

«noted»

Newsletter Of The English Department

Issue N° 2 March 1996

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Next Issue's Topic: The Human Body in Art and Literature.

You are strongly encouraged to contribute to Noted. Send or e-mail your texts to the editors

"The first step to knowledge is to know that we are ignorant." Lord David Cecil

A Trip to Knoware

by Nicholas Palffy

editorial **S**tudying at the University too often consists in gathering and extracting the quintessential substance from the many books we read, chewing it thoroughly and then reshaping it in a form and consistency that will eventually content our teachers. But This is not enough. Students also have to acquire all kind of "practical" knowledge to be able to struggle successfully in their future professional life. Our university provides resources that can be helpful to our education but most students just don't know about them. The médiatèque, the salle des journaux and the salle d'informatique are just a few places where students can improve their culture and literacy.

You now have access to new tools that revolutionize our modes of acquiring sapienza. Internet nowadays represents a major shift in our modes of learning and communicating. The Net is more than an

enormous Alexandrine's library sleeping at our fingertips. It is a dynamic and everchanging medium. How can we profit from this technology most effectively to conduct our academic studies? Can we realistically avoid using it?

A more fundamental issue lies in our ability to master tools that will be directly useful in our future life. Does the university provide such knowledge? The answer is disappointing when we consider the employers' requests. But is that all? The modes of acquiring knowledge and the practicality of our education is certainly just a small part of a bigger problem. The shift from the encyclopedic type of knowledge inherited from the past to a more fragmentary – but eventually broader – kind of connaissance is raising important questions on how we deal with the present state of the world. Are we given the ability to face this challenge?



General Assembly

Tuesday, April 16th, at 18h15

Dear students, The ADEA needs you!

Since no one replaced last year's officers at the fall General Assembly, ADEA is not officially active at the moment. We, the editors of Noted, would like to convene another General Assembly after Easter in order to resuscitate the ADEA, and we

strongly urge students to come forward to fill the principal posts. The responsibilities are light, and the benefits include getting money from the University for department events, film series, parties, cultural activities, etc.

It's up to you.

Discussion is an exchange of knowledge;
argument an exchange of ignorance.



UNIVERSITÉ DE GENÈVE

Confessions of a cyberdog

By Nicholas Palffy

My master is a sympathetic but sometimes dull person. Busying himself with all sorts of activities, he rarely likes to go out with me for a walk in cyberspace. It is not that he doesn't like vast digital horizons, but he usually loses the notion of time and space when he works on his computer. So I recently decided to venture on the infobahn, just to see what's available around and eventually to empty my bladder in a dark corner. So I danced with the electrons and brought back to my owner a mouthful of intellectual bones.

During my trip, I happened to visit a nice website called The English Server (<http://english-server.hss.cmu.edu/>) where I found a treasury of electronic texts (or e-texts) in English for my boss. Most of the texts were digitized versions of writings of all sorts. They were available for a curious dog like me to consult or to download. Submenus like Cultural Studies and Critical Theory contain

interesting writings and essays from Guy Debord (*La société du spectacle*) and Wlad Godzich introductory discourse (Langue Globale), just to mention a few.

Just a mouseclick away there was a page called Eighteenth-Century Studies: (<http://english-server.hss.cmu.edu/18th.html>). It is a collection of e-texts from 18th century writers, such as Mary Wollstonecraft A Vindication of the Rights of Woman. Another site of interest for a faithful cyberdog like me was located at the Gutenberg Project Home Page: (<http://jg.cso.uiuc.edu/PG/welcome.html>). This is really like the Alexandrine Library of the XXIst century. You can find the world's classics of literature, which you can load on your computer easily. This can save you hours of tedious work and a lot of money. A selection of these sites are listed below.

The Beowulf Project

<http://portico.bl.uk/access/beowulf/electronic-beowulf.html>

Classics at the Online Literature Library

<http://www.wonderland.org/Works/>

Literature on the Internet

<http://www.cis.ohiostate.edu:80/text/faq/usenet/internet/literary-resources/faq.html>

American Studies Web

<http://pantheon.cis.yale.edu/~davidp/amstud.html>

Other Electronic Text Sites (General)

http://jg.cso.uiuc.edu/pg/other_gen.html

The complete works of William Shakespeare

<http://the-tech.mit.edu/Shakespeare/by-category.html>

Webster's Dictionary

<http://c.gp.cs.cmu.edu:5103/prog/webster>

Swiss Libraries

<http://www.switch.ch:80/libraries/>

Le restaurant du Pôle run by a former student of this department invites you to come and enjoy its casual, romantic ambiance, excellent cooking, and cheap prices. A full meal of *salade, entrée,* and *plat du jour* costs only 10 Sfr. Open Th, Fr, and Sat eves from 19h to 02h00 at 20, rue Montbrillant (Ilot 13).

Benetton ad campaigns as mémoire de licence

Are you trying to decide a topic for your mémoire? Are you afraid that your research interests are not "traditional" enough? You might not be aware of the range of intellectual possibilities available to you in this department. Here is a short retrospective by a former student, Giuseppe Bianco, who successfully defended his mémoire entitled "United Colors of Benetton: A Reading" last October.

By Giuseppe Bianco

As I was substituting an English teacher at the Ecole d'Ingénieur last winter, I happened one day to chat with one of my temporary colleagues who, once having congratulated me for my newly obtained Licence, asked me what the subject of my mémoire had been. The blank look I observed on her face in reaction to my answer not only suggested that she was perhaps having a hard time making a connection between what she was being told and what her own experience of the faculty of Letters had been, but also put me once again in that odd but now familiar situation where I felt obliged to justify myself.

Indeed, the fact that I proceeded to a reading of the advertising campaign of Benetton within the frame of a department that goes by the name of *département de langue et de littérature anglaises* is unusual but by no means illegitimate. Rather, it represents the acknowledgment of three major elements that the current student in the English department has to take into account.

First, the introduction of literary theory in the curriculum results in the acquisition of tools that can be used in the analysis of different kind of discourses, which in turn do not have to be of a strictly lit-

erary nature. Secondly, the notion of text cannot be restricted to the written word in a society which gives so much emphasis to the image, be it fixed or moving. Finally remains the fact that a *mémoire* constitutes the final stage of studies which comprehend not one but three branches and thus should reflect a certain coherence by integrating in some ways what has been acquired in the other departments.

Once having passed my demi-licence in art history, I soon developed a major interest in the contemporary period and focused mainly on photography, given that it had constituted my C branch in the form of a workshop at the ESAV. Yet, the

strictly conservative and deeply uninnovative approach which prevails in the art history department proved at some point quite unsatisfying and only encouraged me to overstep department boundaries in order to follow my interests. It was thus quite natural that I ended up writing my *mémoire* in the English department under the guidance of Professor Godzich, once the first two premises I mentioned above had been clearly established. After all, my work fell in the Cultural Studies category, which is by now well-established and undoubtedly contingent to English Studies.

However, the most important fact is that, after having been denied elsewhere the freedom to elaborate any kind of original thought, I have been given the opportunity to develop a project that brought together the different elements of years of training, giving coherence and meaning to a Faculty curriculum that is too often fragmented. Of course, it is neither the easiest path to take, nor the safest (for those who believe in intellectual safety), but it remains nonetheless a very rewarding one as it is likely to preserve an enthusiasm that sometimes gets sacrificed in the course of studies.

A short guide to useful resources

Hey, student! Are you aware that our university is offering you an incredible amount of useful resources? Don't let your brain shrink in front of MTV! I'll give you here my best selection of spots for your genius to shine high in the sky, and more prosaically for you to increase your skills and general culture. Don't neglect these opportunities, it's your last chance to get wiser!

The médiathèque

(Open: Mon.-Fri. from 8am to 5pm)

At the médiathèque, you can consult a wide range of documents, ranging from audiotapes of past and recent lectures from your favorites teachers to videotapes of the most famous works from films directors. CD-ROMs and CD-I disks in French and English are available. Here's a few of them:

Learn English with Astérix - Aesop's fables - The Tell-tale Heart - The New Grolier Multimédia - Sherlock Holmes on disk - Criterion goes to the movies - Poetry in motion - MacBeth - Marvin Minsky: The Society of Mind (extremely interesting!) - Stephen Gould on Evolution - Who built America - The first emperor of China - Salt of the Earth - The Complete Maus - The Crucible - A hard day's night (The Beatles story) - View from the Earth - Exotic Japan - etc.

The English Library

This library contains all the necessary material for the English student. Dictionaries and reference books, professional journals and a lot more! With the computer you can search on SIBIL system for any reference you need. The program is self explanatory. If that's not enough, then get your chance on Internet!

The Salle d'informatique

For those who do not have access to computers and word-processors, the salle d'informatique, located on the basement of the Aile Jura (entrance access code: 1234) provides the necessary hardware and software for your essays. You can work on Mac's or PC's. Be sure to check the opening hours of the supervisor when you want to print out your documents.

Internet

With an e-mail address and the proper password to log on the university computers, you can access the World Wide Web (WWW) to search any kind of information you need. See our article on page 2. If you have no idea of how Internet works, the Global Café, Place des Rois, will teach you the basics of the Web for a symbolic fee.

E-mail address

One very useful feature is to have an e-mail address on the university server

uni2a. Using Eudora e-mail software you can exchange messages and files with your friends. Very useful when you need some help while writing your essays! For more information, ask Catherine Marti (Opening hours: Mondays & Tuesdays, from 9-11 am, room A308, Aile Jura). And insist if you are turned down!

News Server

Do you know you can find almost any kind of like-minded people on the Internet News Server? If you're interested in, let's say, psilocibin, or in the sexual behaviour of Tiranosaurus Rex, (or just photo, computers, and sci.bio.phytopathology, rec.skiing.alpine, rec.music.dementia, bio-net.agroforestry, ug.general, ug.general.academique, ug.general.hebdo, ug.rec), you can surely join the usenet group of your choice. Just take a ride on the wild side of the Net.

The salle des journaux

Learning isn't just a question of leaning over a book and sweating your guts out. The Salle de lecture (located next to the cafeteria at Uni Bastions) contains hundreds of national and international newspapers and magazine in several languages. Keep in touch with the world's news or just read about the last movie theatre program.

Elliott the Dragon and Casper

TOWARD INDEPENDENCE OF IMAGINARY FIGURES

By Julien Weber

Mixing two different kinds of image technology is obviously a good way to entertain children. Walt Disney inaugurated it with *Elliott the dragon* some 15 years ago. Now it is Spielberg's turn to innovate in *Casper*. The images have changed from one film to the other. What kind of model of the imaginary do they each propose ?

These two productions are specifically interesting to compare because their success relies upon the same characteristics: the "mise en scène" of a relationship between a child and an extraordinary creature and the integration of an artificial image into a film. Elliott is the only friend of Peter, a poor orphan looking for a family. Casper is a young gentle ghost who experiences generosity and bravery with the daughter of a medium. The cinematographic image is mixed in the first film with the cartoon image (used to represent the dragon) and, in the second one, with the computer generated image putting the ghost into "concrete" form.

But similarities do not go further. In spite of being built on the same pattern, these films develop two antinomic relationships between childhood and imagination. The extraordinary phenomenon functions in two different ways with the human context. While Walt Disney had sent Elliott on earth to console an orphan, Spielberg charges his gentle ghost with the mission of harmonizing life and death.

First of all, the dragon and the ghost, as mythological figures, reflect two distinct issues of human imagination. The extraordinary characteristics of the dragon depend, indeed, on its physiognomy, while those of the ghost rely more on its existential status. The dragon is a frightening figure because of its animal hybridity. Its representation requests extra-human elements and proceeds, therefore, from human imagination. The figure of the ghost, for its part, is constructed on the

ground of human limits. Its existence depends on our death and that's why it scares us, whether covered by a bed sheet or not. The ghost is ontologically frightening and thus oversteps the bounds of phantasmagoric representations.

In Walt Disney and Spielberg's productions, the dragon and the ghost become, of course, gentle comforting characters. Their mythological properties come up however through the kind of image used to materialize them on screen. The green and two-dimension dragon is clearly cut off cinematographic representation of reality, whereas Casper's presence looks more ambiguous: the computer generated image provides the ghost with the same dimensions as the other characters but its body is transparent and its features are drawn in cartoon style. Casper is, at the same time, the simulacrum and the caricature of a child.

These physical or metaphysical properties of both creatures characterize, moreover, their relationships to the child's imaginary. Elliott is indeed presented in direct relation to Peter's imagination. The dragon almost belongs to it. Until the end of the movie, where all the characters finally acknowledge its existence, Elliott is only visible to Peter and the audience of kids, which makes the movie funny to watch and imposes, at a different level, the cartoon as a true expression of children's imagination (as I had noted in my child diary).

Casper, on the contrary, is completely independent from children's imagination. Everybody can see it performing magic tricks and toying with its computer generated dress. The question is no longer to believe or not to believe in Casper. The ghost exists and does not need the imagination of kids for it, which moves therefore the purpose of the film to a different kind of metaphysical problem: is it possible for a gentle ghost to become

human again or, at least, to feel like a human being?

Besides pointing out the similarity between the computer generated image and the ghost, Casper's independence from children's imagination produces an even more interesting effect: it focuses our attention on the ghost's destiny instead of the child's, and directs therefore the plot toward its integration into social life. The spectator attends to a progressive fusion between life and death, an irreparable abolition of human boundaries. This is undoubtedly the greatest shift from *Elliott the dragon* to *Casper*. In *Elliott*, indeed, like in many other fairy tales, the gentle monster only occurred as an initiatic stage during Peter's evolution toward a better life. Its protective presence helped the orphan in his misery but when Peter finally found a nice family, the dragon left. So, Walt Disney still operated a final separation between the imagination and reality, which is not the case in *Casper*. This latter ends up with a fantastic happy end. Even though Casper does not become human again, he is accepted as a ghost by the medium and his daughter. The last scene showing them dancing together leaves us with the image of a harmonious family. Everyone seems promised to an eternal happiness without real death nor real life.

Of course, it would be very easy in conclusion to praise the realistic happy end of *Elliott* and to blame the great escape displayed in *Casper*. What is the point in encouraging children to identify happiness with some simplistic abolition of death and real boundaries ? Is there no other way to make them laugh and dream? But, on the other hand, what is the point in aiming a moral and nostalgic judgement at this kind of fantasy ? The computer generated image will soon get the same place as cartoon in children's life and its virtualities may inspire many phantasmagories of this kind. In this case, instead of blaming or praising the performances of this new image, shouldn't we rather try to analyse its stakes and its direct effects on our perception of reality on the ground of issues at hand? That's what I've attempted to do here. This is no happy end.

Who can approach knowledge ?

By Claude Meyer

The discourse of emancipation that emerges in 18th century Enlightenment is centered on the notion of knowledge. According to this philosophy, personal freedom can only be achieved by a better understanding of the world. In order to allow this process to occur, knowledge has to be transmitted, which, consequently should at length result in the collapse of the old hierarchy that divides society between those who know and those who do not, and in its substitution by a more equal type of relation to knowledge and eventually to power. To what extent has this project succeeded? This question needs to be addressed particularly now that new technologies are said to even facilitate a more democratic access to knowledge, now that we are made to believe that the only barrier to knowledge is of a technical nature. Claude Chabrol's latest movie, *La Cérémonie*, throws an interesting light on this issue.

The movie shows a bourgeois but open-minded family in which a new maid is introduced. Eager to abolish any kind of hierarchy between them, the masters try to deal with their servant as with an equal. Accordingly, she is allowed to use the same channels of knowledge as them, e.g. the family daughter reads magazines with her, like her employers, she has access to a TV set, etc. However, equality is only apparent: while the family gather, fully dressed, as for a night out, to watch an opera on TV, a program that they have chosen and which they actively enjoy (they follow the plot on a

libretto), the maid is stuck, fascinated, in front of her screen and randomly consumes what images are shown. Knowledge thus, according to Chabrol, seems still to discriminate between people. There is a small difference however. Since it is accessible to everyone, knowledge does not itself establish a social hierarchy; what divides society today is much more an ability to deal with knowledge: there are those who master it, and those who passively absorb it.

However interesting this conclusion, Chabrol's *La Cérémonie* should not be reduced to it. As a movie, as a modern work of art, it does not make explicit statements but rather proceeds in an elusive way. Consequently, the spectators are asked to enter into an elaborate reading process. This is particularly true of the last scene. How to read the total absence of justification that presides over the cold killing of the whole family committed by the maid and her friend? A possible reaction is to draw a parallel between this scene and another feature of the movie that exhibits as little justification, i.e. the respective social status of the characters. This brutal murder is thus as arbitrary as the perpetual reproduction of elites which only are able to handle knowledge. But the irony of it is that as soon as this active reading takes place, that is as soon as *La Cérémonie* is constructed as an object of knowledge, the spectators act like the masters and actualize a social structuration that has precisely been criticized in the movie. Isn't democratic access to knowledge a bit of a myth?

Student Conference

The Graduate Student Forum of English and Comparative Literature took place here last Friday, March 15th. Organized by Valeria Wagner, this conference brought together DES and doctoral students from all over Switzerland, as well as professors from Basel, Lausanne, and Fribourg to discuss the present state of the discipline.

The discussion touched on professional and scholarly issues facing the literary studies, its teachers and students, in Switzerland as well as in Europe. We hope to see more gatherings like this in the future, and strongly encourage students to come hear and discuss what's hot and what's not in the study of literature today.

in Brief

- Noted would like to warmly welcome the two new assistants that have rejoined the English Department. Born in Geneva, Guillemette Bolens has a *licence* in French, English and History of Art. She is back from an exchange program with the University of Pennsylvania. She is now in charge of AT seminars on media and medieval studies.
- Fabienne Michelet has spent some time in the Vatican Archives in Rome after getting a *licence* in Geneva.
- Prof. Michèle le Doeuff is resigning from her position as Professor of études féminines. Her decision is motivated by the fact that structural and academical conditions were not provided to satisfactorily fulfill the mandate she thought she had been given. She will leave us at the end of the year. We wish her all the best for her future career.
- The ERASMUS program still have 2 undergraduate and a graduate position open to anyone interested in spending a year in Liverpool.
- Prof. Neil Hertz, currently visiting from Johns Hopkins University, will be giving a talk on March 26 at 17h15 at Uni Dufour room 159. The title of the talk is "George Eliot, Rousseau and *The Lifted Veil*". Prof. Hertz has written *End of the Line: Essays on Psychoanalysis and the Sublime*.
- Envelyn Enders' book *Sexing the Mind: Nineteenth-Century Fictions of Hysteria* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1995) has just been published. It is available at Uni-Payot.
- Roy Sellars has a Fellowship from the Society for the Humanities at Cornell University for next year. Students who need to take an exam with Mr. Sellars should prepare to do so this July.
- Prof. Jonathan Cullers, author of *Structuralist Poetics* (1975) and *On Deconstruction* (1982) will give a talk on Tuesday, May 14 at 18h15. Room will be announced.

Training guide: how to handle a quotation

By Agnieszka Soltysik

In the last issue of *Noted*, I discussed the importance of having a thesis. Reading over that piece again, it seemed to me that I could have been clearer and more concrete in my examples. So, this time, I will address the issue of quotations and how to analyze them, and I will give concrete illustrations along every step. Those of you who are currently enrolled in *Analysis of Texts* should pay particular attention, but I am writing this for students at all levels in this department. I have chosen a magazine article because a module in the analysis of non-fiction prose is not being offered this year.

As you all know, analysis involves paying close attention to how a text creates its meaning. In order to explain the “results” of your critical reading, you often have to quote parts of the text to demonstrate your point. As you probably also know, this is easier said than done. Here are the four most common problems in handling quotations:

1) Dropping the quotation and running – this occurs when you make a claim about what a piece of writing says and then use a quotation merely to illustrate that you are right:

The authors claim that no one paid any attention to what they call the twentysomething generation: “The twentysomething generation has been neglected because it exists in the shadow of the babyboomers.”

2) Paraphrasing – this occurs when you insert a quotation and then approximate what it says in your own words:

In “Proceeding with Caution” David Gross and Sophronia Scott write that:

Absent parents forced a dependence on secondary relationships with teachers and friends. Flashy toys and new clothes were supposed to make up for this lack but instead sowed the seeds for a later abhorrence of the yuppie brand of materialism.

“Quality time” didn’t cut it for them

either. In a survey to gauge the baby busters’ mood and tastes, Chicago’s Leo Burnett ad agency discovered that the group had a surprising amount of anger and resentment about their absentee parents.

In this passage the authors contend that the twentysomethings abandoned their parents, rejected their offers to compensate with presents and “quality time,” and eventually resented their parents entirely.

3) Letting the text speak for you –

The writers say the group has no heroes: While 58% of those in the Time/CNN survey said their group has heroes, they failed to agree on any. Ronald Reagan was most often named, with only 8% of the vote, followed by Mikhail Gorbachev (7%), Jesse Jackson (6%), and George Bush (5%).

4) Tracing a metaphor without commenting on it – this is when you accept the figurative language of a text without reflecting on its implications:

The writers compare the twentysomethings to animals throughout the article. In the original Time publication (7/16/90) they are described as “balking at work, marriage, and baby-boomer values.” In another article, the writer describes twentysomethings as everything “normal” humans are not:

They have trouble making decisions. They would rather hike the Himalayas than climb the corporate ladder. They have few heroes, no anthems...They possess only a hazy sense of their own identity.

Although the above examples may look like analysis, they are really little more than summary. Although summary has its place in critical writing, it is not the main goal. So, what is analysis? First, here are some examples:

1) Paying attention to the language the text uses to say something:

There are at least three levels of neglect in the article “Proceeding With Caution.” The first is the neglect of the twentysomething generation by parents, who structured their “ordeal” as “loneliness” by rarely being around. The second level is that of demographers and marketers who neglect the group “because it exists in the shadow of the babyboomers.” The third is that of the writers themselves. They neglect the possibility that the group might have values in claiming that the group has none.

2) Taking the text apart and interrogating its assumptions:

When the writers say that “absent parents forced a dependence on secondary relationships with teachers and friends,” they seem to be blaming the parents for what they see as a problem. But is this really a problem? By using the word “dependence,” the text seems to argue that these relationships are “bad” things rather than adjustments to a changing culture and socio-economic system. The relationships are further derogated by the use of the term “secondary” to define them. The writers implicitly uphold “thirtysomething” values while allegedly attempting to explain the “twentysomething” generation’s values. Even the name “twenty-something” tells us that this is really an article about the “thirty-something” generation’s perception of people just below them in age.

3) Speaking for the text:

When the authors talk about the lack of heroes for this generation, what they are really talking about is the lack of a single hero, the lack of conformity in the group’s aspirations: “While 58% of those in the Time/CNN survey said they had heroes, they failed to agree on any.”

What is important to the writers is not whether the group has heroes, but the group’s “failure” to agree on any particular hero. Again, the authors use value-loaded language to harm the group they are nominally portraying in an objective manner.

4) Tracing a metaphor and analyzing it:

The authors continually figure the twenty-somethings as animals. They are described as “balking” like donkeys and “possessing only a hazy sense of their own identity.” The authors seem to assume that anyone who hesitates entering the clearly defined social roles and professional careers occupied by the middle-aged middle-class is not a fully realized human being.

Why these last four examples are analytical and the earlier four are not:

First of all, these latter examples show the student establishing the agenda for the writing, and not just allowing the original text to dictate what will be said. While you must be fair to the original text, and not distort or misread it, it is nevertheless important that you do not automatically accept it as true and unquestionable. These examples question the text and identify assumed values implicit in the author’s use of language.

Secondly, the second set of examples are arguable, in the sense that we could have an academic debate about the evidence, the reasoning, and the conclusions. In contrast, the first set of examples seem to be saying something, but in fact, they make no claims that are not already in the original text. This means the student-writer is not saying anything about the text, is not using the quotations to further an argument, and probably does not even have a thesis to begin with.

Thirdly, the second set of examples offer a new way of seeing the original text, and by being conscious of a reader who needs to be persuaded of something, they make the reader feel involved. This is an important part of what academia is all about, i.e. responding to discourse and inviting responses. In the particular case used in the examples above, the hypothetical student is responding to a supposedly objective study about young people, and discovers that there is actually a generational bias against the twentysomething

generation. Without any critical reading and writing skills, the student might resent, but would not be able to identify and critique the negative imputations of the magazine writers.

Although I have used a magazine article in this case, the process of close reading is the same for literature. The point is always to see how the language and form of a text function to create meaning, though your final objective will vary on the context and your interests and the seminar, etc. I will conclude just by noting that, in writing these articles, I am not speaking for the department as a whole, and you might want to further discuss these issues with your instructors in your seminars.

Excerpts reworked from UCI writing Guidebook.

Do students have a future?

By Nicholas Palffy

Congratulation! You have successfully passed all your “examens de licence”, and your “mémoire” has been granted a good grade. You are now facing the rest of your life with great expectations, although you don’t have yet a single idea on what you are going to do the next 40 years. So let’s start at the beginning. I suppose your first step will be to look for a job, and your second step will be to convince an employer that you are the best investment he can make in his whole life. This looks like a problem, but don’t rush in the bush: what you have to do is *anticipate*. Before getting stuck at this existential conundrum, try making a list of what you would dream to do. This can be a tough moment but it will make you avoid sending thousand of useless CV’s around the world.

Your job-hunting strategy should start well in advance, while you have time to evaluate your skills, interests, opportunities and ambitions. If you were wise enough during your academic years, you’ve probably accumulated professional experiences with

temporary employments, and you didn’t forget to ask your employer for an evaluation letter describing the kind of work you did and how satisfactorily you’ve dealt with your tasks. You’ve also spent some time improving your computer skills and now a word processor and a spreadsheet program have no secrets for you. You also took initiatives like taking care of the library bonsai (just to give you an idea...), or being an active ADEA member.

These experiences could be decisive factors on your CV. Here’s why: a short article published in *Psychology Today*¹ reports that researchers at Purdue University who have consulted 344 recruiters to find out what’s decisive in a CV discovered that “it’s the little things that really set an applicant apart from the crowd. In assessing traits like leadership and motivation, recruiters largely ignore employment history. It’s the supplementary information applicants include – volunteer work, athletic pursuits, elected offices – that may be critical for getting a job”. See? You don’t have to get the

best grades to get a job. Now it’s time for the real serious work, that is writing your CV. Here’s a few hints:

- Read as much as possible about the domain you are targeting on, about the company products or services, its entrepreneurial philosophy, etc. This will pay off when you’ll face your first recruiter.

- Adapt your CV to each company. A single standard CV won’t fit the demands of each potential employer. Emphasize on your personal qualities, especially if you don’t have a lot of references.

- The final and decisive touch will be to write a manuscript letter to introduce yourself. Be creative and short (no more than a single A4 page), mention one of your leading qualities in this letter and take care of the spelling, punctuations, margins, legibility, signature... With all this in mind, it should not be long before you hit the jackpot.

1) Psychology Today, Jan.-Feb. 96, pp 13-14

Assistants: what are they doing?

In case you've ever wondered what the assistants do when they're not teaching you, we are listing the topics or titles of their current research projects. Next time, we would like to list the topics of students working on mémoires. If you are such a student, drop us a note in the ADEA mailbox with your name and topic.

Saba Bahar is working on Mary Wollstonecraft and "fictions of education".

Guillemette Bolens is writing on "Body motion in various Indo-European cultures" with a focus on Chretien de Troyes and James Joyce.

Ami Dykman's work is on the Book of Psalms in Russian poetry in the 17th to 19th centuries.

Fabienne Michelet is working on the literary and geographical definition of Great Britain, through Old and Middle English texts.

Valerie Felhbaum is working on the New Woman of *fin de siècle* England.

Simone Oettli is researching madness and rhetoric in three contemporary post-colonial women writers.

Bernard Schlurick, a comparatist and medievalist, is currently interested in literary ventriloquism in philosophy and psychoanalysis, as well as series of wit and humor.

Carla Scott is remapping the colonial female subject between the Virgin and the Hottentot Venus.

Roy Sellars is finishing a book on materiality and waste, from St. Augustine to Milton.

Agnieszka Soltysik, is working on genre theory and the gothic.

Valeria Wagner recently defended her doctoral thesis entitled «Bound to Act: An Analysis of Model of Action as Dramatized in Selected Literary and Philosophical Texts».

Manuela Schoenenberger is doing research on language acquisition.

Claire Forel is studying the use of general linguistic principles in teaching foreign language.

Genoveva Puskas is working on a-bar positions in the syntax of Hungarian.

Eric Haerberli works on the distribution of noun-phrases in Germanic languages.

El manifesto mediatico

If we just think about it for a minute, it is unbelievable that we don't have a real cours-séminaire on modern media. First year students are supposed to be happy spending a couple of weeks on Hitchcock or on advertising, but this is just peanut butter on dry bread. Cinema, television, advertising, and photography have profoundly modified our culture and representations of the world, but are rarely analyzed as specific fields. Our academic institutions are still thinking in terms of manuscripts or printed texts. The historical modes of transmitting knowledge based on written texts are no longer sufficient to comprehend our world. But by ignoring this fact, universities might well be generating a bunch of wise chimpanzees who will be excellent at mimicking their teachers but who are going to be lost in a culture in which landscapes have largely shifted to a wider semiological territory.

We students don't reject the value and wisdom inherited from the past but we want to be able to deal with the present

state of our civilization, its signs, symbols, language, its contradictions, ambiguities and messages. Centuries ago, humanity went from the oral to the written. If McLuhan is right, it is then really time to focus on the medium and to go from the written to a more inclusive multimedia perspective that has nothing to do with the hype that surrounds this word nowadays. MTV and Benetton are raising questions on the present state of our culture that cannot be blithely dismissed. We refuse to submit to the same emotional hysteria they have provoked among the "moral majority".

To avoid being forced to live in a world led by ideological or theological disputes, we need to develop new epistemological models. Analysis of texts will be only a part of this process. Understanding the boundaries and specificities of the medias will be another. It is now time to change. Let's petition our academic authorities to have a real program on media studies.

Nicholas Palffy

Feminist reading group

Attention Students!

I am organizing a "feminist reading group" to meet twice a month during the summer semester to read and discuss key feminist texts in collaborative seminar-like meetings. This group is not an official department or university-sponsored activity, and will probably meet off-campus. My purpose in proposing this reading group is to introduce students to classic texts of feminist thought which are relevant to them in their literary studies, and to provide a forum in which feminist work of a more general nature, as it has profoundly impacted our lives and culture, can be discussed in an academic but informal context.

Possible authors include: Germaine Greer, Monique Wittig, Naomi Wolf, Adrienne Rich, Catherine MacKinnon, Donna Haraway,

Judith Butler, Barbara Ehrenreich, Kate Millett, Simone de Beauvoir, etc.

I suggest that we organize the meetings according to topics for discussion, such as: history of feminism/feminist history; gender as nature or culture?; lesbian feminism, heterosexism, and sexual correctness; pornography vs. censorship; feminism and race; media; the "beauty myth"; feminist literary criticism and literary history, etc.

If you have any questions, drop a note in my mailbox at the Comédie or send me an e-mail message at: soltysik@uni2a.unige.ch or just come to the first meeting, during which we will decide how and when to conduct further meetings: Thursday, March 21, 20h in Phil. 017.

Agnieszka Soltysik,
Assistant in American Studies