

AUTUMN

NOTED

2008

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



NOTED:
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Armstrong, Neil. *Untitled*. 1969.

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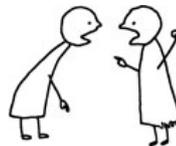
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Editorial



With our backs to the oh-too-rapidly faded summer, we are now facing the new academic year and the future, as one must. The edition of NOTED you are holding in your hands is outstandingly rich with the input and experience of our ever-increasing number of contributors. This is, of course, **your** newsletter, so be brave and cross the thin line dividing reader and author by jumping right onto its pages with your own creative or editorial piece. We would be most delighted to have you on board.

As it is, we present you with a finely packaged autumn issue and our thanks go out to those of you who helped to produce this fantastic issue of NOTED. It is my privilege to introduce the witty, imaginative and multifarious quality of the contributions, so thank you to the students and members of staff responsible for them: to the writers, editors, visual artists, photographers, film-makers and graphic designers. These paper leaves rustle to life with the brilliant stories, poems, pictures, interviews, articles, contests, proposals, calendars and ruminations from home and abroad which cover

them. I invite you to let your hands greedily run through them.

You will soon find out what the 'out-of-this-world' front-cover is all about and hear of the role you can play in this new game. It appears that NOTED is looking to cover its more intimate parts, and has launched a contest for the best front-page picture. And what could be better than a front page which features you and NOTED in the most exciting and unusual places possible?!? Turn to page 13 to find out more.

Our established artists, Annick Challet and Jennifer Wong, are also challenging you to participate in an art contest which blends visual and verbal media under the fascinating theme of 'Happy accidents'. Accidents *can* be happy, and, more importantly, they can be a source of further modelling and creation, so get to work on yours (p. 42).

The backbone of the creative writing section for this issue is 'Sonatina' by Naoko Obara, produced in the context of Alan Sternberg's seminar 'Writing short stories'. In no time, you will find yourself lulled by the music of the sonatina, floating up



and down the streets and mountains near Osaka. While seasons are on the move, adding their different traces to the cherry-trees, the reader is transported to the hidden space of a piano-teacher's heart. Simply beautiful.

Well, it's time to bow out and let you get on with your reading now, but not before thanking the generous Michael Rösli for his unflagging energy and his sustained presence on every page (literally!), and senior editor Emma Depledge, my friend and the ghost inside the NOTED machine. We will do our best to keep things running while she's away in LA,

although, I have to admit, I've yet to figure out how to manage without her. I promise to try though, and I welcome the help of new student members. Now run to your keyboards, your paintbrushes or your cameras and snap away, for such is art in the making!

Happy reading and good luck for the autumn semester. ●

Ioana Balgradean

To enquire about joining the NOTED team, please email noted@lettres.unige.ch or look out for posters advertising one of our meetings.

A Note from the Director

The publication of this issue of NOTED coincides with the beginning of a new academic year. I hope the year will see you prosper and that the English Department will be a source of continual intellectual stimulation and discovery. If you get a lot out of the English Department, I hope you will also put something back in, by actively contributing to the life of the Department. Our website, www.unige.ch/lettres/angle, is an excellent source of information about activities, lectures, and much more. I invite you to consult it regularly.

One of the ways in which students can get involved in the Department is by participating in the making of NOTED, and the splendid issue in your hands shows how many students do so already. Another way is by joining the *commission mixte*, which consists of representatives of

the student body and the teaching staff. Members of the *commission mixte* are appointed at the annual general assembly of the Department, which usually takes place in February. All students are invited to attend. We would be particularly glad to see more first and second-year students as they are usually underrepresented.

The most recent meeting of the *commission mixte* took place in May and led to a useful exchange of information and a constructive dialogue about the state of the Department. Some of the suggestions made at the meeting have already had specific repercussions (the minutes of the meeting can be consulted in the English library): certain policies regarding exams and evaluations have now been defined with greater clarity on the Department website. →



For instance, we now indicate specific dates by which attestations and graded essays need to be submitted (for example, 5 January 2009 for the February session), in the hope of avoiding any misunderstandings in the future.

An important insight I took away from the meeting in May is that many students are worried about the minority among their colleagues whose spoken English is weak. I sympathize with this frustration. As was pointed out during the meeting, students with weak spoken English find it difficult to make themselves understood, or they fall entirely silent during seminars, thus depriving themselves of an opportunity to improve. Don't let it come to this. If your command of spoken English is not yet what it should be, I urge you to do something about it. The English Department is not a language school. Our vocation is to teach literature and linguistics, for which adequate mastery of the language is a prerequisite. Nevertheless, you have a number of options. A short-term solution while you are in Geneva is a language tandem: you find an English native speaker who wants to work on their French (there are notice boards at the Philosophes and the Comédie that can be used for advertisements), and you regularly meet to speak and teach each other the two languages. But nothing works as well as total immersion, which is why I strongly recommend a stay in the English-speaking world. For instance, first-year students with weak English may decide to attend intensive language courses in the UK during the summer (offers on the internet abound). Our Department website also provides information about 'Study Abroad and

Scholarships'. I would particularly like to draw your attention to (or remind you of) the Language Assistant Programme (LAP), which allows students from French-speaking Switzerland to spend a year in the UK teaching French while working on their English language skills. Students need to have completed at least four semesters when they leave (so second-year and more advanced students can apply, but first-year students can't). There is a modest salary which covers the expenses students incur. Once back in Geneva, you will find your English studies much more fulfilling, speaking the language with ease. And you will keep unforgettable memories of the time spent abroad.

By the way, the current student representatives on the *commission mixte* are Léonard Zumstein, Jennifer Wong, Lydia Sonderegger and Kimberly Gaydon (see box on the right). If there are any issues which you would like them to raise at the next meeting of the *commission mixte* later this term, please get in touch with them.

Students can also make a contribution to the Department by producing thoughtful teaching evaluations at the end of the semester. These evaluations, as I trust you know, are entirely anonymous: a student usually drops the forms off at the loge in Uni Bastions, from where they get sent to the Service Aeven at Uni Dufour. A few days later, we teachers receive a typed-up transcript of your comments and a series of statistics reflecting the overall response. I can assure students that teachers take these evaluations seriously. Of course, it would be naïve to assume that every



single criticism students voice leads us to take action: if, for example, some students find the workload for a seminar heavy while a few others indicate that they found it rather light, we probably conclude that we got it just about right. But if all or most students found the workload excessive, we will most likely act on your feedback in the future. I have personally adjusted a number of features of my teaching in seminars to responses in teaching evaluations, notably concerning student presentations and, more generally, the degree and kind of interaction during seminars. By means of constructive feedback, you can thus have an impact on the quality of the courses taught in the Department.

While criticism is vital, we are also glad to receive praise where praise is due. If an assistant did an excellent job in a seminar, tell them (in person, in the teaching evaluation, or both). It is best not to overstep certain limits though: a teacher in our Department once found a love declaration in a student's teaching evaluation. Thank you, but our primary objective is to improve the quality of our teaching.

A special opportunity for an exciting seminar presents itself when it can be tied to a study trip. Few, if any, departments in our Faculty are as active in organizing such trips as the English Department has been in recent years, and another two will take place during the spring term 2009: the trip to Venice is open to MA students attending the seminar on 'L'idée de Venise dans la littérature moderne' (cross-listed in English and Comparative Literature); the trip to London and Stratford is for BA and MA students following the seminars on 'Shakespeare and Performance'.

The Department can only provide a partial subsidy to help cover the expenses for the trips, but we believe that the extra instruction and pleasure gained will nonetheless make them worthwhile. ●

Lukas Erne

Commission Mixte: The Current Student Representatives



Léonard Zumstein

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Jennifer Wong

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Department News

Various News

New Email Lists

New Department email lists will allow our BA, MA and PhD students to sign up to receive important information concerning their studies in the English Department. The email lists will provide an additional means of disseminating information to students who do not regularly consult the Department website and do not always catch announcements made in class. Students are strongly encouraged to subscribe to the new e-mail lists. Visit the following link:

<http://list.unige.ch>

and sign up for the appropriate list(s):

BA students: angle-ba@unige.ch

MA students: angle-ma@unige.ch

PhD students: angle-phd@unige.ch

If necessary, it is possible for a student to cancel or modify this subscription by using the box at the bottom of the subscription page.

New Course for High School Teachers

A *formation continue* course for high school teachers in the canton of Geneva will be offered as of next year (2008/09): Eric Haeberli will be in charge of this, in collaboration with Edna Scheidegger, the person in charge of the *formation continue de formation secondaire post-obligatoire* in the canton. Also contributing to the teaching will be: Valerie Fehlbaum, Annick Challet, Claire Forel and David Wilson.

ADEA

The ADEA's latest party took place on May 16th at Café Gavroche, Boulevard James-Fazy 4. The event was well attended and much fun was had by all.

For more information about the ADEA, the University of Geneva English Department's student organization (the abbreviation stands for *Association des Etudiants en Anglais*), please see:

<http://www.asso-etud.unige.ch/adea/>

Commission Mixte

The minutes of the meetings of the *Commission Mixte* of the English Department will henceforth be made available for consultation in the English Library.

Style Sheet

The Department's *Style Sheet* has been updated by Dr Elizabeth Kukorelly. The *Style Sheet*, which provides detailed instructions for the formal presentation of written work in the English Department, is available via our website or as a brochure at the English Department secretariat.

Bourse Thomas Harvey

The Bourse Thomas Harvey for this year was awarded to Letizia Favorito who completed research for her *mémoire* on early eighteenth-century criminal narratives and biographies, at the British Library in London. The Thomas Harvey scholarship provides up to SFr. 2,000 for a student to travel to an English speaking country for purposes of study and research. Applicants must be of Swiss nationality and must have completed at least two semesters of study at the University of Geneva. Doctoral students are also eligible. The next deadline is at the end of this calendar year.

New Carpets

Both the *Comédie* and Phil 017 gained new carpets last semester.



New Writing Lab Monitors

The writing lab has gained two new monitors, Kimberly Gaydon and Léonard Zumstein. Kimberly and Léonard replace Jennifer Wong and Donald Armbricht. NOTED would like to wish Jennifer and Donald all the very best for the remainder of their studies. The Writing Lab, which is located in room Phil 005, on the ground floor of the Philosophes Building, is an individual tutorial service provided to all students in the Department who seek help with their written English. The schedule and sign-up sheets for appointments are posted opposite the door of the room. Any student at any level in the Department is welcome.

Julianna Bark

Julianna Bark will join the Department as a first year Analysis of Texts instructor in autumn 2008. Julianna holds a *Licence ès Lettres* from the University of Geneva and an MA in Art History and Archaeology from New York University. Julianna has previously held teaching posts at New York University and Webster University, Geneva. She also functioned as NOTED's general editor from 2000-2001. Welcome back, Julianna!

Elizabeth Kukorelly

Having successfully completed and defended her PhD thesis entitled 'Samuel Richardson's *Pamela Part II: Reading, Writing, and Moral Authority in the Early English Novel*', Elizabeth Kukorelly has been appointed as a *Maître assistante* in early modern English. NOTED would like to congratulate her on her excellent thesis, and wish her the best of luck for her future teaching and research.

Sarah Van der Laan

The Department welcomes a new *Maître assistante suppléante*, Sarah Van der Laan, who holds a BA from Yale University and MA degrees in

Intellectual and Cultural History and Renaissance studies from Queen Mary, University of London. She recently completed her PhD at Yale University, with a thesis entitled "What Virtue and Wisdom Can Do": Homer's *Odyssey* in the Renaissance Imagination'. Sarah will be teaching a BA seminar on Milton's *Paradise Lost* this term and will be contributing to the Fonds National research project entitled 'The Textual Life of William Shakespeare, 1593-1623', directed by Prof. Lukas Erne.

Lucy Perry

Lucy Perry joins the Department as a *Maître assistante suppléante*. Lucy holds an MA in English up to 1525 and a PhD on Lawman's *Brut* from King's College London. Her research interests are medieval historiography, Lawman's *Brut*, Rome in English Chronicle and Romance, and Arthurian literature.

Christina Ljungberg

Christina Ljungberg joins us as a *Chargée d'enseignement suppléante*. Christina holds degrees from Lund University and the University of Zurich, where she received her PhD in 1998. She has worked in Cultural Programming with Swedish and Canadian Television and has been teaching English literature at the University of Zurich since 1995.

Fiona Tolhurst

Fiona Tolhurst joins the Department as a *Chargée d'enseignement suppléante*. Fiona holds a BA in English and Psychology from Rice University and an MA and PhD from Princeton University. Her teaching and research interests include Arthurian Literature (Medieval and Modern), Chaucer and Medieval drama.

Alan Sternberg

Alan Sternberg is leaving us to concentrate on his writing career. NOTED would like to thank Alan for his witty and wonderful contributions and his continued support over the years. We wish him all the very best for the future. →



Christophe Rose

Christophe Rose is leaving us to take up a teaching post at Collège Claparède, Conches. NOTED would like to congratulate him on his new job and wish him all the best for the future.

Neil Forsyth

Neil Forsyth, Professor of Modern English Literature at Lausanne University, will be joining us as a visiting professor in the autumn term, 2008.

Erika Scheidegger

Erika Scheidegger has been awarded a competitive grant entitled 'Subside Tremplin'. The grant allows scholars to take a six month break from their teaching and administrative duties, thereby allowing its beneficiaries to fully concentrate on their research. During the next semester, thanks to this opportunity, Erika plans to finish writing her dissertation on 'survivance' in Native American literatures - in the work of Anishinaabe writer Gerald Vizenor in particular.

Emma Depledge

Emma Depledge will be on leave for the autumn term, 2008. She has been awarded a scholarship from the Fonds National Suisse to go to the William Andrews Clark Memorial Library, Los Angeles. Emma will be working on her doctoral thesis, entitled 'The Politics of Rape in Shakespeare Adaptations of the Exclusion Crisis, 1678-82'.

David Spurr

Prof. David Spurr will be on leave in the autumn term, 2008. He will be completing a book manuscript entitled 'Architextures: Modern Literature and the Representation of Architectural Form'. The book consists of a series of

essays which, taken together, are intended to offer a historical and theoretical vision of the relations between literature and architecture in the 19th and 20th centuries. The key literary figures are Goethe, Ruskin, Pater, Proust, Joyce, Kafka, and Stevens. We wish Prof. Spurr the very best of luck with this exciting project.

Deborah Madsen

Prof. Deborah Madsen will be on leave for the whole of 2009. She will be a Visiting Research Fellow at Clare Hall, Cambridge University, where she will be working on her latest project, entitled 'UnAmerican Exceptionalism: From Nation to Transnation'. This project, which develops the ideas presented in her highly acclaimed book, *American Exceptionalism* (1999), aims to analyse the rhetoric of exclusion that underlies the mythology of the American Dream. NOTED would like to wish Prof. Madsen all the very best for her time in the UK.

Lukas Erne

Prof. Lukas Erne has received the Roma Gill Award for Outstanding Contribution to Marlowe Studies for his essay 'Biography, Mythography, and Criticism: The Life and Works of Christopher Marlowe', published in *Modern Philology*, 103 (2005), 28-50. Awarded by the Marlowe Society of America, the prize recognizes the best critical study published on Christopher Marlowe in 2005-06. NOTED would like to congratulate Prof. Erne on this prestigious achievement.

Guillemette Bolens

Prof. Guillemette Bolens has been elected vice-Dean for a three-year term, 2008-11. We warmly congratulate Prof. Bolens on this appointment.



Conferences

SAMEMES Conference 2008

The first SAMEMES (Swiss Association of Medieval and Early Modern English Studies) will be held in Berne from 3-4 October, 2008. The conference is entitled 'Pretexts, Intertextualities, and the Construction of Textual Identity'.

SANAS Conference 2008

A SANAS (Swiss Association for North American Studies) *Troisième Cycle* Colloquium on 'Writing American Women: Text, Gender, Performance' will take place from November 13-15 at Crêt-Bérard, near Vevey, above Lake Geneva. The conference's keynote speakers will lead half-day seminars (*3ème cycle*) open to graduate students.

CUSO Conference: Women and the Theatre

by Valerie Fehlbaum

The Muses exist! I work with them!

Thanks to the unflagging help of my muses (in the guises of Ioana Balgradean, Emma Depledge, Erzsi Kukorelly and Kareen Klein), during the autumn semester Patrick Vincent from Neuchâtel and I shall be organising a *Troisième Cycle* conference exploring the complex relationships between women and the theatre from the Middle Ages to the present day. The conference will take place here in Geneva from 17-18 October, or, to be more precise, from the evening of 16 October when we shall raise the curtain on events by showing *Stage Beauty* in the regular film cycle of the Department.

We have engaged two eminent experts in the field, Pascale Aebischer from the University of Exeter and Richard Foulkes from the University of Leicester, to hold centre stage as plenary speakers. We are also hoping that Anne Bisang from the Comédie will come along and share her own lived experiences as Director/Manager of a contemporary theatre, and we hope to arrange a trip to the Fondation Martin Bodmer at Coligny, thereby furthering links between various institutions of the city.

This conference is primarily aimed at postgraduate students, but anyone interested in the topic is welcome to attend and should simply contact one of the muses or me. More information will be available closer to the date. Watch out for bill-posters!



For further details, please contact:
Valerie.Fehlbaum@unige.ch



Features



Tempus fugit. Time seems to be speeding up! Since the last edition at the beginning of the calendar year, we have waltzed our way through a busy spring semester, the vibrant Euro 2008, the Beijing Olympics, and we now return for the autumn semester, the beginning of the academic year, with its fresh beginnings, and a new edition of NOTED.

In the last issue of NOTED, my features editorial concerned itself with **variety** and **balance**, *innocence* and *experience*. This time around, I invite you to think about **insiders** and **outsiders** (something we all think sensitively about in an international department in Switzerland). This features section is comprised of vital *insider* knowledge, thanks to Jennifer Wong and Gisela Zingg, who offer vital tips on essay writing and study practices respectively, and some illuminating tales from Cambridge by an *outsider* (by location only, of course), our very own Kareen Klein. Finally, to turn inside out, figuratively speaking, we are also turning our attention to the *outside* of the magazine! Michael Rösli describes how you can get involved in providing the cover for the next issue.

The features section exemplifies how, through classes, contact and even covers, there should be no *outsiders* in our English Department. Challenge yourself to get involved, from our theatre group to the English Department forum, and find *insight* in a rewarding community.

Keith McDonald



Outfit Wanted – the NOTED ‘Cover Story’

by Michael Rösli

Thanks to your energetic support, NOTED covers all sorts of events, activities and artistic marvels. The question is: who, or what, covers NOTED? Indeed, it is a difficult task to provide each new issue with a distinctive front page picture, mostly because the newsletter is open to contributions of any kind or subject, and there is neither a theme nor a lead story which might determine the image on its cover.

Realising what held all its precious contents together (and in a slight fit of vanity, one might add), NOTED has decided to star itself on the title page of its next issue. Of course, this is impossible without your help, so we invite you to baffle your fellow-students with a photograph of NOTED being read in the most amusing, unusual or incredible places and situations. The winner makes it to the cover, but if your keen eyes and snappy fingers produce serious competition for the spring issue outfit, we might send NOTED onto the catwalk and present its readers with the potential fashion for the next autumn issue!



NOTED Cover Competition:

Please send your photos to noted@lettres.unige.ch



Improve Your Writing: Introductions

by Jennifer Wong

Writing the introduction to your literature essay can be a daunting task: where to start, and just what to include? As the first part of the paper, the introduction plays an important role in engaging the interest of your reader and guiding them towards the main point of your paper: your argument. However, it's easy to get sidetracked when starting your introduction and it is tempting to include too much information or

information that isn't specific enough. Here are some tips to help you with the introduction of your English essay.

Remember the Goal

The introduction introduces your essay; it is NOT an essay in its own right!

Ready, Set...

You may want to start your introduction with a general statement, →



followed by more and more specific ones as your reader approaches the thesis statement. In this particular theory, the structure of the introduction is compared to that of a funnel: just as a volume of liquid is directed through a funnel's conical shape and emptied in a thin stream at the bottom, so an introduction can begin with a broader statement that intrigues your reader, and then lead to the specific claim at the end of the paragraph.

Another possible way of beginning an introduction is by using more specific statements to lead to your claim. You might, for example, select an interesting quotation to illustrate your paper's argument from amongst one of the texts you are using. If using a citation as a "hook" for your reader, be careful not to frustrate your audience by presenting the quote and then forgetting to talk about it. Rather, situate and explain it briefly, and then relate it to your thesis statement. While doing so, however, remember also not to analyze it in great detail at this stage of your essay! It should pique your reader's curiosity and lead them to your contention, not discourage their interest by revealing too much, too early.

As you may have guessed, your essay's main argument shouldn't be inserted haphazardly into the paragraph. In fact, it is usually placed at the end of your introduction.

What to Include - Be Selective

Often, students find themselves including unnecessary information in the introductory paragraph: too many biographical details about the author of a work, too much historical background about a given time period or detailed summary of the text to be analyzed. While it is important to mention details such as the author and

the work you plan to discuss, extensive biographical and historical information is not required - unless this is the main topic of your essay - and distracts your reader from the purpose of the introductory paragraph. Likewise, textual summary lengthens your introduction pointlessly; a more appropriate place to mention plot details would be in the development of the essay, as part of your analysis.

An introduction has a very streamlined form; any sentence that isn't directly related to the thesis statement doesn't belong in the introduction and can be left out. Thus, while writing and rereading your introduction, it may be helpful to constantly ask yourself if the content of your paragraph is related to the claim you plan to present.

Have a Plan Ready

The easiest way to remain focussed when writing your introduction is to use an essay plan or outline. Unlike science experiments, English essays do not begin with a hypothesis and end with a new discovery; you should already know what you will be arguing or demonstrating and this should be clear from your introduction. The beauty of the English essay's introduction lies in its ability to save readers the time and effort of reading an essay that turns out to be of no interest to them. After reading the introduction of an essay, a reader ought to know exactly what the essay will argue and the steps it will take in order to defend its argument.

If using an outline from the beginning proves difficult, you might also try writing the introduction last. This may sound very illogical, but many writers find it easier to introduce an essay which they have already written as it is only when the writing is complete that they feel able to



summarize their essay's content and argument. In any case, reviewing your introduction once you have finished your essay is vital.

Apply the 10% limit. (And no, this does not relate to questions of credit card interest!)

While not a strict rule, for purposes of proportion and balance, the introduction generally takes up about 1/10th of your paper. (Incidentally, your conclusion should be of approximately the same length as the introduction.) An introduction need not be long to be effective!

Questions of Methodology

Note that explaining how you plan to organize your essay in a certain number of steps (*First, I will explore the theme of silence in the work; then, I will analyze the relationship between the two characters; and finally, I will...*) is not mandatory in an English essay, although it can be very helpful, especially in longer papers with several sections or chapters, as a way of mapping your essay out for your reader and making it easier to follow. However, if you do plan to include such a description, make sure it fits within the logic of the introduction. Often, the most suitable place to include detailed statements of methodology would be after you have stated your claim.

If you do decide to signal the structure of your essay in this way, do so while avoiding sentences which refer to specific parts of an essay, such as "paragraphs" or the "conclusion." Some examples of what to avoid:

~~"After my introduction, I will have a paragraph on..."~~

~~"In my conclusion, I will..."~~

A few last no-nos

Some things just don't sit well in an introduction, and would best be avoided:

Don't begin your analysis in the introduction. Resist any urge to explain in detail how exactly certain literary devices function in different situations of a work, or describing the relationship several characters share with the protagonist. Again, save your analysis for the body of the essay.

Don't use a question as a thesis statement. As always, your thesis is a contention you intend to prove during the development of your paper, and not a question you want to "explore"! It should argue a precise point of view about your topic.

Don't end an introduction with a quotation. Since the end of your introduction should present your essay's argument, you should end your paragraph with your own words. The essay, after all, is based on your *own* judgment - why should you use someone else's words to explain your own essay's claim?

In the end...

Sometimes, it just helps to see examples. If you would like more information about introductions, including some writing samples, here are some resources worth checking out. ●

Resources:

The University of Lausanne's "English Department Guide to Essay-writing" (EDGE), pp.7-8. Download EDGE at: <http://www.unil.ch/angl/page31598.html>

Crews, Frederick. *The Random House Handbook*. 6th ed. pp. 265-282. *This chapter on "Opening and Closing Paragraphs" contains a multitude of examples and writing exercises, and explains in detail different ways of composing an interesting introduction.*



Correspondence from Cambridge

by Karen Klein

My first real 'Cambridge' moment was just after my matriculation. I was standing in the 'panelled room' of my college (Gonville & Caius [pronounced: Keys]), dressed in a black skirt, white blouse and simple black shoes (as required) and, of course, my gown, sipping tea with milk and trying to make a good impression in polite conversation with the Master and his wife. I was looking out into Gonville Court, the immaculate lawn that students are only allowed to tread on in Easter term, and then only from twelve until two and from six until eight (or so I've heard), surrounded by somewhat sinister and very imposing grey walls. It was then that it first hit me: you're in Cambridge. This is Cambridge.



In the meantime, I've entirely gotten used to walking around the corners and not shortcutting across the lawn while a fellow deliberately crosses over it in wide strides. I've also gotten used to my gown - grown rather fond of it

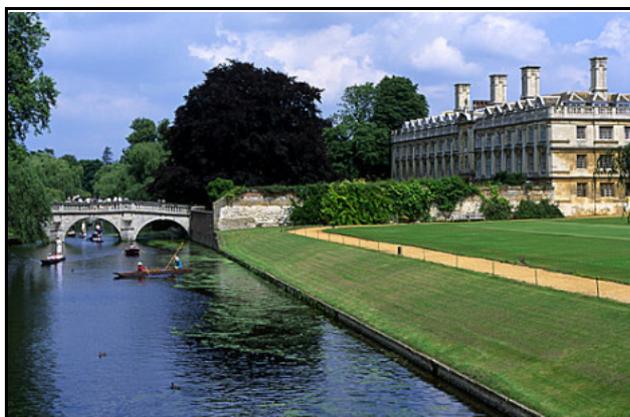
actually. Since I'm older than 24 and already have an MA, I get to wear the 'batman wings', i.e. longer sleeves. They're useful because you can store your wallet in a corner. Grads (Graduates) have black gowns and Undergrads have black and blue ones. What I haven't gotten used to is milk in my tea. Baked beans - okay; jacket potatoes - grand; custard - love it; but no milk in my tea, please. I've also gotten used to the grey and imposing walls - at least those of Caius. Other colleges are a different matter. A friend stated that 'you can't get used to King's College Chapel' and I agree - it should be called a cathedral, not a chapel.

There are certain other things one gets used to rather quickly. For example, at any time of the year people may be running around town in tuxedos and cocktail dresses. They're simply on their way to a formal hall (= dinner) or to one of the many white-tie events. Of course, people wearing gowns do not attract the least bit of attention. Fancy-dress is another daily occurrence. A herd of 'cows', superman, a group of cavemen doing a three-legged race across the marketplace at half past midnight - you don't even blink (okay, I still do sometimes). There seem to be as many fancy-dress events as formal halls. When you're told that your entire graduation will be in Latin, you're not all that surprised either.

One of the great things about Cambridge that I've gotten used to very easily is its bustling theatrical life. One can go see a play or musical several times a week. It has the best student theatre I've ever seen (I wonder when, or indeed if, these thespians study). A few samples: Romeo singing the first lines of the sonnet that he shares with



Juliet at their first meeting gave me goose bumps (a small production by the Pembroke players, but absolutely splendid); not one, but six live lobsters on stage in *Dinner* by Moira Buffini (the lead actress impressed me most when she was holding one of them, not even at arms length, and reciting her speech calmly while it was twisting and turning to free itself); a far-from average Little Red Riding Hood in the musical *Into the Woods* (she ended up wearing a wolf-skin hood); *Cymbeline*, directed by Trevor Nunn, with a splendid Imogen (who, I was told, already has a contract to go on to professional acting); a Fairy Godmother with three-day stubble in the traditional Christmas pantomime (where the lead female role is always played by a man) who kept saying 'Maaagiiic!' and throwing glittering stars into the audience; an explosive and intense production of *Oleanna* (by David Mamet) in a small black box space...



Of course, I should add that one also gets used to (and spoiled by) the enormous resources available here – the University Library (UL) is a copyright library, and thus (theoretically) has every book printed in England (some 7.5 million, I'm told). I've found that pretty much any book you could need is here, at your disposal. Apart from the UL, every Faculty (and every College!) has its own library – library-heaven, no less (though I've only been to about ten of

them). Better still, there are lots of 'rare books' (e.g. Shakespearean first prints) and plenty of manuscripts (e.g. Milton's 'Lycidas' in his own hand).



Another part of the package that one gets quickly spoiled by is the collegiate system: your social life is instantly taken care of. Before classes start at UK Universities, there's one whole week of parties and social events – Freshers' week. So, you're already all set before you start studying; and these activities (ranging from black-tie dinners and port nights to sports events and movie nights) keep going throughout the year. In college accommodation you also live together with people from totally different academic backgrounds: engineers, geneticists, composers, historians, computer scientists, medics etc. On the other hand, your course mates offer you that very rare opportunity of having a group of people who share precisely the same interest: not only do they *not* fall asleep when you start talking about Shakespeare, but they are actually fascinated by the subject and will start discussions of their own free will (and this in the pub!) ...

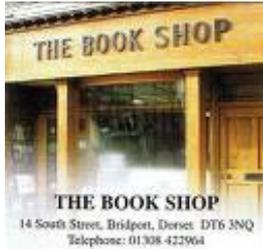
Yet Cambridge always seems to have some surprises up its sleeves – and I'm looking forward to May-Week (which is in June, along with the May Balls and the May Bumps) when all exams are over and all deadlines passed - when this town really goes crazy ...or so they say!



10 DOs and DON'Ts for the new Academic Year

by Gisela Zingg

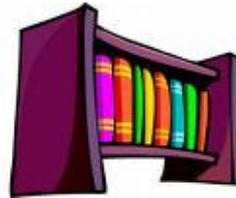
We all know that the beginning of the academic year is hectic and can be a bit overwhelming. But if you apply the following dos and don'ts, you'll be off to a good start. And remember: **DO** keep smiling!



DO buy the books before the first week of class – you spare yourself a lot of hassle running after sold out books.



DON'T forget to take copious notes – they're not only helpful for exams but also for your other classes.



DO recognize the importance of the reserve shelf. Reading a selection of the books and articles is *not* optional... optional...



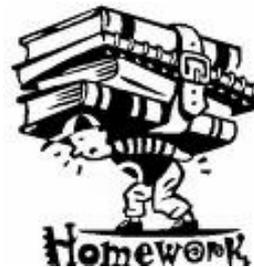
DO start reading the required texts during the semester break: coming prepared to your first week gives you a head start and boosts your confidence.



DON'T wait for the last possible exam session to sign up – your memory won't get any fresher.



DON'T spend more than 1 week 'shopping around' for seminars. Decide which classes you want in the first week and stick to them.



DO take assignments and homework seriously – the teachers remember...



DO take the attendance requirements seriously – teachers do. It saves you from being withdrawn from the exams.



DO make a habit, right at the beginning, of going to the Writing Lab – the benefits *will* show.



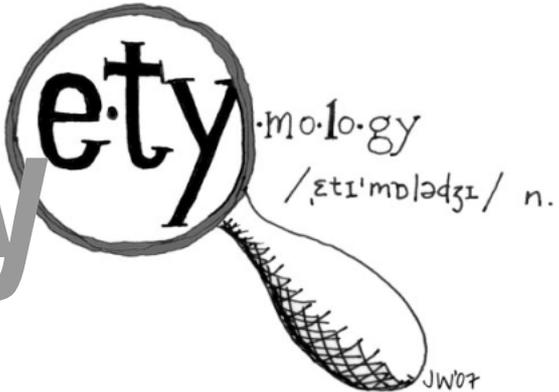
DO participate in class – this is your chance to improve and practice your English.



Last but not least – **DON'T** forget: you reap what you sow.



Etymology



Lewis Carroll's *Jabberwocky* is my favourite homage to the English language, despite the fact that around one-fifth of its words are nonsensical – one understands the connotations of words such as *vorpal*, *manxome*, and *slithy* by virtue of their sound alone. It evokes some primordial linguistic satisfaction of semantic universality, of ultimate union between signified and signifier. The following words have no connexion other than the fact that I find them similarly pleasing, both aesthetically and etymologically. So without further ado:

Snob, of obscure origin, is etymologically imprecise. Entering *snob* into the *OED* yields four results: two nouns, two verbs. The sundry definitions of the noun include the obsolete 'shoemaker or cobbler' (first usage: 1781) and 'a game of cricket' (1888), as well as the 'last sheep to be sheared' (1945) in Australian and New Zealand slang. In the late-1700s, the word began to have social connotations. The Cambridge University folk, as of 1796, used *snob* to mean 'Any one not a gowmsman; a townsman', as in 'Snobs call him Nicholson! Plebeian name'. The 19th century marks the gradual progression from a 'person belonging to the ordinary or lower classes of society; one having *no pretensions* to rank or

gentility' (*OED*; italics added), as recorded in the *Lincoln Herald*: 'The nobs have lost their dirty seats - the honest snobs have got 'em' (1831). Popularized in 1848 by William Thackeray in his *Book of Snobs*, it took on the connotation of 'one who wishes to be regarded as a person of social importance', acquiring a distinctly pejorative sense in the early 20th century, of 'one who *despises those* who are considered inferior in rank, attainment, or taste' (*OED*; italics added), as in F. Scott Fitzgerald's *Great Gatsby*: 'Listen, Tom. If you're such a snob, why did you invite him to lunch?' (1925). Joseph Epstein's *Snobbery: The American Version* explains four more etymologies, such as an abbreviation of the Latin *sine-nobilitate* – s.nob – which, according to Professor Goodell, was appended to names of commoners to distinguish them from aristocracy; and the 'elision of French peasants in pronouncing the phrase "*c'est noble*".

Alas, the 'exclamation expressive of unhappiness, grief, sorrow, pity, or concern' (*OED*), is etymologically antithetical to snob in that, at first glance, a very clear linguistic path may be mapped. Related to 'lackadaisical' and 'lassitude', all stemming from the latin *lassum*, or 'weary', it was brought into English in 1260 from French, as a liaison of *ha* and *las*, modernized →



into the French *hélas*. *The Online Etymology Dictionary* categorizes a slight change in meaning, from an expression of weariness, as in Chaucer's *Squire's Tale*: 'That I was bred, alas that harde day' (1386), to that of woe, in William Morris' *The Earthly Paradise*: 'Alas, the happy day! The foolish day! Alas! The sweet time, too soon passed away!' (1870). However, I recently came across a more fantastical, and thus more engaging, source in Steven Saylor's *Roma*. One of his characters relates this exclamation of sorrow to the mythological character of Hylas, the companion of Hercules, Jason, and the Argonauts on the *Argo*. The tale of his death and the lamentation of Hercules is told in Sir Francis Bacon's *Sylva sylvarum*: 'That Hercules Page Hylas went with a Water-pot, to fill it at a pleasant Fountaine, that was neere the Shore, and that the Nymphs of the Fountaine fell in loue with the Boy, and pulled him vnder Water, keeping him aliue; And that Hercules missing his Page, called him by his Name, aloud, that all the Shore rang of it'; so, as Saylor explains, we, like Hercules, 'still cry "Alas! Alas!" when confronted by great sorrow'.

Gotham City is most widely known as the fictional abode of the philanthropic superhero Batman, described by its creator and editor Dennis O'Neil as 'Manhattan below Fourteenth Street at eleven minutes past midnight on the coldest night in November'. Acquiring a Tolkienesque extra-literary existence, its history has been developed alongside that of Manhattan. Founded in 1635 by a Norwegian mercenary, it was later taken over by the British, according to Alan Moore's imagined history in *Swamp Thing* #53. Gotham, however, existed long before both the 20th and 17th century Batmen. There is

a Gotham Village in Nottinghamshire – originally Gatham, from the Old English 'enclosure of goats' (1086) – although a concrete connexion between the metaphorical and factual places does not exist. The *OED* lists four uses of the word; the first is 'Gotham' as the 'name of a village, proverbial for the folly of its inhabitants'. The first recorded usage appears in the 1460 *Towneley Mysteries* and then again in Andrew Boorde's 1526 *Merie tales of the made men of Gotam*. In the 19th century it was linked to actual places: Washington Irving's 1807 *Salmagundi* applied it to New York and William Brockett, Newcastle. The inhabitants of these cities were simpletons, barbarians, fools. Etymologist Charles Hodgson cites an earlier use of the word, dating back to the period of King John in the 1200s. Royalty, namely King John's retinue, would tour around the countryside, hopping from castle to castle. This would put great strain on the inhabited village, which would have to entertain the king and provide – or rather, sacrifice – their local produce. When the people of the City of Gotham heard that King John was preparing to visit, they devised a plan to act in a psychotic manner, and so repulse the roaming troupe. So when King John's advance guard arrived in the city, they encountered 'a group of townsfolk earnestly trying to drown an eel' and others engaged in other such inane pursuits. King John bypassed the town, which begs the question whether 'Gotham' should really be synonymous with 'fool'.

Burking and the eponymous William Burke are similarly notorious. Burke and his ignominious accomplice, William Hare, moved to Scotland from Northern Ireland in the 19th century. To make a quick buck, the two would dig up bodies to sell to doctors, who would

then use the cadavers in anatomy demonstrations. The pair grew increasingly lazy and began trolling the Old Town, strangling victims in a process which became known as 'burking'. Eventually, their crimes were discovered, and Hare betrayed Burke, who was hanged in Edinburgh in 1829, to the cries of 'Burke him, Burke him!' (*Times*, *OED*). The linguistic heritage he left behind includes the nouns 'burker' and 'burkism', as well as the verb 'to burke' which means 'to kill secretly by

suffocation or strangulation, or for the purpose of selling the victim's body for dissection' and figuratively, 'To smother, hush up, suppress quietly,...to evade, to shirk, to avoid' (*OED*). ●

Anna Gebhardt

Sources:

www.etymonline.com
www.wikipedia.org
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<http://podictionary.com/>
 Steven Saylor's *Roma*

Let's All Have a Nice Cup of Tea: Lexical Meanderings by Erzsi Kukorelly

When I was in eighth grade, my English teacher told me never to use the word 'nice'. It doesn't mean anything', she explained, 'so you'd be better off finding another word'. How wrong was she! 'Nice' was used all the time, and to express a variety of emotions. In the locker-room, a class-mate, male, burps at length. (Remember, he is thirteen.) The others, male, exclaim with jealous admiration: 'nice!' The others, female, sneer with exasperated sophistication: 'nice...' Later that day, the belcher and his chums are sprawled on the sofa watching *Baywatch*. Women in high-cut orange swimsuits jog languorously down the beach. The boys murmur 'nice...' Elsewhere, two female classmates are waiting for a third to come out of the changing rooms at H &

M. When she emerges they show their approbation with an emphatic 'nice!' On Monday, she comes to school wearing an outrageous outfit with 'Get into the Groove' lacy gloves. The popular girls in button-down oxford shirts and penny-loafers snigger behind their hands, but you know they're saying 'nice...'

This, probably, is the problem with 'nice'. It's not that it doesn't mean anything, rather that it can mean so many different things – but surely there is an authority we can go to, one that will fix its meaning

for us; and just such an authority exists, in libraries round the world, and as of recently, on the internet. *O! O-E-D! Save us from semantic indeterminacy! Give us this day our lexical fix!* So →



some decades later (still trying to eradicate the demon word from my vocabulary) I reached for a volume of the Book off the library shelf and, aided by that neat organizational strategy, alphabetization, rapidly found my word.

But semantic simplification is not what the *OED* offers. As it traces words through history, we can expect variations of meaning. The first meaning, 1.a, is 'foolish, silly, simple, ignorant'. Wait a minute, this is 'nice' we are talking about. Double take, top of the entry. No mistake. From the Latin *nescius*, indeed meaning 'foolish, simple, ignorant'. 2.a. is: 'of conduct, ... characterized by or encouraging wantonness or lasciviousness'. Ok, that would mean that between 1387 and 1665 'nice' girls did *not* 'go to heaven', but in fact went 'everywhere'. At 2.c, we get, of clothes, 'extravagant, showy, ostentatious'. Would this include lacy gloves? In position no. 4.a., we find another group of negative meanings: 'timorous, cowardly', and – a real killer of an early modern word – 'unmanly, effeminate' because 'slothful, pampered, luxurious'. Guess that 'nice' boys *don't* do swords, but they *do* patch and powder.

The next group of meanings (no. 3), clustered around 'fastidious, refined, punctilious', is one with which, as a student of the eighteenth century, I am conversant; indeed, it was the main usage in the period. This group is obviously linked with others - no. 5 is 'rare, extraordinary', no. 6 'shy, coy', no. 7 requiring 'great precision or accuracy', no. 8 'difficult to decide or settle', no. 10 'that enters minutely into details; meticulous, attentive', no. 11 'requiring tact ... in handling' and no. 12, 'minutely or carefully accurate'. The evolution of the word from 'unmanly' to 'accurate' is comprehensible; who wields the broadsword, who the

needle? Gender, it seems, is central to these considerations. As the location of heroism migrated from the battle-field to the shop-counter and finally into the home, the attribution of *masculine* value to accuracy and precision perhaps became more acceptable.

Where though, do today's meanings of 'nice' come from? For example, as in 'nice girl' ('I'm a nice girl, I am', protests Eliza Doolittle in *My Fair Lady*)? It is perhaps no surprise that the mother of this usage is none other than Jane Austen: '3.f. Respectable, virtuous, decent, **1799** J. AUSTEN *Let.* 11 June 45 The Biggs would call her a nice Woman' (one wonders if she was being ironic).

The sense in which I used the word back in eighth grade (to describe a poem, for heaven's sake!), no. 13.a 'agreeable, pleasant', apparently came into English usage in 1749; but to describe a person as (no. 13.c) 'agreeable, good-natured', one had to wait until 1797. And, one couldn't be nice to someone, no. 13.e 'considerate, friendly', until 1830. Finally, it would seem, the ubiquitous nice cup of tea was only available from 1899, but immediately it was considered '[h]er sex's universal restorative... "You shall have a nice cup of tea"'. Thank Shiva for that. Otherwise, whatever would the British do in the event of death, deluge and rail strikes??

The last word, though, goes to Jane Austen (writing in *Northanger Abbey*): "I am sure", cried Catherine, "I did not mean to say any thing wrong; but it is a nice book, and why should not I call it so?" "Very true", said Henry, "and this is a very nice day, and we are taking a very nice walk, and you are two very nice young ladies. Oh! it is a very nice word indeed! – it does for everything". I'm sure that my eighth-grade English teacher would agree. ●

Anagrams

by SOIL MACHOLIER (COOL IRISH MALE)

According to the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, an anagram (from Greek *ana-* [again] and *-gramma* [letter]) is based on ‘the transposing of the letters of a word or group of words to produce other words that possess meaning, preferably bearing some logical relation to the original’. **ANAGRAMS** date back to antiquity, where they were already considered an **ARS MAGNA**. The many practices reach from pure entertainment (very popular among Europeans since the Middle Ages) to exercises of religious orders in the 16th and 17th centuries. The *EB* mentions that ‘the angelical salutation “**AVE MARIA, GRATIA PLENA, DOMINUS TECUM**” (“Hail Mary, full of grace, the Lord is with thee”) was a favourite base; it was transposed to hundreds of variations, as, for example, “**VIRGO SERENA, PIA, MUNDA ET IMMACULATA**” (“Virgin serene, holy, pure, and immaculate”)

Anagrams assumed a crucial role for the Kabbalists, who believed that ‘secret mysteries are woven in the numbers of letters’. But is it possible that there should be a magical economy at work in our language? Many instances seem to confirm this; after all, we all know that **ELVIS LIVES**, that **ANGERED** people are **ENRAGED**, that **ELEVEN PLUS TWO** is **TWELVE PLUS ONE** and that **A SHOPLIFTER HAS TO PILFER**.

In a more literary vein, we notice that with all his different signatures, **WILLIAM SHAKESPEARE** had to admit ‘**I AM A WEAKISH SPELLER**’ and we are quite sure that if she was living today, **JANE AUSTEN** would know how to **TUNE A JEANS**. Many authors also used pseudonyms which are anagrams of their names – **VLADIMIR NABOKOV**’s **VIVIAN DARKBLOOM** and the double pen name of the present author are only two examples. In its notorious usefulness to students of literature, *Wikipedia* even reveals to us another

astonishing secret: Herman Melville’s *Moby Dick* opens with the following sentence:

Call me Ishmael. Some years ago — never mind how long precisely — having little or no money in my purse, and nothing particular to interest me on the shore, I thought I would sail about a little and see the watery part of the world.

In its anagram, this opening provides the complete summary of the novel:

To relocate on a whaling ship for months did not seem deadly or nightmarish to me. Then, the wily nut Ahab (our captain with one leg) imperilled our entire voyage, attempting carelessly to lure a monstrous, lone, silvery whale.

Thanks to this principle of the anagram summary, we will never have to read long novels again!

But there’s more to anagrams than that. They even help us in the spiritual and philosophical moments of our lives. Gasp at the discovery that the quest for **THE MEANING OF LIFE** means to be playing **THE FINE GAME OF NIL** or, more creatively, it can be **THE ENGINE OF A FILM**.

However, all this evidence can also be seen as mere arbitrary effects, as the disciples of **SAUSSURE** vehemently **ASSURE US**.

Food for thought. Why not channel your own etymological adventures into an article for the newsletter? Of course, you know that (s)he who writes **NOTED CONTRIBUTIONS** is always ‘**ON BEST INTRODUCTION!**’ Send your articles to **NOTED** – strictly voluntarily of course, for even if you **DO TEN** you won’t **DO NET...** Who could say that the **ENGLISH DEPARTMENT** is not a source of **PERMANENT DELIGHTS?** ●

Sources:

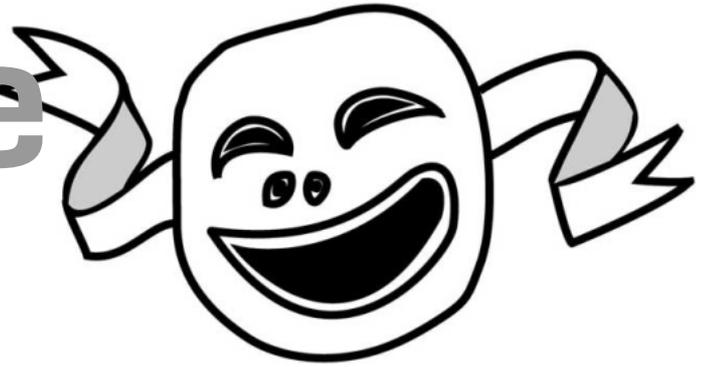
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<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anagram>

Theatre



A Review of Barbe à Papa's *Fragments*

by Emma Depledge and Léa Grammatopoulo

The English Department is incredibly proud of its theatre group - and with good reason too. Having formed in 2004, Barbe à Papa now have a string of successful productions under their belt. They even took one of their plays, *Shakes-Sheared* - written and directed by the troupe's founder, Rachel Nisbet - to the world renowned Edinburgh Fringe Festival in 2006.

The troupe's latest project, *Fragments*, began back in September 2007 and came to fruition with a series of performances in March of this year. The idea for *Fragments*, which consists of a series of sketches from texts by Harold Pinter and Tom Stoppard, grew out of the actors' interest in the 'Theatre of the Absurd'. In preparing their latest production, the student actors embarked on a series of workshops under the expert guidance of their new director, Nicholas Weeks. The enthusiasm which Nicholas has brought to his new role was highlighted in the spring 2008 issue of NOTED, where he outlined the detailed research which had gone into the new 'awareness workshops', which were designed to 'sustain a sense of discovery in the simplest things'.

'A sense of discovery in the simplest things' is exactly what the troupe's play offers to its audiences too. *Fragments*

combines a series of sketches containing characters and situations which vanish from the spotlight before we have had time to contemplate what we have seen, before we have even begun to ask the questions which we so desperately long to have answered. The effect is torturous, but it is beautifully so. It is deliberately so. *Fragments* may well switch from scene to scene, text to text, writer to writer, but there is true unity at the heart of this play, a unity both within and beyond the fragmented pieces which Barbe à Papa have fused together. As the audience come to terms with the constant thwarting of their attempts to interpret the sketches before their eyes, they begin to identify with characters which had before seemed so alien.



Precisely





Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead

The characters we see and the lines they deliver at first seem amusing and detached from our own world. There are characters from Shakespeare's *Hamlet* playing a verbal tennis match as balls roll across the stage and rackets swish aimlessly (Stoppard's *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*); there are men talking of 'brass pet cocks' and 'hemi unibal spherical rod ends' (Pinter, *Trouble in the Works*); there is a 'spy in a blue dress with a pelican tattooed on her belly' (Pinter, *Dialogue for Three*); men haggling and negotiating the number of millions who must be killed, not spent, in order to seal a deal (Pinter, *Precisely*) and old women discussing bread, soup, bus routes and whether or not one of them ought to talk to strangers as they sit in a milk bar (Pinter, 'The Black and White'). It is only when we become aware of the fact that the characters, like us in our interaction with the sketches and their 'meaning', are engaged in ineffectual dialogues that we begin to recognize our shared experience.

The play's third scene, *Dialogue for Three* (Pinter) features three characters: two men and a woman. It is indeed a dialogue for three, as only one of the men gets to interact with the other characters. This 'dialogue' seems to represent the fragmentary voices contained in the whole play. Each voice is saying something important; they simply seem to be disjointed from one

another, preventing us from gaining any clear message.

Not only are most of the characters engaged in ineffectual conversations, some of them also seem to be sharing, or perhaps reflecting, our attempts at interpretation. A key example of this comes in the play's forth sketch, taken from Pinter's short story 'The Black and White'. Here we are confronted with two elderly women, sitting in a milk bar, eating soup. Their discussion seems very trivial, moving from their thoughts on bread and bus routes, to where they will go for the half hour when the milk bar is closed. However, these two women are very different and both offer interesting interpretations of everyday occurrences – interpretations which their self-revelatory discourse urges us to question.



The Black and the White

One of the ladies is convinced that a man who asked her the time as she waited in line for her soup was actually trying to hit on her. She then warns her companion about the dangers of talking to strangers and how it can even lead to being taken away 'in a wagon'. The story teller explains that she was fortunate enough to be set free as the 'coppers' 'took a fancy' to her. Rather than take the story at surface value as a warning, her companion finds it intriguing and is excited by the prospect of such an adventure: 'do you think they'd take a fancy to me too?'

Again like us, these women like to be able to 'see what goes on'; they find a certain security in being able to →



classify and interpret things. Watching them made me aware of my own desires as a literary critic and, as they set off on their separate journeys, one heading to 'the Garden' and the other to 'Waterloo Bridge', my mind set off on a journey of its own: how can I contain and develop this simple scene? What did it mean, or what could I make it mean?



Trouble in the Works

The play which Barbe à Papa created is thus very clever indeed, operating as it does on so many levels. Equal to the genius which went into their collaboration with the greats of the 'Theatre of the Absurd', was the acting talent on show in this production. Nicholas Weeks and Evren Kiefer were outstanding in their roles as a workers' representative and his boss in *Trouble at the Works*, Sophie Badoux and Tania Gentel Ganose sparkled in their portrayals of the two old ladies of 'The Black and the White', and Kristijan Marinkovic sent shivers

down my spine as he delivered a breathtaking performance as one of the sinister strangers of *The Birthday Party* (Pinter).



The Birthday Party

To sum up, *Fragments* is a highly intelligent and entertaining piece of theatre which leaves its audience longing for more. The skill and professionalism of the troupe and its director are impressive and they are to be applauded for their hard work and dedication. Those who were not fortunate enough to make one of the performances will be happy to know that a DVD of *Fragments*, featuring bonus material with excerpts from the troupe's preparatory workshops, is available at the Médiathèque in Uni Bastions.



Special Offer

The theatre group is open to all students, regardless of experience. Workshops take place on Fridays from 2-4 p.m. in S140, Uni Mail. For more information about Barbe à Papa and their activities, please visit: http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/activites/theatre_en.html or email Nicholas Weeks at nickweeks@hotmail.com



Theatre Calendar for NOTED

compiled by Michael Rösli

09.09.2008	<i>Hands Across the Sea</i> by Noël Coward	GEDS
23.09.2008	<i>Heroes</i> by Gerald Sibleyras (translated by Tom Stoppard)	GEDS
07.10.2008	<i>The Cassilis Engagement</i> by St. John Jankin	GEDS
21.10.2008	<i>The Good Doctor</i> by Neil Simon	GEDS
04.11.-08.11.2008	GamePlan by Alan Ayckbourn	GEDS
18.11.2008	<i>Ubu Roi</i> by Alfred Jarry	EDGE
02.12.2008	<i>And Then There Were None</i> by Agatha Christie	GEDS
05.12.-07.12.2008	Aladdin and His Wonderful Lamp (Pantomime)	GAOS
16.12.2008	<i>Improbable Fiction</i> by Alan Ayckbourn	GEDS
06.01.2009	<i>Bouncers</i> by John Godber	GEDS
20.01.2009	<i>Tour di Europa</i> by Jules Tasca	GEDS
29.01.-31.01.2009	The Picture of Dorian Gray Howard Productions based on the novel by Oscar Wilde	

Full productions are printed in **bold**. *Playreadings* are printed in *italics*. Please check the respective websites for information about venues, dates, and times:

The Geneva English Drama Society (GEDS):

www.geds.ch

Howard Productions:

www.howardprod.ch

The Geneva Amateur Operatic Society (GAOS):

www.gaos.ch



Film



Our latest film section presents everything a cinephile heart could possibly desire: thanks to your help and participation in our “Quest for the Holy Reel”, we can proudly reveal the Department’s ten all-time favourite movies! Our wonderful quiz will challenge your knowledge of the nightmares haunting the seventh art. And that’s not all: an interview with Nicolas Senn introduces you to MédiasUnis and your chance to get your foot in the door of the film business. And to top it all off, our schedules of the departmental film cycle and upcoming festivals in and around Geneva will set your celluloid-sensitive neurons a-tingle!

Michael Rösli



Horror Film Quiz

by Annick Challet (turn page for solutions)

- 1) Why does the actor who plays the ghoul man in *Plan 9 from Outer Space* (1959, dir. Ed Wood) hide his face throughout the movie?
- 2) In *Army of Darkness* (aka *Evil Dead 3*, 1992, dir. Sam Raimi), Ash fails miserably when repeating the magic formula in front of the Necronomicon and accidentally releases the army of darkness: what are the three words he forgot and where are they taken from?
- 3) Larry Hagman will forever remain J.R. from *Dallas* for most of us, but he directed one of the sequels to a very famous monster movie: which one?
- 4) Which movie parodies *Jaws* with swimming vegetables attacking a swimmer in a bikini?
- 5) Which movie marked the directorial debut of Trey Parker, the co-creator of *South Park*?



Fay Wray, Hollywood's first scream queen, practising on the deck in *King Kong*.



- 6) In the 1950s and 1960s, there were legions of imitations of horror classics with female heroines instead: on which original film was *The Wasp Woman* (1959, dir. Roger Corman) based?
- 7) Why did Joe Dante call the characters played by Kevin McCarthy, John Carradine, and Slim Pickens after movie directors in one of his movies?
- 8) In the 1940s, Darby Jones appeared in various movies, but always in similar roles. He starred in *Zombies on Broadway* and *The Ghost Ship*, but which movie originally started his career as a zombie?
- 9) In which movie do the syrupy 50s hits clash with the very graphic nature of some of the shots, especially close-ups of meat?
- 10) "Who's going to believe a talking head? Get a job in a sideshow!": Who speaks this line?
- 11) Swiss artist H.R. Giger designed the aliens attacking the Nostromo, but which other monster did he inspire?
- 12) During the atomic age, the movie industry produced many monster movies, among which *Them!* (1954, dir. Gordon Douglas): what does this enigmatic title refer to?



Solutions to the Horror Film Quiz

- 1) Because the actor who was playing that role, the legendary Bela Lugosi, died after having shot only part of the scenes. Ed Wood, who worked with very tight budgets, decided to use those shots anyway and found someone who could replace Lugosi on the spot: his wife's chiropractor, Tom Mason. Mason wasn't credited for this, and had to hide his face for the sake of continuity, but the scenes in which he plays are easily recognizable as he was much taller and younger than Lugosi.
- 2) The three words Ash has to repeat are "Klaatu Barada Nikto". They are the three words that can save the planet in *The Day the Earth Stood Still* (1951, dir. Robert Wise).
- 3) In 1971, Hagman directed *Beware! The Blob*, one of the sequels to *The Blob* (1958, dir. Irvin S. Yeaworth Jr.), in which the frozen gelatinous monster is accidentally defrosted by the scientist's wife.
- 4) *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* directed by John DeBello in 1977. Watch the sequel, *Return of the Killer Tomatoes* (1988) for George Clooney's debut on the silver screen.
- 5) A musical called *Cannibal! The Musical* (1996), for which he also penned the songs, the catchiest being "Hang the Bastard".
- 6) *The Wasp Woman* is the female version of *The Fly* (1958, dir. Kurt Newman). In both, scientists get anatomically mixed with the species they are researching but meet different ends: the wasp woman flies out the window in a desperate attempt to escape, but she can't fly; whereas the scientist asks his wife to crush his fly-head under a press and the scientist-headed fly is eaten by a spider.
- 7) *The Howling* (1981) is meant to be a tribute to masters of the werewolf genre: Fred Francis for *Legend of the Werewolf* (1975), Erle Kenton for *House of Dracula, or the Wolf Man's Cure* (1945), and Sam Newfield for *The Mad Monster* (1942).
- 8) Darby Jones plays the tall and scary Carrefour guiding the white female zombie and her nurse towards the voodoo temple in *I Walked With a Zombie* (1943, dir. Jacques Tourneur).
- 9) *Parents* (1989, dir. Bob Balaban) is set in a typical American household of the 1950s. The music and the rather kitsch environment depicted in the movie clash with the only valid explanation the young Michael can find for the abundance of meat his mother cooks: cannibalism!
- 10) Dr. Herbert West says this to his former mentor, Dr. Hill, in *Re-Animator* (1985, dir. Stuart Gordon): the disciple feels entitled to question his master's authority, for his head has just been severed from his body. The movie is based on a short story by H. P. Lovecraft and is a variation of the mad scientist motif.
- 11) The rubbers in *Killer Condom* (1996, dir. Martin Waltz)!
- 12) Giant mutant ants brought into being by nuclear tests. In order to eradicate the species, the heroes set out on a quest for queens' nests that takes them from the desert to the Los Angeles sewage network.

Sources:

Cooper, Merian C. (dir.). *King Kong: The Eighth Wonder of the World*. RKO Radio Pictures, 1933. DVD. Universal Pictures, 2001. (Golden Classics)
Schwartz, Carol (ed.) *Videohound's Cult Flicks and Trash Pics*. 2nd ed. Detroit: Visible Ink Press, 2002.



The Quest for the Holy Reel

The Department's 10 Favourite Films (winners of the NOTED competition)

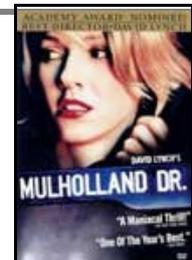
1. *Fight Club* (1999) by David Fincher

One to watch, with a twist to watch out for!



2. *Mulholland Drive* (2001) by David Lynch

Let David Lynch take you on a 'Mulholland' drive along the eponymous road that harbours the most famous directors of the Hollywood dream machine. Reality, illusion or nightmare?



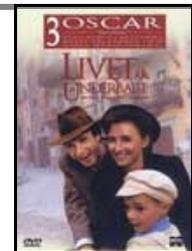
3. *Amélie from Montmartre* (2001) by Jean-Pierre Jeunet

Paris, the city of love. If you think you've seen it all, think again! Let yourself be seduced by this guerrilla attack of kitsch. Just lock up your garden gnomes and dream away!



4. *Life is Beautiful* (1997) by Roberto Benigni

Tissues at the ready. This film has received a lot of criticism over the years, but surely none would deny that it is a beautiful story? I can cry for days after watching this film.



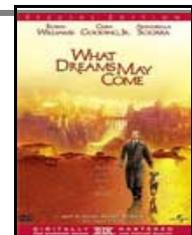
5. *The Ice Storm* (1997) by Ang Lee

Sexual awakening and frustration unfold in two American families in the aftermath of the 1960s and during the height of the Watergate affair. Clever first-class drama with a haunting soundtrack. Unforgettable!



6. *What Dreams May Come* (1998) by Vincent Ward

Leaving aside the literary allusions to Dante and Shakespeare, this movie always gives me hope, cheers me up and makes me weep - there might be some justice in the universe after all.



7. *Lord of the Rings* (2001; -2; -3) by Peter Jackson

Never before have good and evil, magic and mystery, fear and fellowship, been brought so powerfully to life. An epic trilogy unrivalled in its majesty.



8. *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) by Stanley Kubrick

This colourful spectacle about violence and media is highly ambivalent and leaves its baffled audience to return to a world that will never look quite the same again!



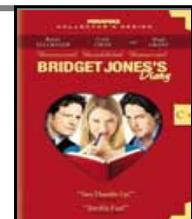
9. *The Commitments* (1991) by Alan Parker

This movie offers an insight into the lives of Dublin working class kids who struggle to start a Soul band. Great voices, fantastic songs and some hilarious one-liners.



10. *Bridget Jones's Diary* (2001) by Sharon Maguire

The Americans have Samantha, Miranda, Carrie and Charlotte (*Sex in the City*), we Brits have Bridget. Not as fashionable, but twice as funny.



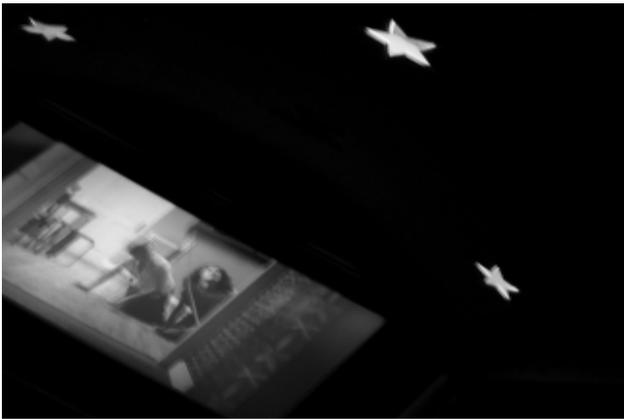
Many thanks to all students and staff
who participated in the competition!



Interview with Nicolas Senn from MédiasUnis

by Michael Rösli

MédiasUnis is a film studio and workshop available to students of the University of Geneva as part of the activités culturelles. Studio director Nicolas Senn agreed to give an interview and outline the opportunities MédiasUnis has in store for any student interested in video production.



MédiasUnis au Bio 72 en 2004: Ecrans introspectifs 1 (Nicolas Senn)

How did you discover your passion for the filmic image?

I've always been passionate about images and had already done loads of drawings before I started school – my mom used to say I was born with a pen in my hand. While I was at the École des Arts Décoratifs, my dream was to become a cartoonist. The crucial point for me was to tell a story through images. Then I entered the École de Beaux-Arts and increasingly engaged with the filmic image. So, I guess my story is rather linear.

How did you get involved with MédiasUnis?

After my studies, I went to Paris to work on special effects. I am a passionate *bricoleur* and am fond of technology, so working with scale models and computer generated imagery was a great experience. After that, a production enterprise hired me to work on small projects, usually

advertisements. The École des Beaux-Arts in Geneva then offered me a position as a video assistant. During the three years I spent there I also acquired teaching experience. This is when the activités culturelles of the University asked me to help them set up a video studio, now known as MédiasUnis.

What activities do you offer at the studio?

I teach a course on audio-visual media at MédiasUnis. It offers practical training in image recording. Although it is designed for beginners, the course covers a wide range of activities. It familiarises students with cinematographic work on three levels: first, there are technical aspects such as handling a camera, lighting, sound equipment etc. Then there is a more theoretical dimension, where participants discover the cinematographic codes which govern the visual material we encounter in daily life in manifold forms (of course, these codes are malleable, but you need to know the rules before you can break them). Finally, we have a closer look at cinematic construction proper, which includes framing techniques, the sequence of shots, as well as digital editing. These activities are not only useful for projects which are specifically cinematographic; they also give insight into a wide range of practices associated with the moving image.

I also teach another course for more advanced students, which focuses on special effects. It ranges from removing unwanted microphones from a shot to much more elaborate constructions. Computational tools now allow us to take a shot and start modifying film, transgressing 'reality' if you like, like a



painter before a white canvas. You can recompose your initial image completely, a liberty that is highly exciting for creative participants. This more specific and advanced course takes place less frequently (once a year), but it brings together students who are looking to share their enthusiasm and ideas.

The first course, on the other hand, is introductory and is specifically aimed at newcomers.

What can students do after their basic training?

MédiasUnis is not only a space for learning; it is also, and most importantly, a working studio. So, the studio lends all the necessary material (camera, microphones, editing resources etc.) to students who, after their basic training, wish to engage in personal projects. All this is for free and, once a student has signed up for a project, they even get a key to the studio (we work on the basis of trust). They are really autonomous with their projects, although they can count on our help and advice whenever they need it.

We also have several specialised workshops for students who wish to pursue their filmic activities beyond the basic training. One of these focuses on documentary productions and is called 'Pôle Production'. It is designed for students with various skill levels and specialised interests, be it for sound recording, lighting, framing, editing etc. Participants then collaborate in concrete projects.

Recently, certain sections of the University allowed their students to complete their *mémoire* with audiovisual documents (for instance, the Department of Sociology). MédiasUnis also accompanies and supports academic projects by students who wish to combine their research with a form of presentation that might prove useful in their future career.

Are there any advanced student projects that particularly intrigued you?

Oh, all of them! You have to remember that films that only last twenty minutes or an hour may take six months or even a year to produce. The close collaboration on such projects often leads to great friendships too.

One documentary, entitled *Archaeological Business* (by Omar Augustoni) was particularly intense and engaging. It critically investigated the market for archaeological art objects and uncovered abject practices of pillaging, theft and trafficking. It turned into an international project, whose scope ranged from Egypt to New York. Another production which was broadcast on TSR last spring in *Temps présent* was called *Crime d'honneur*, directed by Giawdat Sofi, one of our students. Both these works established a bridge to the world of professional production.

This sounds very impressive.

Yes, but you mustn't forget that our primary goal is to give students a chance to become familiar with the recording of filmic images, even if it is only out of curiosity or for the fun of the experience. We also give support to anyone who decides to pursue their filmic activities afterwards. MédiasUnis offers a great opportunity in that we do not judge the quality of someone's work in any way. So there is freedom of creativity (and error) that no professional environment could ever grant. Ultimately, the only way to progress is through 'hands-on' experience.

Many thanks for taking the time to talk to NOTED!

My pleasure. ●

For more information visit:

http://www.a-c.ch/index.php?id_production=130



Upcoming Events, Cycles, and Festivals

compiled by Michael Rösli

Geneva:

25.09. – 11.12.2008 **English Department Film Cycle**
www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/activites/film_en.html

29.09. – 22.12.2008 **Cinéclub Universitaire**
www.a-c.ch/index.php?id_production=102



Cycle: 'Contes cruels de la jeunesse'

This year, the cinéclub's autumn schedule focuses on adulthood and, in addition to great classics such as Schlöndorff's *The Tin Drum* (1979), Tarkovski's *Ivan's Childhood* (1962) and Malick's *Badlands* (1973), it also boasts a number of fabulous more recent productions. Be sure not to miss Sofia Coppola's *The Virgin Suicides* (1999) and Gregg Araki's *Mysterious Skin* (2004)!

04.10. – 12.10.2008 **Cinématou** (festival international du film d'animation)
www.cinematou.ch

27.10. – 02.11.2008 **Cinéma TouS ÉcranS**
www.cinema-tout-ecran.ch



The festival changed its name for the new edition of 2008. Its tendency over the last few years has been to overcome artistic hierarchies among visual supports. This tendency has now become the central focus of the festival: apart from the international film and TV-series competitions, it presents the new section *Les nouveaux écrans de la fiction* with mobile phone short films, internet series, and interactive multimedia fiction produced for the internet. And of course, the festival features an absolute must for any short film amateur: the legendary *nuits du court*!

07.11. – 23.11.2008 **Filmar en America Latina**
www.filmaramlat.ch

Switzerland:

11.09. – 30.09.2008 **Image '08 : Festival Photographie et Film** Vevey
www.images.ch/2008/

17.09. – 21.09.2008 **Festival du Film Français d'Helvétie** Bienne
www.fffh.ch

08.10. – 12.10.2008 **Shnit: Kurzfilmfestival** Berne
www.shnit.ch

15.10. – 19.10.2008 **Lausanne Underground Film Festival** Lausanne
www.luff.ch

05.11. – 09.11.2008 **Kurzfilmtage Winterthur** Winterthur
www.kurzfilmtage.ch

19.01. – 25.01.2009 **Solothurner Filmtage** Solothurn
www.solothurnerfilmtage.ch



The Department's Autumn Film Cycle

compiled by Valerie Fehlbaum and Michael Röösl

Schedule: Our films are screened every Thursday evening
Place: Room B112 at Uni-Bastions
Time: 19h15
Who? All students of the English Department are welcome!



This programme is also displayed on the notice boards of the Philosophes and of the English Department at the Comédie and it is available online on our departmental website, together with more detailed information about the film cycle: http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/activites/film_en.html

Date:	Film Title:	Director:
THU Sep. 25, 2008	Stranger than Fiction (2006)	Marc Forster
THU Oct. 02, 2008	Manufactured Landscapes (2006)	Jennifer Baichwal
THU Oct. 09, 2008	Koyaanisqatsi: Life Out of Balance (1982)	Godfrey Reggio
THU Oct. 16, 2008	Stage Beauty (2004)	Richard Eyre
THU Oct. 23, 2008	Pygmalion (1938)	Anthony Asquith & Leslie Howard
THU Oct. 30, 2008	A Midsummer Night's Dream (1999)	Michael Hoffman
THU Nov. 06, 2008	Barry Lyndon (1975)	Stanley Kubrick
THU Nov. 13, 2008	The Scarlet Letter (1973)	Wim Wenders
THU Nov. 20, 2008	I Walked with a Zombie (1943)	Jacques Tourneur
THU Nov. 27, 2008	Othello (1952)	Orson Welles
THU Dec. 04, 2008	The Cars that Ate Paris (1974)	Peter Weir
THU Dec. 11, 2008	A Portrait of Katherine Mansfield (1987)	Julienne Stretton



Music



Crackpot Culture

by Keith McDonald

(Attention! Attention! Trente-neuf, quarante)

...

Bury the past, empty the shelf
Decide it's time to reinvent yourself

[Pet Shop Boys: DJ Culture, 1991]



DJ Culture video, in which Chris Lowe and Neil Tennant re-enact the trial of Oscar Wilde.

Despite amassing over 250,000 words in personal and academic blogs over the past five years, I have said very little of my love for music. True, I only got interested in music in my mid-teens, I rarely attend concerts, and I have a diverse taste that rarely comes close to that of my peers and often leads to friendly ridicule. However, it sometimes takes considerable recognition that an outsider cannot qualify what, or how much, music means to an individual through knowledge of their 'taste' alone. Music works on much more complex levels than that. It is easy to label particular artists or genres as meaningless or terrible, and to associate their followers within that same bracket. Yet, one person can happily find as deep a connection with Pink as another with Pink Floyd. Music can

provide a non-impenetrable private relationship with its listener, in addition to its social, public function. Furthermore, when people are learning English through music; when music can locate itself within, elevate, stimulate, sympathise, heal, and make a hugely positive difference, it is surely worth acknowledgement!

What is it that has instilled in me this concern that my experience with, and love for, music is somehow illegitimate? I have, after all, travelled abroad to follow music, spent an eyebrow-raising amount on individual albums, and, as an amateur DJ, produced several sets to positive reception. Perhaps it is because one always thinks of physical dedication to the cause – braving the rain, mud and portable toilets at Glastonbury, for instance – as the



dedicatory act of note. Perhaps it is because I have not made my own musical contribution to the world. Or perhaps it is because music has not really provided a straightforward method of establishing relationships. As well as a catalyst for joining groups, music can easily prove a method of distancing from the popular crowd.

In preparation for this article, I constructed a subjective survey for willing friends and anonymous contributors to share opinions about music. Questions ranged from whether music represents an expression of personality, to whether music is important in forming social bonds, or for determining 'popularity'. I invited definitions of what constitutes a love of music, and opinions on whether music can become a locus for pressure, if one neglects their own 'taste', feeling compelled to follow whatever is deemed popular.

Responses to certain questions were clearly divided. Regarding the definition, one contributor argued that *passion* for even a small amount of music takes precedence. For another, to be a music lover is to embrace a *variety* of genres rather than restricting oneself. Regarding the role that music plays in the formation of social bonds, one respondent admitted that his taste was just not conducive to forming bonds; one suggested that it has a non-definitive role to play; while one suggested that it could potentially have a large impact.

Responses to some issues, however, were more unanimous. The first, a belief I hold strongly, is that music expresses or defines personality to some degree. Also conceivably true with literature, we can consider this in the production of music as well as reception. Choosing what to listen to is one form of self-definition, yet creating music could be the deepest expression of the self. The second common response was that music can easily become a cause of pressure and inhibition. Riggered by sexual,

generic, fashion and even class stereotypes, music is often a fast-track to snobbery and ridicule. How many personal treasures lie on hidden CDs that must never be exposed? How many times have we pretended to love songs, purely because they are 'arbitrarily popular', in order to benefit reputation? There is almost always some level of deception or silence regarding music taste which is designed to uphold a kind of social credibility. Finally, inextricably related to this, is the connection with age. This could yet be the most crucial of all.

Given our media revolution and digital age, music plays an ever greater role in the lives of young people. Social and cultural anthropologist Clifford Geertz suggests that man is 'in need of symbolic sources of illumination to find his bearings in the world'.¹ Music is the ideal medium to achieve that aim, but how often does it take on a destructive rather than a constructive force? Although subject to stereotype, music has become a cultural format, feeding accusations that particular genres glamorize violent crime. Yet music itself is glamorized in other defeatist ways, playing to our predatory habits.

The Howard Stern factor: love it or hate it, reality television offers something, however banal, to appeal. The UK's kingpin is the X-Factor, where thousands of substandard performers audition either for their minute of fame, or in the deluded hope of success. Somehow, we cannot help but enjoy some of the ego-battering, scathing remarks from a panel looking to invest £1 million in the winner. Once we have watched the enticed and enchanted hoards embarrass themselves and be promptly bullied off to infamy, the 'exhibition' is over. Likewise, the volume of news turning music into a farce is stunning. Amy Winehouse's issues are well documented; for a premonition, the once revered Robbie Williams is currently forgotten. A newspaper interview with James Blunt reflects on a bizarre →



paradox: he is the most hated man in British pop, and yet one of the most successful. How can the two co-exist? As music becomes as much about method, apart from one's madness, I grow ever prouder of my dear favourites, the Alphavilles, Erasures and so forth. Keeping a low profile, they produce new material and perform for fun and for fans in equal measure; a connection with music that is as 'true' as one might hope to find.

Perhaps one eventually grows out of this great stigma surrounding tastes and preferences, but then does music have the same meaning if it has been 'repressed' for a number of years? Is the right way to deal with shame, fear, or inhibition to wait until we grow out of it? Perhaps not, would be the resounding cry of a man who has done so much, single-handedly, to revolutionise the way in which select groups of young people have approached music.

Gareth Malone, a choirmaster for the London Symphony Orchestra, became a cult hero last year when a documentary entitled 'The Choir' was screened on British television. Having chosen an ordinary comprehensive school, Northolt in London, with little background of singing, Gareth's ambition was to form a choir of 25 eager participants and take them to the World Choir Games in Xiamen, China, nine months later. The new 'Phoenix' choir had only four weeks to produce a CD for their application, and a two month wait for the result caused a real dip in motivation. The struggle for commitment, discipline, and quality is felt and suffered by Gareth at every step. He takes the challenge for the golden rewards, the epiphany moments, which his students are driven to believe will come. Just in time, 'Phoenix' began to gel, and with new bonds of trust and receptiveness, they began to truly perform. After a respectable performance in Asia, students were tearful as they reflected on how beautiful the experience had been: not only a remarkable achievement, but a new-found community finding harmony on

several levels. Gareth waits for solitude before it strikes him too: 'Phoenix' would not go beyond the first round – it was never about miracles and bringing gold medals home - but the extraordinary, life-changing, bonding experience that music provides.



BBC 2: *The Choir: Boys Don't Sing* [first aired 22/02/08]. Gareth Malone addresses the audience of the school proms at the Royal Albert Hall (left), before bringing his tutees' rendition of 'Stand by Me' to a close (right).

One year later, Gareth took on an even tougher challenge: joining Lancaster School, Leicester, an all-male sports college, with the ambition of forming a choir and taking it to the Royal Albert Hall. An alpha-male environment resounded around the school, and gender and gay stereotypes against singing and classical music were thrown around with abandon. The boys initially delighted in putting up a resolute defiance against the new, unwanted, musical culture. Yet, with kind, firm persistence, belief in his ambition, and a willingness to make a fool of himself to break inhibition, Gareth was able to make an unlikely breakthrough. With no auditions for entry, this was based purely on interest and willing: interest which eventually included boys with dyslexia and cancer. This was about progression and confidence building as much as it was about quality, and one is always proud to watch a final performance that is raw, coarse, yet sparkling with endeavour.

We are reminded of *The Breakfast Club*, when stolidity begins to crack, a point when some of the group realise their own social stigmas. A painful silence sounds in contemplation: if they passed each other in the corridor, wouldn't the athletic and popular Andy just blindly ignore the nerdish Brian? 'The Choir' brings different



factions together in a phase of enlightenment. The most touching moments are wrapped in humour, subtlety, or human nature. There is no mistaking confidence for the brash, boisterous front. Love becomes a strength, celebrated in a context of singing. When choristers emerge several weeks into Gareth's tenure, now less afraid to reveal their guarded secret pastimes, we realise just how inhibitive a school environment can be. The series finishes, delightfully, with their choral rendition of *Pie Jesu*. Music, with the right figurehead, can unlock this means of expression, or the fear to express, which is otherwise bottled up with nowhere to go. Deborah Ross' *Independent* review says it all: 'it has to be as profoundly a moving piece of television as has ever been made'.²

With this emotional backdrop, I ventured in April to a rare UK performance by the 'finished article', and one of my favourite artists, boys choir Libera. Under the direction of the excellent Robert Prizeman, Libera have amassed a huge following in Japan and America, and can even be heard on film soundtracks, including *Hannibal* and Baz Luhrmann's *Romeo and Juliet*. As much as I often enjoy a certain exclusivity about the artists I follow, I cannot help but be a little surprised when a dazzling musical act, who recently sang at the US musical awards ceremony in front of George Bush, Robert de Niro, Diana Ross, and others, and also for the Pope at the Yankee Stadium, cannot fill a modestly sized London venue. It seems that Britain is just not interested in contemporary music which approaches the word 'classical'. Yet, alongside a stunning rendition of Bach's 'Air', their latest album includes arrangements of Enya's 'Orinoco Flow' and Brian Wilson's 'Love and Mercy'. Composer and director Robert Prizeman



has a stunning project in place. Even the album titles, from *Luminosa*, to *Free*, to *New Dawn*, encapsulate this very sense of liberty found through music.

In the context of thoughts listed here, watching Libera perform was illuminating even beyond the magic of their voices. A bunch of ordinary boys from south London are singing in Latin, with complex harmonies, and choreographic arrangements. It is incredible that boys as young as nine can take this on board and revel in their achievements. Even the witty presentations between songs were remarkable. This group of boys, who must miss a great deal of mainstream schooling, are confident, articulate, clearly very intelligent, and above all, happy in a group and within themselves. One suspects, and hopes, that all of the boys involved will go on to achieve great things. After the performance, my partner and I were interviewed for a documentary. Perhaps it was because we were clearly the younger end of the audience. Outside the concert hall, I am sure that is not the case. I have loved this group for six years; I would have done so as a young teenager, but equally, I would have been reluctant to admit it. The problem does not stop there though: who, even as a twenty-something-year-old, is prepared to enter or initiate a conversation about music and talk about their love of a boys' choir?

There are ideas and frustrations well beyond this article, but the message is clear: there needs to be the opportunity to instil the confidence, and the freedom, to love the arts as we may. If not, there may be a part of our confidence that never develops as it might, or even a dialogue between the soul and body, wondering when freedom will be found. ●

With thanks to Andrew, James, Forester & Simon

¹ Clifford Geertz, *The Interpretation of Cultures* (London: Harpercollins, 1973), p. 45.

² <http://www.independent.co.uk/arts-entertainment/music/features/gareth-malone-note-perfect-794188.html>



Creative Writing



On the eve of this new semester, NOTED has something to take your mind off the stress of schedule clashes and other headaches. This issue offers you the opportunity to participate in a wonderful creative writing and art contest. If you have always wanted to write a piece for NOTED but couldn't find inspiration, then now's the time to set your creativity free! For those of you who would rather stay away from the battle field, we hope that you will enjoy these new contributions and that they will brighten the start of the new academic year.

Aisha & Alexandra





Annick Challet. *Extra Muros* (2004). Acrylic on paper, 36 x 36 cm



The Yin and Yang of Creating Dangerously

an Art Contest Proposed by Annick Challet and Jennifer Wong

After discovering the many contributions published in the creative writing section of last spring's NOTED, Jennifer and I decided to organize an art contest open to both writers and visual artists. As we thought about a theme that could easily be interpreted in a variety of media, the notion of happy accidents imposed itself as adequately reflecting the many decisions taken during the creative process, from early sketches to *pentimenti* betraying last-minute changes on the canvas. Here are two practical demonstrations of how unexpected events and discoveries led to invaluable experience and great artworks. Instructions on how to enter the contest follow below.



The Art of the Unforeseen Flop by Jennifer Wong

Look away at the wrong moment while riding your bike and you may find yourself crashing into the opening door of a recently parked car. Try a new technique for the first time when working on your final art project, and you may discover yourself staring, horrified, at a print of indistinct blobs where you'd intended a sharp, photographic image. Or neglect to build your wall of personal belongings around you during a lecture course, and you may watch helplessly as your space is invaded by a strange latecomer who, apparently, has never heard about the personal space bubble. Accidents usually happen because of carelessness, and are nothing if not spontaneous. Or are they?

One of my most memorable accidents indeed happened during a final art project, where, due to inexperience with a certain technique, I created an image of blurry, pale, cloud-like masses instead of the distinct, peopled, urban cityscape I'd originally imagined. This might not have been a bad thing, had it not been a) an irreversible process, and b) the night before the actual year-end project was due. However, what began as a stressful night in the art studio evolved when, upon the suggestion of a friend, I tried printing my ruined plate in a different color than originally planned. That started it. I changed the color scheme of my successive plates, added a few touch-ups, and, a few hours later, had, in the place of a photo-like print, an abstract image with elements of collage, dreamy, pastel-like hues of blue and lavender with stains of rich, coffee brown, and where my indistinct blobs had become a wonderful background element of pale goldenrod.



But accidents - coincidences? - are everywhere. Another time, what started as a slightly uncomfortable invasion of space turned out to be the beginning of a fast friendship. A late lecture-goer slid into the seat next to me, violating the unofficial 'one-seat-away' rule of lecture hall etiquette. I was immediately on guard - who did this person think he was, to sit so close, when there was clearly a spot further away, next to the aisle? The stranger then commenced to leisurely empty what seemed to be his entire life out of his bag, spilling its contents across the invisible boundary that separated *my* portion of desk space from his. For a highly space-conscious person like me, it was an invasive incident that should have been prevented with a more careful barrier construction of my personal belongings. I spent the lecture feeling a bit distracted by the cramped situation and the bound reader that ever-so-slightly-but-insistently pressed upon my elbow, but despite my annoyance, something compelled me to ask the stranger a question about the previous week's material. The next thing I knew, we were chatting away about similar experiences we'd had living in the area, and discussing issues like race and mixed origins... Funnily enough, during that solitary moment of my life, I'd been hoping to meet someone like this, someone I could relate to. (And incidentally, I later found out that the aisle seat he should have sat in had been broken.)

Of course, accidents aren't always pleasant events. I haven't yet - thank goodness - crashed my bike into an opening car door, knock on wood! But those accidents that do end happily seem to depend on one's own willingness and readiness to acknowledge the negative in an unforeseen situation while staying open to alternative sources of inspiration. Had I not wrecked part of my original

art piece, I would not have been able to attain quite the same satisfying outcome. Likewise, had I remained silent and glared at the invasive lecture-hall stranger, tapping my foot and waiting for access to the aisle as he slowly picked up his belongings after class, I wouldn't have befriended an amazing person. Accidents can be laden with creative potential, and the most fortunate ones are ready to happen when we're ready to accept them.

“So much depends upon...”
by Annick Challet



Annick Challet. *Gardens Lined in Red* (2008).
Mixed media, diptych, 50x40 cm

Artists all have their secret sources of inspiration: a good book or film, works by other artists, interesting textures, color combinations, or contrasts observed in real life. Anything can spark the imagination, even white chickens scratching around a red wheelbarrow after the rain, as →



William Carlos Williams beautifully showed in his very short, but very visual poem, 'The Red Wheelbarrow'. Being at the right place at the right moment matters, and the creative process that follows may consist in yet another series of happy accidents. This view of the creative process certainly has a ring of truth for the mixed media artist, for whom choices regarding color, technique, and composition also depend on the media and materials at hand. 'Gardens lined in red' is a good illustration of this as it combines different media with previously unconnected bits and pieces, originally collected for their own sake or for other projects.

My initial idea for this project started in July 2007 with a quick sketch and lots of reference photos taken on location in Litlanes, Iceland. What instantly caught my eye was the repetition of patterns emphasizing the verticality of the scene: the two waterfalls of course, but also the particular structure of the basalt organs framing the lower fall on each side. This called for texture, an effect that can easily be achieved with mixed media, especially with acrylics, but also for creativity as to the appropriate format for this particular project. I went for a diptych, finding this more challenging than one plain rectangular canvas.

Once I had a clear image of what I wanted to achieve in my mind's eye – or in my sketchbook, it was time to jump in and get the right side of the brain to take over. Disconnecting the analytical side of one's brain takes a little practice. Artist Deborah Putnoi, who combines etching, monoprint and collage in her work, recommends drawing – even if it's just doodling on scrap paper – when having a conversation on the phone. You can also try copying a Rembrandt upside

down; this may sound acrobatic but is in fact one of the exercises recommended by Dr. Betty Edwards in her groundbreaking 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain'¹.

In this particular case, 'keeping [my] judgemental self busy'² wasn't too difficult as I had decided to treat this abstractly and work with an unrealistic color scheme, starting with the complementary color as background for each delineated surface. The material I used for texture – a piece of non-woven tissue recycled from an IKEA flat pack and similar to the kind of material used in gardens to protect plants from the cold – was added after the initial blocking in of color and soon revealed itself as a very versatile tool for building up layers of color. I also used torn pieces from an old tattered book – I couldn't think of a better way of recycling an old copy of Balzac's *Colonel Chabert* – to add more depth to certain dark areas in the painting.

For the finishing touches, I chose oil pastels to bring out the texture in some areas and used red to emphasize certain lines so as to lead the viewer's eye diagonally through the painting. I cut out a few yellow pages from Balzac's novel, and glued words and phrases generated haphazardly by *caviardage* on each part of the diptych to give more coherence to the work as a whole. This particular stage in the process also solved another problem artists are faced with: finding a title. As a final touch, I added pappose seeds the wind had blown into my apartment that summer and that I had kept for their intriguing, almost spidery shape.

For me, the most difficult stage in the process is knowing when to stop; indeed, one more stroke of the paintbrush or one last collage might disturb the balance I sometimes painstakingly achieved and turn a happy accident into a disaster. Of



course, there is nothing a thick coat of gesso won't cure, but the thought remains daunting. Less is always more, but excess ideas and materials are not lost; they can easily be reused in future projects!

¹ Tarcher/Putnam, 1989. Check the 'Drawing on the Right Side of the Brain' Website at <http://www.drawright.com/> for exercises.

² Putnoi, Deborah. 'Journal'. 17 April 2008. www.deborahputnoi.com/journal_5.html

'Happy Accidents' Art Contest: Call for Entries

The NOTED Art Contest is open to students and staff of the English Department. Send us your visual and/or verbal interpretation of the contest's theme. A jury made of three members of the department—namely, Annick Challet, Michael Rössli, and Jennifer Wong—will award a prize to the best and most original work submitted for the competition. A selection of the best works will also be published in the spring 2009 issue of NOTED.

Theme: 'A Happy Accident'

Works submitted for participation to the competition must be original and recent, i.e. they must have been completed in the last 12 months. Multiple entries are allowed.

Technique: Two-dimensional visual and/or verbal media. Eligible media include: painting, drawing and printmaking media, photography and digital art, fiber, poetry, fiction, etc. Combinations of visual and verbal media are also welcome (see William Blake's watercolors in *Songs of Innocence*, 'The Mouse's Tale' in *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, or Mark Tobey's use of signs in his paintings). Size: A4 (21 x 29, 7 cm), portrait only.

Prize: A DVD of *Happy Accidents* (2000), by Brad Anderson, starring Vincent d'Onofrio and Marisa Tomei.

Address: If your work consists of text or exists in digital form, please email it to noted@lettres.unige.ch. Otherwise, leave it in the staff box of Annick Challet at the English Department.

Required: For each entry, please indicate the following information: title, date of completion, technique, name, address, and email address. Artist's statement optional.

Deadline: December 15, 2008



To Geneva

anonymous

You make me wanna stop
Smoking, drinking, sleeping,
To spend more time with you.
But as the train stopped,
You left, I left,
I might have lost you.

Your laugh burst in the air,
Smoothen the atmosphere.
It's just like a mental tickle,
I can't concentrate!

Cos of a burning smell,
That's it I'm under your spell!
Your looks make me feel well,
I feel like we could fly.

You make me wanna stop
Smoking, Drinking, Sleeping,
To spend more time with you.
But as the train stopped,
You left, I left,
I could have loved you.

Getting closer to Geneva,
Sorry I wish we're off Mamma.
Getting so close to you, now
I try not to bow...

We said good bye, good luck
I'm fucked cos I got stuck
Into your piercing eyes
On your lovely buttock.

You make me wanna start
Looking, searching, finding,
To spend more time with you.
I never wanna stop,
Just you, and I,
I want to love you!



Jennifer Wong

The Risk of Monotony

by Alessandro Persia

My friend, I want us to understand.
Life means many things: a blend.

Let not our friendship like hay sudden burn
So strong and bright, yet quickly consumed.
Shouldn't it be like spikenard perfume?
Like incense burn steady and slowly and long?

Thus let us enjoy completely each day.
Let us be incense, not fire of hay.





Annick Challet. *Tulips* (2004). Acrylic on paper, 36 x 36 cm



Sonatina

by Naoko Obara

Kaori finished the lessons for the week on Friday evening. After the last student left, she closed the piano and opened the thick window of the soundproof room. The noise of the city poured in. There was a chill in the air. It was early April. She took a deep breath, stretched, arranged her music, and wiped the whiteboard clean. Five past seven. She thought she would buy something *prêt-à-manger* at the supermarket next to the T** station and then walk to her so-called boyfriend's place.

Her colleague, Yoko, went out the door at the same time. "Ryo-kun hit a girl on the head with a tambourine," she said tiredly. "During the group lesson. We couldn't practice the percussion ensemble for the concert thanks to this."

"You look like you need a drink."

"I do. I'm meeting some friends. Join us?"

"I can't."

"Weekend with Yuji?"

And Yoko took the subway downtown.

Kaori and Yuji had been together intermittently since high school. Their relationship sometimes broke when he had other girlfriends, while she hadn't loved anyone else for fourteen years. She, of course, sometimes complained about him. When she did, her friends advised her to quit him without exception. She, of course, did not intend to quit him but to victimize herself a bit. She explained that, despite his faults, he did the dishes, bought her birthday presents, carried heavy stuff, and once had looked cool playing soccer. He might not be thoughtful, but he was honest and serious. He was blunt to everyone, not only to her; he did not play up to anyone. That was what she liked most

about him. In general, Kaori's friends became indifferent when she defended him, and they regretted giving their advice.

There was a gap in temperature between Kaori and Yuji. In fact, it was doubtful that he considered her his girlfriend. When they met someone, he always introduced her as, "Kaori, a friend of mine."

She was about to leave the supermarket when her cell phone rang.

"Kaori? This is Mom. I forgot to tell you to bring that cream dress or the pink one next week, not a dark one, OK?"

Sighing, Kaori hung up. Since her sister had married three years ago, getting Kaori married had become the biggest issue for her parents. She would be thirty-two in two months. The more they pressured her to marry, the longer the intervals between her visits were. When she went home next weekend, she would meet the son of a friend of her aunt. "You can decline if he doesn't please you," said her mother. She eagerly asked, rather begged, Kaori to see him.

Yuji worked for a financial company and usually was not at home when Kaori got to his place. He came eventually, and it was half past ten when they finished dinner.

"A German colleague said most of the piano teachers there are pretty, but single. That sounds like Japan, right?"

Yuji was eating strawberries.

"Maybe," Kaori said dryly. "I go home next week. I have a *miai*."

"Do you. What is he?"

"Thirty-four, assistant professor of law." She put a strawberry stem on the corner of her dish. She did not look at his face. More at his throat.



"Already? Do you remember Kenji? He just became an assistant this April. Well...Good luck." Yuji put the dishes together and took them to the sink.

She couldn't sleep. He really seemed not to care at all. He was, rather, impressed by *assistant professor*. There were few academic posts now. *Good luck?* She regretted bringing it up. She was angry and upset over his indifference. And his insensitivity — although she knew he wasn't interested in marriage, she expected more of a reaction than that. She didn't know why he was with her. She wanted to ask if he loved her, but she knew the question would annoy him. She tried to stop thinking about it, to think about a bookcase she needed to buy. Her bookcase was too small for all her accumulating books and discs. A few boards had already bent because of the weight, and finally one of them had broken. Now the books and discs were piled on the floor. Often when she was crouching and looking for something, her elbow would touch a pillar of discs and it would collapse. She imagined a bookcase covering the wall in her tidy room. She was going to look for it tomorrow with Yuji, now soundly sleeping next to her, and he would put it up. She turned to him, looked at him a while, and closed her eyes.

The assistant professor appeared in his Nissan Skyline. He was fat, as round as Humpty Dumpty. She sensed no small mismatch between the sports car and the owner. He made a slight bow without looking at her face. No expression. She cursed her aunt and mother.

She felt oppressed by his stumpiness and by the artificial perfume in the car. They went to the botanical garden on the mountain R**. Conversation was about superficial matters during the drive: her aunt knew his mother from *ikebana* class; he liked driving; he had won the post of

assistant professor last year and was the youngest there. She made a compliment and that seemed to please him. He slightly loosened the edges of his lips and said, "I was just lucky."

The drive showed them the beautiful spring countenance of the mountain. The cherry blossoms, which had bloomed earlier and then suffered a beating from strong winds and rain in the city, were still in full bloom here. White petals were sparsely, obliquely falling, like slow snow. Some of them made dots on the windshield.

Shortly after she began to feel ill from the frequent turns, the car arrived at the botanical garden. Getting out in the fresh air, she gulped like a goldfish. The garden overlooked the city, the port, the ships moving out to the sea.

"It's beautiful," he said.

This honest remark surprised her. It was a lovely day and she finally contented herself with this outing. Because Yuji usually worked late and sometimes worked even on Saturdays, he did not travel much these days. Without this "event," Kaori might have stayed in the city, whatever the weather was. The assistant professor waddled along the paths through colorful flower beds, sometimes identifying the plants. He even explained the distillation machine for essential oil in the herb garden. It was his first *miai*, and she realized that he was tense and timid. That made sense. He spoke much more now than when in the car.

"I don't play any instruments, but I like classical music," he said. "I took piano lessons when I was a kid, but I stopped. My teacher tapped my hands with the pencil when I stumbled. I hope you don't do that."

"No!"

They laughed. The dimples on his round cheeks made his smile cheerful and friendly. He increasingly became talkative.

→



"I like Bach, Beethoven, Mendelssohn, Brahms. . ."

"Well, of course."

"And Webern."

"You listen to Webern?"

"I have his complete works."

"Really?"

"His music is often compared to *haiku*; I agree with that to some extent, but I doubt these Western critics really understand *haiku*. Isn't it too naïve if they judge only from his brief style?"

"Could be."

"The way Gould plays him. . . Well, I like the way Gould plays anyway. It's like the skeleton of the music without the flab."

Kaori stole a quick look at him. It was unexpected, this reference to "skeleton" and "flab." She didn't know how to respond. He was nice; he was interesting. But it was not possible to love him, much less marry him.

They went down the winding road to the city and met many more cars than in the morning. In no time, she felt ill again; sour saliva filled her mouth, and her stomach reversed what she had eaten for lunch.

"Can you stop at the next turnoff?" she said desperately. She covered her mouth.

"Y, y, yes."

He understood and parked at the next opportunity. She burst out of the car, rushed to the guard rail, and vomited. After she was finished, she inhaled fresh air. Wiping her mouth, she heard the twitter of birds echoing peacefully on the mountain.

"Are you all right?"

His face and voice displayed about twenty per cent worry and eighty per cent relief: fortunately, he was thinking, that did not take place in my car.

Tired, Kaori took a nap. When she went to the kitchen, her mother was cooking dinner.

"How was it?"

"No."

Kaori sat heavily and drank off a glass of tea.

"What's wrong?" Her mother turned to her.

"He doesn't interest me. *Tempura* today? My gosh." Kaori ran her fingers through her hair.

"You can't know each other after only one time. Why don't you see him again?"

"Are you kidding?"

"He looks kind. And my sister says his mother is very nice. Don't judge by his appearance."

"Could you marry him if you were me? He doesn't interest me."

She was leaving.

"Don't you want dinner?"

"No. I threw up this afternoon."

"Did you? Kaori! I'm telling you not to shut the door with your foot!" Her mother picked up the phone on the other side of the door. "How can I explain this to my sister?"

When Kaori arrived at the restaurant, Yuji and their friends, Shun and Emi, were already there. The business district on Friday evening was alive with released office workers. Her friends exploded with laughter when Kaori told of her adventure of the previous weekend.

"That would be spectacular. You and the Humpty Dumpty stuffed into the Skyline," Shun said. "And the Sartrean finish."

"It was beyond a joke. Seriously."

"The assistant professor was out of the question. Good for you, Yuji."

Yuji was chuckling and picking up pickled fried fish with his chopsticks. He said, "It's not true that fat men can't get promotions."

"You're mean! Oh, I almost forget this. Here."

— Emi took out two elegant thick envelopes, gold-edged and embossed with cranes, and gave them to Kaori and Yuji.



"The last Saturday of June. I have to write it down before I forget," Yuji said, reading the invitation. He drew his notebook from his inner pocket.

"We already told you the date. Did you forget?"

"It's ridiculous to marry in the rainy season," Shun said to Emi. "Don't you know *June bride* isn't a Japanese tradition? Think of the guests."

"It doesn't rain every day in June," Emi said. "We're meeting at the hotel to make the arrangements tomorrow. Kaori, can you play a piece for us at the reception?"

"Sure. Let me know what you want."

"Kaori, tomorrow I can't help you set up your bookcase," Yuji said. "I have a seminar in the afternoon in Tokyo and I get back Monday evening."

"Why are you telling me now? Do you think I can set it up all by myself?"

"I'm telling you sorry. I completely forgot. Next week, I promise."

"No way! My apartment is full of the boxes! I can hardly move!" She felt like crying.

"You can come to my place."

"That isn't the question!"

"Stop it. Take it easy. I can help you tomorrow," Shun said.

"But don't you have to go to the hotel?"

"It's late in the afternoon. Before that, Emi chooses her dresses and that takes forever."

"He doesn't have any sense of fashion. You can exploit him." Emi tapped Shun on the shoulder.

"So nice. Thanks," said Yuji.

"But you pay the bill tonight," Shun said.

"Oh, come on."

*

Next day —

"It's huge. There's almost no place to stand." Shun began to undo the cartons.

They worked with speed and method. After setting up the bookcase, Shun scrapped the old one and Kaori

put her stuff on the shelves and vacuumed. The dry crack of opening beer cans sounded in the beautifully reborn room.

"Thanks so much. I'm so happy. Didn't you have to be with Emi?"

"No. I decided on my clothes and she doesn't count on me to choose hers. I don't understand why women are so particular about the dresses."

"Only once in her life. Let her be a one-day princess."

"I don't care about the costume unless I look like a comedian." He grinned and sipped his beer. "Lots of irritating stuff: deciding the details of the reception, the honeymoon, the move. Busy until June."

"Why did you decide to marry?"

"We've been together long enough and we both want children."

"You, a father? I can't imagine!"

"Don't laugh. You'll see." He looked at his watch. "I'm leaving. Don't blame Yuji too much for missing this. He looked tired yesterday."

"I know."

"He feels responsibility for you. Don't worry."

She finished her beer alone. She looked round her room, feeling satisfied but empty at the same time. She wanted to arrange her books and discs, but the work and the beer had made her languid. She lay down and put her faintly glowing cheek against the floor. Shun would be a good father. But what about Yuji? She couldn't imagine. She and Yuji had nothing to decide, no irritating details bothering them. Nothing, really. *Responsibility?* She fell asleep.

As Shun predicted, it drizzled on his wedding day. But it mattered little for the reception in the air-conditioned hotel. The only problem was that they couldn't take pictures outside. Shun looked nervous, and his unusual seriousness was funny. Emi was smiling and confident. She was →



beautiful and graceful, especially in the pure white kimono – and her delicately shaped lips were stunning under the bride’s hood; she really was like a princess from the old days.

Kaori saw friends she hadn’t seen for a long time. They shared news of their common friends: some had married or would marry; some had a child or children; some had divorced; some lived far from Osaka; some had changed jobs; and some had changed almost nothing. Someone asked Kaori if she would marry. She was used to this question, but she did not want it, especially when Yuji was there.

“I told them to choose something small and light,” Yuji said on the way home, complaining about the big and heavy gifts presented to the guests.

Arriving at his apartment, he took off his damp jacket and tie. He sat cross-legged on the floor and opened the boxes. “Dishes again. I knew it.” He sighed. “How can I eat these six *azuki*-cakes? Can you take them home?”

“I have the same thing. Put them in the freezer,” Kaori said from the kitchen. After putting a kettle on the lit stove, she came in and sat down.

He lazily wadded up the wrappings and pitched them into the trash box.

“Why shouldn’t we get married?” he said abruptly.

Kaori couldn’t believe her ears. Yet something was wrong. She might have waited for this for a long time; it might have been the moment when she was finally recompensed for her single-minded love. But there was only a twisted silence between them. She had dreamed of marriage with him. But now she abandoned the idea because he seemed indifferent to marriage, and she sometimes was afraid of his indifference to her. She had learned to accept being a couple without marrying and was used to it. Life had been static for both of them, and he didn’t seem to want a major change. She couldn’t be

glad at this proposal; she was, rather, astonished at it. She stared at him.

“Why? Do you want to marry me?” she asked.

He was also surprised, and looked her in the eye.

“Do you love me?” she asked.

After an uncomfortable pause, he said, “I think you want to marry me.”

She felt something like a black, heavy lump in her stomach. Her heart beat violently.

“That’s no answer. You can marry me even though you don’t love me? You can marry me out of responsibility?” Her voice was trembling.

“What do you mean?”

“You never answer me.” She stood up, and picked up her bags.

“I don’t understand what you’re thinking,” he said, and lay down with a sigh.

Carrying the heavy paper bag and her hand bag in her right hand and an umbrella in her left, she plodded with her high heels on her accustomed route to the T** station. Misty rain and tears fogged everything. She had wanted to be with Yuji and it had been her happiness; she had believed so. Now she didn’t know why she was with him, what being together meant. But she did know what she wanted him to say, and he never said it. Would they enter another phase if she said yes? She didn’t think so. She was disappointed again, and it might be for the last time.

*

The last student on Friday, a high school girl, was playing the first movement of Ravel’s sonatina. She neither tried to play fast nor did too much *rubato*; it was modest, neat, and sometimes had sparkling moments. Kaori said it was good, and told her to start preparing the second movement. They talked for a while after the lesson. The student would take the entrance exam for university next year. She wanted to study architecture, even



though her parents said women architects had trouble finding work.

After the student left, Yoko looked in.

“Still here? Come to Hankyu department store with me?”

“I’d love to. In ten minutes.”

She opened the window. The moist noise and the thick scent of summer foliage penetrated the room. She saw

cars strung under the lights on the wet street. The clouds were breaking in a pale fuchsia sky that tinged the washed-off buildings. She took a deep breath, stretched, and wiped the whiteboard clean, humming the melody of the second movement of Ravel’s sonatina. ●



Jennifer Wong, *Morning Coffee*.



Valley of Rest

by Conradin Schwarzenbach

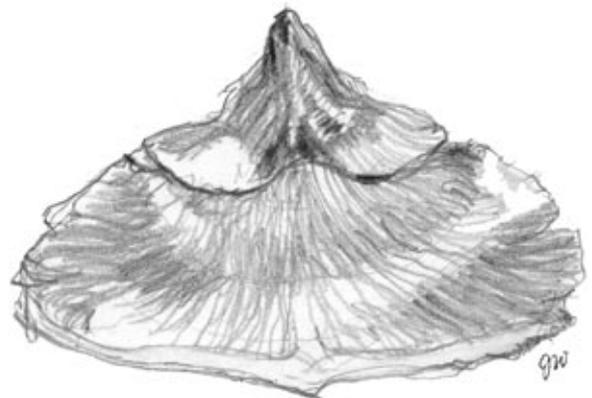
Tired skin crawls around these old bones,
Fatigue left deep marks around empty eyes,
Grey, thin hair ghostly touched by night breath,
Dances a last time in it's dusty coat.

Nothing is really left here in this valley,
But ghosts of those that tried to flee,
Now their tired remains sit on empty chairs,
Waiting for dryness to return to earth,
Count the insects on their white walls,
As snakes on scorched trees give birth,
To fires, there is nothing left to consume.

All has passed, in this valley of gloom,
Except those that sit, still waiting,
Resting after their existence of fleeing,
Breathing heavy, inhaling the dryness,
Inside their corpse, nothing but bones,
The world has left them, far away.

Who is to remember? Who is to say?

Waiting, soon all will have become dust,
Forgetting, one with earth, end to last.



Jennifer Wong

The Need for Sincerity

by Alessandro Persia

Oh please, my friend, don't lie to me:
I know which is the truth.
There cannot be serenity
If talking makes you mute!





Annick Challet. *Nano in Bloom* (2007). Acrylic on canvas, 40 x 40 cm



A Few Stray Comments

by Alan Sternberg

The following are taken from among hundreds of remarks scrawled or typed in reaction to early drafts submitted during the spring 2008 seminar 'Writing Short Stories':

The reader will like the climax, I suspect, but be willing to skip these characters running for the train, which people do all the time, and going to the beach, which they also do all the time. Look at it that way? It's the same thing with the dialogue. If they don't say something that displays unique personality or voice opinions that impact on the climax and the point of the narrative, it's quite likely you can skip it. This is not criticism. It's suggestion. But it's based on psychology and practical considerations. The reader wants to get to the action, and you don't want to write thirty pages when ten or twelve might do. Ask yourself what will interest the reader and leave out everything else you possibly can. Focus on the central action and the climax, and on what that stuff means for the characters and what it says about life. Build backward from that the shortest distance you have to go to make things comprehensible. Think of it as a fifty-meter sprint rather than a marathon.

*

It's nice that you've resolved the sexual tension between your main characters. They seem more believable now. They would have died of toxic hormone overload as you had it before.

*

You risk a false climax if a near miss simply occurs, the sort of empty feeling you used to get in movies when

the bad guys shot at the cowboys and missed.

*

Here we have one of those reality problems mentioned last week. It's dark, probably smoky, and the reader is seeing the precise position of a woman's arms and the expression on her face and even (although I suggest cutting that here) her beauty. Is there a spotlight shining on her from the corner of the house? What is the vantage point of the reader? Is it more than mere sight?

*

As for the first paragraph... 'walked' is awfully tame and you have a chance for something more interesting and unusual. People walk into churches all the time. Why should a reader care? By contrast, people don't often overhear, while praying, a conversation between their priest and a demolition man about tearing the church down. There's your beginning, no?

*

You can't have your main character being shot in the arm and then say no more about it. How serious is this wound?

*

Much better.

*

Also appealing is the simple one-thing-leads-to-another progress of the story, ending in the calamity.

*

Means what?

*

Sorry???

*



*

You manage the 'irrational but right' component we talked about in class last fall: the reader doesn't expect this outcome; it's surprising but also makes sense.

*

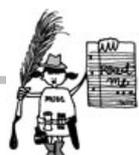
Is there a *meaning* to the climax; that is, what does it say about human existence or modern life or the couple's love to have her squashed by a truck?

*

The only systemic weaknesses in this story are those of youth and profound belief. I'm all in favour of weaknesses like that. I want you to be young and to believe in things. Good writing, sadly, is so often based on a persistent, acidic scepticism. If you can avoid that – and its often-negative consequences for other aspects of life – for a while longer, bravo. Years from now, when reality probably will have brutally intruded, you'll look back on this as a wonderful time. ●



Annick Challet. *Simone and Georgia* (2008). Acrylic on canvas, 70 x 100 cm



The Hen's Philosophy III

by Anja Siouda

This morning I dropped
An egg and a pun
Both of them popped
And I had great fun

The pun made me smile
And the egg was my pride
Cause I had just tried
To enjoy some freestyle

Piling more than one yolk
In the shell, that's no joke
And the eyes of the farmer
Seemed to me then much warmer



Of course I'm aware
That such eggs are quite fair
Compared to my brain
But they don't remain

And end up in a plate
Cracked, crumbled and fried
While the puns and rimes wait
In my small-brained head

To be born and declaimed
In a hen party or night
Cackled, clucked or retained
Beating the crowing cock's might



Annick Challet. *In the Shade* (2007). Acrylic on canvas, 24 x 30 cm



My Caddy

by James Lang

Today in an exceptionally good mood after the sub-prime crisis
plunged stocks better than my draino;
dipping most currencies except for the Swiss franc
hence giving me an edge over the hedge of exchanges
monetary and bodily as they say

In this hearty heart mood with full stride
I thought I'd come to a rending conclusion:
I'd change my caddy of 13 years for a new one!

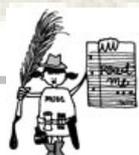
My caddy, my two-wheeled chariot that I purchased upon taking residence in France
My caddy, whose handle is split and wrapped in duct tape
with its old blue and green vertical stripes and strings of vegetables
on the inside that have désormais
turned into a fine compost
I was ready to jettison

So into two or three stores it followed me (as usual)
the sales help was courteous "was it for a friend?"
one inquired and I smiled explaining how this caddy and I went back
back to before my marriage
back to the time of essentials when
another market or marché was synonymous with being;
when my contact with vendors, with the fresh produce of the day
gave me an added urban joy

My caddy followed
always getting fuller
its little wheels never complaining as I rumped it over harsh curbs
the leek tails sticking out and shaking
as the bus number 79's suspension hissed
on the way to Bastille

And today I was ready to rid me of my caddy!
another vendor said: "would you like this"
showing me the latest new-fangled designer model
with a pink coquettish cow emblazoned on its side
I picked it up, it was light! "was it robust?" I wondered
and the vendor nodded sensing my thoughts

Then, I ran out, not for fear of a flimsy machine but of saying goodbye
Today I said au revoir to the deal of a lifetime
but my caddy still treads along my side.



The Click Farm

by James Lang

Googleized by precious 5 cent-a-dick ads
a new fluorescent agrivirtual economy has sprouted:
throng of migrant workers unknown to China or India
have arrived.

A sea of calloused minded techy individuals
ready and willing as Alaskan goldrushers
now field onion, leek and potato patches alike
as far as the eye can see
these foreign new fangled farmers
squat, PC in lap, and click on millions of ads
to make an honest living.

Migrant 'mericans and their families hence
are returning to roots and bearing outdoor elements
clicking, clicking amongst the worms.



It's Another Phone Booth Towed Away

by James Lang



It's 7 am, still twilight, and before my bus stop
a lone phone booth makes its way
on a flatbed rolling out of town
destination unknown
perhaps to a dump of lost communications
or to a place where they'll melt down its wires

All those years of upright intimacy are gone together
we could listen to the good and bad news
happily crammed as the city bustle brushed beside
insulated from wind and rain
the booth stood in all weather
tall, transparent and vulnerable

Now on its way out, people look with little regret
could these silos be restored, recycled for other uses?
or shall we thank them and bid them goodbye!



Adieu, Mon Café Enfumé!

by James Lang

Together we could light up
cigarette and I
and share the counter ensemble

Together we could inhale the morning news
the prospect for a boulot
the comings and goings of Benoit
The smoke surrounded us like an Egyptian veil
it gave us direction and punctuated time

our gestures were as regular as menstruation:
the light, the flicker, the toke we exhaled
good and evil amidst espresso, beer and wine
we exhaled woes and bewonderment
while la lune lay low and the stars shined above

Yet today we are speechless without a butt
void of commeraderie to light one another's
hermetically stuck to our new patches
dans un espoir to alleviate nicotine fever
We are left to leaf today's dry paper looking for something

our lips tremblingly beseech
pourquoi maintenant?
implore to know why this oral void
hath befallen like a guillotine
why now?
pourquoi maintenant?



Jennifer Wong, *Mysteries*



Recueil de poèmes que j'ai pompeusement appelé 'Recueil'
by Léa Grammatopoulo

Gone and back,
But gone and not back.

The river once you pass,
The red-eyed bastard won't give you a second chance.

A comedy you think,
Wrong you are.
Exiled he was for it.
He, too, the river passed once.

Alighieri's lost,
But you might not be.
So before Carron beats the shit out of you,
Get away from that river,
And come back to the living.

* * *

Dying bastard,
As you taught us we all are.
V double S Merwin I think it was.
I now regret
Deliberately being wrong.

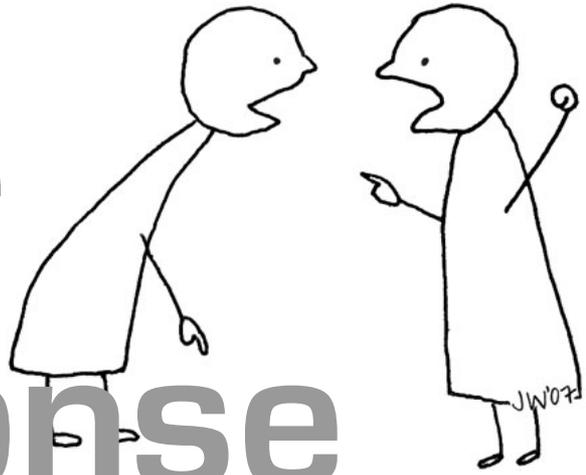
Since I have come to realize it,
Perhaps next time I won't be so stupid.
Understanding makes you grow
Rationalizing makes you die
Regardless of that deathday that all awaits us.

* * *

Oh Romeo, Romeo... Why are you Romeo?
You could be Othello, and not kill me.
Or Hamlet, and get a grip.
Or even yourself, but not feel
you have to kill my cousin to be a man!
Or you could even be William!
With the condition you create a suitable husband!!!



Reader Response



The NOTED Feedback Forum offers readers the opportunity to air their views about our newsletter and any of the issues raised in our articles.

Visit our forum at:

<http://notednewsletter.proboards66.com>

Or find it through the Department website:

<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/>Activities and Services >Newsletter>

You can also send emails to:

noted@lettres.unige.ch

The best posts and emails will be printed in the spring 2009 issue of NOTED. Here is some of the feedback we received following the spring 2008 issue:



‘I read the last issue of NOTED, and I was impressed by it. Nice layout, good work and a lot of interesting contributions. I’m a student in Lettres, yet not at the English Department, so I discovered NOTED by chance when I found it on a table in Philosophes’.

‘NOTED seems to be going from strength to strength – keep up the good work’



‘Baby Noted is cute...and proves that good things really do come in small packages!’

NOTED would like to thank all those who sent in their feedback!

Emma Depledge



Impressum

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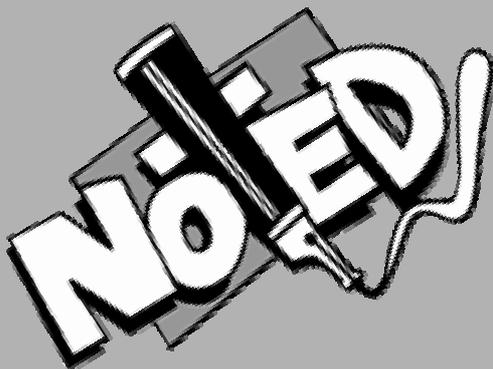
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