurt the other. This meant that Grindelwald was protected from Dumbledore, but Grindelwald couldn't attack Dumbledore either.

While this was the rule, there was a loophole. As we see in *The Secrets of Dumbledore*, the blood pact is broken at the end of the film. But how did that happen if they were unable to attack one another? The thing is that you cannot attack the other with the intent to harm. But in *The Secrets of Dumbledore*, it is the meeting of two spells with different intents that void the blood pact. See, Grindelwald was trying to kill Credence, whereas Albus was trying to protect him.

The congregating of the two opposing spells created another dimension of sorts. One where no one could see them, only they could. *The Secrets of Dumbledore* shows the two battling until they realise that they had ended up with their hand on the heart of the other, which made them lower their wands. Now that the blood pact lay broken on the floor, there was nothing binding Dumbledore and Grindelwald together anymore. As Albus tries to walk away from it all, Grindelwald says "Who will love you now, Dumbledore?" to which Albus responds "I'm all alone."

Dumbledore was seen as the only wizard who was powerful enough to defeat Grindelwald, though Dumbledore notes that "He feared me less than I feared him." Perhaps this does not refer to Grindelwald's physical power, but more to the power of the truth he holds - the truth about his past life with Albus. Grindelwald was at the time the most powerful magical tyrant of all time, the only one that would later outdo him was Tom Riddle, or Voldemort, a decade later.

The wizarding world was pleading with Dumbledore to face Grindelwald and defeat him. They believed that this would be the first time the two would face off against one another, but that is because time was standing still for the outside world when the blood pact was broken - no one had seen the battle. Dumbledore delayed this inevitable duel for a while - Rita Skeeter speculated it could have been "lingering affection for the man, or fear of exposure" that might have caused him to hesitate.

When Dumbledore finally did face Grindelwald in their final duel, it ended with a victory for Dumbledore. Albus had now become the owner of the Elderwand, and Grindelwald was sent off to Numengard, a prison he himself had created for his own opponents. Grindelwald would stay there until Voldemort comes looking for the Elderwand in *Harry Potter and the Deathly Hallows*.

Even in his last moments, when Grindelwald is threatened by Voldemort to tell him where the Elderwand is, Gellert lied, pretending he never had it. Perhaps this was his last goodbye to Albus, an ode to the relationship they once had, whatever it may have entailed.



IHLIA Internship

Written by Tessa Karsten – Edited by Jamie Pilon

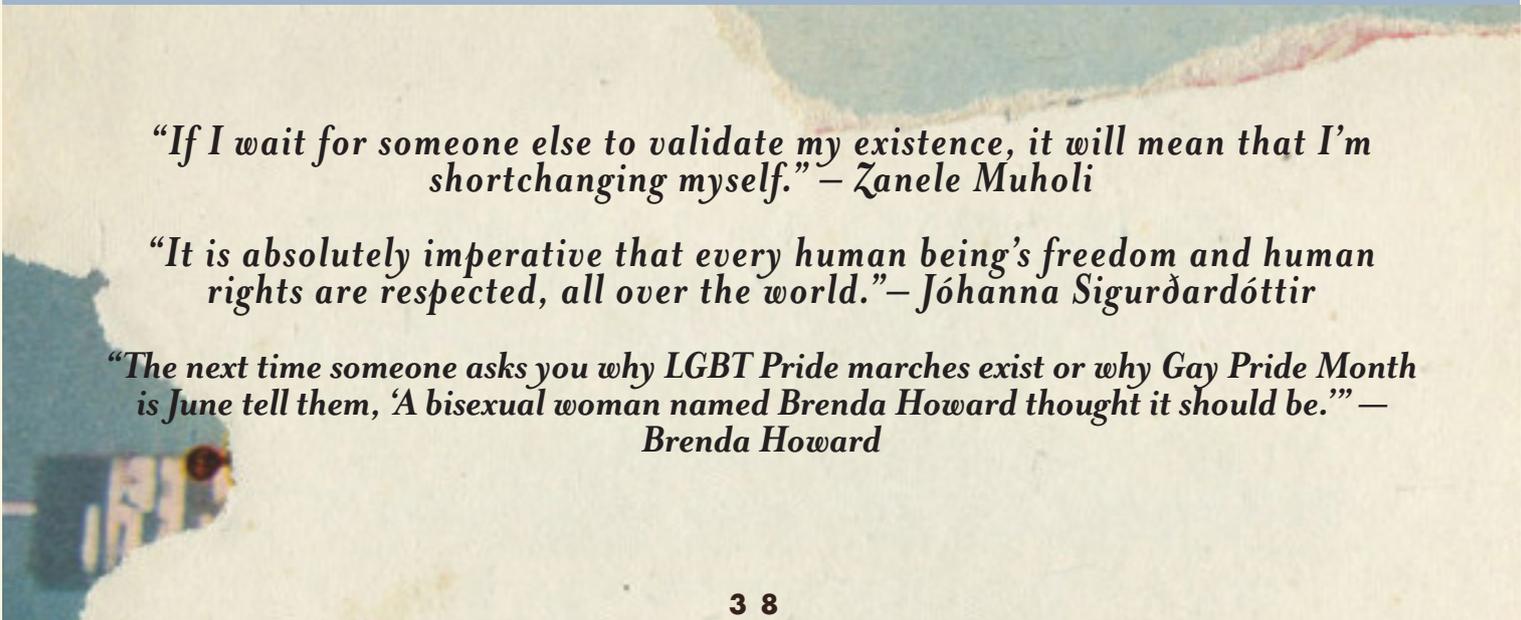
At the beginning of April 2021, I sent an unsolicited e-mail to IHLIA LGBT Heritage. I told them that I would probably be bored over the summer, and, if they would have me, would like to assist in any way, shape, or form. Even if that meant opening their mail or answering phone calls. After a few video calls with the executive manager and a staff member, they offered me a chance to assist Martien Sleutjes in carrying out a research project entitled ‘Homosexuality in and around the Second World War’.

Within this project, which is affiliated with Netwerk Oorlogsbronnen, I focused on digitizing and enclosing fiction related to the Second World War from the IHLIA collection. For three months, I spent 24 hours a week on a scavenger hunt for LGBTQIA+ fiction written during or about the Second World War. One day a week was devoted to sitting in front of a screen, searching for relevant primary – and secondary materials in online search engines.

Fortunately, two days a week were not spent sitting behind a desk. These days I was rummaging around their archives, located in the basement of OBA Oosterdok. IHLIA curates the largest LGBTQIA+ collection in Europe with over 100.000 titles on 1515 meters of shelf length – books, journals and magazines, DVDs, newspaper clippings, posters, photographs, and objects such as T-shirts and buttons.

Flipping through all these items gave me enormous insight into the magnitude of LGBTQIA+ history in the Netherlands, and the importance of the work IHLIA is doing. If it weren't for them, a lot of this information would be lost and forgotten within a few decades. While going through twenty years of the Gay Krant, trying to figure out the cataloguing system, and constantly being disappointed by how useless certain sources were was frustrating at times, it also gave me a look into what living as a queer person in the Netherlands during the war and in the years following it was like.

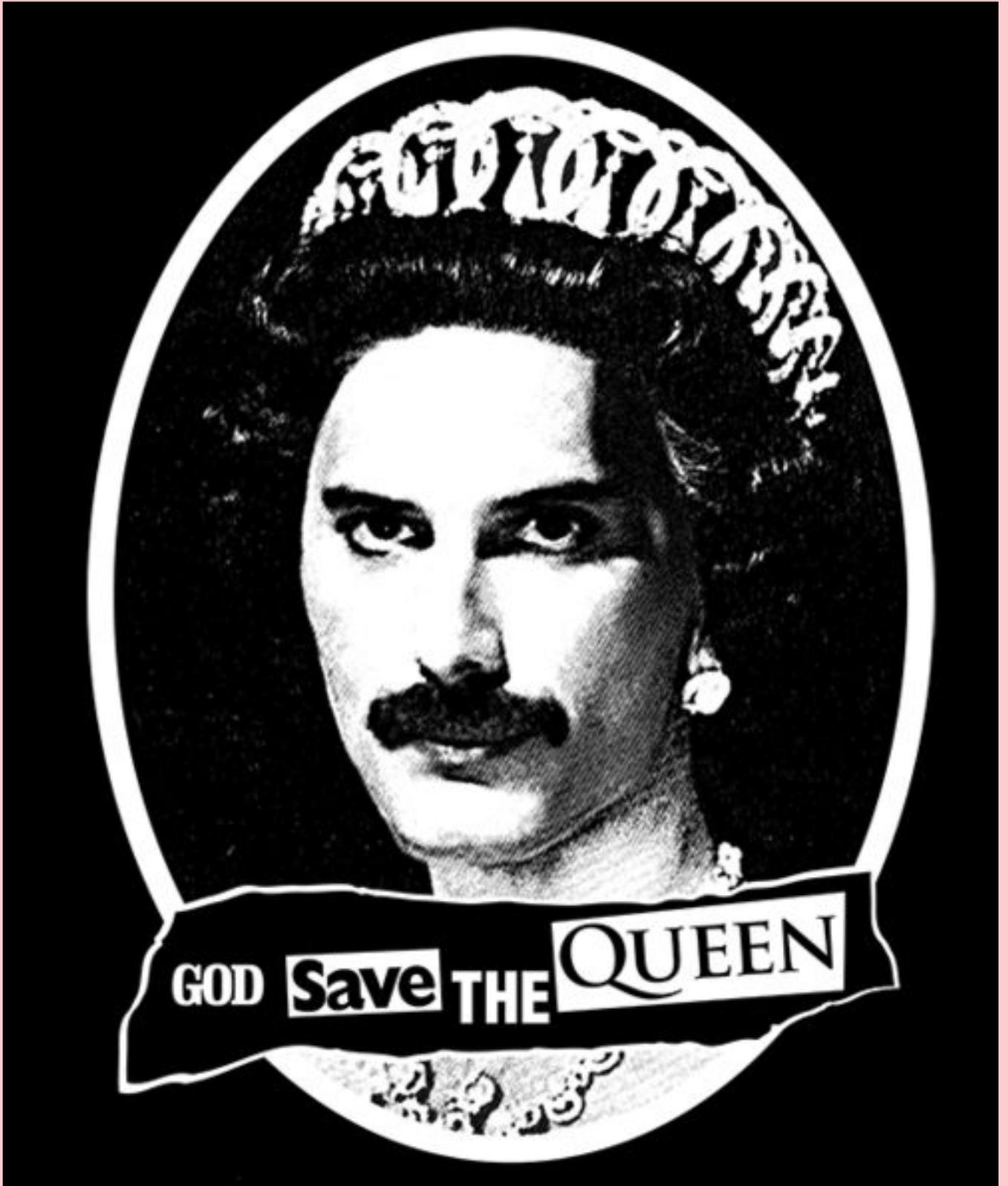
This opportunity taught me a lot about what a research career could look like, and was a very valuable contribution to my BA. While doing an internship is not embedded in the curriculum, it is worth doing if you have the time. On a final note: if you ever find yourself in need of LGBTQIA+ materials for a paper or module, definitely contact IHLIA! They are more than happy to assist you in finding materials and their archives hold a lot of content that cannot be found online.



“If I wait for someone else to validate my existence, it will mean that I’m shortchanging myself.” – Zanele Muholi

“It is absolutely imperative that every human being’s freedom and human rights are respected, all over the world.” – Jóhanna Sigurðardóttir

“The next time someone asks you why LGBT Pride marches exist or why Gay Pride Month is June tell them, ‘A bisexual woman named Brenda Howard thought it should be.’” – Brenda Howard





By Tessa de Bosschere