



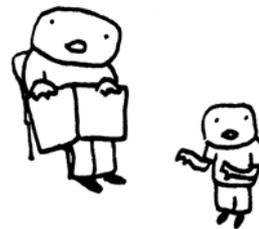
# THE ANGLER

Interview with Dr van Leeuwen:  
“Dracula looks like a Martian and  
Jonathan Harker is a Surfer-Dude!”

Special Creative Writing Issue with the  
final (?) installment of *Camalus*,  
contributions from creative writing  
group *Clio* and many others.

Recipe, Lesser Known Works and  
much, much more!

it's a book, use  
your imagination



what's imagination?  
is that an app?

Dear you

We, the editors of The Angler, proudly present this year’s final issue.

In it, we have gathered a variety of creative writings for your enjoyment. Of course there is the final (?) installment of *Camalus*, but on top of that creative writing group *Clio* have made contributions, as have some of you readers. Thanks to all these writers, we’ve got another special issue for you.

Thank you for reading The Angler this year. We hope you could tell from each issue how much we’ve enjoyed putting them together.

With love from your editors,

Charlotte Liebelt  
Liselore Goossens  
Shannon Ernst  
Minke Jonk

Creative writing consultant  
Laura op de Beke

Studying Abroad	3
“Life and all that jazz”	5
Recipe: Treacle tart	6
Interview: Dr Van Leeuwen	7
“The Extraordinary Life...”	10
Review “Hamlet” by NNT	11
“Eurydice”	12
Lesser known works	13
“The God of Inspiration”	14
Editors’ Page	15
Tips and tricks	16
Camalus: A Story	17

## STUDYING ABROAD



*Always been curious about what it is like to spend time studying abroad? We have asked a student to enlighten us about all the fun and the difficulties that are involved.*

Name: Sanne Vliegenthart

Age: 23

From: Katwijk, The Netherlands

Studied in: Elmhurst (near Chicago) in the United States  
Studied abroad from August 2009 to December 2009

### **Why did you want to study in that particular country or city?**

My first requirement was that I wanted to go to an English speaking country, because it would be a great opportunity to speak English 24/7. I'd been on vacation to the United Kingdom several times, so I picked America because I wanted to experience something new. At the time I had just made some American friends through the Internet and I was also very curious about American culture and college life.

I picked Elmhurst College because it was situated in a small town and had a beautiful campus. I also liked that it was a 30-minute train ride from Chicago. At Elmhurst I got to experience small town life and had the opportunity to explore the big city.

### **Are there any surprising or major differences between studying abroad and here in Leiden?**

I definitely encountered a lot of differences. I lived on campus, which meant that I could roll out of bed and straight into the dining hall or library. There were also a lot of extra activities, such as International & Foreign Language Club and volleyball. The classes were at a different level than I was used to. I didn't have the same independence as I had in Leiden. We would spend 12 hours (about two weeks) on a book instead of the 2-hour tutorials I was used to. Each course had lots of small tests and essays and even a workbook check from time to time.

### **Which courses did you do whilst abroad and why?**

Of course I took a literature and a linguistics course. The linguistics course turned out to be a recap of the first weeks of my first year at Leiden. It was an introduction to phonetics, Old English and Middle English. While most of the students were freaking out, I got a chance to get an American perspective on things such as the [x] sound (which, as you might expect, provided hours of entertainment). I also took a course on Young Adult literature, which was taught by two librarians and a course on Medieval History.

**What are you studying at the moment?**

I'm currently doing an MA in literary translation and writing my thesis on John Green's *The Fault in our Stars*.

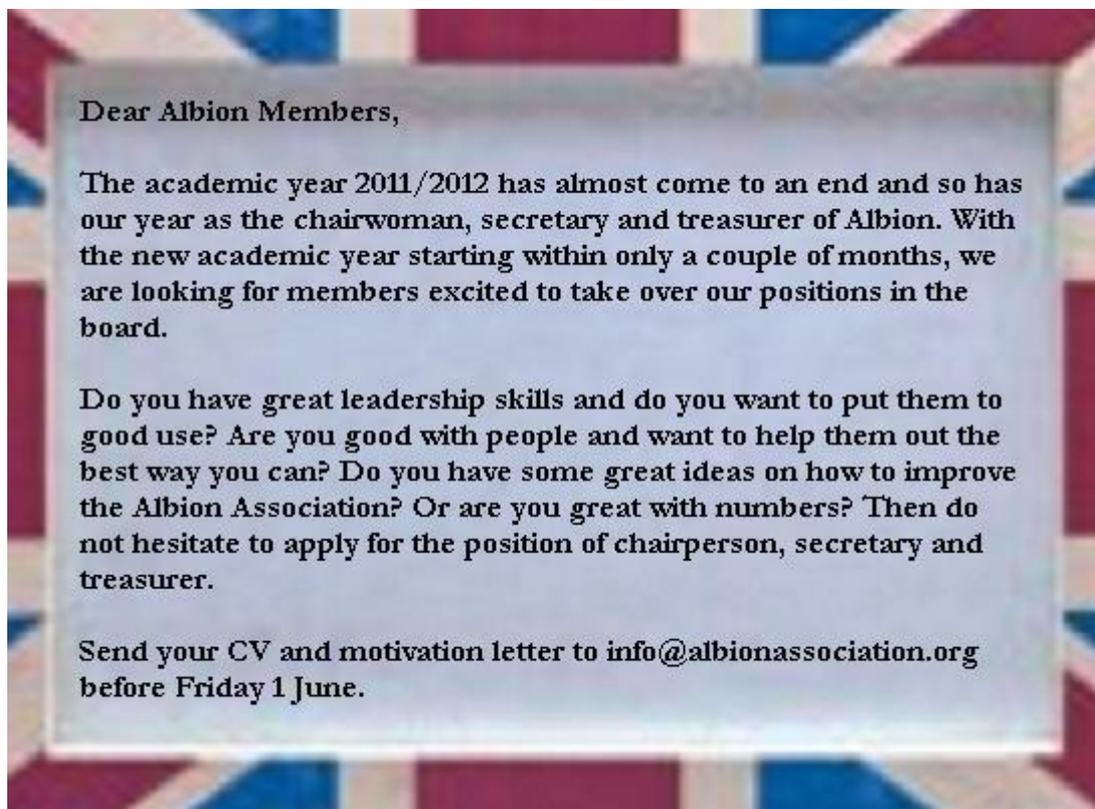
**Did you enjoy studying abroad? Are there any things you wish you had done differently or had known beforehand?**

I had an amazing time studying at Elmhurst. It was incredibly fun to see that many stereotypes about America were actually true, but I was also surprised by a lot of things I encountered. I'm really happy that I threw myself into freshman orientation and made an effort to talk to new people in the first week. I do wish I'd spent more time exploring Chicago. I only went into the city four times! But fortunately I did some travelling after my final tests to make up for it.

**Any tips for people who are thinking about studying abroad?**

If you're in the process of applying, don't leave things up to the last minute! I had some problems with application forms and the IB group, which I should have taken care of way earlier than I did. I could have saved myself a lot of trouble.

To people who aren't sure if they want to study abroad yet, I can only say: do it! You have a chance to see more of the world, meet new people and return with a completely new perspective. And don't forget to keep a journal or take a lot of pictures, because your time abroad will be over before you know it!



## LIFE AND ALL THAT JAZZ

*Anonymous*

Life, an overly discussed topic to my way of thinking, all we have to do is live it and make the best of it. Some people however have to think of a deeper meaning behind the fact that we were placed on this planet specifically. You can't really blame them either; I mean, we have no special role and yet we are the most intelligent beings here (to our knowledge anyway), there should be something obvious that we have to achieve with our human intelligence. I will tell you one of my ideas: firstly we need to mature as a species, and then we should all realize that we are the keepers of planet earth. Yes, that's right, we are the keepers of planet earth. With that I mean; we are here to insure everything goes according to plan, for instance no more unnecessary extinction of any animal, plant, or any other species (slight eco freak here). We need to take better care of our planet, everybody's heard the stories; green house effect, it is raining in the desert (more often than normal) and summers in European countries become hotter and hotter, polar caps are melting. We need to do something. In a couple of years Holland is going to be half underwater (I am also Dutch).

Back to the original point, life has no point. OK, a bit depressing. Life has no unified point. We all have different reasons to be alive. Philosophers try to look for a theme behind them all, but that is impossible, we are all unique, we all have different reasons for remaining alive. Love is high on the list, work/career is another one some people are simply too lazy to do the deed, and others see no reason at all – you read about them in the papers. The true question is, why do we need there to be a point behind the fact that we are alive? Why does there have to be a deeper meaning?

I have no idea myself; as you read in the first line, I don't see the point behind the question, and all you do is waste time thinking about it, while at some point in your life you will find out. At some point in your life you will think that at that exact moment in time you are doing the thing you are meant to be doing. You know what I think? That the pondering of the question is to fill up space and time, look above I have just filled up more than half a page thinking about the question, which in the first sentence I declared pointless. I guess we just can't help ourselves; it is something we have to do.

So let's say, hypothetically, that we have found the answer to life ("the universe and everything" – 42). What would we do with it? Would we all live exactly as dictated? What if the point of life was to die? (Don't see much point in that but its al hypothetical.) Would there be mass suicides? What if it was found by someone no one liked? (George Bush) No one would even begin to believe it was true.

What if I didn't like the answer? Should I live an unhappy life just because the fact that I live says that I should? Of course not, the beauty of humankind is that we rebel against the rules, we adjust but never change. The only reason of life is the one you give it. The point of life is to live it.

Life is what we make it.

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## JAMIE RAMSEY-LAWSON'S MASTERCHEF KITCHEN

‘When I get a little money I buy books; and if any is left I buy food and clothes.’ – Erasmus

### Episode 3: Harry Potter’s treacle tart

Ready in 45 minutes (+ 1 hour resting time).

#### PASTRY

110gr plain flour  
pinch salt  
15gr sugar  
60gr very cold butter  
cold water to mix

#### FILLING

150gr golden syrup  
½ heaped tbsp black treacle (alternative: honey  
or molasses syrup)  
zest and juice of ½ lemon  
2 eggs  
15gr fresh bread crumbs (white bread is  
preferable)

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Heat the oven to 180°C/Gas 4.

Mix the flour, salt, sugar and butter until it resembles fine breadcrumbs. Add the water a few drops at a time until the dough comes together.

Wrap the dough in cling film and leave to rest in the fridge for an hour.

Roll out the pastry and line a loose-bottomed tart tin. Place in the fridge for 30 minutes.

Meanwhile, mix together the golden syrup and treacle with the lemon juice. Beat the eggs in a bowl and add to the treacle mixture. Finally stir in the bread crumbs.

Carefully pour the mixture into the prepared tart tin.

Bake for 20 – 25 minutes until the crust and filling are golden brown and firm to the touch.



(adapted from  
<http://britishfood.about.com/od/cake/sandbakin1/r/treacletart.htm>)

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## NINE UNSETTLING YET INTERESTING BOOK QUESTIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF THE GENERAL PUBLIC

Dr van Leeuwen shares his views on Kenneth Branagh: “How clever am I, true genius!  
Look at me! Super-Ken, dodgy-movie-maker extraordinaire!”

### 1. A book that made you fall in love with reading

As a child I had trouble learning to read and write, and as a consequence reading was not one of my favourite activities when I was young. I played lots of sports and did a lot of drawing instead. I did not get into reading until I was about 12 or so. I was watching old-fashioned B-horror movies late at night on the BBC when my parents allowed me to go to bed late, and many of those were supposedly based on Edgar Allan Poe stories. I liked these movies so much I asked my parents if they could get me a book of Poe stories for my birthday. They were probably so thrilled I showed any interest in reading at all that they gave me a wonderful illustrated edition of his Tales. That book got me into reading. “The Fall of the House of Usher,” “The Man of the Crowd” and “Hop-Frog” are probably my favourite Poe stories. Poe is a great stylist and craftsman of eerie atmosphere. The opening paragraph of “Usher” is probably my favourite paragraph ever. I had memorized it at one point in my life.

### 2. A book so emotionally draining you couldn't complete it or had to set it aside for a bit

I never had this experience with a book. I put books aside when they are just too boring, too badly written (for my personal taste), or too pompous, whatever. I never found reading an emotionally draining experience. That said, some books have managed to extract a tear, but usually these are tears of sympathy or a sense of understanding for a character and his situation. So I can get emotionally involved with fictional characters, but this is usually positive and keeps me reading. Hazel Motes in Flannery O'Connor's *Wise Blood*, or Clifford Pyncheon in Nathaniel Hawthorne's *The House of the Seven Gables* are characters I am emotionally attached to. Recently I taught *Jude the Obscure* by Thomas Hardy because Michael Newton had put the book on the Lit 4B reading list. This was a real revelation to me. I loved this book and its protagonist. Best thing was that the BBC had made a mini-series with one of my all-time favourite actors: Robert Powell in the role of Jude, so that kept me up nights for a while.

### 3. Favourite book turned movie

Do you mean my favourite book that has been made into a movie, or my favourite movie-adaptation of a book? I think one of the best movie-adaptations of a novel I have seen is John Huston's film version of *Wise Blood*, the book I mentioned earlier. I saw the film first and loved it so much I went and bought the novel, which was exactly the same as the film. My favourite book that has been made into a movie is *Christine* by Stephen King. Another of my favourite books is Hawthorne's *The Marble Faun*, but this has never been turned into a movie (as far as I know). I would like to write a letter to Tim Burton or that M.Night Shawaddywaddy guy and ask him to make a film of it. It will probably be Burton as I can never remember the last name of the other director.

#### 4. Book turned movie and completely desecrated

The worst movie adaptations of a book are Francis Ford Coppola's *Bram Stoker's Dracula* and Kenneth Branagh's *Mary Shelley's Frankenstein*. These films are just sooooo awful and totally wrong. These classic gothic novels have inspired some film makers into making really great films. Even the Hammer Horror versions are good and to my taste, if rather free with the source material. Coppola's *Dracula* is just eye-candy and the actors make the characters ridiculous in my opinion. Dracula looks like a Martian and Jonathan Harker is a Surfer-Dude! Sorry...no-can-do. It is also so over-sexualised – even more than the Hammer films – that when I was at school in London in 1992, when it played in cinemas, we called it: Fanny Freud Copulate's *Dracula*. Like all of Branagh's films, his *Frankenstein* is really about Mr B. and not about the story he seems to be telling: "Look at me! I am Kenneth the Great! and unlike Victor I **can** resurrect a woman and snog her – even if this goes totally against the core of Mary Shelley's novel. Know what? I will cast a mobster as the monster because everyone knows mobsters are the true monsters of this world! How clever am I, true genius! Look at me! Super-Ken, dodgy-movie-maker extraordinaire!"

#### 5. Favourite romance novel.

Difficult question. What is a Romance? Ann Radcliffe's so-called gothic novels were first called Romances, Walter Scott's historical novels were also understood as Romances, even H.G. Wells' science-fiction stories were initially called Scientific Romances; Nathaniel Hawthorne had a specific theory about what distinguished "literary" Romances from so-called realistic novels in his day. But Romances can also be cheap love stories that you can buy at the supermarket. Undoubtedly my favourite writer of "literary" Romances is Hawthorne of which *The Marble Faun* is my favourite; my favourite "cheap" love story is Eliza Haywood's *The Distressed Orphan; or, Love in a Madhouse*. Haywood is probably the inventor of the "cheap" supermarket romance; they were called secret-histories in the early eighteenth century.

#### 6. A book you would write if you had all the resources

A story that I could read to my children and that would inspire their creative imagination.

#### 7. An author you completely avoid/hate/won't read

If I would refuse to read a book, I would never find out whether it is worth reading. So I am willing to give every author a try; but there are many authors that do not particularly inspire me – even if, as a professional literary scholar, I respect their efforts. Here's a short list of authors I have read, with respect, but whose books I would not take away with me on Holiday: James Joyce, Jane Austen; D.H. Lawrence; Cormac McCarthy, Ernest Hemmingway, Laurence Sterne, William Shakespeare, Alexander Pope, John Dryden, Samuel Richardson, J.R.R. Tolkien, and on and on....of the millions of authors out there in the world, I have read only very few really, and of those few I only really admire a few greatly. There's just not enough time in a life, or space in my head, for all of them. Same is true for film or music, or TV shows. I like *That 70s Show*.

### 8. An author that you will read whatever they put out

I was born in Den Helder, a not so vibrant city-like living space for people who work for the Dutch navy in the North West of the Netherlands. I think time moves slower in Den Helder, so when I was born in 1973, it was probably still 1773 in Den Helder. As a consequence, I read mostly authors who are already dead to you, but who seem still very much alive, relevant and modern, futuristic even, to me (In short: I do not read much contemporary fiction). It is still my goal in life to read everything by the following authors: William Godwin (read very much, but some of his stuff is hard to get these days), Nathaniel Hawthorne (read very much, but not all the stories and children's books yet), Edgar Allan Poe (almost read it all), Flannery O'Connor (getting there), Shirley Jackson (some way to go), Clifford Simak (long way to go), and Stephen King (long, long, long way to go). It takes me longer to read a King novel than it takes King to write one. When I have finished these, I want to get started on the work of Ray Bradbury, I think. I am also curious to read the *other* novels by the Brontë sisters, apart from *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*. I also love *Treasure Island* by Robert Louis Stevenson, and would like to give some other of his "Romances" a try. As with everything in life, there is just too much and too little time.

### 9. An unpopular/unknown book that you believe should be a bestseller

*Golf Monster* by Alice Cooper (written together with some-one else, which probably means he told stories from his easy chair, and the other "author" typed it up on a computer); not really obscure, but definitely not a best-seller either. I got a first edition at De Slegte for only 8 Euros. De Slegte sometimes does not know what they are selling. Best thing I bought in ages. This is a book in which the Coop tells about his adventures as an (in)famous rock star in the 1970s and 80s. To be perfectly honest, Alice Cooper has been a hero of mine since I was about 13, so I am not being objective here. This book is so full of intelligent and very funny stories that I laughed all the way through it. It is by no means a master-piece, but let's say it is good for the soul, my soul at least. The Coop has great insight into the ridiculous world of show business. There is a story of him meeting fat Elvis in his hotel room in Vegas and Elvis just wanting to fight this skinny shock-rocker and to show off his weapons collection. There's a story of some famous actress falling in love with him and trying to seduce him, but Alice saying "no thanks, not interested, I already have a girl friend." There's of course stories of alcohol abuse, but told with real insight into its destructive nature and awareness of how crap it made him, rather than any fake glorification of how much he could handle. There's some really striking images of him all washed up due to the commercial pressures of touring and albums flopping etc. Did you know that next to being a legendary rocker, the owner of a chain of sport-themed restaurants, and a great amateur golfer, the Coop is also a born-again-Christian, considered by Bob Dylan to be an underrated lyricist, and he has been married to the same woman for like four decades or so...Rock on Alice! The original walking contradiction. Go see him live if you can, it's always a party, literally, with balloons and confetti and all!

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## THE EXTRAORDINARY STORY OF AN ORDINARY BOY

*Shannon Ernst – Creative Writing Group Clio*

Aaron Skyler was a normal boy, until that day that the nanny called in sick and his father had to take him to work with him. Aaron had protested against it, saying it would be so boring to be there. Aaron was twelve at the time. It was a regular Saturday in Miami beach. His father was a businessman, or so he had told his son. But why did a boy of twelve need a nanny? That mystery question was answered whenever Aaron walked into the office. He thought it was just a random office, nothing more. But no, signs everywhere on the wall, Skyler industries, Skyler productions and Skyler airlines. His father had achieved much, much more than he had told him. No wonder they could afford that huge mansion on the Miami Beach. They had three cars and a private beach. Their garden had a big pool and a hot tub. The rooms were huge too, he had one with a big television in it.

Aaron sat down on the big leather arm chair in his father's office as he was running the business. The office had a big glass window and was high up. It was cool to see. He imagined Spiderman climbing on one of these buildings. When he looked down at the desk, he found a piece of paper with the company logo on it and a pen, also with the logo. He started doodling on the paper when a woman with a clipboard and a headset walked in, looking for his father probably. But no, she didn't look for his father. She looked for him. One of the cast members for a commercial had cancelled, and they needed Aaron to stand in. He figured that he should do that, what else was he going to do all day? He had permission from his father and went to the commercial shoot. A lot of grown ups were there. It was a commercial for a clothing line, which seemed alright to him. This is the day his life changed. Among the grown ups was a person Aaron had called the 'talent seeker' back then. Now he knew she was an employee from a casting bureau. And she had selected Aaron to be a part of their team.

So here he was, Aaron Skyler. Nowadays eighteen years old, hot, blond, toned. He was on his way to a premiere of the New York Fashion Week where he was featured as the male lead of the Calvin Klein and the Hugo Boss selection. It didn't happen a lot that models made it to two brands in the same fashion week. His heart beat went up when the limo slowed down. Was it time to get out his shades, or would he show the audience his eyes today? Shades were better for the total effect. Good the limo stopped. He could hear the crowd cheer. It wasn't unexpected that a crowd of girls was out there, waiting for him. Sometimes they were waiting for him if he was just going to a photo shoot. He liked it, the attention. And he had the right to like it. He was only eighteen and yet he had made it to super model at the Elite Modelling Agency. Life was good. And apart from the hangovers at the beach parties he threw then, other than that it was all good.

He stepped out of the limo, running a quick hand through his hair as his feet landed on the red carpet. The crowd went wild. Banners, flag, but mostly there was cheering. Girls threw teddy bears at him as he walked, and roses. He picked one up, glancing over at the press that was standing at the door. They were ready to take pictures, so he casually shoved one hand in his pocket and held the rose close to him with the other. "In other words..." he said and he heard the screaming of the girls. Normally the models didn't speak to their fans. "I'm still single... and throwing a party for all my fans on Friday." With that, things became unstoppable. Girls cheering louder and he walked closer to them to sign their body parts and papers. He did so and smiled a toothpaste smile. Life wouldn't get much better than this.

*Creative Writing Group Clio are looking for new members. So, if you love to write and get some feedback from your peers, send an email to: [lauraodbeke@hotmail.com](mailto:lauraodbeke@hotmail.com).*

## “HAMLET” - NOORD NEDERLANDS TONEEL

*Laura op de Beke*

“Hamlet”. It is unfortunate most people come across this play in secondary school, when they make you read it even though Shakespeare, iambic pentameter and Elizabethan drama are the last things your mind when you’re going through puberty. So even if you don’t understand it, or like it, you are supposed to recognise it for something epic and confrontational. Therefore my relationship with “Hamlet” is very much based on what others have said about it. However, that relationship is about to end as I am going to finally see it this Wednesday.



This is a review in two parts. The first half of it will be written in anticipation. What can you expect of this 400-year-old tragedy? The second part of this review will be written after Wednesday 25<sup>th</sup> when I will have seen “Hamlet” performed in Tilburg by the actors-group ‘Noord Nederlands Toneel’ (NNT). For those of you who don’t know the story (because you have had more merciful teachers), you will certainly have been exposed to something quite similar in Disney’s *The Lion King*, the story is about a young prince whose father is murdered by his power-hungry uncle. The prince, a surly Dane, suffers under the burden of his mother’s rapid remarriage to said uncle, and appearances of his father’s ghost around the castle. His manic depression, if I can call it that, affects the tender-hearted Ophelia. She goes mad under the wax and wane of Hamlet’s affections and ends up drowning herself.

I have always presumed it to be one of the less interesting works of Shakespeare. My reasons for this presumption are varied and vague: perhaps it’s that oft-quoted soliloquy ‘To be or not to be’; or perhaps it’s because I saw Mel Gibson once play the main part in that dreadful 1990 film; or, and this seems the most likely, it might be because the good girl dies. The idea of a young woman killing herself because of the instability of her lover’s affections strikes me as slightly ridiculous, the stuff of bad poetry and teenage diaries. And “Hamlet” is not a love-story, right? This Wednesday’s performance promises to be just that, a love-story.

**April 26<sup>th</sup>, it’s one o’clock in the morning**, and I have to say it: “Hamlet” proved to be not exactly what I had in mind, but certainly something just as magnificent. Even though the performance had promised me a love-story which it didn’t really deliver, it did highlight some very interesting themes. There was love, sure, but in the guise of frustration, pain, anger and doubt; two people hesitantly reaching out for each other, confused and lonely, trapped in world in which hypocrisy is king. Performed like this, suddenly the root of Hamlet’s and Ophelia’s problems became clear; not their youth nor their innocence, but rather the corruption of the world around them. The emphasis was on madness as well as on love. For research purposes director Ola Mafaalani and researcher Noraly Beyer even resided in a mental hospital for some weeks, and it showed. A cluttered stage; screens made out of plastic foil sometimes obscured the actors, making all characters into shades, ghosts almost, or the figments of Hamlet’s imagination: a subtle foreshadowing to the final denouement in which it is suggested that instead of suffering from some very serious character flaws, Hamlet might in fact be an early-modern catatonic.

If you are eager to judge for yourself whether “Hamlet” is all that you were told it would be, don’t fret; on 09-05 NNT will be performing “Hamlet” in the Leidse Schouwburg.

## EURYDICE

*Annelies de Mol – Creative Writing Group Clio*

My hands are clammy, they shake. My head feels heavy on my neck; I cannot hold it up any longer. I see shapes, they vanish, I feel...darkness. It is as if I'm stuck in a realm that gives short incentives to remember, shows blinks of images, faces, names and then takes it all away again. It drains me of my spirit. No sensations, no emotion, no energy. My mind is completely numb. Soft peaceful darkness, forgetfulness

...

When I open my eyes I am in the underworld. I am as insubstantial as my fellow maidens walking in a forest. It is peaceful here. Vaguely I remember a sharp pain. Two strong arms holding me, a voice calling my name: "Eurydice! Eurydice!", entreating me to stay even though he must have known that I could not. I remember that I was happy then. But I had to go, I didn't want to leave, but I was given no choice, I had to leave the mortal world behind me. And now here I am, walking in the shades, a shade myself. But I am at peace at least.

Then one day he comes. He presents the golden bow to Queen Persephone and asks the Underworld King if he can have me back. He makes a nice plea about it too, I think, I cannot feel it as they do.

"Wasn't it love that brought you together? Love?" He cries. "Even in this dark abyss below the light earth you've heard of it, love! Love is what brought me here and love is what will keep me here if it is necessary, if you do not grant me my wish. I am desperate without my love. My life is bereft of reason without my love. Please grant me my wish!" He does not want to die.

Being the musician he is, he accompanies his plea with a sweet melody and all us shades are in awe as much as we can be. His lyre pleads his case. Tears. Tears on the high Queen's face and trembling hands. Tears in the eyes of the furies; a first for that. A sob from Charon's throat. A moan from Sisyphus sitting idly on his rock whose load he cannot carry anymore. Nothing else seems to matter in this dark place but his sweet melody and his honest love. Even the three old Fates stop spinning for just a little while and starting again they accidentally snap a life in two.

I do not feel it. I remember that I used to when we were still dancing in the forests up above, but it does not seem to matter anymore. Love has lost its substance. And maybe one day he will join me here, for all the peaceful eternity, that would be my wish if I still had any.

But his wish is granted. He can leave this insensible plain and take me too. I am to follow him and he is not to look back until I have passed through the outer gates. He bows deeply for the shady King. He gently kisses the still trembling hands of the stolen Queen. And without one glance at his true love he starts along the path. I am to follow him.

...

The light gets brighter. I can see him up ahead, a dark figure surrounded by a halo of light, leading the way. I stumble over some rocks. My ankle hurts, it has started to burn where the snake bit me. It was healed down below, but the moment we re-crossed the river Stix it started itching and burning and with every step we take towards the light it starts burning sharper. I am no longer used to the pains of life.

Painful step after painful step I follow, dutiful. Wishing step after step that he might look back and I be free of this bond. I have lived my life, I wish no second. But he leads me on and on and on and as the light is starting to shine brighter and the air starts to feel warm about me I begin to hope that he might not look back.

The mouth of the cave is visible now. I can feel the sunlight shining in and almost feel it on my skin. I hear birds whispering the news: "Eurydice is back, she lives." And will I live? Or will I die again? I can smell the forest. My ankle stings but it does not matter so much now that I feel the warmth returning to me again. My fingers start to tingle, I am almost fully alive again, I can almost grasp it. I reach. I am to live again... to die.

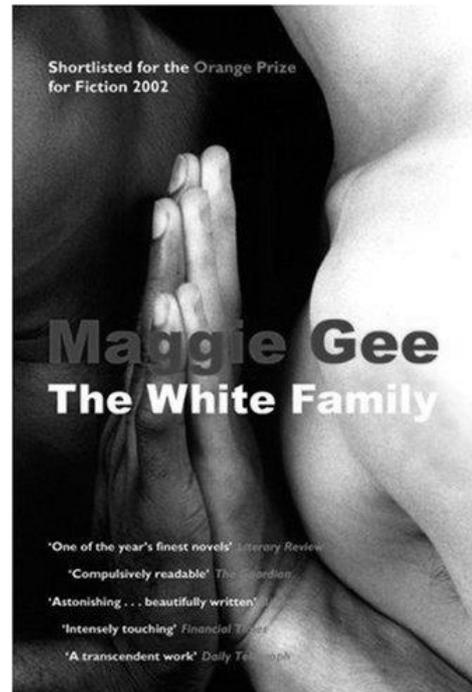
And as I cross the river Stix, yet again, I speak my dying wish: "Let the wild beasts tear him limb from limb so he can feel the pain he caused me!"

## LESSER KNOWN WORKS

*In this item, we want to highlight some of the wonderful novels English literature has to offer, but which are sadly underappreciated by or unknown to the general public.*

Maggie Gee – *The White Family*

This novel can only be described as characteristically English. Its language, straightforward to the point of shocking at times, conveys an image of Britain that will be recognizable to most Anglophiles, both in a positive and negative way. Its subject is the White family, father Alfred, mother May and their grown-up children Darren, Shirley and Dirk. Alfred, who is, lets say, mistrustful of foreigners, has a stroke, uniting the scattered family at his hospital bed. The conflict between the children and their parents – Darren is the “golden boy” who does well for himself but is emotionally scarred by his upbringing, Shirley married a black man against her father’s wishes and Dirk is a skinhead, influenced by his father’s opinions on foreigners – is measured out extensively. The main plot line focuses on Alfred’s stroke and the effect this has on the (extended) family. However, every character has a chapter in which they are the narrator, each with subtle stylistic differences. All of them elaborate extensively on their past, present and future. This makes for a very diverse, varied novel which is extremely readable. Ms Zeven is very right in pointing out that ‘nothing is black-and-white’ in this novel; while characters may be unlikable on the one page, they redeem themselves on another page. They are not meant to be likeable but also not to be unlikeable, either. The reader must have a strong stomach for outspoken racism; while the novel obviously does not encourage it, it does contain numerous instances where characters elaborate at length on why the country is “going to the dogs”. A novel that hits home hard, *The White Family* is both harsh and beautiful, horrible and funny, neither black nor white.



Read this if:

- you like novels firmly planted in English soil;
- you like novels with multiple protagonists, all with their own voice;
- you like realistic fiction that encompasses all tones of life; whether positive or negative, happy or sad, funny or infuriating.

Don't read this if:

- you can't stand small-minded, racist characters;
- you find novels with multiple storylines and narrators distracting or annoying;
- you like short novels that get to the point quickly without too much fuss.

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## THE GOD OF INSPIRATION AND HIS MAGICAL MEDE

*Laura op de Beke – Creative Writing Group Clio*

It's Wednesday, almost midnight and this essay is not going to write itself, but it's one of those days on which everything you write is going to be shit anyway, so I'm thinking *why bother?* My fingers rest on the keyboard, thoughts go wandering. I'm in the university library and it's getting dark outside. Winter has difficulty letting go, still clutching at the water's edge with freezing fingers. The sky is dark, the water still darker. A wild wind terrorises the treetops in the square, a gale that has sent all people to seek shelter.

Then something moves behind a bookcase. I lean back in my chair and roll it half a meter backwards so I can see the culprit: a tall, bearded man, staring intently at a collection of shelves (Scandinavian Literature). Slightly self-conscious I swivel back to my desk, where my laptop hums disapprovingly. After a deep sigh and a glance at the time I decide it's getting far too late for me to produce anything comprehensible. I start packing.

"Are you going to give up that easily?" He has not moved, is not even looking at me. "It's not going to be any good if it comes too easy. Everything valuable comes at a cost". I look at him and wonder if maybe he's some kind of counsellor, or a librarian but he has that look that says 'wizard' and also maybe 'slightly mad' with his keen, shifty blue-eyes. "Knowledge requires sacrifice". His deep, scratchy voice unnerves me. "I'm sorry, are you a librarian? Is it closing time? Because I was already leaving". He shakes his head and wanders a little closer while suddenly the tubular lighting starts flickering innocently. I can see the gleaming whiteness of his eyes, one of which is different from the other, though I can't tell in what way. He looks right through me and whispers: "What are you working at? It's not coming along is it?" I shake my head and show him the cover of my paperback –Faustus– by Christopher Marlowe. He responds with an affirmative nod of the head. "A classic, I love stories about a good sacrifice. Have you tried coffee?" At the look of my bewildered face he continues, "For inspiration I mean. Coffee always works wonders for me. At least when I brew it."

The way he says it 'brewed', strikes me as something out of this time. Suddenly I wonder how old he is and what he's doing in the library this late, looking so forlorn. "That's alright, maybe I'll get some from the machine downstairs." I say, gathering my stuff. "I'll walk you" he answers and true enough, we share an awkward silence all the way down to the cafeteria. He beats me to the coffee dispenser and hits a button I *know* shouldn't be there. It's large and gold, and it adorns what looks to me like a runic inscription. He catches my look of awe and winks while the machine prepares the drink and the air is filled with the odour of a rich, sweet-smelling substance. When it's done he hands me the cup. Perhaps it's the light, but his eyes seem golden.

"It's not really coffee is it?" I ask. He grins. "It's better." I don't know what to say, I feel enthralled. Suddenly something hits the windows. The noise is like a gunshot and startles me. I see a flash of feathers, the flapping of wings. A crow perhaps. "I have to go, they're getting restless. You're welcome by the way for that costly cup of genius in your hand. Don't forget about it. You may be called upon to return the favour." And then he leaves and I feel strangely reverent.

Carefully I take a sip. The liquid runs down my throat, into the pit of my empty stomach, but it goes beyond that: all the way into the tips of my fingers, which suddenly ache for the keys of my laptop. Whole sentences start to form in my mind; I know how to finish the essay. It feels so obvious. All this time I've been waiting for the click. It's heart-rendering. Knowledge is empathy, understanding. Poor Faustus. Poor thing.

## OPHELIA

*Minke Jonk*

It's not fair that you should leave me  
 Because your hand, I held in mine  
 It's not fair that you just left me  
 True minds are meant to be in line

Married without objections  
 At least, that's what my father said  
 Before he died and left my mother's bed  
 To be given to another

That is why I'm drowning  
 And still floating around  
 There is no sense in leaving  
 I'm waiting to be found

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## WHEN DEATH SHAKES

*Liselore Goossens*

There's no going back now. You've made your decisions and played your cards, and now you have to follow up on what you started. Ride out what you set in motion. You were dealt cards and you dealt with them. You did as you pleased and pleased as you lived. You made your choice and set out the route and as planned, you ended up here. Do you have doubts? Maybe, but none big enough. Regrets? Fears? Nothing is strong enough to hold you back anymore.

So you soar.

A punch in the face. And then another in your gut. One moment you're standing up straight, strong – scared perhaps, but determined. The next your world is pulled from under your feet, beaten down, scattered and shattered. The next you're bending over clutching your sides, tumbling, fragmented, shaken. 'She's not going to make it.' There is detachment in the voice, it's just another routine, but not for you. You've stood by her side through it all. You faced it together and you were going to come out of it together. You were so certain.

You aren't certain of anything anymore.

*It is possible to die.* You read the words and it shifts something. They're only five simple words, four of them monosyllabic but you read them and something in your brain snaps. It is possible: it could happen any moment. You could die at any given moment, any given place, any given way. It wouldn't take much more than a heart failure – a speeding car – a knife to your veins. The end of your life could be in anyone's hands: God's, a stranger's, your own. You have never fully realized just how fragile living really is until you read those words, and it rattles you. You have never been so aware of the options, the possibilities.

You have never been more determined to *live*.

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## CREATIVE WRITING DIY

*Tip-top tips and tricks for do-it-yourself creative writing*

- **If you want to write, write.** Planning your story is a good idea, but don't let this process take forever. There is nothing more detrimental to motivation than a blank page. So just get started. Pour yourself a glass of wine and stay in for the evening. Also, disconnect your internet, however scary that might feel. Facebook is every writer's mortal enemy.
- **Do not endlessly mull over every line.** Just write, get into it and then leave it to 'cool off' for a day or two, then start editing and embellishing. Only very rarely does your first draft contain sentences of pure genius. Genius is the result of hard work and a lot of patience. The Flemish author Tom Lanoye once said "A writer's greatest asset is a big ass to sit on comfortably while (s)he's rewriting".
- **Print your text,** grab a pen and start correcting as if you were a teacher, or the world's most-difficult-to-please reader. A story always looks different on paper. It will help you spot errors that you missed on screen.
- It is a generally accepted truth that when you write you are supposed to write for the dumbest readers imaginable – however, most of the time this presumption just leads to an excess of detail. You should **have faith in your readers**. A text can be implicit and mysterious without being difficult to read; as long as you do give the reader something to hold on to in regard to setting and character.
- **Be hard on yourself.** You should be your own toughest critic.
- **Practice makes perfect.**
- When writing you should take care that **every sentence you write is relevant**. Don't just write anything in order to fill the screen. Detail is fine, but keep it limited and to the point. If it's not important that your character is wearing a blue shirt, don't mention it. If it is, by all means, do.
- Lastly, **look for role-models**. Once you've found that writer that you adore, and whose style you believe to be the most beautiful and most appealing, don't be afraid to set it as an example for your own writing. It helps to know what people look for in a novel.

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## CAMALUS: A STORY

By Jordi van de Weerd

*Camalus the dodo, King of Caelia, is ordered to explore an newly discovered island. He is trying to find the Halcyon, a mysterious animal that might help him across the ocean and onto the island. He asks Lughus, the parrot librarian, for his help.*

### The Halcyon

“Bring me all the texts on ancient myths,” ordered Lughus. Lelantos, who had been calmly dusting the tops of the cupboards, was startled by his master's sudden entrance. His master had always been a bit peculiar, but something seemed to have invigorated him.

“What happened master?” Lelantos asked.

“We have no time!” squawked Lughus. While being used to his master's strange habits, Lelantos could tell now was the time to do as he was told.

“What myths are we looking for master?” asked Lelantos. Even though he knew this was not a good time to ask, he dreaded the task of sorting the library's contents, something his master took great pleasure in. Lelantos was good with books, less so with others. He had always wanted to work in the library, to preserve and understand the history of Caelia, but after a few months in the library he was not so sure. Lughus was a brilliant master, but very unskilled at teaching. Not trusting Lelantos with anything, he would usually be given a menial task, such as dusting the books and cupboards. Not that Lelantos didn't appreciate the time spent alone.

“We're looking for an ancient species,” answered Lughus suddenly. Lelantos knew that tone of voice, this was all the information he was going to get. He walked to the back room and retrieved the texts dealing with ancient species and myths. He barely managed to find them all before Lughus grabbed them from his claws and sat down at his desk. Lelantos knew what this meant, he would be here all night helping his master find that which he could not speak of. He resigned himself into a chair opposite Lughus and started reading the texts.

“Look for any reference to an ancient species connected to the sea,” Lughus suddenly whispered. Lelantos was taken aback, his master didn't usually share his thoughts or research with him. Excitement filled Lelantos, and he started scanning the texts for anything related to birds and water.

“I would not ask you for help if I could avoid it, so would you focus?” squawked Lughus angrily. Realising he had a look of awe on his face, Lelantos quickly composed himself and returned to the texts. Sighing to himself, Lughus thought about how he was as an apprentice, and how he had been striving to please his master. *Perhaps I have given him too little credit, he has been invaluable to my research.*

“We are looking for the Halcyon,” Lughus suddenly said. His apprentice stared at him blankly.

“But master, I thought the Halcyon were a mere tale?” Lelantos was puzzled by his master's sudden comment. It was very unlike him to confide in his apprentice.

“I see you are puzzled, but understand that this is of the utmost importance,” said Lughus. Clearly, Lughus wanted to speak more but could not, Lelantos thought. Although he spent most of his time in the library, Lelantos knew much and suspected a great deal more. News travels fast, especially where their leader is concerned.

“Is this why you had to see Camalus, master?” asked Lelantos.

Taken aback by the brashness of his apprentice, Lughus looked up and squinted through his monocle.

“I should have known there would be talk on the streets. I had hoped to keep it a secret for longer,” sighed Lughus.

“I did not wish to cause you inconvenience, master,” Lelantos replied.

“You have not, and if you are to be of any real use I might as well tell you what has happened,” said Lughus.

As Lughus finished speaking, Lelantos eyes and mouth were wide open.

“I have not treated you so unfairly that my offer would warrant such a response, have I?” asked Lughus. Lelantos seemed to be daydreaming, for it took him a while to respond.

“Master, I think we may have found it,” was all he could say.

### A Fearful King

“How goes the preparation in Caelia?” asked Muscio. A trembling badger stood before him, terrified of his king's response to the news. Their king had always been cruel, and made no attempt to hide it. He had come to power through manipulation, torture, and execution, and saw these as useful tools in maintaining the throne. Including murdering anyone who bore dire news.

“Our scouts overheard a meeting in the palace of Caelia. Their librarian seems to have found the location of a species that will help them reach the island.”

Hearing this news, Muscio stood up from his golden throne and walked over to the messenger. His black and white fur rising, claws extended, fuming with rage. The messenger had mere seconds to let out a terrifying cry before Muscio's claws were on his throat, snapping his neck instantly.

“Bring me Tharandar!” screamed Muscio. His guards had seen this happen many times before, and without a word left the throne room.

“I should have known Camalus would prove to be a problem. If he truly finds these Halcyon my plan will be ruined,” Muscio muttered to himself. Waiting for Tharandar to enter, he impatiently paced the room.

“My lord, you have summoned me?” asked Tharandar.

“How is it that Camalus has found a way to reach the island?” screamed Muscio in his usual high-pitched voice.

“The chief librarian seems to have located references to the Halcyon location in ancient texts, sir. It appears his apprentice stumbled upon it by accident,” growled Tharandar, his dark fur and deep voice in sharp contrast with Muscio, who was blind with rage.

“This was no accident! Lughus and his apprentice have scanned these texts for years, yet found no reference to them before. He must have had help!” continued Muscio, still screaming.

“We kept a close watch on them, and there was no help,” spoke Tharandar, knowing full well that there was no point in arguing. It was moments like this that he regretted submitting to the King, and moments like this where he was pleased to know that his species' loyalty lay with him, not with this incompetent ball of fur.

“Send in your scouts, I need information about their current plans! And find out who assisted them!” With this order, Tharandar left the throne room, leaving Muscio to continue his pacing and muttering.

Instructing his scouts, Tharandar toyed with the idea of disposing of Muscio. He had brought power to Solum, but was intend to increase his power, and willing to sacrifice anything to make that happen. Tharandar shook his head, clearing his mind of such thoughts. *We will make sure that never happens*, was all he could tell himself before disappearing into the dark night.

### The Expedition

Camalus had gathered his team. Included in the crew were Lughus and Lelantos, who knew the location of the Halcyon, his chief scout Cerunnos the eagle, and Coturnia, who would serve as the leader. Camalus would have led the expedition himself, but the kingdom needed its king. A small group of Cerunnos' elite scouts would join them, but no soldiers were welcome. Camalus had insisted on this, since he believed bringing soldiers could anger the Halcyon, something he could not afford to do. Halfway into the discussion on which path to take, a black figure approached Cerunnos' nest, which had served as the headquarters of the expedition.

Cerunnos was first to spot it, and immediately flew towards the black figure, who did not appear to have malicious intentions.

“Cerunnos, stop!” screeched Camalus. Cerunnos stopped mid-flight, and escorted the black bird to Camalus.

“O great king Camalus, I am but a simple creature, requesting an audience with one so noble as yourself,” spoke the bird, kneeling before Camalus.

“Please, arise, there is no need for this. Tell us who you are and why you have come. You do not appear to have evil intentions, yet you fly into the heart of my kingdom without invitation,” spoke Camalus, calmly.

“I am called Myrrdin, and I have come bearing grave news concerning the expedition,” spoke the crow. The mention of the expedition shocked all those present, except Camalus, who proceeded with his questions.

“What is this grave news you speak of?” asked Camalus.

“You cannot trust this creature!” interferred Cerunnos. “His kind have been stealing our eggs and murdering our young for centuries! Please tell me you do not intend to let this creature live?”

“I am well aware of their history, Cerunnos, and their past deeds. Yet this single bird chose to come into our home bearing knowledge of something he should not have known. I will hear him out at least, and if his intentions are indeed peaceful, he will be allowed to return home,” replied Camalus. Coturnia let out a brief shriek, indicating her agreement with Camalus. This is why Camalus had become king of Caelia, and why the kingdom had flourished under his rule. The calm mind of a true leader, speaking on behalf of her people, and disregarding any personal emotion.

“Do not fulfil your duties to the cat-king, for it will be your undoing. We have seen it. Continuing on this path will bring destruction to Caelia, and you will be unable to stop it. We have seen it. Camalus, you have ruled this kingdom with wisdom and kindness, something rare in kings. We ask that you use your wisdom now, and heed our warning, for if you do not, all will be lost. This is all we have seen, and all we can say. We implore you to use wisdom, and save Caelia.” With these words Myrrdin flapped his wings and flew off into the sky. The gathering seemed shocked by this prophecy, and Lelantos was the first to recover.

“Save Caelia?” said Lelantos. “How would this expedition destroy Caelia?”

This was the collective thought occupying their minds. However, Camalus had become aware of another presence, this one being familiar.

“What are your thoughts, Cerridwen?” asked Camalus. Cerridwen emerged from the shadows, her black coat of feathers as ominous as always.

“I do not know what to make of this. The crows have always been an enigmatic species, and little is known about them. Most consider them petty thieves, but their elder circle uses a ritual which allows them access to the spirit world. Their visions are rarely shared, especially by one such as Myrrdin. I have heard of him, and he is part of the elder circle. However, I do not understand why they would sense a danger to Caelia. Refusing Muscio's request will surely bring war to Caelia, as he is already displeased with us, and a refusal would give him the reason he needs to invade Caelia. It would appear you have no choice, Camalus. If you refuse the quest, Caelia will be plunged into war. For the sake of your kingdom and people, you must continue with the expedition. I suggest Coturnia stays behind, and I will take her place. You will need Coturnia to keep an eye on the kingdom, and my vast knowledge may be of use on the expedition,” hooted Cerridwen.

“As always, your advice is welcome,” answered Camalus, somewhat confused due to the clarity of Cerridwen's response. It was strange for her to interfere directly, since she usually preferred staying in the dark. However, there was wisdom in her words, and Camalus agreed to continue the expedition. The planning continued well into the night, and it was agreed that they would leave for the Halcyon in two days. Cerunnos had preparations to complete, and they would need enough rest for the long journey. However, beyond the trees that encircled Caelia, a pair of bright yellow eyes were watching, and an menacing smirk slowly appeared. Camalus had just ensured Caelia's destruction.