

An abstract painting of a person sitting on a bench in a room with tall, colorful columns. The person is wearing a blue and yellow patterned jacket and is looking down at a book or paper. The columns are painted in various colors like white, yellow, orange, and red, with thick brushstrokes. The overall style is expressive and modern.

AREA 41

THE ANGLOSPHERE

ISSUE 01 | 2024

An excerpt from: *Am not I Your Katherine? or Shakespeare's Secret*
by **Thomas Kullmann**

A conversation with Robert Murphy: *Roses, Hamlet and a Childhood in Cyprus*

And many stories, poems, artworks and more by students

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

As members of the English department at the IfAA, we're excited to introduce a magazine that embodies the unique spirit of our college experience. The aim of Area 41 is to mark and maintain a space where the voices and creative identities of students and faculty can be shared and celebrated.

This first issue offers a range of content that reflects the diversity of the members of our department. From thought-provoking essays to captivating short stories, from poems to pictures, each piece has been curated to inspire and empower. We want Area 41 to be a source of artistic motivation for contributors and readers alike.

Area 41 is a community. Whether through submitting a fictional tale, sharing your experiences abroad, or offering resonance for others' artistic expression, it is our magazine and everyone who interfaces with and through Area 41 is an integral part.

As you explore the written and visual works, we hope you'll find moments of joy, inspiration, commiseration, insight and connection. Thank you for joining us! We are already eagerly anticipating what - after this edition is "digested" - you'll share with us in your submissions next semester!



Warm regards,

Linda Wright,
Luca Sophie Hillbrands,
Kathrin Klinker,
Kaja Lisann Pawellek,
Jasmin Magdalena Reich,
Xenia Renge,
Maja Rolfsen,
Lisa-Marie Südbeck.

[Handwritten signatures of the listed individuals]



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Note:

Cover art painted by Luca Sophie Hillbrands.

Space for reader ideas, drafts, autographs and doodles



**Excerpt from: *Am not I Your Katherine? or Shakespeare's Secret*
An unpublished novel by Thomas Kullmann**

Chapter 2

Los Angeles, Leicester Hotel, 5 April 2016, 11 a.m.

“I proceed to a summary: As we have seen the Renaissance was a most thoroughly patriarchal movement, destined to curtail any female potential for development and self-realization. All over Europe the spreading of schools of Latin, from which girls were permanently excluded, safeguarded male ownership of cultural capital. Virginia Woolf graphically explains the fate which awaited Shakespeare's sister in the cultural scene of London. As shown by treatises on courtliness, women were invariably assigned an ornamental role, to alleviate the stress involved in male power games. As shown by conduct books, female sexuality was kept under tight control by fathers and husbands; on unmarried girls virginity was strictly enforced, so that on the part of the women there was no sexual autonomy whatsoever. With both rich and poor alike, the position of women was that of slaves, forced to be subservient to the desires and wishes of men, which inevitably brought along the most abject forms of self-denial.

“I would like to conclude by outlining my motivation for undertaking this research, conscious of the fact that there is not, has never been, and can never be what some of our colleagues are pleased to call disinterested scholarship. My motivation can best be described as retrospective anger. Looking at the literary and historical sources I cannot help feeling sad and angry at the plight of my sisters of four or five hundred years ago. Doing research, reading papers and publishing articles allows me to vent this anger, as well as to determine my own personal standpoint. While it is true that I enjoy a good position in society, congenial working conditions and a good salary, I feel it is a duty owed to my sisters long gone, as well as to all my underprivileged sisters now living, to give voice to this retrospective anger and to utter a warning to never get taken in by the complacent discourses prevailing, discourses informed by the patriarchal system, but to work on establishing a feminine identity which needs to be an emotional counterpart or antithesis to these discourses. That's what I had to say. Thank you.”

The speaker cast a challenging look round the auditorium. With her short-cropped blond hair and athletic body, which betrayed her Scandinavian origins, she appeared almost beautiful to Frederick, the young scholar from Germany. The polite round of applause, however, all too well expressed the speaker's apparent failure to rouse her audience to revolutionary action. Some of the listeners might have agreed, others disagreed with what she had said. None of them, however, were in any way surprised by the aggressive phrasing of her talk. Most of them rather strove to hide their boredom. The chair, as usual, invited questions.

[...]

[A] female member of the audience now took the microphone:

“I certainly agree with all the points you have made; I only wonder if you are not doing an injustice to those women of the past who in spite of all the restrictions prevailing produced remarkable achievements. Queen Elizabeth and Mary Queen of Scots can certainly not be called slaves; and Sir Philip Sidney would not have written either *Astrophil and Stella* or *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* without the inspiration offered by women, Penelope Rich and his sister, the Countess of Pembroke.”

This time the speaker appeared to be prepared to provide a thorough-going answer: “I am certainly aware of the achievements of the women you mention, but what they did does not invalidate my points, as none of them made any effort to change the position of women in

society. When I am furious about what happened in the past, not the least part of my fury is reserved for those women who insistently and unashamedly supported male hegemony and did their utmost to play up to and stabilize the patriarchal system, like Queen Elizabeth, like Mary Queen of Scots, and like the Countess of Pembroke.”

There was quite a bit of murmuring in the audience now. Many of the listeners evidently felt that the speaker was going too far and that her arguments began to be self-defeating. The chair determinedly cut the murmurs short by announcing: “Last question, please.”

A tall scholar from Germany rose. His brown curly hair, his full beard and his slow movements made him look rather wild and rendered him an imposing presence. His ostentatious maleness certainly constituted an alien element in an audience largely composed of women. “I do not wish to take issue with what you said about patriarchy,” he said in his bass voice, then stopped for a moment, long enough to indicate that he might have taken issue if he had chosen to do so. “I would only like to ask you if you are aware that Virginia Woolf’s account does not correspond to what we know about Joan Shakespeare, William’s sister.”

The speaker readily answered, apparently quite at ease with the question: “Woolf certainly did not wish to refer to any particular person; what she had in mind was a hypothetical woman as gifted as Shakespeare was who had the audacity to try her hand at writing plays and poetry. I am quite aware that Joan Shakespeare did not do so, however gifted she may have been.”

The German professor nodded: “Thank you.” The chair brought the session to a close and expressed her happy anticipation of a cup of coffee in the foyer. Together with Frederick, the professor made his way there and joined the queue in front of the coffee machine. Before they could get hold of a cup, however, they were accosted by a young woman whose nameplate identified her as “Gwendolyn Fitzalban, Euphoria State University”. “Oh, Professor Ravenstein, I am so glad to see you. How did you like the talk?”

Ravenstein cast an appreciative look at the young woman and waited a few seconds before replying. Evidently he needed the time for reflection: “Well, I agree with all she said, but still, it appears to me somewhat dated. Feminists were using these arguments back in the 1970s and 80s.”

“I couldn’t agree more, Professor Ravenstein; besides it appears rather stupid to me to be angry at what happened more than 400 years ago. And it must be terrible going round all the time being angry. I tend to believe that people who are angry all the time must lead rather unhappy lives.”

“Well, I guess the anger is mostly for show, because this is what people associate her with – by the way, would you mind calling me Alfons? And may I call you Gwendolyn?”

“Oh, certainly – Alfons.”

“And this young colleague is my assistant, Frederick.”

“Nice to meet you.”

“Nice to meet you.”

“And how did you like the talk?” Gwendolyn addressed Frederick.

“Well, what I got out of it is that we should indeed put a greater focus on the women living in Shakespeare’s time, and their contributions to culture. Looking at Shakespeare’s heroines, however, I cannot imagine that women’s scope of action and influence was as limited as she claimed.”

They had by now reached the coffee machine. Ravenstein handed the first cup to Gwendolyn before he took one himself; Frederick patiently waited for his turn.

When the three had selected one of the little tables Frederick took up the thread: “I mean, young women like Juliet, Beatrice, Rosalind, aren’t they rather independent and self-assured? Doesn’t Juliet claim, and obtain, sexual autonomy in spite of the restrictions imposed on her by patriarchal society? And don’t Beatrice and Rosalind even lay down rules to others on how to behave in a courtly environment? Rosalind has to teach Orlando how to talk to a girl.”

“But you need to take into account,” Ravenstein interposed, “that these heroines were played by boy actors – and I must admit they appear to me rather boyish than ladylike. Ladies were probably supposed to speak and behave much more modestly.”

“How do we know, actually?” Gwendolyn interposed, evidently not voicing a criticism but simply asking for information.

Ravenstein hesitated. “Well, we don’t, really,” he finally conceded, “but there are the conduct books –” His voice petered out; it appeared to Frederick that Ravenstein had not read the conduct books the speaker had alluded to; Frederick hadn’t either, but he had studied one relevant text in some detail, so he grasped his advantage:

“I think Shakespeare could not have represented women on stage the way he does if there had not been some kind of correlative in the real world –there is a large section on gentlewomen in Castiglione’s *Courtier*; and in spite of all the speaker just said, Castiglione evidently expected them to hold their own – and even to arbitrate in the disputes of men.”

Conference coffee-breaks are rather like Renaissance courts, Frederick reflected, but it would certainly be better to keep this idea to himself.

“I must admit that I have rather neglected Renaissance women, as Renaissance men interest me so much,” Gwendolyn answered, casting Alfons Ravenstein a look which seemed to indicate that her interest in men was not limited to those who lived in the sixteenth century. Frederick noticed a certain sexual tension. “You know about my hero – Richard Barnfield,” Gwendolyn added, looking at Frederick, who had not heard about her interest in Barnfield before.

Frederick was surprised. This sounded interesting. Barnfield was the one Elizabethan poet apart from Shakespeare who wrote sonnets addressed to a young man, and his poems contained more blatant sexual innuendo than could be found in any of the Shakespearean sonnets. “I don’t know much about him, I’m afraid, but I’d love to hear more – you must tell me about your research.”

Alfons Ravenstein interposed: “We need to rush off to our respective sessions. But why don’t we all meet tonight for dinner so that you can tell us all about it – that is, if you don’t mind sharing your findings with us. Would you be free at 8 p.m.?”

“Oh yes, certainly; which place?” Gwendolyn was obviously pleased.

“Wait a moment – I think there is a choice between Chinese and Italian.” Ravenstein was looking at Gwendolyn. “Which would you prefer?”

“Oh, Italian, by all means. My grandmother had an Italian name, so I think there is Italian blood in my veins.” Gwendolyn smiled in way which Frederick could not interpret, giving a slight toss to her long black hair. Frederick had to admit that her assertion carried some plausibility.

“All right, see you tonight at eight, at the Assisi Restaurant.”

When Gwendolyn was out of sight, Alfons remarked to Frederic: “I am really fascinated by Gwendolyn; both by her looks and her personality. But this Barnfield idea is rubbish. She thinks she has found evidence that Barnfield is the rival poet mentioned in Shakespeare’s sonnets. As if there weren’t so many other claimants. And as if we could ever find out.”

Gwendolyn Fitzalban, Frederick reflected, was certainly beautiful, with a certain aura of the mysterious. Her looks reminded Frederick of Mrs. Ravenstein, who, of course, was in

Germany with the Ravenstein children. The same tall stature, black hair, thoughtful smile – or rather, she appeared as a younger version of the professor’s wife, an Annette Ravenstein of ten years ago.

Dinner tonight would definitely be interesting.



Artwork: “Colourful Me”, by Marleen Eggers

Short report on the Osnabrück University Shakespeare Theatre Group's production of William Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* by Xenia Renge

On June 19th, 2024, the Shakespeare Theatre Group of the University Osnabrück performed its second annual play: *The Merchant of Venice*.

This Shakespearian play is about love, friendship and betrayal, revenge and mercy, capitalism and Anti-Judaism – topics which are still relevant today, well over 400 years later.

Since summer 2023, Prof. Dr. Thomas Kullmann has taken on the responsibility of looking for English students willing to participate in one play selected by him once a year. Motivations for participation include: Credit points, experience in acting and gaining control over one's own voice, to, in his own words, be able to speak loudly and clearly – a skill surely useful for future teachers!

For this year's selection process, the call to action started in the beginning of the year. Students willing to participate in this theatre project could notify him by messaging him via e-mail or StudIP. From then on, the theatre group had at least one two-hour session a week where everyone got to know the play, read different lines out loud and decided which role fit them best. Professor Kullmann then assigned everyone roles, organized costumes and props, and set up a rehearsal schedule.

Many actors took on multiple roles, as did Prof. Kullmann himself. He often had to switch between Launcelot and different servants.

The cast of this year's performance was as follows:

Antonio (the merchant) – Thomas Moro
Bassanio (a young nobleman) – Bjarne Groß
Graziano – Linda Berghaeuser
Lorenzo – Zoe Hack
Solanio – Leah Schomaker
Salerio – Jill Lutterbeck
Duke – Jens Rohlmann
Shylock (a moneylender) – Xenia Renge
Jessica (Shylock's daughter) – Jill Lutterbeck
Tubal – Thomas Kullmann
Portia – Luisa Herbers
Nerissa – Leah Schomaker
Servant, messenger – Thomas Kullmann
Prince of Morocco – Jens Rohlmann
Prince of Aragon – Thomas Moro
Director – Thomas Kullmann

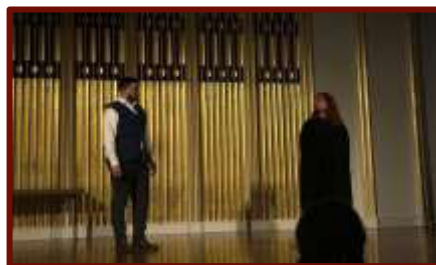


Photo 1: Bassanio (Bjarne Groß) and Shylock (Xenia Renge); Photo 2: Group photo

The premiere and only showing of *The Merchant of Venice* turned out to be a big success. The over 100 people present thoroughly enjoyed the play and even laughed out loud in the appropriate places. The participants of the play had a lot of fun performing, and will surely not forget about this experience.

Some elements of this endeavour then also made their way outside the halls of the Schloss Aula, as one of Linda Wright's ALP Speaking classes took it upon themselves to create modern versions of some of the most important scenes of the play in class the very next day.

Here's to creative endeavours and community within the IfAA!

From Pakistan to Germany

An experience abroad by Ahmad Naseer

While studying in Pakistan, I was motivated by my lecturers to seek exposure to international academic environments. After comparing various countries, I selected Germany and successfully secured admission to Osnabrück University. This is where the hurdles began. Although I had an admission letter from a German university and met all the requirements for a visa, my appointment at the German embassy in Islamabad was canceled three times. This disappointed me greatly. Many students wrote emails to the embassy in hopes of resolving such issues, but all was in vain. Unfortunately, this meant that I was unable to go to Germany in time for the start of the semester. However, the Osnabrück University compensated me and deferred my admission. While I dealt with these problems with the embassy one and a half years passed, but I was determined and refused to accept defeat. I tried my luck a fourth time. I stayed up the whole night and applied within the first five minutes when the registration for visa appointments opened. After that, I still had to wait more than four months for my visa interview. After the interview, I waited 30 days and finally got my visa for after trying for two years.

Before arriving in Germany, I wrote emails to the university regarding accommodation issues. They sent me the details of some dormitories. I contacted everyone I could, but I didn't get any positive responses. After I arrived in Germany, the first issue I faced was how to navigate the transport system, but the bigger challenge was finding any shelter. I applied to the *Studentenwerk* as soon as I learned about the procedure, but had to wait. I also made efforts on my own. I found some relevant social apps, and went by foot to a real estate agency, but the results were the same.

During my first two months in Germany, I didn't have a room. However, I needed an address to register at city hall and complete my documentation, which affected my ability to manage my expenses. As international students, we have to submit evidence of a certain amount of euros (€11,300) to show that we can afford the cost of living, but to access this amount we require a bank account, and for opening a bank account we need an address and tax identification number. I informed the International Office to gain their supervision in this matter; they also searched but didn't find any room. The International Office referred me to an organization that helps students with these issues. I applied and during the interview, I came to know that they help students financially. That was not what I was looking for. I made it clear that I needed only a place to stay so I could register myself and access my bank account. After I'd waited for one week, they gave me a piece of advice: "You came here unprepared; you should go back to your home country." I think anyone could understand I felt about that.

I put my faith in God and decided not to leave. I only knew two people. They live far away from Osnabrück, so for the first two months, I commuted from Magdeburg or Berlin to Osnabrück to attend classes. Eventually, I found a generous Pakistani person who helped me out, and I moved to Lotte temporarily.

After waiting for six months, I described my situation again to the *Studentenwerk* again, and finally, after two weeks, they allocated me a room. Things then started to settle down. Before that, I was unable to focus on my studies. As I didn't know anyone here, I didn't share what I was going through, not even with my family. Many international students don't get a chance to share their experiences, I am very thankful to be able to do so in this magazine.

Caving in Derbyshire

An experience abroad by Jan-Hendrik Voß

The Peak District, a national park located in the heart of England, is notorious for its abandoned mines and complex cave systems. Romans, miners and children had to mine lead, copper and other minerals. Most of the mines were closed in the 1980s under the reign of the “Iron Lady,” Margaret Thatcher. The impact of this closing is still visible today in the form of abandoned buildings, rusty old mining towers and pub stories from your local grandparents. The presence of thousands of cave systems has given rise to a popular activity in this area: Caving, the exploration of cave systems. Many outdoor companies and clubs in Derbyshire specialize in conducting caving trips with tourists.

Thick fog, rain and wet limestone welcomed me when I stepped outside the van to see Giant’s Hole, the first cave of today’s trip. Nothing unusual for a December day. Our guide, a slim middle-aged guy and caving enthusiast of ten years from Derbyshire, provided us with wetsuits, wellies, helmets with lights, worn belts and a large backpack filled with ropes. “Ey duck, put the belt around your belly. Makes it easier to drag you out,” the guide said confidently in his thick Derbyshire dialect. “Sure, mate,” I said and wrapped the belt as tightly as I could around my waist. The plan for today was a 6-hour caving trip covering two caves, namely Giant’s Hole and Carlswark Cavern.

We were a humble group of four: the guide, a young couple from London visiting their family, and me, a 24-year-old English student from Osnabrück completing my semester abroad. We made some cheerful jokes about being trapped in a cave and that we might need some butter to free us. “Let’s go, folks,” the guide interrupted our chat. We slung our backpacks over our shoulders and followed him like ducklings who stumble after their mother.

The cave entrance was quite large, and at first we were still able to walk upright. We encountered some stunning waterfalls and the guide showed us fossils that peeked out of the limestone (crinoids, if you’re into fossils). After a more or less comfortable walk, we reached the first difficult passage and the guide asked us to stop. He introduced us to this part and explained that it would be a tight vertical squeeze. He mentioned that he had done this part with some fellows who had panicked and told us that the most important thing to get through to the other side was our mind.

I thought, “Yeah, it can’t be that hard. The first caving trip I did two months ago was really easy and I don’t have a problem with tight rooms anymore.” The guide happily went forth, I followed, and after me came the couple from London. The beginning was quite easy; we could walk comfortably. The guide was cheerfully crawling ahead of us and easily squeezed through the passage. It got narrower, tighter and really uncomfortable (trust me). I was forced to bend my back and lower my legs to fit through the tightest passage. Elegantly, like an eel, I tried to drag myself with the tips of my fingers against the walls through this dark and slippery chasm. But it didn’t work. I was stuck. I couldn’t move.

Suddenly, I felt the pressure of the wall against my belly, the ice-cold water in my wellies, the water droplets on my helmet. It felt as though I wasn’t able to move my head anymore – which stemmed from the fact that I couldn’t. I felt how abruptly I lost my confidence and how a feeling of panic, like a crippling shudder gripping my stomach, emerged and took control of me. I had the urge to scream and to run out of the cave to get some air but that of course wasn’t possible. In front of me, there was the guide somewhere, and behind me, there was the young

woman from London, laughing and giggling while she effortlessly squeezed her thin frame through the cave. I tried to calm myself down by breathing as slowly and consciously as I possibly could. And it had only been ten minutes in the cave!

I couldn't end the whole trip that way. Somehow, I managed to call the guide and he came back to me, took my hand and dragged me out to the other side. My knees shivered, my heart raced wildly, and the guide told me that being stuck is often a result of being panicked. He explained, with a somewhat bizarre fascination, something about a faster heart rate, higher blood pressure and a swelling of one's body. According to him, it would only last for thirty minutes though, because then you would calm down, get back to a regular heart rate, and to normal blood pressure to release the swelling in your body and to continue caving. "F***," I thought, "this was only the beginning of the first cave, and we still have Carlswark Cavern ahead of us." It took around twenty more minutes for me to realize that I actually felt more confident. Luckily, I had already managed the tightest squeeze of the trip and with this experience, I was able to manage the other squeezes in Giant's Hole and later in Carlswark Cavern quite easily.

Would I go caving again? Hell yeah, but only with an experienced guide and with some mental preparation. Would you like to go caving? Check out the mines and the beautiful scenery of Derbyshire. It's a different kind of getting in touch with the UK. You will walk on old industrial traces, try to understand old lads with a strong Derbyshire accent while having a pint, and most importantly you will get a raw insight into the life of British people far away from the famous and crowded tourist attractions.



Photo of Jan-Hendrik Voß while caving



Photo by Jan-Hendrik Voß



Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski

My Salvation in Times of Need

A short story by Lisa-Marie Südbeck

Silently, he gazed at the old beech tree before him. He wondered how old it might be. How many years had it been growing in this place? How many students it has seen come—and go again? Today was the first time he looked at it. The first of many times, for from today onward, he would also be one of the students at the university. Mike glanced down at his phone. He noted down the building where the introductory event would take place. However, he had long since forgotten which room he needed to go to. And in his rush that morning—he had overslept and nearly missed the bus—he left the piece of paper with the information for this week on his desk.

A cool autumn wind blew past him. Above him, the sky began to darken. A brown leaf drifted to his feet. He would definitely be late. But did it really make a difference? In the end, he was pretty sure he wouldn't have the courage to speak to any of the other students anyway. "Everyone starts anew at the university, just like you. Don't forget that", his mother had said to him before he moved out, the evening before he started his new life. One filled with doubt and uncertainty. And there was one thing he had realized since moving out: he was not a particularly independent person. In school, he had been an outsider. The images of his classmates throwing his things out the window, scribbling in his books, or pelting him with objects still lingered in his mind. All because he had argued with the wrong classmate back then. After a while, he started to hide and stopped talking to others. Deep down, he knew it hadn't been a good idea. That you couldn't make friends if you hid away. But back then, it had been the easiest solution. The one with the least consequences.

At least that's what Mike originally thought. Now that he was older, he knew better. Those who don't muster the courage to change things remain alone and suffer in silence. This was why his studies had become a great hope for him. A new beginning. A new self. A chance. And that's why his studies had also become his greatest fear. If he didn't make friends here, where and when would he? Mike shook his head sadly. He was starting to doubt himself again. He couldn't afford that. He had already learned so much since moving to this city. Made so many mistakes. So many mishaps that ultimately made him stronger and enriched him with experience. This time, he couldn't falter. He had longed for this chance over the last five school years. He took a deep breath, counted to three, and then lifted his head. Today would be the day everything changed.

Mike was about to dash off when he remembered that he had no idea where he needed to go. "Damn it!" he cursed. He looked around, but aside from a few passersby and what he guessed were upperclassmen, he couldn't see anyone who could help him. Grumbling and cursing, he turned back to the beech tree. He was annoyed at his own forgetfulness. In his frustration, a crazy idea came to him. He laughed desperately, pointed to the path behind him, and began speaking to the tree: "You wouldn't happen to know where I need to go, would you? At least make sure I'm not standing here alone." For a few seconds, there was silence, then Mike shook his head at himself. Had he really just asked a tree for help? He urgently needed more sleep. Or coffee. Coffee sounded like a better solution. If he couldn't find his room, it might be best to head to the cafeteria and get a cup. A strong wind arose. He hadn't noticed before, but the sky had significantly darkened since he had arrived. It would probably start to rain soon. He should leave before getting soaked in the rain.

Just as he was about to turn to go, a particularly strong gust of wind blew a piece of paper into his face and then past him into the branches of the beech tree. What was that? Before

he had time to think about it, he heard a deep voice call out behind him: “No! Come back!” Mike turned around. Running towards him was a young man who was quite a bit taller than Mike himself. He had blond, slicked-back hair and wore a frayed brown vest and a thick woollen scarf whose ends almost whipped into his face as he ran. “Damn it, where did it go?” the young man looked around desperately. Without thinking, Mike called out to him: “You wouldn’t happen to be looking for a piece of paper, would you?” The other man turned to him, relieved. The relief didn’t last long, though, because Mike silently pointed to the tree crown behind him. The other’s eyes travelled up the trunk until they saw the paper. Then he groaned. “Damn. Now I don’t know where I need to go. Everything is going wrong today.” Mike didn’t know why, but the statement made him laugh. Perhaps it was the absurdity of the moment or the fact that he now knew he wasn’t the only one feeling like everything was going wrong for him. Mike’s and the other man’s eyes met. For a moment, Mike feared the other might think he was making fun of him and get angry. Instead, he began to laugh as well.

After that, everything seemed to fall into place. The other – John, as Mike learned during the conversation – was a freshman like himself. The paper stuck in the tree crown was the same information sheet that Mike had left on his desk. And as if fate had willed it, John had also overslept, burnt his breakfast toast, couldn’t find his student ID, and then missed his bus. At least he had thought to bring the sheet to find the room for the event, but now he couldn’t reach it. A look at his watch told Mike they were already twenty minutes late for the event anyway. Responsible as they both were, they made the only sensible decision: skip the event and instead find a cozy spot with a cup of coffee. Outside, rain now was beating against the windowpanes. Mike, however, barely noticed it. He was too engrossed in the conversation with John, which had been going on for over two hours. The event was long over, and they missed the following one, as well. At least they would attend the last one of the day, for John remembered the building, an old warehouse. Mike was glad when they made their way there together. As they passed the beech tree, Mike had a strange thought. Hadn’t he asked the tree for help? And wasn’t it John’s paper, blown into the tree crown by a random gust of wind, that had brought them together? No. That couldn’t be. Just absurd. As if a higher power could read his thoughts, a light breeze blew the paper from the tree crown directly to Mike’s feet. Perhaps he should have chosen sleep over coffee after all.

Silently, he gazed at the old beech tree before him. He wondered how old it might be. How many years had it been growing in this place? How many students had it seen come – and go again? Today was the last time he looked at it. The last of many times, for he would leave the university for good. The sun was shining, and it was pleasantly warm. So many years and beautiful memories were tied to this place. Mike bit his lip and held back tears. He had done it. He had successfully completed his master’s degree. Yet he looked back wistfully at his time here. He would terribly miss university life. He had almost forgotten his very first day here until he happened to decide to sit under the beech tree today. Perhaps everything back then had indeed been fate. Or maybe he just wanted to believe that – as ridiculous as it sounded – a tree had come to his rescue. He chuckled contentedly. Then he heard John and a few other friends calling behind him: “Mike! Where are you? The best future English teachers are waiting for their last member to come and celebrate with them.” That made Mike laugh, and he called back that he would hurry. As he ran to them, he turned one last time to the beech tree: “Thank you, my salvation in times of need.”

poem [submitted after the deadline had passed]

A poem by Maja Rolfsen

I procrastinate
and hyper fixate
on trivial things

last exam season
I thought there was reason
in reading all of Bridgerton
linguistics and
literary history
just didn't seem
as appealing

at my desk
in my pyjamas
I thought a lot
and did little

I wasn't able
to say
STOP
this is not what
I Need To Revise

in the end
after taking weeks
of scholarly leave

my back ached
my days were crammed
my nights were sleepless
my self-inflicted punishment.



Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski



Memes: No title, created by students in "PLP: Global English"

Coffee

A poem by Victoria Stembrik

Before you start,
wait a second,
better wait more,
or don't talk at all,
can't bear you now.

Just listen to that aromatic sound,
can you hear the smell?
Taste the view of that dark gold,
view its different strengths.

Let me inhale it,
eyes closed,
enjoy the moment,
my welcomed addiction,
I'm nothing without you.



Artwork: "Coffee", by Kaja Lisann Pawellek

The Balcony

A short story by Kaja Lisann Pawellek

“Can you hand in your manuscript by the end of the month?”, the shrill voice screeched out from the phone into Elira Winters’ eardrums.

“Of course, it’ll be on your office table shortly,” Elira mumbled into the phone as she kicked her black combat boots off her feet and into the corner by her apartment door. The mauve paint on the walls has already chipped a bit and several jackets and an umbrella were scattered all across the floor.

“Thank you, Elira. I’m sure you’ve come up with something great. I’ll see you on Monday then!”, the voice in Elira’s phone answered before quickly hanging up.

The line went dead. *Unfortunately, you will*, Elira thought to herself. She sighed and threw her coat on top of the pile of others. The satisfying sound of plopping cork from a freshly opened wine bottle made her heart skip a beat as Elira sat outside on her balcony pouring herself a cool glass. As soon as the dry alcohol coated her tongue and explored her tastebuds, she immediately felt relieved. Work was demanding an awful lot of her lately and she was concerned that her manuscript wouldn’t make it to her publisher’s office in time. Automatically, she reached for her laptop, opened it and looked at a blank page. The cursor blinked relentlessly – a perpetual reminder of the non-existent progress she’d made on her newest novel. If she didn’t want to search for a new publisher, Elira had to think of an outstanding, bestselling story soon in order to stay relevant as a romance author. But how can she be able to sweep her readers off their feet with a breathtakingly beautiful love story when nearly all romance had left her own life entirely? How can she breathe life into relatable characters when all she’d done lately was sit on her balcony being a people watcher on the brink of alcoholism? As a matter of fact, writer’s block was the only thing exuding persistence in Elira’s life right now.

Living on the second floor of an apartment complex in a fairly big city with roughly 200,000 inhabitants had made it incredibly easy for Elira to spy on people’s everyday lives. Elira’s balcony was almost the highest in the area. From her balcony she could watch over an entire backyard which was shared by all of the apartment buildings nearby. It was as if this backyard with its several parking spaces, sheds, terraces, balconies and brick lots was the heart of all buildings and a spot for human hangouts. Because it was so secluded from the main roads and the hectic city life, being on the balcony and seeing the rawest versions of humans in their own homes had an outstandingly intimate feel.

A resounding high-pitched laughter ripped Elira from her own thoughts and brought her back into the present. Her eyes followed the sound of the laughter. It was coming from a middle-aged woman with long voluminous black hair that cascaded down her back. The woman was sitting on a slightly lower balcony on the right side across from Elira’s. Elira could smell a mixture of burnt coal and spices coming from cooked meat and vegetables on a grill on that same balcony. Another woman in the process of turning over the hot food with tongs looked back at the black-haired woman and chimed in with her laughter. Elira loved how light-hearted these people sat together. It seemed like a totally carefree moment to her. One balcony below, the sound of splashing water on soil startled Elira. An old lady began watering her outdoor plants while humming a sweet melody that seemed oddly familiar. It reminded Elira of a lullaby her mother used to sing to her at bedtime when she was a child. Her eyes wandered a little to the left and spotted a couple tanning on their balcony. Located one apartment above this couple, a naked young man stood in front of the window, the curtains shut only halfway revealing bits and parts of his body. The person quickly put on a shirt and disappeared inside of their apartment,

the quickness of the sudden motion giving the bright curtains a slight swing. Elira let her eyes wander around a bit longer. There was a man heavily breathing as he worked out in the parking lot, several other people were playing some sort of drinking game on the lawn, an old man hung his wet clothes up on a washing line, another middle-aged woman brought her bike into a shed and locked it up, the bike screeching as she did so, and a big skyscraper in the distance was overshadowing the whole scene.

Elira closed her eyes for a bit after she had taken another sip from her half-empty wine glass. She could hear the engines of cars passing by and honking in the distance. She could also hear laughter, mumbling and coughing, a passing train in the distance, birds chirping, dogs barking, some sort of liquid being poured and fire which was fuelling a hot air balloon that flew over the apartment complex. It was times like these Elira wondered when exactly her life had gotten so dull and meaningless. She was surrounded by cheerfulness, love and bits of nature and the only thing she did was sit on her balcony and observe other people's lives. Her life was a tragedy and the only thing she did was wallow over a free-spirited life she longed for.

One week later, Elira was sitting on her balcony again. The sound of police sirens summoned her outside because she was interested and concerned about what was going on. An old man that lived on the ground floor had been found dead in his apartment after having lain there for over a month. Elira assumed he had no loved ones – just like her – and that must have been why his body had been decomposing in his own apartment unnoticed by anyone. Was this the kind of fate that would meet her as well when she died? At least she did not have that special person in her life who checked up on her regularly and loved her unconditionally. As Elira observed the spectacle downstairs in the parking lot, one particular person stood out to her. Despite there being such a scene with police questioning direct neighbours and bystanders chatting agitatedly, this one woman did not seem to notice any of it. Elira could see through the woman's window and what she witnessed baffled her. Behind that window, the woman was sitting sideways on a stool, her eyes focused on a canvas placed on an easel in front of her. With a concentrated look and several paint splatters on her face the woman seemed to focus only on the painting right in front of her. Her brush strokes were gentle and still decidedly placed – full of passion and emotion which was certainly lacking in Elira's own life right now. The woman amazed her. Then, all of a sudden, their eyes locked. Elira smiled shyly and the woman flashed a big toothy smile and waved enthusiastically. Color rushed to Elira's cheeks, filling them with warmth. She quickly broke the eye contact and rushed inside. This woman was everything Elira wanted to be and more. She truly admired her.

During the evening hours that day, Elira's doorbell rang. Not having expected any company on a weekday evening, Elira hesitated as her hand gripped the door handle and slowly opened the door. Outside stood the female painter Elira had watched from her balcony earlier.

"Hey", the voice of the painter echoed through the hallway, "I've just cooked this lasagna and I thought maybe you'd like some? I'm Aria, by the way."

"Sure, I'd like that... but why of all doors did you come here? We don't even live in the same building", Elira's voice replied in slight confusion.

Aria's hand awkwardly scratched the back of her head as she said: "I've been watching you the past few days from my window. I fancied how easy-going you appeared and that's why I've decided to paint you."

Aria grabbed a large and painted piece of thick paper and showed it to Elira. Elira's toes curled inside her socks and warmth streamed from her core into her legs. The simple act of standing was suddenly difficult. The whole time she had been living there, Elira always admired the people around her. She was so hyper focused on her surroundings that she never once

considered that another person could ever admire *her*. She was so used to being the observer – the artist – that she had never realized she herself could become a muse.

“I’m Elira, by the way”, Elira grinned shyly and gestured for her guest to come inside. She then closed the door with a kick of her right foot, leaving the sound of a loud bang that echoed through the hallway.



Artwork: “*Birth of Ahmed*”, by Onur Emre Cubukcu



Artwork: “*Cherry Wine*”, by Kaja Lisann Pawellek



Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski

The Space Beneath the Stars

A poem by Kathrin Klinker

In the cold light of the winter sun
and the warmth of midnight's moon,
through the storm's quite gentle touch,
it was a flower
that started to bloom.

It slowly crawled through deadly earth,
broke through the snow at last,
turned up its head
in deep despair
to finally see the stars.

They were so fair in darkest night,
and to the sprout it seemed
that even though
it'd just been born,
all sorrow was redeemed.

And on the hill down by the lake,
a tiny blossom starts to grow,
to reach the stars
that seem so far
with so much space below.



Artwork: "Flower Rush", by Kathrin Klinker

Windows at Night

A poem by Marleen Rake

To take a look at windows at night
to catch a glimpse of what's going on inside

From red to blue to yellow and then green
fleeing moments often left unseen

Every window full of intricate stories to be told
only for the people inside to unfold

Left outside wondering about the lives being lived
in our fast-paced society it feels like a gift

To slow down and watch could be considered a crime
with so much happening in such a short amount of time

Being so close to other people's lives can be an intrusion
but to be clear and solve the confusion

I'm just looking at windows at night



Artwork: "Reaching for the Sky", by Theresa Lammers

Anime's Appeal for Mature Audiences

An essay by Victoria Stembrik

Anime, a style of Japanese animation, has gained great popularity worldwide. While most people perceive anime as cartoons for children, those who give it a chance quickly realise that the different plots often deal with dark subjects that resonate with adult viewers. This essay aims to prove that anime is often targeted towards adults, as it includes cruel deaths, depicts torture, and tackles very complex topics. By examining specific examples, we will gain insight into the appeal of anime to mature audiences.

One aspect of anime that appeals to adult viewers as the target group is the portrayal of cruel deaths. Unlike conventional animations like "Tom and Jerry" or "Bugs Bunny and Looney Tunes," anime does not shy away from exploring the emotional impact of death and its consequences. One notable example is the anime series "Death Note," which prominently features multiple cruel deaths. The series raises questions about the morality of capital punishment and its implications for justice. The main character in "Death Note" gains the ability to kill people by writing their names in a notebook and begins using it without hesitation to eliminate known criminals. While he claims to serve justice, he garners a following, reduces Japan's crime rate, and increasingly crosses moral boundaries by targeting those who obstruct his plan. The entire plot is replete with manipulations that only adults can fully comprehend without experiencing trauma.

Another factor that makes anime appealing to adult viewers and inappropriate for children is its depiction of torture, including the dark narratives surrounding the tortured characters. The storytelling delves into the haunting experiences the characters endure, resulting in psychological trauma that alters their entire personality. An example that explores torture and its consequences is the torment of Ken Kaneki, the main character in "Tokyo Ghoul". In addition to addressing themes such as justice, death, and cannibalism, "Tokyo Ghoul" includes brutal scenes portraying torture. Ken is captured and bound to a chair, completely defenceless against his sadistic torturer, who inflicts pain for personal amusement. Despite being a peaceful and timid individual, Ken chooses not to escape the torture as he refuses to harm anyone, including his tormentor. Consequently, he endures agonizing acts, such as having his nails pulled out or being subjected to a poisoned insect that enters his body through his ear, causing internal damage. Eventually, Ken reaches a breaking point, transforming into a deranged individual and ultimately killing his torturer. This scene marks a significant shift in both his character and physical appearance.

Anime often delves into complex topics that demand a certain level of intellectual and emotional maturity to fully comprehend the actions and their consequences. With themes encompassing wars, political manoeuvres, and manipulation, one should not underestimate the depth explored in certain anime plots. "Attack on Titan," currently one of the most popular anime series, serves as an example, incorporating a multitude of complex themes. It delves into subjects such as death, betrayal, war, and racism, all intertwined within different perceptions of freedom until one of these perceptions leads to the portrayal of genocide as the only solution to achieve ultimate freedom.

Despite the popular belief that anime is primarily intended for a young audience, the portrayal of death, torture, and complexity distinguishes anime as a medium that caters to both adult and young viewers, depending on the genre. Through narratives that challenge societal norms and embrace complexity, anime often appeals to adult viewers, debunking the notion

that it is exclusively for young people. As more individuals recognize the mature themes and depth within anime, its popularity among adults continues to grow, offering further thought-provoking narratives



Artwork: „Magic Mind“, by Darwin Barkemeyer

Roses, Hamlet and a Childhood in Cyprus: A conversation with Robert Murphy

by Kathrin Klinker

Area 41: Okay, let's start with the first question. So, when did you start teaching at the University of Osnabrück?

RM: I started my contract at the University of Osnabrück, believe it or not, on the 1st of April 1993. That's 31 and a half years ago, so I think that puts me in my 63rd semester at the moment. I might be wrong, but something like that. It seems like a long time. [laughs]

Area 41: Was Osnabrück your first stop as a teacher?

RM: Yes, although you also asked how I came here. So, I was a young man at the time, and in 1991 I finished my Bachelor's degree in England and I went to Canada for a year to do a Master's in Germanistik. And then I was halfway through that and I thought, well, what the devil am I going to do after this?

I asked my professors back in England if they knew of anything developing in the old GDR, because there were lots of opportunities in East Germany back then. And they said, no, but how about this?

And by sheer word of mouth, the job vacancy had got to England somehow. And then I applied from Canada, much to the amazement of the people in the Fachbereich 7 back then, who were just flabbergasted that the job, which was not advertised, had managed to get to Canada simply by word of mouth.

So, I applied in the spring of 1992, and in the spring of 1993 I came. In the meantime, I'd done a teacher training course in Exeter University back in England, which I broke off to come here. It was a bit chaotic at



Photo of Robert Murphy, source: private

the time. Coming here sort of settled things, really.

Area 41: Have you always wanted to teach, or have you had a different dream job?

RM: Well, you know how life is. Things take on a sort of momentum of their own. I don't think I envisaged myself teaching.

Although, I think in the arts, it's what you tend to end up doing. I taught beginners German in Canada as part of my graduate experience. And that gave me a first experience of it.

So, I did teaching placements in schools in England for my teacher training course. And then I guess on the back of that, I came here. And the funny thing about teaching is that you learn at least as much yourself as you can teach anybody else when you're a teacher, right?

I'm not the same person that I was 31 years ago, that's for sure. I don't think I knew very much at all at the beginning.

Area 41: What was your first dream job then, if it wasn't teaching?

RM: First job... As a kid, I wanted to be a truck driver.

And then as I got older... I kind of fancied the idea of travelling the world. So having spent a year in Canada when I was 22, I kind of liked the idea of a hot country next. I had my eye on Egypt. But I also had Japan in my mind as well. I kind of liked that idea of possibly going and just spending a few years there, pottering about, teaching some English. South Korea was very popular at the time as well. So the Far East was definitely a possibility.

Area 41: I guess this sort of answers the next question: What would you do if this weren't your job?

RM: Well, you know... if I still had to work...? [laughs] I'd probably try something radically different. Like being a gardener or something like that. I always liked working in gardens and with plants and so forth.

Area 41: Let's get back to your current job. Of all the classes you've ever taught, what was your favourite class?

RM: I don't know if I have a favourite class, but what I really, really enjoy doing, of course, is teaching translation. And I teach as many classes of translation as I conceivably can; I think it's the sort of supreme discipline of linguistics and *Sprachpraxis*, because it involves absolutely everything that students can do. It's like a holistic linguistic experience, and that is just great.

I mean, I think it pushes everybody as far as they can go, and I think that's a great experience to be discovering things on the edge of your own capabilities.

Area 41: Are there any things you would love to do in a class but can't, for example, because of limitations like resources, finances or time?

RM: Often enough, I've wished that the classes were longer. Why are our classes 90 minutes long?

It seems too long for a language class, and too short for a really fundamental research-based class. So, I've said innumerable times in my translation classes, you know, you sort of get going, and then you have to stop again. When I was a graduate student my classes in Canada were two and a half hours long, and that would be nice.

Area 41: What has a student said or done that you still think about today?

RM: There have been small acts of kindness that I remember. Just small words of kindness. Students used to give us little presents.

That hasn't happened in a long, long, long, long time. So, even just a bottle of wine or something at the end of the semester.

I remember guest students have been quite good like that over the years. I remember a Portuguese student who said once that the English language was so remarkably poetic in contrast to Portuguese. Just basically anything you could say at all seemed to be rhythmic and poetic. I've remembered that over the years and it's proved to be true on so many levels. Part of that I've incorporated into the way I understand translation. The sound of the language is as important as simply getting the words right. So, there's melody to it as well.

Area 41: This leads us into the next question: What are some of the most rewarding aspects of teaching English as a foreign language?

RM: Well, English is not just a language, is it? It's a massive, massive global power. A powerhouse of culture and geography and people. And political principles and other things. So, I think the most rewarding aspect to me is being able to introduce people to this phenomenal cultural power and to broaden their horizons.

And you can see it taking place. People come to the university at the age of 18 or 19, and by the time they are not much older, maybe 22, 23, 24, they've become almost different people. They speak like native speakers and they've been to the most extraordinary places in North America or Africa or Europe or whatever, and it's changed their lives.

And in such a very, very short span of time you can see this incredible steep learning curve that people experience. That's very gratifying.

Area 41: What are your top five pet peeves of students' English language usage?

RM: This is quite a tricky question, actually.

- The "th."
- Strong Germanic accent.
- Incorrect aspect.
- Just a general lack of idiomatic expression.

The worst thing is when people don't say anything at all. There's a sort of paralysis that takes place, like a deer in the headlights.

Area 41: And jumping off of that, what would be your best piece of advice in terms of language learning?

RM: Probably be bold and take a risk. Take the chance. The worst thing that's going to happen is that it's wrong. Nobody's going to die.

And my motto that I say in class a hundred times a semester is "knowledge is power". Communication is important, but accuracy is the king. Accuracy is the thing to aim for. And that comes from knowing or being in command of actual knowledge. Linguistics, grammar and all the things that people don't like.

Area 41: If you were a student again yourself, which professor from any time period would you want to take a class with?

RM: You know what? This is a very difficult question because you could go back to Newton or the great discoverers and the great thinkers. But the one I think that if I could have sat in a lecture theatre and listened to? I think it would have been Stephen Hawking.

Partly because I think that if I was to do it all again, I might go into the natural sciences instead. So, I'd like to have listened to Stephen Hawking's thoughts on black holes and things like this.

Lewis Carroll was also a professor, right? So, he might be quite fun to go and have a listen to as well. He was a mathematician. Hence all the weird perspectives and geometric shapes and things that are in Alice in Wonderland.

Area 41: You're not just a lecturer but also a translator. What was your favorite translation commission ever?

RM: I've only ever translated one whole book. This is one of the most challenging things I've ever done.

It was for a professor of theology. It was German to English. Of course, if you like existing at the very, very edge of your capabilities, then this is something that was very fun.

It was about sociology and canon law. Catholic church law. It was a

combination of theology, sociology and law. I don't think it gets much harder than that.

Area 41: Now that we've talked about your professional life, I want to ask about your personal life. What's your favourite place in the UK?

RM: That's very difficult.

I come from Hampshire, and I love it. I think it's such a glorious place. And the south of England is a great place.

It's beautiful. It's got lots of little country towns, old medieval market towns and so forth. My hometown is Winchester, and just 20 miles from Winchester is Salisbury, which is a superb place as well. It's almost as though it's stayed the same in the last 200 years. It's basically a Georgian town.

And of course, the cathedral cities. I love going in English cathedrals. They're not the oldest, but they are about 800 or 900 years old.

Area 41: And what's your favourite place in Osnabrück?

RM: My favourite place in Osnabrück, I must confess, is probably my garden. It's such a haven of peace.

Area 41: Okay, next question: What's your favourite German dish?

RM: My favourite German dish... Oh, I like the German asparagus culture.

Area 41: And your favourite British dish?

RM: I think the nicest meal I ever had was in an English pub in a village near Winchester once and it was venison with parsnip chips.

Area 41: Now, a different question. Do you have a favorite member of the royal family? If so, who is it and why?

RM: Well, it has to be Prince Charles, King Charles, sorry, who I think is very cool.

He's also got a very enviable wardrobe, which I think I'd like to get my hands on at some point. He's got some very, very nicely tailored suits. And I think, if I won the lottery, I would definitely be looking up his tailors in Savile Row in London.

He's also relatively thoughtful, in contrast to some of them.

Area 41: What's the biggest difference between living in the UK and living in Germany?

RM: One of those things must be the sea. Also, good health care in Germany.

There are also some things I like when I go back to England, things that are noticeably different.

First of all, it's the lack of aggression between car drivers. And strangers talking to you. So just sort of casual friendliness. Small talk. It takes hours to check out from a supermarket most of the time because everybody's got some story to tell, right? Slowness in some respects. Slowness between people. People will take some time, even if it's only five minutes, to chat and exchange the time of day, as they call it.

Area 41: Has something changed for you after Brexit when it comes to living here?

RM: Well, not really, because the one thing I did, a little reluctantly, was to become a German. So, in that respect, nothing changed.

I can still come and go to the UK as I always did. I now have two passports, and so I can just sort of flip them around as I feel like it. I'm a European until I get to the middle of the English Channel, and then I become a Brit.

And otherwise, postage increased. So, it costs a hell of a lot more to send my

parcels back to England at Christmas now.
[laughs]

Also, attitudes have changed. On both sides, I think. And the number of British people here has declined noticeably. So, whenever I'm out and about, I always notice English number plates on cars, and there are hardly any anymore. The Brits have disappeared. And... That's kind of a weird... You're left with a strange feeling as though the tide has gone out, and you're left stranded high up on the beach.

It's such a strange thing, because all through our young years, especially for my generation, I think when we were growing up, we were all encouraged to get out and go and see Europe and spend time in Europe. And now we've kind of been left behind. It's like there's a cloud of smoke on the horizon with Britain disappearing, and we're still here.

Area 41: Touching on that, are you planning on staying in Germany, or do you see yourself moving back to the UK at some point?

RM: I'd go back to the UK. Because I'm curious about it. I think I've been away from it for so long that because I don't live there, I'm able to sort of enjoy the best sides of it. I know that if the opportunity arose, I would seriously consider going back there. I mean, I have to, inevitably. I'm 55 years old in a few weeks' time. So, the business of retirement is kind of slightly on the horizon, so I need to decide... There is a point in time, you know, when you have to decide: Do I want to stay here forever, or do I want to move one last time, or is it too late? So, that's critical, but I think I can imagine myself in the UK.

Dorset, or Devon. Somewhere down there. I have friends in Devon. So, we've kind of joked in the past that it would be funny if we all ended up in Devon within beer-drinking distance of each other. There are some very nice pubs down there.

Area 41: Moving from retirement way back to your childhood: What's a special or a funny childhood experience that you like to remember?

RM: When I was a little kid, my parents lived on Cyprus for a couple of years, and some of my earliest childhood memories are of swimming in the sea off the coast of Cyprus. And I think these were wonderful, happy moments.

The first memories I have are of the blinding sun and beautiful crystal-clear water and playing with crabs in buckets and things.

Area 41: That's really good. I'd love to have childhood memories like that.

RM: Yeah, well, unfortunately, it kind of changed a little bit because there was a war and then we had to leave. There was an evacuation out of the town that we lived in that was in the south called Limassol, and there was a coup d'etat, and the police station that was just down the road from us was car-bombed one night, and then we had to evacuate to the British sovereign base areas. And there was gunfire going on over the roofs of the cars of this convoy that we were in.

Area 41: Okay, that's not that nice.

RM: That was the other side of it.

Area 41: Well, it's interesting nonetheless.

Let's move on to a nicer topic. We know that you like to read history books. So, what's the best history book you've ever read?

RM: This is a really difficult question. In German, it has to be Golo Mann's *Deutsche Geschichte des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*. Wonderfully entertaining piece of writing. It's

so delightful. You need to read it. It's witty, and it's funny, and it's lively, and it's just brilliant historiography. And I think that could be the best book of history I've ever read.

But I've read a lot of history books. I read a fun history book last summer, which was called *The Anglo-Saxons* by Marc Morris. I recommend that because it's often a gap in people's knowledge. They know about the Romans in Britain, and then they know about the Normans in Britain, but there's like a 600-year gap in between as to what the devil happened during that period. I also read a book called *Devil-Land* last year by Clare Jackson. That was about England from 1588 to 1689, that very eventful hundred years. That was a very difficult book to read, and I only just made it. But very enlightening. That hundred years really created so much of what it means to be part of the Anglo-Saxon world. It created things that were the basis of life in what is now the USA as well. The arrival of law, and the idea of puritanism and democracy and representation and parliament and the removal of the power of the monarch and so forth. Fantastic.

Area 41: Those sound like good recommendations! What about novels?

RM: Difficult as well, actually. Politically, I would go for William Godwin's *Caleb Williams*. It's a political novel from the 1790s, I think. It's about libertarian anarchism. Very cool.

I think one of the funniest and most entertaining books in the world is an absolutely chaotic and crazy book by a man called Matthew Lewis. It's called *The Monk*. It's about a corrupt monk in Madrid during the Spanish Inquisition who runs around the city attacking people. He's possessed by the devil, who also makes an appearance, and there are ghosts, too. Great fun.

It's very difficult to find somebody, I think, in novel writing who's got something

original to offer. One of them is James Meek with a novel called *The People's Act of Love*. I met James Meek at a British Council event. Very nice guy. And he wrote one brilliant novel and then not much else, to my knowledge. [laughs] This novel is really quite remarkable. So how on earth you could think this up, I don't know.

But it's about a group of Czech soldiers who are stuck on the wrong side of the Red Army in Russia after the Russian Revolution. It's a book about "communism, cannibalism and castration", as Meek said himself. If you want a really whacky, interesting, original read, I like that.

Area 41: Let's stay in the realm of novels and books: If you could have dinner with any fictional character who would it be and why?

RM: Hamlet. Although he would probably never be able to decide what he wanted off the menu. [laughs] Might have to decide for him. But I think it would be Hamlet. I read the play when I was 16 and it's stayed with me my whole life.

And it always supplies me with a quotable quote. I'm quoting Hamlet constantly. And it's great.

Area 41: We're coming close to the end now. What do you do when you're not teaching or working?

RM: Well, not a lot. I hang out with my family. That's my favorite thing to do. And I play music.

Area 41: What instruments?

RM: Guitar. And then my other favorite beings in the world, my most loyal friends, are my English roses that I have in my garden. I cultivate roses. That's what I do.

Area 41: Sounds like a good pastime. What's the best piece of advice you've ever received?

RM: Quite recently, I think. Trust other people to come to the right conclusions.

Area 41: And, of course, we have saved the most important question for last: Do you open your Christmas presents on Christmas Eve or Christmas morning?

RM: Both. We have two *Bescherungen*. We do the German thing with grandparents. And then we do real Christmas on Christmas morning. That was a provocative thing to say, wasn't it? [laughs]

The ceremony or the excitement of getting up on Christmas morning and sitting around in your pyjamas and so forth for a couple of hours, that's really nice.

I mean, it's a cultural thing, of course.

So, you have this excitement of going to sleep and having Santa come in the night. But we do a bit of both because we have one foot in two different cultures. I think probably a lot of families do this.

But we celebrate Christmas on Christmas Day with the turkey and the big Christmas dinner and wine and so forth. So, the 25th is lots of eating and feasting.

Area 41: And that's it! Thank you so much for answering our questions.

Addition

Area 41: Congrats on winning the *Preis der exzellenten Lehre* for Anglistik / Amerikanistik this week! A well-deserved win. What does winning the *Preis der exzellenten Lehre* mean to you?

RM: Well, I must say it is very satisfying! Teaching at any level is of course more than just a job, requiring the investment of quite a bit of personal energy too, so some acknowledgement on the personal level from

those on the receiving end is very sweet. It gave me pause for thought about what students like to experience in a classroom. Personally, I think that holistic approach I mentioned before is a good one, where knowledge of grammar and linguistics is just as important as knowledge of the world and communicative aptitude, and learning of course has to be fun - a lot of fun! So, what does the prize mean for me? It means that we're on the right track. The prize is also an encouragement to see what other cool stuff we can do with the English language in the coming semesters. Here's to it!



Artwork: "Roses", by Kaja Lisann Pawellek

Disgust or Trust

Lyrics by Ömer Ceyhan, student at the IfAA and guitarist and singer for *ghost of baltimore*, an Osnabrück-based grunge-pop band

So much to say, so less to do
I'm here to stay if you want me to
I need to talk, let it all go out
I'm here for you if you want me to

Confide, you're right
I'm on your side
It's my Ego that does not hide

I must adjust

Oh

I walked alone under my cities sun
I thought of things that could be undone
It's all about a scene that is in my head
I try to close this cause I
Confide, you're right
I'm on your side
It's my Ego that does not hide

Disgust or trust
I must adjust
It's my Ego that does not hide
Oh

There was a girl Who Talked to me
She said that love is all we need
Put your Ego away my friend
And let it all slide (love, love, love, yeaaaaah)
Confide, you're right
I'm on your side
It's my Ego that does not hide

Disgust or trust
I must adjust
It's my Ego that does not hide



Photo of Ömer Ceyhan on stage in Osnabrück

Just a Regular Birthday

A short story by Lea Mairi Förster

CW: Occultism; Domestic Violence

It was about half past ten in the morning when the doorbell rang. Lilith went to open the door but got distracted on the way there by the noise coming out of her son's bedroom. She stopped for a moment to listen a bit more closely: "BANG" "CRASH" "BANG." After a little while she decided that there was no reason to be concerned, as he was probably playing his favourite game—city destruction—with his toy cars. At that moment the bell rang again. She hurried to let her best friend in, who she knew was prone to impatience. Immediately she was greeted with a warm hug.

"Hi girl, how are you? It's so good to see you!"

"Hi Morgan, I'm fine, thanks. Why do you look so nice today?" As usual her friend wore all black, but instead of her normal t-shirt and jeans she was wearing a flowy summer dress and some accessories, making her look quite witchy.

"Aww, thanks bee," Morgan shouted happily as she stormed past Lilith through the door. "I thought I'd dress for the occasion."

Lilith chuckled: "He's a child, Morgan. I don't think he is going to care whether you dress up or not. To be honest, I doubt that he'll even notice."

"So what? That's not really the point, is it? If there's something to celebrate, you dress up—that's just how it is. And I felt like it. Besides, you also look great today."

"Well, thank you."

"I really mean it. You know, it brings out your eyes." Lilith herself was dressed in a rather colorful outfit. She always looked a bit like a modernized hippie; especially now that she was wearing a satin hair band which was just the same shade of deep fir green as her eyes.

"Now where is that little devil of yours?"

"He is playing in his room right now. Wait a second, I'll get him for you. Make yourself a tea if you like, you know where everything is. There should still be some milk left in the fridge."

While Morgan started to make herself comfortable in the kitchen, Lilith went to her son's room out of which emerged the sounds of squeaky toy wheels crashing violently into random objects. She knocked softly on the wooden door and waited a few seconds before opening it. "Hey Damian, would you like to—" She stopped mid-sentence because she could not find him. He was neither on his play rug, nor on his bed, nor anywhere else one would expect a child to play. She turned around, looked up and sighed as she finally saw him.

Damien was indeed playing with his cars but sat in the corner behind the door - upside down on the ceiling. He just stared at his mother in silence, holding small cars in both hands, his dark wavy hair dangling towards the floor. "Oh, there he is," Lilith murmured to herself. "I just wanted to ask you to come in the kitchen and say hi to Auntie Morgan. She has just arrived and is really excited to see you." As she turned around, she added sharply: "And get down from the ceiling at once! How many times have I told you that I hate it when you are up there?"

"It's not like I'd fall."

"I would love it if you fell. Maybe then you'd stop doing it."

"Muuuum, that's so mean! Why do you even care?" Although Damien sounded quite offended, he did not look like it—if anything, he looked bored. Lilith couldn't help but smile at that. She always became a little soft when he tried to behave like a normal child.

"I just don't want you to make a mess and leave your footprints everywhere while you're up there. You have no idea how much of a pain painting a ceiling is to us normal people."

He nodded but was still not quite convinced. "If you don't come here right now, I will not take you to the registration office." This time he did not pretend to be insulted.

Ever since he was a little boy, Damian had loved to go to the registration office. He liked watching people do something tedious and annoying: how they grew more impatient the longer they had to wait, how no one ever really talked to relieve the boredom, and how the employees genuinely felt exhausted even though most of them basically only drank coffee the entire day. Overall, he was thrilled by the entire atmosphere.

Damian tilted his head slightly and pouted but finally decided to leave his spot. He did a backflip and landed right next to his mother. "Will Morgan accompany us to the registration office?"

"Of course, she will. The only reason she came by was to see you, little guy." Even though her son did not particularly like anyone, he seemed to be fond of Morgan. At least he didn't mind her being there.

They found Morgan lying on the sofa in the living room, with tea in her hand and the cat, Onion, on her belly. Once she noticed them coming in, she put the cat aside and rushed towards Damien to embrace him. "Happy birthday, darling! How do you feel, now that you are almost one of the big boys?"

"Thank you for coming, Morgan. I feel just the same as always. I like your dress, by the way. You look very lovely today."

While Morgan was visibly excited and thanking him for the kind remark, Lilith squinted at him suspiciously: "My dear boy, it is rude to eavesdrop on people."

Her friend raised an eyebrow: "Why would you say that? He couldn't have heard us earlier. Maybe he just really likes—"

"Dad told me I should do it to better understand and learn how people behave."

"Your father might be right about something for once—YOU should definitely do that. But don't be so obvious about it. People don't like being overheard."

"But how was that obvious, mum? You did the same thing!"

"Yes, but I've done these things for a while now and I actually like the outfit. As if you would ever notice what someone is wearing. If you are going to lie, do it to people who don't know you." She stroked his hair and sat down beside Onion who immediately started purring.

"Anyway," Morgan gave him a big smile, while rummaging through her bag, "I brought you a present!" She handed him a small box-shaped package wrapped in light blue paper which had small elephants printed on it.

"Thank you so much. May I open it?"

"Of course, you may!" She turned her head towards the sofa: "I remember my little brother at that age. He would have ripped it open before I had the chance to give it to him. How did he end up so polite—with you as his mother of all people?"

Lilith let out a loud laugh: "I seriously don't know. Maybe my random bursts of excellent social skills helped a little after all."

Morgan turned back to Damian, who was examining the gift he had unwrapped during their conversation. It was a wooden box decorated with emerald green pagan symbols. Inside were dozens of cards, each with a different delicately drawn picture and a specific title written in an ornate font. "What are these for?"

"These are Tarot cards," Morgan said in a mystic voice. "People have used them for centuries to seek guidance. The cards tell you what path you are currently on."

"So, they predict the future?"

“Not exactly; they are not magic in that sense. But they can tell you what is most likely to happen if everything in your life stays the same. They might also show what your soul is yearning for. I’ll teach you how to read them.”

The boy looked slightly disappointed: “I thought they were magic... And I do not have a soul either.”

“Don’t be ridiculous! Every person has a soul.”

“Have you met his father?” Lilith chimed in. “But don’t worry, you can still read them for other people and even yourself. You may be a soulless little imp, but you do have a subconscious.”

That seemed to cheer him up as he promptly began flipping through the cards. So far, he liked all the pictures well enough, but one stood out to him in particular. It showed a beautiful girl stepping out of the flames of a collapsing tower. The movement of the different elements drew him in, almost hypnotizing him. His black eyes lit up seeing the different bright red colours, until they seemed a bit too bright...

“Hey, Buddy! Stop that!” His mother had suddenly jumped off the sofa and shook him lightly. He snapped out of his trance and looked in surprise at her concerned face. While all of them sat in silence for a moment, he noticed an odd smell. Wondering what exactly it was and where it came from, he ran his finger lightly along the card’s edges. As he traced the bottom, he realized what it was: Right where the words “The Tower” were written in dark green, there was a still-smoking burn hole.

“I... I’m sorry about that, Morgan. It really is an awesome gift.” He flashed her a weird smile which was slightly unsettling.

“Eww, what was that? Remind me that we need to work on your smile. Aside from that, you must be more careful. Would you please fix the card?”

“Actually, maybe he shouldn’t,” Morgan said slowly, squinting her eyes. “It is interesting that this very card spoke to him. It means change and chaos.”

“Huh, is that so?” Lilith raised an eyebrow. “And while we’re talking about chaos, your father should be here any minute.” She had just finished that sentence when the floor began to tremble abruptly. Throughout the entire living room arose a foggy cloud and finally, accompanied by a loud unearthly sound, a portal opened.

A tall, stately figure emerged from the smoke, spread its arms as if to present itself, and smirked: “Speak of the devil, right?” Before them stood a handsome man with hair and eyes as dark as Damien’s. He appeared to be in his late thirties, maybe early forties, and seemed rather proud of his witty comment.

“Were you just waiting to be mentioned by one of us so you could have this dramatic entrance?” asked Lilith smugly.

He looked a bit dumbfounded for a second, then instantly changed back to his smirk. “If that isn’t the beautiful mother of my child. How about a ‘hello’ next time?” He walked to her and kissed her on the cheek, then turned to Damian and knelt beside him. “And there he is, the birthday boy! Come, give me a hug, my little morning star.” He picked up his son, threw him into the air, and held him lovingly in his arms.

“It’s always nice to see such a proud father.” Morgan grinned at him. “Hi, Samael. How are you?”

“I’m doing just fine, now that I know you’re also here, love. And I’ve already told you to call me Sam.”

“I know, but I don’t like it. It makes you sound less sophisticated.”

"I really hate to interrupt this charming conversation of yours," Lilith jumped in. "But is that a man getting flayed in the background?"

"Oh, don't worry, that's just Kevin. Say hi, it's my son's birthday." Kevin waved with the one hand that currently wasn't tied down.

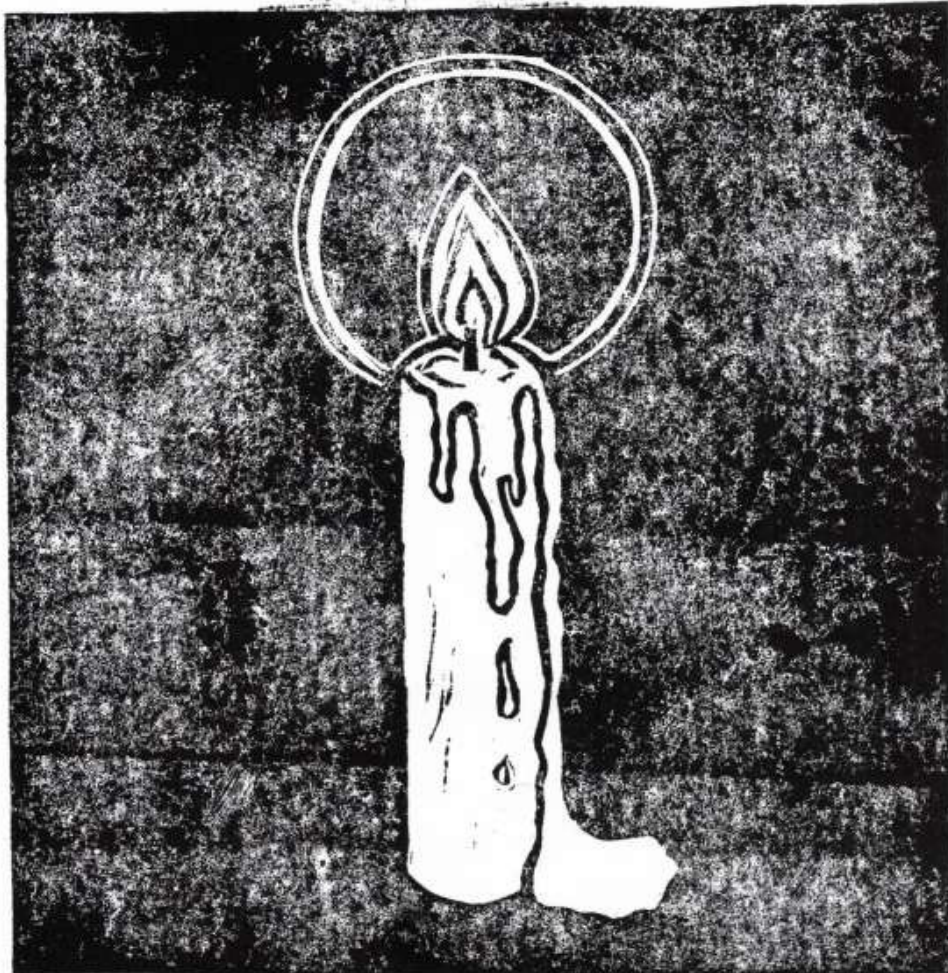
"I don't mind Kevin. What I do mind is you taking your work to your child's birthday. And you also forgot to get the cake!"

"Not cool, dude!" Kevin shouted.

"Fuck off, Kevin! You're here because you beat your daughter."

"Yeah, but I never forgot to bring her cake!"

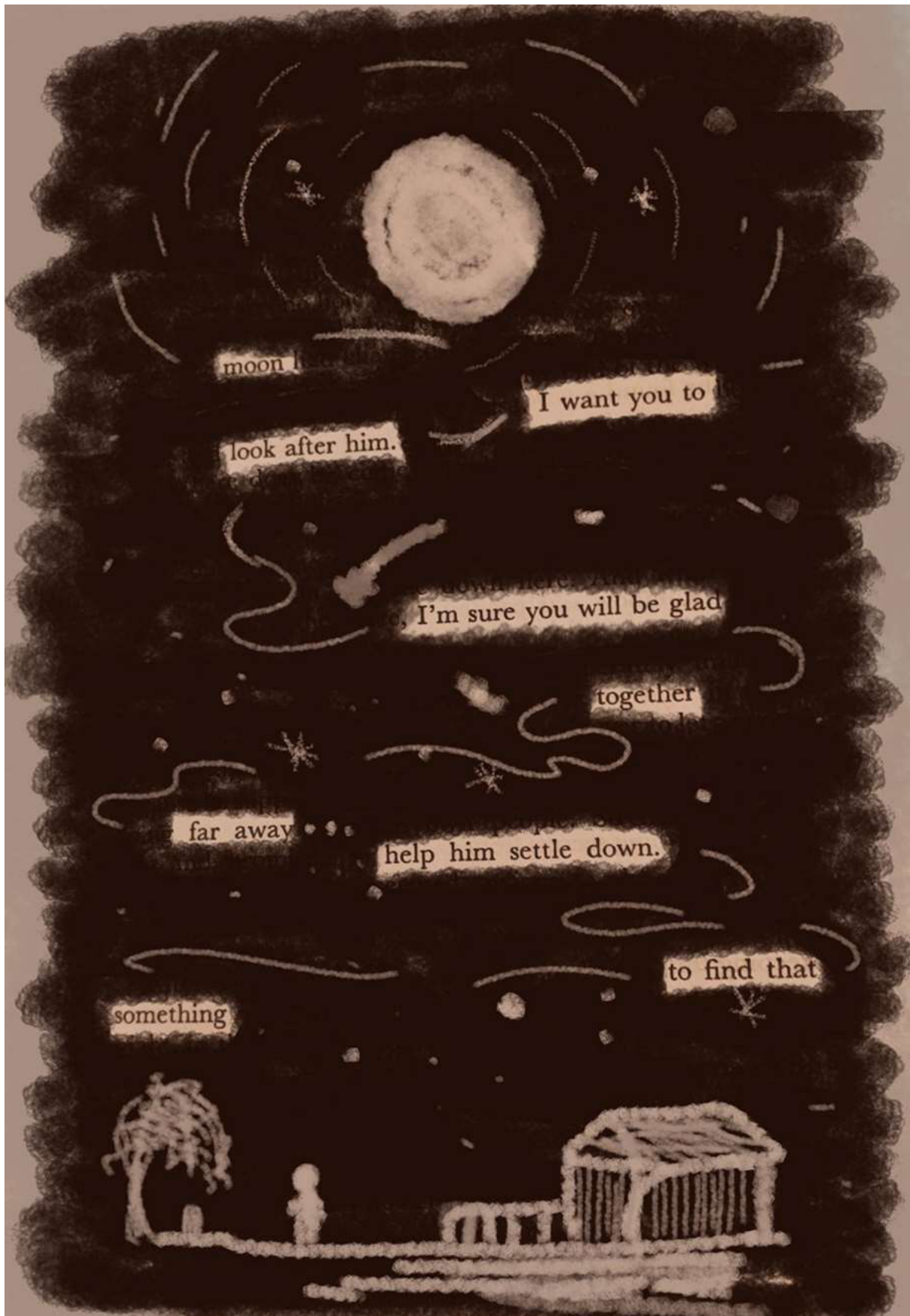
Samael rolled his eyes: "I'm getting it, calm down. And yes, my dear Lilith, from a bakery." He vanished with a snap of his fingers.



Artwork: "A Light in the Dark", by Kathrin Klinker

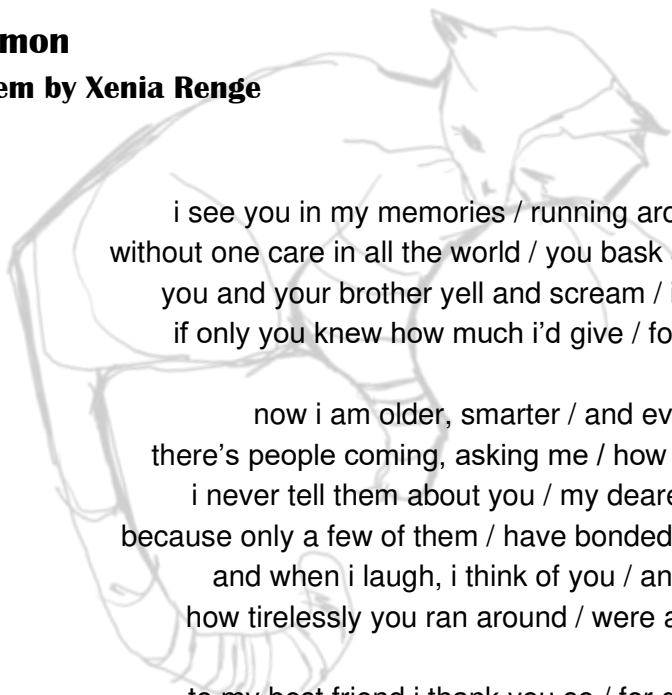
Moon

A blackout poem by Jona Waltenberger



Artemon

A poem by Xenia Renge



i see you in my memories / running around and having fun
without one care in all the world / you bask and play there in the sun
you and your brother yell and scream / in such a playful way
if only you knew how much i'd give / for this to always stay

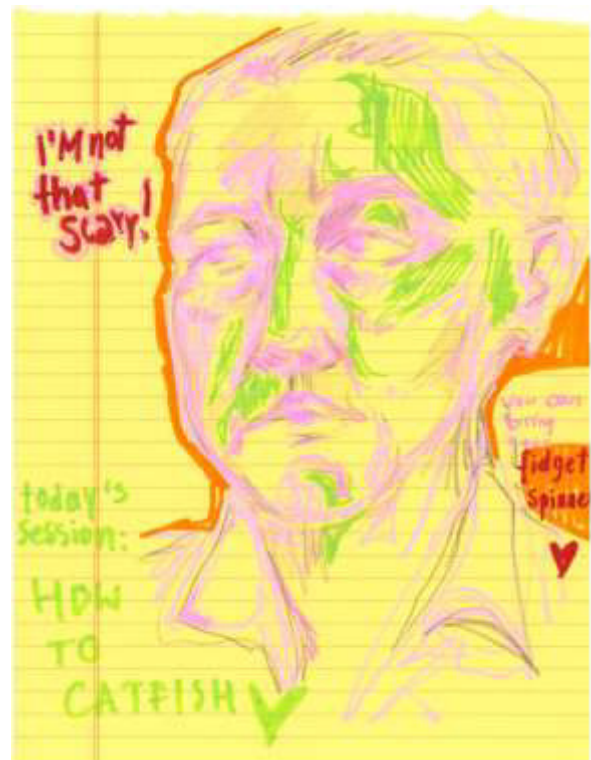
now i am older, smarter / and everywhere i go
there's people coming, asking me / how come i'm laughing so
i never tell them about you / my dearest, smallest friend
because only a few of them / have bonded with their childhood pet
and when i laugh, i think of you / and all your energy
how tirelessly you ran around / were always on your feet

to my best friend i thank you so / for growing up with me
for going on those walks with me / for giving me your company
you're always in my memory / my little artemon



Artwork 1: No title (cat), by Julia Schilowski;

Artwork 2 + 3: Classroom doodles by Anonymous



Ánstapa

A poem by Maverick Greifenberger

Silence.

Here I am again. In this place where joy was my closest friend, where time was timeless, where I was held by the earth itself. In this place I call home.

Home. Is this really my home? What even is home? Was I ever at home? Will I ever be at home?

Silence.

I lay in my bed. The one I built with my dad when I moved in. It was the first time he taught me craftsmanship. While he was there, my bedroom was warmer, as if I were walking through a forest in spring, with soft vines climbing up the trees, with viridian grass dancing a slow waltz in the wind, with golden daylight streaming through the tree's crowns, with love, with joy. Now I barely see him anymore.

I stare at the ceiling. Darkness surrounds me, trying to dissolve me into it. The vibrant, safe light that once lit up my room is now broken. Is someone standing in that corner over there? No, just another ghost from my past.

My past. I remember when I used to carry the light of the sun within me, exploring the woods, hugging trees, running under the stars, laughing until my stomach hurt. Now I sit here sobbing to the moon, hoping that at least it wants to talk to me. But no, tonight, the moon is not here. Only I am here – just like always. The only thing that looks down on me is the deep, vast, black sky; not even the stars can bear looking at me. God, what have I become?

I feel the weight of my blanket. It crushes my aching heart into millions of pieces. The same heart I carried in the palms of my hands like an injured bird as a kid. The same that now leaves claw marks on everything it touches, clinging on so desperately to the idea of receiving the same love it pours out to others. I heard it break once more. Pieces of it fall to the floor beside me. Why is it so heavy? Why does it feel like I can't breathe? Why am I shaking? Why is there water flowing down my eyes? Why am-
Who am I?

Silence.

I sit on my bed. My face lights up with colors as I watch all my hopes and dreams dance in the sky. All the versions of me -everything I could have been- young and old, seem to be so careless, so happy. Some dance a slow bolero, others jump up and down as if music itself kissed them on their forehead. I want to reach out to them, dance with them, laugh with them- I want to leave this place. Why can't I reach them? Why can't I be like them? Why does it have to be this way? Why am I trapped here? Why is it always me?

Silence.

I lay down on my side. I feel your arm resting on my waist. My safe harbor. My only harbor. You hold me in your arms, yet I feel frost's fingers tracing up and down my back. Why do I feel so cold?

Whisper sweet nothings in my ear, love. Promise me that you will wipe the sadness off my cheeks every time I feel the insurmountable weight of the past pressing down on my bleeding heart. Because I will. I will feel it all. I always do. I will break over and over and over and over again. I will lay here in this bed once more and relive the same trauma I can't seem to heal from, the same mistakes I desperately wish to change, the same pain that is haunting me wherever I go. I will lay here, scraping off those haunting memories, like they are dried paint that can't be washed away. I will pick up the shards from my broken heart and put them back together, until it breaks again. When did my heart become glass? Tell me, was I too young to know any better? Was I just trying to survive? My love, tell me, do you promise that you will be there forever?

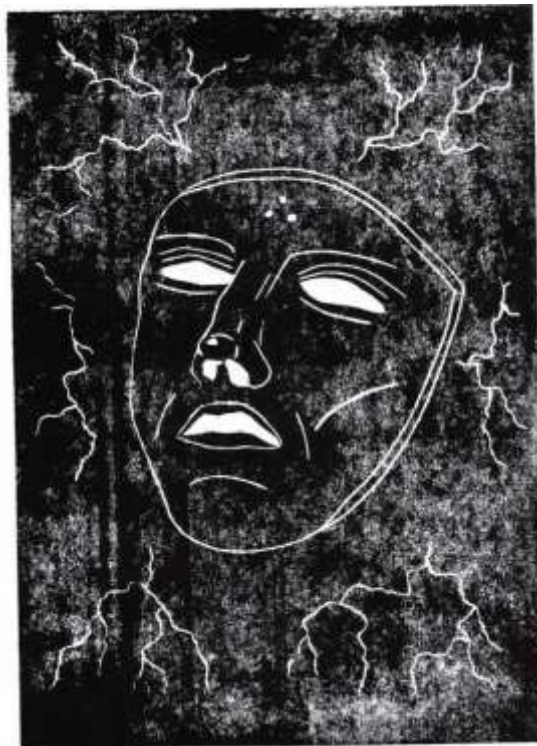
Silence.

I turn to look at my lover. No one's there. No one ever was. No one ever will be.

I stand up, looking out of my window.

Maybe love is not meant for me. Maybe I'm better off alone. Maybe it's all in my head. Maybe people don't hate me. Maybe some things can't be changed. Maybe I am my biggest enemy. Maybe I can dance in the sky with my hopes and dreams one day. Maybe the pain will go away. Maybe I will walk through the warm forest again. Maybe my room will light up again. Until then, I will lay here, waiting for it to be over. All in

Silence.



Artwork: "Varus", by Kathrin Klinker

Drowning

A short story by Clea Appel

Sometimes I feel like I'm drowning. Like I'm overflowing, asphyxiating on the self-doubt creeping into each and every pore of my being. All my mistakes, my countless flaws and blemishes convert into plentiful holes and dents and gaps and pits and pockets and craters and cracks. Like a sponge, I become porous, absorbing every last molecule, every singular atom, until I am filled to the brim, heavy and dense and moist, with the weight of all my accumulated hatred. I bottle it up, until I'm overflowing, with rivers of anguish streaming down my face, leaving the taste of the ocean on my tongue. It's overwhelming and quite uncomfortable, really.

I am *usually* in need of a towel.

There is always the fog, unshakable and all consuming, clouding my body, my mind, my judgement. When it reaches me, it encroaches me, starts to moisten my skin, to bedew my hair, my clothes, entirely, until it envelopes me fully in a blanket of perpetual cold. It's slow and creeping, and yet I can never escape it, never hide from it, for it is invisible, an unwavering foe. But it's quiet, at least, a mute companion. Sometimes, I wonder: Is it with me today? Dear fog, are you here? Because it's silent, and really not too much of a bother, for the most part anyway, except for this continuous damp, clammy, frigid feeling I get. But there is no need for this question, admittedly, oh it is quite redundant.

For it is *always* there.

Often, it gets worse. It will usually start slow, with the fog turning into enormous clouds, gigantic in size. Then they fill up, become saturated with all the accumulated moisture and dampness, expanding. Then, some singular raindrops begin to fall throughout the day, slowly but surely increasing in number and intensity. At first, I sometimes don't even notice them, with their soft pitter patter melting into the usual background noise of everyday life, the busy static that normally fills my head drowning them out for the most part. Until it's too late, when they start mixing and intermingling with the tears falling from my eyes, escaping, forming rivulets down my face, until the sharp taste of salt has become permanent and repulsive in nature. How long does it take, until a few raindrops stop blending in and finally start to affect you, to bother you?

I don't think I am *ever* quite dry.

Sometimes, when the rain gets louder, completely taking over with its sheer vastness in volume and sonorousness, it involuntarily starts taking up all my attention. I wonder, when does it stop just being rain and starts to be a storm? And does it even matter? At this point, I will be soaking, cold and wet, with the water reaching every last part of my body, my being, through every crevice, crack and cranny, like an old, abandoned house failing to keep out the cold air on a frosty winter's day. The storm is unavoidable, it always gets me. It swishes and swooshes, it whips around me and saturates me and drenches me to my bones, to my core. It's hard if not impossible to ignore the storm, once it's here, with its banging and clanging and roaring and pouring. Sometimes I can find refuge, if only for a small moment, in a lodging, a shelter, a hug, providing some momentary sanctuary. But the storm is persistent, it's raving and raging, always brewing and blustering, a cascading cataclysm of water and venom. It waits for me.

It *rarely* stops there.

Normally, a flood eventually follows. When the raging storm, the bellowing monsoon reaches its crescendo and violently bursts, ruptures and starts consuming everything, it evolves into the flood. Wave after wave, downpour after downpour, it rises and surges and billows and breaks and grows. Oh, how it grows. With each wave, each current, each torrent it intensifies, swells, expands. It becomes all-encompassing. Like a river, each current flows at a different speed, sometimes pulling at me so quickly that it takes all my strength not to break apart right then and there. It tears at me, with every tide taking away more and more from me, a small part here, a bigger chunk there, until I'm dwindling, diminishing, disintegrating. I start to separate, to break apart, and crumble and splinter and shatter, until I wash away. At some point it stops to be a flood, a river, growing and intensifying until it is nothing less than a tsunami, the culmination of demolition, destruction, and despair. Complete Carnage. So, I run, flee, but really, there is no point, no chance of escape, no hope.

Will I *ever* catch a break? Will there *ever* be an end to this? Will I *ever* be able to rest?

When will it finally get the best of me, crush me, completely and wholly consume me, until there is nothing left?

Is it when it turns into hail, when it begins falling downwards with accelerated speed, piercing, thrashing, slicing at anything and everything, drawing blood with every malicious thought, yet another dagger slicing and dicing away at me?

Is it when it approaches me, inevitably, all consuming, as one unavoidable, swallowing avalanche, burrowing me alive and suffocating me in the end, under this blanket of resentment and rancor? With the world completely muted, muffled, cut off, no other sound than the voices in my head?

Is it, when it amasses and turns into a dark pond, obscured, seemingly shallow and unthreatening, but in fact so deep and suctioning, that it absorbs me in a second, like quicksand, drinking me in, feasting on me, obliterating me with its enormous pressure?

Or is it, when it finally culminates into an ocean, a vast and endless vessel of water, where all the moisture eventually ends up? When the fog turns into saturated clouds, which start to spill raindrops, which eventually accumulate into an unstoppable flood, culminating wave after wave in a ceaseless river, that inescapably joins into a pond, that in the end grows into a raging ocean, a merciless sea? Is that where it overcomes me? Where it completely absorbs me, where it finally, inevitably defeats me?

I am fading away, drowning. At least, it's finally quiet down here.

Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski

The Best Night Shift in the NICU

Work experience by Johanna Brune

Before I started my university studies, I trained to become a pediatric nurse. At that time, I was allocated to the NICU, the intensive care unit for premature babies who still need help adjusting to the world.

One of the children there was still very young and relied on breathing via ventilator, and since his mother was still weak from giving birth and his father had to look after their other children alone, the child didn't get much time with either of them. He was always quite uneasy, cried a lot and needed a lot of assistance from the ventilator.

One night during my night shift – it was a quiet night without any emergencies – one of the nurses told me to sit down in one of the cozy chairs that are usually meant only for the parents and asked me if I wanted to cuddle with that baby for a while. Of course, I did! So, I sat in this chair for about two hours with this small being laying on my chest. He quickly calmed down and fell asleep there.

The next couple of days he was unrecognizable: He turned into the sleepest, most content baby, and his medical condition improved a lot! Not long after, he was able to get transferred to a non-intensive care unit. It goes to show how much we humans need other humans' interaction and care, even the smallest of us, and how a little sometimes can go a long way.

Easily the best day of work ever!

From Rodeos to Lobsters: A Tale of Two Internships

Internship experience by Isabelle Gross

Entering my bachelor's, I was both excited and scared of the fact that I would have to plan my stay abroad. I didn't feel like studying abroad (I can do that at home, duh) or working at a school (not mentally ready yet, haha), which left me with the option of doing an internship. Don't get me wrong – I love travelling and planning vacations – but the thought of finding an internship abroad stressed the hell out of me.

My stays abroad usually revolve more around horses than anything related to my future career as a primary school teacher. However, I figured I might be able to combine an aspect relevant to my studies with my passion for horses by looking into equine-assisted therapy. Shortly after, I started a highly unstructured research process by randomly googling phrases like "equine assisted therapy internship USA." Surprisingly, I found quite a few and scanned through their websites, reviews and social media profiles, which is how I came across a small ranch in Montana. They breed Fjord horses, train them for equine-assisted therapy, and offer therapeutic programs for a variety of target groups ranging from children to veterans.

Before formally applying, I decided to write an email to the owner, which ended up with us having video calls and getting the internship placement without having to send over any paperwork. The whole process was quite fast and convenient, and I was thrilled to be given the opportunity to work and live there without any expenses besides groceries. First and foremost, I was relieved to be able to continue my studies and focus only on getting the right visa and the university's approval.

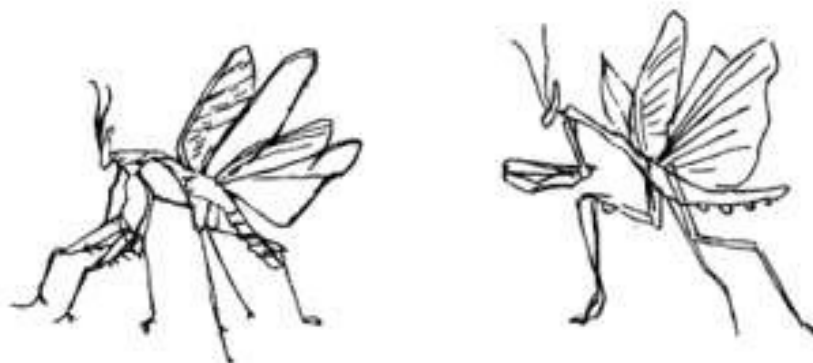
It might be worth mentioning that I applied in December of 2020 and started the internship in May 2022. Since I wanted to make good use of my “Urlaubssemester,” I traveled to Costa Rica for 1.5 months before flying over to the States. You might as well check out another country if you have to fly across the globe anyway!

On my first day in Montana, though, I sadly started to realize the accuracy of the statement, “It’s too good to be true.” Here’s one example: I was supposed to live in a camper including a kitchen and bathroom (I received pictures beforehand). However, these facilities did not work, so I could take only cold showers in a barn next door (keep in mind it was still two degrees in the morning) and my kitchen consisted of one electric hot plate. I was not very excited about living like that for an extended period of time but just thought that it could be worse.

Unfortunately, the living situation was not the only thing which did not meet my expectations. Instead of helping out with the equine-assisted therapy, I was gardening, mucking out, grooming and training horses for up to twelve hours a day (unpaid internship). I realized that the owner deeply cares about her animals but treats her employees in an inhumane way (e.g. going through their personal belongings and threatening to badmouth them to keep them from finding a job elsewhere). I could go on and complain about the whole situation in detail but let’s just say by the end of the first week I had spent hours crying on the phone to my family which got to the point where they booked me flights to PEI, Canada.

My older sister knew the owner of an equine-assisted learning center on the island. Luckily, she was willing to take me in on such a short notice and house me for three months in exchange for my volunteering as a camp leader. Due to my circumstances, the IfAA was willing to make an exception, although the post was not therapy-related like my former internship. Instead of spending my summer exploring the mountains in Montana and going to rodeos, I ended up exploring an island in Atlantic Canada, eating lobster and working with a lot of amazing kids from all over Canada for the summer, which is my way of saying, “It eventually all turned out fine.”

My advice is simple, though: Plan ahead, ask as many questions as you can (no matter how insignificant they feel!), and just be careful when organizing a stay without any organization or help from elsewhere.



Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski

Tingling Sensation

A short story by Luca Sophie Hillbrands

TW: Body Image Issues; Sexual Content

Dancing. Feeling myself. Enjoying myself. Being myself. Being by myself. Loving every inch of myself. Moving to the melody that makes me start my day with that special kind of feeling. Wanting nothing, needing nothing, just being complete and fulfilled. I stand in front of my mirror touching my skin, slowly caressing my left hand with my right hand, moving up to my arm, going in circles before moving further to my shoulder, closing my eyes and feeling the tingling sensation of the energy connecting my hand with my shoulder. My hands continue to explore my body, the texture of the different areas, the shape of each part, the roughness of my arms, the smoothness and curves of my breasts, stomach and hips. The stubbles of my leg hair growing back and the silky texture of the scars on my right knee. I open my eyes just standing and looking.

~~I don't like what I see.~~ I like the round muscular shape of my shoulders. I like the birthmarks on my cleavage. I like the length of my neck. I like the shape and color of my eyes and the long dark lashes that frame them. I love the way I look, ~~but I also hate the way I look. If I was skinny, I would surely love myself, right?~~

"If you were skinny, you would be a ten."

"I prefer girls who are smaller than you are."

"I don't usually go for girls like you, but you're kind of my kink. We should keep this a secret, though; I don't want people to know we fuck."

"Oh, by the way, I got to know a cute girl on Tinder, we should quit sleeping with each other. I mean, I said from the beginning it's just sex, right?"

"You're so pretty, I love your face, but your legs..."

"I love spending time with you, love talking to you, love hearing about your day, and I love the way you make me come, but we should keep this casual; I'm not looking for a relationship."

And then there was you. Treating me like I'm special, like I'm the only one for you. Talking to me every hour of the day, making my body ache just from desire. Just making me feel like you care for me as much as I care for you. Daydreaming about our future; of me moving to your city to be closer to you. You stop talking to me for less than a day and I go crazy.

You must have found someone better, someone more worthy of your love, someone who is small and sweet and doesn't make you feel embarrassed when seen together.

In the evening you send me a message and I can breathe again, eat again, think again, function again. ~~I know that isn't true. I stopped functioning the moment you made my heart beat faster the first time.~~ I'm in control, surely, I'm not emotionally involved. I can keep this casual. ~~I have lost almost 30 pounds since the day we met. Even my body rejects you.~~

Then you never want to see me. I tell myself that you are just insecure and afraid of not living up to the expectations that you raised. But in the evening when you feel lonely, you desire me; you make me desire you. For the first time I actually believe someone finds me attractive. Every part of me. Every curve of me. All the parts I was never able to love.

~~You make me feel good,~~ but you also make me feel terrible. I shouldn't need you to love myself. You give me the illusion that I feel better about myself because of you – everything just an illusion. I was lying to myself the whole time. When I was with you, I was fine. When I was without you, I was miserable. I depended on you. My happiness depended on you. I felt like I wasn't good enough. I questioned everything about myself.

Today I understand. I understand that it wasn't me. It was you. You never looked at yourself and thought *I love myself; I love the way I am and the way I look.*

I am sorry you never felt that.

I'm good, now. I'm better; better without you. Feeling myself. Enjoying myself. Being myself. Being by myself. Loving every inch of myself.

I'm the girl dancing.



Artwork: No title, by Julia Schilowski, designed 2024

Lurking Silhouettes

A short story by Jasmin Magdalena Reich

You glance around the dark room. The silhouette of the sweater you wore the day before catches your eye, still draped over the chair. Your eyes trace its outline, trying to calm yourself and drift into sleep.

You feel calm.

Your vision blurs as your eyelids grow heavy, the silhouettes in the darkness muddling together into a dark mass. You lose focus, your mind wandering in and out of consciousness. The haze in your mind is as heavy as your warm, thick blanket, settling over your body and mind alike. Sleep creeps up on you, lulling you into its sweet song. The crickets outside chirp pleasantly, the wind blows gently against your window.

Just as sleep begins to claim you, something flickers in the corner of your vision.

You blink, your eyes snapping open.

You scan the room as your vision adjusts to the darkness. The longer you look, the more you see it. Twitching. Trembling. Tremoring.

The silhouettes begin moving.

Panic builds as the shadows creep closer. You reach for your phone on the chair beside your bed. A chill crawls up your exposed wrist. It feels like something is reaching out from beneath the bed, wrapping long, thin fingers around it.

Desperation sets in. Your panicked, shaking fingers bump harshly against a solid object. Relief washes over you as you recognize it as your phone, but then it slips from your grasp, falling to the floor.

You can't see it.

It's on the ground.

You stare at your surroundings.

But it's on the ground, and you can't see it.

Heart pounding, you almost tumble out of bed, clinging to the sheets as your hand searches the soft bristles of the carpet. Your body leans over the bed frame, the edge pressing painfully into your side. The sound of your frantic search echoes in the quiet, like desperate knocks against the ground.

It is lurking.

It is watching from beneath the bed.

It is approaching.

The fingers of its hand slowly unfold, turning into a big, gaping maw. You swear you can feel its fingertips dancing against your skin, grazing the sensitive hairs of your wrist.

You finally grasp the phone, throwing yourself back onto the bed. Fumbling, slamming your fingers against the screen and pulling down on the notification tab, your trembling fingertip hurriedly presses the button for the flashlight.

You see your room.

The sweater lies motionless on the chair. The stillness returns. You take a deep breath, your harsh breathing filling the silence. There is no hand beneath the bed. The silhouettes aren't moving.

You are okay.

You scan the room once more, your eyes darting over every edge. Your thumb hovers over the flashlight button, hesitating. After a moment, you press it, placing the phone back and lying down again, the room once more draped in darkness.

You hear the crickets and the wind. Your blanket settles over your weary body, warming you up.

Your eyelids grow heavy as you stare at the still silhouette of the sweater. Just as sleep begins to claim you again, you feel it creeping up from beneath the bed.



Artwork: „Frau auf blauem Grund“, by Julia Schilowski, painted 2023

Eight Feet and a Plural Proper

A short story by Linda Wright

Now that you, dear students, have committed to heart the plural forms for nouns in the English language (mainly -s/-es, -en, vowel change and no change), it is high time you hear from your appointed educators on the subject of a plural form so historically submersed, so linguistically knotty, that Thomas R. Henry himself took it for an extraordinary manifestation of nature and, in fact, nearly included it in his 1958 treatise on *The Strangest Things in the World*.

I refer, of course, to the plural of "octopus." Those of you already motivated to conduct some- ahem- *research*, may now type "plural of 'octopus'" into a search engine and skim the surface via internet surf to learn that people today still navigate whether the plural should be, perchance, "octopuses," for example, or, indeed, "octopi," as a question ultimately unfathomable.

It is not so. Having done the deep dive, I put forward- shocking as it may seem- that this linguistic difficulty was a -if not *the* main- catalyst of the Golden Age of Piracy (1650-1720).

As those of you who - in even younger days - approached such tall tales of swashbuckling fantasy as the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series with a healthy dose of skepticism are already aware, the progenitors of those classical pirates were basically a group of two dozen relatively harmless shipwreck scavengers, presumably of all genders. Many of the details to follow, however, have been neglected in the more widely documented accounts:

One sunny day in the early 1600s as this band of scavengers dropped anchor and dove into the briny dark to explore a sunken vessel, they spied an *octopus vulgaris*.

All was good and well until the second one showed up. An all-told sixteen meters of tentacles undulated in double rows of suction cups menacing enough to scare the subaqueous sailors, who quickly resurfaced and scaled the sides of their oaken brig. When they had regrouped on deck, Davy, who was in charge of this particular investigation, attempted to point out the obvious to his colleagues: It would be difficult to get into the sunken ship's hull with TWO such dangerous multi-appendaged mollusks now barring the way.

He had a really hard time expressing this.

One problem was "The Great Vowel Shift," which caused nearly as much confusion to those who actually lived through it as it does to those who study it today. The shift that would impact the appropriate plural suffixation of words ending in "us" and result in the existence of the nautical marauder was that from long I, phonetic / aɪ / to long E, / i:/, in Early Modern English (1500-1800).

The other problem Davy had to contend with in the split second he had to work with in determining what phoneme to append to Proto-Indo-European *oḱtów was that he had learned a little, but shy of enough, Latin from the local clergy in his home village. He had learned the plural ending "i," (pronouncing it / i:/), in Latin but *not* the word "ped". He also had a rather common understanding of the word "vulgaris."

And so his brain sort of short-circuited and what he came out with was "There be two dangerous Octopussi."

His colleague, Hector, answered, "Aye, that's one too many Octop---" but before he could utter the complete word, his wife, Anne, poked him between the ribs with a cross-staff, and what came out, all told, was

"Octopaaaarrrrrr!"

As Anne was the scavenger ship's navigator and was also holding something pointy, Hector could not very well retaliate. He went after Davy. The ensuing fistfight, which started at

the bow and lasted a total of forty-five minutes, subsuming participants during its counterclockwise route to port and stern. When they careened around to the starboard, the now fifteen brawlers nearly smashed a barrel of rum which had been brought up in anticipation of celebrating the haul from the sunken vessel. At the critical moment, however, they noticed it and logic won out: They decided it was time for their rations.

While in progress, the altercation had sent a crate's worth of oranges over the edge of the ship. Anne and seven wise-and-wary-of-scurvy allies lowered the lifeboat and rowed off in pursuit of the valuable fruit. By the time they had scooped most of it up where it bobbed like miniature suns on the salty surface of the ocean blue, they were already more than a mile out from the main ship and the aggravating din of the iterative, pointless power struggle on board. The eight of them looked at the ship, then at the oranges. Further inspection of their tiny craft yielded a box of hardtack, three jugs of water, and a small lead casket of coins. As was their sapiential habit, they thus carried out a logical and democratic discussion, at the end of which they agreed as one hexadecapus to row their booty elsewhere.

Back on the ship, one tot became two, and then three. After that they all lost count. The next day, still sprawled out on the deck, rubbing noggins that ached from an excruciating combination of clocking each other, grog, and their attempts to recollect why they had been fighting in the first place, they would all need patches to cover any eye not swollen shut against the first, hangover-exacerbating solar rays.

When they had slept it off, Davy and Hector remembered the sunken ship and the creatures they had seen below. Upon reflection and in order to circumvent the insurmountable conceptual barrier between the early 17th century human brain and formulating an appropriate plural for "octopus," the remaining crew decided as one man to just not talk about it anymore. Surely there must be easier ways of securing a chest of gold coins. And so they went off independently to steal ships, threaten trading routes, seize cargoes, and adopt parrots (in *fruitless* effort to upgrade the discourse to the level it had had before the departure of Anne et.al.) from that day forward.

What was then left of the original band of scavengers were the lingering notions that it was *bad luck to have a woman on board* and that the clearest, safest way for a man to express himself was, in fact,

"Aaaarrrrrr!"

And so, dear scholars, thus concludes my conscientious, if condensed account of what becomes of society when those who can, opt not to ascertain and use the proper forms of words in the English language. I hope, as is my professional duty, I have succeeded in spelling out why ignoring this particular language issue would be unwise.

The spelling is O C T O P E D E S. Or it is O C T O P O D E S.

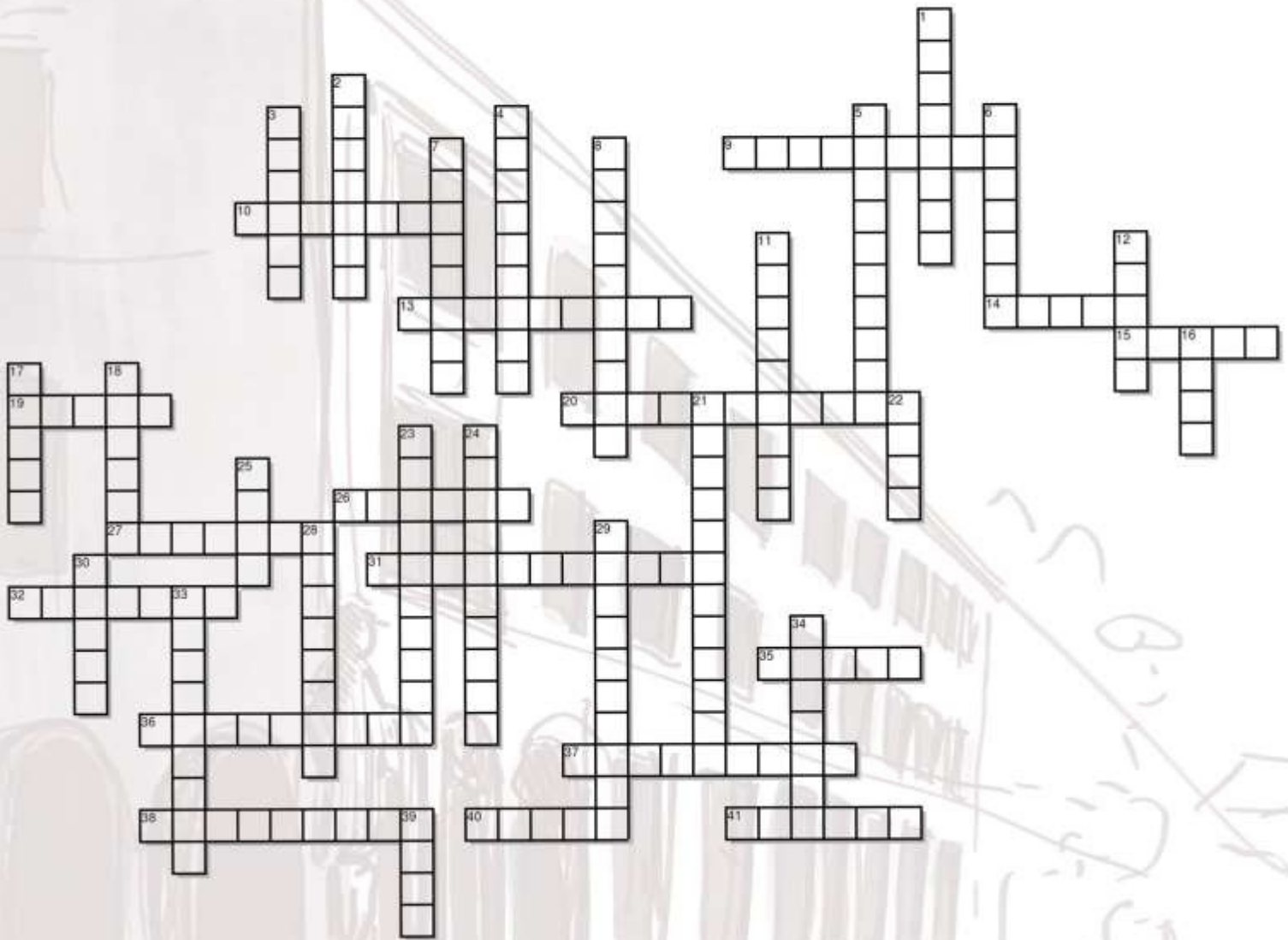
We must decide. Indeed: Should the humanities cease to be and humanity itself thus be again cast to the four winds, agreeing on an acceptable form of this word could well be the best preventative measure and the best practical contribution people in fields word-nerdian can take and make against future crime waves and the cataclysmic peril of plurals on the high seas.

Yours Faithfully,

Linda E. Wright

Artwork: No title (octopus), by Luca Sophie Hillbrands

41 Terms



ACROSS

- 9. An exaggerated statement (9)
- 10. Linguistic term for a variety of a language (7)
- 13. The study of sounds in language (9)
- 14. Shakespeare's theater in London (5)
- 15. The underlying message in a story (5)
- 19. 18th-century literary form often satirical in nature (5)
- 20. The main character in a literary work (10)
- 26. Narrative technique of presenting thoughts as they occur (6)
- 27. An author's choice of words (7)
- 31. Author of "Hamlet" (11)
- 32. The author's intent behind writing a piece (7)
- 35. A category of literary composition (5)
- 36. A speech made by a character alone on stage (9)
- 37. The study of meaning in language (8)
- 38. A fictitious name used by an author (9)
- 40. The perspective from which a story is told (5)
- 41. The structural arrangement of words in a sentence (6)

DOWN

- 1. Figures of speech in which contradictory terms appear together (8)

- 2. A pair of rhyming lines in poetry (7)
- 3. The use of humor to criticize (6)
- 4. Repetition of vowel sounds (9)
- 5. Study of how context influences meaning (9)
- 6. The time and place in which a story occurs (7)
- 7. Word or phrase applied to an object not literally applicable (8)
- 8. A reference book listing words and their meanings (10)
- 11. A lengthy speech by one character in a play (8)
- 12. A recurring subject or idea in a literary work (5)
- 16. Linguistic term for a word's basic meaning (5)
- 17. The regular pattern of stressed and unstressed syllables (5)
- 18. Narrative poem or song passed down orally (6)
- 21. The repetition of initial consonant sounds (12)
- 22. The author's attitude towards the subject (4)
- 23. Branch of linguistics studying word formation (10)
- 24. Unrhymed iambic pentameter (10)
- 25. A long narrative poem on a serious subject (4)
- 28. The "voice" telling the story in a narrative (8)
- 29. The final unraveling of the plot in a play or novel (10)
- 30. A literary technique involving surprising, interesting, or amusing contradictions (5)
- 33. The use of symbols to represent ideas (9)
- 34. The vocabulary of a person, language, or branch of knowledge (7)
- 39. The emotional atmosphere of a work (4)



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