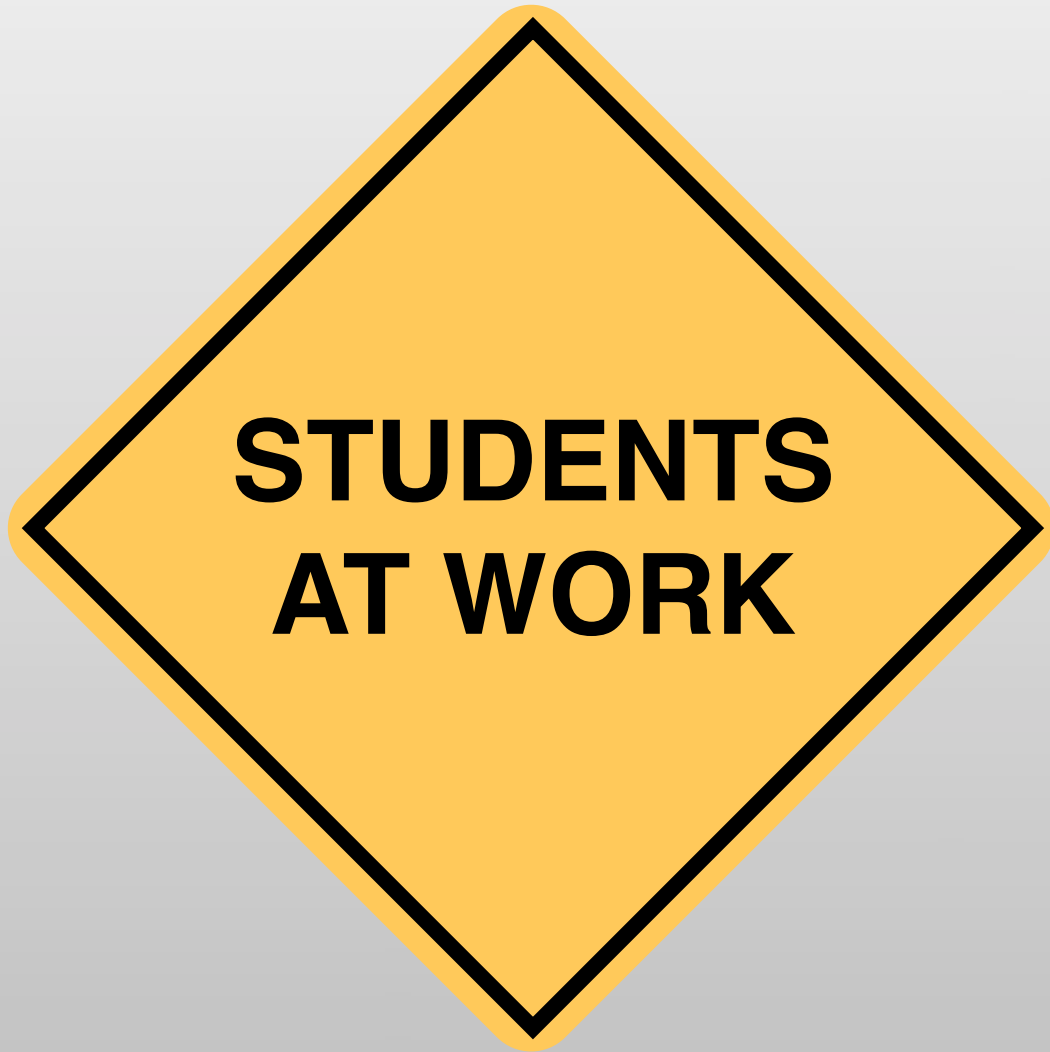


AUTUMN **NOTED** **2011**

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



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Editorial

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Welcome to the first edition of Noted under my command. I hope to provide you with inspirational insights and witty anecdotes as you fling your summer novellas aside, and make the transition back to the Ivory Tower, where coffee and creativity go hand in hand. Whether you have predilection for William Shakespeare, or a bent towards Lars Von Trier, there is food for thought from all epochs in these pages. So, as the nights draw in and the summer sun recedes – *Bains des Pâquis* how I shall miss thee – I ask that you sit yourself down in your most comfortable chair and cross the dazzling threshold into this high-octane issue of Noted. Leave your worries at the door, and delight in the student publication that contains something for everyone.

Perhaps you'd like to hop on a plane, and get out of Geneva altogether? Your wish is our command. Take a stroll

with Nicholas Weeks through the meandering city streets of the Irish capital, Dublin, a city whose breathless wonders I can vouch for. Or maybe you would rather stay closer to home and skip off on a train (or should that be a spaceship) to a hi-tech Parisian wonderland.

Our very own Bryn Skibo – one of your newly appointed Writing Lab monitors – offers us a dazzling feat in creative writing; ultimately, her story questions whether intimacy survives in a virtual age. Is the 'coded matrix' confined to the words on the page, or does this narrative articulate a more virulent comment about the mechanization of human life? Body movement is discussed elsewhere in this edition in Nicholas's second article. No longer in robotic territory, Nicholas allows us to step into the artistic force field Barbe-à-Papa, our resident theatre group. He

invites you to join and also provides a discussion of the group's activities; if you have ever wondered what kind of things happen between actors and writers as they tread the boards in rehearsal time, this article will be essential reading.

Apart from the abovementioned pieces, we can also offer you a passionate review of Shakespeare's *The Merchant of Venice* written by Mark D'Arcy, more ruminations on travel overseas by Mathias Riise, and also a short story by Paloma Lukumbi that evokes the sometimes turbulent relationship that we all have with our own reflection. Anna Iatsenko and Michael Rössli also drop by to tell us all about their time at the Neuchâtel Film Festival: written in a style akin to a movie script, this one is certainly worth a look. On behalf of the editorial team, I would like to thank everyone who contributed material for this edition; each piece is unique.

At the moment, your new editorial team – Arnaud Barras, Sarah Brazil, Susie Gebhardt and I – are eagerly

awaiting the contributions that will comprise our spring edition. Get your pencils, cameras, computers, and highlighters out of their metaphorical closets, and put them to work. You can produce a poem, carve a biography, pen a satire or make a sculpture and then take a photograph of it.

We are open-minded and the sky is your limit. We are also looking to give a face-lift to our rather exhausted logo, so get your designers' hats on *tout de suite*! You could even be the lucky one who walks away with **ONE HUNDRED SWISS FRANCS**, which is on offer for the best contribution we receive. Also, don't worry a smidge about your written English: we are more than willing to edit your work, and have a chat with you about any ideas you might have.

So, all that is left for me to do is wish each and every one of you a cool semester. Take care, and stay in touch.

Tom
Editor-in-Chief

Features

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Note from the Directrice

This is the happy time of year when we welcome the return of our students, with a particularly warm welcome to all those students who are joining our department. You will notice quite a number of new faces among the teaching staff, in both English linguistics and literature. I would like to take a moment to introduce them to you.

In English linguistics, we are joined by Dara Jokilehto, Virag Csillagh, and Eva Watermann. Dara will be working with Genoveva Puskas; he recently completed an MA in Linguistics at University College London and before that took a BA in Modern Chinese Studies at the University of Leeds. Virag and Eva will work with Claire Forel. Virag took her MA in English literature and linguistics at Eotvos Lorand University, Budapest; Eva is a graduate of our own university where she took her licence in English, Computer Science and General Linguistics, and her MA in English Linguistics. Currently, Eva is completing

an MAS at the University Teacher Training Institute (IUFE) in Geneva and teaching part-time in a secondary school.

In English literature, Oliver Morgan joins us as the new assistant in early modern English literature, working with Lukas Erne. Oliver took his BA in English at Pembroke College, Cambridge, and then completed an MA in Early Modern Literature and Culture at the University of Sussex; he has been teaching English at the International School in Geneva for the past several years. David Spurr will be working with two new assistants: Sangam McDuff and Audrey Cerfon. Sangam graduated from Trinity Hall, Cambridge University, with a BA in English and then went on to take his MA in English Literature and Creative Writing at the University of Edinburgh before completing a teacher training programme (PGCE) at the Institute of Education, University of London, and going on to teach English at high school

level. Sangam will be working in the domain of Modern English literature, while Audrey is the new assistant in Comparative literature. She will be working with David Spurr on her doctoral research project as well as her teaching, so we hope that she will consider the English Department her “second home”. Historically, the relationship between English and Comparative Literature has been very important for our department. Several of our most distinguished past professors, like George Steiner and Wlad Godzich, taught in both programmes. We hope that the valuable role played by Professor Spurr, and his new assistant Audrey, will consolidate this relationship. Audrey completed a licence in both Classical philology and German studies from the University Bordeaux III before undertaking postgraduate studies at the Ecole Normale Supérieure in Lyons and the Sorbonne in Paris. Since then, she has been working as a translator in Germany and England.

In the Writing Lab we welcome two new monitors: William McComish and Bryn Skibo. I would like to take the opportunity to offer, on behalf of staff and students alike, our warmest thanks to the outgoing monitors, Susie Gebhardt and Anne Jobin, for their valued efforts and the excellent work they have done these past two years in the Writing Lab. The arrival of new colleagues often signals the departure of others, and this is the case now. We wish Tamsin Badcoe, who has moved to the University of East Anglia, Julianna Bark, who now following a teacher training programme, and Gisela Zingg, who is about to defend her PhD thesis the very best in their future

careers. It is always sad to say goodbye to colleagues but it is also pleasing to know that they are advancing to the next stage in their careers.

We also welcome new teachers who will be replacing various colleagues who will be absent from the Department. Eszter Varga will continue to replace some of Claire Forel's teaching, following Claire's move to the IUFE. Guillemette Bolens has now begun her new role as Vice-Rector and Lucy Perry will be replacing her for the four years of her work in Rectorate. As Maître d'enseignement et recherche in Medieval English, Lucy will take charge of a domain that is hardly new to her, following several visiting appointments in our Department.

Indeed, Lucy's will be a familiar face to many students who followed her seminars and courses in the past. Also in the domain of Medieval English, Petya Ivanova will be replaced this year by Ioana Balgradean. Petya is the recipient of a prestigious award from the Swiss National Science Foundation (SNF) which enables her to spend a year at the University of Essex, undertaking research for her doctoral project. Also leaving us, though fortunately for only one semester, is Lukas Erne. Lukas will spend his sabbatical leave (*congé académique*) as a Fowler Hamilton Visiting Research Fellow at Christ Church College, University of Oxford, and his teaching will be replaced by Antoinina Bevan Zlatar. Antoinina is a graduate of our department who has most recently been teaching at the University of Zurich.

Our warmest congratulations go to Genoveva Puskas as we welcome her in

her new position as professeure associée. This is a very well deserved promotion that reflects the high esteem in which Genoveva is held as a researcher and teacher not only by her colleagues in the Departments of English and General Linguistics but by the wider external community of scholars.

As we welcome students and teachers, new and old, I am particularly gratified that they are welcomed into an environment that is not only academically stimulating but also offers a range of opportunities for dynamic social interactions. Extracurricular activities such as the theatre group, the students' association (ADEA), the film club and, of course, NOTED offer the chance to become involved with other students and members of staff; these opportunities include practical benefits like practicing and improving one's English in enjoyable circumstances while becoming involved in the life of the Department. The English Department is many things, much more than a simple administrative unit offering teaching and examination; the Department has a life of its own that is created by the interaction of staff and students. Each of these extracurricular activities has a page linked from the departmental website and I encourage everyone to look at these pages, make contact with the representatives, and become involved.

I would like to highlight a very important committee: the Commission Mixte. This group of staff and students not only raises issues of concern to students for discussion, it also plays an important role in matters of promotion, the renewal and appointment of teaching

staff, and the development of the department. Each of the communities that comprises the department – undergraduate and postgraduate students, corps intermédiaire, and corps professoral -- are represented. We meet each semester to discuss, usually over a convivial drink and nibbles, any issues that students wish to bring to the attention of teaching staff and anything about which students' views are sought. The current members of the Commission Mixte are: myself, Deborah Madsen (president) on behalf of the corps professoral; Valerie Fehlbaum and Fiona Tolhurst on behalf of the corps intermédiaire; Linda Hinni, Eleanor Skaali, Yeléna Baatard, Eva Gozzelino, Lilia Aghzafi, and Bryn Skibo on behalf of the student body. Yeléna and Eva are replacing the regular members Giorgos Kottas and Emily Chaffar while Giorgos and Emily are away on Erasmus exchanges.

If you are interested in becoming involved with the Commission Mixte, please attend the departmental Assemblée générale in the spring semester when we will be looking specifically for a representative from among the new first-year BA students. In the meantime, please search out your representative if you have anything that you would like to be discussed by the Commission Mixte. As I have said, I am proud that our Department offers such a vibrant intellectual and social environment for everyone.

Bonne rentrée!

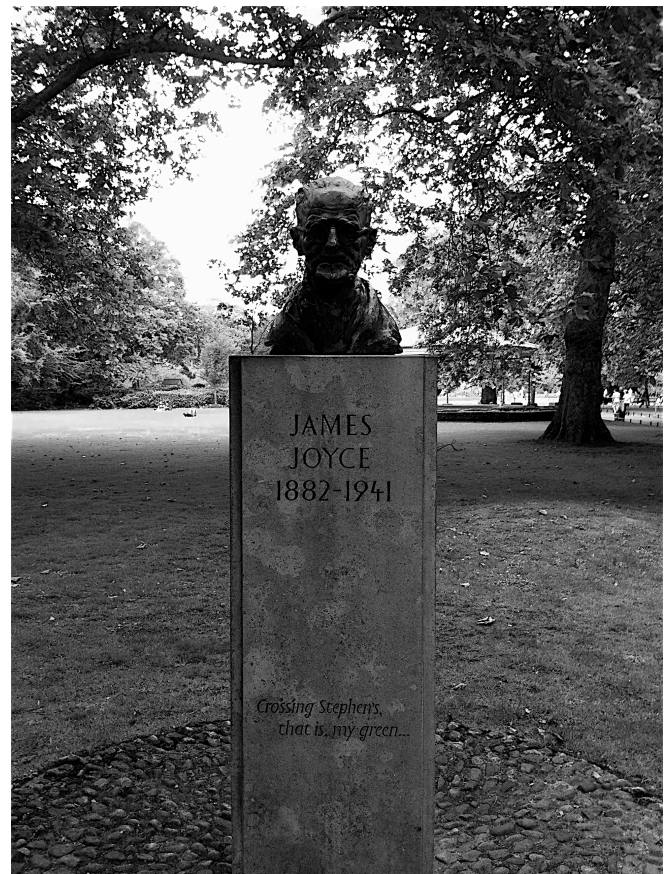
Deborah Madsen

2011 Dublin James Joyce Summer School

By Nicholas Weeks

What Irish capitol city (a dea o dea!) of two syllables and six letters, with a deltic origin and a nuinous end, (ah dust oh dust!) can boost of having *a)* the most extensive public park in the world, *b)* the most expensive brewing industry in the world, *c)* the most expansive peopling thoroughfare in the world, *d)* the most phillohippuc theobibbous paùpulation in the world: and harmonize your abecedeed responses? (*Finnegans Wake* 140.8-14)

Although one is left aghast at the sheer lexical density of a compound such as 'phillohippuc theobibbous paupulation', one can still get a sense of the comical quality of James Joyce's rhetorical question. The rhythmical phrasing of the parentheses echo each other ('a de o dea!...ah dust oh dust!'). Then there's the suggestions of grandeur in his slightly shifting vocables of 'extensive ... expensive ... expansive' and through his direct clues to this riddle (for which the answers are a: Phoenix Park, b: Guinness, c: O'Connell bridge). The literal indications of an 'Irish [capital] city' of 'two syllables and six letters' leaves the reader with the obvious answer that Joyce writes of Dublin, even when he gives four distinct answers to



his question. The dynamic quality of Joyce's ultimate and puzzling masterpiece *Finnegans Wake* cannot be stressed enough. The Dublin James Joyce Summer School offers Joyce scholars a glimpse into Joyce's activities following the completion of what is considered one of the foremost novels of the 20th century.



Hosted by University College Dublin (UCD) and an international cast of Joycean scholars from Stanford, Yale, London, Chicago and Washington, the 2011 Dublin James Joyce Summer School was an amazing life experience and beautiful introduction to the exciting world of international scholarship. The quality of the lectures was astounding; Prof. Anne Fogarty's lecture on Joyce's short story 'A Mother' concerned the specific conditions allowing artists to perform in the politically charged atmosphere of the Dublin theatres in 1904. Dr Christine O'Neill spoke of the sense of smell in the Joycean corpus. Dr Sam Slote and Dr Luca Crispi introduced us to genetic studies, or the study of the writing processes of an author by a careful consideration of the several

manuscripts and notes at the National Library. We were introduced to interdisciplinary approaches to Joyce, first when lawyer and lit scholar Dr Joseph Hassett presented the trials of *Ulysses*, exploring how legal expertise has to seek the help of literary scholars in order to account for the literary merit of an artwork, and then with other comparative approaches: *Ulysses* and Walter Benjamin's notion of history (Dr Catherine Flynn) or Joyce and Proust (Prof. Barry McCrea), scrupulous historical readings (Prof. Andrew Gibson) or our own eminent Swiss Joycean Fritz Senn, patron of the Summer School and head of the James Joyce Foundation in Zürich.

However, if you think a summer school is only study you might have to revise that thought, for the social events accompanying the lectures, seminars and workshops were just as numerous and well organized. The most memorable included the various receptions hosted at the National Library of Ireland or at the Swiss Embassy, the dinner at the beautifully restored Newman House on St Stephen's Green where a tenor was invited to sing for us songs mentioned in Joyce's texts as wine was served, or the magnificent rendering of the play *Translations* by Brian Friel at the Abbey Theatre were all part of the social program accompanying the daily academic schedule.

The summer school perhaps more importantly provided a lively, friendly atmosphere where Joyce students meet each other, as well as readers outside the academic world. This provides discussion, digestion and digression of

these texts long into the night. The friendly atmosphere and relatively small group of students facilitated and encouraged discussions with the lecturers, leading groups from pub to pub, and finally drowned out by the music of the city's clubs.

So to conclude, I would encourage anyone thinking of pursuing an academic career, to look out for the extraordinary opportunity which a Summer School represents, not just for your CV or academic profiles but also for the amazing life experience and new

friendships it might yield.

There are scholarships awarded for some of them, so work hard and apply! This might really change the myth of the 'lonely nerdy scholar' as there are so many clever students out there preparing the scholarship of tomorrow, and meeting them is a highly rewarding experience and a lot of fun.



Northern Impressions

By Mathias Riise

Fondled by the golden light of its slanting sun, or immaculate with frozen layers of snow, Europe's northernmost lands arouse dream and awake curiosity. Yet, though they seem to be a coherent part, as its upper corner, of the cradle of "modern civilisation", they lie more remote in many people's minds than most other parts of the world. While Europeans usually prefer to stray southward during breaks, thoughts of the North will almost inevitably concern Canada and its boreal areas. But surprisingly enough, it appears that most Scandinavians have hardly ever set foot on this wild tundra of theirs; the furthest north they normally happen upon some small ski stations in the middle latitudes of Scandinavia.

However, these lands have scarcely been scorned by humankind. Their first inhabitants came just after the last Ice Age, about 10 000 years ago, following the reindeer as the Ice withdrew. They remained for millennia unchallenged by any other people and developed a lifestyle and a culture perfectly adapted to the both wondrously beautiful and merciless environment. They called themselves "Sameh", the Sami, and their country "Same-ätnam", or "Sápmi" as a modern contraction; but outlanders used to refer to them as the Lapps, living in Lapland. Germanic Scandinavians arrived in Scandinavia around the fifth

millennium BC, but they mostly stayed along the southern coasts. They only began to venture northwards toward the end of the Middle Ages.

As you take the car to go into Swedish Sápmi, you can understand how perilous the pioneering expeditions must have been when the Swedes colonised those endless stretches: there's no taking the wrong route, just follow Inlands Banan, the inland route, which is the one road heading vertically up the map, unless you go the coastline road in the East.

Inlands Banan emerges through forests and opens out on various soils. There are a few towns in Sápmi which are basically all connected by this road; between those exceptions, the route lets you adapt to the calmer cadence of this clime. It greets the foothills of the ancient Caledonian range, nearing soft boggy areas, winding amongst hundreds of peaceful lakes that spread grandly before the traveller's marvelling eyes. It secretly lies as they have always lain, mirror-like, beyond his quick gaze, imbedded within clear woods.

Sometimes, the course will stop on a hill and reveal the slow waves of trees you're driving through, gilded by the ever-low sun of summertime. In winter, the sun does not show up very much. It disappears completely for several days if you go far enough northwards; but it

then catches up a few months later by softly drowning the land in quiet light, even staying up all day long for a period.

Over the last decades, the populations of the North have been moving from their little towns or villages to bigger towns or cities. Nowadays, the greatest number of Swedish Sami live in Stockholm, quite integrated into the Germanic way of life, as a consequence of Swedish imperialism. The modern history of Sápmi is one of spoliation and of the acculturation of a native people by a stronger colonialist people; the Sami were exposed and still are exposed to fierce unfairness; and their culture and identity are constantly challenged.

It is usually hard to distinguish at first glance between the Sami and the Swedes. They have cohabited for many generations now. One distinct feature is perhaps that the Sami, being used from time immemorial to the extreme climate, put up perfectly well with its lunacy and mostly enjoyed it. The Swedes in the North, by contrast, have the reputation among Southern Swedes for being taciturn and asocial, as if depressed by the harsh conditions.

You can observe this if you happen to stop in a smaller northern town, looking for a place to have lunch. After roaming a bit along the dull grey streets that border sparse houses and industrial areas, you may reach the conclusion that the only restaurant open is the fast-food chain Sibylla next to the gas station. Once you get in, it appears that quite a lot of people are having lunch at that moment, yet something feels wrong. There seems to be no match for the

steady buzz of a microwave oven running in the background; even when ordering, people tend to respect this acoustic hegemony by preferring nods and other head signs to mouthed messages, whenever possible.

And then you leave this herald of enlightened civilisation amid the surrounding wilderness to set off for the mountains. There, you abandon Inlands Banan for a less urbanised road which will very progressively raise the soft hills you've been skirting to a broad valley, as you drive onwards. In times past, the postman used to make this 90-kilometre journey once a week to bring the news to the few villages nestled at the bottom of the dale.

Mountains are the wildest part of Sápmi. If you are a hiker, you can make your way to the top of the hills, over the low tree line. Above the forests stretches a new plain, a new world, the upper heath, made of moorlands, more mires, more lakes and higher hills. Blown by unhindered winds, you may catch a glimpse in the distance of half-tame reindeer herds that the Sami let graze freely – unless it was just cows brought there by Swedish farmers from the still nearby village...

I have never really been to Lapland in winter. However, I have been able to get in touch with the spirit of this land during summertime. Apart from the ethical issues that history and society have raised concerning it, Sápmi demands another view on things than we are used to giving in order to grasp its reality and fit in its immensity.

Film

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The English Department Film Club

Autumn Semester 2011/2012

Schedule: Every Thursday evening.

Place: Room B112 at Uni-Bastions

Time: 19h30

Who? All students of the English Department are welcome.

This programme is displayed on the notice boards of the Philosophes and of the English Department at the Comédie.

It is also available online on our department website, together with more detailed information about the film club: www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/vie/film.html

Date:	Film Title:	Director:	Proposed by:
13 Oct. 2011	Terminator II (1991)	James Cameron	K. Gaydon
06 Oct. 2011	Life of Brian (1979)	Terry Jones	A. Iatsenko
20 Oct. 2011	Blade Runner (1982)	Ridley Scott	K. Gaydon
27 Oct. 2011	Hamlet (1948)	Laurence Olivier	L. Erne
03 Nov. 2011	Spider (2002)	David Cronenberg	M. Rösli
10 Nov. 2011	The Science of Sleep (2006)	Michel Gondry	D. Madsen
17 Nov. 2011	Inglourious Basterds (2001)	Quentin Tarantino	A. Iatsenko
24 Nov. 2011	Memento (2000)	Christopher Nolan	D. Madsen
01 Dec. 2011	28 Days Later (2002)	Danny Boyle	M. Rösli
08 Dec. 2011	Ghost in the Shell (1995)	Mamoru Oshii	K. Gaydon
15 Dec. 2011	Adam Bede (1992)	Giles Foster	V. Fehlbaum

NIFFF: The Film Script

By "Those who have been there"

Props: a house (to sleep in), an unlimited quantity of sesame balls and intellectual chewing gum, a sense of humor, a friend in the likeness of Jorge de la Noche, a science-fictional device which allows one to synchronize space/time dimensions in a manner of a GPS, and finally a copy of Spot Goes to School (to restore the reality principle).

Opening Sequence

MICHAEL: So, what are we writing, exactly? Is this a dialogue about going to the NIFFF or about our experience of being there?

ANNA: ...? The readers would know how to get to Neuchâtel... Let's tell them about the big "being there"!!!!

MICHAEL: ...? OK...



Camera pans over the four venues in the heart of the picturesque Neuchâtel Old Town.

VOICEOVER: The Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival 2011 took place between July 1st and 9th. Over 50 films of various genres dealing with the fantastic, the horror, the totally gruesome and the barely decent were screened within these nine days. Amongst the "fanatical extremists" of the event, Michael Rööfli and Anna Iatsenko have managed to squeeze into 37 films. This is their story.



ANNA: Oh, look, we are going to watch 37 films over 9 days!!!! That makes..... euh..... quite a few a day, Michael! Sorry, I can't do simple divisions.

MICHAEL: Oh, no, not really. Look, there are only two films on our very first day, and the programme gets gradually more intense during the week. By Saturday with its six screenings in a row, you won't even need your brain anymore!

ANNA: Good.... [*with a sudden switch to a "blonde voice"*] Oh, look, a parking space!



MICHAEL: Hm, the food stalls look rather similar to last year's. Oh, hang on a sec....

[Enter: SESAME BALLS. Sound track: the monumentally dramatic "Sunrise" from Strauss' Thus Spoke Zarathustra, which everybody knows at least from the opening of Kubrick's 2001: a Space Odyssey]

ANNA: WOAAAAAH!!!!!! What's that? and that?

[Enter: Saussice à l'absinthe!]

VOICEOVER: Little did they know that this would be their last link to reality!

Day 1

ANNA: Oh, it's movie time. What's on the menu?

VOICEOVER: For the technical reason of limited space allotted to this review in NOTED, the script will only permit selective reviews of the films which the two nutters can remember. The intermezzo will be signified by a furious consumption of SESAME BALLS.

MICHAEL: It's... No, not Monty Python's Flying Circus, but... *Trollhunter*! Mouahahahahaha!

VOICEOVER: In his best conference voice, Michael provides a review of the film:

TrollHunter (André Øvredal, Norway, 2010)

A couple of film students are tracking a strange character who might be involved with the mysterious deaths of several bears. However, their reportage turns out not to be about a bear slayer, but Norway's official troll hunter, who terminates the legendary creatures if they venture out of their natural territories, and has to suppress troll-related incidents from the media's attention.

Like in *The Blair Witch Project* or *Cloverfield*, the handheld camera is always operated by characters who are part of the story. And like in those previous films, this effect is used to turn the fantastic into the seemingly real. But while the existence of trolls is additionally rendered more and more plausible by biological, psychological and medical details, the film does not aim so much at a shock- or reality effect as the great pleasure of re-reading. Through the trolls, this hilarious mockumentary traces issues from paranoia over genocide to Norwegian politics from a new and refreshing angle; and you will never see power-lines or a rock fall in the same light again, wondering immediately what territories they fence in, or what clan-struggles they were caused by. A movie that will make you look at your environment with whole new eyes - once you've finished mopping up your tears of laughter.

ANNA: Oh, that was lovely! Especially the part about the troll-smells! Very uncanny!



What's next?

MICHAEL: SESAME BALLS!

Day 2

Food-munching sounds with an occasional burp... from the creature dressed in green and dripping green goo, and who somehow found its way into the solar system and ended up at the NIFFF.

MICHAEL: *[between two hefty bites:]* Anna?

ANNA: hmpf... Whoat?

MICHAEL: We need to talk about Kevin!

ANNA: Aaaaaaaah! Gotcha!

VOICEOVER: In her worst conference voice, Anna provides a little (not intellectual enough) review:

We Need to Talk about Kevin (Lynne Ramsay, UK, 2011)

What I really like about this film, apart from the brilliant performance of Tilda Swinton (see her in the role of the Archangel Gabriel in *Constantine*), is not so much the plot, but the idea that sometimes children aren't all cute but can be truly diabolical. OK, I don't have children yet, so I can't really say that I'm talking from experience here, but have you noticed how our society goes on and on about the very fabulousness of cute little angels with blonde curls and huge blue eyes? I am sure that you have been confronted with this "fabulousness" on a bus or while grocery shopping, or at any other random moment in life (which often happens to be way longer than you'd like it to be) when some little barely-walking person overtly tests your patience for the fun of it! Like ramming his baby-sized shopping trolley into the back of your legs while the parent looks at you sheepishly in the style of "Oh, kids, you know!!!" But what if... what if they aren't as cute as we generally make them out to be? What if they really drive you clinically mad? What if they grow up to be sadistic torturers of little creatures and, eventually, turn into psychotic killers who lock their schoolmates up in a gym and shoot at them with a bow and arrows? There is certainly food for thought in this film, and I would strongly recommend it, not so much as a contraceptive for those who are thinking of having kids (despite having seen the film I know that my children will be



cute little angels!!!), but as a different take on a society which venerates children to the point of putting them on God-like pedestals!

Day 3

ANNA: Michael, I think I've stopped thinking!

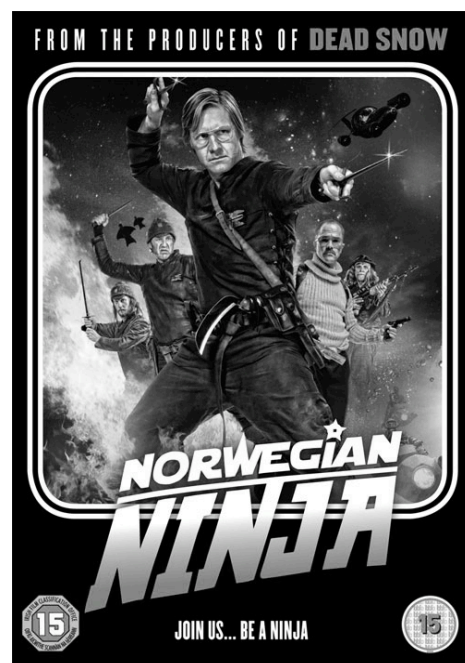
MICHAEL: You don't need that for now.... it's *Norwegian Ninja* next!

ANNA: Yeah, cool, yeah... yeah... euh... (beeeeeeeeeep... flatline)

MICHAEL: [*After elaborately clearing his throat:*]

Norwegian Ninja (Thomas Cappelen Malling, Norway, 2010)

Gosh, I'm turning into the foreign-correspondent for Norway at the NIFFF! This film is toying with an actual historical figure: Arne Treholt, a politician condemned to prison for espionage during the Cold War. However, instead of an espionage thriller, the film draws on an entirely different genre: it casts Treholt as the leader of a secret Norwegian ninja conspiracy. Expect the unexpected. The well-trodden initiation rites involving spiritual illumination, codes of honour and other ingredients of the genre turn utterly absurd in the Norwegian context. With the wonderfully (and overtly) homecooked special effects and a good dose of Nordic humour, this clever production does massive harm to your stomach muscles!



Day 4

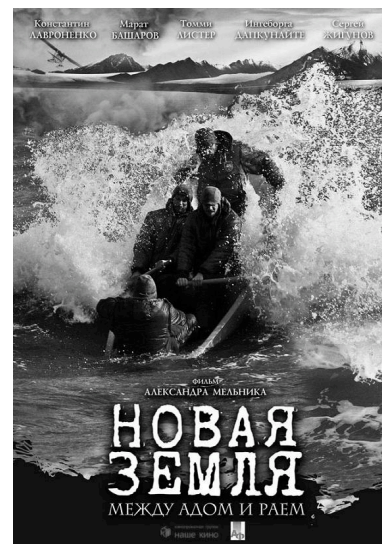
MICHAEL: Anna, it's Russian-films time!

ANNA: Да, comrade! Let me say a thing or two about *Terra Nova* viz mai best Rrrrushhhian aktzent:

Terra Nova (Aleksandr Melnik, Russia, 2008)

What does one do when in a prison the population of inmates exceeds its normal contingent five-fold? Well, you ship the most dangerous criminals off to an island from which it would be impossible for them to escape! In the style of “the promised land where psychologically disturbed individuals can roam free and organize themselves in a coherent manner”...! But of course! And... of course, as you may have already guessed, this all turns into a big mess. Apart from rather disturbing references to cannibalism (because guess what? they haven't been delivered enough food!) and rather graphic violence, there is a hero who can save them all! This is where it all gets a bit tricky – bad guy who became a good guy, who is

nonetheless not that good after all, but who manages to pull it off, sort of, in the last few minutes of the film. But never mind the superhero inmate – there are other details which are slightly more valuable. For example, the film ultimately raises the question of where we draw the line between human and inhuman behaviour. The inmates are certainly insane for the most part and some of them never have moments of clarity, but what about those who have sent them off to this island? How are they better?



Day 5

VOICEOVER: And now for the more disturbing part of the experience! Our two film-specialists are sitting at the kitchen table at 2 a.m. trying to get over the shock of *Secuestrados* – an impossibility, even with the back-up of lots and lots of SESAME BALLS!

ANNA: I am feeling violated!

MICHAEL: The horror! THE HORROR!!!

VOICEOVER: *After gathering himself for about twenty minutes, he dares (for the time of a brief review) to think back to the traumatic experience.*

Secuestrados (Miguel Ángel Vivas, Spain, 2010)

This is completely opposed to the filmic horror that makes us erupt into pleasurable goose bumps. The story in itself is terrifying enough: a gang of masked men break into the house of a bourgeois family who only just moved in. They keep everybody hostage while the father has to empty all bank accounts at gun point downtown. Needless to say, things go wrong and none of the hostages survive. On the plot-level, the film stuns its spectator not only with its graphic violence, but also by systematically punishing hostages who refuse to kill their aggressor when they have a momentary chance. Similarly, a rape is repeatedly foreshadowed, but not in order to play with the spectator's expectations, but seemingly to incite their pleasurable anticipation (the rape indeed takes place, and in its most predictable form). I was terrified by the sick role



the film apparently wanted me to accept as its spectator. On another level, the film also shamelessly violates other filmic texts. Its story is pirated from Michael Haneke's *Funny Games*, and several inflicted injuries come directly from Gaspard Noé's terrifying *Irréversible*. However, while these two films (meta cinematic meditations on violence) have their own *raison d'être*, the simple reproduction of their violent actions outside their contexts amounts to a pure rape of previous cinematic works for the sake of a cheap thrill. Even the fact that the film is composed entirely of 12 long takes remains unconnected to the plot, and ultimately only signifies the failed attempt at an arty touch. *Secuestrados* is the absolutely only film at the entire NIFFF that should not have been screened - which emphasises all the other and thoroughly brilliant choices by the festival committee even more!

VOICEOVER [*to itself*]: Oh, there he goes, waving his finger!!! “This is good, that is bad”... ppppffffff... But don't worry, it's nothing a good Pat Thai noodle dish or a Bleuchâtel cheese sausage from the nearby food stalls couldn't remedy...

Day 6

VOICEOVER: After being emotionally and intellectually violated, our two heroes walk into their first screening of the sixth day...

MICHAEL: Anna, why is there a clown on stage?

ANNA: Michael, I think we need to lay off the sesame balls!

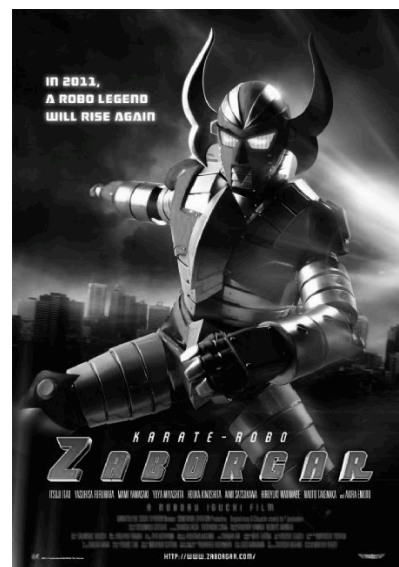
VOICEOVER: Hahahahaha... Sorry! Anyways... Little did the two know... (really, they know quite little)... but they've walked into the children's matinee! Haaaaahahahahahahahahahaha!

MICHAEL: We may not want to review this...

ANNA: Yeah, I know, but then I can't NOT review *Karate-Robo Zaborgar*!!!

Karate-Robo Zaborgar (Noboru Iguchi, Japan, 2011)

Robots, robots, robots!!! Bad robots, good robots, King-Kong-sized sexy robots, motor-bike-robots.... Ok, in short, you take *Austin Powers*, *Bioman* (remember those series they used to show in the early 90's on kid's French TV?), *Transformers*, loads of plastic costumes and some glue – you shake the whole thing together and you get a brilliant, what in French they call a *nanar*, entitled *Karate-Robo Zaborgar* (2011). By the way, Noboru Iguchi is a top-notch director of these sorts of films. If you really want to roll on the floor with laughter at cheesy lines, characters and totally surreal “special” effects, then watch this film! I can guarantee that it will take you some time to forget it!



Day/Act 7

Early next morning (about 11 a.m.)

ANNA: Michael, I am not feeling well! I think I need to read something... deep and insightful... Where is my copy of *Spot Goes to School*?

Musical interlude!

VOICEOVER: Our heroes are having a bit of a problem choosing the next review because on this seventh day (on which, by the way, even God rested!) they were confronted with a moral dilemma. Should it be *The Evil Dead* or *The Girl Next Door*? The first film - part of the gore retrospective - is not so much of a problem *per se*. It is *The Girl* that turned out to be ever so disturbing.

MICHAEL: [*Takes a deep breath, opting for the less gory, but all the more disturbing film.*]

The Girl Next Door (Gregory Wilson, USA, 2007)

Based on Jack Ketchum's provocative novel, this film is a rewarding but painful ordeal for the spectator. Whereas its topic - child abuse - seems rather familiar, *The Girl Next Door* addresses less-discussed issues, and finds a way of communicating them straight to the guts of the spectator. This is not another film about lusty dads, deliberately unseeing moms and children who have to deal with the consequences of sexual abuse. Instead, a teenage girl is harassed by her aunt and her children, and the true violence resides in initially innocent-seeming distinctions and minute choices of words or connotations. The film traces the devastating effects of this power and violence we keep overlooking in our daily lives. What is also horrifying is the immediate and strong response of the girl's cousins. Far from the elusive status of innocent children, they readily welcome and participate in their mother's torture of the girl, which allows them to channel their own drives and teenage curiosity toward a 'legitimate subject'. This straightforward and highly efficient film is an absolute must-see you will wish you had never heard about. ... Sorry!



Ac..Day 8.... or is it night?

ANNA: Ha! Anazer Raaaaashian mouuuuuvie! Super-prod-high-tech-badly-translated wannabe-blockbuster! Yummy!

Target (Alexander Zeldovich, Russia, 2011)

Target is a huge super-production with loads of kinda whacky special effects which is not quite translatable through subtitles. In order to watch this “gem”, I would strongly recommend that you read pretty much all of the Russian literary classics, eventually spend some time in the country and, certainly, learn the language, because the depth of the film lies elsewhere than in the poor translation of the film's culture-specific subtleties. Although the plot is relatively straightforward (some Russian *nouveau-very-very-stinking-riches* bored out of their minds and with a penchant for health-freakdom and an acute fear of old age, decide to go to the middle of nowhere and climb into a hole left over from some unknown scientific experiment which grants you immortality). The plot is pretty bogus. HOWEVER! Instead of living happily ever after in their eternal youth (or 30-40-somethingness), strange things begin to happen to them as if the experience of climbing into the hole allowed them to get in touch with something primordial and relatively evil within themselves. Diluted with rather clever and sober critique of the society of consumption, I think that this film really takes a moment to think of the inner beauty of the human on a slightly deeper level than one of “beauty lies on the inside” type. If you sometimes feel a little pessimistic about the human race, this will certainly be entertaining for you. Personally, I am rather the opposite and as the naive and hopeful person that I am, I do believe in the good within the human. I still enjoyed the film very very much! Watch it!



sOmETHink 9

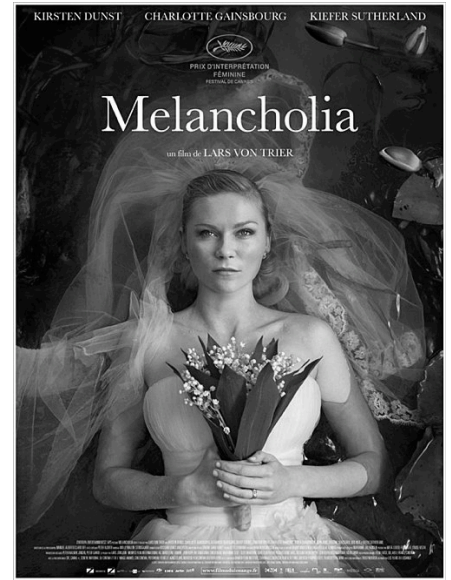
VOICEOVER: The following is the last review from our two heroes. No introductory dialogues will be given as, by the ninth day, they have lost all capacity for speech and general intelligible communication. The reason why the review is still included is the NOTED deadline that the two were working for last-minute in order to submit this article!

ANNA: [*Momentarily jolting out of her human screensaver mode.*]

Melancholia (Lars von Trier, Denmark, 2011)

You may say what you like about Lars von Trier or his films, but please do give *Melancholia* (2011) a chance, or, at least watch it until the end! OK, so it is a little

intellectual (but so are a lot of other things in this world!), perhaps even “artsy-fartsy” (but then again, we do enjoy cocktails at the *Nuit des Bains!*), but this does not mean that it should be forever relegated to the “yawn”-file. Personally, I liked *Melancholia* a lot, and the more I think about it, the more I like it. On a very basic level, this film is a great change from your average Hollywood blockbuster super-production which leaves one bug-eyed and waaaaaaay over-stimulated. This does not, however, mean that the film lacks plot or action: planets crash, a marriage falls apart on the day of the ceremony, depression, ash falling from the sky... The elements are there, it is just the way that these elements are woven together into the narrative that makes this film a truly beautiful (in a strange way!) work of art. On a slightly deeper level, the aesthetic value of *Melancholia* is priceless. I particularly enjoyed the opening sequences where von Trier presents his audience with his reading of the apocalypse that is about to happen (don’t forget, a planet finds itself on the Earth’s trajectory!). I experienced the first ten minutes of the film as a visual reminiscence of what I have seen in art museums during the exhibits of early modern Italian paintings: (almost) still lives against very sombre, Baroque backgrounds. This dissonance, along with the extreme slow motion of the shots, creates within the viewer a type of melancholia that Freud talked about – the kind of unresolved longing for something. However, with this I will say no more and let you figure that one out for yourselves. Go watch it on a Sunday, in the middle of the afternoon...



THE END!!! ... AAaaAhh!

VOICEOVER: Despite the heavy dosage of neuroleptics and antipsychotics that our two heroes have ingested as part of post-NIFFF treatment at the local mental institution, their seminars will take place as scheduled!

P.S.

ANNA: Michael, we forgot to include Jorge de la Noche!!!!

MICHAEL: Yep, we did!

ANNA: Well, we'll just have to write him into next year's review!

Theatre

???

Shakespeare in Performance:

By Mark D'Arcy

The Merchant of Venice, Royal Shakespeare Company, 17/05/11

A perennial question asked about this Shakespearian comedy set in Venice concerns the representation of Shylock on stage. Is he to be villain or victim? Will he be presented as an ugly medieval stereotype of 'the Jew' (Portia); or as a complex and multifaceted human being, whose very essence fluctuates under social pressures? Patrick Stewart presents a Shylock whose humanity is under attack. His personhood and psyche are injected with poison, hacked at with cruel racial slurs and finally rendered asunder by an exquisite piece of treachery: the splitting of bonds that were once woven together by blood and love.

Shylock's first appearance on stage is crucial in setting the balance in the mind of the audience member. The metamorphosis of textual Shylock into

flesh and blood is always a powerful moment and this production's interpretation is quite unambiguous. Stewart plays the role of a confident, successful businessman in a well-cut Italian suit and sporting a pair of leather brogues which glow with the power of understated wealth. In fact, the concept of 'wealth' is the key to understanding the realized performance of this scene. Stewart's Shylock is neither merely rich nor is he a mere hoarder of physical money. He is a creator of wealth and it is this artful power of creation which makes him so seductive to the audience.

Shylock's ethnicity is intertwined with this positive philosophy of wealth and creation. He tells the tale of Jacob and the sheep with benevolent delight, an Ivy league economics professor taking pleasure in recounting the anecdote of a great moment in entrepreneurship. The obvious but crucial point made here is that it is not

the magnitude of Abraham's material possessions which impresses Shylock but rather the man's ability to create wealth. Jacob breeds/breathes money in the sense that he oversees the husbandry of his flock in such a way that wealth is created and is directly linked to living things, and importantly, to new life.

The wider Jewish community of Venice is then drawn into the scene by means of Tubal, who "will furnish" Shylock some part of the required three million dollars (as opposed to three thousand ducats in the text).

It is perhaps worth remembering then that Shylock is putting himself into debt in order to provide for the loan to Antonio. The audience is also obliged to consider that it is another member of the Jewish community who is ultimately providing the funding required to fund Bassanio's romantic escapades. Love and money, individual and community, Christian and Jew are all subsequently interlocked and interfused from the very beginning of the play.

As the play progresses Shylock's personality transforms into something more beastly and base. Yet it is to both the director's and the actor's credit that this tragic disintegration from dignified human being into a two-dimensional wretch does not occur behind the scenes. We as audience members are given access to key moments in the businessman's life and we feel ourselves drawn into the web of pain and isolation that wraps around the protagonist.

It is this very lack of consistency in character, as the environment around him becomes more and more antagonistic, that makes Stewart's

Shylock so endlessly fascinating, an almost Buddhist study in the questionable nature of any kind of permanent essence of self. This taps directly into Shakespeare's greatest skill as a dramatist in terms of his ability to create characters whose motivations and feelings elude summary and/or simple explanations (this last point was brought to my attention by Prof. Erne during a seminar on Elizabethan and Jacobean culture).

Shylock as business man clearly (in this performance) sees the bond as a form of a joke. Stewart goes to great pains to emphasize the repetition of the word 'merry' in his description of the security on the loan. My own interpretation of this scene was that Stewart's Shylock was creating a joke, but one with a special message for Antonio, 'I will loan you anything you wish but please understand just how deeply your actions and words have wounded me over the years'. This was an opportunity for Antonio to recognize his fellow citizen's pain and for a new relationship to develop. But Antonio rejects these sentiments and thus the bond is agreed upon in an atmosphere poisoned by old hatreds.

The vital point here is that the text of the play very clearly shows Shylock, even at this point, to be motivated to a significant degree by fantasies of revenge. However, my personal reading of Stewart's performance leads me to understand that while Shylock (as performed, not read) is indeed painfully aware of the slander projected upon him by Antonio, he has no thought, at least in this scene, of actually calling the bond.

The violent image of the pound of flesh, at this point, serves merely to deliver a coded message: language is powerful, words matter and the human mind can be easily hoodwinked into believing anything if that idea forms part of the linguistic and/or cultural backdrop of a community.

Shylock is a double victim in the sense that he is both discriminated against and is forced to engage in public appearances in full knowledge of the fact that he is despised. As he prepares himself for an evening dinner date we, as audience members, catch a glimpse of the real man behind the mask. He is jaded with the farce of pretending not to be hurt by the cruel barbs which rain down upon him from all quarters 'I am bid forth to supper...But wherefore should I go? I am not bid for love...'. He then continues with the key lines 'By Jacob's staff I swear I have no mind of feasting forth tonight'.

This new reference to Jacob and his staff echoes the previous allusion to the sheep breeder. But this time the circumstances and motivation are very different. In his first scene Shylock was in public, a performer (n.b. credit to Patrick Stewart who refers to this idea of a public and private Shylock) and his Judaism was carefully packaged to sell a positive image of himself and his faith to a hostile public. Now in his own home his religion becomes a crutch, something to cast his weight upon as the reality of his burdensome isolation falls upon him.

The staff is no longer something that creates communal wealth nor is it associated with new life. It is now a talisman for protection, useful for barring

doors and fending off burglars.

A quick point on Jessica: so often cast as the abused daughter, there is at least a hint of something more sinister in her performance in this production. There is a very noticeable deviation from many other productions when Shylock takes his daughter in his arms and gently puts his brow to hers as he delivers a gentle and loving prayer to her in Hebrew. Emotional music plays gently in the background as the audience tingles in empathy with this most natural of moments, a father praying to any god who will listen to protect his child and keep her safe.

Shylock then exits the stage. Jessica promptly walks over to a CD player and destroys the emotion of the scene by brusquely cutting off the music. All of a sudden the theatrical has become depressingly meta-theatrical. We imagine Shylock walking down the streets of Las Vegas (the onstage production has been moved from Shakespeare's Venice) still wrapped in that music and emotion, and then we realize, perhaps with great compassion for him, that his deep feelings have not been reciprocated by his daughter.

This is a powerful moment in the production, because the director and actors manage to transform the audience into two completely different ontological categories in a matter of seconds. First we become Shylock: we feel Jessica in our arms and bend our necks to lock brows with her, we eek out every ounce of benediction possible from our bones to ring-fence our daughter from all harm. However, with Jessica's frigid swoosh across a touch screen (of

an I-pod) we are flung out of Shylock's body and mind and crash land back into our respective seats in the theatre, alone, divided and shivering at the cold-bloodedness of a daughter who feels absolutely nothing for her father.

So as Jessica has manipulated her father, does this production manipulate the audience into feeling more sympathy for Shylock than he deserves? Perhaps, but then again the Shylock as performed in this play (and especially up until this point in the play) is quite distinct from the text (and other performances) and deserves to be judged on its own merits.

In Act three, scene one, the production makes another dramaturgical choice which further complicates the question of Shylock's culpability as a seeker of a bloody and monstrous form of revenge. It is a delicate and subtle addition to the scene, yet the delicacy and minuteness of its form is inversely proportional to its power and effect.

Solanio and Salerio are talking among themselves and produce a serpentine hissing noise as the banker enters the café. This same sound is reproduced, but with a greater intensity, when Shylock launches into his 'hath not a Jew eyes' speech when he says 'if you poison us, do we not die'? The message would seem to be that Shylock has been punctured with venomous fangs for so long that he has been reduced to a wobbling pillar of poison, packed into human skin.

The serpent metaphor also helps to make sense of the inconsistency of Shylock's character as viewed in each of his separate five scenes (again credit to Stewart and Suchet for observing and noting this inconsistency). Shylock, like

all great Shakespearian characters, seems to shed his skin just at the moment when we think we may have grasped the form and character of his true self.

The final blow comes of course with the message from Tubal concerning the sale of Leah's ring by Jessica. This is when Shylock's suffering reaches critical mass (a kind of bloodthirsty psychic fission will shortly ensue). But resting for a moment in that second when he discovers that his only physical connection to Leah is gone, the audience member is struck by the realization that Shylock is a real human being.

He is so often (and the text certainly supports such readings) performed as a man who specializes in the commodification of emotions – Bassanio's love is worth three million dollars, Jessica is compared to a diamond, and his unconscious fears manifest themselves in the form of moneybags. Yet in this scene the very opposite happens. We begin with a material object and, of all people, it is Shylock who transforms dead metal into a human being, a woman and a wife, a lover and a mother.

This transubstantiation reminds everyone that money is, in itself, worthless. It only functions as a symbol, as the agreed upon sign for something that is valuable. Shylock says as much when he laments that he would not have sold the ring for a 'wilderness' of monkeys, because the ring in and of itself is as nothing compared to what it stood as a symbol for.

I must confess I found the court scene in act four slightly overwhelming.

Shylock has, by this point, been reduced to a clothes-horse of symbols. He doesn't wear a yarmulke, a tallit and a traditional overcoat, they wear him. Even the little desk he sits at during the trial has a very unusual construction, the legs of which create a Star of David outline in the court-room.

As Suchet points out he is called 'the Jew' or 'Jew' a crushing twenty-two times here. And as one my fellow students noted in a seminar, (Aline) there is nothing redeeming about Shylock in the performance of this scene. And yet surely that is the point: there is nothing left to redeem precisely because he has been spiritually and psychologically gutted on a daily basis all of his adult life, to the point where he has become a desiccated husk. What we see on stage is, I concede without reservation, not a normal human being. However, the monster he has become is the very normal and predictable consequence of decades of abuse and isolation.

The use of the gun was, I felt, unnecessary and superfluous (n.b. the director added an extra twist to the onstage production by having Shylock produce a gun from his briefcase and then proceed to threaten to shoot his nemesis Antonio.) The colt 45 mini-scene reinforces again, if it needed to be reinforced, that Shylock has been turned into a weapon, but not to the point where he has become completely mechanized (he loads a bullet into the chamber but eventually drops his weapon and surrenders).

The message would seem to be that even after all this abuse, Shylock still has enough humanity left to step outside

the stimulus-response reflex of aggression met with an unthinking and animal counter-aggression.

In conclusion, then, Shylock, by virtue of the dramaturgical choices alluded to above, is presented as a character towards whom the audience is actively encouraged to feel sympathy, especially at certain key moments in the play. The affable businessman in his office paying for other people's romances, the gentle father holding his daughter tenderly, the isolated outcast in the café eating alone and the broken widower lamenting his physical separation from his deceased wife. All these moments taken together make it difficult to see the business man as a simple monster or medieval stereotype.

He is a man, with strengths and weaknesses, who ultimately becomes unhinged by his surroundings. The viciousness and savagery he displays at the end of the play are understood, in the terms set by this production, as the by-products of a life lived in exile and riddled with scorn and humiliation.

Background reading and other important influences:

1. Michael Billington's review of this production as published in the Guardian newspaper. (He makes a funny point about how Shylock was practicing golf in his office because he might have been forbidden from joining the exclusive golf clubs of his peers). <http://www.guardian.co.uk/stage/2011/may/20/merchant-of-venice-review-rsc>

2. Patrick Stewart and David Suchet and their insights into playing Shylock (taken from the interview in the course Dokeos files on *The Merchant of Venice*).

3. Our seminar (Shakespeare in performance) as a whole influenced this piece of writing, especially Prof. Erne's point on the dramaturgical trick or device used by Shakespeare which prevents the audience or reader from being able to instantly understand characters' motivations. I am also indebted to my fellow students for all the discussions we had about all the plays we saw post performance.

4. In a post-performance seminar in

London, Alexandria Gorbounova made an insightful point about how she felt her identity as an audience member kept switching during the performance of *As You Like It*. Her idea helped me to think about the Jessica/Shylock/music scene alluded to above.

5. I found Aline Ijsselmuiden's interpretation of this performance very helpful as I came away from the play with the exact opposite interpretation. This forced me to reflect on how I could attempt to justify my own, subjective, response to the production just as she had successfully justified hers.

BAP joins the AC structure

By Nicholas Weeks

English Theatre Group becomes part of the Activités Culturelles (AC)

For some of you, the title of this article might recall a passage in Salman Rushdie's *Shalimar The Clown* where the author makes fun of the jargon of international organisations such as the UN, ILO, WHO... whose frequent use of acronyms for the names of the various organisations, committees, projects or working teams makes their memorandums hermetic to the non-initiated. Well at our own humble levels, jargon also tends to permeate our ways

of speaking BAP, ADEA, AC... Here is the title and overview of our activities.

BAP stands for Barbe-à-Papa, an English Theatre group composed of students from the University of Geneva, which began in 2004. From the beginning, a group of us would meet up in a mouldy room on the archaic Philosophes building, now unsurprisingly in refurbishment. We'd move all tables and chairs to the side in order to rehearse for a couple of hours before moving everything back into place. These latter years, much has changed.

We have recently been granted the beautiful dance room in Uni Mail as a rehearsal space. However, the main objective of the group has remained to retain the creative spirit we all have in youth and develop it into a proper acting sensibility.

Through the years BAP has performed a series of plays and sketches ranging from a translation of the comic and absurdist play *Amphitryon 38* (2005) by Giraudoux to the menacing dramatic fragments of Harold Pinter in *FRAGMENTS* (2008), toying with Peter Brook's experimental play version of



neurologist Oliver Sacks's *The Man Who Mistook his Wife for a Hat* (2007) or the comical assemblage from Wilde, Shaw and Jane Austen in *An Ideal Party* (2009).

The group has also had the opportunity to travel abroad and participate in the FRINGE festival in Edinburgh, with a composition based on various scenes from the Bard, *Shakes-Sheared* (2006). Edinburgh during the theatre festival was overwhelming - the city streets were teeming with theatre-goers and actors performing, handing out flyers all day long. Every theatre, hall, courtyard and big room served as

an improvised dramatic space for both amateurs and students of professional acting companies from all over the world.

In the past two years, BAP has been producing more ambitious works. The vast number of students involved have enabled the group to realise T.S. Eliot's mystical historical play *Murder in the Cathedral* (2010) and Shakespeare's magical fantasy *The Tempest* (2011). Both productions were successful, but the reception of the latter has surpassed our expectations with an attendance of 200 people throughout the weekend.

The students involved over the years have all contributed to making BAP a creative wellspring for ideas, acting skills and insightful readings of the texts involved. BAP has also benefited from the collaboration between students and staff of the ADEA.

ADEA stands for the 'association des étudiants du département de langue et littérature anglaises'. Over the years, the students from ADEA have been supportive and helpful in providing financial support and personnel to help with the technical side of things, getting the bar ready for the shows, taking care of tickets and announcements.

Now for a prospective look into the future. During the summer of 2011, BAP was finally integrated into the AC structure.

AC stands for the 'Activités Culturelles' of the University of Geneva. This means that from now on advertising BAP's projects will be carried out at University level. We will also benefit from more substantial financial support and longer performance dates for our shows. The increased visibility of BAP's activities over the years, however, has

placed extra demands on the organisation of the workshops.

The 2011-2012 workshops will be part of a research project dealing with the expressivity of gestures in the later works of Samuel Beckett. The workshops will proceed as they have done in the past, with a series of games serving as a basis for training one's sensitivity to space, others, movement and diction.



Because the project will be part of a research project on the way in which gestures are performed/perceived, some parts of the rehearsals will be filmed (those where people are asked to perform scripted actions, rather than the moments when games leave more free range to improvisations). Thus the 2011-2012 workshops will be special in the sense that they will provide a unique opportunity for people interested in theatre and acting to get some feedback and to discuss what it is that actors are doing when they rehearse.

I conceive the BAP workshops as a creative environment where a group of people can experiment with daily or special gestures, slow them down or

speed them up, perform them with intensity of slackness, precision or indecision and see how this changes the way in which they are received by others while confronting this with one's own sensory feedback.

Here are a few threads by Peter Brook, which have guided and continue to inspire my relation to the theatre:

"We are continually expressing a thousand things with all the parts of our body. Most of the time this happens without our knowing it, and in an actor this makes for a diffuse attitude that cannot magnetize an audience.

The actor must know that whatever movement he executes, it can either remain an empty shell or he can consciously fill it with true significance.

Theatre is always both a search for meaning and a way of making this meaning meaningful for others."

I hope these words will encourage some of you, if not to participate actively in the workshops, at least to come and see the result of our work in April 2012, when we'll perform our new show.

For more info, check out the following links:

- http://web.mac.com/nickweeks1/Barbe_à_Papa/
- <http://www.a-c.ch/>
- <http://www.asso-etud.unige.ch/adea/>

Creative Writing

???

A Love Story - Byte by Bit

By Bryn Skibo

Once upon an operating system, in a far-away place called Paris, France, in a robot factory named ParaCells-US... a young and gifted engineer named Cheung LuBien welded together and powered-up a prototype caving robot tentatively labeled Calvin1025 (serial n °CN00000001). Inspired by Alvin, the deep-sea robot who found the Titanic, Calvin1025 bore no resemblance to his namesake. Weighing only 3.5 pounds and consisting of a thin titanium-alloy body on a tri-wheel chassis, the caving robot was equipped with sonar navigation, obstacle aversion, and repelling capabilities. "The finest caving robot ever designed," bragged ParaCells-US's bigwigs. They spoke quite rashly for Calvin1025, while autonomously operational, was a Lamborghini with no driver. A lit house with no one home. A floppy disk in

a...well, you get the idea. While compact and robust, Calvin1025 had just enough CPU to get around but not much else. This deficiency would need to be rectified if the model was to put ParaCells-US at the forefront of exploration technology.

One night, in a dank and sticky bar behind Gare du Nord, two duplicitous ParaCells-US CEOs met with the competition's lead engineer, Josephine D'Ordi. Mademoiselle D'Ordi was solely responsible for designing that year's sensational new micro-controller. The two business-suit clad men quietly offered her three times her current extravagant salary if she would bring her ideas to ParaCells-US immediately. Ms. D'Ordi's signing bonus was parked out front. Three months later, ParaCells-US revealed their newest marvel, "Field Operational Processor." Multi-cored.

Quantum-tunneling capable. Entirely self-operational. Only one question remained: could such a powerful processor operate in a self-transporting caving robot? One frosty March morning, Cheung inserted FOP (license key n °LTHR 64845 30988 40768 32409) into Calvin1025's internal systems and started the upload.

Autonomous movement programs load complete. Mission command RAM upgraded. Self-inflate/deflate tire systems uploaded. FOP's first encounter with Calvin1025 was a blur of sweeping blue upload bars. "Oh 01000110 01110101 01100011 01101100, this bot is wired," FOP processed as he came online with a tri-chord beep and reviewed Calvin1025's extensive capabilities. "We are going to make beautiful explorations together."

In the following weeks, FOP fawned over his partner, explaining to him that they were the finest marriage between brains and brawn, the new Lucy and Desi, designed and destined to be together. Calvin1025, however, while equipped with a halogen-bulb, lithium-battery headlamp, was not bright enough to notice the strong feelings pulsing from his added software. Fate had something else in store for him ...

"Tonight on CNN Technology, Kate McClane meets with Mr. Jean-Louis LePropre to discuss a new house-cleaning robot that has fired up a dusty industry. Kate?"

"Thanks John. I'm here in Paris, France with Mr. LePropre, the CEO and

founder of revered vacuum manufacturer AspirateursInspirants to discuss his most recent prototype that has rumors flying around the service robot industry. Mr. LePropre, what can you tell us about the device?"

"Bonjour, Catty. Le MaidJulienneSE is a limited-edition, self-determined vacuum that features zee latest in cleaning technology: sudden-movement response, sonar, and polish ducts, just to give you an idea. She 'as a new look wiz a sleek, aerodynamic body and a seducing cherry finish. And, but of course, she is eco-friendly. Obviously, I can not tell you everyzing, but, she is on 'er way to a secret location where an independent review will grade 'er after zirty days. She should 'it stores by September. I bet, Catty, you are very excited, non?"

On a cool spring evening, MaidJulienneSE was brought into ParaCells-US for her first trial run. Calvin1025 was certain that his video camera with optical predictive spacial recognition had never seen anything like her. Once activated, MaidJulienneSE's sonar detected the lab furniture and she zoomed off to vacuum every inch of the floor before wiping down the tables and stools. She was efficient. Edgy. Redder than the wings of the Moulin Rouge. She rolled with the grace derived from four rotationally-independent rubber wheels; but *beyond* handling like Schumacher on a good day, MaidJulienneSE cleaned like no other service bot. The attending engineers were impressed; Calvin1025

was hooked. FOP reassured himself that it was just a systems malfunction.

Calvin1025 grew more smitten by the day. One heady morning in mid-May, Calvin1025 pinged FOP, his blower whirring excitedly, "FOP, did you see that? I was watching MaidJulienneSE's maneuvering-"

"I noticed; you were zooming in on her quarter-panel."

"Ok. Yes *but*, she turned around while I was watching, looked right at me, and waved her nozzle. Check my CPU, it might have crashed."

"Calvin1025, 01010011 01010100 01000110 01010101. Seriously-"

"You're just overheated because she can't even see you."

"High-maintenance, over-priced plastic cleaning bots do not make me malfunction. She's just a marketing ploy to attract rich housewives and their credit cards," FOP transmitted. "Now a brawny caving bot that can't take a hint, I go crazy for-"

"Fine, fine, you don't like her. Understood." Calvin1025 refocused on his ruby paramour.

Pollen-filled days turned to heady spring nights as Calvin1025 and MaidJulienneSE grew more adventurous in their contacts. MaidJulienneSE's floor cleaning pattern evolved to require passing Cheung's workspace 47% more often than other areas needing to be cleaned. Cheung noticed that Calvin1025's CPU output dramatically increased with every additional pass of the fiery little bot. Like two magnets attached to the same fulcrum, their paths

slowly converged. In the midst of their AIBO love, they were not aware that MaidJulienneSE's every move was being recorded by her own internal systems.

At the end of May, a systems analyst downloaded her program log and was surprised to see her increasingly erratic maneuvers over the past thirty days. He discussed it in disbelief with his colleagues in the cafeteria. Cheung, nearby, made a hypothesis that her sonar components might be thrown off by the GPS-capable robots in the lab as her presence had equally disturbed his project's CPU output. The observations were dutifully recorded and AspirateursInspirants, Inc. received a detailed analysis of MaidJulienne's performance. She had, astonishingly, not passed the review.

On a sunny June afternoon, Calvin1025 was reminiscing over MaidJulienneSE's decorative sweeps and pirouettes from her morning clean when a young man wearing an AspirateursInspirants, Inc. jacket came in through the lab's double-doors, took MaidJulienneSE from her cabinet, and walked back out the way he came.

"Holy Unimate, what's going on?" Calvin demanded. "FOP, look through my lens; MaidJulienneSE's been botnapped!" Calvin1025 narrowed his video camera's aperture, clenched his left pincher, and said, "FOP, We *must* follow."

He darted off the table, landed smoothly, and was zipping towards the

doors as FOP's transmissions rang through his systems.

"Calvin1025, stop, what are you doing? 10110110, calm down she's probably just going in for repairs: stop!"

Calvin1025 smashed the doors open and peeled down the hall, careening between heeled and sneakered human feet. The whine of his .17cu.in engine echoed against the tile walls while the employees of ParaCells-US frantically jumped out of his path. With his programs running at maximum capacity, Calvin1025 could barely register FOP's communications.

"Calvin1025, cease and desist! *Please*; I don't want to be redesigned to operate factory arms! I don't want you recycled into a dishwasher! Any moment now, we're going to get smashed to pieces!"

"FOP, concentrate," Calvin1025 shouted before squealing to a halt just past the factory front doors. In the sudden stillness, a van could be heard pulling away from the parking lot. Calvin1025 processed the situation for a moment and said simply, "Find out where MaidJulienneSE's heading before we lose her. If you do not, this friendship will be nothing more than a work relationship."

FOP had an indefinable lag as he silently considered his options. *I would like nothing more than for this little French sucker to get recycled but I can't stand to have my partnership with Calvin1025 any less amorous than it already is.* Finally, he asked, "Calvin1025, are you going to risk everything for some plastic Hoover? I thought, a fine machine like yourself, you

would go for something more...intellectual. We could turn around right now and everyone would think you just malfunctioned."

"FOP, I haven't gone into Standby for weeks. Whenever I save something important and try to open it later, it's just a JPEG of her, polishing our worktop. But these aren't *malfunctions*, it's something more. I know she's not just a vacuum to me. She makes me feel...technologically advanced. Why can't you process this?"

FOP computed perfectly what Calvin1025 was saying; his own RAM was clogged with RAWs of Calvin1025. If he had possessed an external power supply, it would have broken. Slowly, regretfully, he google-mapped the AspirateursInspirants, Inc. location.

"Calvin," FOP transmitted, "whatever happens, just remember what I did for you. Now please, we need to hide before we're picked up and taken apart. We are an advanced caving robot, let's act like it. You should be uploading the location for the nearest sewer access point and the catacomb layout."

"Thank Elsie and Elmer, you're amazing FOP!" Calvin1025 said as he zipped towards the sewers. "But how did you think of the catacombs?"

"I've known about them for awhile. Cheung took his partner there on a date; apparently they are quite the romantic tourist attra-" FOP was cut short as Calvin1025 uploaded the schematics.

"I just got the address; tally-hooooo!" Calvin1025's engine strained to gain back ground on MaidJulienneSE. They splashed through puddles of unknown, careened over broken

catwalks, and screeched around corners before sliding to stop before a giant steel gate.

"It should be right in front of us..." FOP ventured, "but I'm not sure how we can get there. What an adventure but I guess we should turn around..."

"You just hang tight, little buddy!" Deflating his tires to their "nook and cranny" setting, Calvin1025 squeezed underneath the gate and escaped through unscathed, his antennae twanging off the bottom as he re-inflated and raced up the utility waste drain.

After a few wrong turns, finding themselves first in the women's bathroom, then the cafeteria, and the CEO's luxurious, but fortunately, empty office, Calvin1025 and FOP finally found themselves looking down into an enormous and well-appointed design lab with tools and machines very similar to the ones at ParaCells-US.

In the middle of the room stood an overweight man in a designer suit, a handful of engineers, and a prostrate MaidJulienneSE on a lab table; her cover popped open and her wires, solar panels, and parts spread across the table.

"Well gents, I've spoken with LePropre and we only have one choice: rewire her," the paunchy man said through thick Oxford accent. "Apparently you left some bugs in the Maid's system. You read ParaCells-US's report, within ten days of her bloody trial, she was all over the floor. She showed no discernable patterns in cleaning, favored areas over others, *and* made other robots malfunction." The speaker paused for breath. "So, rip her systems apart; fix

the bugs! Stop all the bloody feature-creep; it's no good if there's no functionality!" Whipped up by the force of his business-speak, the Englishman began to shout. "While you're at it, cheapen her up a bit. No fancy paint. No solar energy. Plastic and batteries! Cheap, Cheap, CHEAP!"

Startled at his own outburst, the Englishman stopped to wipe spittle away with his thumb. "Right, there'll be no low-hanging fruit on this but let's try to not boil the ocean, eh?" With that, he tossed a "Ciao" insouciantly over his shoulder and strode from the lab.

"Holy Asimov, FOP, they're going to give her a robotomy; we have no time to waste!" Calvin1025 transmitted quickly.

"Hold your horsepower; we can't just jump in, otherwise we'll get our 'oceans boiled!' They seem to be closing her up for the night."

The engineers had moved back to their own workstations. One engineer remained by MaidJulienneSE's table, looking particularly *triste* as he slowly reattached her various bits, bobs, and panels and placed them back into her chrome-laden body cavity. He lightly shut her body compartment and set her right-side up on the table. A co-worker patted his shoulder, "Il est nul, ce mec anglais" he consoled as the technicians cleaned their workstations and left the lab.

As soon as the doors swung shut, the high-pitched scream of an RC engine wailed through the room. Calvin1025 burst through an upper airduct, crashed landed on a worktop, spun out on a pile

of papers, and flew into the legs of MaidJulienneSE's table, knocking her to the ground. He raced to her side and winced at the sight of her numerous scratches and dents.

Righting her with his pinchers, Calvin1025 tapped her gently, "MaidJulienneSE, are you still functioning? Please, blink your hardwood/carpet setting light if you're ok." A small red light blinked once to show a flat vacuum nozzle and once to show a bristly vacuum nozzle. "Sweet Mother of Steve Jobs, she's ok!"

"Calvin1025, make this short; say goodbye already."

"FOP, don't be so PC; we're taking her with us! If we don't rescue her, she'll be turned into a 'user-friendly' device. They don't realize that she's perfect; come on baby, let's get out of here."

Calvin1025 started back for the airduct, expecting his Red Devil *amie* to follow. She rolled forward with her usual agility, but plowed straight into a table leg and lodged herself under the footrest. "Oh motherboard, she can't drive!"

"Calvin1025, they probably forgot to re-attach her sonar systems. We can't save her anymore than Bill Gates's philanthropy can save Microsoft's latest OS. It's over; she's blind. Now let's go!" FOP grew more overheated by the second as he waited for someone to discover them.

"FOP, listen to me: I would rather be sold to a public high school welding class than leave her here. She may be my one true compatible hardware and you want to leave? What kind of friend are you?" Under the weight of these

stinging words, heavy with accusation, and suffering already from fear and heartbreak, FOP snapped.

"Calvin1025, that's it. I love you and I hate her. You're everything to me; everything that I'm not. Rugged, brave, not overly intelligent. I was *made* for you. She's nothing but an expensive mop. But that won't change your mind, will it? Well, I can't stand to help you save her when I want us to stay as we are: friends, partners, and possible lovers. I always thought you'd notice how I felt but I guess your power supply isn't big enough for the both of us. Goodbye." With that certainly final farewell, FOP went BSOD.

"FOP? What do you mean 'love,'...buddy? FOP?" Calvin1025, realizing that his best friend had abandoned him, whizzed in circles and beat his pincers into the floor, "Where are you? How could you leave me? 'Lovers' does not compute!" Calvin1025, realizing that MaidJulienneSE was staring at him from where she was still stuck under the footrest, pushed her out and thought to himself: *"Ok, 1025, get that bandwidth moving. I can't get us through the catacombs again without FOP's GPS; I only saved our factory path, not the sewers and now, my Maid is blind. But we can't stay here. Why did I do this? She probably doesn't even notice me, just like I didn't notice FOP and now he's gone. All for nothing and now we're stuck here because I can't do anything alone."*

Deflated, he turned to his beloved cleaning bot, her searing red finish burning a hole straight to his very core, seeming to fill his power supply to

capacity. She slowly rolled in his general direction, spritzed his hard-case with Pledge™ and gave Calvin1025 a gentle polish. For a moment, his cooling fan stopped whirring. "I can do this. *I CAN DO THIS*. Come on MaidJulienneSE, we're getting out of here." His repelling line dipped out from his back panel and was sucked into MaidJulienneSE's nozzle. Before darting away, he turned towards her and for the first time, really recorded how beautiful a machine she was. Determined to save her, he led their escape out of AspirateursInspirants, Inc.

Two hours later, Calvin1025 and MaidJulienneSE were desperately lost in the catacombs of Paris. Covered in grime, scratched from headlamp to repelling cable, Calvin1025 looked every bit the rugged explorer bot that he was designed to be. Sadly, his companion was suffering. She was a house vacuum, not a shopvac and it was increasingly evident with every meter that she would not make it much further before her wheels were too jammed to continue. If they did not escape the sewers, her solar cells would run dry and the humidity and filth would handle the rest.

Calvin1025, hearing MaidJulienneSE's low-power beep, came to a stop. "Oh, Asimov, if you're out there, help me save my beloved Hoover," he pleaded. To himself, he added *"Right, like there even was an Asimov! We're finished and I can't even say goodbye to FOP."*

"Save your goodbyes; you two need some sun!" FOP pinged. After wallowing in a coded matrix of guilt and loneliness, he searched for what he should do and finally computed, through a series of logarithms and by googling Kelly Clarkson lyrics, that unrequited love is better than no love at all.

Twenty minutes later, with FOP leading their way, the two robots emerged on the Quai Henri V, covered in detritus and stinking of *merde*. "We made it!" Calvin and FOP transmitted simultaneously. Even MaidJulienneSE, low on power though she was, managed to raise her nozzle and give a hearty "vroom." Depleted almost completely of energy, the two bots found a sunny area under the cover of leaves to soak up the rays and recharge. Calvin1025, his pincer holding MaidJulienneSE's nozzle, slipped into Standby for the first time in weeks.

FOP bitterly registered the scene and contented himself with the knowledge that he and Calvin1025 had lifetime guaranties, plenty of time to grow obsolete together.

The little French home-wrecker only came with a one-year warranty.

FIN

A Corner

By Paloma Lukumbi

A mirror and maybe, the recognition. Up. She had stood on this position for twenty-three hours. In fact, she had been confined in this cubbyhole for two months, her mummy remembers, but she does not know the woman who gave birth to her anymore and it does not truly matter. All had disappeared. She slept on the floor. It seemed to be the best solution instead of sticking into the knife on the bed. She did not need further compassion or compunction. Smith was supposed to be her one and only. She tried to convince herself so many times that she was his beloved but she remembers here, under the crackling ceiling, that she has always been as dark as a black-eyed pea. Little by little, it was coming back. It stroke. She figured since nothing could get any worse than now, she might not try to change the images, the flashes, but instead swallow everything in one time.

She got out of the airplane, walked across the airport and as she got outside, all went so fast that she felt totally alone, but in the right place. She looked intensively at the people who surrounded her and for the first time in her entire life, she saw people who had her appearance. There, he was just in front of her. Big, oval eyes stood before her. She had the sensation of being complete. The man could not take it anymore and gripped her tightly.

“Do you think it is necessary?” a friend asked her before she was gone.

Yes, the proof was that he set up every single detail in the house, in her newly girly bedroom. He showed her that he cherished her. He let her get comfortable saying that his home was hers, that she should take a shower and rest. He was going to Auntie Billy to get some soul food that she had never tried until then. It was going to be perfect.

She wandered around, no shower, no rest. Somehow, he was her guest. She was trying to prove him right and not the contrary. That would have been disgustingly paradoxical to her. She familiarized herself with the place. She would make up a creation, fictionalizing herself, she thought.

“Shall I prepare you a tea?”, that would be the first step. She would play some John Coltrane and he would tap his malicious and long fingers against the rocking chair turning his head around and around because one is always trying to follow the “blue train’s” locomotive. She might come back from the kitchen shivering and he would notice but she wouldn’t let herself get distracted.

He poured three spoons of sugar like she always does too. Smooth, it was. Their first common point. He took out the corn bread. The smoked chicken was there too. They talked about her and him, what they enjoyed doing at leisure. None of their hobbies were similar but the way he looked at her was enough for her. He mentioned the relatives and her story was slowly put together. Although,

she might have expected more, she sensed that it was how it was meant to be and she indulged herself in this brand new situation.

Two weeks went by, everything was flowing naturally. They would wake up, have breakfast and go around the city to visit some relatives who would tell him how adorable she was. He would always stare at her, pass his fingers through her fuzzy hair and say “yes”, bobbing his head up and down. They would spend some cozy nights listening to all sorts of music. They were open-minded. That was the great connection between the two. It was this very link that made her decide to stay longer and maybe to establish herself in this foreign country. She would give it a thought, she told him that night and went to bed.

It was dizzy. She was done writing to Mummy and she would send this letter off the following morning. Mother would

be delighted by this wave of relief, finally recovered. No doubt, the sun was enlightening her teenager’s forehead through daytime, nighttime and in-between. Half asleep, the door opened. He entered. She chuckled thinking that he wanted an overnight chat but all of sudden his hands were on her mouth and he stuck in. Behind, Leon Parker and his “Epistophry” were playing tenderly first and then faster to a wilder rhythm. He could not stop thinking that she was gorgeous.

Mummy was in the corner staring at the building. Coming up the stairs, she would cook one of her cuttie-cute’s favorite dishes. As usual, knocking at the door for ten minutes. The child figured that it might be high time she went for a change but a second later, she turned around facing the glass in which her body was transposed. It is not worth the ride. Eventually, she broke the mirror.

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