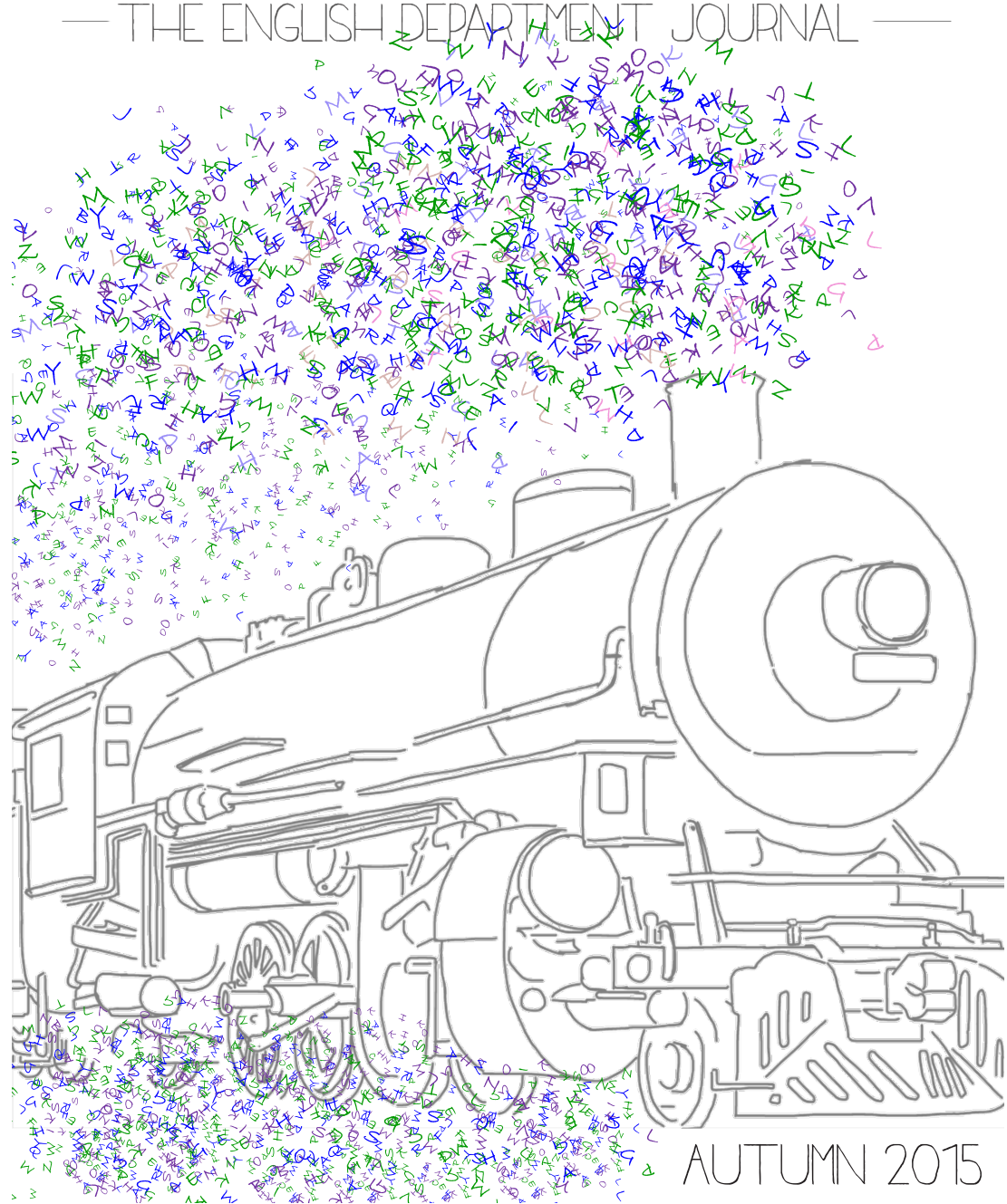


NOTED

— THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT JOURNAL —



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**UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE**

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Letter from the Editor

BRYN SKIBO-BIRNEY

Granted, September marks another summer gone by, but before you despair over the loss of sun-drenched afternoons on the lake, impromptu gelato visits at the dusky hour of 10 p.m., or the unadulterated pleasure of reading “for fun,” allow me to offer this: what is possibly the most adventure-laden issue of *Noted* ever! To welcome you (back) to the English Department, you have a particularly international collection of contributions: **Athéna Dubois-Pèlerin** and **Cristina Simoni** will take your imagination to England and Canada (respectively) and give you good reason to start planning your own adventure to a faraway land. Their tales of foreign foods (Scones and tea! Gravy and French fries! To be consumed separately!), unexpected sojourns, new friendships, lasting memories, and – perhaps most important – personal revelations, will surely provide the necessary impetus to head outside the cozy boundaries of Geneva and to explore anglophone regions further afield. Another recently returned English department resident and regular *Noted* contributor, **Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert**, takes his impressions of being a stranger in a strange land (in his case, Los Angeles, perhaps the *strangest* of strange lands) to the fable-esque forest in his short story, “A Tale of the Stranger and Ms Badger.” Did Ben’s travels through America inform his political cartoon regarding the current ease in buying firearms in the United States? Only Ben knows the answer but you can provide the caption; see the back cover of *Noted* for details on the latest puzzle, a cartoon-caption contest. Our thanks to the newly-arrived Professor Simon Swift for the contest suggestion!

Whether or not our contributors went abroad, meeting and greeting still seem to be the name of the *Noted* game this semester. In the ensuing pages, you’ll be introduced to the many facets of the mythical, historical, and – somewhere between the two – the “real” Anne Boleyn in **Roberta Marangi**’s reading of “Anne Boleyn fever” across film, TV, novels, and historical accounts. Was she the conniving and cold-hearted politico whom some have portrayed her to be, the hysterical woman, or the deformed predecessor of Elvis and the Duchess of Cambridge? Read on to find out more. Speaking of different media, it is a great pleasure to “publish” **NAkama**’s recording of “March 19,” in which he introduces readers to the “presence” of the fire which raged through Plan-les-Ouates; to access the piece, simply take a photo of the QR code with your phone. *Noted* has hit the 21st century running! Just as fresh, **Olivia Lindem** tackles the biggest literary releases of the spring and summer, with her nuanced and sparkling reviews of Lee’s *Go*

Set a Watchman, Smith’s *How to Be Both*, and Atwood’s *Stone Mattress*. Beware, there are plenty of spoilers, but don’t let them stop you from enjoying her always engaging impressions of these novels; as with any adventure, it’s not the end that matters, but the journey. Surely Olivia’s fellow contributors and travelers will agree.

As always, this edition will also provide you with what you need to know about the goings-on in the department – from the past events and future productions of **EMMET** to the mind-bending semester that was the **Film Club**’s “Puzzle Film” roster. In the former, **Marlon Ariyasinghe** discusses the evolution of EMMET’s production of *Antigonick* over the past two semesters as well as the new productions ahead; in the latter, the new Film Club head honcho, **Amy Brown**, lays out the grand schemes in store for movie viewers: in keeping with adventures, travels, and trials, the new roster of films will take you to “a galaxy far, far away.” Finally, in her “Note from the Director,” **Guillemette Bolens** returns from her sojourn to the Rector’s office. So to our new *Directrice*, and to you, dear readers of *Noted*, we say: “Welcome back!”

Happy reading,
Bryn

PS: Remember, *Noted* can only thrill, enlighten, and enhance your reading experience if you continue fill its pages with your thoughts, scribbles, cartoons, photos, and (now) recordings. Don’t delay! Send your contributions for the next edition whenever you want; we at *Noted* HQ relish receiving them.

Note from the Director

GUILLEMETTE BOLENS

Welcome to all students! You have made a good choice: the English department of the University of Geneva is a great place to be, study, and learn. I write these words after travelling for several years through the uncanny, yet somewhat thrilling, worlds of academic governance, and after delving into four research projects here and in the UK. And my appreciation of our department is now as great as ever. Not only because we are part of the University of Geneva, which belongs to the 100 top universities in the world—58th in the Shanghai ranking, which is impressive. Not only because of the high level of training we offer, but also because of the human and intellectual quality of the people in it. Among them, I wish to thank Professor Deborah Madsen in particular.

Deborah Madsen has been our director for five years. After sharing my views and thoughts with colleagues, I can safely say that our department is immensely grateful to her. We have been impressed by the way she has so skilfully and generously played the role of facilitator, allowing the rest of the department to focus on teaching and research, while stepping in to help, adjust, and adjudicate when necessary. Equally important is the excellent atmosphere she has maintained through a culture of open and friendly exchange and dialogue, showing genuine appreciation for those around her. The English Department is perceived from the inside and the outside as a department that functions smoothly and in which people get on, a happy state of affairs for which Deborah, as Head of Department, has borne chief responsibility over the last five years. Deborah will take her well-deserved sabbatical in the Spring semester, working on fascinating new research projects. All our very best wishes to her!

Our new Professor of Modern English, Simon Swift, is now a full-time staff member of the English department, having recently moved to Geneva, following last semester's smooth cross-Channel schedule, teaching both at the University of Leeds and teaching an MA seminar on Romanticism in Geneva. We are very happy to have Simon's full-time collaboration in the department.

Dr Devani Singh is joining the department as a post-doc from September 2015. Devani is assisting Professor Lukas Erne on two research projects: she is employed at 60% on an FNS research project on early modern printed commonplace books and at 40% on the 'Bodmer Lab' project, where she is helping to lead research on the 'Shakespeare

collection' of the Bodmer Foundation. Devani is a trained book historian, with special expertise in early modern editions of Chaucer and has recently completed her doctorate at the University of Cambridge. We welcome her warmly to the English department.

The *décanat* has granted Professor Puskas two hours' teaching dispense during the Autumn 2015 semester. Consequently, Mr Tomislav Socanac, who has an MA in English and is currently finishing his PhD dissertation under Professor Puskas's supervision will teach the two-hour BA7 seminar on Syntax I. We would like to welcome Tomislav to the department for the coming semester.

And, last but not least, a very warm welcome to Marine Chatelanat, who is joining Olivia Lindem as a monitor in the Writing Lab.

The new *plan d'études* is coming into effect this semester. It defines a Master module as two seminars taken in either English Literature or English Linguistics. This replaces the old definition of a module as two seminars taken in the same historical domain. So be bold and feel free to stride over literary history and linguistic fields the way you wish!

Finally, the department offers opportunities to become involved in extracurricular activities such as the remarkably prolific theatre group (EMMET), the film club, and, of course, *Noted*, in which your thoughts in prose or poetry may get published and posted on the department webpage. So, to your digital ink and quills, good people!

And let me end with some of my favourite verses by E. E. Cummings—this is my way to wish you the boundless curiosity and stamina he had.

may my mind stroll about hungry

and fearless and thirsty and supple

(E. E. Cummings, *Other Seasons, Other Creatures*, 5)

Reading Female Fictional Characters in Contemporary Literature: Smith, Atwood, and Lee

OLIVIA LINDEM

*He says he has been infuriated by a story.
It haunts him, he says : he can't stop thinking about it.
What story? I say.
All stories, he says, really. They're never the story I need or really want.*

Ali Smith, *How to Be Both* (368)

FEATURES

Disclaimer: Spoiler alert!

The years 2014 and 2015 have seen many books published by women writers, and it's difficult to escape three of them in particular if you spend much time online: the controversy surrounding the publication of Harper Lee's newly "discovered" manuscript for *Go Set a Watchman* has been all over the media, with journalists and bloggers alike debating whether and how the book should be read at all, while the rest of the blogosphere has been buzzing with praise for Ali Smith's *How to Be Both* and Margaret Atwood's latest short story collection, *Stone Mattress*. I decided to read all three this summer, starting with *Go Set a Watchman* and ending with *How to Be Both*, and each of the novels stands out in its own way... not necessarily for the elements that have been dragged through the media but for the way they decide to approach gender and, particularly, female characters.

Harper Lee's *Go Set a Watchman*, while far from subversive in its narrative, has created a controversy through its very existence. Falsely presented as a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird* in the media, the book is neither sequel nor novel, but a first draft by a first-time writer which was rejected and later transformed into *To Kill a Mockingbird*. The

book's appearance, decades after Lee's only novel was published, is in itself suspicious, and many sources suggest that its publication is morally ambiguous and without Harper Lee's knowledgeable consent. What happened is difficult to determine, but the dubious nature of the publication was enough to cause many people to boycott the book. Curiosity won out in my case, not because I was excited to read the "sequel" the media was claiming it was or because I wanted to see just how bad things get with Atticus, but precisely because all of the horrified reactions to the book were concentrating on Atticus's transformation. This struck me as problematic, not because it destroyed the image of one of American literature's most beloved figures, but because the book wasn't supposed to be about Atticus. After all, Jean Louise, and not Atticus, is the protagonist of *Go Set a Watchman*, and the story is supposed to be about her disillusionment with her father figure.

From that perspective, the book is actually interesting to read. It's rough and has clearly benefitted from being transformed into the classic that *To Kill a Mockingbird* became, but the story is not a poor one for the gender standards of the 1950s. Throughout most of the book, Jean Louise is an independent young woman who defies the gender expectations of her time. In a sociological look at young women in the 1950s, Wini Breines explains what we all know in *Young, White, and Miserable*, that "white, middle-class girls [...] were taught in the 1950s that their main goals in life were to become wives and mothers" (ix). Jean Louise is clearly encouraged to follow this path by her aunt, but she refuses to comply, living and working in New York on her own and refusing to marry her longtime sweetheart just because it's what she's expected to do. When she learns that her father is not the fair, open-minded man she idolized as a child, but is in fact a racist bigot, she turns against him and resolves to leave the South behind her. She speaks her mind to her equally bigoted aunt, breaks things off with her boyfriend for being no different than the rest of them, and it seems for a few pages that the book is going to come to a satisfying end. Things, however, go horrifically downhill as Jean Louise is literally slapped in order to be brought around to her family's way of thinking, and the story ends with a reconciliation between Jean Louise, Atticus, and the South. This dated and disappointing ending aside, *Go Set a Watchman* is therefore an interesting read, not as a sequel to *To Kill a Mockingbird*, but as a draft and a sociological experiment. If one actually reads the book as it was written, as the story of a young woman struggling to understand the racist society to which she is attached against her will, then it carries a weight it is being denied through the erasure of Jean Louise's depiction in favor of her culturally idolized father.

Ali Smith's new novel, *How to Be Both*, meanwhile, actively looks to subvert narratological norms throughout its three hundred some pages. Consisting of two parts that can be

read in any order, the novel follows the stories of two female protagonists: one a young contemporary woman with a gender-bending name, George, and the other a Renaissance artist who lives as a man but is biologically female. The Renaissance artist in question is the real-life Francesco del Cossa, and Smith's transformation of the artist's sex and gender causes readers not only to question history, but to continue questioning works that were allowed to survive in the literary and artistic canon due to the sex of their creators. How many female writers of past centuries needed to pretend to be men in order to be published and respected? How many true historical identities remain masked today? Smith asks many such questions through Cossa, who functions as the novel's narrative voice, and through George, who inherits her Second Wave Feminist Mother's beliefs after her death and tries to find meaning through Cossa's works. She also goes on to bend history and gender, as well as time and space. Though the novel is told by one narrator, it covers two stories in what should be two distinctive time periods. Yet, time bends to accommodate both, creating a universe that seems to be both earth and purgatory as one, where the seen, unseen, living, and dead can co-exist to question the very essence of the established order. Enigmatic in its own existence, *How to Be Both* encourages readers to question everything they think they know not only in the world of the book but through history.

Finally, consisting of nine short stories that "reveal the grotesque, delightfully wicked facets of humanity," Margaret Atwood's *Stone Mattress* collection tests narrative bounds in its own way. Connected through a series of characters, the first three stories in the collection – "Alphinland," "Revenant," and "Dark Lady" – take a look at a circle of writers and their entourage as they leave their writings behind and age. "Alphinland" focuses on Constance Starr, an elderly writer who gets lost in her sprawling, eponymous universe and dictates the events of the following two stories. "Dark Lady," meanwhile, turns towards Constance's one time rival. Full of snark, the story focuses on Jorrie, an ageing free spirit who likes to spend her time reading the obituaries of people she dislikes and imagines "tap danc[ing] on [their] graves" (77). The middle story, "Revenant" turns towards Constance and Jorrie's ex-lover, a man named Gavin who, having spent his youth writing explicit poetry about his lovers and his old age selecting younger and younger wives and basking in his supposed glory, is the embodiment of the Midcentury Misogynists. The only story of the three to be focalized through a male protagonist, "Revenant" is the humorous gem of the collection. It deflates Gavin's falsely inflated ego as he comes face to face with a young grad student who comes to interview him not because she is interested in him as a writer but because she sees him as an accessory to unlocking the backstory of the true literary genius in their midst, Constance. Discovering that his one-time muse is more highly valued than himself and that a young woman

wants to study her and has no true interest in him is too much for him to take, and Gavin drops dead, allowing for the story to come full circle in “Dark Lady” as Jorrie rejoices at his death. The three stories point out important issues that continue to appear through society and even through the academic and literary worlds we know so well: notably, the immediate praise given to male writers and the belittling of fantasy fiction written by women.

While all are written in very different forms and styles, *Go Set a Watchman*, *Stone Mattress*, and *How to Be Both* thus all stand out for their treatment of female characters and for their receptions in the media. Rightfully praised, both Smith and Atwood’s works subvert standard forms of storytelling by questioning the very gender of a supposedly male artist or by telling the tale of women’s literary history through the deconstruction of a male author. Lee’s work, meanwhile, whether rightfully published or not, faces many of the same difficulties it might have faced at the time it was written, as it sees its central, female story overshadowed by the figure of a man.

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A Life-Changing Experience

CRISTINA SIMONI AND ATHÉNA DUBOIS-PÈLERIN

Longing to discover a new place and immerse yourself in a different culture, while pursuing your university studies? This is it! Spending a year – or even just a semester – abroad, is an enriching experience like no other, both personally and academically. But *what exactly makes this experience so special?*, you are asking yourself. Here are two accounts, written by third-year students from the English department who spent the 2014-2015 academic year in Anglophone universities, which highlight, sometimes with a pinch of humor, the aspects that rendered their experiences so distinctive.

Cristina Simoni – University of Ottawa, Canada

My year abroad was a great experience. Not only did it make me grow intellectually, but it also led me to adopt a different view of the world and appreciate its diversity even more. I met students from all over the world, had the chance to study on a different university campus, and – last but not least – got to experience a new lifestyle and savor local delicacies! These two semesters have thus been truly *unique* to me, and can be summed up with the following six key words.

U – NPREDICTABLE. Apart from knowing which university I was going to attend and where I was going to reside, everything else was a blank space that would be filled in as time went by. I took part in activities and trips I had not planned in advance and, more importantly, I encountered beautiful people. During the Reading Week in October, I went to visit Toronto and the Niagara Falls with nine other exchange students. We rented two cars, so that we were free to stop and go wherever we felt like it. Funnily enough, before leaving for this trip, I knew only three of the people I was going to spend five days with. This trip was a surprise not only in that I had not organized it beforehand, but also because, in a limited amount of time, I made very close international friends. Therefore, my year abroad was a true *adventure*, an ingredient that made my Canadian stay all the more exciting and special.

N – OURISHING. My experience was nourishing, figuratively and literally. Metaphorically speaking, I learned a lot about the Canadian way of life, and, in

particular, their customs and values. I took part in celebrations such as Remembrance Day, Thanksgiving, Halloween, and Saint Patrick's Day. Did you know that in North America Halloween is not just about dressing up in scary costumes, such as a witch or a vampire like in Europe, but more like a carnival? I still smile when I think about a Canadian friend who chose to be the Pope for that occasion. I was also nourished with yummy local food, yet unfortunately, not particularly low-fat. I still remember eating my first "Poutine" with a French friend, i.e. a Québécois dish made of French fries, cheese curds, and gravy sauce. Very nourishing, indeed! The same goes for the "Beavertail," among others, namely: fried dough in the shape of a beaver's tail. I won't deny it: before seeing it, I thought I was about to eat an actual beavertail.

I – NTENSE. Living away from home for a long time can be challenging. Everything is new: your home, the city, the university system, the teachers, and the students. Hence, it happened that I experienced waves of nostalgia and discouragement. At the beginning of my stay, when I knew no one, I even nearly got lost when going to the university campus, because I was heading in the opposite direction. Also, being surrounded by native speakers in class was sometimes intimidating and the number of essays I had to write was considerable. However, all of these are just a matter of habit. Indeed, as soon as you get accustomed to your "new life," these issues fade away. You do not feel disoriented and like a stranger any longer, but become more and more confident and sense that you are part of this new community. When you look back, you realize everything you have achieved. Were it not for the aforementioned hurdles, my experience would not have been as rewarding.

Q – UEER. That's right. When you go to another country, you can't help finding some things awkward, because they are unusual to you. Language-wise, the first thing that struck me was, as you can probably guess, the sound of Canadian French. I had prepared myself for this linguistic challenge, but unfortunately it did not prevent me from smiling when I first spoke with French-speaking Canadians. I just couldn't help it. In addition, their word choice was surprising to me at times, such as the employment of the phrase "Allô!" to commonly say hi, or the use of religious words to express anger: "tabarnak!," "crisse!," "ostie!," or even combined as "ostie d'crisse de tabarnak!." I also found particularly interesting that bilingual Canadian speakers naturally blend French and English in the same sentence, such as "C'est l'fun!" As for Canadian English, it also has a peculiar feature that doesn't go unnoticed, namely the "eh?" at the end of sentences: "Cold, eh?" or "I know, eh?" Apart from linguistic differences, everyday-life details also surprised me, like the fact that eggs in Canadian supermarkets are kept in the fridge!

U – NRIVALED. Whether you opt for a semester or a year abroad, you soon realize that all the effort put into the application form and other administrative issues were definitely worth it. In fact, residing for a few months in another part of the world is not the same as going on holiday to that place. Full immersion is a great advantage, as you wholly experience a new reality, a new way of living. During my stay, I really felt "Canadian" because I experienced happiness and sorrow with Canadians. I felt fright and anxiety at the moment of the shooting at the National War Memorial and on Parliament Hill, but I also felt joy when I celebrated Christmas with a Canadian family. I even began to take on Canadian habits, like apologizing whether it was my fault or not, and sometimes unintentionally ending the sentences with "eh?" Moreover, I felt like a "Canadian student," because the teachers treated me and my fellow students equally. Thus, I not only *saw* a new place, but I also *experienced* it.

E – MOTIONAL. A year abroad is characterized by facts, but also – and especially – by emotions. You certainly miss home, your family, and friends at the beginning of your stay, because they make you feel "at home." However, the sense of remoteness and loneliness is very soon taken over by curiosity and excitement. Indeed, you get to know more and more people and make close friends, who become almost like "family" and you experience moments that you will cherish for a very long time. For instance, I will always remember the time when a German friend and I went apple-picking and took pictures of ourselves with our overfilled plastic bags; when I prepared a pumpkin pie with a lovely whipped-creamed smile with a French friend for Thanksgiving; and when, in Quebec, my hair froze because of the outdoor temperature of -38°C! Such amazing memories and precious friendships. I believe that in an experience like this one, you make friends for life. Therefore, this year abroad was, for me, an incredible experience that I definitely recommend to those of you who are adventurous and willing to discover as an *actor*, and not only as a spectator, another part of the world.

Athéna Dubois-Pèlerin – University of Kent, England

I've just got home from a year abroad in Canterbury, in the south-eastern part of that peculiar island called the United Kingdom. Although I enjoyed the courses, the campus, the independence and so on, what I loved the most about my stay there was experiencing a little 'culture clash' and marvelling every day at the tiny and often amusing differences

that make the British people so unique. So here is a list of five well-known stereotypes about the British, and what I have to say about them, after one year spent in England. Some of them are still quite true, others much less, but the important thing is the extraordinary human experience behind every one of these rather funny little clichés.

1. British people drink tea all the time.

True, but technically speaking, false. During my year abroad, I had the honour of meeting the person who probably drinks the most tea in Great Britain: my housemate Joe. Joe had this HUGE mug which basically contained tea at all times of the day, always that same black, bitter tea sweetened to excess and turned nearly pink with all the milk he poured in it. When I told him that if we added all his daily cups of tea we'd probably find he spent two hours every day just boiling the kettle and drinking tea, he answered very seriously: 'I need tea every 45 minutes. Otherwise I can't get on with my life'. I found it so very funny (and in some ways, so very absurd) that one Saturday night I knocked loudly at his door at about 4 o'clock in the morning. He immediately opened the door, dishevelled and utterly astonished. When he asked me what was it that I wanted, I answered in the sweetest way I could: 'Well, it's been 45 minutes now, and you still haven't come in the kitchen to have tea. I was worried.' He then explained the best he could that he didn't drink tea when he was asleep. I said I didn't know that and offered to make him some tea as an apology. He considered my offer, then nodded: 'Well, since I'm awake now... I might as well have tea.'

2. British food is distasteful.

True, I'm afraid. The only exception to the rule are scones, which are amazing. As for the rest... Joe decided one day our French housemate and I had to try English breakfast while we were in England. Josh, my other British housemate, agreed. I said okay, but as I was already dreading having to swallow sausages and bacon right after getting up, I immediately brought up one condition: no English breakfast before 3 o'clock in the afternoon. As usual, Joe said I was weird, but we had a deal. The next day at 4 in the afternoon, we were summoned to the kitchen: breakfast was ready. And there was Joe, standing in the middle of the kitchen surrounded by a pile of fatty sausages, greasy bacon and overcooked hash browns, looking as proud as Marie-Antoinette's chef who'd just discovered the recipe for *macarons*. So we sat down, and ate all the fatty sausages, all the greasy bacon and all the overcooked hash browns. And when I remember Joe's face when he saw we'd eaten all of his food without complaining, I think, well, it wasn't that bad.

3. British people are not that fond of 'Europeans'.

False... I think. During my year abroad, I must say I was never looked down on for being a foreigner. Not once. In eight months, not a single English person was ever rude to me, or showed any signs of impatience whenever I didn't get right away what they were trying to tell me. Actually, I was amazed at how helpful people in the classrooms, streets, shops and cafés were, always with that same quiet sweetness that made me love at once whoever I was talking to. I often reflected on the way foreigners are sometimes spoken to in Switzerland, and remembered how easily people here can be rude – and found myself blushing every time I thought of it.

That being said, no one there will ever let you forget that Great Britain is an island. That is not only a simple geographical fact, it's almost an identity. One thing that never failed to annoy me was to hear my British housemates speak of the French, the Germans or the Italians as 'Europeans' as opposed to them, the English. 'Well, what are YOU then? Africans?' I asked them once. They gave me that rather enigmatic answer: 'No, we are also European. Just not as European as you all are.' I'm still trying to work out whether that is a compliment, a criticism or one of those sarcastic statements I never get. Or all three at the same time.

4. British people are snobbish.

Definitely more false than true. There is one main reason why that stereotype lives on. Everybody in England can guess where you were born and raised and what your level of education is the minute you open your mouth. That is NOT a stereotype. It's a skill nearly everybody there has and it's properly baffling. However, this doesn't mean British people are snobbish. Interestingly, it's actually quite the opposite. The thing is, you're not supposed to talk about class or mention class or even think about class. The class system is by all means the biggest taboo in that country, light years ahead of 'mainstream' taboos such as drugs or homosexuality (neither of which are really taboos up there, by the way). I often heard that British people are obsessed with class; in my experience, they are far more obsessed with not showing they are aware there is a class system in Britain, for fear of being found guilty of snobbism.

One afternoon when I was sitting in the kitchen with my British housemates Josh and Joe (both of whom speak a very elegant English) I found myself explaining very

seriously to them that features such as the h-dropping and the glottal stop are linguistic particularities specific to the working-class. To my surprise, Josh started laughing in a rather embarrassed way, while Joe accused me half-jokingly of being a 'horrible person'. I was to learn that, no, h-droppings and glottal stops are certainly NOT linguistic particularities specific to the working-class, but rather 'indicate a London upbringing'. I was utterly bewildered by that cultural difference, especially when I thought of how casually people in France or Switzerland might make fun of the famous 'racaille' speech, or the 'banlieue' accent. Had I attempted to imitate the Cockney accent at a dinner, I would have probably spent the night in jail for public disorder and indecency... So much for the good old days of *Downton Abbey*. And don't you dare mention *My Fair Lady*.

5. British weather is ghastly.

Now I don't know about Cardiff or Aberdeen, but as far as Canterbury is concerned, that is definitely a myth. All right, people say it's the driest part of England and that it even has a microclimate of its own, but still. I can assure you that during the whole eight months I was there, it hardly EVER rained and when it did, it was really nothing to be afraid of: a 15-minute shower and the weather cleared soon after. Nothing to do with the horrible never-ending rainy afternoons we often get in Switzerland. March was so hot we could have had a water-pistol fight in the yard (which we had in June... and it wasn't that hot then. Still, we had a great time having a water-pistol fight in the yard, only the pistols broke so the water-pistol fight turned into a water-measuring cup fight, which turned into a water-salad bowl fight, which turned into a water-tin saucepan fight, at which point we decided to call a truce before anyone got killed). All this to say that, no, sorry, after one year in England, I still don't get all the fuss about the weather.

I guess I could carry on for ages. But I'm kind of craving tea now. After all, the last cup of tea I had was when I started writing this... And it's been 45 minutes.

History, Myth, and Literature: The Anne Boleyn Fever

ROBERTA MARANGI

It is said that the first monarch to lose his head was Charles I. This, however, is not strictly true. Before *Madame La Guillotine* claimed many royal and aristocratic heads in France, England had already been experimenting with the art of beheading: for example, whenever someone threatened the tranquillity of the Tudor tyranny. The first beheaded monarch, albeit a consort, was, in fact, Anne Boleyn. True, the gravity of the charges against her warranted an act to render her marriage to Henry VIII void, therefore depriving her of her royal status. However, as Eric Ives argues in the chapter on Anne's coronation in his *The Life and Death of Anne Boleyn*:

The elite of the land had taken Anne as queen in the sight of God, and under the most solemn and hallowed sanctions of Holy Church. [...] The mystique of monarchy now belonged to Anne Boleyn. Only death could take it away. (179)

And it did. Is it her cruel death, then, that captures the interest of many? Or is there more in her life that inspired the recently spreading Anne Boleyn 'fever'? It certainly seems that all kind of media are meeting an increasing public demand for material concerning this memorable Queen: from novels – such as Plaidy's *The Lady in the Tower*, Gregory's *The Other Boleyn Girl*, and Mantel's unfinished trilogy on the life of Henry VIII's 'prime minister', Thomas Cromwell, *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies* – to the TV series – *The Tudors* and the adapted *Wolf Hall* – and the films – *Anne of the Thousand Days* and another adaptation, *The Other Boleyn Girl*; from the dedicated websites – such as theanneboleynfiles.com – to the myriad of blogs, Facebook groups, and Twitter accounts. Naturally, there is no easy answer to questions like 'why her?', or 'what is it about Anne?'. However, one of the possible answers is: today, Anne Boleyn is a myth. Her life has been told for the past four hundred and fifty years with alternating dismissiveness and reverence. The scarcity of credible information has laid a veil of attractive mystery upon her person, and encouraged many writers to fill those gaps with their own imagination. The narrative of the events that form what little we know about her is itself structured as a series of well-known myths.

The epithets ‘myth’ or ‘legend’ are often attributed to deceased people of fame whose life or death – or both – have caused clamour, or have been deemed of great value. Indeed, whether or not there was something mythical about such figures during their lifetime, the consecration usually occurs at the moment of their death. Stories that are perfectly encased in a mythical structure start to emerge and captivate an entire community. For example, is Elvis still alive and residing in a paradisaal island, detached from society, almost immortal in the eyes of those who idolised him? The most rational and obvious answer is ‘no’. Indeed, what is most compelling about this is the similarity between this tale and the heroic myths in which a man of extraordinary value does not really die but ascends to a supernatural, idyllic place where he will live forever, removed from the world of mortals. Something completely different has happened in the case of Anne Boleyn. The story of a king who went to great lengths to marry a commoner while still married to one of the most powerful princesses of Christendom was as incredible then as it might be today, in fact more so. For this reason, the attention of the political and religious parties at court was immediately captured and Anne became the protagonist and villain of a lengthy series of tales. The most popular stories centre on her appearance and the presence of deformities on her body as proof of Anne’s connection to the devil. The most renowned story is certainly ‘the sixth finger’ story, spread by the staunch Catholic, Nicholas Sanders; accompanied by other, less-known tales concerning warts and a deformed foetus (Ives 39, 296). It is indeed true that these kinds of deformities were connected, in popular imagination, to deviances of the soul. However, as Susan Bordo argues in her text, *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, if Anne had such evident markings, she would have immediately stood out as a morally corrupted woman; therefore, would the religious Henry have chosen her among so many clamouring for his favour (28)? It is clear then that an entire community failed to process the idea of a commoner ensnaring a man so thoroughly as to change the course of history for an entire kingdom; they applied the most common source of mythology close to them, the Catholic one in this case, and tried to supply possible explanations linking such a curious and uncommon woman to images that were instead common and comforting. Therefore, did a woman with no royal blood and little beauty ensnare the king? Definitely the work of the devil.

In an article called ‘Myth, Mind, and History’ that deals with the depiction of myths in painting, Walter Abell explains the necessary elements for the formation of a myth in a manner that is simple and easily applicable to myths in general: there is what Abell calls a ‘tension-imagery’, the story is expressed through a series of symbolic images; the myths have to be shared by at least a group of people because a myth is a collective symbolic image, otherwise it is can very well be but a dream; finally, a myth stems from an ‘experience within which the community is unprepared to exercise accurate and rational

observation’ (Abell 79). All these elements are easily identifiable in the outline sketched above concerning the ‘mythical tales’ of Anne Boleyn. They are born from, and shared by, the Catholic community, because of her Protestant sympathies, by the supporters of Katherine of Aragon, former wife Henry VIII, divorced in order to marry Anne, and by all anti-Boleyn parties at court. The stories are indeed symbolic: if even Eustace Chapuys, ambassador to the Holy Roman Emperor and the most renowned enemy of Anne at court, did not report any description of evident deformities, it stands to reason that there were not any. Finally, those tales cannot but come from an unpreparedness to deal with a situation virtually unknown before. If today we cheer and smile watching a royal wedding on television between the future king of England and a woman who has no ties to the aristocracy, back in the Tudor era, it was a scandal at best and an offence to the divine nature of the monarchy at worst; uncommon does not even begin to describe it, considering that, in this case, the man in question was still married and was renouncing his allegiance to the Catholic Church of Rome.

On an almost instinctual level, we tend to be aware of this difference in the public perspective. While the symbolism connected to a woman who climbs the social ladder might still not be particularly positive, it clearly differs today from what it was back in the ‘olden days’ – no horns appear spouting from the Duchess of Cambridge’s head – and there still is a mythical component in the way such historical events are approached. This is why the way Anne Boleyn is represented today greatly differs from the myths of anti-Boleyn propaganda that flourished under Tudor monarchy. Far from arguing that the characterisation of Anne Boleyn in contemporary literature consists of a coherent and single portrayal, it is, however, possible to identify a single underlying mythical structure. In the chapter called ‘Who Let the Bitch Out?’ from *The Creation of Anne Boleyn*, Susan Bordo beautifully contours the modern representation of Anne through the stereotype of the *femme fatale* – as seen in the TV series, *The Tudors*, and in the book and adapted film *The Other Boleyn Girl*. All the sources that prove her religiosity and charity are disregarded in favour of scenes in which Anne is transformed into an expert seductress. Even more than that, I find extraordinary how this characterization is accompanied by the ‘cold-hearted, manipulative woman’ stereotype.

Even Hilary Mantel, winner of the Man Booker Prize for both *Wolf Hall* and *Bring Up the Bodies*, seems to assign Anne Boleyn a certain aloofness; for example, the way she would speak with a French accent, even transforming Cromwell in to ‘Cremuel’ shows a certain disregard towards a man who turned out to be the executor of her rise as well as of her fall (*Wolf Hall* 201). She is the strategist, yet doomed like a hero of classical tradition by her fatal flaw, her mighty temper. The day she is imprisoned in the Tower of London

is narrated as a study in stereotypical feminine hysteria, preceded by a great show of *hybris* and then obtuseness. When the wailing, weeping, fainting, and even laughing begins, Anne utters the words that best express her characterisation: 'It is too good for me' which Cromwell himself would later interpret for the external reader as 'I am not worthy because I have failed' (*Bring Up the Bodies* 302-3). It seems like a distorted kind of myth is applied here, that of the modern 'tough woman'. Anne's power comes from her coldness and cruelty, her single-mindedness in the mission to become and remain the Queen of England. There seems to be little to no softness in her, as if there could have been no other way to accomplish what she did if not through a set of unpleasant and ruthless, almost masculine, features. She offers no words for her family, except to wonder what they could do to save her. She does not even flinch when her daughter, the future Queen Elizabeth I, is mentioned. The only emotion she is allowed is hysteria, through laughter and inappropriate jokes. Even at the very end when the French executioner has done his duty and it seems like she can finally find rest, she is mistreated once more and her detached head is laid by her feet (398). Anne Boleyn is 'dead meat', a 'bundle of bones', she is hated by the men she has refused and by those she has helped in equal measure, while her ladies-in-waiting are all depicted as envious and back-stabbing (371, 395). Mantel's Anne Boleyn is a purely fictional character, with traits that are impossible to corroborate and which sometime seem rather unlikely and exaggerated. However, the mythic foundation of Anne's popularity is present: in this scene she is Ajax, the Greek hero who reached his goal, won the Trojan war, only to fall to his own arrogance, his better judgement obnubilated by his ire; she is also Persephone, fallen victim of the ultimate act of possession, a husband taking absolute control over her life and death, soon to embrace a perpetual winter; lastly, she is Icarus, who flew too high and fell too low.

Since her death, Anne Boleyn has been a myth gliding through history, created and re-created multiple times since her husband tried to remove her from his life and from public memory. Her silhouette still haunts us but it's an image diluted by the convincing strength of novels, films, and TV series. It might seem paradoxical how curiosity is usually appeased through, and fed by, works of fiction that carry great persuasive power but very little truth. However, this is the way the myth of Anne Boleyn establishes itself more deeply in popular imagination: ever-present and ever-changing.

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Carson's Antigonick Revamped

EMMET – THE ENGLISH DEPT. THEATRE GROUP

In the spring semester, Emmet continued to work with Anne Carson's *Antigonick* (2012). There were a lot of new faces at the theatre workshop, which began in February 2015. The workshop culminated in another three productions of *Antigonick* in May. The workshop was aimed at delving even deeper into Carson's now-familiar text. Our objective was to discover new things about the play, the characters, and new modes of performance. We were not disappointed; the text itself was rich and it facilitated this introspective reinterpretation.



There were significant changes in the cast from our previous production (except for the actors playing Antigone, Ismene, and the Chorus). New players were welcomed and were integrated into the production. Moreover, the spring production transformed the performance space from a traditional, proscenium setting, where the audience faces one side of the stage directly, to a traverse stage, where the audience sits on two sides of the stage. The aim was to create an intimate atmosphere, where the audience themselves became a part of the acting space. It also enhanced one of the signature elements of

FILM AND THEATRE

Emmet's *Antigonick*: the square, created by a lighting effect, which was placed at the centre of the stage. The conflicts of the play and Antigone's monologues take place within the square. The square represented Antigone's burial chamber as well as the limits of man-made power. The light from above represented divine justice. Hence, the traverse stage setting created the effect of being inside the tomb of Antigone, the audience witnessing her death and the downfall of Kreon.



Furthermore, the bi-frontal acting space posed a challenge to the actors. One of the unwritten "rules" of acting is never turn your back to the audience. Actors hear this so often in their lives that it becomes internalised. In this stage setting, however, breaking the rule was inevitable. Thus, the actors had to "reprogram" themselves to a certain extent. Additionally, in favour of intricate lighting, the production did not use any props.



Lighting, thus, played an amplified role in the production.

In May, Emmet took part in the Festival d'Ateliers-Théâtre 2015. For the first time in the history of Emmet, we were able to perform at the Théâtre La Comédie. We were warmly welcomed by the staff and crew along with the organisers of the festival. After our performance at La Comédie, Emmet performed the final two productions of *Antigonick* at UniMail (Salle de Theatre). At UniMail, *Antigonick* was finally "laid to rest."

The English Theatre workshop will kick off again on 2 October 2015. Next semester, we will be working with Sarah Ruhl's dark comedy *Dead Man's Cell Phone* (2007). Hope to see you there.

Students, alumni, and outside participants who would like to join Emmet can register for the workshop at: <http://www.a-c.ch/>.

For more details, please go to:
<http://emmet.ch/> or contact marlon.ariyasinghe@gmail.com.

Like us on facebook:
<https://www.facebook.com/pages/Emmet-Embodied-Metaphors/180628502028023?ref=ts>



News from the Film Club

AMY BROWN

Film Club is back this autumn 2015 with a semester's worth of sci-fi goodness for your delectation. We put our heads together to think of an exciting theme, and when we realised that every possible theme we thought of had some sci-fi in it, we said unto ourselves: can we do a whole semester of this? YES WE CAN.

So this autumn, we will be romping through the genre, from *Invasion of the Body Snatchers* to Benedict Cumberbatch as *Star Trek's* Khan. Since it is 2015, the year in which Marty McFly visited the future, we'll be showing *Back to the Future* for Halloween (wear your best futuristic outfit! Bring your hoverboard!). What's more, the final screening of the year will be a Students' Choice session selected by Film Club attendees – so if your favourite sci-fi isn't on the program, come along to Film Club and nominate it for Students' Choice.

Film Club in the spring semester saw a lively and popular tour of puzzle films under Bryn's fine leadership, and with a pleasing number of new and returning student members. This year Amy has taken on logistical co-ordinating of the Film Club, despite knowing very little about film: so students are encouraged (begged, pleaded) to bring their opinions, ideas, critical expertise and outright geekery to Film Club for apéro, discussion and planning of future themes. Otherwise Amy will sentence you to a future semester of terrible Arthurian films.

We will meet fortnightly (and out-of-schedule in Halloween week) on Thursdays in B112, starting at 7pm for an apéro. A short presentation will precede each film, and films usually kick off around 7.30. The attentive among you might notice this is perfectly timed for BA1 students to proceed straight from class to Film Club – please do! Please also feel free to bring friends, students of other departments, even your grandpa, if your grandpa is into sci-fi. Where possible we screen films with English-language subtitles.



SCI-FI

TO BOLDLY GO
WHERE MANY NERDS
HAVE GONE BEFORE

24th September
INVASION OF THE BODY SNATCHERS
Presented by Kimberly Frohreich

8th October
STAR TREK: INTO DARKNESS
Presented by Ghada Ben Said and Roberta Marangi

22nd October
THE ISLAND OF DOCTOR MOREAU
Presented by Bryn Skibo-Birney

29th October - Halloween Special
BACK TO THE FUTURE II
Costumes Encouraged

12th November
ALIEN
Presented by Nathalie Roessinger

26th November
THE FIFTH ELEMENT
Presented by Amy Brown

10th December
Student's Choice

THE ENGLISH DEPT. FILM CLUB
FREE ENTRY, FROM 19H00
ROOM B112, UNI BASTIONS

 UNIVERSITÉ
DE GENÈVE

March 19

NAKAMA

CREATIVE WRITING



You can also access the recording at: <https://soundcloud.com/nakspopo/march-19>

A Tale of the Stranger and Ms. Badger

ANDRÉAS-BENJAMIN SEYFERT

She awoke to the sound of scratching at the window. Or had it been a thud? A little worried but mostly intrigued, Melina Badger got up and wiped the dirt from her nightgown. She peered through the shades. Nighttime, thank god. Time to get up anyway. She pulled up the shades and opened the window.

The overwhelming scent of night blooming jasmine came rushing in. As usual, Melina leaned against the window sill, closed her eyes and breathed in deeply, listening to the light chirping of crickets in the night. She enjoyed the peace and quiet of a summer night at the cottage.

Without giving the sound at the window a second thought, she lit the gas with a match and set a kettle on the stove. She was about to fix herself a lovely cup of root tea when she heard another faint sound; this time, it was coming from the door.

She caught a strange creature leaning against the threshold. When they met eyes, Melina and the intruder seemed equally panic-stricken. The stranger was holding his right wing, in obvious pain. "Please!" said the stranger. "Don't be alarmed. I am not here to cause you any harm. I am so very sorry. I crashed against your window and hurt my wing."

There was a steady clunk of a cane against the sidewalk and the pair turned to see Old Mr. Hedgehog on his nightly stroll. When he spotted Melina with the stranger, he cried out in his feeble and husky voice: "Ms. Badger, are you alright? Is this creature bothering you?"

Melina couldn't help it: as kind as this inquiry might have been intended, she felt a rush of antipathy rise up from her belly to her chest. And rather than give in to temptation, she was quick to invite the stranger in and to close the door behind her, leaving Old Mr. Hedgehog to shake his head and to go off on his merry way.

She bandaged the stranger's wing and offered him a seat at her table. If Ms. Badger had met this same creature in the street, she would probably not have acted this way now, she reflected. But the stranger had come to her window, her door. So *she* was the one who had to decide on what she was going to do.

In the cupboard, Melina recognized an open can of worms. No, definitely not. This called for something special. She decided to open a whole new can of worms.

That night, Melina and the stranger had a feast and enjoyed each other's company. The hours fled, and they found how much they had to tell each other!

They talked about this and that. The stranger told her about the beautiful place where he grew up: a landscape with gorgeous beaches, traditional Greek villages and a laid-back lifestyle. But as beautiful as his birthplace had been, the stranger had always harboured the dream to discover a world beyond. One day, he now proudly declared to his host, he had decided to spread his wings and fly... and had been traveling ever since. Melina, who had never left her cottage for so much as a day, listened with increasing interest and told him all about her life spent in serene privacy, tending to her flowers and enjoying every corner of her small kingdom.

In the early rays of sunlight, she bade her new friend farewell and watched with delight as he made his way through the garden. He stopped at the little gate and freed his wing to reveal that it had healed overnight. In a swift motion, he flew away, disappearing into the distance.

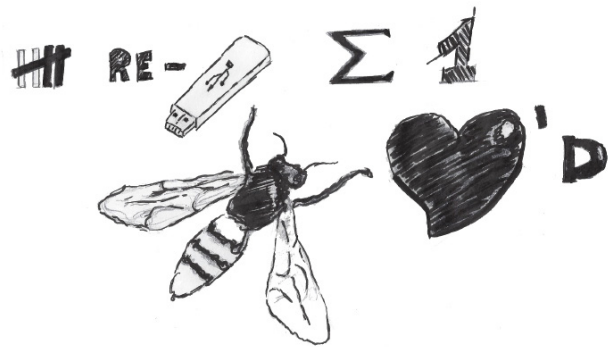
When Melina finally got to bed, covering herself up in a nice pile of dirt, she realized that this had been the most exciting night of her life.

CONTEST NEWS

Laura Lee is the winner of the Spring 2015 Rebus Puzzle!

Remember this rather complex rebus puzzle, drawn by our resident puzzle-maker, NAKama, from the last edition of *Noted*:

Laura Lee certainly does. After a weekend of puzzlement, Laura came up with the rebus puzzle hint – "To re-memory someone beloved" – which led her to the puzzle answer: the novel in question is none other than Toni Morrison's *Beloved*.



For her efforts, Laura was awarded a 40CHF gift certificate to Ordning & Reda.

Congratulations on your excellent sleuthing, Laura! You are the new English Department Puzzle Champion!

PUZZLE-ING

NEW CONTEST: CARTOON CAPTION!

After a wordsearch, a crossword, and a rebus, we wanted something a little more "free-form" for this semester's contest. Fortunately, Professor Simon Swift had the excellent suggestion of a caption contest and the resident *Noted* artist, Andréas-Benjamin Seyfert, was happy to oblige.

For this caption contest, there's no right answer; just send your best caption for the cartoon below to noted-lettres@unige.ch anytime before 15 January 2015. The winning caption(s) will be selected by the ever-growing *Noted* crew and displayed in the next edition. As always, prizes will be awarded.

