

# PHOENIX



## Steampunk Issue





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## INTRODUCTION

*Written by Eva Bleeker - Edited by Aitana Montoro*

Dear readers, welcome to the long-awaited first edition of this year! We know you have had to power through this first term like a machine, so thankfully you can now blow off some steam and relax with this issue on Steampunk. We too have worked hard to bring to you an issue full of articles breaking down this genre and subculture, discussing its fashion, teaching you about the Victorian era by which it is inspired, and far more!

All the gears and screws that together form the concept that is Steampunk will be revealed. What is the meaning of the fashion of this subculture? Why is Steampunk so obsessed with clocks? How did they speak in the Victorian era? And what do we see of Steampunk in today's culture and literature?

So get ready to dive into the world of Steampunk with us! Put a pair of chunky goggles on your hat and take out your extraordinary looking coat; you are now ready to be immersed into this subculture. Perhaps you too will come out of it with a new appreciation of the intricacies of extravagant looking steam-powered technology and dismiss that boringly simplistic smartphone for a pocket watch that for some reason has its gears exposed.

## WORD OF THE BOARD

When I got the request to write the Word of the Board about Steampunk, I was a bit mindful. I had no idea what Steampunk could possibly entail, and had to do a little bit (not a little bit, a fair amount) of research before I wrote this. However, doing that research let me on an interesting journey of a whole new side of literature I was not knowledgeable about and it was so much fun! There are a lot of great literary works that fall under the specific term of Steampunk, such as works of Jules Verne and the famous novel *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*. This is why I love this magazine and the people who put so much work into the articles; every issue falls under a specific theme and it is so much fun to discover new things about literature. So I hope you all love this issue and learn some new things about Steampunk, just as I did.

Nina, Secretary 2023-2024



# Phoenix Magazine



A magazine for English Language and Culture students at Utrecht University.

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TEAM 2023-2024

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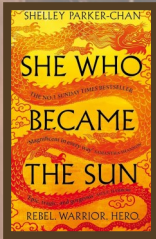
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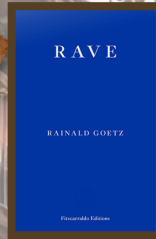
We

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Reading...



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Rave  
by Rainald Goetz



Jonathan  
Red Comet: The Short  
Life and Blazing Art  
of Sylvia Plath  
by Heather Clark



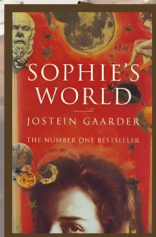
Marèl  
The Serpent and the  
Wings of Night  
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Aitana  
Beyond the Black  
Door  
by A.M. Strickland



Zuzia  
One Piece by  
Eiichiro Oda

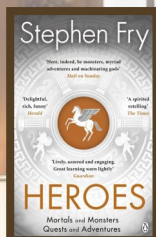


Alice  
Sophie's World  
by Jostein Gaarder

Zoya  
Big Summer  
by Jennifer Weiner

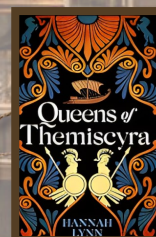


Nina  
The Blood of  
Olympus  
by Rick Riordan



Eva  
Heroes  
by Stephen Fry

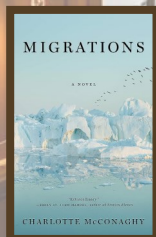
Chiara  
Queens of  
Themiscyra  
by Hannah Lynn



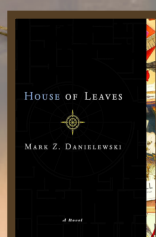
Gabriela  
Yellowface  
by R.F. Kuang



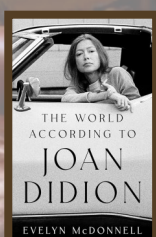
Diego  
Migrations  
by Charlotte McConaghy



Mar  
House of Leaves  
by Mark Z. Danielewski

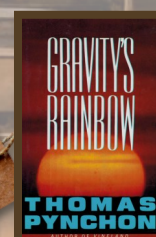


Aleeza  
The Starless Sea  
by Erin Morgenstern



Raka  
The World According to  
Joan Didion  
by Evelyn McDonnell

Luka  
Gravity's Rainbow  
by Thomas Pynchon





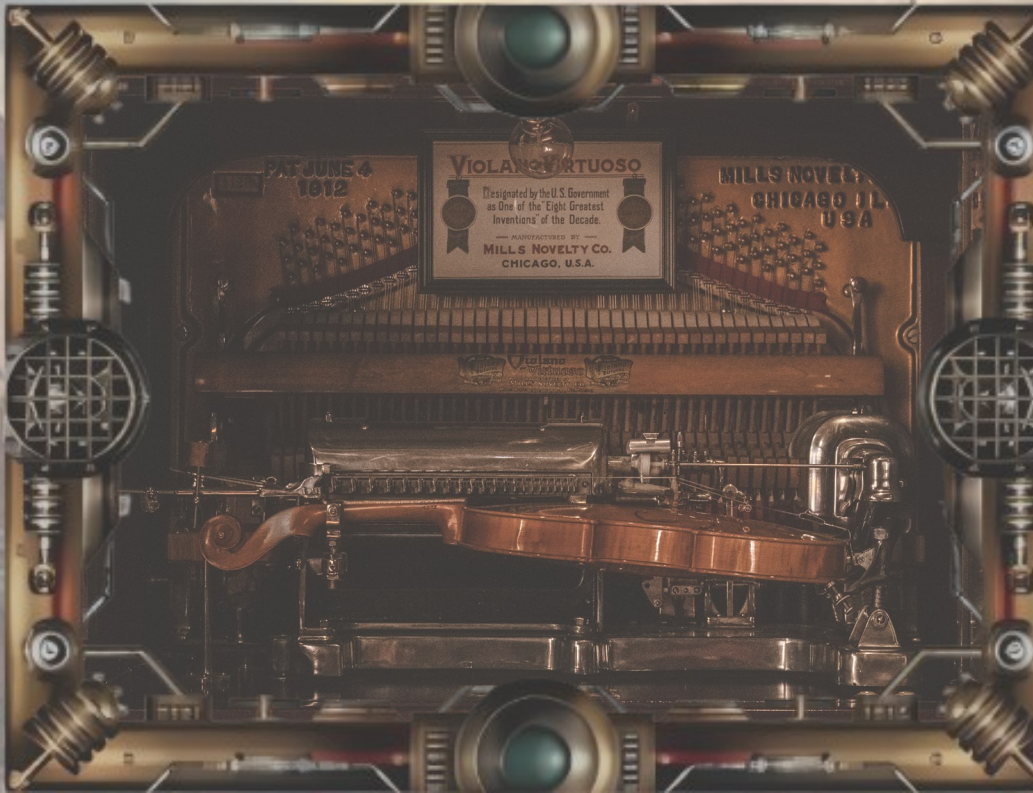
PHOENIX  
TEAM

2023-2024

Photography by  
Jonathan van  
Noppen and  
Diego Maggiore









# The Origins of Steampunk Fashion

Written by Alice - Edited by Eva Bleeker - Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff

One of the largest and probably most well-known parts of the Steampunk aesthetic is its fashion. Read on to find out more about this weird, otherworldly blend of styles and its origins.

What exactly is steampunk fashion? This term, first coined in 1987 by author K.W. Jeter, can be described as an avant-garde style of fantasy fiction that combines elements from Victorian fashion and retro-futurism. Sometimes dubbed Neo-Victorianism, the Victorian style, defined as fashion from the period of Queen Victoria's reign and having lasted approximately from 1837 to 1901, brings a softer, more romantic and traditional element. This is counterbalanced by tough and practical aspects inspired by the industrial revolution that occurred roughly between 1760 and 1830 in Britain. There are also subgenres, for example those that focus on the American Wild West or incorporate elements of horror or modern technology. It often goes hand in hand with themes of post-apocalism and heavily centres around the fashion of character archetypes such as explorers, soldiers, nobility, burlesque performers, cowboys, and vampires.

## Steampunk in High Fashion

- Jean Paul Gaultier 2008 Fall
- Christian Dior 2010 Fall
- Vivienne Westwood 2011 Fall

## Social Events

- Steampunk-themed conventions
- Comic cons
- Ren Fairs
- "Weekend at the Asylum" at The Lawn in Lincoln, England

## STEAMPUNK FASHION STAPLES

- ◆ Brass goggles, monocles, spectacles
- ◆ Corsets
- ◆ Bustle skirts
- ◆ Tailcoats
- ◆ Collared shirts
- ◆ Top hats, pirate bandanas, flight helmets, Bowler hats
- ◆ Leather, brass, lace
- ◆ Jewellery made of cogs and gears
- ◆ Compasses, mechanical clocks, tool belts, various other gadgets and gizmos
- ◆ Masks
- ◆ Heavy boots



## Steampunk in Film

- Disney's *Atlantis: The Lost Empire*
- Disney's *Treasure Planet*
- Marc Caro's *The City of Lost Children*
- Stephen Norrington's *League of Extraordinary Gentlemen*
- *Sweeney Todd: The Demon Barber of Fleet Street*
- *Steamboy*
- Guy Ritchie's *Sherlock Holmes*







## *Clock Symbolism in Literature*

*Written by Luca  
Salman - Edited  
by Nina van Veen*



The appearance of clocks in literature has repeatedly been identified as a symbol of time passing, urgency, tension and mortality. Time warps into a physical being that can be heard and seen in the form of pocket watches, necklace watches, mantelpiece clocks, or grandfather clocks. A clock ticking in the background is equally affirming as it is anxiety-inducing; it brings stability and comfort, and contradictorily it reminds us of the little control we have, of the reality that time slips by without our influence, intention or wish for it. While clocks are ultimately the creation of humanity's need for control, in literature they frequently reflect the opposite: the impossibility to control the world around us, the realization that things go on beyond and without our interference.

Specifically in steampunk literature, the inner workings of clocks are highlighted. It is not just a broad picture of clocks, but the exposed mechanisms within, and this way they are often related to the human heart. The regular ticking of both the human heart and clocks evokes a sense of reliability, but also a bizarre feeling of vulnerability and frailty. Both the clock and the human heart are stand-ins for wider meanings and become interconnected in their similarities.

Stephen Blackpool's quote "Put that clock aboard a ship an' pack it off to Norfolk Island, an' the time will go on just the same. So 'tis wi' Slackbridge every bit," in Charles Dickens's *Hard Times* encapsulates the sense of eeriness, hope, and desperation the appearance of clocks induce. The contradiction of the vulnerability of the clock itself and the relentlessness of the passage of time remind the reader of their humane powerlessness in the face of time but simultaneously advert the reliability of time — it goes on without taking notice of its surroundings, it goes on no matter what.

In relation to steampunk literature, clocks offer another paradoxical image. Steampunk literature, as science fiction, escapes the confines of reality; it moves beyond the confines of literature that bases itself on reality and achieves a sense of freedom. The frequent appearance of clocks in steampunk literature becomes almost comical when one (the clock) at least seems to be utilized in order to confine humans into structured reality, and the other (steampunk literature) breaks free.

*The Anubis Gates* by Tim Powers — a steampunk novel — connects (time) travel, magic, romance, and deceit. In the novel, the juxtaposition of time—through the jumping nature of time traveling, in the novel rearranges understandings of time and conveys that imagination has the ability to cross rules and borders and is impossible to contain — even by time.

While steampunk literature is continuously concerned with clocks, its content offers a contradiction to the traditionally accepted role of the clock. It actively moves against the notion of control and discipline and reforms the symbol of the clock as a reminder of humanity and creativity.



# Sucker Punch:

## “Alice in Wonderland with Machine Guns”

Written by Jonathan van Noppen - Edited by Luca Salman



*Sucker Punch* is a high-concept fantasy film directed by Zach Snyder. He is known for his signature cinematography, which includes expert use of monochrome color schemes to make the scene look grittier and more fantastical. In *Sucker Punch*, this can be seen by the cool green and blue colors of the mental institution in the film's first act, contrasted against the warmer orange and maroon hues of the brothel in which much of the story takes place. Another characteristic of Snyder's films is their meticulously choreographed action sequences interspersed with parts shot in slow motion. Much of the action in the film takes place in Babydoll's fantasy world. Whether the girls are fending off steam-powered undead German soldiers in the trenches of WWI or wielding a katana against three samurai soldiers in a Japanese monastery, the set pieces and highly stylized maneuvers are at once a visual smorgasbord. The film, however, is not all style and no substance. Beyond the hotties in tight outfits and dark eyeliner is a story about a girl's struggle for autonomy amid horrid abuse.

In the beginning, the audience is introduced to Babydoll. She is sexually abused by her stepfather, who becomes violent after learning that Babydoll's recently deceased mother left her the inheritance in her will. During one such episode, Babydoll defends herself with a gun and fires shots at her stepfather. She misses and ends up killing her sister. Following this incident, her stepfather has her admitted to a mental institution where she undergoes psychotherapy and further abuse, culminating in a lobotomy procedure. Right before the pick strikes her frontal lobe, the scene cuts away to a set production of the operation. We see the character of Sweet Pea dressed up as Babydoll commenting on the absurdity of including a lobotomy sequence in an erotic routine. This is the second narrative layer of the film, which some have interpreted as taking place entirely in Babydoll's imagination as a coping mechanism to the intense abuse she is experiencing.

The setting is a brothel that is eerily similar to the mental ward that Babydoll languishes in. It is run by the malevolent Blue, who has the female performers stage elaborate dance sequences to entertain wealthy male guests. Ironically, it is during these performances that Babydoll enters a fantasy world, which is the third narrative layer. The setting of this place changes each time but is bound to five tasks that Babydoll needs to complete to gain her freedom. One task involves securing a map from a horde of mechanical, steam powered, zombified German soldiers. One of the girls—Amber—operates a mecha robot that is painted with a rabbit's face—a subtle nod to *Alice in Wonderland*. After gunning down a zeppelin bearing the map, the girls escape in the mecha and the scene cuts back to the dance sequence in the brothel. Babydoll's semblance of freedom to express herself in her fantasy world is contrasted with the harsh treatment she receives in trying to break free from captivity in the brothel. In a pivotal scene, Sweet Pea is able to escape while Babydoll sacrifices herself by staying in confinement. This idea of freedom and captivity is complicated further when we return near the end of the film to the scene of Babydoll's lobotomy. After the operation, the doctor exclaims that he has never seen the expression of consent on a patient before. The film ends with Sweet Pea getting on a bus to start her life of freedom.

My own personal interpretation of the film is that Sweet Pea's escape is symbolic of Babydoll's mental freedom. The fact that she accepts her fate of a lifetime of captivity by the end of the film comes from a deeper awareness of her power to overcome sexual abuse and objectification through autonomous choice. In conclusion, *Sucker Punch* is not only a stunning action film, but it also offers clever commentary on the psychology of victims of abuse.



# *Steampunk Book Recommendations*

*Written by Aitana Montoro  
Edited by Mar Luijks*

## The Boy with the Cuckoo-Clock Heart by Mathias Malzieu

"I love you crookedly because my heart's been unhinged from birth. The doctors gave me strict instructions not to fall in love: my fragile clockwork heart would never survive."

On one of the coldest nights of the year, a boy is born with a frozen heart. Even though smoke drifts from the chimneys of Edinburgh, the streets are a landscape of endless white. In the chest of the boy, a lump of ice beats faintly. To save his life, a witch doctor replaces the frozen heart with a cuckoo-clock one. The cuckoo-clock heart is a delicate thing; a fake organ made of wood and metal. It's a beautiful creation but he must be careful, because mechanisms aren't built to endure human feelings.

## A Clockwork River by J.S. Emery

"A gallery of rooms on the second floor was devoted to Sam's collection which comprised hundreds upon hundreds of combination locks, padlocks, barrel locks, pin locks, cam locks, tumbler locks, wafer locks, lever locks and countless other kinds of locks, as well as a great number of books on the subject."

This hilarious and dazzling story takes place in Lower Rhumsford, a city where everybody is obsessed with facial hair and river hydraulics. The industry and economy of Lower Rhumsford depend on the force of the river's flow, for the water's energy is used to power the city's machines. But the river is winding down, and the entangled labyrinth of rusty pipes that lies underneath the city is on the verge of collapse.

Sam and Briony Locke are the descendants of the city's most famous engineer, and they know that the river's time is running short. After Sam attends a meeting of the Lock, Key, and Fob Club to display some of the most eccentric pieces of his collection, he sets in motion the machinery of a political intrigue that will change the future of Lower Rhumsford forever.

This book has everything: duels gone wrong, hidden identities, chemical experiments, staged performances, and an unhealthy usage of miracle hair growth formula. Featuring a lovesick mouse, an aristocrat with beautiful ankles, an accidental redheaded footman, and many other endearing characters.

## The Watchmaker of Filigree Street by Natasha Pulley

"The clockwork octopus came out. It extended a tentacle with a clicking of metal joints. Around it was looped the chain of his watch. He hesitated, but took it. The chain skittered over the metal tentacle with a high, thin pitch like incoming sea."

Beware: this book contains an adorable clockwork octopus that will steal your heart (and socks).

London, 1883. The electric hum of light bulbs and the scent of lemon soap welcomes Thaniel Steepleton when he enters a strange shop filled with pendulum clocks, golden locusts, mechanical solar systems, bronze birds... The owner of the shop, Keita Mori, is as fascinating as the whimsical creations he builds out of clockwork, and Thaniel will find himself trying to pick apart the cogwheels of the watchmaker's mind.



# Writing about the Victorian Era

Written by Marèl Molenaar - Edited by Nina van Veen



Prudishness, strict etiquette and no humour. Those are some things you might think about when thinking about the Victorian Era. But there are some specific things you should think about when writing about the Victorians. Here are three tips for when you want to write about the time of Steampunk and ankle showing.

## The Industrial Revolution

The Victorian era was also the time of the Industrial Revolution. The rise of urbanisation and the growing amount of factories caused a rapid increase in the modernisation of the world.

Though this modernity also caused people to lose their jobs, because the manual labour around the villages disappeared and was replaced by big cities around the factories. When you're describing your character, think about where they live and what, logically, their home situation would be like.

The colour grey is also a crucial part of your Victorian story because everything was smog grey. The factories emitted a thick, dark smoke that covered the whole city in a cloud of toxic smog. When talking about the Victorian atmosphere, use these grim surroundings to your advantage.



## NEW INVENTIONS

Tons of new inventions were made during the Victorian times. Stamps, medical equipment, bicycles, and one of the most important symbols of the Victorian Era: faster trains. The trains became a more popular means to travel long distances. These and other inventions had a big impact on Victorian society, so try to incorporate these in your stories. These sometimes strange and out-of-the-box inventions can really add to the world-building and atmosphere of your story.

Do be sure not to overkill the amount of inventions, unless your character is an inventor, of course. Most households didn't immediately have every single new gadget the moment it came out. Also, do your research on what year the invention came out. You cannot have someone ride a bike in your 1808 story when the first bike was invented in 1817.

## Sexual Scenes

The Victorians were actually not as tame in the bedroom as we think. In fact, the Victorian Era was the height of prostitution. Rumours say that even Queen Victoria had quite a deep and personal connection with her personal server after the death of her husband. So if you feel like your Victorian story needs a sex scene, do not hesitate to write one.

Women, however, usually didn't know much about sex. The only people who could tell them about these subjects were their mother, grandmother and the midwife. People did write and publish about sex, but this was mostly done by scholarly men who wrote articles for other scholarly men. This division between men and women was prominent in the Victorian era, so make this difference clear in your story.

Do think about the balance between accuracy and authenticity. Because yes, it is very accurate that the Victorians weren't that prude, but that does take away from the authenticity of the story. The reader doesn't feel like they're reading a Victorian story, even though sex is a normal aspect of Victorian times. Try to find a balance between the two.





# HOWL'S MOVING CASTLE : STEAMPUNK'S OLD AND YOUNG WORLDS

Written by Zoya Tashi - Edited by Mar Luijks

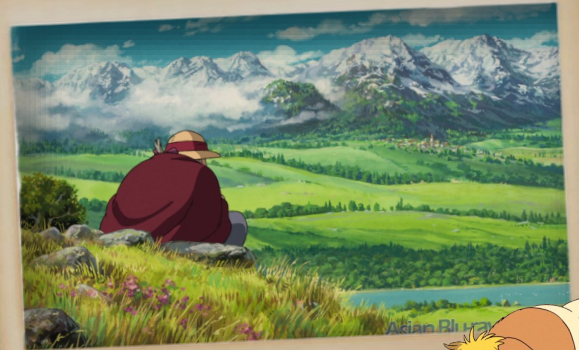
Illustration by Zuzia Gelauff

Steampunk, as a genre, thrives on the marriage between juxtaposed themes: The old and new, life and death. Hayao Miyazaki's *Howl's Moving Castle* stands as an enchanting epitome of these themes. The aesthetics of the movie perfectly match the steampunk genre. Yet, the narrative and characters relate most to this unique theme.

Our journey begins in a place inspired by the Alsatian town of Colmar. Here, the well-preserved architecture makes the rapid modernisation of the world stand still for a moment.

Enter a humble milliner, Sophie, whose life takes a turn as she falls victim to an evil witch's curse, rendering her aged and fragile. Her character beautifully captures one of Miyazaki's key messages: growing older should be celebrated, and the culture of the past must be woven into the ever-evolving ways of the new.

With the heart of a young woman, Sophie embarks on a quest to break her curse. While venturing into the countryside, she comes across a semi-organic castle housing Howl and his comrades. The castle itself is another steampunk icon in the movie: A mechanical wonder pieced together with eclectic parts, powered by the embodiment of Howl's heart, Calcifer. The notion that the castle is intertwined with Howl embodies the Steampunk archetype that machinery and the living can live in harmony.



Howl himself personifies the fantastical genre of steampunk. He, including his hair colour, is forever changing. From a gentlemanly, soft-spoken man in one moment to a panicking adolescent mess in another, Howl's constant transformation underscores the idea that true beauty emerges from embracing the extraordinary.

*Howl's Moving Castle* beautifully encapsulates steampunk's essence: Harmonising old and new, life and death. Sophie's journey celebrates ageing and the fusion of past and present. The semi-organic castle showcases the harmony between machinery and life, while Howl's ever-changing persona highlights the beauty of embracing the extraordinary. This enchanting tale masterfully illustrates steampunk's timeless appeal.



# CABINET OF C

*Written by Alice - Ed*



## *Did You Know...*

...that the desire to understand the recent technological advancements caused a rise in belief in the supernatural? Séances were especially popular — mediums convinced grieving loved ones that they could contact the deceased through clairaudience (hearing), clairvoyance (seeing), and clairsentience (feeling) messages from spirits.





# CURIOSITIES

edited by Aitana Montoro

## *Did You Know...*

...that the Victorians loved freak shows? People with unusual physical deformities and features would perform for an audience. The most common acts included giants, dwarves, congenitally missing limbs, conjoined twins, and hypertrichosis (werewolf syndrome). These shows provided performers with safety and (usually low) pay.

## *Did You Know...*

... that the Victorians would regularly boil themselves to death in the pursuit of cleanliness? The gas bath was constructed from metal and connected to a gas source. Underneath the bottom of the bath, a flame would be lit, heating the water inside. The bather's skin was directly against the metal being heated by the flames and there was no protection from overheating.





# HOOR STRIKES

*Written by Aleeza van der Giessen - Edited by Eva Bleeker*

*Tick-tick-tick*

Second passes before me, just like the crowds of people. People who come here day in day out with their leather suitcases and top hats and long dresses with flowers similar to the ones covering my housing. They look pretty. They wear long coats that I can only dream of wearing and bonnets. I wear a bonnet, only mine is made out of wood. Pretty. Pretty worn out over time.

*Tick-tick-tick*

Minute slips past me. Almost time, time to shine, although no one has polished me in years. Forgotten, that is how I feel. Faces glance at me thousands of times every day of every year, always checking in. Lovely. But they stay for mere seconds, not longer, never linger. No one seems to notice the intricate carvings that cover the length of me, my pointy tip that people see as an arrow but closely resembles a heart. Not close enough, not human. They run away when they see me, always complaining that I am moving too fast, always off to their trains that will take them someplace I will never see, never know. I only know how slow time passes for me.

The ones that regard me a little longer are the ones that are left behind: mothers, friends, lovers, children. Or those who are reunited, they watch me impatiently, unable to hide their nervous smiles.

*Tick-tick—*

The moment has come for Hour to strike. My biggest performance. One that happens twice a day but has an audience only once. Twelve times I sing my most beautiful song, the sound echoing through the hall, and I imagine every person stopping in their step, for once taking their time to watch me as I sing on. Hundreds of eyes looking straight at me, treating me with care, patience, not caring for their steel trains. I imagine the conductors stepping inside to find the origin of that wondrous sound, people putting an arm over other people's shoulders, grabbing other people's hands, as I commence my final song. Once more, they look at me, eyes big. I imagine the audience bursting into the grandest applause, louder than my own voice, hands moving faster than Second. I imagine them walking up to me to watch me move ever so slightly, looking closely enough to see my sleek lines and glass face and swinging golden necklace. They move their hands to touch me but—

*tick...*

I shudder as I lock in place, pointing upward. I strike twelve times, but this time, no one seems to appreciate the time a clock takes.





# As I Make my Way Back Home

Written by Esmee Bosman - Edited by Luka van den Berg

The dark tunnels of the London underground railways pass me by. The steady rhythm of the rails under the train is almost enough to lull me to sleep, but I manage to stay awake. Down here, it is impossible to tell what time it is. When I look at my old pocket watch, it shows ten past six.

While my travels progress slowly, the underground train is still faster than walking. Some people prefer walking. The dark scares them, and they're afraid of being underground for so long, or they're afraid of accidents and breakdowns. Not me. The dark has never bothered me; I was always the one who got out of bed if there was commotion outside. As for the accidents and breakdowns, well...

The train comes to a slow stop, and I get out. I walk out of the underground station, turn right, and begin the last part of my journey home. It's rainy and cold outside, and I pull my coat tighter around myself. I was always the warmest of us two, but now I'm always cold. I pull my collar up to my ears as a gust of wind passes me.

Once home, I hang my coat on the rack, take off my shoes and walk straight to my bed. I don't stop to turn on the lights or make a fire. I don't even bother undressing; I just drop myself onto the bed. I don't know how long I lay there, and to be honest, I don't really care either. At some point I take out my pocket watch and stare at it, as the hand slowly ticks the time away. When the watch shows eight o'clock, I get up.

I walk to my tiny kitchen and grab a bottle of whiskey from a cabinet. Sitting down at the dinner table, I take a sip and stare at the empty chair across from me. I swallow down the lump in my throat with another sip of burning whiskey. I avert my eyes to the hearth, where my eyes catch on a tiny photo, and I feel my chest tightening. I quickly take another sip of my whiskey. It's not even good whiskey, but it will bring me an easy sleep. I tip my glass back, walk over to the hearth and after giving the frame a small kiss, I place it face-down on the mantle. The remnants of my drink I leave for tomorrow.

The next day, I take the same train home. I see my reflection in the window and flinch. My hand raises to my face, and I can almost feel soft hands brushing my soft cheeks, but when I touch rough stubbles instead, the feeling is gone. A loud, crunching sound abruptly pulls me from my musings, and it's followed by a high screeching. I feel the train starting to lean sideways, people start screaming and then we crash. My head hits the window, shattering my reflection into a thousand pieces. Darkness creeps into my vision, and I close my eyes. And then I hear her voice. I feel her hand in mine. I open my eyes and find myself immediately lost in blue depths I thought I had lost forever. *I missed you, she says. And oh, I missed her too. I'm here now.*





# *The Perfect Date*

*Written by Aitana Montoro - Edited by Aleeza van der Giessen*

The ticking of his clockwork heart was deafening in the awkward silence, and he worried that the frantic sound of the machinery was coming out from his ears, as if he were a human-shaped gramophone. He glanced at her, as she looked at the room's ceiling, where a bunch of oddly shaped light bulbs hung in a constellation of criss-crossed wires. The electric stars cast half of her face in shadows, but her eyes were bright as lampposts in the dark.

A cemetery of crooked pottery was scattered over a patched tablecloth. He'd washed the grime from the dishes, scrubbed the porcelain for hours until the water had messed up the circuits of his hands, but the table still looked like a junkyard. The tablecloth was sewn together so badly that it seemed like a drunk spider had tried to create a monster out of a mishmash of floral fabric, and the cutlery was gap-toothed. The cups of tea were filled to the brim with motor oil, and the biscuits had screws in the dough. He ran his fingers through the mop of messy curls on top of his head; strands sticking everywhere like octopi arms.

The girl smiled politely as she dabbed the corners of her mouth with a laced handkerchief, cleaning the rust that tarnished her lips. She hadn't eaten much, and he worried that she was not pleased with his culinary abilities. He felt sick to the stomach even if he knew that that was impossible. His empty plate looked up at him like an open eye, peering into his insides. The claws of the fork scratched against drywall.

At the head of the table, his father was munching on a cucumber sandwich. The man's imperial moustache twitched like clock arms when he sensed his son's sizzling tension, and he asked him if he needed to fetch his toolbox. He refused, embarrassed by the reminder of his artificiality. His father shrugged, and continued to mumble under his breath about airships and steam-powered vehicles. A clockwork rat scurried underneath the table, and the girl let out a high-pitched screech. He apologised profusely and shooed the animal away after giving it a few belly scratches.

His head was a boiling kettle filling with steam. Trains of thought derailed in endless railways, and he followed the locomotive's smoke to a wasteland of memories. The turn of a lock, a clock going backward, and he was back in the Crystal Palace Exhibition. It was the first time he'd seen her. His father had been displaying him in front of an army of aristocratic caterpillars with hungry eyes, and he'd felt like a circus monkey. Come and see the man-machine! Wonder of all wonders! He was a fetishized toy in a freak show of daguerreotypes and leech barometers. They talked about him as if he was nothing more than a brainless automaton, a monstrosity of scrap metal created to satisfy their sick fascination. But she had noticed the rotten discomfort that was eating him alive, and had spent the rest of the afternoon entertaining him with the gossip that a friendly ghost had told her during a séance.

Suddenly, the cogwheels of his clockwork heart ground to a halt when he felt something brush against his clenched fist. It was the girl, who took his hand between hers. The warmth of her skin bled onto the metal of his own. Beneath her wrist, a pulse was thrashing like a maniac in a straitjacket. He tapped the code, counting the pounding screams of her flesh, and telegraphed a love letter with chocolate chips.







## Teatime: Interview With Dr. David Pascoe

*By Chiara Palmeri - Edited by Luka van den Berg  
Photographs by Diego Maggiore*

### **What is your favourite literary period?**

Well, I have two: first, the period between 1590-1625, and the other one would be the period between 1920-1940. Both periods deal with radical changes, such as the shift from manuscript to print, and the second one is a period of modernising, of avant-garde. I also did my PhD on 20<sup>th</sup> century British Poetry.

### **Which literary genre fascinates you the most?**

I think biography is important. Writers cannot write out of their lives, and sometimes there are very direct forms and influences and pressures which cause them to write, and I am a bit annoyed that biography, over the last 30 years or so, has just disappeared. What really strikes me, for example, is when students come to me, and they say, "I want to write my thesis on this novel." And I always ask, "Who wrote the novel?" And most of the time they hardly know anything about the writer. One of the first things to do is to read their biography, to understand where this work came from.

### **What are your favourite biographies?**

There are two: one is a fantastic biography of James Joyce by Richard Ellmann; then there is a brilliant biography of Virginia Woolf by Hermione Lee published in 1996. Both of those books completely alter our sense of both writers, as in both cases there were family issues as well, and those kinds of situations really feed creativity.



### **In 2021 you published "Sterne and 'That Dreary Double Entendre.'" What inspired you to write about this subject?**

I have kind of a strange research profile, because I work both in history but also in the history of technology. I like to write about pairs of writers: I have just finished an article on T.S. Eliot and Joyce, and one about Samuel Beckett and an 18th century writer called James Thomson. The one you just mentioned was a quite long piece that I did on how a 18th century writer called Lawrence Sterne appears 100 years later in the work of the 19th century novelist Thackeray. It is quite complicated, but it is about how Lawrence was famous for his dirty puns. In the 19th century, officially, writers were not supposed to like this, but Thackeray did. The article is also a little bit about the history of the double entendre as a concept.





**The theme of the first issue of this year is “Steampunk”. Do you have a favourite steampunk book you would want to share with us?**

I would answer by saying yes, but I would like to kind of enlarge the definition of what steampunk is. One great example of the second half of the 20th century is an American novel called *Gravity's Rainbow*, which is like a prototype of steampunk. Steampunk is about strange collisions, strange combinations, the unexpected appearance of zany happenings, crazy things and often obscenity. *Gravity's Rainbow* is my example of steampunk, despite it not being really steampunk. I also like Gaiman's work, but it has never really moved me that much.

**You teach various literature courses. Which one is the most interesting and pleasant to teach for you?**

The English Lyric. First of all, I did my PhD on that. It takes me back to lyric poetry, which I did for years. Moreover, poetry seems to be becoming less and less read, and at the same time, it seems to be becoming more and more popular. So, I wanted to have a course that taught students the basics of close reading. We cover all kinds of work, from Shakespeare to Sophie Collins, and I think students are often surprised at the associations that we come up with. A fine poem is one you see new things in, new facets. If I had to choose my favourite poem, I would say anything by W. H. Auden.

**What is your pet peeve when correcting an essay?**

Repetitions. Needless repetitions. The inability to be aware of what is in the previous sentence. Moreover, I hate generalisations: if you are writing an essay for me everything has to be extremely specific. You can maybe have a generalisation around the end of the essay. I'm trained in an Anglo-American school of literary philosophy, so you proceed by means of induction. Also, the subject seems to be changing, and it seems to be getting away from text and context. Instead of thinking about literary materials, students now have far more interest in what a literary text has to say about identity politics, and that seems a too narrow way of reading. Sometimes we, as critics and teachers, place too much stress on the identity politics side. Obviously, I think politics are important, but it is not the only thing that literature is about.

**What is a course that you used to like but stopped teaching?**

There was a course called “The Aesthetics of Detection”, it dealt with Arthur Conan Doyle's Sherlock Holmes and the deduction and induction methods. It was very popular. To be honest, it got too popular, and since I was the only person teaching, it became unmanageable. But I would like to go back to it.





1. "Mary On A Cross" — Ghost
2. "Harness Your Hopes" — Pavement
3. "Hidden In the Sand" — Tally Hall
4. "Bang" — AJR
5. "Yellow Flicker Beat" — Lorde
6. "Young and Beautiful" — Lana Del Rey
7. "Welcome to the Internet" — Bo Burnham
8. "Line Without a Hook" — Ricky Montgomery, mxmtoon
9. "Labour" — Paris Paloma
10. "Don't Blame Me" — Taylor Swift

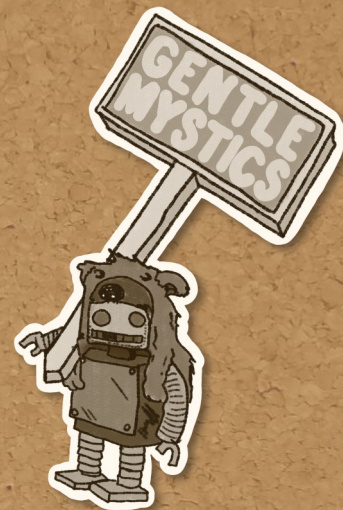


First issue of the year, first playlist. I am really bad at actually listening to lyrics and listening to music based on vibes. These songs might not necessarily have anything to do with either steampunk or the Victorian era, but to me they feel like they do. I piled some of my current favourites and all time favourites together to get the ultimate gloomy yet stern vibes. Bo Burnham has been in my top 5 artists for the last 2 years, so I couldn't make this list without a bit of Inside. I am also a reborn Swiftie, was sad with Lana at 16, and AJR honestly only makes bangers. And a *Hunger Games* soundtrack on my playlist? I would never have thought... Other than that, I sadly get most of my newly discovered music via Tiktok, so you might recognise some of these from that forsaken app.

*Written by Marèl Molenaar - Edited by Aitana Montoro - Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff*

## PLAYLIST OF MY LIFE

1. "Rivolta Silenziosa" — Humanwine
2. "I Never Woke Up in Handcuffs Before" — Hans Zimmer
3. "Two an Dros" — An Dro
4. "A Gentle Man's Jihad" — Munly and the Lee Lewis Harlots
5. "Building Steam" — Abney Park
6. "I'm Only Joking" — KONGOS
7. "Deep Sea Detective" — Gentle Mystics
8. "Contortionists Tango" — Beat Circus
9. "Solar" — Cosmo Sheldrake
10. "Dirty Night Clowns" — Chris Garneau



For this edition's playlist, I wanted to stick to the Steampunk theme. I asked myself what I associate with this genre, and the first thing that came to mind was adventure. Steampunk is very interesting in the sense that it is made up of both futurist and antique elements, inviting us into a sort of parallel universe of escapism. It is an idealistic genre based in fiction, calling to those who have felt like outcasts in their own realities. Steampunk literature, film and music allow us to imagine ourselves as what we dreamed of being as kids, be it barefoot vagabonds, sword-wielding zeppelin pirates, eccentric circus contortionists or ghost-hunting detectives. I have tried my best to curate ten songs that embody this spirit, and I hope that you will see my vision — perhaps through an eye-patch or a pair of aviator goggles?

*Written by Alice - Edited by Aitana Montoro - Illustrated by Zuzia Gelauff*



# WORD OF THE MONTH

*Written by Zuzia Gelauff - Edited by Gabriela Thodé  
Illustration by Zuzia Gelauff*

## VOLITANT

*/ 'vɒl ɪ tnt, -tənt /*

*adjective*

1. engaged in or having the power of flight.
2. active; moving.

From Daedalus and Icarus, who soared too close to the sun, all the way to the Wright brothers, who had finally managed to create an aeroplane, humanity has always had a certain fascination with the concept of flight. The Victorians, in particular, had been some of the most eager to find a way to reach the sky and, with the inventions of the hot air balloon and the zeppelin, that dream soon became a reality. These creations and new ways of travel eventually led to classics such as Jules Verne's *Around the World in 80 Days*, in which he wrote: "Anything a man can imagine, other men can make real."

As we are making a start on a new school year, some of us beginning our university adventure or even just coming off an exciting first term taking new courses, it might all begin to feel a bit overwhelming, maybe makes us want to just... fly away from all the assignments and readings that are due soon. We might forget about things that feel less important because they don't have a deadline looming over them, but see this as a reminder to go follow that spark of creativity and fun. You never know to which far corner of the world it could lead you.







## PUT A COG IN IT: HOLLYWOOD'S OBSESSION WITH STEAMPUNK ADAPTATIONS

Written by Zuzia Gelauf - Edited by Gabriela Thodé



As with any piece of media, Hollywood follows specific trends from time to time. Whether it be the abounding Romcoms in the 90s and early 00s or the current need to franchise any profitable content, there is always something that piques the interest of the studios. In the small window of the late 2000s and early 2010s, the bullseye was steampunk: leatherbound- and clad protagonists surrounded by Victorian-inspired aesthetics and machinery straight from the Industrial Revolution for one reason or another. Some of these worked better than others, but most have been forgotten as any temporary trend that does not stand the test of time. Still, it is interesting to analyse how the subgenre could be incorporated into projects where neither steam nor punk was meant to be in the first place.

These films (coincidentally, all adaptations in one form or another) fall under categories. The first is period pieces, which used the steampunk aesthetic along with elements originating from a different point in time. While Sherlock Holmes is one of the most known Victorian characters, his stories were never ones to be considered as “steampunk”, yet the 2009 Guy Ritchie adaptation of the detective really plays into the industrial side of the era as well as the aspect of the aesthetic and subgenre that connects both future and the past. The movie is full of historical inaccuracies, inventions, clothing, and even music, but these anachronisms create a cohesive story world. On the flip side, the 2011 *The Three Musketeers*, set in the court of Louis XIII, excuses its use of large zeppelin “airships” and other industrial-like machinery as the invention of none other than Leonardo da Vinci. It somehow combines Renaissance and Victorian elements, coming closer to the sub-subgenre of clockpunk and taking both Dumas’ story and the original historical events on a wild spin.

While most of these movies took the inventiveness of the era and genre as their inspiration, some took ideas from the works that originated under those circumstances. The imaginative titles of *Hansel and Gretel: Witch Hunters* (2013) and *Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter* (2012) already show a clear pattern of what route Hollywood was taking, but then take other examples of *Van Helsing* (2004) and *Victor Frankenstein* (2015), and what appears is to be movies inspired by the novels of the Victorian and Gothic era, which in turn were large inspirations for the steampunk movement themselves, concluding that all the aesthetic elements are simply the perfect ingredients for gritty monster hunting action flicks, which must have been Bram Stoker’s intention all along.

Overall, this was undoubtedly a strange period in cinema history. One of which the results have been mostly forgotten, for better or worse. And while it is rarely possible to guess what the executives up in those big studio towers were thinking, it must have been something along the lines of making historical fictional characters just that smidge edgier by making them fight creatures and shoot pistols, no matter if that had any relevance to the original story... Or perhaps they just thought leather trousers were a really good look. We may never know.







# VICTORIAN SLANG

## SICK, IT'S SLANG TIME



*Written by Marèl Molenaar - Edited by Luca Salman*

In today's world we have words like 'lit', 'sus', 'vibe', and 'rizz' for us to express a certain emotion, feeling or action. But all throughout history people have had phrases, words or sayings that show who they are and what time period they belonged to. And so did the Victorians. But what are some Victorian slang words that were popular at the time, but we don't remember today? And could they maybe come back in your daily vocabulary?

### ***Damfino***

Okay, this might not be a term that's only used in the Victorian era, but why would we still fully pronounce the full "Damn if I know" when we could just bring back this Victorian abbreviation. Just mumble the words and you sound like a real Victorian.

### ***Got the morbs***

When your friend is having a bad day, or when someone is feeling temporarily melancholic, you could say they've got the morbs. But don't worry, because these morbs are usually not contagious and will eventually go away. It could get really morbid if they didn't.

### ***Gigglemug***

You might have already guessed what this word means by just reading it, but when someone is smiley all day, every day, you could call them a gigglemug. So instead of calling your friend a happy, optimistic or friendly person, try calling them a "gigglemug" every once in a while. It's a good word to spice up your compliment game.

### ***Bricky***

Someone who isn't afraid of anything, doesn't step out of the way when something is challenging and a general brave person? You'd call them "bricky". So telling the waiter that your order is wrong makes you a "bricky" person.

### ***Whooperups***

Are you singing loudly in the shower but not able to hit any of the notes right? Then you might have been considered a "whooperups" in the Victorian times. This word was used to describe people who couldn't sing very well, but would still sing loudly despite their terrible voice.

### ***Mollisher***

Want to live your villain romance dream? Become a "mollisher". In the Victorian era this was the term used for the female romantic partner of a gangster, criminal or any other type of villain.

### ***Sauce box***

Nowadays to refer to someone's mouth, you could use the phrase 'pie hole'. But back in the Victorian time people said "sauce box" to refer to that gaping hole in your face. Which is a term that could still be relevant today if we look at the insane amount of sauce options there are these days.

### ***Grinning at the daisy roots***

This Victorian phrase was used to describe someone who had died and had already been buried. Because these people are so deep in the ground, people described them to be "grinning at the daisy roots", to be with the plant roots below the earth. This phrasing makes dying a bit less



Today, for the bookshelf interview, we have the lovely Robin Wijnen, a student of English literature. She is a huge bookworm, especially into classics, and has a really original book order for her own bookshelf that she cannot wait to share with us.

**If your room was on fire, which book would you save first? You can only save one.**

It has to be *Lord of The Rings*. I have a box set which is kind of fake leather, and it has a lot of engravings on it. I am crazy for this box set, so I would definitely save this one, no questions asked.

**The theme of this issue is steampunk. What is the most aesthetic steampunk book you own?**

Let me think... well, I have *Stalking Jack the Ripper*, and I think the cover is quite nice. I have mixed feelings about the book, because I don't really like the protagonist; she was like "I do not easily fall for looks and bad guys," and then, instantly... But, aesthetic-wise and cover-wise it really fits the theme.



## Interview with R

Written by Chiara Palmeri

**Do you order your books by colour, size, or author?**

I usually look at the publisher. I read a lot of classics and I tend to buy a lot of Penguin books, and I like to order them based on that: Penguin or not Penguin. I have, more or less, twenty-five classics, all Penguin, but my favourite one is *War and Peace* by Tolstoy. If not by publisher, I mostly order by cover design.

**How long have you been collecting books?**

I think I started collecting them around 2019, so not that long ago. I am a bit of a "late reader". I used to read a lot when I was younger, but I think school destroyed the fun in reading.

**Which book character do you identify the most with?**

That is difficult. I guess Elizabeth Bennet from *Pride and Prejudice*, as I am very stubborn and I do not listen to what others say, later realising that I was being too full of prejudice, and I judge too much. I also am more focused on my own thoughts and feelings, but I still care about others. Another character I identify with is Alice from *Alice in Wonderland*, especially character-wise, as I find myself wondering about the world and trying to find the magical aspects of it. I think she also gives great advice, but then she does not listen to her own advice. I do that too.



# Robin: Bookshelf

- Edited by Mar Luijks

## Are most of your books in Dutch, English, or another language?

Almost all of my books are in English. I have less than ten books in Dutch, because I am studying English literature, and it is more enjoyable in the original language rather than translated. And I feel like Dutch is less beautiful, almost childish. Dutch uses a lot more words to translate from English.

## What is your least favourite book you own?

It is probably a poetry book I have read, it is called *Instagram Poetry*. I see the potential in the poetry, but each line is one or two words, and spacing does not really make sense to me; even though I love poetry and I try to read as many different kinds of poetry as I can, I do not think this one is poetic. To think that I bought it myself...

## What is the book you hate the most but never get rid of?

Definitely *Birthday Girl* by Penelope Douglas. It is a romance, and I dislike romance. It is about a girl and her boyfriend, but the boyfriend is so toxic, there is no chemistry, they have nothing in common... does not make sense.

## What is the most boring book you have read for university?

Definitely *The Namesake*. I did not dislike it as much as others did, but plot wise, other books are more interesting. Usually, I read books similar to that one, but they have more plots and storyline.



## Which books should be added to the English curriculum?

Great question. I think some studies read *Lord of The Rings*, and we should also read Tolkien's other works. And maybe some "fancier" books with deeper messages.

## Which book you liked the most from the English curriculum?

I really liked *The Merchant of Venice* by Shakespeare, because I did not expect the plot to be that interesting. It is a really fun experience to read, especially with an audiobook in the background, and it almost feels like you are watching a movie. Very fun.





# ZODIAC SIGNS AS STEAMPUNK INVENTIONS

Written by Balca Isevcin – Edited by Aitana Montoro

ARIES



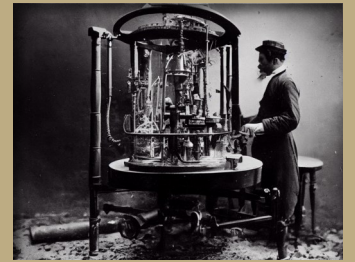
Fiery Aries loves a good fight.. Just like Victorian style canons, Aries are also filled with fire and rage.

TAURUS



Taurus loves traveling only in the form of comfort and style, with the Penny Farthing bicycle you get both.

GEMINI



This Mercurial sign loves trying new things and pushing the limits. The Victorian era time machine is extreme, brand new, and controversial just like Gemini.

CANCER



The whole steamPunk aesthetic isn't cutting it for Cancer. Cancer likes the walking around in the park aspect of this era. Intricately woven, the lace parasol is beautiful but can be weaponized when needed, giving



Leo loves a good crown; goggles are the new crown of this era. The queen of the zodiac meets queen Victoria, reminding everyone once again that

LEO



Virgo takes the Victorian style gloves and makes it their own. The reimagined Victorian gloves, now in leather, keeps Virgos' hands clean. Style, comfort and hygiene?

VIRGO

LIBRA



Fashion and practicality go hand in hand for Libra, to be fashionably late you must be stylishly up to date with the time. Libra can't commit to a certain type of watch; is it going to be an open-face watch or a hunter-case watch this morning? Maybe even a necklace watch...

SCORPIO



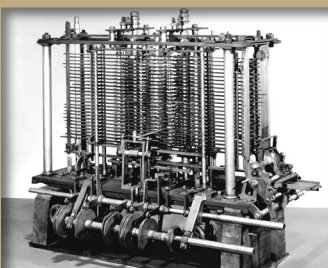
Victorian style corsets with a little bit of steam and some punk? Scorpio goes crazy for it all. The corset keeps them snatched, keeping also their feelings intact. Carefully controlled Scorpio is definitely a corset.

SAGGITARIUS



The horse sign of the zodiac is obviously this energetic fire sign. Sagittarius gets bored if they stay in one place, they need to explore.

CAPRICORN



It is the beginning of a new machinal era, Capricorn is leading the way with the first computer, calculating and thinking, on the way to change the world.

AQUARIUS



This air sign loves floating away, literally. Like the airship, Aquarius is so ahead of its time. The outer layer and the air filled inside is the physical representation of Aquarius.

PISCES



This water sign loves to escape. The world of music helps Pisces calm down, run away from real life. The dancing and drinking associated with the gramophone is also perfect for Pisces.



# ALBION ABROAD

*Written by Tessa de Bosschere*

*Edited by Luka van den Berg*

Dear Albioneers and other readers,

My name is Tessa, former illustrator of Phoenix, and I have swapped my Dutch student life for an English one. Mid-September, I set foot on the ferry at Rotterdam, bringing me to my new life at the University of Hull in the small yet pretty town of Hull in Northern England. I live in one of many student accommodations on campus, which means that everything school-related is reachable within a 10-minute walk. Moreover, there is a supermarket, sport centre, pub, and club present on campus. In other words, the University of Hull is in itself a small town.

Hull's city centre is a combination of the industrialisation of a port city, gorgeous architectural buildings, modern shops, and old pubs. I love to wander around, grab a cup of tea, and admire the architecture, the art, and the river Humber. It takes me a 20-minute bus ride to get to the train station in the city centre, which is also an easy way to get to other cities such as Leeds and York.



Regarding my newfound life, I have joined the university's women's volleyball team. We train two times a week and play a game against other Northern universities on Wednesdays. Joining a society or sports team has been a great way for me to meet others, which makes you feel at a lot more at home.

Although I've made new friends and have great roommates, it remains difficult to hear about my friends and family in the Netherlands having fun without me. Nonetheless, this experience has already taught me so much, and I am so glad that I have been given this opportunity.

I hope you enjoyed hearing about what my exchange is like, and I would definitely recommend everyone to go abroad, even if it is just for a few months. My international experience will be over at the end of May, meaning that when I'm back in the Netherlands, I will write my thesis and (hopefully) graduate from my bachelor.





