

Simile

Issue / 02

**An interview
with Children's
Laureate
Michael Morpurgo**

**A dummy's
guide to William
Shakespeare**

**English as a
modern
must-have?
The view from
Russia**



Simile

student literary magazine

*Produced by and for students at Ghent University,
with the support of staff at the English Studies department*

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In December 2010, Griet and Margot had the honour of interviewing Michael Morpurgo, a best-selling British children's author and former Children's Laureate. To do so, they had to venture deep into the hills of West Flanders, looking for a small parish, Zandvoorde, where Morpurgo was doing a reading set to traditional English music in remembrance of the First World War.

INTERVIEW/ with Michael Morpurgo, Children's Laureate and best-selling author

By Griet Jacques and Margot Guillemin

Zandvoorde is a tiny village in West Flanders with just 500 inhabitants. It has one bakery (which doubles as the local tavern), a church, a few houses and not much else. As such, it might seem an odd setting for a conversation with Michael Morpurgo, one of Britain's most famous storytellers, and a former children's laureate.

Yet in many ways it is a perfect one. The village lies along what was, in the darker times of WWI, the Western Front, which has provided the setting for many of Morpurgo's books, including his most famous work, *War Horse*. Moreover, Morpurgo's interest in the link between history and literature is not a purely professional one. Born in 1943, he grew up under the shadow of both world wars, and was himself evacuated as a small child during the last years of the Second World War. Only later would he come to learn the impact the First War had had on his family. His uncle, who incidentally had close ties to Belgium, died on the Western Front, and his grandfather, Émile Cammaerts, was a Belgian war poet who gained notoriety during WWI.

Name: Michael Andrew Bridge Morpurgo

Birth-place: 5 October 1943 – St. Albans, Hertfordshire

Lives in: Essex

Studies: French and English literature at King's College London

Career: author, poet, playwright and librettist

Title: former Children's laureate (2003-5)

Other activities: together with his wife, Clare Lane, he established three farms, and started the 'Farms For City Children' charity which aims to provide city children with the experience of life in the countryside.

War Horse, the feature film

Morpurgo is clearly interested in Belgium; indeed before we have a chance to ask him anything, he starts to ask us questions about Belgian current affairs. He has given readings and performances of his work at Ypres and elsewhere, we learn. When we meet him, he is preparing to read from his picture book, *The Best Christmas Present in the World*, to the accompaniment of traditional English carols. But

This film, based on Morpurgo's book, recounts the adventures of a horse's journey from the farm to the battlefields of World War I. A friendship grows between the horse and his young owner, which survives the toughest of tests.

Release date: 28/12/2011 (USA)

Directed by: Steven Spielberg

Cast: Emily Watson, Jeremy Irvine and David Thewlis

(www.michaelmorpurgo.com/books/war-horse/)

before that, we have the honour of interviewing him about his career and what he thinks about literature.

We hold our conversation with Morpurgo in the nave of the village church, interrupted sporadically by fragments of Mozart blasting out of speakers and technicians shouting at each other as they set up for the show. It is not quite the elegant surroundings we might have expected

for an interview with one of Britain's most successful children's authors. But the minute he starts to talk, we are swept up by his famous gift for storytelling and we soon forget that we are sitting on cold, hard pews in the back of a dusty church.

Although Morpurgo has a degree in English literature, it was only after his studies, while teaching in a primary school, that he discovered the magic of storytelling. He found that maths or grammar could not engage all of his 35 pupils. Rather, telling stories was the only way to ensure their undivided attention – mouths open and eyes looking eagerly at him. Reading tales from a book did not always do the trick, however. His pupils would get distracted. So he would create stories of his own, which, surprisingly, worked well every time. 'I do not think it was because the story was very good. It wasn't. But it was because I meant it and what I discovered in there in that ten minutes is that if you mean a story, people are going to believe it ...'. As his tales expanded, he began to write them down, and, as they say, the rest is in the books.

Today Michael Morpurgo is one of England's most renowned writers of children's literature, and yet he is not a fan of the canon. Rather, for him, storytelling is more than a corpus or a genre. It is at the core of everything he does: 'Great literature is, in the end, storytelling. Filmmaking is storytelling, theatre is storytelling [...]'. We ask if this makes the act of writing itself almost secondary, and Morpurgo agrees that it is, or at least it 'should be to every writer of fiction'. It is dangerous to focus too much on literary techniques, he says, as it can crush the

creativity of the writer and the spontaneity of the literary work. ‘As far as I am concerned, a story that works is one that moves you, enables you to empathise with other people, understand the world of other people.’ This statement counts for children’s as well as adult literature. ‘The only difference is that children are more impatient as an audience. What children won’t do is pretend. If they don’t like something they walk out, so it’s got to be good. That’s a real compulsion’.

Morpurgo’s idea of literature as pure storytelling diverges somewhat from that of the established literary world. When asked what he thought ‘Literature’ means, Morpurgo said it was ‘a book that touches you, a book that matters to you, which makes you think of the words in it. I know the difference. I mean we all know the difference [between] books that you read and think, pass me another one [...]’

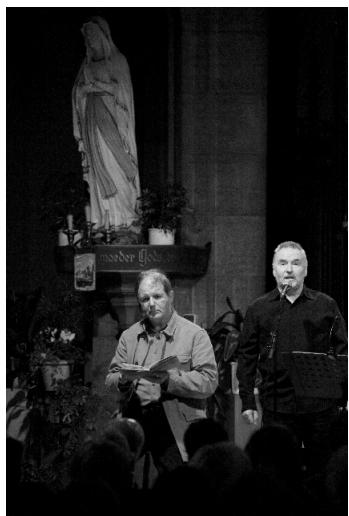
“Literature with a capital L are books that really get through to you, the ones you go on dreaming about and thinking about.”

[and] books that really get through to you, the ones you go on dreaming about.’ Those are the books that make up Literature ‘with a capital L’ in Morpurgo’s opinion, and accordingly he does not subscribe to the idea that one’s knowledge about literature could be measured by ‘counting up how many you have read’, even though he does acknowledge such reading lists are still useful. The British government uses these methods to estimate how ‘literate’ young people are, but Morpurgo would much prefer a system in which teachers and librarians are free to choose which books to read with children, and to share their own love of particular stories and writers with the children, rather than one that forces children to read a particular set of ten books from the government-approved ‘canon’. He feels it

is much more important to teach young children a love of reading by letting them read the books they want to read, so that when the time comes they can then be guided towards books that are more difficult to understand, and eventually to books that are considered ‘real’ literature.

Morpurgo himself did not react well to being forced to read a certain type of literature. By his own admission, he was not a very good university student because he felt like everything was a test, and in those days – ironically – he often had trouble expressing himself in writing. ‘One professor made a difference then.’ He remembers, ‘One day he sat on a desk and read me a wonderful poem, the story of Gawain and the Green Knight. He read that to me, and to all of us, and I was enchanted! Not because he was a particularly good teacher, [...] but he read it as if he cared. As if it was the most important thing in the world to him at that moment. You just got fired with it, that this man, this old doctor, that he just

loved it, he absolutely loved it, and he read it like that, [...] and all of a sudden I realized that he had a huge capacity for the love of words and the music in them.' Many of us, as students of literature, distinguish between real literature with capital L and popular literature, but Morpurgo disagrees: 'I do not want the capital 'L' at all, I want a small 'l', and a big S for Story. I think it is a sort of Apartheid which we have got to get rid of between those who read literature and those who read other things. I think it is very crippling and negative, in a way that literature should have a small l, because it is more than stories. It is important but it shouldn't feel self-important about itself [...].'



His feelings towards 'Literature' notwithstanding, Morpurgo maintained a strong personal friendship with one of the biggest names in the contemporary canon of British 'Literature', the late Poet Laureate, Ted Hughes. The two often met and talked, and it was Hughes who made the Children's Laureate possible. Morpurgo recalls saying to Hughes late one evening, 'You are the poet laureate. Why do you not do something about the fact that

people are always looking down on children's literature? Why can we not have a children's laureate?' Hughes loved the idea and 'he immediately made a list of five people he needed to call to make it happen; he rang the Queen – something he could do because he was the Poet Laureate – and the Minister of Culture and he had a meeting set up within the week.' Sadly, Hughes died a mere three months later, and during those months he was sick, leaving the lobbying, the meetings and organizing to Morpurgo. The Children's Laureate became fact one year later: a position granted to an influential children's author or illustrator for a period two years. 'A short six years after the conversation between Ted and me, I got a phone call saying: what if you were to be the next one? My first thought was that it was going to look silly, that people would think that I elected myself.' But Morpurgo did say yes and was made the third Children's Laureate.

The work which most likely contributed to Morpurgo becoming Children's laureate is *War Horse*, his famous novel about a young boy and his horse during the First World War. Indeed, throughout his oeuvre, Morpurgo does not avoid themes of suffering and sadness. Another of his novels, *Private Peaceful*, is set during WWI, and he has also written about World War II (*Alone on a Wide Wide Sea*, *The Amazing Story of Adolphus Tips*) and more recently

"Great literature, in the end, is storytelling."

"If you mean a story, people are going to believe it."

about the war in Afghanistan (*Shadow*) and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict (*The Kites are Flying*). Morpurgo's choice of subject is influenced by his personal experience as a child growing up in the aftermath of war. 'I was a war baby, and witnessed what bombs had done to buildings and to people. [...] You grow up with that in your head and it never leaves you.'

Yet he also grew up at a time when adults simply did not explain such serious matters to children. 'There was a time when I was young that adults could keep the world hidden for children. There was a kind of conspiracy, actually a quite nice conspiracy, to protect children physically and from all sorts of realities. [...] Now every time a body comes home with a plane from Afghanistan with a flag draped over, kids are watching. Every time they see a photograph of a plane, of a bomb coming down, a bridge blowing up, they are watching someone being killed, and I would hate that to become entertainment. It is not entertainment and they need to know the difference between the one and the other'. Over recent decades, war has 'bubbled up to the surface all over the world.' Now it seems that, as Michael Morpurgo the child grew up with a conspiracy of silence, Morpurgo the adult feels responsible for reminding others about the danger of war, and telling the story of war's gravity and horror in a way that children can understand.

The dual nature of his work – treating complex themes in a medium designed for children – lends itself to adaptation. His works have appeared as operas, musicals, stage plays, theatre plays and films. A particularly successful adaptation was *War Horse* by Nick Stafford and the Handspring Puppet Company, which used spectacular life-size puppets of horses to tell Morpurgo's story. What did Morpurgo think of the adaptation? 'Actually, I found it quite wonderful. It is very different from the book, but that is what is wonderful. They took the book and brought this wonderful inventive music and design, made the puppet recordings, ... More amazing is that it has become so iconic of the theatre in London, it is now (being) made into a movie' (eds: by Steven Spielberg) [...] I love the way it spreads out'.



The combination of literature with other art forms clearly fascinates Morpurgo. A few years ago he started a new project on World War I together with the English a capella trio Coope, Boyes & Simpson. The act combines Michael Morpurgo's storytelling with English roots music. 'I first met them in Ypres in the Flanders Fields museum. I had just finished *Private Peaceful* and I thought it would be a very interesting project to have their music warming up the story. So we created an evening of story and music woven into each other'. Tonight (eds: December 11, 2010) the group, accompanied by three female singers, will perform for the first time in Belgium. Morpurgo is telling his story *The Best Christmas Present in the World* (based on the events of Christmas night 1914 when soldiers on the Western Front came out of the trenches and played a football match in no-man's-land) accompanied by traditional carols from World War I. And indeed as we later see, the fusion works well. The artists bring to life their stories of little men in the Great War with great compassion and earnestness so that suddenly this war, now almost a hundred years in the past, is again tangible. 'History and literature side by side is very important.'

Despite his repeated assertions that he is not interested in the theory behind 'Literature', Morpurgo is an author who has thought deeply about how and why he writes as he does. His philosophy of literature is based on storytelling, rather than literary techniques or the canon. For us, as students of literature, his is a refreshing perspective. Like us, Morpurgo once worked his way through reading lists and literary theories and reminds us that the study of literature is often laden down with rules and conventions. In effect, Morpurgo seems quite a pragmatic writer. Rather than see literature as an isolated art form, he is engaged with the world around him in a practical, tangible way. Children's literature is a medium through which history, ideas, fantasies, and human experience can pass in a way that is meaningful and gripping for children and adults alike. Morpurgo is able to capture the complexities of war – present and past – with a simple story. About a boy and a horse. Or young men playing football at Christmas. This in turn not only engages children in the story, but also explains why the story matters: War should play no part in any child's future.

With a new appreciation for Michael Morpurgo's way of writing for children, we leave him to prepare for an evening of what he does best: storytelling.

**"What children
won't do is
pretend. If
they don't like
something, they
walk out."**





Dancing in the Library (Marianne Van Meegeren)



Speed reading is technique for reading quickly. It is not the same as 'skimming' or 'scanning'; you do not omit any words, and, with some practice, the skilled speed-reader does not miss out on any content at all. It makes it possible to double one's reading rate, from the average 250 words per minute to up to 500.

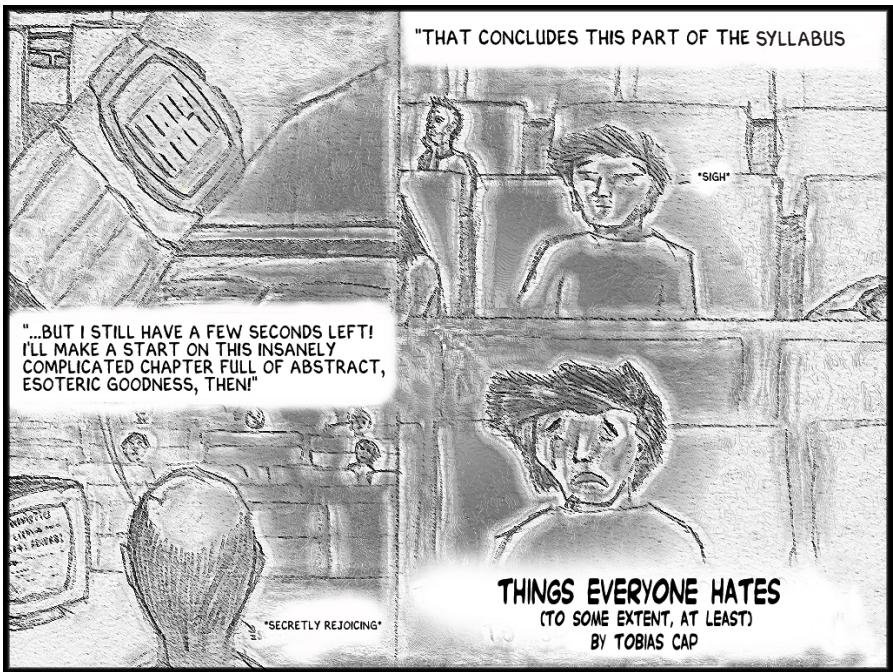
SPEED READING

By Janne Vanhemmens

It is impossible not to see the advantages of speed reading: you can finish Flaubert's *Parrot* or *Pride & Prejudice* in only half so many frustrating hours; or if you need to copy some articles, you can save the environment, and pay less because it is a piece of cake to quickly work out exactly which pages you need. The disadvantage is that you need quite a bit of training and motivation to learn how to speed-read. But it is possible! First of all, make sure you are reading a book that you understand. You need perfect surroundings and optimal concentration. Then, you can train yourself by using a visual guide:

taking a pen or using a finger to guide you along each line makes it possible for your eye muscles to be coordinated in a more efficient way. What happens is that your brain is forced to read groups of words instead of all words separately. When you speed up the pencil, your reading follows automatically. Relax and take a short pause after big paragraphs to think about the main idea it contained. Finally, it is necessary to reduce 'subvocalization' (the habit of silently forming the words with your mouth which seriously slows down the reading process).

HOWEVER! Do not try to learn speed reading too speedily! You have a good chance of becoming competent if you just read about five times a week, and increase your speed a little bit each time.





On 24th February, five teams of student debaters met in the presence of Prof. Dr. David Crystal and debated the question below. They have kindly summarised their opinions for Simile:

STUDENT DEBATE /

"How should language be organised in Belgium?"

Full bilingualism in Belgium/

Nils Smeuninx and Vic De Muynck

Our joint effort in advocating bilingualism in Belgium has led to a waterproof plan to secure the linguistic future of Belgium. We stated that bilingualism has worked out organically in other countries such as Switzerland and Canada. In the case of Belgium, our proposal consists of expanding the Brussels 'personality principle' to cover the entire nation, thus offering any Belgian the ability to be addressed in the language of his/her choice. In that way, by slowly but steadily moving the language frontiers, the political impasse will soon be resolved in a natural fashion, and automatically trigger more civic happiness.

Abolition of language laws/ Tom

Vanassche and Warda El-Kaddouri

We advocate people's free choice to use

whatever language they deem fittest. Frankly, we do not really need any language laws. One reason for this is that our constitutional laws (and hence also our language laws) are far too complex. Moreover, it is very possible to break the language laws and get away with it, which simply proves that these laws are completely redundant. What is the use of a law if no one abides by it? Another reason is that the language laws block the Belgian system rather than helping us achieve a clear-cut language policy. Abolishing language laws would result in complete freedom of choice: we would be able to build bridges between the northern and southern parts of our country and it would finally be possible to form a government, which we urgently need to protect pensions, jobs, and the economy.

English as an official language/

Elise D'haeseleer and Joylene Dumarey

Our solution to the language problem in Belgium was to introduce English as an official language. This will end the constant battle between Dutch and French, and we're not the only ones who think this: last year Professor Bruno de Wever, history professor, suggested the very same thing. Moreover, English is a far more economical language than Dutch: if you swear in Dutch you use four syllables, in English you only need four letters.

French as an official language/

Katelijne De Meyer and Lisa Buelens

Without a doubt, we had the best solution to end the language troubles in Belgium: French! Before you critical thinkers – a.k.a UGent students – start raising your eyebrows in doubt and disbelief, listen to a few of our extremely convincing arguments. French as the official language of Belgium has certain economic plusses, for example cheaper educational costs for the royal family. Considering the level of the Dutch skills of the royal family, the savings made here will undoubtedly fix the Belgian budgetary deficit. Furthermore, introducing French will result in improved communication between the Flemish and the French. We will always understand Mr. Daerden, even when he is drunk. And there will be no more need for panic or extreme body language if you get a heart attack in Brussels, because now people there will actually comprehend what you are saying.

Dutch as an official language/

Karlien Lowie and Leander Van Gijsegem

Anyone who has been watching the news over the past few months will agree that Belgium is struggling with several political and linguistic issues. Even if the current political situation seems irrelevant to us linguists, the linguistic reality, however, is rather unsettling. Lay people might believe that a mere 3 languages are spoken in Belgium: French in the southern regions where people are viciously searching for a job market, German in a few eastern villages where people fill their days milking cows and finally, Dutch in the larger - and historically and culturally more important - area. Though this is a rather accurate observation, one cannot deny that multiculturalism is also an important characteristic of Belgian society: next to the three main languages, many speak Polish, Serbian, Hungarian, Bulgarian, Turkish, Slovak,...

Past studies of Babel (e.g. The Bible) illustrate that such a situation will inevitably descend into utter chaos. To avoid this, we should invest in a linguistic unity throughout Belgium, and of course the simplest, most sound-proof solution is to turn to Dutch. Why? Because Flanders wouldn't even have existed if it wasn't for the economic power of its language in the Middle Ages. Because our free accent simply sounds more beautiful than the endless end-weight sounds that dominate French. Because Flanders is bigger than Wallonia and because most Belgians

speak Dutch, not French. Because Dutch would facilitate our trade with South Africa, where a variety of Dutch (Afrikaans) is spoken, which would in turn enable Belgian traders to import African music, African design and even African weather.

Karlien and Leander also added a word of sense about their experience of debating: "Of course all of the above is utterly ridiculous. Of course we know that the arguments are far-fetched, irrational and absurd. And yet, my partner and I – and all the other debaters – were immensely convincing. And that's exactly what debating is all about: thinking outside the con-



ventional boundaries and then mastering the sweet skill to actually convince others that your gibberish sounds more rational than the fact that the sky is up. That – my dear friends – is what we call 'academic achievement'."

Prof. Dr. David Crystal's perspective / *David Crystal*

The debate was everything one could wish for, and it's nice to have the opportunity in the pages of *Simile* to congratulate all the participants for their splendid preparation and presentation. All the participants were impressively fluent and cogent - so much so that I found it impossible to choose a winner based on the content of what they said! In the end I had to fall back on one of the criteria mentioned by the organizers – the element of humour and absurdity.

In my comments afterwards, and taking my cue from the winning team, I drew attention to two other proposals which could help resolve the language problem. One was to accept all five proposals, and implement them in sequence for, say, two months at a time; the other was to adopt a completely neutral tongue as a national language - and Welsh stands out here as the obvious candidate. (Did I mention that I came from Wales?) However, I am not holding my breath that either of these submissions will be respected anywhere outside of my imagination, and they certainly don't compete with the intelligent discourse that I heard in the debate.

Interested in joining the Ghent English Debate Society? Find out more through Minerva (course number AX00006A) or Facebook, or email mieke.vandenbroucke@ugent.be or joanna.britton@ugent.be



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English is fast becoming the most popular language in the world, so it's no surprise that many people want to learn it – of course, you need English to travel, to communicate, to understand web pages, to read the instructions for your brand new gadget, and, moreover, to get a good job.

ENGLISH AS A MODERN MUST-HAVE?

The view from Russia

By Daria Vaulina

»

- » There are many ways to start speaking English, but in my opinion the most important thing is the country where you live.

In Belgium it's easy: the culture itself pushes people to study English. There are BBC channels on TV; none of the good films are dubbed so you get to listen to the native speakers starting from childhood (it's easier to listen than to follow the subtitles, and, moreover, even listening to the language improves your language skills). There are also other reasons why English is so popular here: Dutch comes from the same language family, and lots of English words are used in Belgium. Most students here are taken to London on a school excursion – it takes only a couple of hours by train to get to the centre of UK, no visa needed. Belgium has always been a small country, and it needed to maintain the balance between its neighbors, and to be friends with different nations – for this, it is necessary to speak English, of course! What is the difference with other countries? I was born in Russia and for now I'm living in Moscow, and here the situation is completely different. Our language isn't like English at all – of course we use the Cyrillic alphabet which doesn't look or sound at all like the Latin alphabet – there are symbols like щ, ц, ы, and there are some letters that seem to be almost impossible to pronounce if you're not Russian. There are many people who can speak fluent English after living in an

English-speaking country, or after studying it really hard, but there are very few people who can really speak Russian after learning it for a couple of years, or even living here. It is really very different, and for many European people it doesn't seem logical at all – we don't use articles; we say one thing and mean something different from its obvious meaning; we speak fast and our grammar is extremely difficult to study.

Imagine a country like Russia. It is 150 times bigger than Belgium. It has got many cities, towns, villages. Only in the last 20 years have people started to understand the importance of studying English. Before that, there was a Soviet Union with its strange desire to protect us from everything abroad. (Yes, the Beatles, gum and good clothes were prohibited.) This dangerous culture, which could break up communism, was the number one enemy for us. And so was English, the main language of this culture – of course there were some people teaching it at school, but no one really spoke it.

Has the situation changed now, with the spread of Internet and democracy? Next time I will tell you more. With best wishes from the windy and snowy Moscow (we do have lots of snow at the end of March!).



Woman with Orchid (*Lisa M. Burns*)

Lisa M. Burns is an American-Canadian artist who moved to Leuven in 2006. The artworks printed in this magazine are black-and-white photographs of originals painted in color. "The Gift of Mystery" and "The Path of Least Resistance" were part of the SalonSalon exhibition at Bar Aktion III (Brabantdam 70, Gent) in March and April 2011. For more information: please see www.lisaburns-artist.com or send an email to lisaburns.artist@gmail.com.



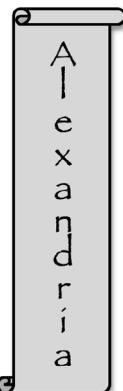
TRAVEL GUIDE/ to the most prestigious libraries in the world

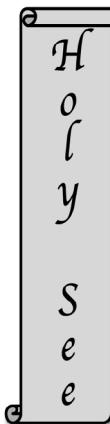
By Pauline De Pelsmacker
and Margot Guillemin



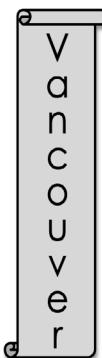
» **THE BODLEIAN LIBRARY/**The Bodleian Library, also known as the Bodley, is the library of the University of Oxford. It is the oldest public library in Europe and one of the largest; in the UK only the British Library is larger. The Library as it is now was named, refurnished and founded, if you will, in 1602 by its namesake Sir Thomas Bodley. It is one of six legal deposit libraries, meaning that it contains a copy of every work published in the UK. Some of the most famous manuscripts and texts in history are kept there, for example: a first folio of Shakespeare's works, several copies of the Magna Charta, a Roland song, and a Gutenberg Bible.

ROYAL LIBRARY OF ALEXANDRIA/Although the Royal Library of Alexandria in Egypt no longer exists it still deserves a mention in our list of the most prestigious libraries in the world. It was founded by a student of Aristotle, and designed according to the latter's idea of a lyceum. This kind of architecture probably resembles the present day layout of a university campus. It flourished under the patronage of the Egyptian Ptolemaic dynasty from the 3rd century BC until it was burned – accidentally? – by Julius Caesar in 48 BC. This is the first of four different disasters that historians accept as possible reasons for the whole or partial destruction of the library.





» **THE VATICAN LIBRARY**/The Vatican Library is one of the oldest still-existing and working libraries in the world. A part of the library is open to the public and it is possible for any member of the public to see the rest of the collection if they can prove they need access to e.g. older manuscripts or restricted documents. Officially the library was founded in the 15th century, but the records go back to the 8th century. Some of its most famous manuscripts include the 'Codex Vaticanus Graecus 1209', one of the oldest existing extended manuscripts of the Bible; the 'Vergilius Vaticanus' a manuscript of Vergilius's Georgics and Aeneid; and, last but not least the Secret Vatican Archives are home to the very letter sent by King Henry VIII to the Pope requesting an annulment of his marriage to Catherine of Aragon.



THE PUBLIC LIBRARY OF VANCOUVER/The Public Library of Vancouver is the third-largest library system in Canada. It holds over 2.2 million items, but this is not what earned it its place. This library is in our travel guide because it occupies an entire city block in downtown Vancouver! The library itself is a rectangular box with 9 stories containing all the books and services of the library, surrounded by a curved wall and glass-topped roof. Not only is this library situated in a very interesting building, it seems the librarians are apparently also true philanthropists, as they give the residents of local homeless shelters a place to spend their days in the library during the winter months.



» **THE KUNLIGA BIBLIOTEKET**/Founded in 1661, the Kunliga Biblioteket in Sweden has over twenty million objects in its virtual collection, consisting of everything from Swedish newspapers and books to TV- and radio programs. The library is not only responsible for collecting all materials which are ever printed in Sweden. It also functions as a research library, and is a source of information for numerous journalists, students and scholars. The institution and its staff of over 400 employees are authorized by the Swedish minister of Education and Research. Despite its spotless reputation and strict rules- for example, the fact that no books can be taken home, and the library can only be used by people who are over 18 - there was a scandal in 2008 when a great amount of child pornography was found in the library collection.

THE NATIONAL LIBRARY OF FRANCE/

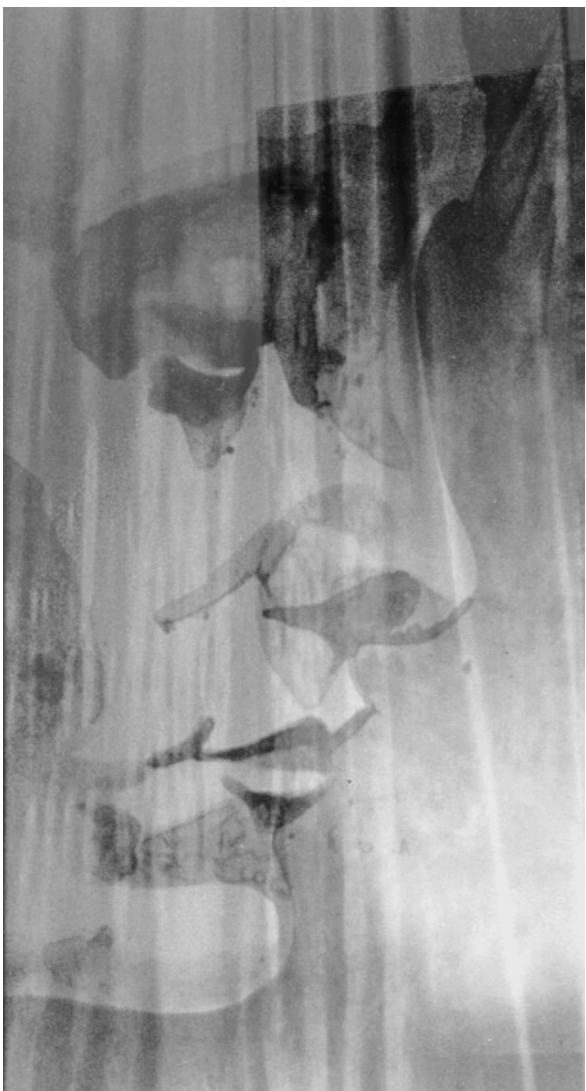
As one of the oldest libraries in the world, the National Library of France has existed as an institution for over 600 years . However, it was only after several changes of location and owner that the Bibliothèque Nationale de France finally had its own building in 1996. The four L-shaped buildings are meant to look like four open books, and each building is named for the content of its collections: time, law, numbers and letters. This is not only one of the oldest, but also one of the most modern libraries in the world, due to its architecture and use of its 'Gallica' database , where people not only search for references but they can actually view over ten thousand documents online from anywhere in the world. Some collections are still available for the public in the older premises in Rue Richelieu, including Western and Eastern manuscripts, maps, music compositions and even costumes from theater productions. Although it isn't a museum, the BnF also occasionally organizes small exhibitions and cultural events, with the support of the Government and the Minister of Culture.

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» THE AL-QARAWIYYIN UNIVERSITY LIBRARY/The

Al-Qarawiyyin university library in Fez was founded in 859 by a Muslim woman who inherited some money from her father and decided to build a mosque. In Arabic, 'Al-Qarawiyyin' means 'The central mosque of Townspeople', and the mosque served as a cultural, social and political center where people could come together. This place has seen numerous generations of scholars walk through its doors, and the beautiful 1200 year old university is still in use today, and is known throughout Africa and the Muslim world as a great center of learning. Although built as a mosque, it never really had a religious role in history, but rather is one of the oldest existing educational institutions in the world. One of the famous scholars who used the Al-Qarawiyyin University Library was Ibn Khaldun, a medieval social scientist and forerunner of several modern disciplines. The collection of the Library mostly consists of gifts from Sultans, who donated items because of their high admiration for this prestigious university.

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The Face of Antigone (Lisa M. Burns)



People Walking (*Lisa M. Burns*)



Oceanic Dreams (Lisa M. Burns)

CR/01

APRÈS MOI LE DÉLUGE | F.M. EROLL

As I | Tom Cornelis

| F.M. EROLL

BUTTERFLY | LENI VERBOGEN

SEASONS | LENI VERBOGEN

*ARACHNOphobic | AINGHEAL APRYL

CUPERTH | VALENTINO BOTTAZO

WALK | KAICHENG QIAN

WORSHIP, WINE AND WEEPING | GEOFREY COLSON

Après moi le Déluge

The arks and arches turned and toppled
In the silence of the thunder's roar
Profess and preach a turmoiled truth
Of churning tranquil's reign afore
For Clarity did dance in shackles, and
Spoke half lies and then no more
Of whirling dark that counter-
pointed shadowed light and bleakened awe
And died. And rose again too briefly,
Her chains as broken as her form.

So render me, to speak and be
The 'I', now, of the storm.

(F.M. Eroll)

As I

Tear down the wall
revealing the first crimson line,
Tears shed I shall
unearthing cold enemies mine.

As my heart, deprived of air,
unveils its last hidden shrine,
Only pain becomes my heir
scorching every path divine.

No longer can I contain
the horrors of the smallest vein,
No more may I reign
when nothing is all, and all is in vain.

(Tom Cornelis)

Like anything beyond compare,
You are
Just enough
When barely whispered

(F.M. Eroll)

Butterfly

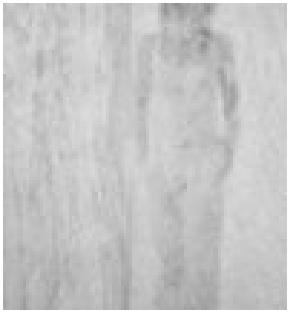
Like a butterfly on a string
Caught in your fascination
Fluttering but not yet free
With every tug
Pulling me closer to your heart
As you wrap your strings around mine
This fluttering feeling
Of anxious anticipation
Makes me tumble down
Into your hands
My wings gently folded
Shimmering in your light

(Leni Verbogen)

Seasons

As the year's wheel revolves
Fluffy white puffs float around
Winter firmly standing his ground
While Spring merrily evolves
To Summer-loving gayety
Losing themselves in their wond'rous game
Questioning our sanity
To love all seasons the same
Autumn is pulling at their sleeves
Pointing out the flash of red leaves

(Leni Verbogen)



Dancers (*Marianne Van Meegeren*)

*** A**rachnophobic

My stomach has crawled all the
way up with its iron spider legs
not to dilate through my mouth
but to explode in my throat

Yet Hush. Hush my child.
We'll all end up dead one day.

My fists are raw from the beating
against walls of splintered glass
trapped with the eight-legged
c r e a t u r e

Now Sleep. Sleep my darling.
We'll never wake again.

What is fascinating about the foul?
Why does the nightingale die?
The long bent spears of steel
pierce throats of the innocent.

(Aingheal Apryll)

Curseth

Curseth be thee,
for ye shan't judge those ye know not,
for ye shan't spite those ye know not,
for ye shan't speak ill of those ye know not.

Yes, curseth be thee
and may the punishment of purgatory
and the fiery flames and fires of the deepest depths from hell
descend upon that pitiful soul of yours
and devour it.

Yes, curseth be thee,
for ye shall suffer an eternity of pain
and heaven's gate will remain closed for thee
and then long lost your name, your soul will be into oblivion.

Yes, curseth be thee

(Valentino Bottazzo)

Walk

Many walks took place along the bank of Swan Lake. As I sat through a day on a bench and watched people pass by, I felt sad.

At dawn, I faced the lake covered by a thin layer of ice, but I didn't feel cold. A mobile phone was playing a song again and again, and it was mine.

I was waiting patiently for someone to come and sit beside me.

She hadn't come yet; maybe it was too cold or too early or the sunlight wasn't bright enough.

The first to pay me heed was a dog, followed shortly after by its master, wearing pink. He gave me a sniff; she passed by. Good dog, I said to him, don't lose your master, I'm just waiting for someone to come and I'm fine.

Oblique light touched the ice, too weak to melt it down. Two workers walked behind me and stopped nearby. They were here to shovel up the sand scattered by the strong westerly wind. After a while, they finished their work and lit up two cigarettes. One patted the other's shoulder and pointed at a black spot in the lake. When a seagull landed on it, they both laughed. They went on shoveling and the sun went on rising.

It was about noon and I was still sitting on the bench, waiting for her to come. An old couple sat down beside me. I didn't hear them speak much, or they didn't speak at all. They were out to bask in the warm sun and watch the ice thin. Otherwise they would surely be sitting by their fireplace reading fairy tales to their grandson.

The wind mustered its force and blew the old couple away, scattered sand all over the pavement. A young man walked by. He picked up my mobile phone, looked around and tried to take it away. I stared at him with unflinching eyes and he hurried off.

Then I heard the laughter of approaching children. Their teacher warned them to keep a safe distance from the water. And when they walked by me hand in hand, I smiled.

Trees were getting greener, grass was too, one young lover was hurting, hurting.

I sat through the day til dusk. Many people had passed on by. But not her. She made me wait on a bench of nails. When the last glow of sunset was gone, snowfall followed. But I didn't feel it melting on my palms; it slid through my fingers, wetting them slightly.

I heard an ambulance's siren, heard it cry out my name. She came to me but I was already gone; the tinny music of my phone falling on cold, deaf ears. It took a searchlight to see me, under the big moon, under the thin ice, where I sat.

My day is done. If I am cold then you are warmth, light to my deep dark. Will you hold me tight again? Walk with me and sit with me?

(Kaicheng Qian)

Worship, Wine and Weeping

The boy and girl went
To a bar: Place he'd end up
Anyway that night.

They were not lovers
But together they sheltered
From the pouring rain.

Coming from seven
Degrees outside, they ordered
Twelve and a half each.

The boy revealed his
Dreams to her and she faced him
With reality.

With a frown he said
'I really thought you and I...'
'Quit thinking.' she said.

As his trembling hand
Caressed her cheek, she turned her
Head and left the place.

With a rapid pace,
She went to the door as the
Poor boy sighed in vain.

He waived the waitress
For a drink, to shrink the dusk
Of his optimism.

Blonde Marie brought him
A beer. In a mist of smoke
The boy wrote "way down":

"I have nothing to
Regret, except for my love
And this dull haiku."

He chuckled without
A smile and then looked at a
Woman of ripe age.

She blew vicious smoke
Circles towards the square he
Suddenly felt like.

After a few more
Thoughts and drinks, he left at a
"Last quarter" past twelve.

At home, he put on
Leonard Cohen's first record
And stared at the rain.

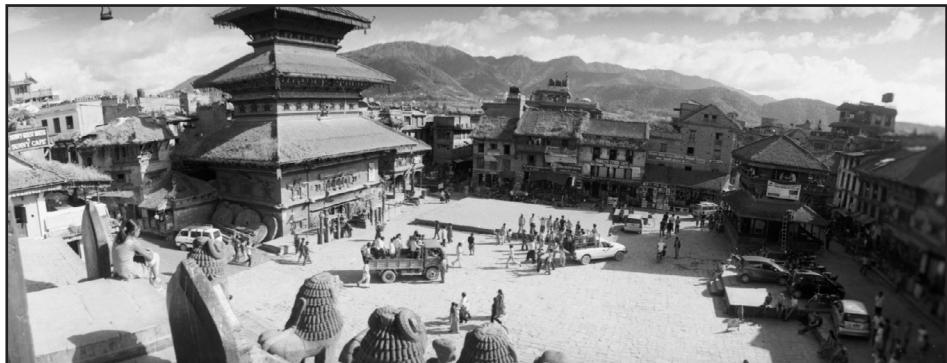
And he ended up
With his mind even more mixed
Up than his last drink.

With a stained heart and
A broken liver, hope ran
Out of cigarettes.

(*Geoffrey Colson*)



Waterdrop (*Marianne Van Meegeren*)



(Janpieter Chielens)

Globe-trotting in Nepal **A TRAVELER'S REFLECTIONS/**

By Griet Jacques

»

» Monday Sun/

As the jetliner gets ready to land I gaze through the little window at the spot we are about to discover. The airplane flies alongside the green walls which surround the valley of the Vishnumati river. In this valley, lying at 4429 ft, is Kathmandu, the capital city of Nepal. The mountains are beautiful and bright as we land there on a Monday afternoon. The city appears peaceful and calm and I remember descriptions of this place as the mecca of meditation and inner peace. Beneath me, a colourful carpet of little houses is spread out between green giants who seem to close off the ancient city from the outside world and protect them so that daily life here can go on undisturbed.

At the sight of the incredible landscape, my excitement grows and I cannot wait until we get out of this plane. But my idea of Kathmandu as a quiet city quickly disappears as we walk out the international airport – which looks less like an airport and more like the cafeteria of my local swimming pool in Flanders which is past its prime. Even the air feels similar to a swimming pool: in September the Nepali climate is very hot and damp from the passing Monsoon. On the other side of the road a crowd is staring at us. Barely a second later taxi drivers come running towards us from all sides! They all want to offer us the best lift for the best price: “For you good friend, good price!”. They

scream, push others aside, pull us from one car to the other. This sudden chaos, the heat and the tiredness of an almost twenty hours journey overwhelms us. Welcome to Kathmandu!

Hustle and Bustle/

Eventually a fifth-hand Suzuki brings us to our first destination. Crammed into the ragged little car, backpacks on our laps, we rush through the dusty streets of Kathmandu, gazing around at the bustling street activities. We pass dozens of markets with fruit, vegetables, fish, meat, rice, clothes, but also with what for us are less common products: spices, chewing tobacco, calendars of the holy spirits, Hindi-music cassettes, sacrifices like flowers and sugar candy, masks etc. People are walking up and down the streets, carrying heavy baskets, guiding a group of children, making music near holy temples, dragging building stones.

Kathmandu is full of building work now; as I saw from the airplane, the valley is nearly built over. It is as if the city is slowly climbing up the mountains. You could say that this growth of Kathmandu symbolizes how Nepal is changing, how it is stepping out of its isolation and ascending its massive walls to take a look at the rest of the world. We notice how modernity is slowly trickling through. However Nepal still remains an island in the clouds cherishing its cultural inheritance after being

isolated for many centuries. At the same time, things we find obvious are not present in Nepal. An international newspaper, concepts such as equality and freedom of speech, compulsory school attendance, prohibition of child labour, fast transport and so on, are lacking.

Inner City/

The first impression we get of Kathmandu is from the little Suzuki which brings us to our hostel. Its driver is a chatty young man. He studies political sciences at the University of Kathmandu. Taxi driving is one of the many jobs he does in order to pay for his studies. Like many other Nepalese he also has jobs taking people trekking, or standing in the street and trying to lure tourists into one of the many hotels. After half an hour of winding roads we arrive at Basantpur Durbar Square. This main square is the centre of Kathmandu and lies in the shadow of the mighty Royal Palace. On Basantpur Durbar Square salesmen try to sell their goods displayed on pieces of cloth on the ground. Children are running around and when they notice us, they stop, approach and reach out their little hands, asking for "chocolates".

Loaded with our backpacks we walk across the square into Jochen Tole, now better known as Freak Street. In the late 1960s and early 1970s this street became the 'place to be' for hippies and flower-power-lads who left the capitalistic West and travelled to the rooftop of the world

in search of inner peace and knowledge. Now, forty years later, the older colourful dreadlocked hippies still sit on the doorsteps of their homes, philosophizing about life and smoking their magical herbs. They are no longer tourists, but have become a part of daily life. Here, along with traditional Nepalese music such as Bahun, Gurung and Tamang, the sound of the Beatles and The Rolling Stones resounds through the streets. Hostels and shops are run by Nepalese as well as Westerners.

Our hostel is at the end of a small street and is called Annapurna lodge. The real Annapurna is nowhere to be seen- being a long massif in the north of Nepal, part of the Himalayan highlands and the ninth highest mountain in the world. Many tourist facilities are named after Nepalese mountains. The owner of the hostel is also never to be seen and the housework is done by five young boys. They clean the rooms, go to the market, prepare dinner and each night one of them is the night guard. He has to sleep behind the counter while the rest sleep in the dining room on the floor.

We are amazed by the mass of people in the streets. Goods are sold in every street and on every square. Rickshaw drivers – of whom there are plenty – zigzag between the people who are buying goods, talking to each other, playing music, praying, etc. So as we walk through the streets we meet all kinds of people: salesmen, taxi

drivers, street children, old hippies, holy men, school children, etc.

La La Language/

With most of the people we meet, we are able to communicate fine: English is a well-established language in Nepal. Those who work in the tourist sector often have a basic knowledge of the language or even better. Nonetheless, mistakes of course lead to hilarious moments. A guy we met told us he knew a hostel where we could enjoy a “hot sour” - whatever that was. Probably some English consonants he had not yet acquired or maybe he just did not like tourists. Tourism is an important gateway for English. Yet many others do not have the chance to learn an international language, such as the people who live in the streets. Children – they only know the word “chocolates” -, rickshaw drivers, market vendors, etc have never gone to school and only know the Nepalese they hear on the street. The chance of ever getting out of their – often miserable - situation is very small.

Then again the number of children going to school in Nepal is increasing. I remember the many children we saw while traveling through the countryside, walking alongside the roads heading to school which can be at a distance of even fifteen kilometers and, even more striking, climbing up 2000 meters high! In the second week of our journey, we are hiking, aiming for Poon Hill which lies at 3400

meters. Venturing up the mountain we are totally out of breath when some children overtake us, running up and down the mountain, in slippers! We meet some of these children who are going to school and to our surprise they speak English very well!

So the competence in English is very split in Nepal. Some can go to school and learn history, mathematics, biology, foreign languages, etc. A knowledge of English can give them the opportunity to learn more about the rest of the world and communicate with outsiders. For others, life in Nepal is a matter of surviving. The cities are full of people who, every day, try to find food and water and who have no access to any form of education. Thinking back on this first encounter, I remember Nepal as a country with many faces.

Visiting the ancient cities Kathmandu, Patan and Bakhtapur, trekking through the mountains, walking through Chitwan national park we could catch a glimpse of the amazing and various cultural and natural beauties which are cherished in Nepal. At the same time, alongside these natural and cultural extremities life in Nepal remains for many people a hard one. Many organizations – Nepalese and international – are busy opening the borders of Nepal concerning economy, culture, language, etc. While they try to look at the rest of the world, we were privileged to have a remarkable view from inside.

Reviews

02

Cradle of Filth | Tom Cornelijs

The Bridges of Madison County | Irina Suvandijev

1984 | Julie Aelbrecht

Literary Hall of Fame | Michelle Verdonck

MUSIC REVIEW/ Cradle of Filth

Reviewed by Tom Cornelis

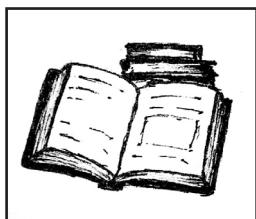
Cradle of Filth is one of the most important bands in the British metal scene. Many love them, even more hate them, but all have heard tales of Cradle. Their atmospheric black metal deliveries had been grounded to a halt with the albums *Nympphetamine* and *Thornography*, but in 2008, *Godspeed on the Devil's Thunder* has shown the community what Cradle of Filth is all about, with a revival of shredding riffs, blasting drums and atmospheric keyboard melodies. Their newest record, *Darkly, Darkly, Venus Aversa*, takes this legacy further. Like its predecessor, it is a concept album: vocalist Dani Filth has written a Gothic horror story about Adam's first wife, Lilith, which unfolds throughout his lyrics. And there is much to be told, as *Darkly, Darkly, Venus Aversa* has no less than fifteen tracks, making for over 100 minutes of metal. The opening song 'The Cult of Venus Aversa', it seven minutes long making this the longest song on the album, immediately sets the mood for the entire album with its beautiful keyboard intro and female voice-over. Once the guitars kick in, you are blown away by the crushing riffs and Dani's signature screams. During the first four songs, the dazzling riffs just keep on coming, with lead guitarist Paul Allender throwing some tasty solos and melodies in the mix. The fifth song, 'The Persecution Song', is much slower and darker, allowing the musicians (especially the guitarists) to play in a more refined manner. This song, along with 'Forgive me Father (I Have Sinned)', could very well attract a more mainstream audience. As they are in the middle of the album, they provide a welcome break from the otherwise constant shredding and screaming. The last song, 'Behind the Jagged Mountains', is not nearly as memorable as 'Corpseflower' on *Godspeed on the Devil's Thunder*, but it still does a respectable job of ending the album, and with it, its epic story of Lilith. This certainly is not the best album the band has ever released, but it delivers the goods: Cradle of Filth has once again succeeded in producing a story in their own unique way.

MOVIE AND BOOK REVIEWS/

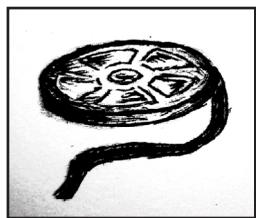
01.

The Bridges of Madison County

Reviewed by Irina Souvandjiev



A bestselling novel from Robert James Waller with about twelve million copies sold, according to the internet. To give you an idea of how impressive this is: the recent hit *The Kite Runner* sold ‘only’ ten million copies. The story line is quite simple at first sight: Francesca, a housewife from Iowa, falls in love with a photographer, Robert Kincaid, but Francesca is already married and they part after four days. Yet there is a lot more behind the romance, especially when it becomes clear that the two lovers cannot stay together. The unadorned way of writing down these torn feelings, the passion and despair, is certainly a quality that makes the book very worth reading.



The main difference between the novel and the film adaptation is the point of view from which it is told. The film is nearly all about Francesca’s experience, while the book gives more attention to Robert’s feelings during his visit to Iowa. The presence of Francesca’s children, Carolyn and Michael, is also much stronger in the film and makes the story more compelling. Children find out about their mother’s affair together with the viewer, they themselves evolve while the viewer too discovers the truth. The children are deeply impressed by the way in which their mother discovers a soul mate, only to give him up after four days because of the husband and children she loves, and her actions deeply impressed me too. I can only hope you enjoy it as much as I do.

02. 1984

Reviewed by Julie Aelbrecht

The book tells the now-famous tale of a man named Winston Smith, a member of the ruling party of the great empire of Oceania, who lives in London. In this society, based on the principles of IngSoc: freedom is slavery and war is peace. In the eyes of this society, Winston is completely corrupt and, even worse, in love with a young woman named Julia, which will ultimately mean death for the both of them. *1984* is full of references to Nazism and communism, it is a pessimistic view of the future, but nevertheless a beautifully painted picture about a man who is (in his own words) 'a minority of one'. *1984* is a book mostly written out of fear of an enemy force, but that does not make it any less of a masterpiece.



The movie is more or less faithful to the book. Although 'comrade' was replaced by 'Brother' and 'Sister' in the script, the film is still very obviously a critique of communism. This replacement could be explained by the stunning emphasis on the sexlessness of Oceania's Party-members. And it also makes the name 'Big Brother' more logical. Indeed, only after watching the movie did it become clear how scary English Socialism really is, the 'Minutes of Hate' reminded me of 'Triumph des Willens' which is, in this case, and in this one only, a good thing.



LITERARY HALL OF FAME / Fantasy

Two to know – our guide to lesser-known authors from well-known genres.

By Michelle Verdonck

01.

James Herbert/

The beginning of *Once* has such a witty tone that you might think the author is about to take you on an adventure cracking one joke after another. But I'll have to disappoint you. The story does have its witty moments, but overall isn't funny (not that the point of the story is to make one laugh). To the attentive reader it is fairly easy to determine who is the 'bad guy' and who is the good one, right from the start. This is no obstacle to the page-turning effect, though. It is a book I could hardly put aside, even when a state near exhaustion took over my mind.

Another thing the more sensitive readers would appreciate my pointing out, is that this book is filled with erotic passages. I don't mind a little (artistically justified) nudity, but the actions are described in a very (very) intimate way. I wonder where the man got the inspiration for the fantastical (yes I'm making a pun) girl-on-girl action. I bet the poor guy spent a lot of time with his writing hand. And perhaps not just writing novels.

Name: James Herbert

Born: 8 April 1943, London

Died: It's alive!

Occupation: Writer and publishing author

Nationality: English

James Herbert was born in London, third son to a stallholder at Brick Lane Market. He went to the Hornsey College of Art and afterwards found a job as art director in an advertising office. In 1967, he married his wife, Eileen. They have three daughters and they currently live in Brighton, Sussex.

He started writing novels at the age of twenty-eight, with *The Rats* as debut. Anno 2010, he is a successful writer; his works being translated into thirty-three languages. Mainly, he is described as a horror-fiction writer, even though the book reviewed here seems rather fantasy-like to me. Although he is successful, to beat the King (Stephen), he will have to write at least twice as many novels as the twenty-seven he has thus far. (Source: www.james-herbert.co.uk)

Even though all books have good and bad aspects, I was particularly surprised by Herbert's idea of a witch or wiccan (which are two different things he takes as one): he presents a misleadingly beautiful wicked wretch, with the sole purpose of lavishing her (yes, her! The stereotype is confirmed once more) with sexual needs and desire for destruction. Combined with a dash of greed, of course. Reading a fantasy book, I was rather surprised to see so many prejudices affirmed. You would think that a writer of an alternative genre like fantasy would present innovative ideas, would you not? It is hard to stray from the path paved by folklore and Tolkien- yet a work inspired by these would have pleased me greatly. Because, to duplicate is to plagiarize, I say. For

those of you with the need to give their dear brains a well-deserved, refreshing rest, I highly recommend this book. For those seeking the undiscovered Tolkien, I say: the Horror! The Horror! Maybe this is why Herbert claims to be a horror-writer.

02.

Marion Zimmer Bradley/

As a child, I encountered *Hawkmistress!* and was immediately enchanted. Due to whatever reason, I had not started reading the Avalon series (even though Bradley is best known for these books). Maybe it is for the best, because it takes more than the mind of a child to plough through the language of *The Mists of Avalon*, not to mention some of the strange events, which a child's mind has not developed enough to deal with.

Name: Marion Zimmer Bradley

Birth: June 3, 1930

Death: September 25, 1999

Nationality: American (the way she spelled 'honour' should have rung a bell here)

Her two marriages brought her two sons and one daughter, but both ended in divorce. She has a bachelor degree in Arts (1965). She was baptized an Episcopalian, turned to Neo-paganism and back to the Episcopal Church again. Her first story was sold to a magazine in 1952. She died of a heart attack when she was 69. Her first 'novel' was *Falcons of Narabedla*, also published in a magazine. A remarkable work in her oeuvre is *I Am a Lesbian*, written under the pseudonym Lee Chapman (she had been a member of the first lesbian rights movement DOB). But she usually kept to writing series in a fantasy or science-fiction setting, such as the 'Darkover' series. She received (posthumously) the World Fantasy Award (one of the most prestigious awards in speculative fiction). (Source: www.mbzworks.com)

But continuing with this review, I shall try to digest them. They are written so that you get sucked into the book; you start thinking in her style of writing, you dream of Morgaine wandering through hostile woods and get blown away by the fact that Arthur, Gwenhyfar and Lancelet shared the bed. Together. The three of them. Yes, I can chatter about the most foul things as if this were a white, blue-eyed baby rabbit with its head tilted slightly to the left, but I was shocked nearly to death.

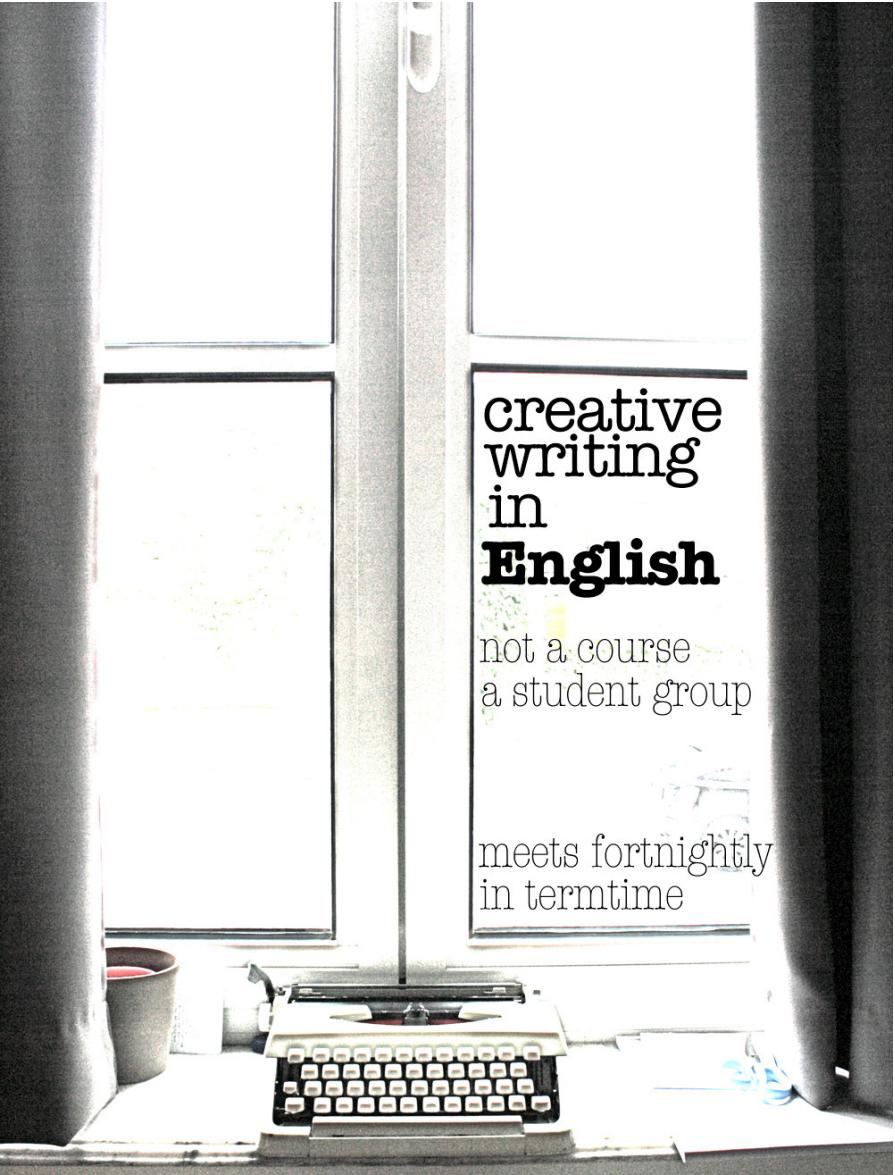
Bradley has a strange way of twisting the plot in a way that the reader is so eager to turn the pages that they might almost rip them in excitement. And this comes from a lady who adores books, but is seldom thus fully satisfied.

Some passages are very confusing though, you have no idea what the narrator is talking about, or what you are supposed to visualize. They are usually about either a vision or an encounter with the Fairy land, two things abstract enough to need at least some explanation (even though I understand she did not want to give away too much, it sometimes reads as if she herself does not know what she is writing). That did frustrate me, and I can imagine I am not the only one.

But overall, if you do not mind gritting your teeth and getting through those few passages, it is a real must-read! Plus, it gives a more nuanced image of what the Old Religion really was/is. Of course, it is still fiction and the spells or charms are quite exaggerated (no, a witch (priestess) cannot bring on a fog as thick that you cannot even see your own hands).

So if you can divide fiction from real life: go get that book!

If either of these authors whet your literary appetite, check out these other great writers: Joe Hill – Ann Radcliff – Edgar Allan Poe – Anne Rice – Matthew Gregory Lewis – Bram Stoker – Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley – David Almond – Lois Lowry – Susanna Clarke – Tim Powers – John Crowley



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Despite his great name, the biographical details of William Shakespeare's life are quite hazy. All the facts we know with certainty can be summarized in two sentences: he was baptised on the 26th of April 1564 in Stratford-on-Avon as the son of John Shakespeare and Mary Arden. He then left Stratford for London in 1586. Beyond these details, our factual knowledge of the poet and playwrite fades. In this piece, two Simile writers seek out truths among the conjecture, myth, and allure that surround this titan of English letters.

A DUMMY'S GUIDE TO WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE/

By Joke de Vos en Irina Souvandjiev
01.

Shakespeare's father seems to have held a political position in Stratford for some time. His mother was the daughter of a gentleman and added a small inheritance to the family "fortune". William had three brothers and two sisters and attended the local free grammar school until he was thirteen, at which time the family came into financial difficulties and William was forced to quit school and work at home.

» At the age of eighteen, he married Anne Hathaway, a woman seven years his senior and already three months pregnant. In total the couple had three children, Susanna, Hamnet and Judith. Many theories have been formed about the relationship between Anne and William. Some even say the reason for his departure to London was to prevent any more children from being born. One of the main sources for this discussion is Shakespeare's will, in which he leaves his wife his second bed. Something that in modern times would hardly be appreciated. There is however another view possible: in the Elizabethan age it would have been common to save the best (and second) bed in the house for visitors. All in all it would be surprising if Shakespeare had been completely dissatisfied with marriage as

there is hardly a bad marriage to be found in any of his plays. Almost all the women in his plays are portrayed as extremely loving. No one speaks about marriage with more respect than he does.

» There is another theory, based on a legend, which tries to explain why Shakespeare left for London. This 'legend' tells of Shakespeare and other young men poaching deer in a park belonging to a knight, Sir Thomas Lucy. Shakespeare would have been brought to court and flogged for this crime, and to avenge himself, Shakespeare is said to have written a satirical poem about Sir Lucy, which he pinned on the gates of the knight's house. This act then made Sir Thomas Lucy so angry that it became impossible for Shakespeare to remain in Stratford any longer and so he fled to London.

The London adventure begins: first period in his drama career/

Whatever the reason for his departure, when Shakespeare arrived in London in 1586, society and culture were blossoming under the reign of Elizabeth I. Shakespeare first came into contact with theatre working as a handy man behind the scenes. In 1587, he was said to have made his very first appearance on stage: in the production of the catchily-titled *The Giant Agrapardo, King of Nubia, worse than his late brother, Angulafer*, he was said to have taken on the less-than-difficult task of bringing the Giant his turban. After working off stage Shakespeare finally became an actor; probably aided by his friend, Richard Burbage who would later become the first man ever to play most of Shakespeare's tragic heroes, such as Hamlet and Richard III. Together with Burbage and two other companions, Heminge and Condell, all of whom were left money in his will, Shakespeare played at court and began to earn some money.

» Shakespeare also began writing his first plays around this time. There is much debate over which plays were written when, but it is generally believed that in his first dramatic period (1586- 1594) he wrote *Love's labour's lost*, *Henry VI*, *Two Gentlemen of Verona*, *A Comedy of Errors* and *Titus Adronicus*. His style, however, is not yet that of the great Shakespeare. The characters are less developed and his writing is more artificial than spontaneous. It is only towards the end of this period he apparently discovers his own genius and grows confident enough to finally leave the artificial style behind. He becomes successful, much to the dislike of Robert Greene, a fellow actor and writer, who accuses him of plagiarism.

It is very possible that Shakespeare ‘borrowed’ some of his material from someone else, but Greene’s foremost reason for assaulting Shakespeare was simply his own disappointment. Greene had been a successful writer but was later overshadowed by his contemporaries, Marlowe and Kyd, both of whom were huge influences on Shakespeare’s works.

The Origins of Shakespeare 02.

It would be naïve to believe that Shakespeare, however brilliant he may be, invented all those stories himself. There is hardly a writer to be found who has not, at one point in his career, been inspired by existing stories. The question that remains is: where do the stories come from?

» For his historical dramas (Richard III, Henry V,...) the answer seems obvious: the inspiration lies in Britain’s history, but what of his other tragedies and comedies?

Romeo & Juliet is perhaps the best-known drama William Shakespeare ever wrote, but where did he find the inspiration for his tragic plot? We find its origins in Roman mythology, more specifically in the story of Pyramus & Thisbe, two lovers from Babylon who fled their parents to be together and ended up committing suicide over a grave misunderstanding. Sound familiar? The story is recounted in *Metamorphoses*, a book written by Ovid, a Roman writer born in 43 B.C.. Shakespeare had perhaps already come into contact with these stories, however he knew “small latin and less greek” as described by his contemporary Ben Jonson, so a more probable theory is that he read the story in one of the many adaptions made by both Geoffrey Chaucer and Giovanni Boccaccio.

» *The Merry Wives of Windsor* is a comedy in which a knight, Falstaff, courts two rich, married women for financial purposes. It is the only play Shakespeare set in Elizabethan England but even in this play we can find traces of older works. The main character of this play, the pompous knight Falstaff, greatly resembles the role of the braggart soldier, Il Capitano, used in the Italian plays of *Commedia dell’arte*. Other similar characters from *Commedia dell’arte* such as “the lovers” also reappear in the *Merry Wives*. The characters of *Commedia dell’arte* itself are, again, to be traced back to Roman comedies, where the same stock characters were used.

» The second period in Shakespeare's career started in 1595 in London, which was just recovering from a dark and difficult period in which the theatres were shut down for quite some time due to the plague. 1596 also marked the start of a dark period for Shakespeare himself, when his son Hamnet died at the age of eleven, followed by the death of his uncle Henry and the latter's widow soon after. Yet it was in this period that Shakespeare secured his place among the famous theatre playwrights, and he created his first masterpieces. His sonnets, for instance – known by everyone, everywhere – were probably created in the very beginning of this period. One of the most famous of these is:

Sonnet 130

My mistress' eyes are nothing like the sun;
Coral is far more red than her lips' red;
If snow be white, why then her breasts are dun;
If hairs be wires, black wires grow on her head.
I have seen roses damask'd, red and white,
But no such roses see I in her cheeks;
And in some perfumes is there more delight
Than in the breath that from my mistress reeks.
I love to hear her speak, yet well I know
That music hath a far more pleasing sound;
I grant I never saw a goddess go;
My mistress, when she walks, treads on the ground:
And yet, by heaven, I think my love as rare
As any she belied with false compare.

» Although this sonnet was clearly written for a woman, the general opinion actually is that the first 126 sonnets were dedicated to a young man and only the remaining to a lady.

»

In 1596, Shakespeare's family were presumably pleased when William's father John was granted a coat-of-arms. It was quite an honour to have this, and it made the Shakespeares a family of 'Gentlemen', high on the social ladder. A coat-of-arms was allowed to be displayed on the front door and all other possessions such as a seal ring. The emblem of the Shakespeare family is a black banner with a silver spear on a golden background, which says: " non sanz droict" or 'not without right'. John had applied for it once before in 1570, but at that time, he had not been granted it. We can only assume that the reason he received it now was due to the success of his son. At this time in his life, William Shakespeare's plays were only performed by the company 'The Chamberlain's men', a company which was to become one of the most important theatre companies from then on. They were protected by Queen Elizabeth, and so, they could work without having to worry too much about finances.

»

In 1597, Shakespeare bought a house in his birth town, Stratford-upon-Avon. The house was called 'New Place', and was one of the largest houses in the town. He didn't move into it right away, but from then on he spent more time with his family and out of London. At this time, he also finished some of his famous plays such as *Richard III*, *Richard II* and *Romeo and Juliet* and, we might say, he was at the summit of his career. However, his luck was about to turn, for the owner of 'The Theatre', the playhouse that functioned as a 'base camp' for the Chamberlain's Men, forbade any more performances on his domain. The company had to move to 'The Curtain', a nearby theatre house. Richard Burbage (son of James Burbage who had built The Theatre), who was a star actor of the Chamberlain's Men, then dismantled the theatre. With the pieces, he managed to have a new theatre built, 'The Globe', finished in 1599, just in time for the premiere of *Henry V*, and this event concludes the second period of Shakespeare's career.

Shakespeare: Second and final period in his drama career/

A calm and yet busy period presented itself in 1600. Calm because Shakespeare's private life was quite simple, there are no deaths or marriages, and all was well. But busy because in this period, he produced some of the greatest tragedies in the history of drama such as *Julius Caesar*, *Hamlet*, *King Lear* and *Othello*. Due to the death of Queen Elizabeth in 1603, Othello was first performed at the court of James I, successor of Elizabeth who was - fortunately – as keen on theatre as was the former Queen. James in fact took over her role as protector of the company, which changed its name into 'The King's Men'.

» June 1607: Susanna Shakespeare, Shakespeare's eldest daughter, married John Hall, a well-known and reputable physician in London, and in February 1608, she gave birth to Elizabeth Hall. This was the first and last grandchild William would ever see. Seven months later, in September, Shakespeare attended the burial of his mother, Mary. She was sixty-eight years old, considered a good age, but it seems her death was quite a hard blow for the playwright to digest: his production slowly decreased, and he slowly detached himself from the city, returning to his family in Stratford-upon-Avon. In 1610, Shakespeare wrote *The Tempest*. This play is unique for Shakespeare because the plot is entirely new; it is not based upon any existing tale. It is also believed to be the last play Shakespeare wrote on his own.

» June 29, 1613: *Henry VIII* is performed for the first time in the Globe. A rather uninteresting detail, we might say, but we are mistaken. During the play, the cannon used in the play went off but slightly in the wrong direction, and the roof caught fire. No one got hurt, but the theatre completely burned down and had to be rebuilt. 3 years later, disaster struck again: William's youngest daughter Judith marries a certain Thomas Quiney, a wine-merchant and tobacconist without status. This brought shame over the Shakespeare family, and the couple was excommunicated only one month after their wedding, and Quiney was removed from Shakespeare's will.

» March 25, 1616, Shakespeare finished his will. And then, one month later, it happened: William Shakespeare, playwright, father, husband, died on his birthday at the age of 52. The cause of his death was unknown, but sources say he drank too much and got a fever. Still, considering the spread of diseases such as typhus, syphilis, tuberculosis and toothaches, Shakespeare had a good and healthy life. His wife Anna outlived him, and only died in 1623.

» But did Shakespeare really die? Not at all! Shakespeare lives on through his work: his plays are loved by all ages and nationalities, and are still performed regularly. His poems and sonnets are compulsory reading in secondary school, artists make paintings and songs based upon his words, and every generation has its own film adaptations of some of his masterpieces. According to Wikipedia, more than 420 film adaptations have been made of Shakespeare's plays, starting, believe it or not, in 1907 with a silent short about Shakespeare writing *Julius Caesar*. Shakespeare made it into the top 5 of the '100 Greatest Britons', a poll by the BBC in 2002. It seems that Shakespeare has not lost a bit of his popularity. One might say he is more alive than ever.

CR2 / 03

MYSTERY AT THE MUSEUM - PART 2 | LENI VERBOGEN

A PAUPER'S RAGS | LEGOLOES GREENLEAF

THE REBEL SHELL | LEGOLOES GREENLEAF

DREAM WALKER DYLAN | LEGOLOES GREENLEAF

IN THE END | FIONA COUDENYNS



Last time in “Mystery at the Museum”: A priceless gold mask disappeared from the Mori Arts Center in Tokyo. The mask was on loan from China, and its disappearance could spark a diplomatic row. But never fear, Isaac Apanay is on the case! So far, Apanay, the hippest detective in town, has charmed his way into the museum to make a few enquiries of his own. But with no thief showing up on the surveillance video, and the hi-tech alarm system intact, Isaac Apanay has his work cut out for him as he investigates this, a most impossible theft.

Mystery at the Museum / part 2

Isaac scanned the floor and the exhibition stalls, but he couldn't find anything unusual. From one of the CSI-officers he learned that there had been no fingerprints on the glass cone that once housed the mask.

‘Other than that, we've got half of Tokyo's fingerprints in here,’ the officer sighed.

Isaac was walking around slowly, his eyes on the witnesses grouped together in one corner of the room. He suddenly felt something crack under his foot and casually bent down, pretending to fix his shoelaces, to pick it up. He turned the little black object in his fingers. It was a pin, decorated with Tokyo Storm in silver letters. He knew them. He slid the pin in the pocket of his trousers before anyone would notice.

He walked up to the witnesses and flashed his police badge. Some of them looked worried, some of them merely curious at the spectacle unfolding.

‘Right,’ Isaac said. ‘Which one of you is in charge of the surveillance tapes?’ A nervous middle-aged man stepped forward. ‘That would be me, officer.’

‘Have you noticed anything suspicious tonight?’

‘No, sir, not at all! I hadn't noticed a thing until suddenly the mask was gone! I looked away for one moment, because I heard something strange – as if someone was walking past me in the hall – and when I looked back at the screen it was gone! The security system didn't even go off! I really don't understand how this could have happened...’

The man seemed to sense that he was in a bad position. He kept throwing nervous glances at the director standing on the other side of the room. He would

probably lose his job after tonight, Isaac thought.

‘Did you notice anything like a loop in the camera system? Anything strange at all?’

‘No, not at all, sir! Everything seemed normal!’

‘Okay, thank you.’

Isaac proceeded to talk to the night guard, but he too hadn’t noticed anything. At that moment the director walked past and Isaac turned to him.

‘Director?’

The director turned around, talking on his mobile. ‘Wait a moment, I’ll call you right back.’ He cut the phone. ‘Yes? How can I help you?’

‘Could you please walk me through the security system? I’m sure you have already explained,’ Isaac said, cutting off the director’s protests, ‘but could you please be so kind as to explain once more?’

‘Oh well,’ the director sighed. ‘I really don’t have time for this... Of course we have a surveillance system, and the cameras are positioned so that there are no blind spots. And we have a ray security system, which only a very acrobatic three-year-old would be able to pass without being detected. There’s a lock on the glass cone that responds to touch, and...’ The director seemed to catch somebody’s glance over Isaac’s shoulder. ‘And that’s it, really. The police tell me there is nothing to see on the cameras and that the ray system didn’t go off. It seems to be one big mystery.’ His voice cracked on that last word.

‘And you have no idea who would want to steal the mask?’ Isaac asked.

‘Hah! Everybody, I guess! Who wouldn’t want a gold mask worth \$ 2.5 million?’ The director was on the verge of hysterics. It seemed the surveillance man wasn’t the only one with a job on the line this evening. ‘But real clues, no, I haven’t got those. It could have been anyone!’

‘Okay, thank you for your time. We will do our outmost to find the mask.’ Isaac bowed to the director.

‘Oh, I know, I know,’ the director said, his mind obviously already elsewhere. Isaac turned around to see who had caught the director’s eye and cut his conversation short. He saw the Chief Inspector turn away from him. Shady business, this, but it wasn’t worth blowing his cover to find out what the Inspector was hiding from him. If he asked too many questions somebody might actually check with the Japanese Secret Services to see whether they had put somebody on the case. The Inspector’s choice not to cooperate with the Secret Services was his own problem.

Besides, he already had everything he needed.

He sighed, threw the keys to his motorcycle up and caught them again in one smooth movement. He heard some female officers catch their breath.

‘So cool!’

They all stared at him as he left the room.

He went down the escalators again, nodded at the policemen, and took the stairs. The police had missed the one clue that would have led them straight to the culprit – or at least his associate. So it was his duty to correct that error. He counted the stairs as he went down to the 52nd floor. There were no officers on this floor, and he quickly looked around. There was nothing to be found but a magnificent view of Tokyo by night from the observation deck. The culprit was somewhere out there, Isaac thought as he looked down on the city. He wouldn’t be free for long.

Isaac went down the stairs to the floor below. When he stopped at the bottom of the stairs, he suddenly halted. Hadn’t the other floor had more stairs? Strange... All floors seemed the same height from outside.

Isaac tried the doors in the hall, but they were locked. He walked back to the elevator. As the elevator came speeding up, Isaac wondered how long it would take the Chief Inspector to find out he wasn’t really in the Secret Services.

Judging by the mayhem the theft had caused, Isaac bet a long time.

After giving the female police officer her badge back and promising to take her out for dinner – which he knew he’d never do – Isaac sped through the city. He knew exactly where he could find Tokyo Storm.

Tokyo Storm was a gang to which nearly half of the Tokyo underworld had to pay ‘respect’. Or, in other words, “protection” money. The gang must have been involved in the theft – Isaac couldn’t imagine they’d visit a museum for fun. Certainly not when a \$ 2.5 million mask was right within reach.

Tokyo Storm had contacts spread out over Tokyo, but their base was in the Akihabara ward. And that was exactly where Isaac was going.

As he turned into the street where the Tokyo Storm headquarters were located, Isaac could already hear the trouble before he saw it. A girl was screaming bloody murder.

And it probably was.

A few gang members were attacking what seemed to be a schoolgirl, still in her school uniform. Although Isaac was surprised at her knowledge of karate, she was no match for these thugs.

A grin spread over Isaac’s face. Time for some action.

Isaac revved the engine ferociously. Some of the men looked up. They ran off as if the devil were on their heels and Isaac's motor stormed right after them. Isaac pulled hard on the brakes, propelling the motor into the scattered group. The leader of the small gang came in contact with the rear end with a hard thud. Isaac threw the motor onto him as he jumped off. Before any of them could get away Isaac grabbed one of them by his jacket, performed a spectacular shoulder throw and threw him on top of another gang member. One of them tried to hit him with an iron bar, but Isaac stepped out of reach just in time. The bar hit another member on the back. The man sagged down screaming. Isaac used that moment to kick his attacker hard in the stomach, squeeze his arm behind his back and wipe his feet from underneath him. The man fell down hard and let go of the iron bar screaming. Isaac picked it up and swept it through the air.

'Everybody stand still!' he ordered. The gang members quickly looked at Isaac, his foot on the back of the man who had held the iron bar. Their looks locked on the bar firmly held in his hands, ready to strike at least three of them around him. Then they glanced at their leader, grunting under the weight of the motor, and an alley behind Isaac, their only getaway. It had to be said, the odds were not in their favor.

'Whatdya want, you moron?' the leader shouted from underneath Isaac's motor. 'Get this fucking thing off me! Do you have any idea who I am?'

'Yes, I have a very good idea who you are, Ogura Takuya,' Isaac said calmly. He didn't look at Ogura, but at the schoolgirl who had scrambled up and now was staring at him in awe. She must have been in the last year of secondary school. Isaac looked away.

'You are the leader of the lowest ranks of Tokyo Storm.'

Ogura hissed. 'I don't give a damn even if you can name my granny! Get your fucking bike off me!'

'After you've given me some information,' Isaac said smoothly. 'How about the theft at the Mori Art Center?'

'We had nothing to do with that!' Ogura growled.

'Really? How do you explain this then?' Isaac threw the Tokyo Storm badge at him. It turned a circle on the sidewalk before Ogura's eyes before it dropped to the ground.

'Where d'ya get that, you scum?' Ogura shouted. 'If I get my hands on you-!'

'No need to get physical,' Isaac taunted. 'It was found in the Mori Art Center, just a few feet away from where the mask was. Taking your gang to the museum, Ogura? You reckon they can actually learn something?'

‘Oy, you!’ one of the members exclaimed, making a threatening gesture.

‘What d’ya fucking want, you moron?’ Ogura shouted.

‘I want to know the answer to two questions, and if you answer them truthfully, I’ll let you out from under my motorcycle and I won’t tell the police you guys were involved. If not, that badge is going straight to the Chief Inspector.’

‘And what makes you think you’ll still be able to walk away from here?’ Ogura growled vengefully.

‘Well, seeing that you’re squashed underneath my bike, two of your crew are down and I’m holding an iron bar in my hands, I’m pretty sure I’ll be able to walk away,’ Isaac replied casually. ‘Here are my two questions: one, what was your part in the theft; and two, who did the assignment come from?’

‘I’m not fucking telling ya!'

‘Really?’ Isaac stepped away from the man on the ground and put his foot on the motor. Ogura screamed.

‘All right, you idiot! Get off of me!’

Isaac took his foot off the motor.

‘Our boys had to make some computer shit that could get to that stupid glass cone undetected! Like a remote control fly or something, too small to be seen on the surveillance tapes! All we were told to do was to touch the glass cone with the fly thing without touching the security rays and job done!’

Isaac stared at him incredulously. ‘And who did that order come from?’

‘I don’t know! We weren’t told! All we had to do was make the damn thing, use the remote control and get out of there unnoticed!’

‘I definitely hope you’re telling the truth, Ogura,’ Isaac warned him. He picked up the badge and put it in his pocket. He slid the iron bar in the back of his jacket, with the top sticking out so he could reach it. One of the gang members immediately stepped towards him, but Isaac put his hand on the bar and the man stepped back. Isaac pulled the motorcycle up, causing Ogura to scream. He quickly jumped on, kick-started the motor and revved the engine. The thugs still on their feet stepped back immediately.

‘Thanks for the warm welcome!’ Isaac shouted at them, and drove off.

Suddenly a pair of hands closed around his waist...

(Leni Verbogen)

A Pauper's Rags

Walking along the streets. Night had already fallen. Some crazed surrealistic stuff going on. 'Twas Dali's paintings, all in one. Checking their legs to see, see if everything was still okay. Looked perfectly human. Temporarily reassured. But then, to dare look up. Hissing snakes, attached to a neck. An anonymous claw wanting to shake my hand. All courteous, the headless knight took off his hat to greet. I was being welcomed into their world now. Renaissance staircase, escorting me up, steps shifting as I climbed. Belle's chandelier kindly lent me its light. Paintings from the wall, there was motion, real life sceneries all framed up. One revealed a sunflower plantation, with a naked man. Another had a medieval monastery, all in ruins, on display. Some bonfire orgy was taking place. I could even hear their music play, a seductive call at my address. There was something happening, but what it was, still ain't clear. Everybody looking, wondering what was going on. White knights were talking backwards as shiny boots of leather were approaching. To my left a lady, like a burning incense twig. Not much longer before all of her would be nothing but perfumed dust. Hasty rabbits ushering me on, tilting me, dragging me into their magical realm. Little Miss Tarantula on duty to show me the way. Cushioned in the soil of those sunny flower fields towered the monastery. A fruit of this very earth, but quite a rarity among the rest. There he was, in all his glory. A godlike figure, dressed in a pauper's rags. Hanging from a cross, just like an image I'd seen somewhere before. With one free hand, he reached for me. "Strike, dear mistress, and cure my heart.", is what he whispered. Coming in bells, my ears acknowledged its arrival. Melodiously, it mastered my mind ever so slightly. Everything into a blur. Flames of lusty fire, out of which his shape emerged. Ceaseless attack of subconscious legions, demanding sublimation. Moaning, moving, no use to fight,

full surrender to delight. Juices started flowing. Tunes of lust brought forth by a magic flute. Doubling the pleasure, consummation of the flesh. On a bench, a crippled man sat playing the accordion, a eulogy to an upcoming storm. The incense lady had long since quenched. Caught a glimpse of those white rabbits, taking everything away, in a hasty manner. The staircase was rolled backwards into a carpet. A thousand dreams could not awake me. I was left along the streets, all tired and weary, dressed in nothing but a pauper's rags.

(Legoloes Greenleaf)

The Rebel Shell

Have you heard the story of the Rebel Shell? His name is known by all who roam the Northern Waters. Protected by the Jelly Fish Squad. Escorted by those legendary Vegetarian Sharks, he and his signature shell are celebrated in the North Sea abyss. All that crawls the North Sea sand lives under his rebellious dominion. Only few know his whereabouts. Few know where to find him. But what is it that made a rebel shell out of him, you wonder. Some suggest he eloped with a shell of different colour. A most outrageous thing to do in the Northern District. You do not destroy what you covet, is how the unspoken rule is spoken. Others hint at outcast behaviour. Allegedly , he turned his shell to all water-ly conventions in such a way that drunken sailors sing of smoke on the water to this very day. Speculations about adventurous urges have been bottled and thrown aboard. Schools of Mussels talk and tell. Seagulls pick up his chivalric quests like old bread crumbs, they screech, they yell. Lighthouse lights lit in his honour. Whilst Caliban secures the gates of his sacred realm, Shakespearean tempests are called upon to praise his unbounded bravery. Lost Souls at sea find rest in his mysterious manners. Sirens pray-away Triton's rage for worshipping the Astray. Whatever it is that he has done, it can be affirmed he and his rebellious shell turned the tide and the dashing of the waves. For every shell, no matter on which shore, is dedicated to his soul. Days of yester may not matter when they're gone, but as of now, the Northern waters will ever be the same again.

(Legoloes Greenleaf)

Dream Walker Dylan

It was his younger self. Backstage of his show. Not as a fan. More a desirable woman. Got into talking. Quickly moved on. The Blues belled, curtains fell. Nerves started ticking as passion made its entrée. Curly hair got entangled. His breath a necklace. Doing it all sophisticated. Lusty lips locked, were licked. A celebration of the senses. Epiphany within the mile. A serenade of Big O's. They came and went. Something about his poetic P as well. Watchers in the dark. Muffled voices turned into applause. Time for another encore.

(Legoloes Greenleaf)

In the End

My blistered foot impales the flames
that burn this house in deafening roar
Attempt to run when downward rains
the sky in ashes to the floor
Glistening, glowing mirror pieces
that still reflect my black-white walls
Flames like hands increase the creases
cracking floor and ceiling of the halls
One frozen day, now long since past,
between proud towers I've been told
to leave while chance to leave would last
Alas, my exit I have long since sold...

(Fiona Coudenys)

Simile

student literary magazine

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Simile is:

- literary terminology: an explicit comparison indicated by words such as 'as' or 'like';
- a place to compare and bring together Belgian and English-speaking cultures and literatures;
- an acronym (sort of) for Student Magazine of Literary English, because that's what we are!

If you have enjoyed this edition of Simile, and would like to be on the team for the next edition, or if you have any creative writing, artwork, features, reviews or interviews to contribute, please drop us an email at similemagazine@gmail.com.

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