

Spring NOTED **2013**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT

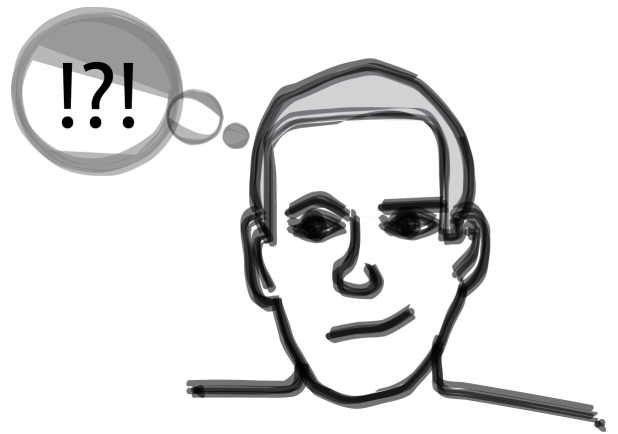


Editorial 4 - Features 8 - Film 19 - Theatre 32
Creative Writing 35 - Impressum 40

Contents

Contents	3
Editorial	4
Note from the Director	5
Departmental and Staff News	7
Features	8
What will you do with an English degree? Plenty	8
Spectacular Violence	10
Interview with Brian Clark	14
Field-notes from a non-native Francophone	17
Film	19
News from the Film Club	19
The Lizzie Bennet Diaries	22
The Black Movie Festival 2013: A review	23
Theatre	32
When Contemporary Dance Meets Theatre	32
Creative Writing	35
Raphael	35
Living in literature	37
Return to Narnia	38
Impressum	40

Editorial



The Spring 2013 issue of NOTED is finally out! As usual, you'll find plenty on film and theatre, but in this edition we're also treating you to interesting articles on English literature, language, culture and representation. The most expressive section of the newsletter, Creative Writing, includes one poem and two pieces of prose this time. On the last page you can find the list of contributors. I would like to offer my warm thanks to everyone for their participation in the departmental newsletter. Know this: **NOTED would not exist without them!**

On a completely different note, and as I do not want to spoil the newsletter any further, I would like to use my powers as editor to change the subject to more theoretical concerns. Please bear with me for a minute, as I will attempt to explain a fact of the utmost importance, which I hope will radically change your life! *Oh the suspense!*

“ THE WORLD IS A TEXT ”

Yeah, you read correctly. The man's

telling ya that the world's a text. What does he mean? Well, simply that not only the act of reading words on a page is similar to that of making sense of one's surroundings, but also that making sense of the words on the page actually is reading the world as a text. My head's spinning, what about yours?

I could expand on that statement that the world is a text, but do I really need to? After all, the movie *The Matrix* says so, so why not believe it? Why not believe me? Just go for it and take the red pill, mate! Okay, let's all calm down... What I mean is that studying English literature is like studying the world. What you learn every day in our department are skills that you can transfer directly to real life. Understanding a text is just like understanding a tiny portion of the world. Shame on me! It's not *like* understanding the world, it *is* understanding the world! In other words, the skills and tools you acquire to study literary texts are tools that you can use to apprehend life in general!

So keep on thinking hard about texts fellow students, you'll end up knowing more about the world than you could anticipate!

There are many other ways to explain my previous statement. One being that language is such a prominent component of human life that I believe it pervades

the way we perceive and conceive of the world. Indeed, the world is a text, and life is reading it!

With these good words and after all this truthful nonsense, let me take my leave of your textual world and let you enjoy ours! Cheers!

Arnaud Barras

Note from the Directrice By Deborah Madsen

The largest and most influential professional organization in the field of English is the Modern Language Association. Recently, the outgoing MLA President, Michael Bérubé, wrote a short blogpost for CNN on the topic “what will you do with an English degree?” which is reprinted in this issue of NOTED. His answer was: plenty! Starting from the point that a degree in English is not a vocational qualification – meaning that the training we offer in the English Department will not provide the very specific skills needed to walk into and begin performing a particular job immediately – Bérubé points out quite rightly that the requirements of all jobs change over time and, in fact, some kinds of employment simply disappear while

new kinds come into existence with the emergence of new technologies. My favorite example of disappearing jobs is the “keypunch operator.” I am old enough to remember the time, in the 1970s, when girls were encouraged to train as keypunch operators. A keypunch operator used a special machine (not unlike a manual typewriter) to punch holes into special cards that were then fed into computers. These cards effectively contained the programs that the computers then ran. Clearly, these computers and the whole data processing industry at that time were very primitive in relation to the devices that we use now. And those keypunch operators all very quickly found themselves unemployable as technology developed. This is not to

say that training focused on specific skills is not needed; it is to highlight, however, the need for more generalized skills that promote adaptability and a capacity to learn (and keep learning) new skills and new knowledge throughout life. This is where a degree in the Arts, like English, is clearly of value.

On our departmental website are listed some of the skills that the study of English promotes, skills such as the capacity to synthesize large amounts of material, to deal in a critical way with conflicting viewpoints, to read in an analytical manner the material you encounter, to develop an informed opinion and to communicate your ideas persuasively. These are skills that empower, as Bérubé argues. By learning how to learn, how to take on a new area of knowledge and approach it in an informed way, graduates in English are able to pursue careers that are as diverse as those listed on our departmental website: teaching, journalism, radio, television, editing, libraries, documentation centres, archives, bookshops, museums, national heritage organisations, tourism, international organisations, diplomacy, firms, banks, administration, human resources management, public relations, cultural events, the art market, galleries, literary, linguistic and/or philosophic research and creation. Reading through this list, I recall being asked to write a recommendation for a student who had applied for a place on a management training course with one of the large global financial organizations. The firm explicitly asked me not to list all the courses this student had followed but rather that I explain in what ways her experience of studying English had prepared her to learn. All the financial training she would need was provided by

the firm; they wanted to know that she had learned how to learn during her time in the English Department.

But I think there is something more to studying English that Bérubé does not mention and that is the training in effective citizenship that is part of studying any course in the Arts and Humanities. What do I mean by this? I am suggesting that in order to fulfill our responsibilities and obligations as citizens of a participatory democracy we need to be able to form opinions based on the evaluation of all the information we encounter every day. Advertising in all forms, newspapers, magazines, films, television, internet posts ... all try to persuade us that their ideas and attitudes are right, normal and natural. We are constantly manipulated intellectually by the information that bombards us, yet effective citizens are not passive in the face of these kinds of communication.

The ability to evaluate the everyday texts with which we are confronted is based on an understanding of how language works and how it can be used in manifold ways. So in addition to training in the techniques of learning that apply to paid employment, a degree in English trains us in techniques for living both as informed individuals and as members of a free and democratic society. For me, this is the fundamental value of what we do and the knowledge we create as students and teachers of English.

With these ideas in mind, I wish you a productive and enjoyable spring semester.

Deborah Madsen

Departmental News

Assemblée générale

The annual meeting of the English Department will be held on Tuesday 16 April, at 7.00pm in room B112. All members of the department, staff and students, are cordially invited to attend.

The Prix Thomas Harvey 2013 has been awarded to Gervais Clark to support a research visit to the New York Historical Society as part of his research project on the accession of Geneva to the Swiss Confederation.

Commission Mixte

The members of this important departmental committee are Deborah Madsen (president) on behalf of the corps professoral; Valerie Fehlbaum and Fiona Tolhurst on behalf of the corps intermédiaire; Linda Hinni,

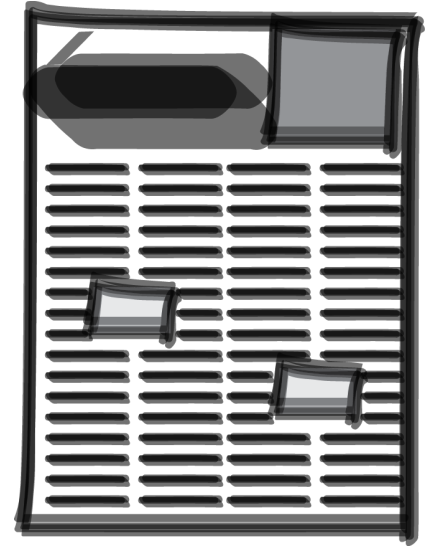
Paloma Lukumbi and Natacha Poletti (BA), and Bryn Skibo (MA).

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Commission mixte, please attend the departmental *Assemblée générale* when membership of the committee for 2013-2014 will be decided.

Staff news

Erzsi Kukorelly has been awarded a “subside tremplin” and will be on research leave in the spring semester. Consequently, we are pleased to welcome to the Department Rahel Orgis, who will be teaching a BA5 seminar, and to welcome back Michael Rösli, who is teaching an MA seminar this semester.

Features



What will you do with an English degree? Plenty By Michael Bérubé*

Almost every college student who considers majoring in English - or French, or philosophy, or art history - inevitably hears the question: "What in the world are you going to do with that?"¹ The question can come from worried parents, perplexed relatives, or derisive, incredulous peers, but it always implies that degrees in the humanities are "boutique" degrees, nice ornaments that serve no practical purpose in the real world. After all, who needs another 50-page honors project on the poetry of Charles Baudelaire?

Well, strange as it may sound, if you're an employer who needs smart, creative workers, a 50-page honors project on a 19th century French poet might be just the thing you want to see from one of your job applicants. Not because you're going to ask him or her to interpret any poetry on the job, but because you may be asking him or her, at some point, to deal with complex material that requires

intense concentration - and to write a persuasive account of what it all means. And you may find that the humanities major with extensive college experience in dealing with complex material handles the challenge better - more comprehensively, more imaginatively - than the business or finance major who assumed that her degree was all she needed to earn a place in your company.

We have plenty of anecdotal evidence for the value of the humanities. Over 25 years of teaching, I've had many students tell me - sometimes five, 10, 20 years after they graduated - that their English major gave them the intellectual skills they needed in their careers, while introducing them to some of the most challenging and delightful works ever written in our language. At the Modern Language Association, any one of our almost 30,000 members can say something similar. That's why we're such

passionate advocates of study in the humanities.

And as Richard Brodhead, president of Duke University, has pointed out, we can point to success stories like Martin Dempsey, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff, or Harold Varmus, director of the National Cancer Institute, Nobel laureate and former director of the National Institutes of Health. Each of them earned a Master's degree in English. Dempsey studied Joseph Conrad and William Butler Yeats; Varmus concentrated on Anglo-Saxon literature. In other words, they immersed themselves in dealing with complex material that requires intense concentration, and they honed their intellectual skills in so doing. It turns out that those skills are useful - and transferable - anywhere there is thinking to be done.

But for the first time, we also have statistical evidence for the value of the humanities. In 2011, Richard Arum and Josipa Roksa published "Academically Adrift: Limited Learning on College Campuses." What most people took away from that book (no doubt partly because of the title) was that college students are goofing off: They spend far more time on social activities than on homework. The results show up on a test called the Collegiate Learning Assessment, which basically asks students to deal with complex material and write a persuasive account of it. "At least 45% of students in our sample," Arum and Roksa write, "did not demonstrate any statistically significant improvement in CLA performance during the first two years of college."

That's not a happy result by any measure - and it makes college sound like a waste of time and money. But when you break down the numbers, a funny thing

happens: Students showed improvement in "critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills" largely to the degree that their courses required them to read at least 40 pages a week and write at least 20 pages in a semester. The more reading and writing they did - serious reading, analytical writing - the more they learned. A remarkable finding!

All right, it's not really a remarkable finding. It's precisely what you would expect - except that it's precisely what everyone manages to forget every time they ask a humanities major, "What in the world are you going to do with that?" In Arum's and Roksa's findings, humanities majors scored quite well; business majors did not.

Too many students (and their parents) think of college as the place that will grant them the degree they need to work at X job. The problem is, X job might not exist 10 or 20 years from now. Or X job might be transformed into something else, something that requires critical thinking, complex reasoning, and writing skills.

When that happens, and it happens all the time, humanities majors find that their degrees were good investments after all - and that they are employable anywhere in the economy where there is thinking to be done.

*Michael Bérubé is the Edwin Erle Sparks Professor and director of the Institute for the Arts and Humanities at Pennsylvania State University, and the 2012 president of the Modern Language Association.

This article was taken from <http://schoolsofthought.blogs.cnn.com/2013/01/04/my-view-what-will-you-do-with-an-english-degree-plenty/> on 9 January, 2013.

Spectacular Violence

By Giulia Champion

A few weeks ago, Quentin Tarantino was asked by a journalist whether he thought there might be a link between the enjoyment of violence on screen and in real-life. The filmmaker refused to answer the question because he “(has) explained it already many times in the last twenty years”¹.



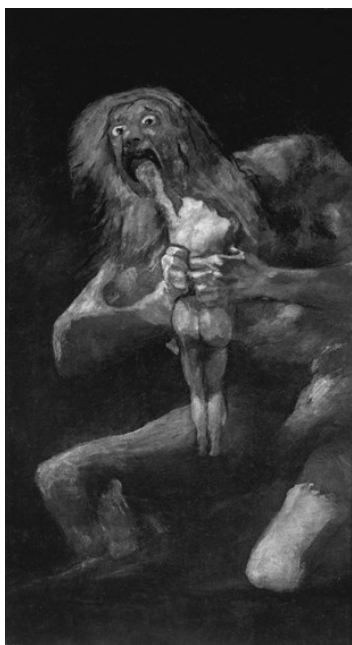
Django Unchained

In fact, as far as we can look back on interviews of Tarantino, we can see he developed this specific topic of violence. In 1992 he said: “As an artist, violence is part of my talent. If I start thinking about society, or what one person is doing to someone else, then I have handcuffs on”. This statement is actually very accurate, because violence is pretty much present in art, whether the reason is because it is used by artists spontaneously or requested by the public. There are different aims for this use of violence, but the important fact is that this violence is fascinating and often trivialised. The reason for this is that violence has become a form of entertainment.

Paradoxically, the amount of violence

has only been decreasing since the beginning of the twentieth century. Most people are used to thinking that violence in individuals is caused by the influence of movies, video games, books, TV shows or even music. On the contrary, the familiar and social environments have a much more important effect on people's behaviour. So, if this on-screen violence in itself does not actually turn people into criminals, why does it seem to be such a fascination, and why is it so desired by the public?

In Francisco de Goya's painting, Saturn is depicted eating his child in an episode taken from Greek mythology. It is known to be filled with violent and horrible stories about crimes, tortures and rapes. Those stories have been a main inspiration for a lot of art, such as painting, poetry, etc. They also inspired psychology with the famous Freudian Oedipus complex, named after the Greek hero's myth. Nevertheless, violence was not only a fiction even in those times. Throughout history, from Aztec public sacrifices to gladiators' games to public executions and hangings, violence has mostly been for entertainment. There has always been a need to attend sensational shows, probably to seek the emotion felt while watching. In fact, there is a physical response to violence which we seem to crave, and that would explain the request for the omnipresence of violence in most of arts and medias.



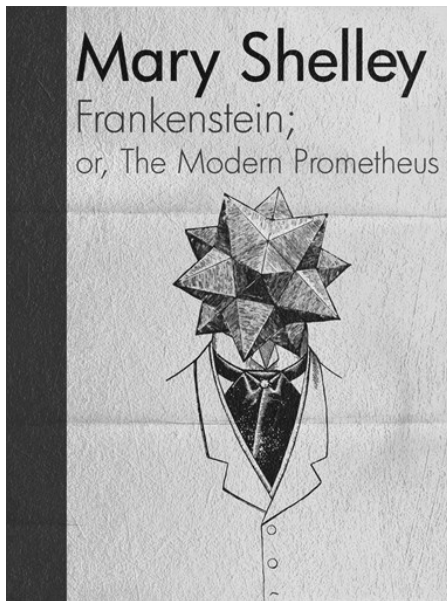
Saturn Devouring His Son
Francisco De Goya, 1820-1823

The excitement and tension sensed create this beloved atmosphere called suspense, which is much appreciated. In his book *Lust for blood: why are we fascinated by death, murder, horror and violence*, Jeffery Kottler explains that “we all have within us the remnants of the capacity to respond violently to conflict, or confusion, or fear. And yet it’s no longer functional in modern life. Rarely do we come across a saber-tooth tiger or a warring tribe attacking. So we do need alternative ways to deal with our violent impulses”. Thus we do feel violence inside ourselves through impulses and feelings, this idea though is neither Kottler’s, nor that modern. Actually, in Aristotle’s *Poetics* the theory of what we now call *catharsis* appears. This Greek word meaning either “purgation” or “purification” is linked to Aristotle’s argument to describe the effect of a good tragic drama; that it should achieve an effect of purification of the spectator’s soul. The purifying effect goes through the vicarious experience of spectator of a play, the reader of a book, the watcher of

a movie or TV show, or the player of a video game. This release through medias spares us from physical violent responses.

Through the history of books, movies and TV shows there is then an omnipresence of evil. The folk horror ghost stories were surrounded by supernatural monsters, modern violent movies, TV shows or books are often about criminals and there is a fascination growing for the criminal himself. Not only is horror and the feeling it gives desired by the spectator/reader, but also there is an interest in the analysis of the human being as psychopath or sociopath.

This evolution, however, also encompasses a fundamental change to evil’s longevity. In fact, when the old stories might be aiming at a moral teaching on how to behave, since the 90s, evil never really dies and stories do not have a happy ending. These changes can be seen for example on the TV show *Criminal Minds*, where a team of behavioural analysts from the FBI investigate serial killers and sometimes the FBI characters express the fact that the list of criminals never shortens, even though they put some of them behind bars. So the evil people and the criminals seem to live forever, or to multiply in these shows, and once one is caught, another one is born. Nonetheless, this permanency is also important for the critiquing of violence. We can see two examples here. To begin with there is Mary Shelley’s *Frankenstein*, a story imagined by the young Mary at nineteen when Lord Byron challenged her and Percy Shelley to invent the most frightening horror story possible.



Frankenstein is not only one of the most famous Gothic novels, but it also aims to talk about a social problem that particularly interested Mary Shelley. In fact, the subtitle of the literary work is *The Modern Prometheus*. The reference is to the mythological figure of Prometheus. This story, as most myths do, has many versions. Prometheus was a demigod who tried to give fire to the humans unbeknownst to Zeus, the king of gods. Another version also says Prometheus created humans made of clay. Either way, to punish Prometheus for his transgression, Zeus condemned him to have his liver eaten by an eagle. The torment would be eternal because, as a demigod, Prometheus cannot die.

The link made here is to the scientific experiments on the dead bodies of animals or humans. Thus in her novel Mary Shelley shows how when a human tries to play God, he fails and creates a horrible monster that will commit terrible crimes. This example is a critique of the scientific society. The second example is the 1991 novel *American Psycho* by Bret Easton Ellis. The fiction is particularly

gorey and violent. It describes Patrick Bateman's life; a golden boy from Manhattan but also a serial killer. The fiction can be seen as a critique of the life of Wall Street businessmen, because they live such consumerist lives that their desires have become perverse. So Bateman's desires and urges are translated in murders.

In an interview, Ellis said: "[Bateman] was crazy the same way [I was]. He did not come out of me sitting down and wanting to write a grand sweeping indictment of yuppie culture. It initiated because of my own isolation and alienation at a point in my life. I was living like Patrick Bateman. I was slipping into a consumerist kind of void that was supposed to give me confidence and make me feel good about myself but just made me feel worse and worse and worse about myself. That is where the tension of *American Psycho* came from.



It wasn't that I was going to make up this serial killer on Wall Street. It came from a much more personal place, and that's something that I've only been admitting in the last year or so"². Here, both a critique of the consumerist society can

be seen and this idea of the violence coming from within us. Through art, not only can we criticize the world around us, but also it is possible to unwind the personal aggression or violence.

Also, art can simply express the world's violence. In fact, a few examples, like Picasso's *Guernica*, show the violence of war through art. A lot of violent movies or video games also play a key role in that idea. In 2006 a movie called *The Wind that Shakes the Barley* won the Palme d'Or at the Cannes Festival. It was a tragic war movie about the Irish War of Independence that took place from 1919 to 1921. Its subject-matter was about the first *guerrilla* war with terrorism and was also terribly violent. The movie shows the sufferings of people during this war but there are also scenes of physical torture. Nonetheless, the movie is considered as a masterpiece.

Also, the video game *Grand Theft Auto IV*, for example, displays a principle character who is a man of violence. He is a survivor and veteran of an unnamed Eastern European war, he tries not to fall again into violence, but it appears to be impossible because of the corruption and crimes surrounding him. Examples are plentiful, but they all have something in common. In fact, whatever media or art is, there is an inherent notion that to show violence is also to show our world as it was, or, how it is. So things can actually be seen the other way around; it is not a violent movie that influences us to be violent, but it only shows the violence we already generated and coming from within us, from our hate.

Thus violence is buried deep within us already. What make us push it back

nowadays are social conventions implying that we can avoid it.

This is also why showing it in an artistic form or through medias is so controversial. The avoidance of violent reactions lies in the attempt not to feel violent impulses, as Martin Luther King said: "Non violence means avoiding not only external physical violence but also internal violence of spirit. You not only refuse to shoot a man, but you refuse to hate him".

Endnotes:

1. <http://www.channel4.com/news/tarantino-cinema-violence-django-unchained-quentin>.
2. Baker, Jeff (July 2010). "Q&A: Bret Easton Ellis talks about writing novels, making movies". *The California Chronicle*.

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Pictures sources:

1. Django Unchained poster: http://25.media.tumblr.com/tumblr_mdvg74Nlfg1qc7t8ao1_1280.jpg.
2. Goya's Painting: <http://www.museodelprado.es/coleccion/galeria-on-line/galeria-on-line/obra/saturno-devorando-a-un-hijo/>.
3. Frankenstein's book cover: <http://www.filmofilia.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/11/django-unchained-a.jpg>.
4. American Psycho's poster: http://www.crimeculture.com/Images/09_American_psycho.jpg.

Interview with Brian Clark, European editor for *Twitch* magazine (www.twitch.com) By Anna Iatsenko

Film festivals are special events. You get to see great films (some more so than others), but you also get a chance to meet new people, directors, journalists from different corners of the world and gather new perspectives on cinema, art and life in general.

This year's edition of the BLACK MOVIE film festival which took place in January (18-27) was an occasion for me to meet a talented young man – Brian Clark – who was invited to the festival to write reviews of films for the Twitch magazine. Currently based in Paris, Brian visits various European film festivals and writes his impressions to the benefit of the general public but also film aficionados in a style which combines form and content with a touch of wit and a profound knowledge of the cinematographic world.

The following interview was conducted after Brian's departure from Geneva, via email.

Anna: Could you tell our readers a little bit about your academic background? What did you study and where?

Brian: I did my undergrad at The University of Texas in Austin, TX. Austin is a very artsy, progressive city with endless cultural opportunities – not at all like the rest of Texas. It's as if someone flew in a city from elsewhere by helicopter and just dropped it in the middle of Texas. So, it was a great place to study, with lots of repertory screenings and film festivals to fill in whatever gaps my class work left.

I got bachelor's degrees in English and Cinema. For the Cinema degree, I mostly took classes on screenwriting, film studies and producing, as opposed to classes that actually required me to make films. At the time, I reasoned that the actual production aspects would be better learned just making movies with likeminded friends rather than doing structured exercises in a controlled environment. Thus, I wrote short scripts and convinced friends with equipment and technical know-how to make them with me on weekends. I've since wondered whether this approach was smart, or just arrogant. But whatever; here I am.

Anna: Do you see your two majors (Film Studies and English) as complementary? Do they intersect at any point?

Brian: A smart friend once told me that it's essential for all filmmakers to read constantly, because the act of reading novels conditions you to create little movies in your head, to visualize the action that does not currently exist and to create spaces and images that aren't real. Looking at the two subjects from this perspective, film is, in many ways, a logical continuation of literature.

There are of course other parallels like the fact that both forms are, at their core, about using the art of fiction to illustrate some sort of truth or elicit some sort of emotional reaction from the audience. And yes, many of the greatest films ever made are adaptations of novels. But enough! Most of these parallels should be self-evident to any reasonably thoughtful

person who has studied either subject. I don't want to bore anyone.

Anna: Do you think that film and literature are inextricably bound together in our contemporary world or can the two live perfectly happily in their own galaxies?

Brian: Speaking in absolutes is always suspect to me, and inextricably is a strong word! I mean, there have probably been very insightful things written about literature by people who refuse to acknowledge film as a worthwhile art form.

That said, I don't really understand why any person who is interested in one art form would completely dismiss the other. There's been an inevitable give and take between cinema and literature over the past hundred years in terms of narrative techniques, style and content, and to deny or ignore the relationship between the two seems foolish and stubborn to me.

For example, in *Lolita*, there are a number of passages where Nabokov begins the description with something like, "If this were a film..." On the other hand, Ingmar Bergman would often write out his movies as novels, then adapt those into scripts. And so on. Both narrative forms are so intertwined, and also prevalent in our culture, I think that to fully explore one, you should have at least some knowledge of how to analyze the other.

However, I do feel it's also sometimes necessary to separate cinema and literature, because they really are two very different art forms, especially in terms of authorship and of how information is conveyed. It bugs me when people critique a film adaptation of a novel based solely on its adherence (or lack thereof) to the source material or when some book review just talks about how great the novel would

be as a film. But probably, those who really take the time to understand how to analyze and understand both forms are less likely to fall into this trap.

Anna: Could you tell our readers a few words about what your current work as an Editor for Twitch involves?

Brian: I started writing for Twitch because I felt like they were the only film outlet that wrote intelligently about all types of cinema from around the world. Most movie websites are basically wastelands of casting rumors, desperate features and sound bites about the same six or seven movies. On the other hand, the ones that cover art and specialty cinema generally tend to completely dismiss genre films and blockbusters, as if there was nothing to discover or learn from these types of movies. Their writing also generally contained more pretension and sophistication than I could muster.

Twitch is a site with writers stationed around the world, from Hong Kong to Europe to Toronto to LA and New York. The writers don't share one mandated, unified voice, and they write like they still genuinely love cinema and want other people to love it too -- not to simply prove how knowledgeable or clever they are. Moreover, the guiding principle that we should place, for example, a new film from Philippe Grandrieux on the same level as the latest Batman was completely in line with my personal film going philosophy. I've always thought there was just as much to be learned from trash as from high art.

Most of my work involves going to European Festivals (Cannes, Berlin, Sitges, Black Movie, L'Etrange Festival etc.) and reviewing films while I'm there. I occasionally do interviews with filmmakers, though, unless I feel like there's an

audience for the interview and that I actually have something interesting to talk about, I generally find these are more trouble than their worth. I also write a bi-weekly column called Euro Beat, which is basically a wrap-up of European film news and box office stats. I also edit our correspondents' articles for style and grammar, and sometimes post individual news items or think-pieces and features related to whatever is happening in film culture.

Anna: You've told me earlier that you also wrote a number of film scripts. How does that compare to your work as a film critic?

Brian: I think the only real through-line between the two is that I'm constantly bouncing between the position of the writer and the position of the audience throughout the writing process. Otherwise, I keep all the different types of writing I do pretty compartmentalized. Even within categories like "script," "movie review," and "short story," the process varies considerably. Some scripts I'll spend weeks outlining before I write, while others just evolve organically without much planning. The same goes for film reviews. At least consciously, I keep each project completely separate in my head from everything else I've written.

Perhaps there has been some unconscious carry over as a result of bouncing between the different types of writing, but since that's unconscious, I wouldn't really know.

Anna: Thank you Brian for sharing your experience with us. You've been a great help and I am sure that a lot of our students will find your words inspiring and motivating for their own future careers. Do you have any last words of advice for the upcoming generations of Literature/Film

Studies specialists?

Brian: Don't lose the passion and enthusiasm that you had for films and novels when you first began your studies. Every time you sit down to read a book or watch a film, try to empty out everything you've learned -- allow yourself to experience it emotionally and irrationally. There will be time for analysis later, but if you can't remember how a certain work made you feel at first, before all the academic analysis strategies take over, what you have to say later will not be as interesting.

Also, for those interested in film studies, learn as much as you can about the actual filmmaking process, not just how to analyze the final product. This will allow for far deeper, and usually more relevant analysis. I can always immediately tell whether or not a writer has bothered to actually learn how to create the thing which he's trying to analyze.

When I say "learn about the process," I don't mean just mean to learn about the nuts and bolts, but rather, get a real sense of the chaotic, unpredictable demands of production. To that end, I very highly recommend these three books:

A Third Face by Samuel Fuller (Shock Corridor, The Naked Kiss, The Big Red One)

Making Movies by Sidney Lumet (12 Angry Men, Network)

I Was Interrupted by Nicolas Ray (Rebel Without a Cause, Johnny Guitar, In a Lonely Place)

You can read Brian's reviews of some of the films screened at the BLACK MOVIE and other festivals on: <http://twitchfilm.com/globalvoices/brian-clark/>.

Field-notes from a non-native Francophone

By Bryn Skibo-Birney

I was stopped in the park recently by a woman who wanted to know if my dog was a male or female (apparently hoping to avoid a male-on-male-fight), to which I responded “C’est une femelle.” After a short pause, and looking for polite conversation, I returned the question and received an eye-brow-raising, “Mâle, mais il s’en fout.”

This raises an interesting linguistic debate: What is the cursory (ahem) meaning of the phrase, *Il s’en fout*? Generally, it means, “He doesn’t care” or “He couldn’t care less” or more interestingly, “He doesn’t give a fuck/shit/flying fart/etc.” Depending on who you ask, the phrase is either totally acceptable or blush-inducing to the light-hearted. As such, it’s a phrase that the non-native French-speaker should probably understand, at least contextually if a direct translation can’t be found.

So, in times of doubt, the best way to discover the true meaning of a phrase is to go to the source, a true-*bleu* francophone. I spoke to my friend at the local furniture store - a hip, artsy guy with his finger on the pulse of something - and during our conversation, I said, “Mais franchement, je m’en fous!” He burst out laughing which alerted me to the fact that I had probably said something I didn’t mean to say. When I asked if it meant more “Oh, I couldn’t possibly mind either way” or “Honestly, I could give a fuck,” he kindly told me it was the latter.

Well, shit. This is bad news as I say it all the time (well, I *used* to say it): in meetings, over the phone at work, at the grocery when asked if I wanted a receipt, etc. Think how many times you say, “I don’t care.” Yeah, it’s a lot. When I first learned the phrase, I was told it meant, “Ah, I really don’t mind either way, good sir.” Then again, I also translated *ça caille* to “It’s pretty chilly out there!” when really, it is more “It’s brass balls out here.” This was discovered by my partner during an elevator ride for two with his boss’s boss. Oops.

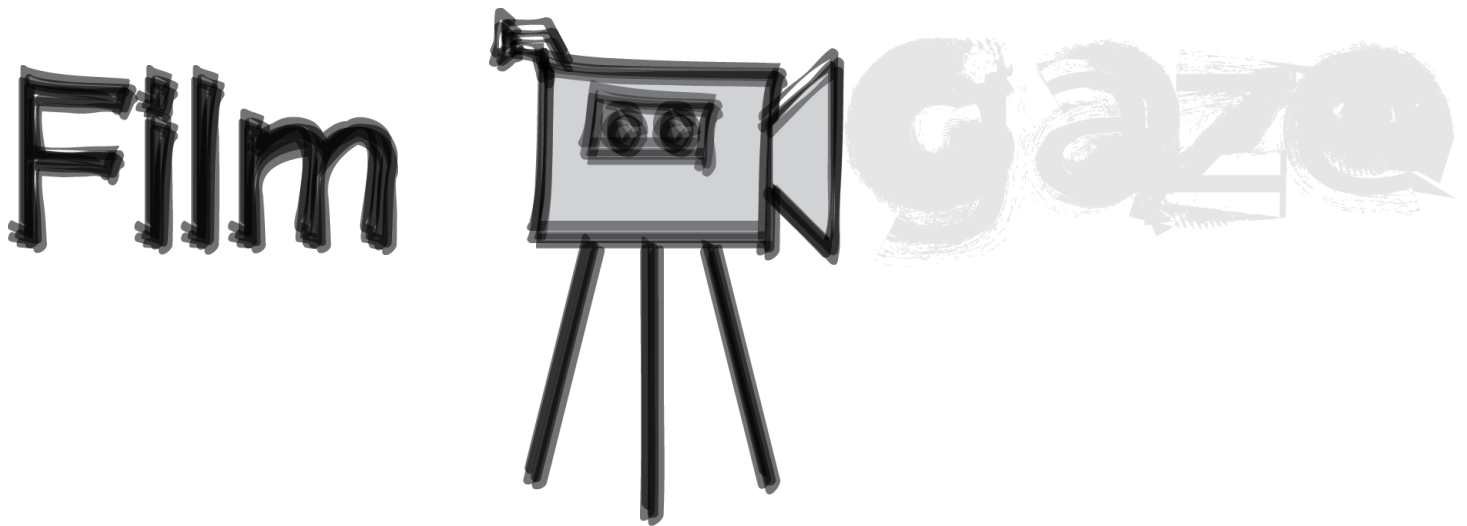
After some thought, I realized that I probably curse far more often in French than I mean to, but it’s an easy thing to do. As the Merovingian in *Matrix II* said, “Cursing in French is like wiping your ass with silk.” It’s just so *nice* sounding. *Ah, merde. Sacré bleu!* No Parisian conversation is complete without a good *Putain*. Previously, in my efforts to reduce the amount of cursing, I used translated English phrases, like “Oh, in the name of God.” (“*Nom de Dieu!*”) Sadly, this didn’t work either; after trying it out in front of colleagues, it was met with peals of laughter; apparently, the equivalent is a eighty-year-old farmer covered in mud, screaming “Oh Jesus-fucking-Godheads’!” as his cows run through a broken fence towards the highway. This phrase is made even *older* and *more offensive* by adding a pronounced “s” to *dieu* so it sounds like *Di-uce*, like Deuce. Now you’re a farmer from Provence who just caught his wife with the farrier.

So what is a girl who speaks like a French pirate to do? Meet other pirates. I met a girl in the dog-park who dresses like a badass, with hair as dark as her eye-liner. Imagine my delight when, in the midst of my resolution to use the French equivalent of “Oh fiddle-dee-dee, I’ve stepped in dog poo,” she whips out a “I swear those cops do fuck all with the goddamned drug-dealers around here.” YES! At the next opportunity, I let loose weeks of linguistic restraint with a good, prolonged *PUUU-taaaaain*. (Insert that

many U’s into “fuck” and you get the idea.)

So in the interest of linguistic appreciation, I’ve returned to my old ways. When it’s cold, *ça caille*. When I step in dog *merde*, it’s an exasperated *nom de dieu*. When some jerk yells something gross at me, he’s an *espèce de cretin*. And when I find out that the old lady in the park is married to a farmer whose cows have escaped, that’ll get a big, fat *putain*.

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News from the *Film Club*

By Bryn, Sylvère, Sam and Anna

Although this may seem slightly late in the year, we would like to begin by wishing you all a Happy New Year! Yes, indeed, welcome to 2013 and congratulations – if you are reading this, it means that you’ve survived “The Apocalypse” and you are now ready to move on in this new post-apocalyptic world. We would like to thank those of you who have participated in last semester’s screenings and discussions: we had a great time test-driving our new “Film Club” format and a lot of fun in exchanging ideas.

The Film Club also welcomes on board a new member – Sylvère Guyonnet -- who has been an active participant during the fall semester. It is thanks to Sylvère that we were able to find a new theme for the spring semester’s screenings and his knowledge of cinema has been paramount in the creation of the new program.

And now, without further ado, the Film Club is proud to present a new program for the spring semester entitled “Mirror/Mirror”. This theme brings certain questions to

mind: how does film, as a representational art form, “reflect” its subject matter in its method? Also, as you will see from the program, we have included a new event this semester that will focus on theory relating to film studies.

Last semester gave us the opportunity to include in the program a “Students’ Choice” film. This was a great success and thanks to Chloé Genest-Brunetta we got to watch *Akira* – a brilliant animated film by Katsuhiro Ôtomo (1988) and we’ve unanimously decided to make “Students’ Choice Film” officially part of all future programs. This semester you are welcome to submit your suggestions for a screening in line with the theme of the semester. You will be given more information about this procedure on the first screening which will take place on Thursday, February 21st.

As usual, the screenings will take place on Thursdays at 19h15 in B112 and you are welcome to bring along food and drinks. We are immensely looking forward to seeing you all at the Film Club!

FILM CLUB's "Best Review" COMPETITION

This is a reminder that you still have an opportunity to participate in our spring semester's competition to win a pass to the

Neuchâtel Fantastic Film Festival (NIFFF)

which will take place between the 5th and the 13th of July 2013. To enter the competition you must submit a piece of work relating to film which can include (but not be limited to) one of the following:

- a film review
- a short scenario
- a short film
- a piece of short fiction written about film.

The deadline for submissions is June 3rd 2013.

We are looking forward to reading/watching your work.

**ETERNAL SUNSHINE OF
THE SPOTLESS MIND (2004)**

Thursday, FEB. 21

Dir: Michel Gondry

Introduced by: Sylvère Guyonnet
and Sam MacDuff

**ENGLISH DEPARTMENT
FILM CLUB**

THE MATRIX (1999)

Thursday, MAR. 07

Dir: Andy and Lana Wachowski

Introduced by: Deborah Madsen

PRESENTS:

MULHOLLAND DRIVE (2001)

Thursday, MAR. 21

Dir: David Lynch

Introduced by: Michael Rössli

**MIRROR
WIBBOB**

MIRROR (Zerkalo) (1975)

Thursday, APR. 11

Dir: Andrei Tarkovskiy

Introduced by: Anna Iatsenko

FILM THEORY NIGHT

Thursday, APR. 25

Special Guests

STUDENTS' CHOICE

Thursday, MAY. 16

Introduced by: To be Announced



**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**



FREE entry. All students welcome

7:15 PM

Room B112, Uni-Bastions

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries: A Twenty-First Century Take on a Beloved Classic By Olivia Lindem

Clicking on the first “webisode” of Hank Green and Bernie Su’s online series, I expected to find silliness and disappointment. I long ago abandoned the idea that film producers ought to stay away from classic novels. They’ve proven through the years that beloved stories can be told in new ways and that by doing so, they can even bring new life into existing characters. Yet, it seemed that there were still limits to the idea. *Pride and Prejudice* told time and again through BBC and even Hollywood movies? Wonderful! *Pride and Prejudice* as a Bollywood film? Unexpected, but still an entertaining concept. But *Pride and Prejudice*, reset in Twenty-First Century California? Told through a series of YouTube videos? Subplots presented through numerous Twitter accounts? Characters that interact with their viewers? Too Much! Or so I thought.

In reality, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* is one of the most gripping and surprisingly well-thought-out adaptations of Jane Austen’s novel. The timeless nature of Austen’s characters mean that they can be transported to just about any year after 1813 and continue to flourish, even if that means bringing them to modern day America. In the series, the Bennet family has traded the English countryside for a California suburb, where they now belong to what Lizzie likes to refer to as the “2.5 WPF Club.” In other words, they have a white picket fence and three daughters.

Just as intelligent and headstrong as ever, Lizzie is the family’s middle child

and has opted to go to graduate school rather than fulfill her mother’s wishes and search for a wealthy husband. In fact, she puts together the videos that comprise the series as part of her Master’s thesis on mass communications. Meanwhile, Mrs. Bennet is just as silly as ever and is consequently one of Lizzie’s favorite people to imitate. Mr. Bennet has a love of toy trains, and instead of dealing with the consequences of placing an entail on his estate, struggles to save his home from the current American equivalent, foreclosure. Jane is still the sweet and favorite older sister who fails to see weakness in anyone, while Lydia is an incurable party girl. Mary and Kitty seem to have been written off, but they eventually resurface in the story – Mary as a cousin who loves to wear black, and Kitty as Lydia’s dependent cat.

Even the story’s plots translate with ease. Bing Lee, a young medical student, moves in to a neighboring house for the summer, along with his snobby sister and seemingly robotic friend, William Darcy. A romance blossoms between Bing and Jane, Lizzie grows to hate Darcy, and the story proceeds much like in the novel. Rather than the militia, swim teams flock to the neighborhood for an annual swimming competition, and Wickham appears as a popular coach and proves to be the most exasperating interpretation of the character to date, second only Austen’s Wickham himself. Meanwhile, perhaps one of the most original interpretations then arrives with the character of Ricky Collins. Rather than

being Mr. Bennet's cousin and heir, Mr. Collins – who demands that everyone continue to call him “Mr. Collins” – is a former classmate of Lizzie's who comes back to town after he's discovered her videos. Rather than wishing to marry her to please his “esteemed benefactor,” Lady Catherine de Bourgh, he wishes to engage her as a business partner in a new media company he has created, under the orders of venture capitalist and investor Catherine de Bourgh. When he is refused, he turns instead to Charlotte, who, up until now, has been the producer of Lizzie's videos. Characters then go between Los Angeles instead of London, Las Vegas instead of Brighton, and San Francisco, the home to the Darcy's Pemberley Digital, a family company named after “the place [Darcy's] father's family comes from England.” Few details of the original story seem to be forgotten, yet they translate to the new story in unexpected ways.

The series' best quality, however, proves to be its humor. The irony that characterizes Austen's writing makes its way in to the video blogs through Lizzie's narratives. She makes snap judgments and never fails to express exactly what she thinks, even if it sometimes conveys an insult. She, for instance, never directly insults her mother, but she throws on a huge, blue hat, fakes a Southern accent – in a bit she calls “costume theater,” and tells of Mrs. Bennet's latest antics.

Like her novel equivalent, Lizzie eventually sees the fault in the prejudice she displays towards others and acknowledges in the series' eighty-third episode that she has been using “costume theater to paint a picture of people that only shows [her] limited perspective, and that can seem mocking,

like with [her] mother” and that she hopes to “be about portraying people from more than just [her] perspective.” The scene serves as the equivalent to her personal epiphany at Pemberley in the novel where she realizes that her favorite victim, Mr. Darcy is nowhere near the proud and dislikable man she first believed him to be, as twenty-first century Darcy is the one to whom she makes the statement. The characters thus grow in parallel with their original selves and bring substance to the story.

Overall, *The Lizzie Bennet Diaries* prove to be the perfect way to pay tribute to *Pride and Prejudice* on the two hundredth anniversary of the novel's publication by showing that the story Jane Austen introduced to England in 1813 is still relevant to the world today. The online interpretation is entertaining, endearing, and provides a glimpse at modern, everyday society, complete with its virtues and its faults. In short, it's a social comedy for 2013 and does many of the same things *Pride and Prejudice* did in the early Nineteenth Century.

Bibliography:

Austen, Jane. *Pride and Prejudice*. 1813. New York: Barnes and Noble Books, 2001.

The Lizzie Bennet Diaries, prod. Hank Green and Bernie Su, YouTube, 2012-2013.

<http://www.lizziebennet.com/>
<http://www.youtube.com/LizzieBennet>

The Black Movie Festival 2013

A review by Anna Iatsenko

This year's *Black Movie* festival which took place in Geneva from the 18th to the 27th of January presented a brilliant and eclectic program of films from all over the world and film-related workshops and events. I was happy to be able to attend quite a few films this year and I enjoyed them thoroughly. Ranging from chronicles of contemporary Russian society to *Dead Sushi* (I think the title really says it all) the diversity of the films is so broad that it is sometimes difficult to wrap one's head around the whole experience.

This is the beauty of this particular festival – not only does the *Black Movie* give the Genevans the opportunity to glimpse into the para-Hollywood film industry but it does so extremely generously and intelligently.

My *Black Movie* schedule was rather busy and it is understandable that out of the 20-something films I watched during the festival there were some films that stood out more than others. This is due to my personal taste and in no matter is it an indication of the quality of the films not included in the review below.

« From Russia With Love » - Russian Film Cycle

Heart's Boomerang dir. Nikolay Khomeriki (2011)

You're in your early twenties with your whole life ahead of you: love, work, family, children, parties. Then, suddenly, out of the blue comes the verdict: a heart

condition that is so completely irreversible that no surgeon would touch you. In fact, the heart condition is so acute and so advanced that you can drop dead while eating your breakfast, working your shift at the metro, or just sitting there, quietly considering death itself. The beauty of *Heart's Boomerang* does not lie in the poetics of desperation or hysteria. On the contrary, the main protagonist remains silent – he tells no one – not his mother, nor his co-worker or his girlfriend. Immersed in the protagonist's silence, the film lets other voices emerge: the desperate ex who begs him "Fuck me, please" while her baby is sleeping in the next room; his long-lost father who dreams of coming to Moscow from a provincial town and needs to have his papers approved; his mother who sells tickets in the Moscow metro and who spends her days looking at peoples' faces from behind her counter, dividing them into "kind" and the "unkind". The film does not make the protagonist fight for his life – there are no desperate attempts to overcome illness. On the contrary, the film emphasizes the suspendedness of the situation, the pause in life when a diagnosis irrevocably changes us and life around to reveal pathologies in everyone and everything, all irreparable, like a deadly heart condition.

Twilight Portrait dir. Angelina Nikonova (2011)

Marina wakes up from a scream. Somewhere out there in the forest a woman is raped by a trio of policemen on

patrol. This foreshadows her own undoing. Or does it? How Marina lives through her own post-rape trauma is something very different from the conventional narratives. She suddenly becomes extremely lucid about the state of her life: the childish dependency of her husband, the hypocrisy of her friends, the impotence of her position as a social worker of poor families. As she accidentally runs into her aggressor one night at a restaurant, she follows him home, but her initial desire for revenge transforms into a version of Stockholm's syndrome – despite the acts of violence the words she constantly utters to him are “I love you”.

Twilight Portrait is not a story of psychiatry, nor a story about overcoming trauma. Rather, it is a testimony of the capacity of love to transform even the most dreadful events and situations. Nikonova's camera works on the characters, transforming them from victim and perpetrator into people, into human beings via the use of light that illuminates faces that have been covered by shadows. Seen from this perspective, *Twilight Portrait* which is initially a set on a photographic camera that compensates for a lack of light, becomes the governing metaphor of the film as Marina is able to see past the shadows of her aggressor.

Indeed, Marina doesn't fall for her aggressor blindly – there is something about her own twilight function that is deeply thoughtful – she reads him almost flawlessly and each day she spends with him becomes a thorough investigation of his past. When she spends time with his doped-out little brother who jokingly tells her about his father's violence towards him; when she asks the cop about the reasons for joining the force and gets a reply “I wanted to become human”; when she sees the senile father fishing in the

living room with his fisherman's boots on... The puzzle of abuse, violence, neglect, poverty comes together to reveal a trauma of the whole society, in which her own rape becomes an almost unavoidable tragic consequence.

The beauty of the film resides in the fact that it is able to articulate cause-and-effect by presenting the portrait from both sides – not just the victim's, but the perpetrator's too. Perhaps this is what makes the film so deeply disturbing – while witnessing both sides of the story the film confronts the audience with its own responsibility in Marina's rape. Although this may seem counter-intuitive, or at its worst, heavily Judeo-Christian in its encouragement of the feeling of guilt, the film did make me reflect on the random acts of kindness and acts of gratuitous violence which we all perform on a daily basis. These acts can be so subtle that they can potentially pass unnoticed, like when you look at a person sitting across from you on the bus. Do you welcome them or reject them with your gaze? Do you use those who are weaker than you, poorer than you, shyer than you as stepping stones or do you do something to give them a voice, giving them a way out of victimization? As Judith Butler suggests, by calling someone a victim you are participating in the very act of victimization, you make sure that the victim remains in this state of victimry because it is convenient to so many and on so many levels.

This film is disturbing, to say the least, and it would be tempting to draw a conclusion in the lines of “love conquers all”. This, however, would not do the film justice as it engages with much deeper issues in more constructive ways than this simplistic sentence suggests. If there is a moral, a deeper meaning to be gathered from *Twilight Portrait*, I'll let you figure this one

out for yourselves for the film does not condone, does not speak a final truth about either of the protagonists – the film simply shows love and hate, pain and beauty, side by side, together.

Anton's Right Here dir. Lyubov Arkus (2012)

Despite what you may have heard about this documentary, this is a love story – psychiatry is a side-effect. “Lyubov” translates as “Love” in Russian and it is a lesson that the director has been taught about love through the autism of a 14-year-old Anton that is at stake here. But it is not the abstraction that we off-handedly call “love” that is at stake here, Arkus is not concerned with the epistemological reduction of the act of loving into a noun. Rather, she bravely plunges into love to experience the act of love itself to find out that the extent to which we have been wrong about this term is the way that we think about but also live “love”.

In the opening of the film Anton is 14 years old. And he writes. He writes a list of words which assemble into a poem and which enumerates all the different things people do – my favorite one is “People endure” which marks the resilience of Anton’s mother in her fight against Russian psychiatry and bone cancer. But there is also “People fly” and this sensation of elation can be sensed when Anton finally finds a person outside his family circle to whom he can finally become attached.

Out of 600 hours of footage, Arkus selects 110 minutes which are telling of our current inability to deal with people like Anton. In a post-projection discussion Arkus twice repeated a phrase that is astoundingly simple in its content: “You can’t just love him, implicitly – you need to

show him that you can love him the way he wants to be loved!” At this point I could feel the audience tense up and a ripple of incomprehension pass through the theatre. But Arkus brought it home (even to the members of the medical profession who attempted to defend themselves with their medical do’s and don’ts and protocol and psychiatric lingo) by asking yet another simple question: “How do you love?” This question seems innocent enough, but it had an effect of a nuclear blast because it is so loaded with meaning. In the context of autistic patients and in Anton’s case in particular, the desire to have someone next to him who could love him the way he demanded, the way he wanted to be loved, he needed to be presented with this love over and over, again and again which is what seems to us so pathological. Arkus said that there is little pathology about Anton’s behavior – it is simply an exacerbated version of what we all desire, but repress at the same time. Indeed, we value love, but not its manifestations: we value love in moderation – nothing too grand or too demanding. We even have some words for the “too demanding” – it is called “dependency” or “symbiosis”. We value independency in love and sometimes, some of us even trick ourselves into believing that we do not need it at all. The film takes a brave stab at these beliefs and it takes a strong and loving heart to accept this criticism.

Loving Anton the way he wants to be loved also implies gaining an entrance into his pain. Carted around psychiatric hospitals, sanatoriums, institutions, caregivers, and a myriad of other places where he has no place, Anton’s existence comes across as a continuous battle with pain. This battle, the film suggests, will be forever fought because contemporary Russia does not even recognize “autism”

as a condition. Not having accepted to ratify the Diagnostic Statistical Manual, “autism” does not exist as a possible diagnosis. As a result, most people suffering from autism are heavily medicalized for schizophrenia. This treatment involves an outrageous cocktail of neuroleptics in excessive doses which renders a person completely inept for any sort of activity.

Anton's Right Here also has other incredible moments like the relationship that Anton develops with the camera. His fascination with the object is so complete that the camera becomes almost another human being. Arkus told the audience that Anton didn't like watching himself on the screen, but he could spend hours being filmed, staring straight into the eye of the object/person. Anton's mother, who over the four years of filming the documentary was diagnosed and passed away from cancer, is one of the bravest women that I've ever heard of. Her fight for her son's access to some sort of decent life is not only admirable, but truly deserves praise.

If you have a chance to see this movie, and I strongly recommend that you do and I promise that you will walk out of the screening a different person. It's up to you to decide whether this person will be more loving or caring, or more scared and disappointed with the world. I can only make one promise – the film will do something to you whether you like it or not!

Innocent Saturday dir. Alexander Mindadze (2011)

When the accident at Chernobyl's nuclear power plant happened 26th of April 1986, I was 8 (almost 9!!!) years old and was living happily in Moscow. I do not remember hearing anything about the

accident in Block 4 of the plant at the time – Chernobyl didn't happen for me until many years later, when I heard of the event as a teenager.

Innocent Saturday is a fictional film about Valery who knows that the accident has happened and is aware of the amplitude of contagion by radiation, but has been threatened by his superiors not to reveal the truth. From that point on, Valery has two choices – to tell or not to tell the truth about the accident and, relating to this – to run or not to run. Sounds familiar? Yes, there is a little of Hamlet in *Innocent Saturday*. In reality, however, the film turns out to be more down to earth and Valery doesn't run – he gets absolutely and irrevocably pissed with his old musicians friends and ends up taking a boat trip down the river in front of the very digitized Block 4 while radioactive fumes and ashes cover the passengers of the boat leaving the audience in a state of panic about their own thyroid glands, skin, and other more or less vital and reproductive organs.

Certainly, getting drunk is an old Russian stereotype. OK, so alcohol can be an answer to a lot of life's questions (I am being only slightly ironic here). Historically, Pripyat – the town near Chernobyl was evacuated by the then Soviet authorities days after the accident – people did live in lethal levels of radiation for days! There is, indeed, something very serious to drink about.

Although the plot of the story is somewhat simple, you may say, the camera work is incredibly precise and the soundtrack is absolutely astounding. The film opens with Valery running and the camera follows him in his sprint. But this is no smooth job – there are no rails on which the camera travels softly to reveal where the

protagonist is running to. On the contrary – the camera is hand-held and it feels like the cameraman is actually performing the gesture of pushing himself with his hands while jogging. It's not the type of subtle shaking as you may find in *Melancholia*, but a full on up-and-down affair that lasts for a time long enough, long enough to make one feel extremely uncomfortable and even, for those more sensitive of us, ill. From the opening of the film, the hand-held camera creates a dense feeling of urgency, panic and disorientation – precisely the right conditions to the news of the reactor which come later.

One other jewel that *Innocent Saturday* presents the audience with is its soundtrack. 80s Russian rock (with a slight touch of Punk) accompanies Valery throughout the major part of the film. I am extremely grateful to the director for this touch of “the underground” – Russian pop from the 80s is not, to be honest, my thing. Music is also at the heart of an old discord between Valery and his friends: sometime in the past he had denounced his friends to the local authorities for playing Western rock music and, as you may expect, they all got into a lot of trouble for that. In a pang of revenge, the musicians do get back at Valery – they beat him up in a sort of drunken rage. They even have time to make up, but one still wonders – what kind of future will the baby of the pregnant bride have after being exposed to over 600 rem of radiation?

My Joy dir Sergei Loznitsa (2010)

While watching *My Joy*, I kept on returning to another film that I saw at the NIFFF last summer – *Inbred* directed by Alex Chandon (2011). One is set in Russia, the other in York; one is a disturbing road movie about lack of humanity and the other is a horror comedy. Both made me

feel quite uncomfortable about mental health and extreme poverty. Actually, it's not the subjects themselves that made me uncomfortable, but I am not quite sure what did – whether it was the way that Loznitsa and Chandon presented their respective subjects or the audience's reaction to the spectacle.

When a truck driver delivering flour takes a wrong turn in the road, he gets lost in the countryside and ends up near a village that no one's probably ever heard of because no one ever came back to tell the tale – it's a sort of a northern climate Bermuda triangle. The countryside is beautiful – the people much less so. Basically the driver faces a pack of hungry and angry animals disguised as humans who will kill him for his cargo before they even know what's inside. But it is not greed that motivates them – it's poverty and hunger and something deeper, more basic, almost primordial and survivalist... And they will kill and steal because they have to – the story does not offer any other way for them to survive. Here, the tables begin to turn away from the protagonists and towards the general disorder that rules the country where anything and everything can be bought and sold, where no one can expect any help in difficult situations (especially not from the police or any other official representatives); where in order to survive, people have become animals.

Chapiteau Show dir. Sergey Loban (2011)

If you think that there are no more new ways of telling stories, watch *Chapiteau Show* and you may wish to reconsider. This film is composed of four intertwining vignettes which make you understand what the term “intertextuality” really means. The four vignettes tell stories of radically different people and groups of

people intertwine and crisscross in the most unexpected ways and, occasionally, a main character in one story finds him or herself as an extra in another. The stories themselves are fairly banal – there's a young man who tries to retain some sort of self in the shadow of his actor-father, a young couple who meet in an internet chat room, a close group of friends bound by a common handicap and another bound by drugs and art.

Although this film is original and interesting, at times its own self-awareness of originality does become a little too visible. Already at the second vignette, one begins to pick up on the obsession with interconnectedness between the characters and the film starts to acquire a touch of an after taste of a game of chess: you watch out for the characters' movements and positions (especially in the repeated scenes).

Having said that, I thoroughly enjoyed the film and in particular the end of each vignette where the main characters of each story find themselves under a circus tent. Staged like a freak show where "the norm" does become a sort of "freakishness", each character gets his/her own few minutes of fame, generally via a song and a goofy little dance, alongside an MC dressed as an old-fashioned lion-tamer and an old lady who does brilliant vocal imitations of Marilyn Monroe with a heavy Russian accent (oh, perhaps I should also mention that she seems to be wearing a green fairy dress!).

What I saw of Kim Kyung-mook

I don't like using the word IDENTITY. It makes me think of the little plastic card with my name, picture and signature on it: the ID card. My ID card perpetually gets

lost in my over-sized wallet usually full of other ID cards – my swimming pool ID, my University ID, my video shop ID, my bank ID.... My ID ID... Well, anyways...

The other reason why I don't like the word IDENTITY is because I actually had the brilliant idea of looking it up in the OED once. The OED told me that IDENTITY is "The quality or condition of being the same in substance, composition, nature, properties, or in particular qualities under consideration; absolute or essential sameness; oneness." This was some years ago, but I am still not sure to what extent this can be applied to a person. I don't like "IDENTITY" and I suppose I am having issues with it.

However, jokes aside, the reason why I am looking at this word in such a hostile manner is perhaps because I've never encountered any "identity"-related problems in my life. I've never been beaten up or harassed for my choices in gender, race, intimacy or political allegiance. Had I been, perhaps IDENTITY would mean something different to me now. Had life been different for me I would have wanted something "essential" or "absolute" within me that would ground me, that would make me feel... I don't know.... Stronger? Confident? Clear?

The films by the young South Korean director Kim Kyung-mook that I saw at the *Black Movie* festival address the issues of gender and sexual orientation. The films do this so thoughtfully, poetically, provokingly that they made me reconsider the idea of "IDENTITY" as recommended by the OED. Incredibly skilled as a director, but I also suspect him of being a talented poet, Kim Kyung-mook invents his own language with which he tells his stories of identity, where nothing is fixed and everything is always becoming.

Me and Doll-Playing dir. Kim Kyung-mook (2004)

This autobiographical 19-minute film was done when Kim Kyung-mook was in his teens. With very rudimentary materials and editing he tells the story of his own coming out. There are cut-out and Barbie dolls (well, Kens rather), a young adult with a big cardboard box over his head, Avril Lavigne's "Skater Boy", and loads of dubious stereotypes about mothers, fathers and nuclear families. Alongside these objects and images there is also a lot of loneliness, unhappiness and pain.

Me and Doll-Playing is a beautiful and powerful narrative. I never would have thought that card-board could be so expressive and how fragile a human body looks when wearing cut-out paper clothes. Those of you who are interested in queer studies and issues of identity should be on the lookout for this young and talented director.

A Cheonggyecheon Dog dir. Kim Kyung-mook (2008)

A Cheonggyecheon Dog looks at the world from the point of view of a transsexual who becomes friendly with a talking dog. Whereas the dog always seems to be running somewhere and always in transit between different parts of the city of Seoul, the humans are less fluid, more gravity-bound and exposed to all sorts of violence. This film is not only a poetic critique of gender and sex roles, but also of rapid urban transformations.

Stateless Things dir. Kim Kyung-mook (2011)

Somehow, I was sure that the title of this film – *Stateless Things* – was a reference to the poor immigrants from North Korea living in Seoul. The first part of the film, for

me, was about politics, states and economic migration. The second part was about a young homosexual man being kept in a golden cage as a pet by an older married man. I automatically assumed that the second young man was also an immigrant from the poor North Korea. And I am still not sure to what extent I was actually right or wrong.

Towards the end of the second part of the film, the two stories of the young men begin to merge via the text about twin brothers that one of them writes. When the two protagonists meet in the golden cage, attempt to commit suicide and fail, there is a rather lengthy sequence where the camera films each actor in turn walking down an empty street. Every time the camera cuts back to one or the other character, the two of them merge that little bit more. At the end of the film, it becomes clear that the two young men are one and the same person living two relatively different lives as a day-worker at a petrol station and as a kept love object at night.

This coming together of the two characters puts a completely different twist on the word "stateless" which begins to articulate the term "identity" relating to gender together with "political belonging".

OTHER FILMS

Dead Sushi dir. Noboru Iguchi (2012)

This response to *Attack of the Killer Tomatoes* is a deep introspection on the Japanese philosophy and art.... JUST KIDDING!!!! *Dead Sushi* is a kind of zombie-sushi film! Yes – sushi attack and kill people (I suppose one should have expected some sort of revenge from tuna!) Well, not all sushi and not all people. There's "Eggy" – the lovable egg roll who is bullied by the fish sushi but who also

vomits acid and sings cute songs. There's a really sweet almost-sushi-chef heroine (sigh) who is bullied by her mega-sushi-chef-father. There's also quite a bit of boob-grabbing (but one would expect nothing less from Noboru Iguchi!) and other cultural stereotypes that aren't really worth mentioning in a review. **HOWEVER!!!!** To pull off an hour-and-a-half feature about sushi eating people one does need a certain amount of talent and trust me, you will be laughing from the first minute to the very last. I loved the film for its total lack of depth and total visual craziness which made it a completely surreal sort of entertainment in the great Noboru Iguchi-style!

Sofia's Last Ambulance dir. Ilian Metev (2012)

This documentary which sometimes borders on fiction takes the audience on a tour of Sofia on board an ambulance. Unlike what I expected, the camera does not follow patients, but the team of doctors who patrol this big city. There are no graphic resuscitations, or impossible miraculous healings. There are doctors and their beautiful but exhausted faces, there are incessant radio transmissions, unruly drivers, and almost fictional situations like that of a woman who can't get herself to the hospital because the petrol station does not have any petrol and so she is about to give birth to her child in her car.

If I had to choose one aspect of the film that I found most impressive it would be Mila talking to her patients in the back of the ambulance. Whether it's a drunk that they pick up on a busy street or a young child, Mila always finishes each and every single one of her sentences with a loving and caring word. Against the stress of ambulance work, the lack of means, the

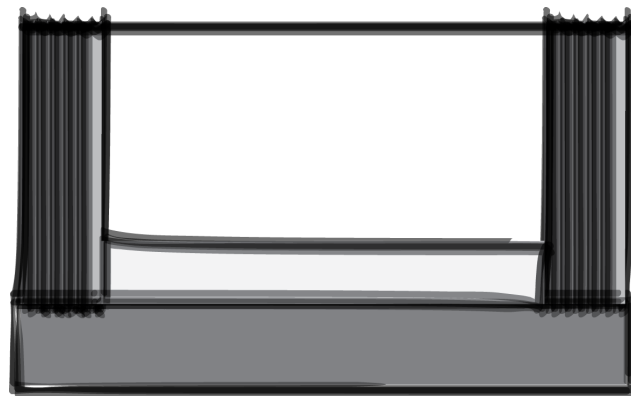
crazy working hours that the doctors do, Mila's kind words are healing in themselves and this also makes her one of the most beautiful women I've seen on the big screen.

Aujoud'hui dir. Alain Gomis (2012)

In a fictional land Satché (played by Saul Williams) wakes up in the morning fully conscious of the fact that today will be the last day of his life. His family, his neighbors, his friends, in fact the whole town knows it too and it is a great honor. The camera shows us Satché's last day as he tours the town visiting his friends, mistress, the mayor, the elders until he finally returns home to his family. His day is joyful, intense: his evening peaceful and loving.

It is not so much the film itself that attracted my attention, but the final screening of it which was organized in the downstairs space of the Usine. Saul Williams accompanied the film on his Mac providing a live soundtrack over the edited sound of the film. This was the first time that I experienced something like this and I must confess that Williams' accompaniment blew my mind. Already, as a musician, Saul Williams has a reputation of being conceptual and maybe a genre all on his own. But when his sound began pouring out the two front speakers and I began to feel the floor trembling with the bass, well... that just puts a whole new perspective on the perception of aural and visual material. In short – he blew my mind via ears and eyes and made me think twice about the “miracle” of digital sound in the more contemporary cinemas. If you ever have the opportunity to see a film with a live accompaniment, I would strongly recommend that you do so.

Theatre



When Contemporary Dance Meets Theatre: A Workshop with Guilherme Botelho By Nicholas Weeks

Friday 18 January, the members of Barbe-à-Papa (BàP), the English department theatre group, and the participants of Catherine Egger's class of contemporary dance from the Activités Culturelles (AC) met for the first time in Uni Mail for a special workshop with the Swiss-Brazilian choreographer Guilherme Botelho.

Gui had accepted to give a full day workshop to a mixed group of amateur dancers and actors from Geneva University. The workshop was structured in three parts including a warm-up (9-10.30am), a morning training session (10.30-12am), followed after lunch by a second training session in the afternoon (2-4pm). The warm-up included simple exercises such as walking across the room shifting one's body weight from the heels to the sides of the feet. We were then asked to invent gaits. Nothing

surrealistic or absurdly outlandish, but rather simple explorations of the laws of gravity in movement. The playful defamiliarization of usual social conditioning in order to feel how unaccustomed ways of moving easily turn a walking motion into a character's gait. The slightest dynamic nuance in one's walk patterns, a bodily inclination at an unusual angle or a postural adjustment such as a curve of the cervical or lumbar vertebrae and suddenly a whole persona was brought into being before our eyes.

The warm-up also included training motion at different levels of height, such as the swift elation of floating on tiptoes with chest and shoulders expanding horizontally or the rooted sense of merging with the ground while rolling on the floor. There again, exploring various unusual positions of the arms and legs

as one lets oneself roll on the ground initiating movements variously from an elbow, the torso or the hips. Then, moving on to more imaginative forms of the same basic movement exercises we were asked to walk across the room as if drenched in cold water. "Coming out from a shower" Gui would say. From detached stylized depictions to the more psychological searing embodied image of an extremely disagreeable sensation elicited by jerky and angular body movements, it was striking to notice how much significant difference was to be observed among participants enacting in clearly distinct ways the same basic task. We were then successively asked to do the same exercise in slow and fast-forward motions. There, the difficulty lay in trying to maintain the same inner feeling (or mental construct) while transforming its outer manifestations. These were difficult exercises and not always successfully achieved, yet there was a lot to learn in terms of fine-tuning our observation.

Once the "technical" warm-up was over, we then spent the rest of the day on a totally unexpected set of activities. Whereas we were all mentally set up for a form of dance or movement course, we actually started a range of improvisations. Each one of us was successively asked to come up to an actor in the centre of the room and initiate an encounter through a simple phrase. Gui scrutinized every element and would acutely identify features of pace, posture, voice, and the combination of the three in these small acts of performance. He would then ask the actors to repeat their improvisation while helping them manifest their ideas with more clarity.

For instance, a woman, upon approaching her partner, would stop, and lift her head before announcing she was pregnant. While repeating the scene, Gui asked the actress not to lift her head, but rather lower it even further. The scene took on a totally different quality as the character seemed almost to avoid contact while making her announcement. This contradiction between verbal intention (the sharing of an important piece of news) and physical behaviour (the avoidance of making eye contact) made for a supplementary richness in the interaction, which rendered the scene both more interesting and realistic.

Gui then wanted to move towards a more interior form of work. Here actors were asked to approach one another in a state of extreme anger. This time a key element, Gui repeatedly asserted, was to mentally emphasize the fictional nature of the interaction taking place so as to free the actors from residual social inhibitions. It is easier said than done and most people were at pains to let go of themselves in order to experience freely even such a basic primary emotion.

After a lunch of pizzas & Chianti spent discussing the various ways social conventions and norms fashion individual behavior for instance with regards to the institution of marriage or the mononuclear family, we found ourselves back in the theatre room of Uni Mail to work on... seduction. At first, a wave of unease became almost palpable as everybody wondered who would dare attempt to perform the first seduction act. What became immediately clear was that to be convincing does not mean to reproduce a cliché. Moving once again

towards a more complex view of social reality, Gui encouraged us to go for the unexpected. Thus, to an actress who had hesitantly approached another actor intimating, in a shy singsong voice, that they might go out together for "a coffee, perhaps... at some point... later today", Gui suggested that she add an afterthought in the same timid body language but in a more fluent casual tone "and then we could fuck" taking everybody aback by tearing through the

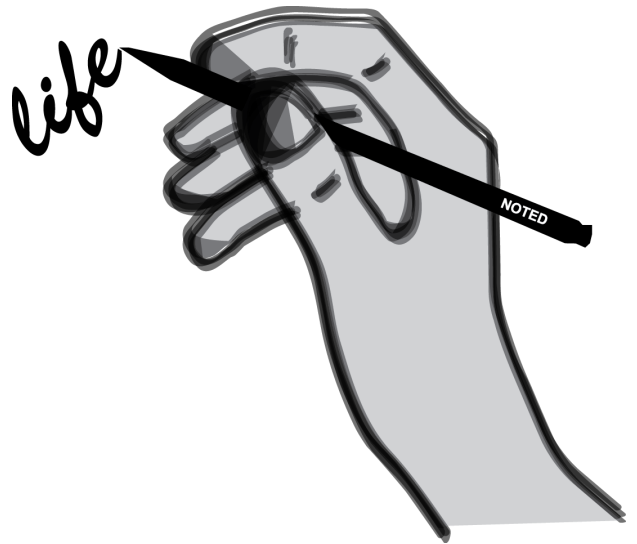
decorum of the situation. "Improvisation is about opening doors into the unexpected" Gui would say to us. Leading us outside of the expected patterns of standardized behaviour, the whole workshop taught each of us a little about how difficult it really is to let oneself cross the threshold and experiment with personally alien forms of socially uninhibited behaviors. Inviting each of us to take the solitary plunge into his own inner freedom.

Don't miss out on Barbe-à-Papa's new play based on the writings of Willam Blake and his contemporaries Thomas Paine, Mary Wollstonecraft, and Edmund Burke, Blake's Revolution to be performed:

- . 10 & 11 April 2013 at la Cité Bleue**
- . 8 May at Carouge, Festival d'Ateliers-Théâtre**
- .**

- > www.bapunige.ch**
- > www.alias-cie.ch**
- > www.a-c.ch**

Creative Writing



Raphael By Linda Hinni

One night, I thought I **saw** Raphael in a crowd
And my **heart** skipped a beat
My **head** knew it couldn't be him
'Cause he was **slain**
By a **train**
Only a **week** before turning **20**
Ever since I **thought** I saw Raphael in a **crowd**
I can't stop **thinking** about him
About **all** he could have **become**
If only he'd come **home**
And not **taken** a short-cut
Over the train-track
He was a **brilliant** mind
A **kind**-hearted guy
A **friend** to all
He's **missed** by so **many**
He touched so many **lives**
One night, I thought I **saw** Raphael in a crowd
And my **heart** skipped a beat

My **head** knew it couldn't be him
'Cause he was **slain**
By a **train**
Only a **week** before turning **20**
And left a lot of **people** behind
Wondering **why** it had to be him
But **not** wanting anyone else in his place
All youth wants to **cheat** death
Suddenly, **death** comes
It doesn't **care**
If you're **loved**
If you're **admired**
If you're supposed to have your **whole** life in front of you
If you'll be **missed**
One night, I thought I **saw** Raphael in a crowd
And my **heart** skipped a beat
My **head** knew it couldn't be him
'Cause he was **slain**
By a **train**
Only a **week** before turning **20**
He'll **never** become a grown man
Or a **husband**
Or a **father**
He'll never **graduate** from University
Or start **working**
Or get **on** with the rest of his **life**
We weren't even **close**
But I **miss** him all the same
And I can't help but **wonder**
At **all** he could have achieved
If that **track**
Hadn't **been** his short-cut
And he had gotten **home** that **night**

Living in literature. By Honor Jackson

I never quite know how to say the things I want, and I follow Dickens around the playground of words as if it's possible for understanding to leap from pages into my physical being, like chalk that attaches itself to my shoes from hop-scotch when I lose. Sometimes, I feel as though it's almost happened, but then I must remind myself that what I've learnt isn't real, Sissy isn't my friend, my tears for Stephen are lost, because my sympathy can't affect the end. Maybe it's a home truth just sitting in his realism; we are ineffective, and so we live in his imagination and floral abstracts to save us from the world.

So I harangue the ghost of Chaucer with my questions, and study history for answers to quell my thirst for companionship. As if knowledge of his world will keep me warm in the months where no-one holds me but the pages I sleep in, they leave ink upon my face like kisses, in a lipstick so intangible and rare. But reality comes down in droplets from the shower head, washing their words from my face as if they never meant a thing. And so they don't, the immortal myth of literature slides down my body and into the drain along with the remains of my dream in the morning.

And Bukowski talks reality through intoxication, but within the paper strewn throughout his life the only thing that's real is the alcohol content on the whiskey labels, the tar in his lungs that seeps into the earth at death. One day, my tar will join his too, perhaps then I'll feel at home. What is home? A thousand different buildings in the texts that I absorb are called by that name, but they change and they jostle, and when I really want to see them they dissipate into alphabetic formations of turrets that crumble into black smudges at the nape of my mind. And time? Does not exist, episodic novels, stream of consciousness, madness in a time stream that can never be pertained.

I can stop time.

I close my book and stare around at everything I know ceasing to be while I'm dragged into the parallel universe in which I myself exist.

So why bother, in the end, when nothing is real. I find solace in my papers. At least, sometimes, when I cry with Frankenstein, I feel as though I hear him here, a lost abandoned child in a world he can't belong to, craving something he can't pinpoint except from observation of society.

Return to Narnia

By H. M. Ji

The summer before my father passed away C.S. Lewis came into our lives. Conjurer of my childhood eden and author of divine texts alike, and one no wiser than the other but for our personal preference, his work was the link between us. As a harbinger of things to come I was named after Parsifal or 'Sir Percivale', and he, of course, was one of the famed knights of the Round Table. I've surmised my parents had, as early on as my birth, entertained great expectations of their only son who, through no wish of his own and upon wailing his first breath in a white hospital room, was fated to bear this mighty name. It was abridged to 'Percy' on my first day of school, in deference to my diminutive stature. I almost regretted the change when first I saw John Boorman's rendition of the Arthurian legend. I believe such heroic impulses as were in my nature awoke when my pulse mingled with the haunting cadences of the 'Carmina Burana': with King Arthur and his knights clad in shining armour, I too rode under a shower of spring blossoms to our doom and glory! It was a given, then, that Parsifal's leitmotif should have smote my heart as it did when, bloodied and wearied from battle, I fulfilled my dying lord's will to return Excalibur to the Lady of the Lake. O, to perish in such a quest! For my heroism my mother called me a Romantic; my father abstained from any remark. My sense of the epic sustained me through the darkest hours before in-class presentations and exam periods, mighty foes in their own right. When, a few years later, a plainly wrapped book was given

me for Christmas, whisking me to a land beyond a wardrobe, little did I know that it would accompany me for the remainder of my life.

That particular summer a six-week course had been offered at the university where my father taught, as a special offering of British authors' lesser known works. These were recommended to me as a 'furthering of my horizons' by my father - whose suggestion I did not heed. To reign as Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy on their thrones at Cair Paravel, sitting tall and fair on a hill, and with the blessings of Aslan the immortal whose mere name revived one's heart, no need or desire did I feel to look beyond its borders! As I well knew the realm of talking centaurs and intrepid mice, of heroic gryphons and weeping dragons could not be farther from my father's world. My own childhood tales he denigrated, as would be expected of a serious professor, hence the existence of C. S. Lewis as the 'believer', whom he naturally preferred, I resisted as one resists an intruder into one's dreams. 'Why break the spell?' was my thought.

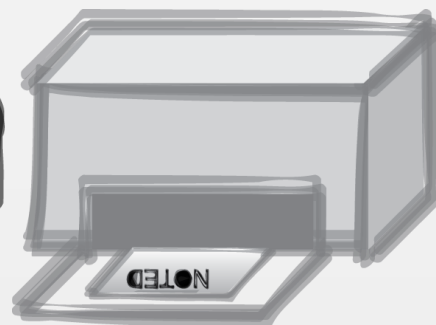
The day I penetrated my father's world came on the following spring, during a yearly visit to my mother, when I was called upon by the university department to clear out his office. Whilst browsing through innumerable dusty book which I would never read, and thus would be either donated to the faculty or simply discarded, a bulging folder came into my hands. Unfolding it I found, hidden away

from all eyes and for the better part of four decades, a collection of my childhood drawings and letters mailed to him whilst a student, and an essay written a lifetime ago – sadly forgotten by its author - about magical beings and their great deeds, of courage and friendships not forsaken, that once took place – as in a dream - through the back of an enchanted wardrobe in 'Spare Oom'! On the last page, beneath my teacher's assessment of my early work, were my father's handwritten comments: 'written by my own dearest Percy, who remains at heart and to my deepest delight a true Parsifal!'.

Had an alternate life been given me, even for the smallest measure of eternity, time would have befriended the risk of choosing away from the safety of familiar shores, allowing for reticence and mistakes (I would like to think those inevitably made in the course of one's life!), to leave no lasting marks of regret.

But a life not lived escapes us and gives us no respite in our present grief. That summer faded away as all things do, as memories of my father would, I knew, one day begin to fade away. Indeed there is no going back. Still, now and again, I cannot help but wonder was I, at one time, called to a most wondrous adventure with him, and did I merely fail to hear it? Retracing my steps back into Narnia raised the spectre of the dead, yet little dread or fear was there in facing a past that resurrects memories of a life riding on the strain of a haunting tune once heard, and which awakened in my heart a longing for great deeds done and unfaltering courage and eternal friendships. And now that my own winter is inexorably marching upon me and such thoughts are becoming wisps of dreams barely remembered upon awakening, the cry that rings throughout that enchanted kingdom is none other than, 'Hail mine father!'

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