

AREA 41

THE ANGLOSPHERE

ISSUE 02 | 2025

*From Capetown to Osnabrück - An interview
with Lucy Gasser*

What the faculty nerds out about

And many stories, poems, artworks and
more by students



Dear Readers, Welcome back to Area 41: The Anglosphere!

The editing team proudly present the second issue of our magazine! We hope you will enjoy reading your fellow students' texts and seeing their artwork as much as we did when compiling this semester's edition.

We would like to use this opportunity to thank everyone who contributed to this magazine, whether your submission made it to this final version or not. *Area 41: The Anglosphere* only exists because of the talented student body and faculty at the IfAA!

Our intent has always been to create a platform for everyone at the IfAA to share their imagination and thoughts and we would like to encourage everyone to embrace their creativity and to be confident in their artistic abilities.

As a small student-led initiative, we appreciate all the great feedback, the support and submissions we have received over the past few months. We are already looking forward to seeing what the next issue will bring. Do you want to know what it feels like to be part of our team and the creation of the magazine and then to finally hold the product of all your work in your hands? We'd be happy to hear from you via Instagram or email to join our editing team! Or just talk to any of us if you see us around in building 41 (aka Area 41 :D).





Warm regards,
The editing team

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Issue 02 | 2025

Time Travel	3
What's the Craic? A Reflection of my time at the University of Limerick (UL)	5
Murder's Laughter	10
Student's Declaration of Authorship	11
Between Decisions	11
What are you a nerd about?	12
The Green Bench	14
Unburdened by Emotion	16
How Taylor Swift influenced the US elections	18
Friday the 13ths	19
Leash	20
Untitled Poem	21
Student's favourite literary quotes	22
Why the ending of "How I Met Your Mother" isn't as bad as you think it is	23
From Capetown to Osnabrück - a conversation with Juniorprof. Dr. Lucy Gasser	24
Fragility	28
Procrastination	28
Burn-Out	29
13°C	30
Language in Criminology: How Linguistic Analysis Helps Solve Crimes	31
Metal Knuckles and Red Teeth	32
Blackout Poem	36
Travelling, Teaching and Taming a Slug	37
Pen and Paper Role-Play and the Escape from Reality	39
The Editing Team's Favourite Books	40
Elon Musk's Global Town Square – Democracy in the Hands of a Billionaire	42

Emilia Tschauko

Michel Lenz

Lasse Wendeln

Julian Blome

Victoria Stembrik

Franziska Rick

Lea Mairi Förster

Victoria Sperling

Leon Kropp

Jona Waltenberger

Lara Arlinghaus

Karoline Soff

Clea Appel

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Time Travel

a short story by Emilia Tschauko

In the grip of sadness, when the worries of life have worn me down, and the glare of artificial light fails to brighten my days, I lie down at night and play a game of make-believe.

It starts with a clock ticking backward, each tock a step forward into the past. The hours pass by, the walk turning into a sprint, turning into giant leaps — a lapse of time.

In a desperate attempt to keep up, the only clock on my wall accelerates to a sickening speed. Before long, each of its three nimble hands is torn from its screeching hinges; relieved of the arduous task of measurement, time itself turns meaningless.

My eyes grow heavy, and I barely register the quiet clip-clopping of hooves outside. The angry screaming cars that had previously been racing up and down the treacherous two-way street have now softened into the rhythmic tapping of horses on cobblestone paths. The increasing comfort of silence guides my thoughts to rest.

Then, my state of unconsciousness gets interrupted, but I don't mind, for the scene that greets me is worth the disruption. I wake up in a thick veil of darkness belonging to a time far different from the one I am familiar with. The air is purer now; it smells of leaves and wet earth, and a pleasant humidity envelops me. I turn my head to take in my surroundings when a gentle breeze weaves its way around my ears, a rogue dream caressing my face. As it dances through the air, I can almost swear I hear it whisper ancient secrets of the past. As quickly as it appeared, it vanishes in the distance, taking with it the weight of a million untold stories; the kind that linger in the depths of time.

Maybe things are meant to be forgotten.

A strange humming noise interrupts my reverie, revealing itself to be the motion of flight. All around me, there is motion: enormous dragonflies and otherworldly critters in all sorts of shapes and sizes venturing towards uncharted horizons. Normally, I'd be afraid of creatures with more than four legs, but tonight, they do not bother me. I cannot suppress the smile tugging at the corners of my face; there is nothing to fear. Everything is pure and untouched, revealing the wonders of existence in plain sight, with nothing hidden or destroyed — the earth a million times removed from the place in the universe it will one day call home.

I look up to the sky, but the stars twinkling above are unfamiliar. Still, I do not worry; after all, worry hasn't been invented yet. Despite this alien scene, there is peace.

My gaze drifts through the night, scanning the barely visible shapes that make up the strange landscape. How I wish I could see through the muddy puddles of water for a glimpse at the creatures lurking beneath, to witness the origins of complex life, this incomprehensible wonder that humanity often turns into misery. Here, there is no talk of misery. The primordial swamps harbor life oblivious to pain and laughter.

My friend, the ancient whisper, brushes past me once more — journeying further than I could ever hope to wander, seeping through dense vegetation, revealing plants I have never seen before. These long-for-

gotten ferns appear to answer with a rustling yawn. I wonder if their atoms make up a part of me.

Cradled gently by a bed of moss, I surrender to the soothing pull of slumber. In nature's embrace, the world around me slowly fades away. The worries wait for me in daylight.

There is no rush to catch up.



artwork by Kathrin Klinker

What's the Craic? A Reflection of my Time at the University of Limerick (UL)

an experience abroad by Michel Lenz

Fáilte! That's the Irish word for 'welcome,' and it perfectly captures how I felt during my stay in the Irish city of Limerick—truly welcomed. One might have heard about the Irish people's communicative spirit and their deep pride in their heritage. During my time in Ireland, I found these qualities to be absolutely true, and I really enjoyed spending my time with my fellow Irish students.

But let's start at the very beginning. After successfully applying for the Erasmus+ program, I needed to arrange accommodation and register with the Erasmus coordinators at both the University of Osnabrück and the University of Limerick (UL). Thankfully, this process was seamless, as both coordinators provided clear and effective communication about the required steps. I was also fortunate to secure on-campus accommodation, sparing me the stress of searching for housing on my own, which was a great relief.

I arrived in Limerick on September 1st and met my roommates for the first time and I now consider them close friends. My roommates were international students, like me, coming from Malta, Ukraine, and France. That is another of the great aspects of the Erasmus program: the opportunity to meet not only Irish students but also people from all across Europe. In Limerick's case, I also encountered many students from the United States and India who had chosen to study at UL in both undergraduate and postgraduate programs.

It was particularly heart-breaking to witness the reactions of some of my American friends and their disbelief following the outcome of the US election in November. However, I truly appreciate the feeling that, in times of rising populism and the growth of far-right parties everywhere, I had the chance to meet so many open-minded young people from all these different nations. The Erasmus coordinators at UL also did an excellent job of bringing us international students together. They organised an orientation week filled with lots of different events that were designed to help us socialise and connect with one another.



I also enjoyed my courses very much, as I was able to learn a lot about Irish literature and Irish culture. However, I found it challenging to meet Irish students in my courses, as most of my modules were lecture-based, leaving little to no opportunity to interact with fellow students. Additionally, UL does not have a central canteen like the Mensa Schlossgarten back home in Osnabrück, where you might casually run into your classmates. For me, the highlights at UL were, therefore, the clubs and societies. These clubs and societies are evening programs that allow students with shared interests to connect, offering an incredible variety—from sports, political activism, and photography to board games and many, many more. I joined the Basketball Club, as I also play in Germany, and became a member of both the Literary Society and the Philosophy & Debating Society to explore my interests in literature and debate. For me this was the best way to meet Irish students

in a relaxed atmosphere and there is absolutely no need to stress about not knowing what to talk about as you will have at least one mutual interest.

During my stay, I also took numerous trips to explore the country and its breath-taking natural beauty. The landscapes of Ireland's west coast, including the Connemara National Park, the Ring of Kerry, the Dingle Peninsula, and of course the Cliffs of Moher, just to name a few, left a lasting impression on me. Anyone with the chance should definitely visit these incredible places someday. But it is not just Ireland's nature that is worth a visit. Ireland's cities and towns, though smaller than Osnabrück—except for Dublin, Cork, and Belfast, if you include Northern Ireland's capital—have no trouble making up for their size with their own unique charm, their friendly people and cosy pubs.

In conclusion, I am deeply grateful for the opportunity to study abroad and for the people I met along the way. These memories will always mean the world to me. It was great craic!



Murder's Laughter

a poem by Lasse Wendeln

All along, it was their screech
A horrid song always within reach
Black winged fiends follow my every move
Ensuring my soul has nothing to soothe.

These corvid beasts haunt my every dream
Guiding me to fulfil their craven scheme
Their laughter echoes within my mind
Branding scars that will forever bind.

Sleepless nights leave me no rest
Plagued as a spawn of their father's nest
Crows await in every corner of this ward
Cruel arbiters of my murderous court.

No one believes in my crude abominations
They say these are just shades of imagination
But then why do they cackle with glee?
Is everyone just deaf or is it really me?

Ravens gather just slightly out of sight
All stay ignorant of this dooming blight
They sing of death, blood and slaughter
As they will eat with dreadful laughter.

Hungry demands heard I grab the blade
Black eyes of terror, burning with hate
Blocking all thought through constant fear
So, I must scream but there was no tear.

My hand but a puppet of father's will
I watch as bodies stack up on a hill
My voice drowned in a cacophony of night
The murder of crows snuffing out my last light.

Student's Declaration of Authorship

a poem by Julian Blome

I, the author, hereby confirm that all words are entirely my own
I want not another's words; considered neither theft, nor a lease, nor a loan
Except for instances in which the original sources are correctly referenced or quoted
Accordingly, there can at no point be uncertainty about who wrote it
I have written the present text without external assistance
I affirm it is a fact that only I brought it into existence
And I have not submitted this piece of work at any other time
You read it here first: if I am found guilty, sincerity is a crime



artwork "The Common Raven
(Corvus Corax)" by Céliena Kind

Between Decisions

a poem by Victoria Stembrik

Two different paths are on my mind,
which way to choose, I can't decide,
one is easy but nothing to gain,
second might work but is paved with pain.

The first is a risk,
keeps shadows falling,
the second has pain,
but the one my heart's calling.

Myheart pulls left, my head leans right,
each holds its truth, each claims its fight.
The heart feels both, the head feels wise,
a war beneath uncertain skies.

No map, no guide, no compass near,
I've gotta choose, my path with fear,
I trust my heart, and trust my mind,
will see whatever my fate may find.

We asked the faculty...

What are you a nerd about?



Linda Wright

(1) *Canis lupus familiaris* (2) The Voyager Golden Record
(3) "Word, words, words..."

Lucy Gasser

Most of the things I'm a nerd about are related to literature. I'm weirdly into the oeuvre of Nicolas Cage, if that counts. A man that has made the variety of films he has (e.g., *Con Air*, *Face/Off*, *Pig*, and *Mandy*) is surely a misunderstood genius.



Thomas Kullmann

I suppose what I nerd out about is the willow trees on the bank of the Avon at Stratford, the Renaissance garden at Kenilworth Castle, the early morning hours in Kensington Gardens, the woods around Shimla (Himachal Pradesh, India), the Ganges river at Benares, the tea gardens of Darjeeling, special e-mails by special correspondents, concerts of the Osnabrück Cathedral children's and youth choirs ... places and things that "tease us out of thought/ As does eternity" (Keats).



artworks by Annemarie Schneider



Robert Murphy

I nerd out about correct English usage, particularly the past perfect by journalists and speakers on the tv and radio news. In what is essentially a landscape of imperfection, anyone who does it wrong is booed, and anyone who gets it right gets a cheer. At the very least it makes the dismal business of catching up with the news a bit more fun :-)



Elisabeth Reichel

I'm a pretty intense close reader, but in my free time I also 'nerd out' at great length about potted plants—and the university's botanical garden!



Emily Larkin

The thing I "nerd out" about most is probably the TV show "Gilmore Girls". If I am ever on Mastermind, "Gilmore Girls" would be my special subject as I am 100% certain I know everything about that show. I started watching it when I was 14 and have not stopped since - when the last episode of the last season ends, Netflix already knows the drill and I restart the series, meaning it is pretty much on non-stop in our house (my husband and I literally watch at least half an episode every morning when we have breakfast). My dream is still to somehow find a way to connect the show to English Lit & Cult studies and teach a class about it, so if any of our students have any suggestions regarding this - keep em coming.



The Green Bench

a short story by Franziska Rick

I sat on an old green bench and tried to get comfortable, surrounded by my luggage. Children were laughing, screaming, chasing each other. Parents chatting, then scolding their brats for throwing sand. I tried to calm down and prepared myself to wait here for about four hours. Four and a half hours till my train would depart. It still felt surreal to be here, in Paris, in this park at a playground. I definitely hadn't pictured myself in this situation this morning. I had in fact pictured myself to have already arrived in Karlsruhe by this time, so I could get my next train straight to Munich.

I still felt a little of the adrenaline from this morning rushing through my veins. I remembered how the heat had started to rise in my head when I realized that I had just missed my train to Karlsruhe. I also remembered how I had spoken to the cashier at the travel information desk, upset, stammering something about problems with my ticket and how I really, really needed to arrive in Munich by tonight. I was lucky he had offered me another ticket with a transfer in Paris right away. Maybe he was just being nice or maybe he had seen that I was about to burst into tears and didn't know how to handle it. It seemed to be beneficial to have big shimmering blue eyes that begged for help because, to be totally honest, it had been my own fault that I hadn't caught the train.

Or maybe it hadn't. How was I supposed to know that a train station in France was more of an airport with giant halls and gates you had to pass through? Anyway, I really did have a problem with my ticket, but the ticket itself had been perfectly fine; I had simply not been capable of opening it in the application. Silly. So silly.

I tried to calm down and not to get too annoyed with myself, as there was no point in it anyhow. It was too late now. I tried to focus on the present. There I was, in the city of love, slouching on an old bench in a tiny park. Four hours would have been enough to visit Paris for at least a bit, but my luggage was heavy, especially the big black suitcase I held onto tightly. Also, I was way too scared to miss my next train. That mustn't happen. Not again. I squinted at my watch; thirteen minutes had already passed. Only three hours and forty-seven minutes to go. I delved into my bag for my headphones and listened to music for some time, shutting out the noise around me.

About an hour later an old woman in a fine coat appeared nearby. She seemed to hesitate, as if she couldn't decide where to sit, but then steered directly towards me, I noticed, displeased with her decision. I didn't really feel like company. Even though the park was pretty tiny, it wasn't like there weren't any other benches. There were three of them, to be precise, including the one I was sitting on. The other two weren't taken; however, for some reason the woman seemed to be certain that she needed to sit at this exact bench. My bench. She sat down at the far end of the green steel and there we sat quietly and awkwardly.

I didn't say a word; I mean, what was I supposed to say? "Hey old lady, would you be so kind as to sit on another bench because I got here first?" So we kept on ignoring each other. I started to read the book I had

bought earlier at Paris train station Gare du Lyon, as the park warden came by. I immediately started wondering whether I had done something wrong, but fortunately for me, he only wanted to talk to the old woman. I wasn't exactly fluent in French, but from what I could tell, the two of them seemed to know each other very well.

After some time the park warden started including me in the conversation, asking me where I was coming from and where I was going. He was a friendly man in his late thirties, big smile, obviously trying to be polite. I answered as best as I could. I had always loved French lessons back in school, but I now realized talking to a native was entirely different. The man started to explain how he and the old lady had gotten to know each other. Apparently, she came here every day to sit on this very bench. The woman added that she had come to Paris after the Second World War and had lived here ever since. This had been her regular place for over forty years now. Her eyes started to lighten up as she began talking about how, until recently, her friends had come with her, and the park warden laughed, remembering how the bunch of old ladies used to sit on the benches acting as if they belonged to them. I didn't ask why her friends were gone, but considering her age, it was likely some of them had already passed away.

I started to feel guilty about not wanting to share the bench with her in the first place. This was her bench. I was the intruder who had forced their way into her territory. Luckily she didn't seem to think of it in that way. She simply seemed to be happy to talk to someone. It was hard for me to follow the conversation, but the warden was very patient and even drew the numbers in the sand as he tried to tell me the woman's age. French numbers were terrifying. Quatre-vingt-treize. Ninety-three. The woman was ninety-three years old. It humbled me to think that I had only lived for a tiny part of her lifetime. When I had to pack my bags and leave, I thanked both of them for their company, which had almost felt like hospitality. I didn't say the latter. When I finally got on the train, I thought how peculiar life could be. How certain moments in life were coincidental and insignificant but at the same time felt like they meant something. And how I was really glad I caught the train this time.



artwork by Luca Sophie Hillbrands

Unburdened by Emotion

a poem by Lea Mairi Förster

Ignored in your childhood,
Disguised in your prime
Simply never truly there,
But ever so benign

Never bothered,
Never hurt,
Never broken,
Never touched,
Never really spiralling as nothing is too much

You have not a heart of stone,
Nor a soul made of ice,
You are but an empty vessel
That nothing can suffice

Always helpful,
Always smiling,
Always perfectly controlled,
Always finding ways to prove,
That you can feel as you are told

Enlightened by indifference,
You see how people are
Blinded by it all the same,
Will cause them to stay far



زن، زندگی، آزادی

Woman, Life, Freedom
by Kouhestan A.

How Taylor Swift Influenced the US-Election in 2024

an essay by Victoria Sperling

“I will be casting my vote for Kamala Harris and Tim Walz in the 2024 Presidential Election. I’m voting for @Kamalaharris because she fights for the rights and causes I believe need a warrior to champion them [...]. I’ve done my research, and I’ve made my choice [...]. I also want to say, especially to first time voters: Remember that in order to vote you have to be registered! [...] I’ll link where to register and find early voting dates and info in my story”

- (Taylor Swift on Instagram)

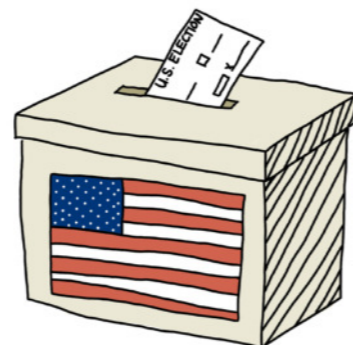
With these words Taylor Swift, one of the most successful singers and songwriters of the century, reached out to her 283 million Instagram followers and fans on September 11th 2024, after the TV debate between Kamala Harris and Donald Trump.

Swift has an outstanding impact both on the music industry as well as on political discourse. Forbes even describes her as the most influential musician in the political sphere. Swift’s raising her voice on the US American election in 2024 and encouraging her fans to vote, therefore, does not come as a surprise.

Swift has actively been using her social media platforms such as Instagram, TikTok and X as well as her music to address certain political issues, such as abortion and LGBTQ rights, for quite some time. In 2024 she endorsed former Democratic Vice President Kamala Harris and her presidential campaign. Under the hashtag “Swifties for Kamala,” a lot of her admirers followed their idol’s lead online to spread awareness of the importance of doing research on the election campaign and its candidates.

Additionally, she has had a major impact on the number of new voter registrations, especially among first-time female voters between the ages of 18 and 24, a phenomenon that became known as the “Swift Effect.” After she had reminded fans to sign up on National Voter Registration Day, vote.org noted a 22.5% increase in voter registrations compared to the year prior.

This shows how celebrities like Taylor Swift can utilize their fame to actively shape political discourse by functioning as opinion leaders. She captivates her fans, who are mostly young people, and raises awareness regarding socially significant topics such as the presidential election.



Friday the 13th

a poem by Leon Kropp

Today I woke up craving cake, and cookies on my mind.
Therefore, I made my merry way, ingredients to find,
But then I saw a cat so black, I went the other way,
On which I saw, to my surprise, an owl during the day.

Now turning back, I’m not unwise, I ruminant to thee:
“Woe be me; don’t you believe that bad luck comes in three?”
Am I insane? Damn you, my brain! I must fast knock on wood.

Who do I kid? This all began this morning when I woke.
The wrong foot first, I slipped and swerved, my bones, they almost broke.

Or was it when I spilt the salt that spirits came to haunt?
Or was it yet the side of bed? I did not mean to flaunt
A disbelief I dare not hold of wicked spirithood.

And so, I kept myself from harm, returning back home.
And there I sat, all orderly, began to read my tome.

It said there on the pages white to ward them off with candlelight,
And so, I did and prayed to God and left the wraiths for Him to smite.
Till I could feel their presence gone and knew my fear would not prolong.
I closed my book and deeply sighed: “At last, I feel the world is right”.
As this I said, complacently, my stomach roared, I was hungry.

Craving now something to eat, recalled I longed for cake,
But thinking this, it felt awry, for now I wanted steak.

Leash

a poem by Jona Waltenberger

I see them walk by, a man and his dog.
One on a leash, the other is not.
Phone in his hand, keeping him captivated,
The dog running, sniffing, happily uncontained.

Sniffing the world, feeling the ground with his paws,
Smooth and unpersonal, a thumb scrolling past.
Butterflies, bees, beautiful flowers.
A message, social media, and he's lost for hours.



a poem by Lara Arlinghaus

A night full of stars
And then a sudden shooting star
Blurred by lonely tears
Carried by a selfish wish
And then, a sudden darkness
As the shooting star carries my selfish wish into the night
And to the stars



“The wisdom of the wise, and the experience of ages, may be preserved by quotation.”

- Issac D’Israeli

We asked you about your favourite literary quotes.
Here they are!

*Better three hours too soon
than a minute too late. -
William Shakespeare
(The Merry Wives of
Windsor)*

Maite Kortendick

*I was quiet, but i was not
blind. - Jane Austen
(Mansfield Park)*

Jill Lutterebeck



*A comfort zone is a beautiful
place but nothing ever grows
there. - John Assaraf*

Anna Becker

*I wish you to know that you
have been the last dream of
my soul.
- Charles Dickens
(A Tale of Two Cities)*

Johanna Brune

*Dr. Lecters eyes are maroon and they
reflect the light in pinpoints of red.
Sometimes the points of light seem
to fly like sparks to his center. His eyes
held Starling whole.
- Thomas Harris
(Silence of the Lambs)*

Ilayda-Ceren Alp

Why the ending of “How I Met Your Mother” isn’t as bad as you think it is

an essay by Karoline Soff

Beware, spoilers ahead!

“How I Met Your Mother” was one of the most popular TV series of its time, winning several awards and gaining millions of fans worldwide. Yet, even ten years after the final episode aired, HIMYM remains infamous for something else: its allegedly bad ending. While the episodes in seasons 1–8 consistently reach IMDb ratings ranging from 7.2 to 9.4, the last season includes the most low-rated episodes, with the very last episode receiving a comparatively low score of 5.5. However, there are many aspects that show why the fans’ judgement was premature. While it is true that the execution of the final season was subpar, the concept behind the series’ ending is indeed consistent with the plot, the genre and the overarching theme of the show.

The shocking reveal in the last episode is that, by the time Ted is telling the story to his kids, their mother, Tracy, has been dead for several years due to an unnamed illness. Fans were, and many still are, deeply upset about this, even though Tracy’s passing aligns flawlessly with the show’s premise. Why else would a father sit his children down to tell them the story of what led to his meeting his wife in grand detail, without ever being interrupted by said wife? Why would the kids care enough to keep on listening for so long that they even occasionally get bored? This big reveal was always where the plot was heading. The same is true for the final scene in which Ted asks his former girlfriend Robin out on a date once again. It is consistent with the storyline because Ted is characterized as a hopeless romantic who never gives up on love—and not because, as many claimed, he never really loved Tracy. And Robin is available because her relationship with Barney was portrayed as unstable from the beginning, so it can’t be regarded as out of character for them to eventually break up.

A majority of the fans argue that the ending was too sad for a sitcom, a genre which is generally known to be upbeat and humorous. But HIMYM’s ability to be both funny and serious is what made it so successful in the first place. The show always aimed to reflect real life, with its highs and lows, just in a funnier and slightly exaggerated version. But it never shied away from portraying serious subjects, either—like unemployment, substance abuse, and death. It’s not a Disney movie; it doesn’t need a perfect happy ending. The show is instead being rounded off by the fact that it ends not with Ted and his perfect wife simply living happily ever after but, instead, with a further portrayal of life’s imperfections.

Most importantly, the ending aligns with the theme and underlying message of the whole series: to keep on loving. Throughout the series Ted and his friends experience heartbreak, loss and tragedy, but they eventually heal and learn to trust in love again. Whether it’s Lily and Marshall finding each other again, or Ted learning to trust once more after he was left at the altar, or Barney learning the meaning of unconditional love through fatherhood after having had many unsuccessful relationships. It makes sense for the show to end with one more example of just that—with Ted giving dating another try after tragically losing the woman who was meant to be the love of his life.

It is understandable that people who watched and loved a show for almost a decade want a perfect ending that feels unspoiled and helps fans find closure, but HIMYM was never meant to end with a simple “...and that’s how I met your mother.” While the flawed storytelling of the final season partly justifies fans’ disappointment, it’s unfair to claim the ending itself was inconsistent with the rest of the series.

From Capetown to Osnabrück - a Conversation with Juniorprof. Dr. Lucy Gasser

This edition's interview features Dr. Lucy Gasser, who serves as the Junior Professor for English Literary and Cultural Studies in Global Contexts at our University. Thank you for agreeing to share some interesting facts about your personal and professional life with us!

When did you start teaching at the University of Osnabrück?

I'm still a relatively fresh addition to the IfAA. I started at UOS in April 2023.

What brought you to Germany in the first place? Did you come to Osnabrück straight away?

I completed my undergrad and Master's degrees at the University of Cape Town, and then I decided I needed new teachers. So I moved to Berlin to pursue a PhD, which I did at the University of Potsdam. I stayed on there as a lecturer for a couple of years before starting at UOS.

Have you always wanted to teach? What was your first dream job?

Maybe like many people who end up working with books in one way or another, once upon a time I wanted to be a novelist. I started teaching as a tutor in my fourth year at uni, and soon realised how rewarding I found it. I think teaching gives me a lot of what I found appealing about the idea of being a writer: a creative engagement with language and stories.

What would you do if this weren't your job?

I like the idea of doing work with tangible results that provide a clearly discernible benefit to people, so I find the idea of doing something concrete and useful like installing kitchens attractive. But I think that ship has sailed.



Of all the classes you've ever taught, what was your favourite class?

I couldn't pick a single favourite class, but one of my favourite things about teaching is the way a group sometimes comes together to bring out the best in each other.

What has a student said or done that you still think about today?

A few years ago, when I went home to South Africa for a visit, I bumped into a former student whom I had tutored in his first semester. He had just graduated with a first class Master's in English Literature, and told me his first-semester tutorials had been a part of what inspired him to keep studying English. I was really happy to have been part of one step in his journey.

What is something that you have learned from your students?

I learn from my students all the time. Whenever I give my students tasks that involve creative engagement with the subject matter of a course, they exceed my expectations by the way they're able to come at the question in ways I didn't anticipate. They inspire me.

If you were a student again, which professor from any time period would you want to take a class with?

I think I'd like to sit in on some lectures by Toni Morrison. Not all great novelists make great teachers, but I think she might have.

Your work is primarily focused on literature of the Global South. What sparked that specific interest?

Since I grew up in Cape Town, literature of the Global South is to some extent literature from the part of the world I think of as home, so there's a certain affinity on that basis. At the same time, when I went to school and university in South Africa, we studied a lot of canonical British and American texts, which seemed very distant from the world I inhabited. As I came to understand more about how much power there is in stories, it became increasingly important to me that stories from the Global South get told and read.

Are you involved in any active research in that area at the moment?

Yes, I'm researching a literary journal that was

published by the Afro-Asian Writers' Association during the Cold War. It was a magazine put together by writers and activists from countries freshly independent from colonial rule, or still in the throes of their liberation struggles, who wanted to foster the development of creative work free from cultural imperialism. In practice, it means I spend a fair amount of time paging through dusty archives that I imagine are objectively boring, but which I find really interesting.

How is literature making a difference in regards to decolonization?

That's a big question, but I'll give it a try. Literature is a part of the way we develop a cultural vocabulary to imagine the world and how we might want it to be. As literature that seeks to imagine a world that isn't structured by coloniality (by which I mean colonialism, and also colonial ways of thinking and being) grows, and increases in reach and visibility, we gain imaginative vocabulary for decolonial alternatives. By helping us see and articulate where coloniality lives on, literature can help us unlearn it. By giving us imaginative resources, literature can help us configure alternatives.

Having grown up in Cape Town, what is your favourite place in South Africa?

I have several favourite places in SA, including parts of Cape Town, but I guess the one that comes to mind first is Bulungula in the Transkei, which you can only reach over a long dirt road. You stay in a hut next to the sea, there's no electricity, you share the beach with cows that wander freely by, and there's no end to the sky.

What's your favourite place in Osnabrück?

Is Osnabrück, I'm a big fan of the playground in the square by Henne, mostly because my 3-year-old is really into it.

What's your favourite German dish?

Hmm... You can't go wrong with Käsespätzle. And Apfelstrudel.

What's your favourite South African dish?

We're big on barbecue culture – which we call braai – in SA. So anything that you can put on a grill in the open air is probably the way to go. It's less about the food and more about the setting and the company.

What's the biggest difference between living in South Africa and living in Germany?

At this time of year, the difference at the forefront of my mind would be the weather.

Are you planning on staying in Germany or do you see yourself moving to another country in the future?

My dog, my child, and my partner are German, plus I love my job, so I think I'm here for the foreseeable future. But I suppose you never know what might come.

If you could have dinner with any fictional character, who would it be and why?

I think I might like to attend a dinner party with the characters from Oscar Wilde's *The Importance of*

Being Earnest. They're all so witty and charismatic, and there'd probably be good food and wine.

What's a novel you think everyone should read at least once in their lives?

I can never just pick one. I think there's a lot of wonderful contemporary writing coming from the African continent, by writers like NoViolet Bulawayo and Namwali Serpell. I've loved everything I've ever read by Amitav Ghosh, whose books I find deeply engrossing and incredibly well-written, while they always teach me something. The first time I read *Middlemarch*, I inhaled it in two days and felt like I was living in the novel. The first time I read *To the Lighthouse*, I thought I'd never read such beautiful prose.

artwork by Luca Sophie Hillbrands
"You & I" (2023)
Acrylic on canvas
80 x 60 cm





Fragility

a poem by Clea Appel

Why does everything
Appear to be so
Frail?

I thought you were made
Of stone—
Seemingly sturdy,
Stoic, and strong.

And yet, if I dropped you,
Would you break like porcelain?
You're nothing but
A crystalline glass,
A delicate vase,
Beautiful to look at.

But if I were to
Take my gaze off you,
You would shatter in
Mere seconds,
Wouldn't you?

Procrastination

a poem by Sandra-Elisabeth Effinghausen

The paper's deadline is onto me,
Oh, how I wish that done I'd be!
But instead of writing, thinking, and reading—
Oh no! I have started cleaning.
The windows are shining brighter than ever,
And the oven has never looked better!
I glance at my reflection in the floor,
And wish I had as much time left as before.
The laundry is done, my apartment smells great,
It seems I have accepted my fate.
At eleven p.m., I start one last try,
After finishing a long and good cry.
Suddenly, words are filling the pages:
In the blink of an eye, the paper is done!
I think I don't have to mention
How I wish I had started on day one.



Burn-Out

a poem by Siena Feldkamp

I hate to admit it—
maybe because it sounds dumb,
or maybe because admitting
means acknowledging my denial.

I am addicted to stress.

I've wondered what that really means,
what this translates to
when, after all,
I know it fits me.

No one else pushes me.
No one else expects this.
Just me.

And when the world is still,
when there's nothing to do,
the silence swells,
but my thoughts do not.

I feel incomplete.
Work fills this void;
it gives me purpose—
a constant need
to be moving, doing, proving.

Without stress, I feel unworthy—
lazy, aimless, undeserving.
Unachievable standards,
though I'd never impose them
on others.

I know it's insane.
And still, it isn't enough.
I am not enough

when I rest,
when I laugh with friends,
when I try something new,
when I simply exist.

Maybe I'm not addicted to stress.
Maybe I'm defined by it.

And though I hate that truth,
it feels good
to finally say it aloud.



I shiver as the first wave washes over my toes. I knew the water would be cold, but it is still somehow colder than I had expected. I am nonetheless determined not to let that deter me from my mission of swimming in the sea on this beautiful early September afternoon.

My friend is already hip-deep in the water and after taking a few deep breaths I follow her, gritted teeth and heart beating. I feel the rocky ground under my feet transitioning into soft sand and the sensation briefly distracts me from the frostiness that surrounds my legs. I stop and try to acclimatise myself for a second. It actually seems to work, the lower half of my body soon stops freezing, but maybe that's just due to my skin becoming increasingly numb.

I take a look back at the beach, a small bay, tucked away between low limestone cliffs, dotted with pebbles, shells and kelp washed up by the last high tide. Our other friend, sitting on a towel and basking in the sun, waves at me and gives me a thumbs-up as she flashes a smile. I return the wave and turn around again, now facing the open ocean once more.

As I keep inching forward, every newly submerged centimetre is a challenge. At this point my friend is happily swimming, a few metres further out. "How do you do it?" I ask her. "Just get in!" she replies, her smiling eyes concealed by the sunglasses that are resting on her rosy cheeks.

Just get in, just get in, I tell myself. Easier said than done. I close my eyes for a short moment. Then I take the leap.

My shoulders now submerged, I swim, and the feeling of the coolness on my skin quickly makes way for the tingling sensation of doing something equally as cool as the temperature of the salty waves of the Irish Sea.



Language in Criminology: How Linguistic Analysis Helps Solve Crimes

an essay by Laetitia Siegel

Language is one of the most powerful tools humans possess. It reflects many aspects of our life, such as our identity, habits, upbringing or even subconscious patterns that we develop over time. In criminology, language plays a vital role in forensic investigation. Over time, linguistic analysis has become an effective instrument for solving crimes; as it can uncover new clues, it is likely that this tool will continue to gain popularity amongst investigators.

Linguistic analysis involves the examination of language on many levels, such as syntax, morphology, semantics and pragmatics. It uncovers patterns regarding typical word use or sentence structure, but it also seeks to find out how words may be pronounced differently by different people. In criminology this branch is known as forensic linguistics.

Here, experts analyse written and spoken language for clues about a person's identity or background. There are countless so called linguistic markers that play a major role in identifying perpetrators.

Said markers contain individualized parts of language like vocabulary, indicating slang, dialect or social group. The complexity of the syntax used can help in putting together a picture of a person's education. Morphology provides knowledge of word formation; sometimes specific grammatical errors can suggest an individual's native language or pinpoint a specific regional background. Another marker is pragmatics: the use of language in context. Implicature and the application of formal or informal tones might reflect one's familiarity with conversational norms. Stylometry specifically gives insights into someone's writing style, regarding consistency, namely in formatting, certain punctuation or repeated spelling errors. Lastly, in spoken language, there are phonological markers, such as accent and speech disfluencies that can indicate nervousness or dishonesty in a trial or questioning, for instance.

Put into practice, forensic linguistics has proven its value in several criminal cases. One notable example is that of Theodore Kaczynski, also known as the "Unabomber." Even though his case had been extensively investigated, he had evaded imprisonment for almost two decades. When he anonymously sent his manifesto to major newspapers, his brother recognised the unique way Theodore voiced himself due to rare expressions and choice of words. After his brother alerted the FBI, providing samples of Theodore's earlier writings for comparison, Kaczynski was finally arrested.

Nowadays, linguists also assist in social media investigations concerning the identification of cyber-criminals by analysing patterns in online communication. This has certainly become increasingly relevant in cases involving fraud, stalking, or trafficking.

While linguistic analysis is surely valuable, it also raises concerns, mostly of an ethical nature. Forensic linguists must act carefully to avoid bias or overinterpretation. Misuse of linguistic evidence could, for example, lead to wrongful accusations. Because of that, sociolinguistic factors must also be understood in context. Bias against certain linguistic features, such as regional dialects, could perpetuate stereotypes or result in unfair treatment of some social groups. Therefore, a responsible use of linguistic tools is essential in forensic linguistics.

Still, the use of linguistic analysis in criminology holds great potential in solving crimes. Already having been used for decades, this field continues to evolve and contribute to serving justice. With the advancement of technology, linguistic analysis will likely become more precise, but it has to be assessed with ethical considerations in mind to ensure fair and accurate results.

Metal Knuckles and Red Teeth

A short story on how bloody teeth change the world into a better place

text and artworks by Ilayda-Ceren Alp

“Care to share one of those cigarettes, Kanka?” asked Ahmet Aydin with a smirk, greeting his pal with a fist bump to his right shoulder. The afterhours ritual at the vocational training center consisted of smoking a cigarette and philosophizing about anything and everything. After spending most of the day in different classrooms, theorizing about the mechanics of circuit diagrams and different materials, taking a break with a sweet tobacco cigarette was a well-needed cathartic break.

“Sure, help yourself.” Sotirios Tsakiridis leaned leisurely on the stone table and held his newly opened Marlboro pack out in the open. The slightly cold autumn breeze at the beginning of October caused a bit of tobacco to fly around among the falling leaves of the surrounding trees. But Sotirios Tsakiridis did not notice that, like most little details. He was a simple young man, his circle of friends rather a dot only, his expression mostly neutral, and he lived by the motto Don’t sweat the small stuff. Ergo, he was easygoing. Well, most of the time.

“Thanks, the next round is on me,” chuckled Ahmet Aydin. His good friend’s kind gesture meant a lot. He knew that Sotirios Tsakiridis was the one he could come back to without feeling judged. Like a brotherly bond, but without the consanguinity. They had both noticed this feeling from the first moment they had met. Purely by chance, they had sat next to each other on the first day of their job training. Two and a half years had passed and together they had been smoking cigarettes at the same place ever since.

“It is getting colder; my leather jacket doesn’t keep me as warm as it did a few weeks ago. Winter is near, the days are getting shorter. I don’t know if I am in the mood for short days. It gets depressing real fast, don’t you think?” Ahmet Aydin took a break to take a whiff of his crisp burning cigarette.

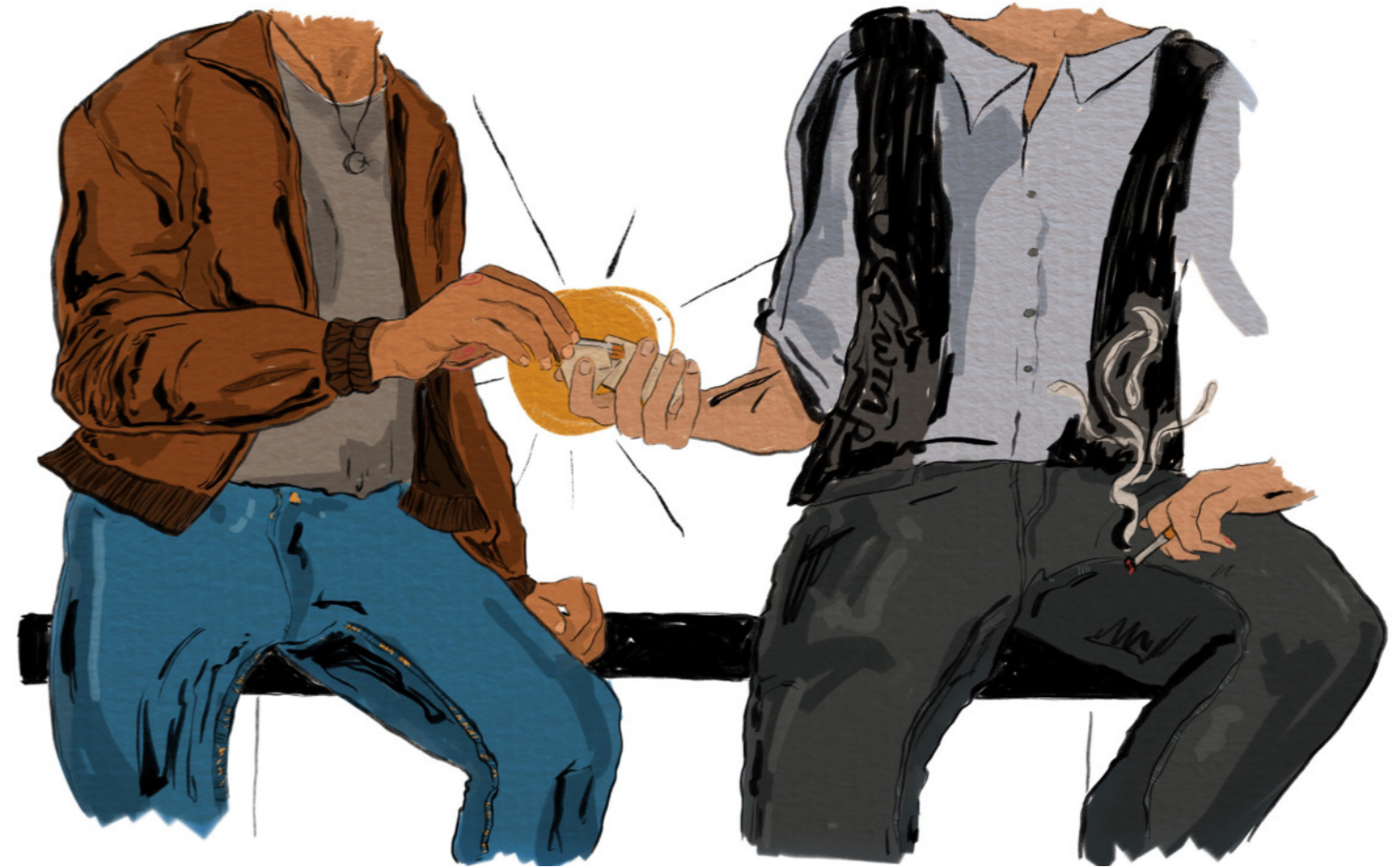
“Yeah. But this is how time works; we got to live with it,” Sotirios Tsakiridis answered.

“I know. I still grieve the warm summer in Cappadocia. The vegetables here are so stale and tasteless. It’s just sad. You can relate to that feeling, can’t you?”

“I do. I miss my grandparents in Greece.” Sotirios Tsakiridis looked at his feet as he puffed out smoke, his voice rather nasal. It made him sound melancholic.

“Same time tomorrow?” He extinguished his cigarette on the stone table, walked towards the small trash can and threw in the yellow-stained filter. After turning around, he buried his hands in the pockets of his grey coat.

“In our habitual way.”



Something was off today. Was it the stillness of the weather? Where was the wind and what about the clouds? It seemed like the ambiance of this day cast a grey filter over everything in an uncanny-valley way, inhumane and unnatural. Ahmed Aydin sat on the stone table and flipped a cigarette in his mouth while holding the pack under Sotirios Tsakiridis’s nose.

“Here you go, Kanka.”

“Thanks.” His friend lit both cigarettes with his steel Zippo-lighter. An old, but well-looked-after lighter, it was adorned with a picture of the Greek God Asclepius, and under him the engraving “Σωτήρ”. “Anything special planned today?” Sotirios Tsakiridis inquired, but Ahmet Aydin did not listen. Like a cat with a high and puffed tail, eyes fixated on a foe, body and stance wide and firm, he looked at a group of men standing nearby. They held beer cans in their hands; one carried a six-pack while another, a middle-aged man, crushed a can with his bare hands and threw it on the ground. For a gathering of seven people, they were pretty loud, and harsh.

“And those Turks, they are horrendous, barbaric fuckers!” A loud burp cut the uncomfortable screeching roar of one drunk and tumbling man, highlighting the penetrating laughter of the guys.

“Don’t...,” but even before Sotirios Tsakiridis could finish his plea, Ahmet Aydin was rushing towards the plague of bulky men.

“What about Turks? Anything else to say?” he declared, nodding his head forward at the crowd, taking one last drag on the cigarette before throwing it on the ground. The smoke was still rising up in a narrow band as he stood there like a poser, the crescent moon and star pendant hanging off his chest.

“Ahmet, let’s just...” again, Sotirios Tsakiridis desperately tried to move his friend away, tugging on his arm, losing his cigarette in this process, but there was no way he would listen to him. Ahmet Aydin just shrugged off the tug. The eyes of the bulky, drunk, swaying man analyzed him thoroughly, but his vision immediately fell on the white-gold pendant. The sharp moon and star manifested such an anger in this man, so hard for others to understand. It was as if not the confrontation, but rather the mere symbol, that Ahmet Aydin was proud to call his, made the man’s blood boil, the image triggering a primal rage.

“I have nothing more to say, but a lot to show!” and before anyone could blink an eye, the man’s fist hit Ahmet Aydin’s nose—so bad, it immediately started to gush out raw, dark red blood. It dribbled down his philtrum, over his lips, and found its way over the slightly yellow-stained front teeth. Before Ahmet

Aydin could gather his thoughts, another hit came his way, right to his left cheekbone. He tried to push away the burly man, but the blows had made him dizzy. All he saw was a right hand, bound with a white cloth over knuckles. Every hit felt more sharp and destructive than he expected; it was not just a fist striking him. There was metal. In all trouble it was surprisingly obvious to see the man was missing a thumb.

And it only takes one more hit for it to be over, Sotirios Tsakiridis thought. “Get off!” he shouted, while pulling Ahmet Aydin behind him, from whose nose blood was still dripping all over his clothes and on the ground, creating a mess.

“We were just leaving,” Sotirios Tsakiridis said, breathing quickly. “Come on now,” he whispered to Ahmet Aydin, carefully stepping away from the scene.

It was noon and the two young men were sitting in a class on circuit diagrams, the last one before their final exam this term. Ahmet Aydin’s injuries were doing alright; his nose was swollen and half of his face was tinted in a purplish, bluish color with a green undertone, but the pain that still lingered did not stop him from dozing off and daydreaming about a warm, summer life somewhere in Central Anatolia, not perceiving anything the teacher tried to explain. What caught him off guard, though, was a solid knocking on the metal door of the classroom. It was not a familiar knock, like the one of the principal or the teacher from the classroom next door.

“Come in, please,” said the teacher kindly.

And through the door came two men and a woman, dressed in dark green police attire, hats, gadget belts, boots and all. Everything highlighted their height and fit figures. Their arms rested on the guns in their holsters. The atmosphere in the classroom



tensed up as the police officers came inside. All of a sudden, no student made a sound; for a moment it seemed like the whole classroom was frozen in tension.

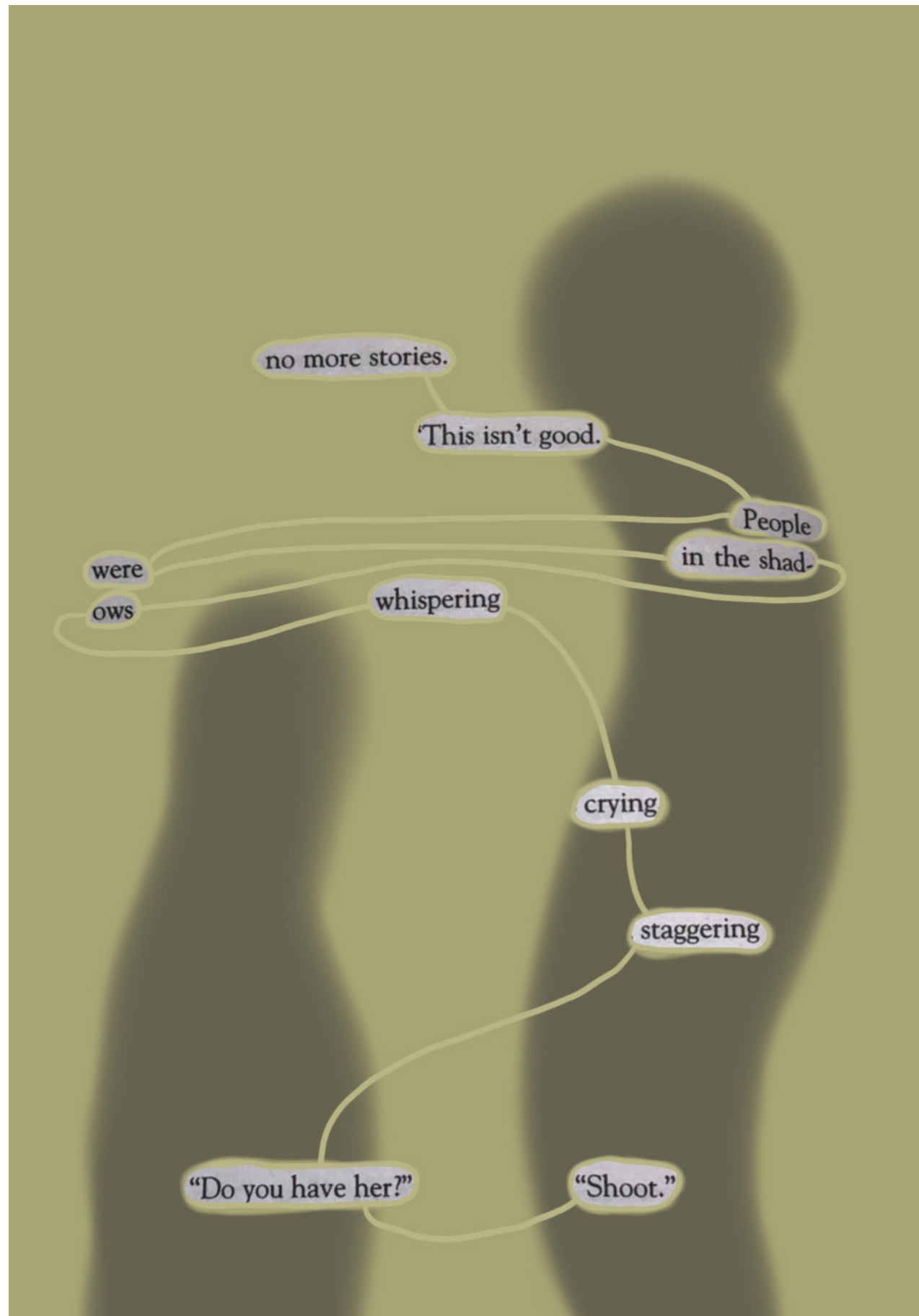
“Is Ahmet Aydin in this classroom?” echoed the firm voice of the policewoman. Every student turned their head towards him. Ahmet Aydin was ripped out of his daydream, looking to Sotirios Tsakiridis in fear. Slowly he raised his hand..

“That’s me,” he said with a shaking voice.

“We are Officers of the Criminal Investigation Department. We would like to talk with you about something. Please, step outside.” The female police officer demanded.



BREAKING NEWS: YOUNG STUDENT’S CLUE LEADS TO THE CAPTURE OF RIGHT EXTREMIST ORGANISATION LEADER AFTER HAVING EVADED THE LAW FOR MONTHS - SENTENCE LENGTH UNCLEAR - MORE DETAILS ON THE LEGAL PROCESS TO FOLLOW.



a blackout poem by Hannah Langen

Travelling, Teaching and Taming a Slug

My experience as an assistant teacher in England

by Lea Mairi Förster

At one point or another, most of us will have to spend some time abroad. Many are excited about it, others less so, and then there are those who would prefer not going at all, because they are a bit scared of being so far away from home for an extended amount of time. Either way, we all have to do it. In my case it was luckily not just a necessity; it came as a blessing.

Since I wanted to make sure that I would actually speak to natives, I chose not to attend a university, because I figured my chances of connecting only with international students there might be quite high. I could claim that I hoped to gain teaching experience, and while that was part of the gist, I mainly wanted a break from uni while spending time abroad. I therefore started searching for a position as an assistant teacher in England.

I got accepted at Thomas Mills Highschool in Framlingham – a small town in Suffolk near the east coast of England. This was purely accidental, because the position was randomly announced on the university’s notice board, as someone had pulled out of the program on short notice. As a consequence, I had merely a few weeks to prepare myself and to get everything done in time – a process which is neither typical, nor recommendable. But, as I said, it was a blessing to me, even though everything was so rushed.

This was because my semester was jam-packed with work, courses and even more work. In a strange way, I had created a weird paradox for myself, in the sense that I was leaving home to escape work, only to become an intern working full-time somewhere else. But let me tell you: Living in Fram for a few months was one of the best and most relaxing experiences I have ever had.

Let’s start with my living conditions: I lived in the house of a lovely lady named Sara together with another girl, Ellen, with whom I got along great. Luckily, the house was within walking distance of Thomas Mills and right next to town. (Framlingham will always be a village to me, but people get really mad if one calls it that, because it’s supposedly a “market-town”...) The place always felt like it was stuck in time, in the best way possible, with cute little cottages, lots of hidden footpaths in the greenery, and even a castle on the hill – yes, THE “Castle on the Hill.” When I didn’t have to work, I absolutely adored either walking about and taking in the environment or chatting with Sara and playing with her grandkids.

When it comes to work, it didn’t really feel like work, if I am completely honest. Not because I didn’t do anything, but because it was rather enjoyable. Work started at around 8:30 and included pretty much everything from helping teachers in their German lessons and even stepping in as a substitute teacher if the main attraction was absent, to preparing the year 12 and 13 Students for their A-Levels. Of course, I also had to perform the typical intern task of making coffee for everyone. Aside from that my boss Matt and I found ourselves in a fun “hunt” for a slug which kept eating our paper but was never found, even though we tried filming it during the night at one point. The creature is known to the language department as “Slugzilla,” which I think is just beautiful.

All in all, this was an awesome experience, and I am so grateful for all the lovely people I met during my time in Framlingham, who made my stay abroad really special. So, if you ever see on the notice board that a small school in England is desperately searching for an assistant, give it a chance – it might just be the greatest study break you could ask for.



artwork by Kaja Lisann Pawellek
"Liberation" (2024)
Acrylic and golden markers on canvas
100 x 80 cm

Pen and Paper Role-Play and the Escape from Reality

an essay by Jonas Goeze

In a recent discussion, a friend and I were asked if we could still recall anything that happened in ninth grade. Surprisingly, we both remembered the same event: It was the year my friend's role-playing character left a fellow student's character to die during an epic fight. We reminisced about that evening: our group sitting around a table, the storyteller creating a world in our heads, and we players role-playing our characters. Strangely, out of all the moments from that year, the first one that sprang to mind was not even a real memory. Or was it?

Escapism, a term often used to describe pen and paper role-playing games, is defined by the Merriam-Webster Dictionary as a "habitual diversion of the mind to purely imaginative activity or entertainment as an escape from reality or routine." There are, of course, different definitions, but descriptive terms very commonly used are "distraction," "avoidance," "diversion," or "escape." Although the term "escapism" is often used negatively, pen and paper role-playing games provide a positive way of avoiding cognitive overload whilst building memories, friendships and confidence in the process.

The huge amount of media that we are confronted with daily can easily lead to overstimulation. Consequently, we need regular breaks to clear our heads and refocus on the important information. The problem with these breaks is our tendency to spend them scrolling on social media. Apart from also being overstimulating, scrolling does not provide any long-term joy or purpose. It's hard to identify all the factors that generate feelings of joy or a sense of purpose, but we certainly access these feelings when we create meaningful memories with others. While other modes of escapism through fantasy such as books, movies, or video games might generate a few fond memories, the time spent with friends around a table creates countless memories over the years because one never explores these role-playing worlds alone.

The strong ability to bring people together can be considered one of the main appeals of pen and paper role-play. A group of strangers is bound to become a group of friends quickly when shaping a thrilling story arc together. Furthermore, an already established group of friends will always have a reason to meet up at any point in life to continue their story. No matter what you are occupied with at the moment or for how long you have been separated, the time in this unique fantasy world continues only when you sit down with your friends to play.

Pen and paper role-play helps players to establish more self-confidence. With the right group, an introverted person gets the opportunity to role-play as a confident knight and to approach certain scenarios as such. The lines between real life social interactions and the dynamics within the imaginary world become blurred, creating a space for self-exploration.

Clearly "escapism" isn't limited to a desperate getaway from reality, as it often presented to be; it can also provide the necessary breaks we need to avoid cognitive overload. Pen and Paper role-play enables this by letting you create memories, build friendships and develop your confidence in the process. Therefore, everyone who likes spending time in a world without social media, advertisements, or deadlines should try creating a world with others where time is frozen and always waiting for you.

The editing team's

favourite books



Lisa's pick:
Coraline by Neil Gaiman

3 words: grotesque, Witty, Eery

Coraline Jones discovers a secret door to another world in her new house, where she meets her other, and seemingly better, parents - if it wasn't for them having buttons instead of eyes...

The story's atmosphere is nothing but unsettling the entire read through, yet there is something witty about the way it is written. Dark, phantastical elements, rhymes and the irony of children's logic make for a unique and suspenseful experience.

I'd recommend this to anyone who enjoys a short, suspenseful dark fantasy with a touch of horror that's creepy but not too intense.

Jasmin's pick:
The House That Horror Built by Christina Henry

3 words: Suspenseful, Surprising, Haunting

Harry Adams, a struggling single mother, works as a cleaner for renowned horror director *Javier Castillo*, who hides many secrets behind a locked door in his house.

While reading the book, I questioned whether the narrator was unreliable or if something was truly happening within *Javier Castillo's* house. The story is well-written and gave me chills during certain suspenseful parts. *Christina Henry* knows exactly how to keep readers on their toes.

I would recommend this both to readers who are new to horror and to those who have been reading horror books for a long time.



Annemarie's pick:
They Both Die at the End by Adam Silvera

3 words: Moving, Heartwarming, Bittersweet

If your life were to end today, what would you do? Making one last friend who shares the same destiny as you seems reasonable to me. "They Both Die at the End" tells the story of two strangers whose loose bond of fate develops into a friendship throughout their last day. While the frame of the story

might seem rather sad at first, the story is peppered with amusing and joyful moments that will bring a smile to every reader's face, especially those who fancy heartwarming stories about friendship and love. Normally, I am not the biggest fan of "no eye stays dry" stories; however, this one is special. Rarely has a book captivated me like this one did. "They Both Die at the End" guarantees a unique reading experience.



Kathrin's pick
The Long Way to a Small Angry Planet by Becky Chambers

3 words: Cozy, Smart, Thought-provoking

Rosemary starts her new job on a tunneling ship and goes on a long journey with her new crew, as they (literally) navigate bigger and w obstacles in a busy galaxy to get to it's center.

Every book of the *Wayfarer* series shares the perspective of totally unique characters, while still telling stories from the same universe. *Chambers's* worldbuilding is so elaborate and well-thought out.

Even if you are usually not into hard scifi (aliens and all) I think you might enjoy the tales from her rich universe!



Luca's pick:
Murder on the Orient Express by Agatha Christie

3 words: Captivating, Cozy, Nostalgic

Private detective *Hercule Poirot* investigates the murder of a wealthy American passenger aboard the luxurious *Orient Express*, only to uncover a complex web of secrets and motives involving nearly all the other passengers.

What I love about this book is that this novel is so captivating for its clever plotting, intricate character development, and the thrilling mystery of how all the passengers are connected to the crime, keeping readers guessing until the very end.

Generally I would recommend this to everyone, but especially if you want to get into reading again it is a captivating easy and short read.

Linda's pick:
Playground by Richard Powers

3 words: Anthropocene, Postcolonial, Thriller

Four main characters' formative experiences forge them together and put them asunder on paths of life that take intriguing psychological turns until they twist into a strand that ends on the punctuation mark of *Makatea*, a small Pacific island in French Polynesia.

This book, which I chose among *RP's* 14 novels partially because it is his most recent, has the power to open our hearts and minds to

the beauty and intelligence of marine life as well as to the distinct possibility that we humans, both as individuals and as a species, are unreliable narrators. I would recommend the book to anyone who is interested in games and/or cares deeply about the environment and/or wishes to contemplate the ways advances in artificial intelligence may play out.



Happy reading!

Elon Musk's Global Town Square – Democracy in the Hands of a Billionaire

an essay by Leonard Mack

People call him a revolutionary and a genius and have even compared him to Steve Jobs in terms of shaping the world through innovation. PayPal, SpaceX, Tesla and Neuralink – Elon Musk is often admired for redefining entire branches of technology through his corporate endeavors. Twitter, now rebranded as X to signify its ambition to be the world's digital “everything platform,” is the most recent addition to his repertoire. His takeover of the platform has sparked intense debate about its impact on free speech and democracy. Musk's plan to transform X into a “global town square” is dangerous because it places supra-political power in the hands of one individual and poses a threat to democratic societies around the world.

For Musk, dystopian fiction like Orwell's 1984 has long become reality. This is why he prioritizes the unrestricted expression of beliefs and opinions. According to him, other social networks suppress viewpoints perceived as unpopular, creating echo chambers and stifling democratic dialogue. As a self-proclaimed “free speech absolutist,” Musk insists X fosters healthy debate through reduced content moderation. Polarizing figures like the now reelected President Donald Trump have been reinstated on the platform, and the threshold for tolerating posts identifiable as hate speech is much higher under Musk's leadership. To help differentiate between what is real and fake, “Community Notes,” a fact-checking feature crowdsourced by users rather than curated by the platform itself, was introduced. Through this, Musk portrays himself as returning power to the people and resisting the influence of “malicious” mainstream media.

However, Musk's vision has also faced sharp criticism. Ostensibly making decisions in the name of free speech, his approach actually opens the door to manipulation and the spread of misinformation. Additionally, by laying off most of X's staff and relaxing moderation policies, the platform formerly known as Twitter gradually developed into a breeding ground for false narratives. For example, the platform's AI image creator Grok allows users to generate images with an alarming amount of freedom in contrast to other similar tools—a factor particularly impactful in an election year like 2024.

The return to the platform of figures like Donald Trump, who uses X to bypass traditional media, once again amplifies inflammatory rhetoric, deepening societal divisions and eroding trust in democratic systems. Moreover, Musk's personal biases conflict with his alleged concept of a neutral foundation for discourse, considering his constant public endorsements of right-wing figures. While the world's richest man positions himself as a champion of free speech, this alignment raises concerns about fairness, particularly of this influence. For many, the idea of a single billionaire shaping political discourse globally undermines the very principles of democracy – equal access, transparency and accountability. The algorithms driving engagement on X further intensify polarization, fueling extremism instead of constructive dialogue. In this sense, Musk's company policies risk amplifying societal rifts rather than bridging them, a dangerous outcome at a time when democratic systems are already under enormous strain.

In conclusion, Elon Musk's X reflects a fundamental tension between free speech and responsible governance. On one hand, his platform challenges censorship concerns and empowers voices traditionally sidelined. On the other, his radically relaxed moderation policies risk promoting misinformation, polarization and bias, jeopardizing the integrity of political processes. While Musk's vision of a global town square resonates with democratic ideals, he has turned the platform into the Web's wild west. These recent developments demonstrate the dangers of placing such immense leverage in the hands of one incredibly rich and powerful individual, essentially empowering not the people, but the oligarchy.

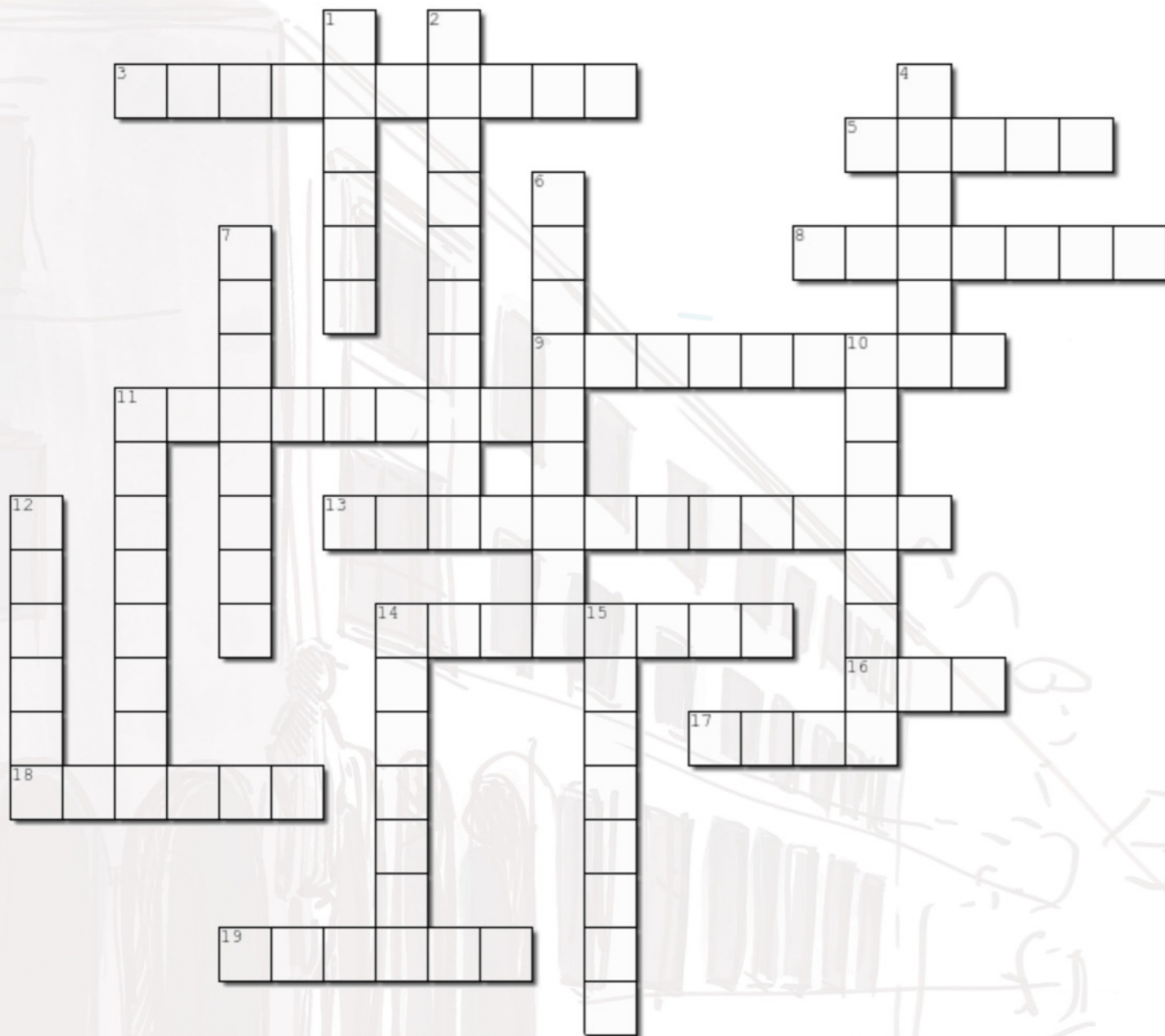




"In this series I combine thematic and iconographic elements of each statement in the horror anthology podcast "The Magnus Archives" into an artwork. In these artworks I depict a scene or place which aims to capture the emotional impression the story left on me."

www.jhb-art.com; [@joosth.becker](https://twitter.com/joosth.becker)

Artwork pages 43-45 by Joost-Henrik Becker
ink on paper; 70 x 50 cm
p. 43: Episode 4 - Page Turner
p. 44: Episode 3 - Across the Street
p. 45: Episode 1 - Angler Fish



Across

- 3. Where would Ahmed Aydin rather spend his summer?
- 5. Barbecue in South Africa is called...
- 8. Woman, Life...
- 9. Nickname of the animal Lea hunted in England
- 11. Jasmin's favourite book is by Henry
- 13. Artist of "Warm Meal": Jona...
- 14. "Unburdened by Emotion": V2, L1, Word 2
- 16. Animal in Julia Schilowski's artwork
- 17. Author of "The Green Bench": Franziska...
- 18. Mr Kullmann loves this river
- 19. Branch of linguistics

Down

- 1. What inspired Joost's artworks? The ... Archives
- 2. What does Ms Larkin nerd out about?
- 4. Author of 1984: George...
- 6. Sandra Effinghausen's middle name
- 7. Temperature of the water that Kathrin swam in
- 10. City Michel lived in during his time abroad
- 11. What city did Dr. Gasser grow up in?
- 12. Annemarie describes her favourite book as...
- 14. Poem by Siena Feldkamp
- 15. Term discussed in Jonas Goeze's Essay





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