

NOTED

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Letter from the Editor

BRYN SKIBO-BIRNEY

As you stand or sit holding this copy of *Noted* in your hands – be it the e-form or the rarified paper copy – I wonder, was it the cover that impelled you to pick it up? Perhaps. I find that there's something particularly inviting and soothing about this edition's cover image, donated kindly by Montréal-based artist **Le Monstr**. Maybe it's the idea of reading a book by moonlight, cruising quietly along an inky night solely by skateboard power, under a moon that is back to adhering to its previously scheduled, non-eclipsing programming, that does it. Or maybe it's the cozy beanie. Regardless, there's a small detail which signalled to me that, yes, this was our cover: the tri-pronged light emanating, not from the envious moon nor the streaming stars, but from our hero's anonymous text. (Is it a novel? A collection of short stories or poems? A political pamphlet on resistance methods? To a curious and critical reader, any and all texts provide ample material for questions and potential illumination.)

The transportive, affective, and enlightening qualities of reading are discussed and questioned, poked and prodded, indeed, shaken and rummaged for all their delicious possibilities by many, if not all, of *Noted*'s talented and curious collaborators in this edition. **Olivia Lindem** takes a cultural-critical lens to Elif Batuman's recently published novel, *The Idiot*, about a young Turkish-American woman who struggles to find her place as a newly minted adult in the world of academia; the novel produces, as Olivia writes, a sense of "uncertainty and restlessness" that I think many readers of *Noted* will know only too well. Similar questions of academia's role in the identity crisis of young scholars are artfully laid bare in **Roberta Marangi**'s consideration of the power dynamics, gender roles, the methods of control, and the means in self-representation that come to the surface during the process of researching and writing a master's *mémoire* on decapitation. Whether you are just starting your studies, somewhere in the middle, or blissfully/frantically approaching the end, I am sure you will find yourself asking the same questions Roberta asks about the value and role of reading within societies, and the significance – to others and to yourself – of your chosen field of expertise and of what this expertise says about you, the presumed expert! That said, if you are closer to the beginning than the end of your studies, may I suggest that you turn immediately to **Téo Verhoeven**'s helpful list of tips for first-year students; with his characteristic good humour and aplomb, Téo condenses years of experience, mistakes, accidents, and much-merited success into a handful of concise points, all in the interest of easing the paths of those who follow

behind him. Alternatively, **Dr Arnaud Barras** offers an equally sage, if characteristically tongue-in-cheek, retrospective to his time in the department and his views on life in general in the "Proust Questionnaire." Many of us know Arnaud to be a fearless, critical reader of complex worlds and characters who ably defended his thesis during his *soutenance* this summer (just about the scariest thing an assistant can do); while he may be brave on the academic front, just don't get him started about cheese.

In the "Features" and "Creative Writing" sections alike, questions of fear and discovery (of the nature of one's fears and of one's strength to overcome them) permeate the journal this semester. New contributor **Bruna Villiger** offers a disturbingly familiar, and fearful, tale for many of us who spend time in the more rural areas of Switzerland; in the interest of avoiding spoilers, I'll simply say that the tension and anxiety that her story creates cut to the quick for their simplicity and mundanity. That is to say, we've all been there and *that doesn't make it any less scary*. **Lorraine Devillard**'s allegorical tale also features an anxiety that I'm certain we've all experienced (for better or worse); fortunately, her speaker takes you through the darkness to the revelation waiting on the other side. Anyone who has some essays looming would do well to tune in to Lorraine's piece. Meanwhile, **yours truly** returns to a particularly "interesting" (read: white-knuckled) sea voyage experienced this summer for the colors, sensations, and dangers which go hand-in-hand with the terrifying beauty that is found far out at sea. If you're feeling understandably concerned by this point, **Céline Vonlanthen** has just what you need: a healthy dose of body positivity. Sit back and let her poem, "Calypso," remind you that whether figuratively or literally at sea, *you will be fine*. If you needed any further convincing, take a trip to the Film section; the new Film Club *chef*, **Patrick Jones**, will dazzle you with the daring, audacious, and ground-breaking "Style" employed by some of cinematography's finest directors, all on tap for the autumn film schedule; remember, even the "Greats" all started somewhere, and so should you. Attendees of Film Club evenings have the opportunity not just to watch a film, but to read it as critically as any great work of prose or poetry; the "enlightening" text on the cover could just as easily be a movie on an iPad as a novel.

In a variety of ways, the writers in this edition of *Noted*, immensely talented readers all, dramatize the struggles, questions, fears, and discoveries that we in the English department work with, and against, every day. I hope you find their pieces equally calming (despite the fear factor!) and illuminating.

Happy reading,
Bryn

FEATURES

Memories of a Mémoire

ROBERTA MARANGI

The end of summer is the time to delirious binge-watch, binge-read, binge-everything for me. Soon the new academic year will start, I will start working again, and I will have to say goodbye to such pleasures – making an exception for the next season of the History Channel's *Vikings* because I am only human and not a very strong one when it comes to addictive period dramas with strong female leads (Team Lagertha, of course). Here I am, then, at the end of August, watching episode after episode of Marvel's new series *The Defenders*. Slow at the beginning, struggling to come together in the middle, and with a very anticlimactic ending, the one moment I truly enjoyed was an exchange between two of the four defenders: when Luke Cage calls out Danny Rand (a.k.a. the Iron Fist) on Rand's privilege as a rich, white man. That was well done; it was very satisfying to watch considering the excessive amount of whining and self-victimization on Rand's part. It wasn't the only moment, though, that got my attention because it's a visually stimulating show. The fight scenes were engaging, with two full beheadings, after which I opened my little notebook of beheadings and wrote a short account:

Beheading 1 — unexpected, and physically improbable despite the sharp blade. Seemed mainly functional because apparently character could not have died otherwise. Same goes for Beheading 2 — interesting to note that these two characters were members of an institution called 'The Hand' and they were referred to as the 'Fingers of The Hand' (see metaphors of 'societies as bodies'); are these decapitations then more symbolical than you thought at first? Symbolical dismemberment through physical beheading? Think about this.

Research never goes on holiday, right? And you never know what will unlock the mess in your head, which is especially important to me now, as I am so close to writing my masters' *mémoire*. The project investigates women who decapitate men in medieval literature; hence, the little notebook of beheadings always at my side (which is very effective, I have to say, and certainly makes for interesting conversations every time someone peeps over my shoulder). Usually, there are two reactions to it: people who know me, even just a bit, laugh and shake their heads, as if to acknowledge my strange subject and even stranger note-taking habit; the others are confused and grossed out, with questions ranging from 'How did you come up with that?' to the more vocal 'But why would you

do that to yourself? Isn't there enough unpleasantness in the world?

These are questions to which I have a variety of reactions. The simplest one, for when I don't have time to get into the details or it is not appropriate to rhapsodize about decapitation, is a little laugh and a quick 'That's true; it's gross, but it's an important subject'. For example, I sometimes accompany my mum to church and I always get the 'No beheading talk after mass; it's inappropriate' scold, which is funny considering that two of the three beheading narratives I'm currently studying come from the Holy Scriptures.

Then there are two other answers, much longer, much more difficult to explain, for I have rarely verbalized them in their entirety. I suppose this is because deciding what you're going to work on for such a long time implies a bit more than mere enjoyment or interest. Whether we realize it or not, there is something deeply personal about a choice that involves letting in new concepts and inviting new thoughts. When we do realize it, it becomes essential that the question 'why' be answered; we need to know: what does this choice say about me?

In my case, I had just turned twenty when the will to explore the ugliness that can be found literature crystallized in my mind. At the time, I was studying economics with average results and less than average motivation; so, I was constantly trying to distract myself and a weekly trip to the bookstore was a loving part of that ritual, along with the following reading session. One of the most intense of these sessions centered on Umberto Eco and Jean-Claude Carrière's *Non Sperate di Liberarvi dei Libri* (original title: *N'Espérez Pas Vous Débarrasser des Livres*). In particular, something Jean-Philippe Tonnac wrote in the preface to this book made me stop and think:

Se consideriamo i libri l'esatto riflesso delle aspirazioni e delle attitudini di un'umanità alla ricerca di crescita e di miglioramento, allora essi devono necessariamente tradurre quest'eccesso di onore e di vergogna. (11)

[If we consider books to be the precise reflection of the ambitions and of the attitudes of a humanity that wishes for growth and improvement, then they have to necessarily translate this excess of honor and shame.]

Books, for Tonnac, are part of a cultural system that is as good at forgetting what shames it as it is at preserving what flatters it. Books are an homage to human greatness and, at the same time, to what Eco calls *stupidità*, or what Tonnac calls *bêtise*. As compelling as this sounds, it left me puzzled: what about books that confront the ugliness of

life? Are they not exceptions to such a view? Or does the literary form, with its artistic nature, make it, by default, part of something we can be proud of? As if to say, 'Look, this is terrible and wrong but let me make Art about it, let me ennoble it, make it more palatable and, in the process, make *us* more likable'. I wasn't sure what to think; I'm still not sure. It's certainly subversive enough to intrigue me, but still too neat to convince me. It is, however, a perspective that allowed me to expand my own limited views of literature and to start considering the fact that there often is an agenda behind what we read and that ugliness and stupidity are as part of it as any talk of genius and greatness. That's why I became fascinated by stories of blood and death, of folly and of not-so-righteous violence. That's when, confronted with the brutality of decapitation narratives, I started questioning their meaning and their role in literature.

I don't have an answer, of course, I'm not even sure I am going to have a definitive answer by the end of my M.A. Instead, what I have right now is a lot of information and images swimming around in my head. Having recently finished writing an essay on the myth of Anne Boleyn in historical fiction, the images now converge towards the shape of a woman kneeling in front of a grim audience, eyes wide open, every breath deep, but labored, as if drawing more air would extend time as well as the lungs, and then a heartbeat that stops before the sword cuts into skin, veins, and bone. It's ugly; there's no denying it. When I first read about Anne Boleyn's execution, I had nightmares, unexpected and unwelcomed. I am not sure if there was something beyond the brutality of the beheading itself that triggered me; all I know is that it was the unwelcomeness of these nightmares and their overwhelming nature that paradoxically prompted me further in embracing such a gory subject. Herein lies the second answer to the question of 'why?': because I needed to take control over something that was becoming a phobia, a fear of annihilation and utter silence.

In *Women Who Read Are Dangerous* (2008), Stefan Bollmann addresses the concept of control in recounting the history of female readership. Unsurprisingly, there were many detractors of female readers, and they had a particular set of fears: once consuming literature became silent and personal, how was society to have control over women? To this audience of detractors were dedicated paintings like Baudouin's *La Lecture* – a woman lasciviously reclining over a luxurious chair, her corset unbuttoned, her left hand distractedly caressing a book while the right one is hidden under her skirts. You can almost imagine a bigot of the time yelling 'This is what comes from letting women read! Onanism! Dissolution!' Due to this conveyed excessiveness, the painting is as much representation as it is a parody of these fears, according to Bollmann himself (22). That is why he titled his text *Women Who Read Are Dangerous* because, in a way, reading is a dangerous

business, shifting control from the social to the personal, and, with control being redistributed, so is intellectual power. That is why women who read and take control of their intellectual life – the heroes of Bollmann’s book– become a threat to the status quo.



Pierre Antoine Baudouin's *La Lecture*

Considering that the status quo today involves neo-Nazis, I wouldn't mind becoming a threat through reading. However, I must admit to a more personal concern. I followed that same logic in Bollmann's work and started reading as a way to control my own fears. As paradoxical as that sounds, it worked. It's at that point that reading turned to research: not because I want to understand why people cut other people's heads; I mean, I might, but setting that kind of goal would be insane because there could never be one reason for beheading. Even if there were something resembling one reason, it would concern the much larger issue of human violence. I decided to start researching it because then beheadings, with all their unpleasantness, would become part of my daily routine in a way that would allow me to manage their role in my life. And this is exactly what happened. While this fear will probably never go away – let's face it, there isn't a scenario in which decapitation is not ugly and utterly wrong – now I get to decide how these thoughts enter my mind and for how long.

Rather than Baudouin's reader, then, I aspire to be a bit like Van der Goes' St. Margaret

from his *Altare Portinari*: with a book in my hands, certainly, but also with a dragon – my fears, ennobled and always present – tamed under my feet.



Hugo Van der Goes' *Portinari Altarpiece* (right side)

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Cultural Curiosity and Academic Uncertainty

OLIVIA LINDEM

Editor's note: This review was originally published in Ms. Lindem's co-produced online publication, The Attic on Eighth. It has been revised from its original form for publication in Noted. You can find more of Ms. Lindem's reviews, essays, and curated book lists at theatticoneighb.com.

One of the most anticipated novels of this year has been Elif Batuman's *The Idiot*. A staff writer for *The New Yorker* and the writer of the 2010 memoir, *The Possessed: Adventures with Russian Books and the People Who Read Them*, Batuman is predominantly known for being a non-fiction writer who travels quite a lot and engages with literature. I've been sporadically following Batuman's work since 2010, having been recommended *The Possessed* by my high school English teacher shortly after having gone through that Russian Literature Phase we all experience as students. While her taste in literature is what initially got my attention, what kept it is that Batuman is, like me, of Turkish-American origin. Knowing few Turkish-American authors (read: none), I hoped that she would eventually produce something that spoke to me culturally.

With *The Idiot*, she did just that. A modern *Bildungsroman*, the novel is internally focalized through Selin, who, at eighteen, is just beginning her studies at Harvard. Selin is born and raised in the United States by two intellectual, supposedly agnostic, parents who have divorced and live in different states. Selin is intelligent, tall (an important detail when Turks are rarely portrayed as such – something I appreciated, being tall myself and having many tall relatives), and curious about everything. She goes against every racist stereotype – from the physical to the intellectual – and brings the Turkish people I knew to life through words.

Still, that Selin is of Turkish origin is never the point of *The Idiot*. That she is Turkish is important to her, but it never defines her. The novel is all about her struggles to find herself as she tries to translate her passions to her studies. This is predominantly seen through her attitude towards language as she engages with linguistics and foreign languages. She immediately signs up to study Russian at university, and it is her struggle to learn the language that defines much of the first half of the novel. Through this program,

she becomes close friends with a Serbian girl, Svetlana, and falls in love with a Hungarian senior, Ivan. These relationships both destroy stereotypes of with whom Turks can and can't be friends and beautifully open up the novel and Selin to other cultures: the relationships push her to travel to France (with Svetlana) and to Hungary (because of Ivan) in the second half of the novel.

Ultimately though, *The Idiot* is a novel about the uncertainty and restlessness of university life. Selin is a young, eager student, and still, her hesitancy comes across on almost every page. She makes decisions on which classes to take, but there is a haphazard feeling that permeates her actions. These decisions drive the entire novel, but that they might never have been made are never forgotten. She goes into her university life seemingly knowing what she wants, but she comes away not knowing at all. She is awkward, and often, her actions go awry. It is an unsettling representation of what student life can be like, leaving you stuck between the feeling that you suddenly know so much and yet know nothing at all.

This feeling is so thoroughly woven into the text that I was left in a state of uncertainty for three weeks after finishing the novel. Like Selin going to university, I had gone into the text eagerly, ready to love it. Yet, I came out unsure, not really knowing what I had read. I knew that I had liked whatever it was, but it had nevertheless left me a bit empty. I still don't really know, but I think that the feeling is appropriate to the story and is a direct result of the way the book is written. It is a masterpiece of characterization, and so it would be impossible to put down the novel feeling otherwise than Selin.

I am thankful for *The Idiot* – few novels dare to take such an honest stance, depicting both the passion and the potential loss behind intellectual pursuit. *The Idiot* rings true to many intellectual endeavors, and Selin's youth and status as a college freshman bring forth a specific uncertainty known to most young academics. I certainly wish that it had come out when I was still an undergrad, wavering between literature, history, and international relations. I highly recommend it to anyone who has lived through the university experience as well as to anyone feeling a lack of cultural representation. It is an excellent, funny, and beautifully mundane book.

THE IDIOT

By Elif Batuman

432 pages. Penguin Press. CHF14.00

A Little Help for First-Year Students

TÉO VERHOEVEN

Téo Verhoeven: 24 y.o. – Native French speaker – finished my bachelors at UNIGE – French and English – satisfied with my academic journey – time to recap – maybe it will benefit others.

Dear First-Year Students,

Even if I managed to earn all the necessary credits, I still made a lot of mistakes that I hope you guys can avoid, because some were just plain dumb. So, here are my tips: they might be good; they might be not-so-good. They're just here for you to see, and if just one student benefits from reading them, I'll be a happy man!

- *Do the reading.* No kidding, it'll save your life and you will thank yourself later when it's time to study for the exam (said the guy who read 1,000 pages by Rousseau in two weeks for his last exam session). A good idea to start would be to look at how many pages you have to read, and to make yourself a schedule (in order to avoid massive headaches; no offense, Rousseau.)
- *Print all of your material at the beginning of the year.* Even if you consider yourself a tree killer, printing everything right away will save you so much time and will allow you to have all your materials during your courses (plus, paper can be recycled). It also might be useful to get everything bound.
- Speaking about printing, *learn how to use the printer efficiently.* Ask somebody from the library, or an older student, to show you all the subtleties of this complicated beast. Again, it will save you so much time.
- *Talk to your teachers.* You will be asked to write a lot of papers, trust me. Due to the infinity of subjectivities in this great world, one useful thing is to talk to your teachers to know what they're looking for, just in case you don't get it right from the start. Don't harass them, alright, they already have their hands full, but office hours have always been utterly interesting to me, and hopefully will be to you too. Yeah, professors are scary, no doubt about it, but if you go and talk to them, they won't bite; just don't insult Chaucer, Shakespeare, or Postmodernism in front of them. About assistants, remember they were

students like you not so long ago, so good tips about your studies can be found there too.

- *Talk to each other.* Everybody knows it is much nicer to get to know other people, but it is also an advantage whenever you need to do a work in groups, or if you need notes.
- *Go to the Writing Lab;* it's a free, heated room in the winter, with nice people, and, sometimes, snacks. Go there and you might find the Holy Grail, namely, what is a thesis statement.
- *Participate as much as you can in seminars.* Being in the humanities allows you to express yourself beyond just filling in the boxes, so use that power to develop your thinking.
- *Leave your cellphone in your pocket or in your bag during a lesson.* Learning is a privilege so Whatsapp & co. can wait until you're outside of the room; plus, it's nice to show respect to the person teaching. If it doesn't interest you, try to make it interesting. Doing so will make it easier to study for the exam or the paper at the end. (And there is nothing more annoying than trying to focus on a complex topic when someone pulls out a video of a stupid cat; no offense, stupid cat.)
- *Be critical about what you're being taught.* Teaching and learning is a never-ending process, so call things into question. Just remember that the people in front of you are super smart, but dialogue is a part of learning and teaching. Ask questions and think critically.
- *Sign up for exams.* Listen, folks! If there is a grade, you sign up (e.g. exams, contrôle continues, or graded papers). If there isn't a grade, you don't sign up (e.g. attestations). Don't mess that up, or you'll feel like a fool!
- *Don't hesitate to ask, in any case.* The way the Humanities Faculty is structured is complex, so nobody expects from you to know it all from the start.
- *Try crazy courses and get to know other teachers;* it will broaden your perspectives. I went to a few seminars a bit reluctantly, and they happened to be fascinating.
- *If you believe in an idea, go write it down and defend it well.* Do not be scared of having an idea that nobody had before.

- Last, but not least, *making mistakes and getting some bad grades is OK (at first)*. We've got this idea that getting a bad grade is bad. I think that I needed to learn to view it as a step in order to get better, as in "there is room for progress." I'm not writing a motivational speech, but I just wanted to bring to the fore that it is fine to make mistakes; viewing them as steps to getting better helped me to judge myself more kindly. In the end, getting an average grade gave me a challenge to improve, rather than putting me down.

These are just a few tips off the top of my head. Don't read them as dogmas, as we are all unique: my experience may not be yours. Read them as a recap of my studies; maybe things will talk to you, maybe others won't, and that's fine (except for the cellphone thing. That's a social problem; come on, everybody!!). 😊

Have fun, fill your mind with a billion things, and enjoy!

Best,
T.

FILM

Dispatches from the Film Club

PATRICK JONES

Dear *Noted* readers,

I'm thrilled to be taking over Film Club from Amy who has done a stellar job over the past two years, and whose shoes are going to be very hard to fill. I'm sure you'll all join me in thanking her for her hard work.

Film has long been a passion of mine, and, once upon a time, it even payed the bills: I worked as a projectionist in an independent cinema for many years, and have done a variety of odd jobs for film festivals, including programming.

Our theme this semester is 'Style'. We can interpret this as loosely as we like, but linking the programme are films by directors who are said to have a distinctive 'style' – whether that be visual, sonic, or narratorial. The films are a diverse bunch: at once strange, funny, moving, and in the case of *Suspiria*, our Halloween special, downright silly. Some are absolute classics (*Playtime*; *Far from Heaven*) and some are underrated gems (*Rope*; *Sweetie*) that I encourage you to take a chance on. I'm sure our discussions will go in many fascinating directions, but a question that's always intrigued me is: why are we so obsessed with the figure of the director when cinema is so extraordinarily collaborative as an art form?

As always, Film Club takes place on select Thursday evenings in room B112 (Uni Bastions), with an *apéro* from 19h00 and the screening beginning around 19h30. There will be exciting special guests giving introductions, so keep your eyes peeled on our Facebook page ('Film Club Anglais UNIGE') for updates.

Looking forward to seeing you there,
Patrick

STYLE

FILM CLUB ANGLAIS PRESENTS:

28.09 - HITCHCOCK'S 'ROPE'

12.10 - TATI'S 'PLAYTIME'

26.10 - ARGENTO'S 'SUSPIRIA'

16.11 - HAYNES'S 'FAR FROM HEAVEN'

30.11 - CAMPION'S 'SWEETIE'

14.12 - STUDENT'S CHOICE

FIN

FREE ENTRY / FROM 19H / ROOM B112 / UNI BASTIONS

Calypso

CÉLINE VONLANTHEN

And if you don't want to be nice with yourself, I'll be nice for you
You are a goddess
 Queen of the oceans
And all the strength you have in you
 All the hopes
 All the beauty
 All the fire
 All the thunder
It breaks my heart with happiness.
You are a riot.

CREATIVE WRITING

The Kings of the Forest

BRUNA VILLIGER

I live in a small cottage in the mountains with my parents, brother, and my dog, Papu. My older brother is always busy doing “teenager stuff,” as my mother calls it. She says I will understand what it means when I grow older, but I am quite old already! I am eleven years old after all! Papu is a close friend of mine. We often go for long walks together, during which I try to guide him – unsuccessfully: he almost always chooses which path we take. I do not mind; his instinct is unerring. My mother allows Papu to sleep in my room, because she knows that he can fight the monsters hiding behind the door. Papu is generally courageous; I only saw him scared once, and then I was as scared as he was.

It was a Wednesday evening, and my parents had gone out to watch a movie. My brother was probably at his best friend’s home, playing videogames, as usual. Papu and I were home alone. I made myself the biggest sandwich I could and went upstairs to eat it in front of the television, something that my parents would never have allowed. Papu was sitting by my side, perhaps dreaming that I would give him a bite. As soon as I turned on the television, I heard a strange noise downstairs. I looked at Papu. His sense of hearing is better than mine, and he seemed puzzled. I sighed loudly and picked up my sandwich. After the first bite, another noise occurred, louder than before. It was a strange, screeching noise. I put my dinner down and decided to find out what was happening. I had already started to go downstairs, when I realized the fatal mistake I had just made: I had left my sandwich on the coffee table, which means that Papu had access to it. I returned, almost jumping to the coffee table, but Papu was not even looking at my dinner. He was lying down, his generally erect ears now glued to his head. He looked frightened. At this point, my heart missed a beat, and Papu’s fear contaminated me. What was happening downstairs for Papu to act like this?

Fear is an odd sensation. I could not move anymore, just like Papu’s ears. I turned my feet, millimeter by millimeter, and faced the stairs. I called Papu in a whisper. Unlike me, he moved quickly. We went down the stairs together. My cottage has three floors: the ground floor, where the laundry and the wine cellar are; the first floor, with the kitchen and my father’s study; and the second floor, where the bedrooms and television are. The noises came from the ground floor. I stopped on the first floor landing and stood still. The screeching resumed! It seemed to come from the outside. Luckily, I had turned off all the lights, so I could reach the door unseen in the dark. We continued our slow descent.

The entrance light shone through the glass of the door. We edged closer to the door. The entrance hall is not wide, but at that moment, it seemed wider than a football field. I needed to see what was happening, but fear prevented me from doing so. Finally, Papu broke the spell by touching my leg with his muzzle. This encouragement was all I needed: I reached the door and looked through the glass. I saw a ripped garbage bag, which my parents had probably forgotten. Circling the bag, two wolves were inspecting its contents. One of them raised its head and looked right into my eyes, or rather, my soul. I stood petrified. I heard Papu whining. The second wolf broke off scavenging, intrigued by what its companion was doing. It looked dissatisfied with the garbage and ambled away. The first wolf waited a bit and then went away too. It took me ten minutes to regain the power of movement. I had just met the kings of the forest.

The Little Girl Inside Me

LORRAINE DEVILLARD

Petrified.

Somehow, a sparkle of wisdom found its way to me. It gave me the force to acknowledge that I was afraid and to move on, to move beyond this frozen state of inaction.

So I dived deep into myself, from my heart all the way to my stomach where I found the fear. A little girl huddled up in a corner, a little ball all tensed.

I went to her, gave her a hug, and looked at her, gently.

‘What is it that you are so afraid of?’ I asked.

She looked at me with big eyes, silent, surprised that somebody could be interested by what she had to say. Was this real?

But I remained there, looking at her patiently with the same gentle eyes lulling her.

She started speaking. Her voice was full of knots, of broken silences and swallowed words, words not expressed, words expressed too early or too late, words unheard, words stamped out.

I asked her again: ‘But among these, what is the one knot you’re the most afraid of? And is it something avoidable, something we can ignore and move around?’

She thought for a while, then told me.

No, there was no way around it. We couldn’t escape writing an essay. This was something we’d have to face together, she and I, to confront.

So I took Fear’s little hand and told her to come with me, that instead of fighting one another, we’d face the knot together.

She smiled at this, a warming smile that went all the way to my heart. She rose slowly and stepped forward timidly. She was still a bit afraid of all the other knots lingering around. I squeezed her hand gently.

‘For later, I said. We’ll come back. Together.’

She looked up to me, her eyes sparkling with hope. I think I read gratitude in them as well.

And I heard a sweet, crystalline laughter.

A child’s innocent laughter.

She started running towards our essay, pulling me with her into a swirl of determination.

We wrote it together, Fear and I.

Sometimes as swift birds flying over high distances smoothly and joyfully.

Sometimes as worms exploring slowly the complexity of the earth’s obscure and secret grounds.

We were petrified a few times. That’s when we lost hold of each other’s hand.

This is how I came to realise that the little girl’s name is Fear only when she is left alone, pushed away and forgotten in a corner.

Because she’s yearning to let her voice out, yearning to share the secrets of her heart.

This Small Craft

BRYN SKIBO-BIRNEY

In this small craft,
 we slide down
 the bellies
 of gluttonous waves.
 The bow cuts
 unambiguously through,
 while the stern,
 deceitful,
 slips and sashays,
 through the dangerous slosh.
 We fail to gain hold
 among the lips and shelves
 that mark the
 dark grey faces,
 rising to meet us.
 Each summit reveals
 a familiar
 hatcheted seascape
 of fierce blue, deepest black, white foam, and livid green.
 Chasms and chips
 promise bone-
 jarring
 impacts
 and
 sickening
 drops.

Salt crusts our faces,
 burning our eyes,
 with delicate crystals
 that drive us mad
 with thirst.
 In this wet, hoary hell,

we wait,
 to glimpse
 and
 to catch
 our salvation.

We have heard tales,
 passed along from
 envious and unbelieving mouths,
 of balls of silver, pulsating ribbons
 of flesh and muscle,
 so dense and alive,
 that,
 to catch them,
 we need only let drop
 a simple,
 woven
 basket.

These stories are centuries-old
 and we are fools to believe them.
 Worse yet, we tell them again
 and again;
 the stories will certainly outlast us.
 But we can't help
 but to hope.
 Such material wealth seems to await us
 at every sublime peak
 and
 in every shattering valley.

We follow the gannets,
 who congregate in greedy circles,
 black daggers against iris skies,
 piercing the sea,
 over and
 over and
 over again.

Fighting for our place in this melee,
 We anxiously throw our nets,
 praying that,
 within the streaming bodies
 we haul up –
 who mutely gape their deaths at us,
 their bodies fatally and forcefully rainbowing against our boots –
 we will find our future,
 our escapes,
 from mistakes, misdeeds, and misadventures,
 our own,
 our fathers',
 and some that the world has thrust upon us.

In this small craft,
 we rise and fall in time
 with a power
 to which
 we are wholly subject.
 Down the hull,
 a glittering stream runs
 red into the iron sea.
 We work feverishly in the bloody mess.
 Our hands glint
 white and silver,
 crystallized and scaled.
 Each knife flenses tenderly
 in tandem,
 piercing soft flesh;
 the smallest mistake,
 could kill.

VARIA

The Proust Questionnaire

WITH ARNAUD BARRAS

Fresh from a whirlwind summer of successfully defending his thesis and joyfully marrying his now-wife, the newly degreed *Doctor* Arnaud Barras reflects on life, love, cheese, and pseudonyms.

What's your current state of mind?

Relaxed and lost in thought.

If you could no longer be "Arnaud Barras," what would you be named?

Yavanna, the "lover of all things that grow in the earth," in Tolkien's *The Silmarillion*.

What is the most recent song you listened to?

Feist's *1234* (randomly selected by Spotify while I was cooking lunch).

What is the most recent book you read?

Cursor's Fury, by Jim Butcher. It's a high fantasy novel, part of series I read seven years ago and which I've decided to reread over the summer. It's an easy read and there are battles and magic and romance and courage and sadness. Everything a teenager likes.

Which living person do you most admire?

I don't really like scales of values.

Which living person do you most despise?

There can't be that many people I despise, and, sober, I would certainly not name them publicly. Ow, and I don't like scales of values.

Who is your favorite hero/-ine in fiction?

Oblivia Ethylene in Alexis Wright's novel *The Swan Book*. Oblivia is the embodiment of resilience and she uses imagination and stories to face a grim reality.

Who is/are your favorite prose author(s)?

Rudy Wiebe, a Canadian contemporary writer whose poetic prose is beautiful and intricate, and whose narratives let you experience life in a way you never would have imagined.

Who is/are your favorite poets?

Judith Wright.

What is your most treasured possession?

My imagination.

What's your favorite French word or expression?

L'apéro! Although it's a tough choice. Certainly the expression I use most often is *Ça va*?

Which talent would you most like to have?

I would love to be able to do music improvisation.

What is your most marked trait?

Caring, I wish, but arrogance, I fear.

What trait do you admire most in your friends?

Righteousness.

If you died and came back as an emoji, which emoji would it be?

After I die, I'll come back as a blank space.

Where would you most like to live?

I'm fine where I am.

What is your idea of perfect happiness?

Love.

What is your happiest memory?

My wedding.

What fear have you successfully faced?

Eating cheese (no kidding).

If a feather and a bowling are falling in a vacuum, are you the feather or the bowling bowl?

I'd be gravity (told you I was arrogant).

What's your motto?

I don't have one, but were I to make one up, it'd be: *Love and let live*.

THE CREATIVE WRITING GROUP (CWG)

Ranging from daring short stories of a drought-stricken apocalyptic future and Nero's fire-struck Rome (both are quite *à propos*) to inter-planetary and touchingly terrestrial poems of comets, cliffs, time, and love, the CWG covered a lot of ground last semester, in terms of genres, voice, style, and topic. After such a productive and lively set of meetings, the CWG is champing at the bit to get back to work on our creative pieces this Autumn semester.

We hope, then, that since you've made it this far into *Noted*, you'll consider joining us throughout the Autumn semester, when we meet on the first Friday of every month in Café Voisins (8 rue des Voisins), from 17:00 to 18:00. All students and staff of the English department are kindly invited to join us on the first meeting, **6 October 2017**, with their creative work or with their editorial eyes and ears on the ready.

Disclaimer: The Creative Writing Group is not a formal enterprise of the English Department. We are an entirely grade- and credit-free band of poets and writers, looking to turn you – yes, you! – into a dreamy-eyed, beret-headed poet and/or écrivain(ne) as well. Join us!