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Images on pages 6-10

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Letter from the Editors

BRYN SKIBO-BIRNEY AND OLIVER WRIGHT

Unless you have been living under a rock this past year, you will have noticed the tidal change taking place in the discourse of feminism. Beginning with the global Women's March in January, and gaining momentum through the summer and autumn with the mounting allegations against those in seats of power in a variety of fields – from movie producers to actors and talk-show hosts, from politicians, coaches, and cops to newspaper and magazines editors and executives, and on and on and on – by the end of 2017 (truly the winter of our discontent), it felt like every time a headline included the name of an even-somewhat famous man, you expected to learn of the horrific things he had done, or tried to do, to those in his professional realm. From this waking nightmare, which most women didn't find surprising because of the alleged actions, but for the fact that people were *finally listening* and *acting* against these abuses, came an equally, and inversely, ferocious and inspiring response from women around the world: one among many, the #MeToo hashtag, for example, canvassed the globe through Twitter in less than a day. From this miasma of anger and abuse, scepticism and sisterhood, it should come as no surprise (though it nevertheless did) that this edition of *Noted* is predominantly filled with the voices of the women of the English department and beyond.

The striking cover image, provided by the uniquely talented portrait artist, **Georgia Smalls**, opens the journal with a mischievously insouciant peace-sign-wielding model. The fact that "Sarah" is missing her head, and somehow still seems to smile in its absence (or due to its absence? **Smalls** discusses why this may be so), should be ample warning that the things in this journal are not what they may initially appear to be. Alongside **Smalls**, *Noted's* go-to cultural reporter, **Olivia Lindem** ably scrutinizes the nature, history, and the paradox of selfies: are they vainglorious exhibitionism or artistic self-empowerment? Do they buy into society's interest in objectifying women's bodies or do they rewrite the cultural narrative to alter *who* gets to be seen and *how*? This explicit challenge to how selfies are perceived and characterized on social media and beyond is a real-life example of the problems of perception, superficial judgement, and the damage they can entail, all of which **Donatella Avoni** addresses in her laudatory review of R.J. Palacio's novel, *Wonder*. Primarily, her review focuses on how perceptions – face-value and inaccurate though they may be – can be changed through interaction, a shared humanity, and the knowledge that our behaviour is always a factor in the happiness of those around us.

The Creative Writing section picks up similar topics, stemming from **Helena G.**'s interpersonal introspection over a couple's breakfast table wherein the couple's argument leads to a sense of fragmentation and disembodiment. Conversely, **Diana Moyo** heads to the gardens where her minimalistic and reverential speaker – the eponymous "Jungle Lady" – finds self-renewal and strength. If we're looking for a common humanity, we could do worse than to start with our common dependency on (and yet our often ignorance towards) the natural world in which we live and of which we are a part. Alternatively, we could follow the lead of **Lorraine Devillard** whose speaker finds, and dramatizes, "Reconciliation" through a meeting of languages, making word-play work across a battlefield of formerly antagonistic tongues; what you call poison – she writes, echoing Derrida – depends on your perspective...and your language. **Donatelli Avoni** again asks us to reconsider the nature of challenges and obstacles with her parodic and complex quest to find the infamous Bastions 307. Regardless of your understanding of Einsteinian spatio-temporal conundrums, anyone who has been late to class will find common ground with her speaker. In the vein of Avoni's allusions to knights and wizards past, **Helena G.** reconsiders the trope of medieval love from the point-of-view of the author and the female protagonist, illustrating how female authorship can re-appropriate common tales – of the handsome, *active* knight and the beautiful, *passive* princess (to borrow from Olivia Lindem's piece). Clearly, not all obstacles to progress are as visible as the stairway leading to B307. Finally, **Bryn Skibo-Birney** puts ink to the turmoil of sentiment that suffused this difficult year. Like **Devillard**, her poem explores the space in-between multiple perspectives and voices; yet, while "Reconciliation" offers enjoinder for mankind, in "Superheroes," **Skibo-Birney** focuses more on the need to bear witness to these inequities and to legitimize the rage that rightly ensues.

Bringing some measure of light and levity is *Noted's* newest editor – **Oliver Wright** – in the reader-favorite "Proust Questionnaire." Immediate regrets include, but are not limited to, admitting to his caffeine addiction, spoiling his future chances at poker, and realizing that any Francophone pop-culture references he can draw on are over a decade old. In closing, this edition of *Noted* is itself a bit of a paradox – an opening at a close. After five years at the helm, Bryn bids you, readers and contributors all, a fond farewell, as she hands the keyboard over to Ollie. Keep writing, keep contributing, and, most importantly,

Happy reading,
Bryn and Ollie

Project Secret Selfie

A *NOTED* PROFILE OF GEORGIA SMALLS

@geesmall.art

FEATURES

This semester, *Noted* is honored to feature the work of Georgia Smalls, a University of Durham-educated artist living in Australia. Her image gracing the cover of this journal is part of a selfie project in which she transforms the personal, and often intimate, images sent in by followers of her Instagram account into brightly-colored, minimalistic, and anonymous portraits. The overall motivation behind her work, she writes, is the female body and Generation Y, telling *Noted* that “nudes are a perfect culmination of both of these things.”

Like the images she receives and the portraits she produces, the project’s creative origins are equally intimate, stemming from what Smalls describes as “my own struggle to love my body for what it is. I have an immense appreciation for the female body that I often cannot find for my own. I look at other female bodies as art, but never myself. It is something I’ve struggled with for a really long time and it totally sucks. Selfies are often a product of low self-esteem, rather than an expression of self-love. I know that I, for one, can only begin to see myself positively in a carefully posed photo, and only feel good when other people like or comment on it; I present myself to the world in a confident manner in the hope that seeing me, like this, in the world, I will see myself the same.”

Clearly, Smalls is aware of the potentially problematic nature of the artistic appropriation of her followers’ bodies, especially when viewed in the context of a society that overwhelmingly profits from the images of the hypersexualized and objectified bodies of girls and women. Nevertheless, she writes that this tension – between passive consumption and active exhibition – is apiece with the emotive power of the project itself. “Selfies are these epic paradoxes: simultaneously empowering and full of vulnerability. I feel an immense satisfaction in being entirely in charge of my own appearance, but at the same time, there’s the terrifying realization that you are the only person responsible for the image you take. It is of you and by you.”

The reasons, Smalls explains, behind the decision to – *snap* – take the selfie are as diverse as the photographers themselves, but each are united by the same act of *choosing* to take their own photo. “I think that most girls take nudes but for a whole range of reasons. Whether it’s to make yourself vulnerable and sexy for someone you care about, or to

remember how you felt on a particular day.” For Smalls personally, her selfies are an act of memorialization – “I often take photos of myself simply to remember a moment when I was feeling a particular way” – regardless of whether that feeling was of self-pride or self-loathing. “I am just obsessed with memory keeping. I can look at every selfie I’ve taken and tell you exactly how I was feeling and why I took it.”

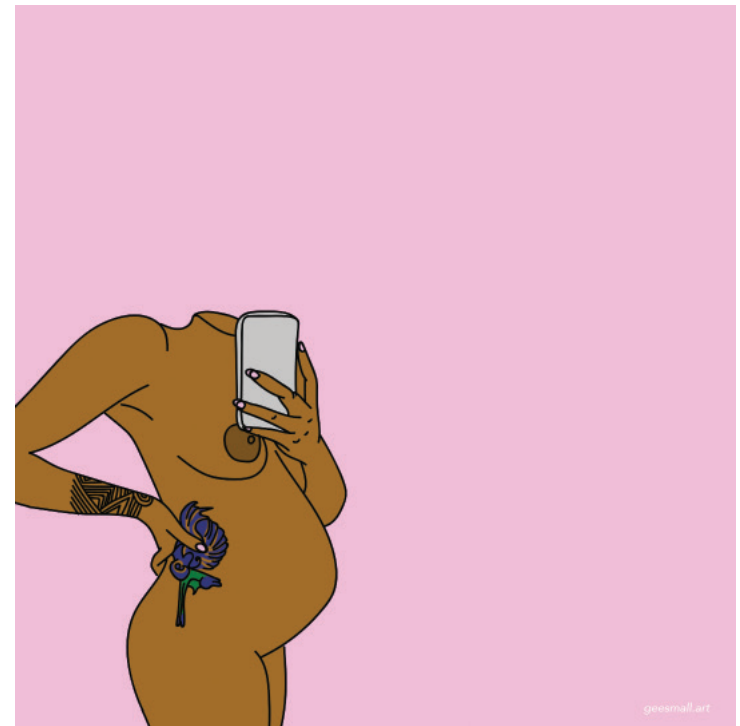
While Smalls is intimately aware of the self-consciousness or self-hate that might push the shutter down, she argues that her project is, overall, one of empowering the subject, as well as the artist, through the self-made image: “Being able to focus on other people’s nudes has been the most incredible feeling. Tuning out myself and my own worries, and instead thinking about others and trying to help them with their insecurities has been the most refreshing feeling ever.” While some of the images – such as “Sarah” and “Ana Kruse” – strike a particularly defiant and proud stance, the beauty of Smalls’ other pieces is in their simplicity and the evident appreciation shown by the artist for the subject, as in the luxurious jewel tones and striking asymmetrical placement of “Life Gives Life.” “Nudes are so beautiful, man. These girls are just like: ‘YO LOOK AT ME. I TOOK THIS PIC OF MYSELF BECAUSE RIGHT NOW, I WANT YOU TO SEE ME AS I AM,’” writes Smalls. “Nudes are beautiful, powerful, and artistic” and, she claims, “that’s where the art is. Art is in the outline of a body, the rim of a nipple, the curvature of a waistline. It is not in the clothes you choose to wear, or which products you decide to put on your face.”

Indeed, a unique element in Smalls’ project is the dedicated focus on the body as opposed to the face, allowing the face to remain blocked by the phone, if not cut off entirely. Consequently, even more than the face, the subject’s phone becomes, in many of the images, almost as engaging as the body it is ostensibly exhibiting. “Every image has a phone in it. This project is about our generation and the way we perceive ourselves, and I think our stupid/brilliant/horrible phones are the primary medium of self-perception these days. I want the phones to be there as a symbol for our era, a record of a moment in the same way that a selfie captures a memory. Normally when I write poetry, draw, or paint, I shy away from including anything that reflects the technological side of life because I feel like it is a rejection of art. But for some reason it just felt right to have [the phone] in. I think selfies are a twenty-first-century art form.”

In Smalls’ portraits, the absence of the subject’s head is meet, as it were, head-on. Rather than, for example, using the margins to make the cut-off, Smalls makes a crisp line across the neck, leaving a delicate circle where the spinal cord would be. The result could be brutal and gory, yet, in Smalls’ rendition, the effect is strangely sympathetic, almost

of compassion between the unseen artist and the exposed subject. “There is a kind of anonymity in the choice not to draw their faces,” Smalls writes. “It’s about seeing the body as art, and not as something to be objectified. I feel like it is a lot easier for women to be confident when there’s an element of disconnection. I guess it is also an attempt to separate your mind from your body, to allow yourself to see your body as a beautiful creation and not let your head get in the way of positive thoughts.”

As Generation Y – or the “Selfie Generation” – comes to be defined (largely by those who are not a part of it) for its supposed narcissism and for its love of self-exposure through the act of digital photography, Smalls’ project is a valuable step in re-appropriating the generational narrative, from one of frequent derision and objectification to one of self-love, compassion between strangers, and a reclamation of our most private and, paradoxically, exhibited selves.



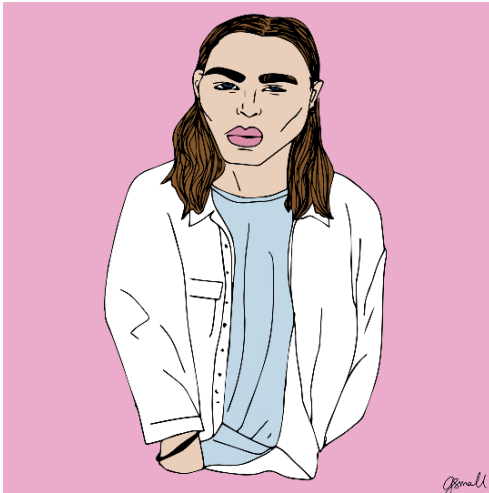
“Life Gives Life”



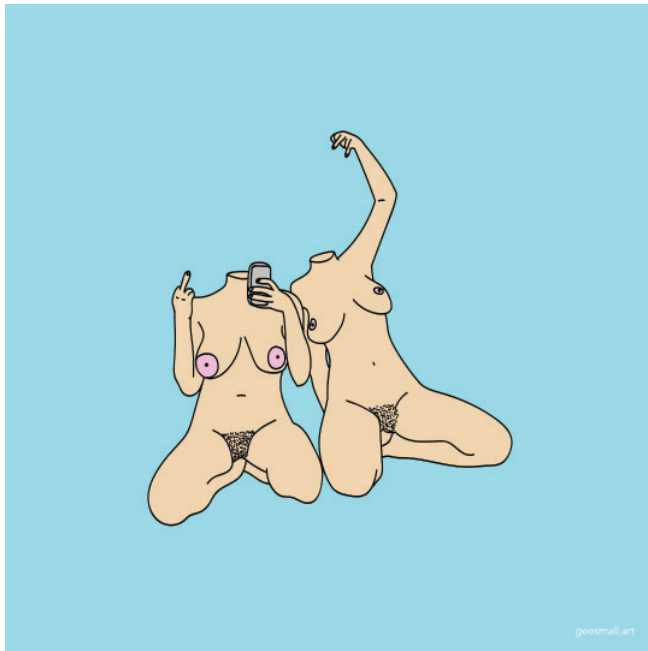
“Emmortalization”



“Ane Kruse”



"Milo"



"Twins"



"Loic"

selfie, *n.*

OLIVIA LINDEM

I used to take selfies for granted. I used to think that their value as tools of self-empowerment was obvious. But then I came to think of how many of our supposedly universally-acknowledged truths are just products of a liberal cultural bubble. We may consider all gender identities to be valid, that Black Lives Matter, that sexual assault victims are to be taken seriously, and that feminism is not feminism unless it is intersectional; but, in the present world, we're challenged every day. Every day, Donald Trump is President of the United States. Every day a middle-aged white man tweets "#notallmen" and mutters "all lives matter." Every day, an older feminist falls further from grace as she makes trans-exclusive comments or turns on younger women. Only last week, Germaine Greer accused actresses of "spreading their legs" for Harvey Weinstein and Margaret Atwood promoted a piece criticizing #MeToo for having gone too far. Only last week, a hoard of middle-aged women came after me on Twitter for daring to ask women to support each other. I wasn't allowed to have an opinion on feminism, they said, because I hadn't lived through the struggles of the '60s, '70s, and '80s. Our generation of women aren't feminists, they said, because we're too vain and privileged. If the past generation of feminists was fighting to make life better for the women who followed in their wake (and they were), then why are they aiming at us the generalized and simplistic criticism that was once leveled at them?

When the most obvious of truths are challenged, why would I think that one so small – claiming that selfies are empowered acts rather than narcissistic ones – would not be? How often have I heard men and, yes, women call out selfie-takers for being "vain," "idiotic," and "vapid" for staring at their faces in their phones and snapping pictures? Do I not feel shame every time I snap my own image, even though I've seemingly internalized the rhetoric of inclusiveness? Do I not recoil a little bit in fear every time I share a selfie on my blog, waiting for at least one person to fling insults at me? I do. And so, I know selfie empowerment has a long way to go.

Cultural critic Rachel Syme wrote a definitive piece on selfies in 2015 for *Medium.com*, entitled "SELFIE: The Revolutionary Potential of Your Own Face, in Seven Chapters," in which she captures perfectly everything that we supposedly take for granted about selfies. She talks about its critics, about the power it gives women, about self-portraiture in the past with photographers like Julia Margaret Cameron, Marian Hooper Adams, and

Francesca Woodman. She talks about the reasoning behind selfies, about people who take photos, not because they think they "look hot," but because they're struggling with depression or eating disorders or chronic illness and want to document their recoveries or give a material reality to their existences. She talks about women of color who want to make themselves visible in a world of media that doesn't include them. She talks about transgender individuals publicly sharing their journeys so that more people won't grow up in a world thinking that people like them don't exist, that they're doomed to be Other. She talks about the joy of framing your own image, of – to paraphrase and adapt Frida Kahlo – giving birth to yourself.

Everything Syme addresses is true for the selfie world I see online. Every day, I log on to Instagram and Twitter and I see dozens of selfies of people going about their days, putting a face to their struggles. Often, selfie denouncers will say that selfies are acts of unrestrained egotism and vanity, but so often that isn't the case. Instead, I see people who aren't usually visible in traditional media putting themselves out there – in my case, mostly women dealing with chronic illness and students battling depression and overwhelming pressure. I see people redefining beauty and joy as aesthetic beings in and of themselves. Instead of cringing as I've been taught to do whenever I take a selfie, I'm inspired by the people I'm lucky enough to follow. I'm reminded that we get to shape the world that we live in, that we get to control our own images.

What, though, would be the big deal if the women whom selfie denouncers love to criticize were doing exactly what they said: delighting in their own images? Academic and film theorist Laura Mulvey coined the term "the male gaze" in her 1973 article, "Visual Pleasure and Narrative Cinema" to explain the way in which women are seen and objectified in popular media. The term was quickly popularized, and we all know what it means when it's mentioned, even if we don't know its source. We all know that women are perpetually seen through men's eyes, not only in the media that defines our modern culture but in the everyday world that it influences. As John Berger so memorably points out in *Ways of Seeing*, written just one year before Mulvey's essay, women are so constantly observed that when they see themselves, they do so not only through their own eyes but through men's eyes as well. "*Men act and women appear*," he writes.

Men look at women. Women watch themselves being looked at. This determines not only most relations between men and women but also the relation of women to themselves. The surveyor of woman in herself is male: the surveyed female. Thus, she turns herself into an object – and most particularly an object of vision: a sight. (46)

It's nice to think that things have changed in the forty-five years since Mulvey and

Berger's publications, but the selfie debate proves that it really hasn't. Still, in *Ways of Seeing*, Berger – first and foremost an art critic – turns to art to prove his point. He shares a series of paintings of women holding mirrors and staring at themselves in the nude:

The mirror was often used as a symbol of the vanity of woman. The moralizing, however, was mostly hypocritical. You painted a naked woman because you enjoyed looking at her, you put a mirror in her hand and you called the painting *Vanity*, thus morally condemning the woman whose nakedness you had depicted for your own pleasure. (51)

Does this not clearly fit the same model that we see in play today: middle-aged men condemning young women who take pleasure in their own images as vain narcissists, bringing about the end of society, while they themselves are more responsible for the way women are sexualized and objectified?

With female artists being marginalized and silenced, not only on canvases but in the pages of books and, recently, on the screen, images of women have been shaped by men for centuries. They, and the organizations they've created, rule cosmetics companies and advertising firms and fashion magazines as well as films and television series. Only in the past decades – with the emergence of “influencer” culture, with women broadcasting their own images through the internet, through blogs and Instagram – has this started to change. Many of these women still have advertisers shaping their images, but many are on their own, defining their own personas and putting forth the images they want seen. Instead of having their photos airbrushed to fit the requirements of the male gaze, they style and shape their own. They have the freedom to define the angles of the photographic lens. They have the freedom to edit photos to suit their own aesthetic tastes and preferences. When they take selfies, they are both in front of and behind the camera themselves. They pose for themselves. They portray themselves the way they want to be seen, and that is through their gaze, not the ubiquitous, anonymous, and objectifying male gaze.

These self-portraits are mostly known through, but not limited to, selfies. Photographer Jamie Beck (@annstreetstudio on Instagram) turns away from selfies and specializes in self-portraiture, often inspired by classical painting. Virtually every photograph she posts of herself is composed and taken by herself, with the help of tripods, cameras, and remote controls. She posts elaborate Instagram stories detailing the work that goes behind every shot, and there is no denying that what she does is no more a work of narcissism than that of any artist who dared to paint a self-portrait in the past – it is, rather, labored artistry. Every element of her image is in her control, and that, in this day and age, is still controversial. Just as young women are criticized for taking selfies, she, an adult woman

and a professional photographer, is criticized for her work. Much like the women in the paintings Berger turns to in *Ways of Seeing*, Beck channels paintings like Botticelli's “The Birth of Venus,” in her nude photographs and is then – according to Instagram stories of the past – reported to Instagram for having posted “harmful” material, as if a woman expressing herself in anything but the patriarchally dictated ways is harmful to society.

What is more, in the eyes of many people, Beck absolutely *is* harmful to society because she is in charge of her own image. She has, so to speak, placed the mirror in her own hands and then used her creations to comment on the world. She even sometimes goes far beyond the common practices of the daily-criticized selfie takers in that she not only posts images of herself but often composes elaborate shots where she appears multiple times. In a photo published on her website and on Instagram called “The Last Supper,” she stages a new interpretation of Da Vinci's painting and appears thirteen times in the single composition, playing every single role in the biblical supper. Instead, however, of using the image religiously, she does so biographically to explore the multiple aspects of her personality and her femininity. If a woman delighting in a single image of herself is threatening to the male gaze, then what is a woman who not only embraces herself, but also positions herself in the place of the Son of God and dares to multiply herself on screen in order to do so? It is no surprise that she upsets some viewers.

Though the self-portrait technically differs from the selfie – selfies are, according to the OED “photograph[s] that one has taken of oneself, *esp.* one taken with a smartphone or webcam and shared via social media” whereas self-portraits are not necessarily taken with a smartphone or front-facing camera – their functions are the same. They allow individuals to see themselves the way they want to be seen and to curate their own identities. In a world where the external tries to dictate your behavior and appearance, that is radical. You may think it's trivial or narcissistic, but that's exactly what you're meant to believe.

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Book Review: *Wonder*, by R.J. Palacio

DONATELLA AVONI

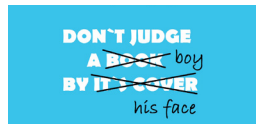


I came across R.J. Palacio's novel, *Wonder* (2012), by chance. I had just come home and directed myself to my room to drop my stuff, when my eye fell on my brother's desk – or more specifically, on the book on my brother's desk. Those who know me also know that books are like magnets to which I am attracted as if by instinct: no surprise, then, that I read the blurb, and then some pages... and then the rest of the story. *Wonder* is simply one of the best books I have ever read. And when I received the email reminding me of the deadline for *Noted* submissions, I felt a familiar tingle in my fingers: I knew I had to write about this amazing story.

Why "wonder" as a title? It could seem ironic, as the story is about a ten-year-old boy, August "Auggie" Pullman, who has a significant facial deformity due to a genetic disease. The story begins with his entry to Beecher Prep School, a delicate task as he has never gone to school before, being home-schooled by his mother since the numerous operations he had been undergoing to reconstruct his face prevented him from attending school regularly. Going to school also means leaving the family nucleus and facing the reaction and judgement of others, something that obviously scares and frustrates Auggie. The first days are disastrous: his classmates avoid him, show disgust, and bully him.

However, Auggie is also a very lively, ironic, perspicacious, and sympathetic boy. Even though he faces difficulties, he tries to become stronger and survive the first year, with the help of his sympathetic, encouraging and ever-present family, of his teachers, such as the wise principal Mr. Tushman, and of his friends, Jack and Summer. They come to discover that Auggie is not *only* his face, but a boy who is unique like every other human being. One's appearance – one's face – is deeply connected with one's identity: what we show of us, willingly or unwillingly, is part of who we are. But appearance does not determine one's true nature, and there is a lot to discover behind masks.

Knowing a person is like reading a text, one that is always writing itself. As readers, we only have access to the text, and our job is to discover it, to analyze and interpret it, in order to understand its character, style, the messages and the story it contains, going beyond what it shows us, but always questioning it and never ceasing to find wonder in it. And, as we read people, we also constantly read the world around us, this kind of enigmatic never-ending book; in doing so, our perspective can change and evolve, our attention can be caught by details we didn't see in our first reading. We can choose to read superficially or to be more curious and critical. That is why I find the sentence on the cover of *Wonder* to be brilliant: the point is not really what we read, but how we read it.



The same reasoning goes for the characters' behavior: the point is not who they are and what choices they make, but more *how* they cope with their sense of right and wrong to become better people and create something good, not only for themselves, but also for other people. That is to say, the point is how they *read* their own selves and react to this reading. For instance, even though Auggie's friend, Jack, is condemnable because he betrays Auggie, he is also elevated above his mistake because he recognizes his fault and repents – in contrast to his classmate, Julian, who engulfs himself in his disdain and antagonism towards Auggie without questioning his feelings.

The story also shows the development of Auggie's response to all the difficulties and setbacks he faces as a result of his genetic disease and the reactions of others to it. He is condemned to be constantly pointed out as different; coping with this daily situation makes him feel miserable:

If I found a magic lamp and I could have one wish, I would wish that I had a normal face that no one ever noticed at all. I would wish that I

could walk down the street without people seeing me and then doing that look-away thing. Here's what I think: the only reason I'm not ordinary is that no one else sees me that way.

Auggie would like to be "normal," but also knows that being "ordinary" only depends on social conventions: there is not a scientific category named "normality." The problem is not him, but how people judge him. Knowing this, he can choose to listen to the judgements that single him out or just to ignore them. Initially, Auggie is a mixture of both: he swings between acceptance and non-acceptance of those reactions. He does not always accept the face he has; once, for instance, after bursting into tears, he miserably asks his mother, "Why do I have to be so ugly, Mommy?" At the same time, he knows that "words can't change [his] face" and so, the more the story evolves, the more he gains confidence and strength in himself. He learns, with the help of his family and friends, to prevent people's reactions from frustrating him, to be willing to enjoy fully his childhood, to be funny or even ironic, as when he describes his rare disease to his friend, Summer:

"I mean, I don't want to brag or anything, but I'm actually considered something of a medical wonder, you know."

He smiled.

"That was a joke," he said. "You can laugh."

I smiled and shook my head.

"You're funny, Auggie," I said.

"Yes, I am," he said proudly. "I am cool beans."

What touched my heart when I read this scene is its underlying insistence on the everyday humanity of the characters. This allows for an easy identification with them because I can understand what they feel and imagine the situations they live which, in some cases, I can link with personal recollections. I'm not saying that I engage less with, say, fantasy characters, but the way Palacio writes the characters in *Wonder* resonates with me. *Wonder* is, ultimately, a story about everyday relations with everyday people; Auggie's struggle for acceptance – and the struggles of all the other characters around him – are human struggles, with a realistic balance between tears and joy, doubts and certainties, shame and pride.

Part of the insight offered by *Wonder* stems from the narrative emphasis on the personal struggles of various characters, highlighting their personal ups and downs, their differences in perspective, their own ways of experiencing reality. Even though most of the story is told by Auggie, the narrative voice switches between six characters in total. This gives a more complex view of the story and shows that what a character thinks or knows about another is not necessarily or completely true. After Auggie's narration, the narra-

tive perspective switches between his two friends, Jack and Summer, describing their life at school and how they came to be Auggie's friends. The narration also turns towards the life of Auggie's teenage sister, Via. She knows that her parents love them both, that Auggie needs more attention and, therefore, that she needs to be more independent. At the same time, she is torn between her acceptance of the situation, her love for the family, her frustration, and her desire to feel more important – to be seen as *Via* and not as the sister of *the boy with a "deformed" face*. Readers also discover the story of Justin – Via's boyfriend – and Miranda, Via's best friend, for whom Auggie's family becomes almost a surrogate. Miranda, living with newly-divorced parents by whom she feels abandoned, envies Via's life and her family, thereby seriously undermining their friendship. This kaleidoscopic narration shows that there is not one single version of the story, but that there is one story for each character – innumerable stories that intersect and illuminate, influence, and complicate each other. For instance, Via's and Miranda's narrations each describe two kinds of families: one that is loving and present, another that is divided and absent; one from which the character wants to become independent and another in which Via wants to feel included. Thus, "wonder" is again invoked: having a new point of view on a situation – a new discourse – deepens your knowledge on a topic and eventually wonder at how much you missed about a person, at what they can be capable of. Everyone has something to say, something that renders them special and deserving to be heard. As Auggie says, "everyone in the world should get a standing ovation at least once in their life because we all overcometh the world".

The sense of everyday humanity that permeates the story can possibly be attributed to the fact that it grew out of a real event. In an interview for *The Telegraph*, Palacio stated that she had the inspiration for this story following an encounter in 2007 in a park with a girl affected by Treacher-Collins syndrome. When Palacio saw the child, she panicked, fearing that her own child might be scared and start screaming, and thus hurt the girl's feelings. Palacio briskly left with her son, but not without seeing that the girl and her mother were hurt by her behavior. She was ashamed of her reaction: she had no reason to be so disrespectful. The story formed in her mind after this episode, born of the examination of her conscience and her experience. Palacio creates a worthy life-lesson out of her mistake and her shame, offering it to all readers, sharing her conclusions, her questions, and the progression of her thoughts through the story. I really encourage you to read this insightful story that, I am sure, will touch your heart and inspire your mind, as it did mine.

Wonder by R.J. Palacio. 315 pp. Alfred A. Knopf. CHF 14.70 (Payot)

FILM

Dispatches from the Film Club

PATRICK JONES

Dear *Noted* readers,

A very happy new year to you all and a massive thank you to everybody who made our exploration of cinematic style last semester so enjoyable!

After much deliberation and discussion, we've decided that our theme this semester is going to be 'Dystopia'. The programme is below and, needless to say, we've got some real treats lined up for you. From tense eco-thrillers to absurdist send-ups of totalitarianism, there'll be something for everyone, and I promise there'll be plenty of (black) comedy to counteract the doom and gloom. As always, expect exciting and informative introductions, lively post-film debates, and lots of *snacks*.

The programme can be found on the following page and the first screening will be on Thursday, March 1st, with subsequent sessions taking place fortnightly until the end of teaching on May 25th. Like last semester, we're in room B112 (Bastions) and meet from 19h, with the films starting at 19h30 on the dot. Finally, for up-to-date information and cinema-related chat, don't forget to join our Facebook group (<https://www.facebook.com/groups/filmclubanglais/>)!

Cheers,
Patrick

March 1 st	<i>Snowpiercer</i> , directed by Bong Joon-ho
March 15 th	<i>Pleasantville</i> , directed by Gary Ross
March 29 th	<i>Mad Max: Fury Road</i> , directed by George Miller
April 12 th	<i>The Lobster</i> , directed by Yorgos Lanthimos
April 26 th	<i>The Trial</i> , directed by Orson Welles
May 17 th	<i>Blade Runner</i> , directed by Ridley Scott
May 24 th	Student's choice

CREATIVE WRITING

Breakfast

HELENA G.

I was an ear stuck on a wall
 A fly inside an eye
 My lips were stitched to my head
 And my tongue was tied around my neck

We sat across the table
 Throwing darts at one another
 The fire burning in the furnace
 Heating our glances of unawareness

You had a thought that stuck like glue
 A cryonic chrysalis never to bloom
 You never said a word or two

My heart was in flames, it burst out of the room
 You went outside to fetch some coal
 opening the door to a celestial pole
 Your hand was blue and mine was too

I was in parts, from toe to head
 And spread like jam on toast or bread

I found little corners to hide my secret
 They were so dark I hardly went to visit
 This made you imagine I hardly existed.

And every morning I would wake up
 Make breakfast
 And spread some jam on toast or bread.

Jungle Lady

DIANA MOYO



Sun beaming
 Embracing
 Her aura
 Enlightened
 Her
 Soul
 Liberated
 From
 Her hibernation
 Perennial
 Rejuvenation
 She regained her strength within the jungle

The Stair Climber's Progress

DONATELLA AVONI

For all those who, needing to reach room B307, face the stairs every week and triumphantly arrive at the summit out of breath!

Here – finally – I am, in front of this staircase. I, doomed to climb up it, sadly stare at my feet – aww! sorry my fate – soaring me up, incessant and pitiless. Look!

*Breathing hard, him! The glorious knight ascends.
No, a dragon he has not, only his
feet and breath. Off he goes! Like a bird who,
brutally thrown out of his nest, must learn
how to fly, clutching his heart, most desperate,
Heavily heaves he up. Battles would but
a joke be compared to this trial! The heart
on fire, the bending knees implore the wretch
– mercy! – to stop. Bathed in sweat, his hand
On his brow, bravely he turns to admire
The accomplished path. Oh despair! Only
five steps has he climbed insofar, and more
than thirty divide him from his goal.*

*Oh, why his watch doth so quickly progress?
Five steps in five hours: has he time to rest?
His heart – sure! – would want; but his mind refuses:
What kind of knight lets a stair bar his road?
No: to have time and glory on his side
On Time itself must be a spell cast,
To make it progress more sleepily for
All the other guys, to give him all time
To go his way, and prevent everyone
To mark he is late. Relativity
Of space and time: that is what he now needs!*

“Relativity? Who dares say the name
Of my great theory?” In a puff, Einstein
Himself appears at my side, and me stares.
“Oh Einstein! Oh, ye great mind! Would you mind
Helping my poor cause and slow down the others’
Time? Make a second for them an hour be
So that if I’m late, on time I’ll become!”
The great man shrugs and hesitates... but then
“Ok!” he says and once his fingers snapped
Away goes he in a puff. Saved am I!

*Up and up, vigorously, the great knight,
the steps – no: mountains impossibly high
and most threatening – he climbs. It’s the sight
That motivates his effort, the sight of
His goal: the room B307 that
Smiles, radiant, there – at the end of the stairs.
I’ll spare my poor readers the description
Of his incessant pains – his groaning and
moaning, the sweat on his face, the aching
of his strong limbs, the swelling of his feet,
the breathlessness afflicting his trained lungs
(I know: it’s not so knightly, but truthful)
just to cite some. Surrenders he to this
most painful effort? Not at all! Compelled
by the strength of his soul and mind he climbs,
Determined to achieve his epic task.*

*Remember his great determination!
For it’s because of this admirable
And mighty trait of his character that
His long, perilous, courageous, brave, tough,
painful, desperate, infinite and famous
journey – oh! finally! – came to an end.
Up there, bent in two by his heavy breath,
Panting and puffing, sighing and coughing,
He admired the path that he had trod.*

*“O heavens! Here am I, in front of the room!
I can't believe I really did it!”
Just let me catch my breath before I triumphantly walk inside, to join my mates, in the great room B307!”*

Puff! What an adventure, decidedly!
Once my breath calmed, I direct my weary
Feet to the room, my hand to the handle.
I open. Inside, everything is still.
No one moves. My mates and the professor
Are as immobile as a painting is!
“Einstein! What happened?!? Why is everything still?” I cry at the old man who meanwhile
appears at my side. “Relativity!
One second for one hour: isn't that
What you have asked me?” replies he, a smile
Shining on his innocent face. “Yes... No!
Well, just during my climbing up, of course!
Could you put everything in time again...
... please?” Amused by my case, the old man shrugs.
“Mmm, I don't know... I could and I could not...”
“Please! I can't see them stuck in this state because
I'm late!” I cry, desperate. “Ah, ah, relax
Brave knight! I will put everything all right!”
And again, his fingers he snaps: the scene
Suddenly comes back to life – all my mates
Accelerate what they were doing so
Slowly, the professor finally puts
His bag on the desk and says “Good-morning!”
– unaware that they all just escaped a
Spatio-temporal trap! And I most
nonchalantly sit at my desk, thanking
the great Einstein for his help. What a fright!

Being a knight truly is difficult!
But what matters, at the end, is that I
Succeeded in my epic task: the stairs,

I climbed; the stairs, I vanquished! Certainly,
Next time, I really must find another
Solution to solve my lateness. Maybe...
... yes! Maybe next time the great Merlin,
will I summon... Will he transform Bastions'
stony stairs into Hogwarts' fantastic ones?
Who knows? With a bit of magic...

Reconciliation

LORRAINE DEVILLARD

A war
 es war a war
 war
 war
 war
Vergangenheit
 was
 And today is a gift
 aber kein Gift, nein
 nur ein Geschenk
 ein Geschenk
 Geschenk
 das uns von diesem Gift
 des *past* befreien
 kann.
 Gift darf es sein, nur wenn
 von Liebe geschöpft,
 reiner Liebe,
 die durchdringt
 Von Herzen zu Herzen
 Von Wesen zu Wesen
 Von *war* zu Frieden.
 Breaking what needs be broken
 Reconciliating what aches to be reunited.
 Eine Achse
 Fürs Leben
 Lieben.
 Will we let the poison of the past
 spoil us? Weaken and break us?
 Uns kränken?
 Or...
 Or...
 Acceptons-nous de le transformer, ce plomb

en... or?
 Gift als Geschenk...
 to build
 now
 in Today
 Create.

Miss Chance

HELENA G.

Eyes are twitching
Lips are pulsing
Hands are still
And eyes are looking

My fingertips touch the bleached white page
And feel the smooth surface ready to be laced
A pen dipped in ink makes its way between my hand
It tries not to forget how we once could throw a hex
It wiggles between my thumb and my index

It begins with a line
No straighter than a vine
It begins with a curve
No rounder than Arthur's table

It begins with a dance
In a country close to France
Where miss chance sings her ritual trance
And begins to notice the hidden glances

A fair lady steps in
From a land far or near
She's mysterious, you'll hear
That's the first thing that's clear

A dark knight gallops in
From a journey with a violin
He makes music you see
But there's more in the case

Miss chance makes them dance
Oh, what a night of romance

The day breaks and he's gone
She mounts her own horse and knows nothing's wrong
They catch up to each other
Chasing light and fair weather
They decide not to part

Not this time, nor ever.
"I love you a lot
My Sir Lancelot."

Superheroes

BRYN SKIBO-BIRNEY

Do you know why there aren't more female superheroes?

It's not because we can't draw them
and it's not because we couldn't be them,
a Superman or a Batman,
virginal do-gooder or damaged savior,
hunting night-creatures with no good intent
politely leaving their quarry,
trussed and dangled –
but intact –
waiting safely for the police to find.

No.

We wouldn't use our secret strength,
our secret hate,
fuelled not by an alien sun –
conveniently distanced from this life-giving planet –
but by the late-night violence and day-time abuse
permitted under the gaze of broken street-lamps and passive colleagues,
to save and to offer redemption to those who break Man's law.

No.

Our superheroes
forged by bearing witness to injustices, inequities, and violations
offer no quarter.
That space was
burned out
by "witches" fires and electric shock
ripped out
by vote protectors and marathon marshals
pushed out

by those keeping sacrosanct the positions of patriarchal power.

No. You should not expect forgiveness nor redemption for there is none to be found.

There are not more female superheroes because
we would give vent to our cat-called anger and
release our pent-up rage
held whale-bone tight in our constricted chests
our needs, wants, and waists shaped strictly
by fear of what might escape the cloisters built around us
laying bare our raw hearts
pocked with everyday violence and so-called hysterias
we would flail every man in our path
our fathers, our sons,
our brothers, our lovers,
witnesses and participants all
with the keys gripped tightly in our fists.

No. We are not yours to beckon and call upon.

Female voices
long ignored, marginalized, or silenced
sing high and
call down the wrath of the Furies
our mothers our daughters
our sisters our lovers
our bruised selves
witnesses and participants all.

Enough. We are our own superheroes.
We answer only to our own beacon
and it's a siren song.

The Proust Questionnaire

WITH OLIVER WRIGHT

The English Department's newest PhD assistant in American Literature – and the new editor of *Noted* – takes to the back cover to enthuse over Pynchon in California, reminisce about adventures in New Zealand, and dream about ballroom dancing and well-fitting glasses.

What's your current state of mind? Alert, productive, and ready for the day.

What was the last doorway you walked through? A place that sells caffeine, which explains the above.

What was your favorite journey? A trip round New Zealand.

Where would you most like to live? Between the city and the country.

What is the most recent book you read? *Vineland*.

Who is your favorite hero/-ine in fiction? Dr King Schultz.

Who is your favorite writer? Pynchon.

What's the most recent song you listened to? "Black Grease"

What's your theme song? "Red Right Hand"

What's your most treasured possession? I'd be a bit annoyed if I lost my notebooks.

What's your favorite French word / expression? *Cassé!*

You're plugged into the Matrix and can learn anything in 15 seconds; what program do you ask them to upload? Ballroom dancing. Or adulthood.

What's your most marked trait? The arms on most glasses don't reach my ears.

What trait do you admire most in your friends? Honesty.

When do you lie? In Proust questionnaires.

If "Oliver Wright" was no longer available as a name, how would you rename yourself? Scarsdale Vibe.

You are dealt a poor hand in high-stakes poker; do you bluff, fold, or go all in? Bluff.

What is your happiest memory? April 9th 2017.

What fear have you faced? Bureaucracy.

What's your motto?

Life is far too important to be taken seriously. (Apparently attributed to Wilde.)