

June NOTED 2005

Newsletter of the English Department

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Noted is the newsletter of the English Department at the University of Geneva. The deadline for contributions for the next issue will be **November 30th**. You can send your Word texts or photos, cartoons, or drawings to either: agnieszka.soltysik@lettres.unige.ch or michael.roosli@lettres.unige.ch.

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Editorial

Noted is back after several years of hibernation. The editor is happy to report that she has a new co-editor, Michael Röösl, whose interest and enthusiasm in reviving the newsletter has been instrumental in getting *Noted* back in print. We are also pleased with the numerous contributions we have received from students and want to thank all the people who made this issue possible. Hopefully, even more of you will be inspired to send us your articles, stories, reviews, and news items for the next issue, which we would like to distribute in the Winter semester. Although *Noted* is currently edited by an assistant and a *maître-assistant*, it continues to rely mainly on students writing for other students, so please help us make this an interesting and vibrant medium of intradepartmental communication, reflection, expression, and most importantly, imaginary community building. We hope to prepare the next issue for the Winter semester, so start thinking about what you can contribute. Anything relating to your intellectual and aesthetic experiences as a student of the English department is welcome: personal reflections, advice to other students, reviews of books, films, plays or art exhibits. Tips on overcoming writer's block. Stories. Investigative reports. Interviews with teachers or anyone you think is interesting. Almost anything you can and want to write in English. Well, the editors do get final say. And if you like our decisions, well, then become an editor yourself! We have room on our editorial board for you. In any case, you have all summer to write something for the next issue. We're looking forward to hearing from the intrepid few who answer this call.

In the meantime, good luck on exams and enjoy your summer. See you all again in October!

A Word from the Director

It is an exciting time to be part of the English Department at the University of Geneva, because the beginning of the winter term in October will also mark the beginning of a new era in the department's history: what one might call its "Third Republic". To those quick to point out the difference between the forms of governance of our department and a republic, I ask for poetic licence. The first professor of English at Geneva, Hans Häusermann, was appointed in 1939. Tradition has it that James Joyce, at that time seeking refuge in Switzerland from the war in France, was offered the position first, but that he agreed to accept only on the condition that he be allowed to teach his own work exclusively. I have not been able to verify this story, but if it is true, the Faculty of Letters in declining Joyce's terms missed an extremely interesting opportunity.

Prof. Häusermann was a specialist in nineteenth century literature, and wrote a still useful book on the "Genevese background" of figures like Shelley, Edgeworth, Ruskin, and Conrad. A second English professor was added in 1965 with the arrival of Paul Taylor, who formally founded the department in 1969, thus inaugurating the "Second Republic". Succeeding years saw the appointments of John Blair, Gregory Polletta, George Steiner, Richard Waswo, Liliane Haegeman, and Wlad Godzich. Except for Professor Haegeman, a Belgian, these distinguished gentlemen are Americans, and the department was known and sometimes criticised for being an American preserve. Paul Taylor tells me, however, that the point was to bring native English speakers to the department, and that all of these professors had, as indeed they still have, an international outlook on the discipline. In any case, it is an impressive list of names, of teachers and scholars who built the reputation of an internationally respected English department. As this era draws to a close, we owe special recognition to Rick Waswo, who, with characteristic courage and professionalism, assumed progressively more of the department's burdens as he saw one after the other of

his colleagues go into retirement.

The new English department is both international and youthful: among the members of the corps professoral are three Swiss (from both sides of the Sarine), an Australian Briton, a Dane, and (inevitably) an American. Their average age is 43, a figure that would be even lower if not for a rapidly ageing director. More importantly, they are smart and energetic, and dedicated to continuing the distinguished record of research and teaching from which the department already benefits.

The French Third Republic was constructed on the ruins of war. Our own transition has been more peaceful, but is nonetheless a new departure. One of the signs of this is the new *plan d'études*, which will go into effect in October as the University converts to the European-wide degree structure known as the Bologna principles. At the student level, there are also new signs of life: a film series, a theatre workshop, a reborn *Association des étudiants en anglais*. Noted is once again in circulation. Members of the *corps intermédiaire*, equally as dedicated as the *corps professoral*, are meeting regularly to share their respective "Works in Progress."

When not admiring his colleagues, a department director is occupied with the dreary business of enrollment figures, budgets, examination schedules, room assignments, etc. Caught up in this routine, I try to remember why we are here, and to not confuse *plans d'études* with knowledge, or knowledge with thought. A former member of this department, the late Bill Readings, has written that "Thought does not function as an answer but as a question"*. What is called thinking, then, is not an episteme, not a doctrine, not even an idea. Rather, it is a name for the persistent interrogation of ourselves and of our world: this is what matters most to the life of a university, and to that of our minds. Allow me to leave you with that thought.

David Spurr

*Readings, Bill. *The University in Ruins*. Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1996, p.160.

English Department News

Beginning in October, 2005, the Department of English will be a significantly different institution from what it was as recently as 2002, when David Spurr and Deborah Madsen were appointed as *professeurs ordinaires* in modern English and American literatures, respectively, followed by the appointment of Eric Haeberli as *professeur adjoint* in English linguistics. In 2005-06, three new members of the corps professoral will officially begin their duties. Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne, both former assistants in the department, have been named as *professeurs ordinaires* in medieval and early modern literatures, respectively. Martin Leer, of the University of Copenhagen, has been named as *maître de recherche et d'enseignement* in contemporary literature.

There will also be some new faces in the *corps intermédiaire*. Christoph Rose and Ioana Balgradean, both *licenciés* from Geneva, will begin their work as assistants in medieval literature. In addition, there will be two new assistants in early modern literature: Kareen Klein (Geneva) and Sarah Cooper, of the University of Sussex. Finally, the department is in the process of hiring two *chargés d'enseignements* in practical language, in order to reinforce the first-year programme. The budgetary measures needed for the hiring of the new *chargés d'enseignement* have meant that the weekly schedule of the Writing Lab will be reduced from four days a week to two, and will be staffed by two *moniteurs*, Camilo Gomez and Jocelyn Moren.

The *Bourse Thomas Harvey*, given annually for scholarly research conducted in an English-speaking country, has been awarded to Elizabeth Kukorelly and Jessica Stevens. As part of her doctoral thesis project, Ms. Kukorelly travelled to the British Library in London to consult early editions of Richardson's *Pamela* and eighteenth-century conduct manuals. Ms. Stevens, who is studying the relations between literature and architecture in the eighteenth-century, also went to the British Library to consult Colen Campbell's *Vitruvius Britannicus* and other works on Palladianism.

The major changes in the *plan d'études*, which is still in the process of being reviewed by University authorities as a condition for approval, can be summarised in the following way:

1. The four-year *licence* is replaced by two diplomas, a three-year *baccalauréat universitaire* followed by a two-year *maîtrise*. The current system of two major and one minor branch of study is replaced by one in which the student studies only two branches (A and B).
2. The new *plan d'études* is based on the principle of progressive freedom: the student is granted greater liberty to select an individual course of study as he or she acquires the knowledge and skills necessary to make informed choices.

More precisely, students will move from a general introduction to English literature and linguistics in the first year to a more articulated series of modules in the second and third years, based on the major historical periods of English literature and on more specialised topics in linguistics. The holder of a BA in English from Geneva will thus have a general knowledge of literature in English from its origins to the present, as well as a certain competence in English linguistics.

On the basis of the knowledge and analytical skills acquired in the BA programme, the MA programme offers the student virtually complete freedom to follow his or her intellectual interests. MA courses are graduate courses, where students will be introduced to the most recent research in the topic under study, and will be expected to conduct research on their own.

The MA culminates with the writing of a *mémoire*, demonstrating the student's expertise on a subject on which he or she has conducted original research.

Once it is approved by University authorities, the completed *plan d'études* will be posted on the department's website along with a guide to converting credits from the old plan. Students meanwhile are advised to consult the *Lettre du Décanat aux étudiants et étudiantes de la Faculté des lettres* on the website of the Faculté des Lettres.

David Spurr

And More News

Guillemette Bolens has been appointed *professeur ordinaire* in Medieval English. Her successful *leçon d'épreuve* was based on her forthcoming book, *Chaucerian Semiotics and The Tale of Beryn*. She is currently beginning a new research project on Medieval drama.

Annick Challet has recently given a presentation entitled "Unexpected Ties of Kinship: Condé's *Célanire cou-coupé* and Shelley's *Frankenstein; or the Modern Prometheus*" at The Caribbean Unbound conference in Lugano in April.

Lukas Erne has been appointed *professeur ordinaire* in Early Modern English and will be back with us in the fall. He has a chapter forthcoming on Dürrenmatt's Shakespeare adaptations in a collection on *World-Wide Shakespeare* to be published by Routledge later this year. He also has a chapter on "Manuscript and Print" in *The Cambridge Companion to Shakespeare's Poetry*, to be published next year. His edition of *The First Quarto of Romeo and Juliet* in the New Cambridge Shakespeare series will also be published next year, as will his monograph on *Shakespeare's Modern Collaborators*. And he's still very much working on his book *From Marlowe to Milton: Biography and Criticism of Early Modern Authors*.

Valerie Fehlbaum's book, *Ella Hepworth Dixon: The Story of a Modern Woman* will be published in the fall in the *Nineteenth Century Series* (Ashgate publishing). She will continue to organize the English Department Film series with Michael Rösli.

Véronique Fernandez will be defending her doctoral dissertation, *Clothing and Sexual Difference: Dress and Gender in Speculative Fiction and Cinema* in July.

Agnese Fidecaro will coorganise the *cours général en études genre* of the Faculty next year (*Questions d'autorité: identité et l'intimité de l'écrivain-e*) and will teach a comparative literature seminar attached to it. She is preparing her thesis, *Exposed Bodies: Crises of Experience in Twentieth Century German, French and English Literature*, for publica-

tion and is working on various projects in the fields of gender studies and contemporary literature.

Eric Haerberli has been nominated *professeur adjoint* and is currently researching syntactic variation and change in the history of English, particularly Old and Middle English.

Elizabeth Kukorelly spent one week in London in May, doing doctoral research at the British Library. She was able to consult early editions of Samuel Richardson's *Pamela* and read a selection of early-eighteenth-century conduct literature unavailable in Switzerland, mainly on the care of newborn children. She was looking specifically for references to breastfeeding. She profited from open access to the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, a monthly periodical that began publication in the 1740s. Surprisingly, perhaps, given the gender bias apparent in the title of the periodical, she was able to find a number of articles on breastfeeding, which verified her contention that this was a polemical and highly public (or at least publicized) domain of practice.

Deborah Madsen has been teaching at the University of Berne this semester, in addition to her usual teaching in Geneva, while the Berne English Department appoints a new Professor of American Literature. She is very glad that one of her major editing projects recently came to fruition with the publication of the Dictionary of Literary Biography volume *Asian American Writers*: a book of 250,000 words which has been some four years in the making. She is working on a collection of essays on e-learning which will be published by Palgrave Macmillan in 2006 <<http://www.palgrave.com/products/results.aspx?se=TENE>> and a further edited volume on indigenous American literatures and the question of authenticity. She has written a series of essays on trauma and American ethnic women's writing which will appear in journals such as *Amerikastudien*, *Symbolism and Essays and Studies*, and an essay on Paula Gunn Allen

and trauma theory for Elvira Pulitano's book, *Transatlantic Voices*. "Thomas Pynchon and the Tradition of American Romance" will appear in the Modern Language Association of America (MLA) volume *Approaches to Teaching Thomas Pynchon's The Crying of Lot 49 and Other Works*. She recently gave invited lectures on multiculturalism at conferences in Salzburg and San Antonio, which will be published in the respective conference proceedings.

Myriam Perregaux is finishing up the last chapter of her doctoral thesis, titled provisionally, *Contemporary Chronotopes of London*, which she hopes to defend in the fall. The dissertation includes a discussion of six different novels and examines the way space and time are used to construct specific versions of London.

Elvira Pulitano is currently editing a collection of essays titled *Transatlantic Voices: Interpretations of Native American Indigenous Literatures*, under contract with The University of Nebraska Press. This collection will present the most recent, original interpretations of Native American Literatures by scholars in Europe. It is scheduled to be out at the end of 2006. She is also working on a monograph tentatively titled *Cartographies of Displacement: Writing Diaspora in Anglophone Caribbean Literature*, whose proposal is under consideration. Elvira is also planning a trip to the Caribbean sometime this fall to do some research for this project as she will not be teaching in Geneva next year. She has applied for academic positions and research fellowships in North America and Europe and is still waiting for a reply.

Michael Rösli has begun work on his doctoral thesis, involving a holistic rereading of photography through literary and filmic narrative, taking into account the cross-fertilisation of photography with other media and the influences of the camera on what happens before as well as behind its lenses. His other activities at the English Department include the creation and maintenance of our current webpage, and the organisation of the film cycle with Valerie Fehlbaum.

Erika Scheidegger is working on her doctoral dissertation on healing and Native American lit-

erature. Before joining the department last year, she translated two books by Swiss-German novelist Ruth Schweikert into French, *La Poupée fourrée* and *Ohio*. She also wrote a foreword to *Le Creux de la Vague* (1999) by Alice Rivaz.

David Spurr continues to preside over the department in addition to teaching and publishing. *The Space of English*, a volume edited by Prof. Spurr and Cornelia Tschichold, has appeared as part of the SPELL series published by Gunter Narr Verlag in Tübingen. It includes essays by the two co-editors as well as by several current and former members of the Geneva English department: Lukas Erne, Corinne Fournier, Fabienne Michelet, Myriam Perregaux, and Gisela Zingg. He is also working on a series of essays on literature and architecture. "Architecture in Frost and Stevens" is forthcoming in the next issue of the *Journal of Modern Literature*, and another essay, "Modernism in Literature and Architecture," will appear in the two-volume collection on Modernism to be published this year by the International Comparative Literature Association. "Figures of Ruin and Restoration," on Ruskin and Viollet-le-Duc, and "Demonic Spaces," on Sade, Dickens, and Kafka, are also in press.

Margaret Tudeau Clayton would like to say "farewell" as she will be leaving the department after five very happy years as *chargée de cours* teaching seminars on a range of texts in Modern English literature from Shakespeare to Woolf. She will continue to teach in Zürich, which she enjoys, as it is a large, lively and forward-looking department. But she will miss her Friday afternoon seminars in Geneva: she has particularly enjoyed students' curiosity and the challenge of their questions in discussions, which have sometimes contributed directly to her own work (a rare thing!). The seeds of a paper on *Hamlet* have been sown this semester; last year's seminar on Woolf and Mansfield fed into a paper she is currently revising for the 2006 issue of *Comparative Criticism*; a seminar on Jane Austen also gave her ideas, which she hopes to work up one of these days. Friends amongst the teaching staff have also stimulated her work: for instance, an

essay on Shakespeare which is to be published this year in a new (and hopefully cutting edge) journal - called *Shakespeare* - began life as a paper given at the conference organised by Simone Oettli and Valeria Wagner in honour of Professor Richard Waswo in May 2004. Other projects include: a collection of essays on Shakespeare and England, which she is co-editing with a colleague from the University of Glasgow and a (linked) book-length project called *Shakespeare's Englishes*. Be assured you will not entirely lose sight of her: she has friends and family in Geneva, and you might catch a glimpse of her in a cinema, theatre, or tearoom, wandering through the Parc des Bastions or the public library.

Valeria Wagner will continue her research and teaching, pending approval from the Rector, in the "*Unité de langues, littératures et cultures Hispaniques*," where she will be teaching next year, among other things, seminars on literatures of the Americas.

Richard Waswo will be retiring this year. He is looking forward to working on his tennis and piano playing, and to reading anything and everything he wants, unconstrained by professional obligations. We envy him and wish him the best in his new life.

Writing Lab News

The Writing Lab will continue next year to help students of all levels in the English Department to write better papers. This year the Lab was staffed for the first time by 4th year student monitors, Kareen Klein, Ioana Balgradean, Petya Ivanova, and Christophe Rose, who helped students find a thesis, organize their argument, structure their paper, focus their paragraphs and generally smooth out their writing. Please note that the Writing Lab never has and never will be an editing service where you can have your papers "corrected." It is, instead, an intense one-on-one tutorial, where your paper and your writing skills receive highly qualified personal attention with the goal of making you a better writer and reader of your own writing. Next year's staff will be Camilo Gomez and Jocelyn Moren, who will be available for half-hour appointments two days a week (the specific hours will be posted on the Writing Lab door at the beginning of the Winter semester). The sign-up sheet will also be on the door of the Writing Lab (Phil 005). Once again, this service is open to any student of the English department with help at any point of the writing process (from brainstorming to final drafts), so take advantage of it!

Tips from the Writing Lab: The 12-Step Writing Process

1. Highlight passages of the text as you read.
2. Brainstorm while the book is fresh: spend time thinking and taking notes of your ideas.
3. Select a topic that interests you.
4. Reread the text, looking for passages relating to your topic.
5. Formulate your conclusions about the topic into a thesis statement and write a brief introductory paragraph.
6. Find your evidence: choose the most pertinent and useful passages.
7. Outline the main supporting evidence or arguments for your thesis, structured as paragraphs focusing on the passages you have selected.
8. Write the first draft.
9. Reread for coherence, logic, focus and development (in other words, the ideas and how they're presented). Sometimes it may help to reread the essay after a few days have passed and you have some critical distance.
10. Revise the essay. You may find at this stage that you need to cut or add entire paragraphs or sections, reconceive the focus, or rearrange the order of the paragraphs.
11. Reread for coherence and ideas, but also for grammar, punctuation, wordiness, syntax, tone, and flow. Make sure the essay follows the guidelines set out in the Style Sheet (also available online from the English Department website).
12. Write a final draft.

Mosquitoes, Books, and Celluloid: The English Department Film Cycle

"Once wäre una fois una grande Schloss lugubre e trista..." A mosquito settles on a tree branch and watches with disgust a pack of wolves devour a carcass in the darkening woods. The sun sets slowly behind the castle towering over the scene on a pointed rock. The page turns, a new scene literally unfolds in the three dimensions of the popup book. Erring through the vaults of the paper castle, the mosquito discovers the uncanny and undead inhabitant of the place, and immediately falls in love with its blood-sucking soul mate rising from his coffin.

During the last year, we have travelled through various books, diving into their worlds of wonder, enhanced by images, texture, and sounds, and seen it through someone else's eyes like those of the amorous mosquito in Soltán Horváth's *Nosferatu Tango* (2002). Our journeys took us from the United States to India, from the Renaissance to the future. George Romero led us through Edgar Allen Poe's dark imagination. We met killers, vampires ... and authors, and got a noseful of *The Sweet Smell of Success* until we were completely *Bamboozled*. Not a bad way to spend a Thursday evening, eh?

Our Department film cycle was launched in November 2004 by Valerie Fehlbaum and Michael Rösli, and has now reached the end of its first year. Intended as an informal complementary look at literary works discussed in various seminars, the cycle gave students the opportunity to meet each other outside the classroom. The public has been shifting between a full house and a smaller hardcore group, once the brighter rays of the summer sun with tempting smells of barbecue started competing with the enterprise.

Many thanks to everybody, and especially our regulars, for bringing - and keeping - our film cycle alive. We are also deeply indebted to the members of the teaching staff for their suggestions which made up the exciting program of this first year. The good news is that the great book has not yet closed on our poor mosquito:

thanks to all of you, the cycle will be back in October 2005 for a new round full of surprises. As usual, our posters on the notice boards of the English Department and the *Philosophes* will keep you up-to-date about all our activities.

List of Films Shown This Year, Thursdays at 7 p.m., in Bastion 112:

Hamlet (2000) Michael Almereyda
Rosencrantz and Guildenstern Are Dead (1990) Tom Stoppard
The Josephine Baker Story (1991) Brian Gibson
Sweet Smell of Success (1957) Alexander Mackendrick
Nosferatu Tango (2002) Zoltán Horváth
Nosferatu, a Symphony of Terror (1922) Friedrich Wilhelm Murnau
Bram Stoker's Dracula (1992) Francis Ford Coppola
Bamboozled (2000) Spike Lee
Far From the Madding Crowd (1967) John Schlesinger
Mansfield Park (1999) Patricia Rozema
The Killers (1946) Robert Siodmak
Anita and Me (2002) Metin Hüseyin
Michael Collins (1996) Neil Jordan
Two Evil Eyes (1990) George Romero & Dario Argento
The Handmaid's Tale (1990) Volker Schlöndorff
Fight Club (1999) David Fincher
Thomas Pynchon: a Journey into the Mind of P. (2001) Donatello & Fosco Dubini
The Hours (2002) Stephen Daldry
The Graduate (1967) Mike Nichols

NB: The films were all chosen by instructors of the English department, including Myriam Perregaux, Valerie Fehlbaum, Véronique Fernandez, Deborah Madsen, Michael Rösli, and Agnieszka Soltysik, in relation to their seminars. Next year at least some of the film screenings may be tied in to seminars offered by the new *maître de recherche et d'enseignement*, Martin Leer.

Michael Rösli

The English Department Theater Group

You might not have heard of us - but you have probably heard us. Maybe you thought you were eavesdropping on a lovers' quarrel, as 'I love yous' and 'I hate yous' echoed through the halls of *Philosophes*. Perhaps you even believed that you were witnessing some sectarian ritual as you walked in on us crawling around on the floor.

We are the English Department Theatre Group, the brainchild of Rachel Hosein Nisbet, 1st-year English student (do not be fooled - she already has a Ph.D.). Being an amateur thespian, she decided to remedy to the English Department's lack of drama group - by promptly founding one!

The text we are working on, which we hope to stage in the autumn, is a translation of Jean Giraudoux's 1929 play *Amphitryon 38*, a revisited Greek legend with a comic twist. The story is as follows: Alkmena and Amphitryon are happily married and madly in love (yes, it is possible). However, Jupiter decides he wants to seduce Alkmena. The trouble is that she is stubbornly faithful to her husband. With some help from Mercury, Jupiter disguises himself as Amphitryon and beds Alkmena, creating Hercules in the process.

We meet weekly (Wednesdays, from 6 to 8 pm, Phil 017) to explore acting skills through improvisation, voice work and movement.

However, it does not stop there. Rachel's specialty lies in organising brilliant weekend workshops, hosted by accomplished performers whom she met during a course at the Roy Hart Centre of Artistic Expression, in the Cévennes. They kindly agreed to share their skills with us. Therefore, in exchange for a modest contribution, they have travelled from Dublin, Lausanne, London and Berlin to impart some of their knowledge.

Our first workshop (February 5th) was with Fiona Browne, who trained in theatre studies at Trinity College in Dublin. After graduating, she formed her own the-

atre company. She also staged a one-woman show, based on the life of Karen Carpenter, which she wrote herself. She kick-started our whole project by introducing us to general theatre skills. Thanks to her expert teaching and enthusiasm concerning our project, she gave us faith in ourselves and a will to take Rachel's idea as far as possible.

Our second workshop (March 19th) was taught by Héloïse Chaubert, a former member of the Swiss Junior Improvisation Team. She subsequently decided to pursue professional music training and has interpreted roles in opera, theatre and operetta. She introduced us to the *Commedia Dell'Arte*, an Italian troupe that was founded at a time when Italy was not yet united by a common language. Consequently, the actors did not use much dialogue. Instead, they concentrated on movement and sight gags that were accessible to everyone. We learned how to interpret some of the main characters, including the famous Harlequin.

The next workshop (April 16th and 17th) was with Andreas Müller, a performance artist based in Berlin. He has toured Europe, Australia and the Far East with a contemporary dance piece. He has also formed his own company. He taught us how to pay special attention to our bodies and how they are useful to us in acting - it is not just about the text!

The latest workshop (May 14th) was taught by Frankie Cosgrave, an actress who trained at the Method Studio in London and now teaches there. She was a member of the Royal Shakespeare Company for 5 years. She schooled us in Method Acting, a famous technique in which the actor aims to identify completely with his character. We learned how to apply the theory she taught us to our text, *Amphitryon 38*.

We are all incredibly motivated and dedicated to making this project work, not to mention excited to see it growing the way it is. Although we have been going since February, we are still welcoming new members with open arms. You don't need any experience - just enthusiasm and commitment!

For any additional information, you can contact Rachel at rachel-hosein.nisbet@laposte.net.

Sarah-Jane Moloney
Rachel Hosein Nisbet

There's something English in the State of Geneva...

***An Ideal Husband*, by Oscar Wilde,
Performed by the Geneva English Drama Society (GEDS)**



The last staged play of the GEDS season, *An Ideal Husband* by Oscar Wilde, was performed at the Théâtre de Carouge from May 24 to 27. Filled with epigrams and biting irony, this glimpse at a superficial *fin-de-siècle* London tells the story of the successful politician Sir Robert Chiltern. His career was triggered by an illegal transaction, which now is used by an illustrious Lady to blackmail him. Chiltern's wife, a morally impeccable creature with a soul of stainless steel, idealises her husband to such a degree, that he fears the revelation of his secret would destroy not only his career, but also the marriage with his beloved wife.

The comedy was performed by an excellent cast. The aura of some actors, no doubt, was enhanced by their well-known personality and acting history at the heart of the GEDS, which doubled the fun. Most notable among them, Frances Favre impressed the audience with her hilarious rendering of the elderly and hopelessly naïve Lady Markby. In addition to the excellent acting - remember that all the cast consisted of amateurs - the *mise-en-scène* provided a few hints at Oscar Wilde himself, mostly through the role of Lord Goring (interpreted by Ian Farley), who resembled Wilde visually.

The GEDS was founded in 1933 and has filled its audience and members, many of which participate actively on stage, with enthusiasm ever since. They organise a playreading every fortnight, where plays are read by several actors, but also enhanced and inspired by a few props, costumes and actions. The informal atmosphere as well as the drinks and nibbles served at these occasions emphasise the social aspect of the event. Among the 21 playreadings of the last season were Graham Greene's *Travels With My Aunt*, Arthur Miller's *The Last Yankee*, and Harold Pinter's *The Homecoming*.

Four to six times a year, the GEDS also stages plays with considerable professionalism in acting, props, and backdrops. This year's productions, apart from *An Ideal Husband*, were *Gym and Tonic* by John Godber, *My Irish Pal*, an original play written and directed by Charles Slovenski, and *Art* by Yasmina Reza.

Unfortunately, the season has already come to an end. However, after a summer break the GEDS will be back in action in early September. For everybody who might be interested, the playreadings are held fortnightly on Tuesdays, at 8 p.m. in the downstairs hall of the English Church of the Holy Trinity, 14 bis, rue du Mont-Blanc. Admission is free for members and five francs for non-members. It is a great opportunity to socialise with the Geneva English-speaking community and at the same time to explore the gems of English language drama. They also welcome non-native speakers who would like to venture a step onto the stage and participate actively in a playreading. For an up-to-date program of those events and staged plays, please consult the GEDS website: www.geds.ch

Michael Rösli

On Beginning With a Preposition

Take a few examples of various well-known titles: *To the Lighthouse* (Woolf), *Of Human Bondage* (Maugham), *On Writing* (take your pick). There are people who will defend them, and they must. They (the infamous "they") have used these as the subject for their doctoral thesis. They have spent years of their lives, left spouses to vacation alone in exotic locations in order to ruminate on the inner meanings and gain a deeper understanding of their subterranean subtexts. They have propagated the image that one must be anointed to appreciate the hidden currents flowing within. These *œuvres* are educational, inspirational, often literarily impeccable, and in a word, b-o-r-i-n-g. Sorry. Just the idea of reading something titled with a preposition puts me in a state of narcosis. Having begun this essay with one, I'll be back after a nap . . .

. . . I feel better. Now, where were we?

I don't know if anyone has explored the comic possibilities (or if I'll be up to the task myself, but life's short, let's try). This idea was inspired by a friend of mine (who will soon be famous, so I'm going to name-drop here to let everyone know that "I knew him when"): Michael J. McClure, who wrote in one of his poems:

"I was passing the time conjugating the verb 'to behead'"

(A little aside on Michael McClure -- he has the bad luck to be a very good poet, and have the same name as a much more famous Beat poet with the same name, hence the Michael "J." McClure. He has now switched to art history, where there are no predecessors requiring the use of his middle initial).

And now title no. 1: "On Beheading". I thought at the time, since I was teaching English, "but it's a regular verb; how boring to conjugate it". But it is a nice pastime. At the supermarket, for instance, when the lady in the fur coat somehow manages to both push in front of you and make you feel frumpy. The future perfect is

very entertaining. "I will have beheaded. . . ." Example: "By 5 o'clock, I will have beheaded the lady in the fur coat." Past perfect "I had beheaded the lady in the fur coat before paying for the cornflakes." Or the present perfect continuous "I have been beheading the lady in the fur coat (but I'm not finished yet, and will continue later)." Until Iraq, behead was a nice, quaint word. We can thank Dubya for ruining something else besides the American image abroad, the economy, and whatever forests were left when he arrived in office.

Title no. 2: "On Getting Off the Subject." Asides are nice. So is the overuse of parenthesis. All of which should be avoided. Like incomplete sentences.

I should, however, stick to the point. Prepositions + Titles = Boring. Clear, mathematical, good enough for a sound bite. Don't go there, even if I'm going there. Title no. 3: "On Not Being a Lemming."

And I've only proposed here a few titles beginning with "on." Whatever could be done with a "with," "in," "to," or "from"? A whole relationship could be invoked by titles beginning with prepositions. Imagine the following, as, say, a series of short stories:

Title no. 4: "With the Big, Brown Eyes"

Title no. 5: "In My Bed"

Title no. 6: "To My Future In-laws"

Title no. 7: "From Our Honeymoon in Vegas"

And now wait a few years for the next installment:

Title no. 8: "With My Lover"

Title no. 9: "In the Doghouse"

Title no. 10: "To My Lawyer"

Title no. 11: "From Reno"

Add in a ski vacation and we'll have done a tour of Nevada.

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Coca-Cola Linguistics

When you order this famous refreshment in a bar in Geneva, you would hardly find yourself saying: "Un coca-cola, s'il-vous-plaît !" No, normal people order: "Un coca." Whereas in Germany, you would rather say: "Eine Cola, bitte!" And in the States, you order "A Coke." How come the abbreviations are so different in the three languages?

Let's analyze. We have:

- (a) coca
- (b) cola
- (c) café au lait
- (d) Milchkaffee

As you can see, in French, the important part, i. e. the coffee, comes first: (c) café au lait. It's first of all coffee we're talking about, not milk, whereas in German the important part of the word comes last (d) Milchkaffee. This occurs in nearly all composite words. Here is another

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There are even religious and psychological possibilities.

Title no. 12: "To My Future Self" (for the Buddhist)

Title no. 13: "In Repentance For All the Fun I Had" (for the Christian)

Title no. 14: "On Not Being Appreciated" (for the mother, sub-title "I do and I do and I do for you kids . . .)

Title no. 15: "In Knowing That I-WILL-NEVER-BE-LIKE-YOU" (for the teenager)

Title no. 16: "On Hip-replacement" (for the over 50 crowd)

This could go on and on (Title no. 17: "On Going On and On"), but thankfully won't.

And now for the end: Title no. 18: "On Knowing When to Quit." (Or for the disgruntled reader "On Wishing She Had Never Begun.")

Ericka Olsen Stefano

example from the culinary section:

- (e) gâteau au chocolat
- (f) Schokoladenkuchen

The cake is the important thing here, not the chocolate. You can try to find other words, you'll see - it works. So that's why, following their natural language instinct, the French considered the first part of our soft drink to be the essential one, they say "coca," while the Germans say "Cola," the last part of a composite word being the one with the highest semantic impact.

Now "Coke" is a bit of a problem in my theory, I must admit. The English also put the semantically most important word at the end.

- (g) milk coffee
- (h) chocolate cake

But, not considering this mystery, we can be sure that the French would never have made "Coke" out of their "coca." Because they pronounce it "coca," while the English say "Coca-Cola." So the Anglophones could abbreviate their version into "Coke," because they put the accent on the first syllable and it is easy to lose syllables which do not carry the accent, just like in other abbreviations, e. g.:

- (i) microphone
- (j) mike

The French didn't follow this evolution because their accent is (as always) on the last syllable of the word. And the accentuated syllable can not be cut off. If a French speaking person orders a "coke" today, that would definitely be due to the American influence on the language, to which the *Académie de la langue française* opposes itself so vehemently.

Kareen Klein

I Owe It All to Shonon Knife: A Review of Various Things in the Last Century

Who would have thought that three years of hanging out with performance artists would actually have been useful for something?

It came to pass that I had to do a dance performance in order to become a Swiss gym teacher. It would be simpler not to go into details, so please accept this as true. Why on earth a dance piece would be a requirement for becoming a P.E. teacher is, of course, one of the great mysteries of the world, up there with the pyramids and Marianne Faithful's singing career. But there you have it.

I spent a lot of time listening to music to find some sort of inspiration for the piece. I had no ideas, just waited for something to come. I found a remake of the "Candy Man" by Cibo Matto. To my friends the performance artists, this (the song and the group) would have been almost banal and obvious. For a Swiss P.E. school, it seemed frighteningly original.

So, explaining the Candy Man first. It was picked up and made popular by that famous ratpacker Sammy Davis Jr. It was also sung, I think, by Shirley Temple mincing around with a lollypop, but I might be mixing this up with one of the early scenes of *Lolita*. (Or was that "The Good Ship Lollipop"?)

In any case, it has happened to many of us (not to me, but to people I know) that we were forced to sing this song during a second grade pageant with our class, which was then filmed by proud parents on a Super 8 camera, transferred to a video and which now haunts the existence of otherwise happy and well-adjusted adults. I repeat, I have only heard of this happening. But this still makes the "Candy Man" a song with a history.

It was also used in *Willy Wonka & the Chocolate Factory*. This movie is a children's classic as inspiring as the *5000 Fingers of Dr. T*. The "Candy Man" appears early on in the movie,

before Mr. Wonka (Gene Wilder) appears. The first time we see Wonka, he comes out of his factory, trembling and old, leaning heavily on a cane. He advances toward a crowd at the gates of his factory, and just before arriving, he "falls" almost onto his face. This is spliced (there's an obvious cut here) to him doing a rather amazing forward roll and jumping up, now appearing to be quite the spry young man. The idea was (I learned in the DVD version with extras) that one doesn't know what to believe, which Wonka was the real one or where reality stops and fantasy begins. Two other things to mention about this film: one is the journey into the depths of the factory. It is truly strange, truly frightening, and its juxtaposition of images is very clearly LSD-inspired. The second is the wondrous impression of the center of the factory, where everything is edible. There's a river of chocolate, candy trees, and (as we hear in the version of "Candy Man" by Cibo Matto) "you can even eat the dishes."

The group Cibo Matto is two Japanese girls who like hip-hop and believe themselves to have come from another planet, à la Sun Ra. They are known for three things. Maybe four. In no particular order: 1) they write songs about food; 2) they did a really inventive version of "Black Hole Sun" by Soundgarden, apparently partly because they are friends with the bass player who is Japanese American, and because it's, like, an awesome song, dude; 3) They were picked up by Grand Royal, the Beastie Boys label, which later went bankrupt. This means that Cibo Matto's music is no longer easily available. 4) Despite their first album not doing badly, they became known more as "Sean Lennon's project" when he joined the group for their second release. I think this was also a Japanese American connection.

And now back to the beginning, the idea that hanging out with performance artists could actually be useful. I like this phrase mostly because the people here in Geneva wouldn't

realize how ridiculous it sounds. It's like the line "don't quit your day job". You can translate it, but it doesn't translate, if you know what I mean. It's like actually knowing the words to "Take me out to the Ballgame" or "There's no Business like Show business." Outside of me and a few Ethel Merman fans, these don't make sense either. The Europeans I've met in general never tire of telling me how there is no American culture, and in the same breath complaining about how American culture is taking over. *Modus tollens*, this is impossible. If American culture doesn't exist, then it can't be taking over. But getting back to useful performance art (generally believed to be an oxymoron), "don't quit your day job," and knowing the words to old songs and show tunes, what is fun about them is the culture they are attached to. Or lack thereof, if you wish.

Why I hung out with performance artists, I can put down to the stupidity of youth. No, that's not true. A good performance piece, and I insist that this is not an oxymoron, is the most wonderful experience you may ever have. However, if you aim to have this wonderful experience for yourself, you will have to go through hundreds and hundreds of excruciatingly bad performances before you find one that's worthwhile. As David Sedaris would say, you might as well just throw a bag of flour over your head and call it a day. But good ones exist, and my friends were responsible for some of them. I can recommend Joe Silovsky, Scott Gillette (now appearing with Radiohole in New York) and Goat Island.

Joe and Scott were my roommates for a year or so. We lived in a loft, which I guess everyone has to go through. One of the roommates was a sculptor and put our bathtub up on four foot iron stilts, simply because he could. He also put door handles where he felt like it (one guy had to get on a stool to open the door to his room), and doors opened from any direction (hinges above, below, left or right). It was very fun and very cool, and as you can imagine, cold, impossible to keep clean and full of Chernobyl-esque spiders. It had the advantage that I could use the industrial sized elevator to park my car inside the loft, and we had great parties. And hanging out with these guys

meant that years later in a different county and a different culture, I had no problem creating, structuring and performing a dance piece in order to become a Swiss gym teacher. Who woulda guessed.

For the dance piece for the P.E. exam, I rather rapaciously stole elements from *Willy Wonka* that interested me. The walk to the gates I used, the fall (without the splice, I'm good but not that good), the cane I replaced with an umbrella, and so forth. I mimed drinking from a cup and then eating the cup, just like Mr. Wonka did in the movie. I used a mask, decorated (rather badly) to make one think of Japanese theater (my only reference to Cibo Motta besides the music itself). The piece was not wonderful, and my performance was only adequate, but it was liked by everyone and I got a grade of "6" out of 6. I won't attempt to describe it any further since it's a bit like describing the smell of perfume. We don't have good vocabulary in English for describing movement, or smells, or many of the intangible things in the world.

Motto:

Even the parts of life that seem to have been wasted may eventually be worth something one day. Drink up.

A few details about the things mentioned in this article:

Music:

Shonen Knife: a Japanese girl group too cute to actually play their happy, candy-like pop well. Responsible for the return of hip length white go-go boots in the 1980's, an item not seen then since the days of Nancy Sinatra and today waiting for some brave soul to give them a third breath of fresh air. Buy Shonen Knife, they're great. Or at least a pair of white hip length go-go boots.

<http://www.shonenknife.net/eng/index.asp>

Sammy Davis Junior: Here I drew a blank while writing. I thought of asking my Swiss husband, "who was that black guy in the rat pack, the one that tap-danced? This would confuse an American because I used the term "black" instead of African American. I never

liked that. I'm no more white than a person of darker skin is black, or a person with orangish hair is a redhead. But as long as it's correct and descriptive I don't mind. "African American" you could only use if you've had a conversation with the person and you knew where they came from. Maybe they're just African. Maybe they're French or Dutch or Swiss. I still use black because when I see someone in a train station who I don't know, especially in Geneva; it's simply quite likely to be untrue to say African American.

So getting back to the ratpacker, I couldn't ask my Swiss husband that sort of thing. (I could have used, "who was the short guy in the rat pack?" or "who was the one with the eye patch" but those would have drawn even more vaporous blanks than the first question). The problem is not the "black," or the "short" or the "eye patch," but the "rat pack." He would know Frank Sinatra, but not the rest of them or what they represented to the 1960's: talented, famous bums and gamblers; serial marriages to starlets but so over the top that they became kind of kitsch.

Sun Ra believed that he came from Saturn. He taught music at Berkeley where he was artist in residence in 1971. He experimented with a huge range of musical styles. Buy his stuff, but choose with discretion as not all of it may be to your taste.

Marianne Faithful (or try Nico with the Velvet Underground): singers who can't really sing, but ooze aura. Just buy their stuff, it's all worthwhile.

Cibo Matto: you can't buy their stuff, but I'll copy CD's for anyone who wants them.

The Rat Pack: Sammy Davis Jr., Peter Lawford, Dean Martin, Joey Bishop and of course, the king Rat himself, Mr. Frank Sinatra. Actors and singers not to be missed: see and listen to anything with any of them

Soundgarden: want a headache? Want to annoy your neighbors? If you do, they're fantastic.

Beastie Boys: icons.

Movies and Miscellaneous:

"Take Me Out to the Ballgame" or "There's No Business Like Show Business": corny beyond belief songs, kitsch meets cool again, if you can stomach it.

Grand Royal: great music label tied up by lawyers.

Shirley Temple: you have to see one of her films to get it. Fun kitsch.

Lolita: see it.

Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory: see it over and over again.

5000 Fingers of Dr. T: see it over and over and over again. It shows up occasionally at CAC Voltaire. It's also known as the film with the story and screenplay by Dr. Seuss.

Gene Wilder: actor (not to miss: *Young Frankenstein*, *The Rhinoceros*, *The Producers*, *Blazing Saddles*).

Ethel Merman: most waterlogged actress. You have to see one of her films to get it. I have never had an occasion to do synchronized swimming, and in her films she always did. What creativity.

David Sedaris: GREAT writer.

Joe Silovsky: GREAT artist.

Scott Gillette: not a great artist, but capable of occasional brilliance. See Radiohole if they come your way.

Goat Island: not everyone's cup of tea, but are always thought provoking. Appeared at the Vienna Performance Festival a year or two ago, and come to Europe occasionally.

Ericka Olsen Stefano

Field Trip to New York

The idea of taking a journey to New York first popped into our minds in room 016 of the Bâtiment des Philosophes and, though it was a fine thought to have, we probably did not take it seriously enough as to think it would gallop out of our minds and take the shape of reality. But it did! And the idea began to take concrete form when Agnieszka -- who was leading the seminar -- succeeded in negotiating a grant from the U.S. Embassy in Bern for a six-night stay at a central Manhattan hotel and plane tickets for the five students and one teacher joining in the adventure.

This wish of breathing "the City" and touching its ground was induced by the subject matter of Hart Crane's poem, "The Bridge" (1932), which constituted the basis of our seminar during the entire summer semester of 2004. The voyage we were now just about to begin was rooted in the object that Crane transformed into a symbol of America, the Brooklyn Bridge, in his poem with the same title.

Setting foot on New Yorkean ground led to our encounter with the hotel we had booked in Manhattan's hottest spot, Lexington with 5th Avenue. Quite luckily, we were in for a treat. The building which from an outside first glimpse appeared to be a mere staying place where we would rest our limbs after walking the City up and down, turned out to be totally different from what we have imagined it to be. The Carlton Arms Hotel is fashioned into an unbelievably surprising 4-story artifact enlivened by the presence of some real cats, where each room has been decorated by a different artist and one gets to pick a room according to one's mood and inclinations.



The rush of adrenaline derived from the city's intrinsic dynamics served to keep us running about for over six days, greedy for all the attractions the place had to offer to tourists as well as locals. We challenged every opportunity by ever walking one more block and by jumping into the metro so as to have another go at its confusing diversity. I see it as rather insignificant to pause upon the New York cliché destinations we, of course, visited, as they are quite used up by story-telling, in spite of their capacity of renewal through each and everyone's private experience of them.

Harlem, however, was great fun both by day and by night. Thirty to forty-five minutes away from down town Manhattan, Harlem proved to be a worthy destination, a distinct space structured by distinct forces and tendencies, in opposition to most of the Manhattan spots we had encountered up to that point. The plural languages spoken here and their subsequent hybrid derivatives contribute in rendering the place - under the perspective of our foreign eyes - either more "real" or, paradoxically, more romantic. No matter how we may call the local atmosphere, we certainly were taken in by the experience of it: the fact of walking the streets, watching the people, buying that stuff we were never to wear again after that day, stuff which, in time and once away from Harlem, would mean precisely "Harlem." That particular diner, where we took some five minutes to wonder about the mysterious code the ladies working there had in understanding each other's language, and listening to teenagers singing Gospel while waiting for their Coke at MacDonald's, turned us into the spectators of live, real-life, spontaneous multiculturalism. And glad we were, as we ended our day in Harlem at the mythical

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Alumni Column

Starting with this issue, each *Noted* will include a short column featuring a former student of the English Department. This time we spoke to Claude Meyer, who was a student from 1995 to 1999, graduating in 2000. Claude did English as his Branch B, writing a *mémoire* for the French Department, with Philosophy as his Branch C subject. Currently, he is the head of the English Department at the Cycle du Renard school in Lignon.

Was this your first job after the Licence?

Oh, no. I first taught French and English in a private school, which was just crazy. It was a school for disabled students but I wasn't really teaching anything. I was just there.

How did you find your current job?

I looked in the telephone book and sent my CV to all the schools that I thought I'd want to teach at. Lignon called me back.

What do you do exactly?

I teach full time, which means 24 teaching hours (in the classroom). I teach French and English and I am *maître de classe*, which is partly an administrative position and partly like a mentoring situation.

Do you get to teach literature?

In the French classes a bit (texts like Sherlock Holmes in translation, for instance). But not in English. We don't do deconstruction or anything theoretical like that.

What is your favorite thing about your job?

The time off. No, I'm just kidding. Let me see... Well, one thing I really like is that moment when kids go "aha!" and you know they've gotten something new and it's exciting to them. I also like the fact that at this age (12-15 years), you're not just teaching - you're also like a big brother or a mentor or something. I like that kind of contact.

What's your least favorite thing?

The administrative bullshit, definitely. There's



too much paper work.

How is it to teach in Lignon?

Well, it's quite different than teaching at Collonge Bellerive. But I don't think I would like to teach there anyway. At Lignon, we have around 80 different nationalities, and sometimes there are conflicts between students. And also, sometimes when we meet with parents, when their kids are not passing or have done something wrong, the parents don't speak French and we need a translator. Or they don't understand the Swiss school system. Or sometimes we have kids that have just arrived from another country where there was war or something and they don't understand what it means to sit in a classroom without getting up and walking around.

Lignon is reputed to be a tough neighborhood. Do you have problems with violence?

Well, the violence is mainly between students. I have rarely heard of a teacher being aggressed. But there are conflicts among the students. It's funny, they identify with their neighborhood a lot. They identify with their postal code, and they're like, "We're the *douze dix-neuf*." But they also break down around musical styles and clothes - there's the rappers, and then there's the heavy metal crowd, etc.

So, it's not so much racial or ethnic as about musical subcultures?

Well, the rappers tend to be more likely black, but it's not just about race. That's also there, sure, but that's not the defining characteristic of the different groups.

Are there other former students from the English Department there?

There were one or two. There was a girl who started a thesis on Walter Benjamin in New York and then worked in my school for a while but she is a journalist now. And there's Anthony Kant, who taught at the university a few years ago. He's teaching English.

Do you plan to stay there forever?

No. (But I hope my director doesn't read this). I mean, I really like teaching here: it's very intense, we have cops on campus sometimes, it's interesting, and you have the impression to be doing something really meaningful. But I'd like to also teach at a college.

Do you have any advice to students who are at the university now?

Party! I still haven't stopped.

Seriously, if you were to go back, would you do anything differently?

Hmm, I'm reassessing my whole life now. I guess I would take it as seriously as I did, but it's important to know there's a world outside. There's life outside Bastion.

So, what kind of non-academic activities do you enjoy?

Music. I play electric guitar in a band (in a definitely non-academic way). We're called Monsters in Love. If you ever see that we're playing, come check us out.

Can students bring their CV for you to look at when they come?

Sure. You can also give them my email if they have any questions about anything:
<cloudmey@yahoo.fr>.

Thanks a lot, Claude, and have a good summer.

Agnieszka Soltysik



Harlem By Day: The Billboard Urges the Reader to "Never Blend In"

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Appolo, where anonymous talents hit the stage for knock-out performances, hoping to be spotted and signed to major labels. America has got the dream, but more importantly it breeds talents. New York is its living proof. Though appreciative of their faith in the dream, I, as product of the old continent, allow myself to remain sceptical about these somewhat perplexing endeavours.

But, since ideas look better and seem more reassuring and effective when contradicted, I'll take advantage of this opportunity to challenge the self-limiting thought of those saying to themselves "wishful thinking!" by replying "well, not really and not always!" The Bridge is in the real world, and in truth, is everything it promises to be, the sum of its written metaphors and visual images, whether produced by hand or camera . . . especially if you participate, as our group did, in the Poet's House Annual Brooklyn Bridge Walk under the mythical arches and happen to bump into Bill Murray and Jim Jarmush talking about . . . movies and story-telling.

Anamaria Balgradean

Jeremy, Anne, Joanne, Anamaria, and Daniele



Fiction:

Neat-Ché

by Jeremy Ergas

Neat-Ché was walking down the broad dirt road so many other damned suckers had walked before him. At sunbreak, his lean and emaciated figure was seen slipping past massive pebbles. Every now and then, by convention and habit, he would try to kick one of these pebbles as he had always done since he was a kid, but his stubborn attempts succeeded only in breaking the bone of his left foot. - True! Neat-Ché reminisced I was once a talented soccer player! He stopped and looked at the cloudless sky, smiling a smile choked with nostalgia: - In my day I could've dribbled from my half and scored against any team, he added, searching the bracket by the road for two sticks big enough to use as crutches. The pain in his left foot was killing him.

Neat-Ché was a good-looking young man, tall and elegant. Or was he really so? I can't remember. Some in my village used to say contrariwise that he was small, fat and physically repulsive. But they were goddamned liars the whole bunch of them, Biblical snakes spitting on everyone the slanderous venom of their forked tongues.

This having been said, you must be wondering where the Hell my main character got such a name as the one I chose for him. Well it's complicated, though I just came up with it. Tall or small, elegant or repugnant, athletic or pathetic, one striking detail we villagers all agreed on was that he sort of vaguely resembled the Ché. Only without the rebellious unshaved beard and the unkempt revolutionary hair. Being superficial, he put a lot more importance to such frivolous details as dressing, hair-combing and even perfuming. Thus, though he was destitute, he always presented well and seemed neat in appearance and so people in my village started calling him "Neat-

Ché."

I have just stated that Neat-Ché seemed neat in appearance. Only in appearance. In truth he was a stinking asshole, a sad individual always provocative, condescending and insulting. But he was ready to change, to redeem himself.

Thus, Neat-Ché was walking down the broad dirt road so many other damned suckers had walked before him. The slanting rays of the sun were shooting right through him as if his mortal coil was but a shadow caught somnambulating out of Hades. Yet, surely, Neat-Ché was not enjoying the cold sleep of death, for dreams were coming to him in hordes, galloping dreams so real and forceful he couldn't dissociate anymore. He's convinced he was bludgeoned by an invisible hand in a distant undiscovered land not long ago. It felt like falling down a never-ending tunnel or hole. But he has returned . . . someone new.

He remembers only two white ears. And now some preternatural force is hidden inside him. He is endowed with the gift of prophecy, can see the future and knows what awaits humanity. But more than predict Time, Neat-Ché must conquer and destroy it: this is the great enterprise he must bring to an end.

How can it be done? For the time being he knows not, but slowly he's climbing out of his dark ignorance as the rising sun in front of him. This has been a long journey: many times has Neat-Ché lost himself, many times in turn has he been his own guide. Midway between Hell and Heaven, half-Dante half-Virgil, he has descended and ascended the same old dirt road down and up Mount Purgatorio, broad as a whore's crotch.

Neat-Ché is not alone on his journey: dangling from his shoulder is Jeroboam, the amazing Baltimore Raven he has brought back from one of his countless adventures across the meaningful but opaque waters of the Sea. Every 40 minutes, the little bastard indents his new master's skull with his lacerating beak and yells: - Horrrrorrr and Abomination, the End of the Worrld is Nearrr!!! Then he keeps silent again for the next two-thirds of an hour.

Jeroboam's first master, an American whaler spun off east and stranded on the Orkney Islands in search of a giant octopus that had sucked his eye out, claimed he had bought the bird from some sort of raving poet. They had met close to St. Margaret's Hope one day, and the whaler had told Neat-Ché that if he didn't accept Jeroboam straightaway, he would lodge a bullet in his tiny ebony head. - Then it'd sure be the end of the world for this head-splittin' son of a bitch right here! he had said, caressing the cross of his rifle. So Neat-Ché took Jeroboam and never regretted it, except every half an hour or so.

After having stumbled a long way, Neat-Ché and Jeroboam were approaching a large bubbling crucible of a city infested with lingering and malcontent souls: Unreal London. From afar, Neat-Ché could only discern Big Ben's clock tower. Still in the outskirts of the city, hobbling on his crutches, he arrived with his bird at a bus stop where an old couple and John Turtle were waiting to get back to work.

It was midday, yet they seemed already exhausted and spent. Their sparkless eyes dragged themselves across the street, focused on nothing. Neat-Ché sat down next to Turtle and tried to engage into some kind of pleasant conversation, but we know how these city people are, don't we? Lives of petty individualism have completely separated them from others: behind their shells, no one can penetrate. - Why hello there my friend, saluted a jocular Neat-Ché. Turtle didn't answer. Nor did he consider it necessary to shake ol'Neat-Ché's out-held hand. Continuing to stand in the same posture, aware of the fact he was being taken for a fool, Neat-Ché was smiling more and more nervously. Still Turtle didn't move or speak. - Now listen you spawn-eating creep, Neat-Ché finally exploded, I don't know who you think you are, but where I come from, not answering someone when he talks to you is a blatant sign

of disrespect and if you don't...

All this time, the indignant old couple that had been staring reproachfully at Neat-Ché as if he were out of his mind, now suddenly turned their heads, eyes flashing: - Emit Time! They cried together, pointing their fingers to a white ball of fur bundling down the street with a big clock bouncing round its neck. - Who? asked Neat-Ché. - The famous physicist! In a second, Turtle had jumped from his seat and was running at the top of his speed, trying to reach the evermore evanescent figure in front of him.

Neat-Ché turned inquiringly to the old couple. - Useless, chuckled the old man, trying to catch up with Emit Time... - The Emmitt Thyme? asked Neat-Ché. - Precisely. Neat-Ché smiled gratefully: - Ah it's such a joy to be able to communicate at last! he cried with satisfaction. It's not too often it happens nowadays. To tell you the truth, I haven't spoken to another man in months... only to this Raven here. - We neither, the old man replied curtly. - Isn't that terribly sad? commented Neat-Ché, tears filling his eyes. - Frankly, answered the old man, I don't give a damn about what you have to say and I'd much prefer you'd go on walking downtown rather than bust my balls while I'm forced to wait with you for the next bus. Neat-Ché took a step back, dumbfounded: - Well-well-well...he finally responded, this must be the legendary hospitality the English are renowned for.

It is 6 o'clock when Neat-Ché arrives at Westminster Bridge: the working day has just finished and people are streaming out of their offices into the streets. Rivers of tired and extinct bodies. The last minute of their eight-hour day is past now and they are pushing and trampling each other, desperately trying to salvage one minute of the evening they will waste slouching in front of the tube and drinking soda water. Some stop by at the bar to see the mates. The mates are waiting inside, yelling in front of the same highlights of last weekend's Premiership games they have seen over and over since Monday. In record time, they will drown themselves under oceanic levels of booze till near unconsciousness, each new pint a deci-

sive step on the way to total alienation, each gulp making their "unswallowable" lives easier to forget.

Neat-Ché is having trouble following Emit Time. Fortunately, the physicist's uncommonly long and white ears never quite disappear from Neat-Ché's sight. Crossing the bridge, Neat-Ché finds himself tossed by growing and receding waves of this artificial sea of indigestible and mediocre humanity. The crowd sickens him: he can't help sneering at their dull and stupid faces, at their lifeless and lidless eyes - those mirrors of the soul! - kept passively low as they follow each other in distorting lines. - What vacancy! thinks our agitated elitist. Just look at them stare at the black soles of their shoes, following the stranger in front, pushed by the strangers behind, and thus all advancing as if they belonged to Panurge. And towards what? The end of the cliff?

At the end (or beginning) of Westminster Bridge, Emit Time takes a sharp turn left and penetrates Big Ben's clock tower. Looking up, Neat-Ché cannot see the huge clock blurred by the dense fog hovering higher and higher above the turbulent waters of the Thames.

Hey! screams Neat-Ché, pushing his way through herds of anonymous and closed faces. He is in full chase, yet almost cries at the thought of this immense crowd where everyone feels as alone and abandoned as he does. But there is no time to cry or reflect: he mounts in the tower and soon finds himself inside the huge clock's dial.

Finally he catches up with Time and confronts him, face to face. The physicist simply smiles, bending over the large opening at the centre of the clock and peering at Westminster Bridge way below: - Look at them! he laughs, his tall ears twitching in the wind. In a hurry, they turn in circles from one extremity of the bridge to the other, revolving so quickly that one cannot tell if they are going forwards or backwards . . . like the spokes of a bicycle wheel that a kid turns faster and faster with his hand.

When Neat-Ché does advance and look, what he sees strikes his soul. As harshly and cruelly critical of humankind as he is, his heart

fills with compassion at the sight of such a calamity. Inner waves of sensibility impossible to contain come bursting through his eyes - those mirrors of the soul! Huge and innumerable tears fight their way outside, falling abundantly to the flooding ground. - God! remarks Emit with disgust as he watches the water gush down the clock tower and come crashing on Westminster Bridge, - You're worse than Alice!

As the mass of water comes falling down, shattering Westminster Bridge, it incorporates the water of the Thames and overflows in all cardinal directions, overcoming skyscrapers (O London Bridge Tower, where are you?) and factories, drowning the entire city under the magic of its spirit.

In an hour, the city is washed away. Nevermore will the pools stand in drains, nevermore will the cisterns be empty and the wells exhausted.

Many people died that day. For them the day was one of devastation, but for others it was a delivery, a miraculous rebirth. The end is where we start from, said the Poet. In the abyssal depths of the Sea, next to the corpses of drowned merchants, now stands a new race of men dancing with sea-girls. When the waters came, they had not attempted to escape in a last fit of panic. They accepted submersion and let their old selves sink so that they could be born anew, purified, freed from the slavery of greed and envy, money and power. They were children once more, wreathed with seaweed red and brown, singing music so deep it was not heard at all.

Since that day, no trace of Emit Time could be found in this second Atlantis, but Jeroboam has stopped yelling the same 10 words every 40 minutes. Neat-Ché used to hear them 36 times a day, now all he can hear at the bottom of these poetic waters is silence. In this heart of light he will stay, till human voices wake him, and he drowns.

Only through time time is conquered.

(T.S. Eliot)

Jeremy Ergas