

December *Noted* 2005

Newsletter of the English Department

Table of Contents

| | |
|--|----|
| English Department News..... | 2 |
| Theses and <i>Mémoires</i> | 2 |
| The ADEA Needs You..... | 3 |
| Note From the Director..... | 4 |
| Dispatches From the Essay Front..... | 6 |
| Five Rules for Submitting Written Work..... | 7 |
| Poem: <i>A Little Ditty</i> | 7 |
| Ecocriticism..... | 8 |
| Impressions of <i>Amphitryon 38</i> | 10 |
| Poem: <i>Love Always</i> | 11 |
| Review of <i>Hamlet</i> | 12 |
| Review of <i>Hunger! Richard III</i> | 13 |
| <i>The Nuit du court</i> | 15 |
| Alumni Column..... | 16 |
| Fiction: <i>The Prozac Lady</i> | 18 |
| Fiction: <i>Birds of a Feather</i> | 19 |
| Fiction: <i>The Siamese Cat of Plainpalais</i> | 20 |
| Fiction: <i>Morning on the Metro</i> | 22 |
| News From the Library..... | 23 |
| Cinema Corner..... | 24 |

Editors:

Michael Röösl, as
Agnieszka Soltysik, ma

Layout:

Agnieszka Soltysik, ma

Contributors:

Kareen Klein, Lise Magnollay, Sarah J. Moloney,
Catherine Jane Müller-Griffiths, Rachel Hosein Nisbit,
Ericka Olsen Stefano, Calvin E. Poe, Lydia Sondegger,
David Spurr, Jessica Stevens-Campos

Editorial

Welcome to the Age of Bologna. We have passed into a new era. The transition may seem bumpy and confusing to some, but being the adaptable humans we are, we'll soon be used to the new system and won't be able to imagine how we lived in the dark ages of Euro-incompatibility! The Editors are pleased to see that most of you have successfully converted their credits and notified the English Department and Madame Decombaz of the *services des examens* of your status (whether you will stay under the old *Licence* system or convert to the BA). The Editors are also pleased to have received more submissions than ever before. Bologna must be inspiring students to feel more engaged and willing to express themselves. We are glad to see this new spirit and hope it will help revive the ADEA (see the article inside) and generally motivate students to get more involved with the activities of the English Department.



English Department News

The administrative staff of the English Department has just completed a very big project: the processing of nearly 200 applications from individual students for conversion of credits from the 1999 *plan d'études* to the new one. Our able departmental secretaries, Ancilla Stefani and Clare Tierque, deserve our special thanks for their many hours of work on this project, as well as for their patience in receiving students and helping them to fill out the conversion forms.

The last issue of *Noted* welcomed a number of new members of the department who have since then begun their official duties: Professors Guillemette Bolens and Lukas Erne; Martin Leer, MER; and, as assistants, Kareen Klein, Christophe Rose, and Ioana Balgradean.

In this issue, we have the pleasure of introducing other new members:

Emma Depledge, *assistante* in early modern literature. Ms. Depledge, who will begin her duties after the new year, has a master's degree from the University of Leicester. Her doctoral thesis is on "Rape and Rhetoric in Restoration Adaptations of Shakespeare."

Gregory Ellison, *assistant suppléant* in English linguistics. For his DEA in general linguistics at Geneva, Mr. Ellison is working on "the syntax of inflectional projections, especially regarding modality and auxiliaries."

Alan Sternberg, *chargé d'enseignement suppléant* in literature. Mr. Sternberg is a writer who has published several pieces of fiction in the *New Yorker*, among other places. He has an MA from Columbia.

David Wilson, *chargé d'enseignement* in practical language. Mr. Wilson, a former editor at Oxford University Press, has an MA in linguistics from the University of London. He comes to us from the University of Neuchâtel.

Congratulations to the following students who successfully defended their doctoral theses in 2004-05:

Agnese FIDECARO, "Exposed Bodies: Crises of Experience in Twentieth-Century German, French, and English Literature"

Véronique FERNANDEZ, "Clothing and Sexual Difference: Dress and Gender in Speculative Fiction and Cinema"

Corinne FOURNIER, "La Ville fantastique au tournant du siècle dans la littérature européenne (1880-1914)"

Congratulations to the following students who successfully defended their *mémoires de licence* in 2004-05:

Thi Hahn FLEURET, "The Use of English Prepositions by L2 Learners"

Ralph ETTLIN, "The Role of the Secret in Three Works by Joseph Conrad"

Kareen KLEIN, "Bad and Good Women in Bad and Good Quartos - Female Characters in Shakespeare's Multiple-Text Tragedies"

Aude BONGI, "The New Millennium's Woman in the Language of Advertising: In Quest of Modern Female Identity"

Michael L. O'REGAN, "A Comparative Study of Tense and Aspect in English and French, and its Implications for Second Language Acquisition"

Yvan DURIC, "Non-overt Elements in Diary Writing"

Kirsten HARRISON-PONS, "Fragmentation in Don DeLillo's *Underworld*"

Lejla HRNJADOVIC, "Shakespeare Adaptations: from Source to Page to Stage to Film"

English Department News

Daniele PILONI, "Frederick Douglass, Booker T. Washington, and Malcom X's Liberating Paths Through Literacy and Language"

Caroline FROIDEVAUX, "The Origin of Periphrastic 'Do': Between Syntax and Semantics"

Isabel ZUMBE, "White on Black and Black on Black: A Comparative Study of Novels by White and Aboriginal Australian Authors"

Christophe ROSE, "Geoffrey Chaucer: The Emerging Vernacular Author. A Study of Chaucer's Grappling with Authority"

Ioana BALGRADEAN, "Silence, Break-Off and Open Endings: Instances of Self-Conscious Textuality in Chaucer's *House of Fame*, the *Squire's Tale*, the *Nun's Priest's Tale* and the *Manciple's Tale*"

Nadine ANDREY, "The Magician Figure: A Rationalization of the Fairy"

Hélène DELAVAY, "Heritage in Twentieth Century Chicano/a Literature: Burden or Blessing?"

Aminullah SIMAB, "The Thematics of Dust and Filth in Three Novels by Charles Dickens"

Debora PORFIRI, "The Interwar Years in Virginia Woolf: Fragmentation and Spaces of Contention"

The English Department Needs You!

On the current state of the ADEA

First of all, what is an 'ADEA'? Those who haven't witnessed its brief revival at the dawn of the new millennium probably never even heard of it. ADEA stands for the *association des étudiant-e-s en anglais*. It is headed by a committee consisting of at least three students (a president, a secretary and a treasurer), and its members are all the students at the English Department who sign up.

For each of its members, the ADEA gets a small financial contribution from the University, the use of which is not further specified. The main goal of the association is to animate the social life at the Department, so the funds can be invested into parties or any kind of event related to the English Department. Other activities like those of Barbe à Papa, our theatre group, can also benefit from the ADEA, either by drawing on these funds or by asking for an extra financial contribution from the University through the association.

What does being a member of the ADEA imply? For student membership: nothing at all - you can simply enjoy the events and activities of the Department. All you need to do is sign up every semester, so the association can get the funding which depends on the number of student members. The tasks of the committee consists of getting these signatures, managing the fund and investing it in social activities. Although the ADEA - when active - is closely linked to the University, it does not imply any political obligations. The CUAE (*conférence universitaire des associations d'étudiant-e-s*) takes care of that, and helps and protects the student associations in all sections and departments. In short, the ADEA committee can indeed concentrate on the fun part.

How come you haven't heard of the ADEA? For many years, there hasn't been a committee to collect the money and organise events. A brief revival occurred in 2000/2001 and led to a great party at the Datcha. However, most of the committee members graduated and left the University shortly afterwards, and no successors have been appointed. Since 2001, funds for the ADEA have been offered by the University in vain, although they might have covered many student activities and would have been useful also for the theatre group's excellent first performance last October (see the article on *Amphitryon 38*).

In short, YOU can make things happen! You can bestow the spark of life on the spirit of the Department! If you are interested and ready to revive the ADEA, all you need is two more people to fulfil the three basic positions of the committee (president, secretary, treasurer - but there can be more, of course), so the ADEA is recognised officially as a student association. Collect the member signatures, collect the funds, and you're ready to go! For more information please contact (Michael.Roosli@lettres.unige.ch).

Note From the Director

The East wing of the Bastions building is one of the most attractive locations in Geneva, overlooking the Place de l'Université on one side, and the *Parc des Bastions* on the other. The second and third floors of this wing have spacious offices, with high ceilings, parquet floors and built-in wooden cabinets with glass doors. They remain, however, empty, locked, and dark. These quarters have been designated as the future home of the English department, but they have been awaiting renovation for what is now a period of some years, as the necessary funding remains blocked somewhere in the labyrinth of the cantonal administration. The latest estimate is that the work of renewal will not begin until 2007, in order to be completed-perhaps-in 2010, as part of a project that will also include renovation of the Bâtiment des Philosophes. In the English Department, the projected move from the Comédie to the Bastions has been put off for so long that it has become something of ... well, a comedy, and no one can be entirely sure that it will ever take place.

Rather than live in a state of continually deferred expectations, I suggest that we learn to like where we are. Viewed properly, soiled carpets, dirty windows, and harsh fluorescent lighting can have a certain *louche* appeal, like the seedy office in *The Maltese Falcon* where Humphrey Bogart holds sway as a private detective. The English Department as film noir.

If that seems implausible, consider the durable attractions of the Boulevard des Philosophes. How many English departments have a sidewalk café on the ground floor and a kiosk across the street where you can buy a ham sandwich and a copy of the *Herald Tribune*? We are practically in Paris.

There are eighteenth-century maps in the Maison Tavel, the museum devoted to the history of Geneva, which show a little group of houses called Les Philosophes about where we are now, and a Chemin des Philosophes leading to it from the Vieille Ville. But how did the hamlet get its name, and who were the *philosophes*? Rousseau must have wandered this way on his solitary promenades, but otherwise he is not associated with this part of town, and Voltaire was definitely a Right Bank sort of philosopher. The reader of *Noted* who can offer a reliable historical explanation of the origin of the name "Les Philosophes" will receive grateful mention in the next issue of this newsletter as well as a bottle of Comte de Peney Cabernet Sauvignon, Domaine des Balisiers, Peney.

But back to history: by the end of the nineteenth-century, the city's southwestward expansion had turned the Chemin des Philosophes into the Boulevard. In 1887 the architects Jacques Simmler and Albert Bourrit built the neo-classical Ecole de

Chimie (now Bâtiment des Philosophes) at the same time as the Ecole des Arts Industriels in the Boulevard James-Fazy. Both buildings are good examples of late nineteenth-century French neo-classicism.

This was a neighbourhood known to Joseph Conrad, who came for treatment of his rheumatism at the Hôpital Beau-Séjour, which in those days was the centre of a health spa known as Champel-les-Bains, where



patients bathed in the waters of the Arve. In those same years (1904-08) Lenin was here, studying at the University library and plotting the Russian Revolution with other expatriates, including the philosopher Plekhanov.

The atmosphere of pre-Revolutionary idealism, conspiracy, and espionage is brilliantly evoked in Conrad's *Under Western Eyes* (1907). The novel's narrator is an English professor at Geneva who is introduced to the world of Russian expatriates. After one of their gatherings at a house in the Boulevard des Philosophes, he remarks:

The shadow of autocracy all unperceived by me had already fallen upon the Boulevard des Philosophes, in the free, independent and democratic city of Geneva, where there is a quarter called "La Petite Russie." Whenever Russians come together, the shadow of autocracy is with them...haunting the secret of their silences. (136-7)

Conrad, a Pole whose family suffered under the Tsar, had his own ideas about the Russians; the point is that he helped to make our Boulevard famous.

The Boulevard des Philosophes has since acquired other associations. The Comédie de Genève was built in 1913 to house the fledgling repertory group directed by Ernest Fournier. Next door is that spiritual survivor of nineteenth-century Boston, the Christian Science Church, holding to its message of Christian healing in a street full of radiologists and kidney specialists. Directly across the street is the residence of



the prolific writer George Haldas, translator of *Anacreon and Catullus*, and author of an autobiography entitled...*Boulevard des Philosophes*.

These days, a great deal of attention is focused on No. 24, the "Rhino" squat, distinguished by a garish red horn extruding from the building, whose façade has been painted black. The current residents of the building wish to stay. The owners think they have overstayed their welcome. It is not for us to take a position in this dispute, except perhaps to say that we can understand why everyone seems to like the Boulevard des Philosophes.

David Spurr

Work cited: Conrad, Joseph. *Under Western Eyes*. Harmondsworth, England: Penguin Books, 1985.



Dispatches From the Essay Front

by Agnieszka Soltysik

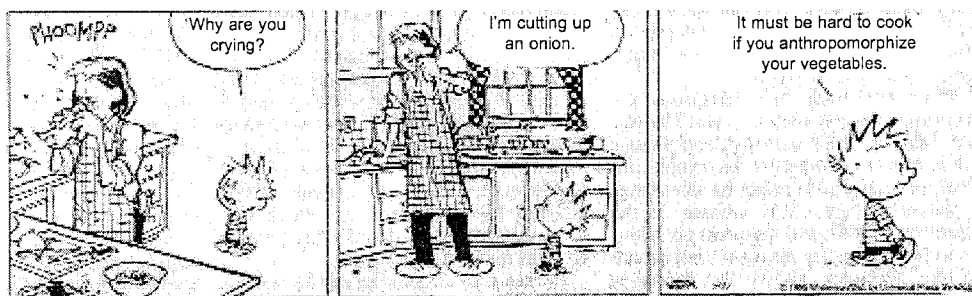
A few years ago I wrote an article for *Noted* on thesis statements. That article is hanging on the wall of the Writing Lab, and anyone who is having trouble getting their minds around the exquisite specificity of the thesis statement can go see it there (Phil 005). You should all be aware that the Writing Lab is open to any student in the English Department, at any level, for help on any aspect of their written assignments. However, it is probably most useful to go at the moment when you have written a couple of drafts already and are preparing to write the final version. This moment, coming between your own best efforts at revision, and the final draft that you give to your teacher, is the moment when you simply can't see the forest for the trees anymore and you need help from a local aviator to see the whole landscape in perspective.

You might be wondering, "a couple of drafts?" What does that mean? That means, dear readers, that writing is rewriting! A first draft may be nothing more than a long brainstorming session, where you get a few ideas for the final draft but cut most of what you've written out. And that's okay! The single most important part of writing an essay is the thinking, that moment of painful intellectual effort where you try to make connections and formulate a single main argument. This is a step that some writers of essays apparently never make. It is possible to write a paper without thinking too much, but it is impossible to write a good one this way. Thinking is that moment when you step out of familiar territory and you allow yourself to explore the new and unknown in quest of an original idea. It is a disorienting moment, even an agonizing one. It can last for hours or even days, as you rummage about in your mind for ideas, jot down thoughts, and brood over your books just before falling asleep at night. It is an intense and invasive process. Writing a first draft should come at the end of it, but for some people it is a way of getting started. For others, it is a way of

avoiding it. The point is that writing an essay is an all-absorbing task, and the process usually takes several drafts. The first draft is reread for its ideas and the second draft is written to clarify the main argument and the main supporting ideas. This process can continue over several drafts, each time trying to make the thesis clearer and the structure more logical and effective in support of the main idea. But even the best writer gets stuck after a few revisions and needs some distance and some feedback. One way is to let the essay "gel" for a couple of days. You will come back to it with new eyes.

Another way is to let someone else read it, preferably someone in the English Department who understands the specific purpose and form - the language game, to borrow a term from Wittgenstein - of the English literary essay. This is the moment to make an appointment in the Writing Lab, where one of two experienced students and writing tutors (Jocelyne Moren and Camilo Gomez) will read your essay and offer feedback on your writing. They can tell you if your thesis is clear, your introduction appropriate, your evidence convincing, your argument well structured, and your quotations effectively glossed. Note, however, that they won't correct your punctuation and grammar mistakes. The Writing Lab monitors are there to help you with your writing skills, not to edit your paper for you. So, you will have to do the very last revision, the proofreading one, where you check for grammar, spelling, punctuation, referencing format and bibliography, yourself. With the help of the *Style Sheet*, of course.

Here are some writing tips from the Writing Lab: 1.) when analyzing a passage for an essay, you don't need to summarize the rest of the text; 2.) the thesis statement of an analysis paper can describe the function of the passage in the text as a whole, or it can discuss some aspect of how the passage is written; 3.) think about how you will structure the paper *before* you start to write; and 4.) come to the Lab!



Calvin and
Hobbes by Bill
Watterson

Five Rules to Remember About Submitting Written Work

- 1.) Written work is due no later than three exam sessions since the end of the semester in which you took the seminar. So, for Winter 2005 seminars, written work must be submitted no later than October 2006.
- 2.) Graded essays must be turned in no later than three weeks before the exam session for which you want the grade.
- 3.) Attestations must be completed before the exam can be taken for that module.
- 4.) Essays must follow the *Style Sheet* in all matters of punctuation, formatting, referencing and paragraphing. Please note that our *Style Sheet* follows the conventions of the *Modern Language Association Handbook for Writers*, and you can find explanations of the MLA style online. For example, the following site provides a description and examples that are based on the MLA style: http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_mla.html. This site also is a valuable resource for handouts on all aspects of essay writing. Check it out!
- 5.) Most professors require you to turn in a printed copy of your essay instead of emailing it (though some may permit you to submit work electronically under special circumstances). If you need to send it by email, be sure to ask. Otherwise, you can place them in your instructor's mailbox (or cubby-hole, as some teachers refer to these wire baskets in the mailroom of the English Department).



English Department Mailboxes (a.k.a. cubby-holes)

A Little Ditty

by Catherine-Jane Müller-Griffiths

Please read this little ditty
By a pretty old biddy
At the university
In Calvin's lovely city.

I may look rather old
Don't leave me in the cold
Please bring me in the fold
I'm worth my weight in gold.

Where must I go, what should I do?
For me everything is brand new
Except the toilets, what a view
There's never any "papier Q".

Go buy your books at Off the Shelf
Or do photocopies for yourself
This might lead to problems of health
But Unige must protect its wealth.

Different profs, various classes
So much to read that I need glasses
Tragedies, comedies and farces
With hard benches we feel our arses.

First assignment I'm so stressed
Will I succeed in my quest?
Will the profs think that I jest?
Stupid questions, what a pest!

Is my future bright and breezy?
Will I find my studies easy?
Will I become a rising star?
Am I likely to go quite far
In this great academia?

Quirks of Style Corner:

You probably know that you need to italicize foreign words in English, but you may not know all the exceptions to this rule:

- 1.) Quotations entirely in another language (e.g. Julius Ceasar said, "Veni, vidi, vici."),
- 2.) proper names (e.g. Boulevard des Philosophes),
- 3.) foreign words anglicized through frequent use (e.g., cliché, ad hoc, versus, etc., et al.).

Source: *MLA Handbook*, 3.3.2.

Ecocriticism

by Rachel Hosein Nisbet

Ecocriticism: "studies the relationship between literature and the physical environment...taking an earth-centered approach to literary studies" (Cheryl Glotfelty and Harold Fromm, *The Ecocriticism Reader*).

According to John Berger "seeing comes before words." This critic's seminal text, *Ways of Seeing*, confirmed my own choice ten years ago to read geology rather than English literature. Berger writes:

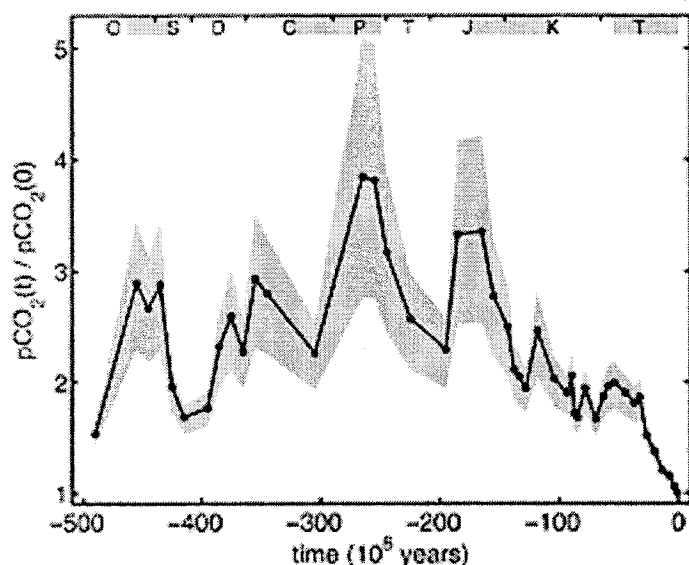
We explain the world with words, but words can never undo the fact we are surrounded by it. The relationship between what we see and what we know is never settled.

During my geological studies there were many fieldtrips. We went to the Malvern Hills, home of the medieval poet, Langland. The region has very little outcrop, so one day after much wandering about our lecturer suddenly prostrated himself on the ground, and clawing the earth cried out: "A ploughed field is a gift from the gods." This was our introduction to the quantification of drift lithologies in order to identify subsurface bedrock. Techniques like this can be used in mineral prospecting, geological mapping, and the like. Outside class the University Exploration Society organised expeditions to: Trinidad, Guyana, Iceland, Cyprus, and Bolivia. Thus students could go and measure: birds, plants, insects, reptiles, ice, earth, and rocks in far-flung places. Some headed off "to reside in thrilling region of thick ribbed ice" (*Measure for*

Measure; 3.1.125-6). Here they measured the ablation rate of glaciers, walking back to camp down lateral moraines, gelifluction lobes, and braided streams; fishing baby icebergs from fjord waters to drink with a glass of Baileys before breakfast.

Arctic willow surrounded their camps: a rock-like shrub, one centimetre high. Even grasses, the most common flower family in the world, would tower above them. When I was eight my Uncle Colin told me that grasses are flowers. Having loved roses since I was seven-months-old, this was one of my best presents, ever. Science words are also gifts to me, mellifluous labels whose meanings are huge. For example *oligomerous deuterostome* is a phylogenetical term (<http://www.palaeos.com/>), which ring-fences metazoans based on the characteristics of their embryos. Metazoan embryos have blastocysts with few cells (~8); and upon gastrul-invagination (where the circle of cells pulls in on itself to form a test-tube shape) the hole that forms becomes the animal's anus. According to this classification system, which Aristotle founded, all ecocritics, scientists, *Homo sapiens*, sea cucumbers, and sponges are encompassed by this term.

Oligomerous deuterostomes have existed for around 565 million years. The first evidence of a multicellular, macroscopic ecosystem, preserved in the Burgess Shale (thefamous Cambrian fossil bed in the Canadian Rocky Mountains), is of a similar age. Steven Jay Gould's book, *Wonderful Life*, gives a brilliant account of these fossils. It is a historical epic, with a one-off cast including: *Marrella splendens*, *Yohoia*, and *Opabinia*. In 1975, one year before the term ecocriticism was coined, Wittington wrote down his observations of *Opabinia*. It had 5 eyes, and a vacuum cleaner-like flexible tube coming out of its head, which was probably a feeding appendage. These animals were officially beyond Linnaean classification.



Atmospheric CO₂ fluctuations over the last 500 million years, with cool-climate periods marked in grey: note that the CO₂ signal exhibits no systematic correspondence with long-term climatic variation.

Rothman, Daniel H. *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences of the U.S.A.* v. 99 (2002): 4167-4171.

After the creation of the Burgess Shale 550 million years ago, the world's biosphere has been re-jigged by plate tectonics, fire, flood, and ice on many occasions. Consequently, long before the advent of man, there have been mass extinctions and new partitionings of evolutionary ecospace. For example, the graph above shows the fluctuations in atmospheric CO₂, a greenhouse gas, from 500 million years ago to the present-day. Rothman argues that on timescales larger than 10 million years there does not appear to be a correlation between atmospheric CO₂ and climate. Graphs allow scientists to express complex relationships: such as feedbacks in biogeochemical systems. Scientists and engineers are necessarily trilingual: being able to view, model, and interpret the world using numerical, pictorial, and lexical tools. Perhaps ecocritics should be conversant with these ways of communicating, and these timescales too?

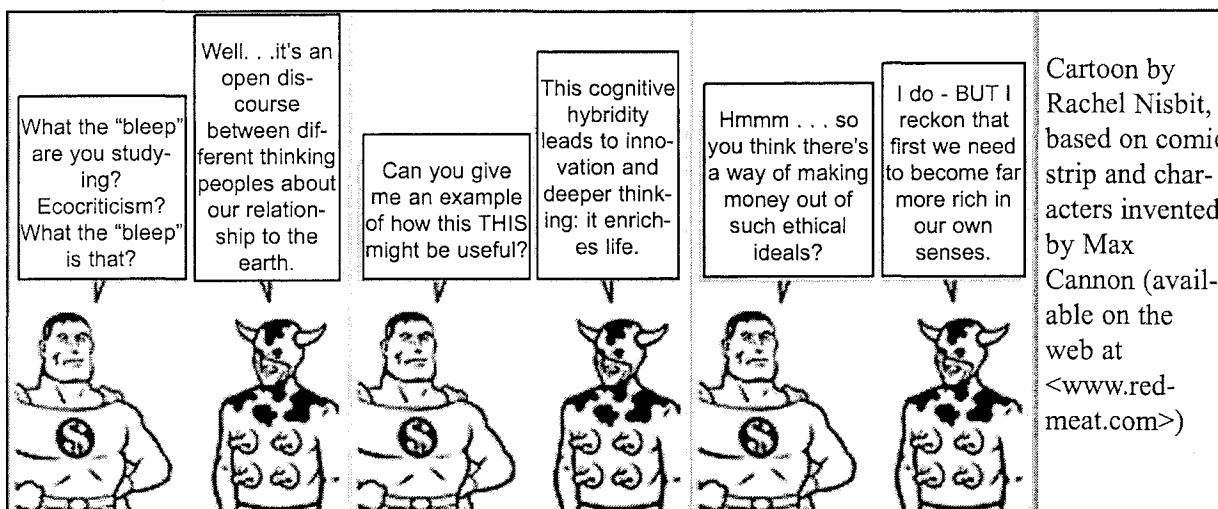
The Baconian tradition defines scientists as impersonal observers who do not use descriptive narrative. Yet, science necessarily involves people. Once I went to Venezuela, to study how tropical weathering rates might interplay with climate change. We were entertained in Caracas by an army corporal, the Commissioner of National Geography. Next we travelled up to a village in the Andes where Hugo Chavez's brother was mayor. There we spent a week floating about on a piranha-infested, dammed lake, sampling water, and sediments, and measuring algal, and oxygen levels with an electric probe. There were three male European researchers and technicians in our little boat: a short one from Neuchâtel, wearing a buoyancy aid that would immediately inflate should he fall in the water; a middle-sized French lecturer, with a plastic bag at his feet containing a large black Bible; and a tall, stylish, half-French / half-Vietnamese scholar who smoked a lot. They obviously had their own person-

al strategies to enable them to get the sampling done. They must all have each constructed their own adventure stories as we motored down shallow rivers towards the Orinoco. These personal tales would, I am sure, influence how they saw their data, and how they would write up a good story in order to get government funding for another adventure.

Scientists may document climate change, and engineers may pioneer green technology, yet neither party was invited to speak at the first Green Cross Earth Dialogue: Globalization and Sustainable Development: is Ethics the Missing Link? The media, NGO's, banks, International Organisations, World Religions, and Foreign Ministers were requested to participate, but not scientists, since ethics is not their domain. Witnessing this I decided I did not want to be a scientist anymore. I did not want to dumbly measure and report -- I wanted my words back! Surely, to respond to present-day, ecological problems, scientific, poetic, and bureaucratic languages are needed! Debate needs to be inclusive! The ecocritic William Howarth proposes that the traditional dichotomy between the arts and the sciences should be bridged to this end. Scientists should be more aware that they have a relation to their texts, and those studying letters should think beyond literary works.

I propose that James Lovelock's autobiography, *A Homage to Gaia* (2000), should be essential English Literature wide reading. Lovelock's creative research lead him to the conclusion that the earth is a living, self-regulating system who tends to equilibrium. James Golding helped Lovelock to christen his breathing, pulsing vision of the earth, Gaia. Their collaboration seems instructive to me. If we follow their example someday, writing poetry and inventing technology might be embraced as sustainable, symbiotic human practices.

With thanks to Erika Scheidegger for her comments.



Cartoon by Rachel Nisbit, based on comic strip and characters invented by Max Cannon (available on the web at <www.red-meat.com>)

Impressions of Amphitryon 38

by Kareen Klein

When I first heard about this play, I was thinking: "Amphi - what? And why 38?"

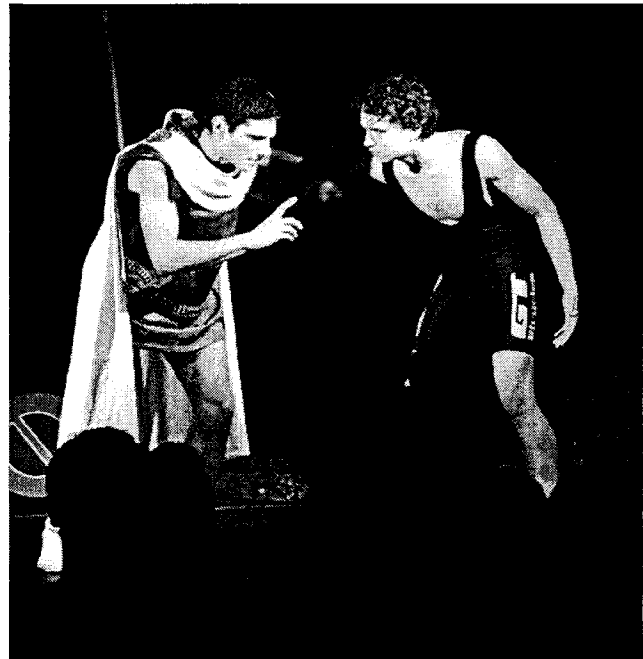
When I went to see it, I was somehow expecting one of those incomprehensible modern plays. But no ...

My second question was answered very soon: 38 because it is the 38th version of the Greek myth, as the program told me. And it was impossible not to remember the name of "Amphitryon!" after having it heard exclaimed precisely with that intonation and with great vigour by Rachel Hosein Nisbet, who not only directed the play but also played the female protagonist, Alkmene (Amphitryon's ever so faithful wife).

The play is called *Amphitryon*, but the warrior of that name hardly appears on stage. That is why **Barbe à Papa** (the English Theatre Workshop) has simply given his role to a mannequin (and a headless one at that!), as seen on the poster, and have someone shout his few words from off stage. This obviously gives Alkmene's unconditional devotion for her husband an entirely different note. Yet, for anyone who has seen the performance, the author and the actress leave no doubt whatsoever about Alkmene's attachment to Amphitryon.

Nevertheless, or, rather, precisely because of that, Jupiter (Yvan Allegrini), the big boss of the gods wants to seduce her, but returns from his quest somewhat dismayed: "She's not a woman - she's a fortress!" His sidekick (and son) Mercury helps him in this difficult conquest. Mercury (Nicholas Weeks), with his piercing looks, full of insinuations, never ceases to keep his master up to date about the differences between gods and humans. For example: "May I remind you, Jupiter, that, since you're omniscient, you can not make discoveries?"

Jupiter Chatting Up Alkmene



Jupiter and Mercury Debating Seduction Strategies

cient, you can not make discoveries?"

Jupiter finally resigns himself to visit Alkmene in the shape of her husband. (Since, as she confesses to her friend Leda: "I do have one weakness - my husband.") Hercules will be the product of this night, which - to the god's dismay - Alkmene qualifies as "the most connubial" of the nights spent with her husband. Jupiter thus does not have the courage to reveal his true identity, as he is put off by Alkmene's behaviour. For example, she darns a hole in his sock, which she then lovingly pulls over her husband's foot (still impersonated by Jupiter - the husband, not the foot). (I have to admit that I was in constant fear that someone would sit on the needle which she had carefully plucked into the mattress next to her ...). Her honest irreverence towards anything "divine" gives Jupiter further occasion to discover that humans are not at all like the gods think they are.

The actors could rejoice about a full house on the opening night. The play starts out with Mercury and Jupiter pumping up their muscles in a fitness studio, both dressed in tight tank tops and sport shorts. Both are jumping on clouds painted on the stage, taking great care not to step in between them. The cast had to deal with a lot of props - which they managed really well. (The jumps from past to present bothered me, but wasn't really wrong).

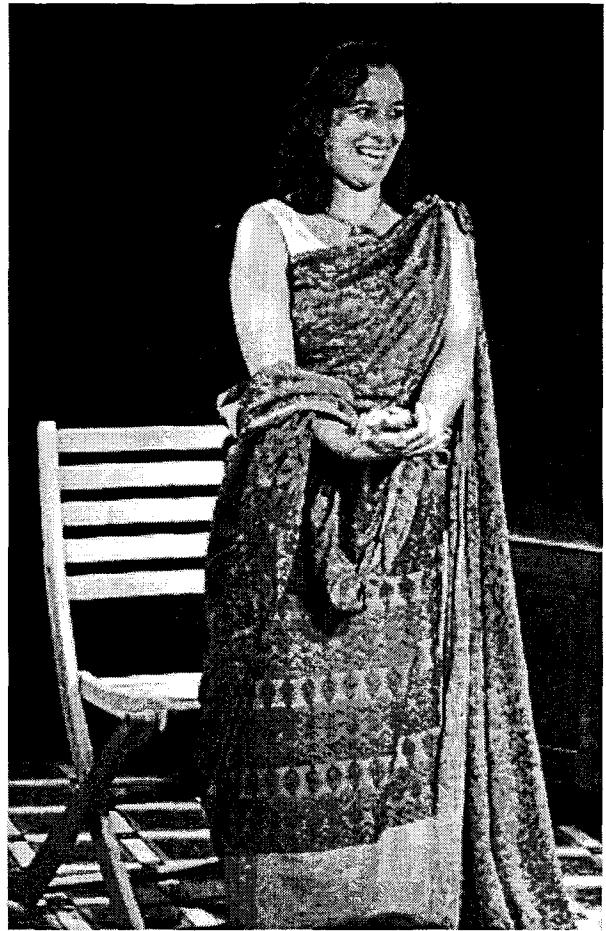
One of the many surprises was a baby carriage pushed on stage, out of which emerged the voice of a warrior (spoken by Max Wenner, a member of Geneva English Drama Society). The Trumpeter (played by Sarah-Jane Moloney) listens to the whole message and finally takes the "baby" out of the carriage - a gas mask. The audience's curiosity was thus well rewarded. The gas mask-warrior announces a war, to be won in one day, no one is to be killed and only the left hands are to be wounded (except for the lefthanders, of course). We are afterwards told that even the horses only have wounds on their left legs. This war has been created by Jupiter to lure Amphitryon away from home. (again: slip from past to present bothers me, but still isn't really wrong).

The doubling of the Trumpeter and Leda makes sense, because both see rhythm, melody, and even syntax in unusual places - one in silence, the other in a swan's chirp. Jupiter visited Leda in the shape of a very large swan. Her costume was of a very pretty blue and her fetishism of swans made visible by large white feathers decorating her dress and hair.

Sosie and Eclissé were also doubled (by Violeta Struijk Van Bergen Stulz), Eclissé (Alkmena's nanny) offering a frenzied improvisation (in French), expressing her joy at Jupiter's visit to Alkmena.

Let me end with another quote, which comments on the commotion in Thebes when Jupiter's union-to-be with Amphitryon's wife is announced: "Those are the virgins, congratulating Alkmena. With their theoretical knowledge, of course."

The Trumpeter and Sosie



Alkmena, played by Rachel Hosein Nisbit

Love Always

Love, by virtue of its mysterious ways,
always takes us by surprise.

Though we keep fleeing from it, rejecting it,
Love always catches up with us.

It is never where we thought it would be ;
it appears at the most inopportune,
the most unexpected,
the least hoped-for
moment.

And when it knocks on our door,
it does not do so as a beggar
asking for food or money,
but as the Teacher it truly is,
the One that comes to remind us
of emotion, kindness and
humility.

Lydia Sonderegger - November 22, 2005

(translated from the original poem, written in French on
October 18, 2001)

A Very Phlegmatic Hamlet

by Kareen Klein

Hamlet - performed by the Helvetic Shakespeare Company at the Théâtre du Loup (in French, alas) on 11 October 2005

The stage was a long corridor, a big, red curtain at each end, the audience sitting at both sides. This allowed for a lot of tension when two characters appeared on either side of the stage, especially when one was holding an object out to the other (such as Ophelia trying to return the tokens Hamlet has given to her). On the other hand, it sometimes felt as if one were watching a tennis match.

The play within the play (entirely a dumb show) was unusual in several ways. It was played for comedy, and well. The Player Queen was played by a man, as is the custom. However, the most surprising thing was that *The Murder of Gonzago* didn't stop after the King had been poisoned and his widow remarried. It went on to present Ophelia's drowning, as well as the duel and the death of the rest of the characters (the Queen poisoning herself inadvertently, the duellers wounding each other mortally, and Hamlet killing the King). This production thus provided a real *mise-en-abîme*. Interestingly, Hamlet killed the King with a rapier in the play within the play, whereas in the "real" play, he forced him to drink the poison. In the second Quarto or the Folio text, both things happen (in the "real" play).

Horatio's role was unfortunately reduced - Hamlet did not even have that one good friend left at court. He only appeared in the beginning, but all his other appearances were cut. The actor who played Horatio doubled as Osric (which is not very clear, it looked as though Horatio had betrayed Hamlet and run over to the other side) and as one of the players. The actor was excellent, I think that I remember him as Ariel in *The Tempest* at the Comédie, where this big man gave the performance of the tiny fairy with the tiny voice, and Prospero was (accordingly) played by a woman - but that's another story.

The King was without any colour - possibly on purpose. One generally felt like laughing (or at least smirking) at him. He (and his Queen) wore bright orange-gold dresses, in contrast to the rest of the cast who were dressed in white and black (Ophelia wore a light blue-greenish dress).

The Queen did not (could not, would not?) communicate any of her motives. But she was not lascivious in the least, and she always seemed earnestly con-

cerned about everyone, be it Hamlet, Ophelia or Laertes. The actress was a bit too young to be convincing, in my opinion.

Polonius was great, just as one would expect him. One didn't really mind his death. He was also the only one in the cast wearing shoes (which I only discovered when Hamlet dragged his corpse out of Gertrude's closet), every one else was barefoot. The actor also doubled for the Ghost.

Hamlet - Hamlet... When he first entered, I was a bit shocked. He was small and had a little beer belly - nothing of Olivier's elegance. But a phlegm. Impossible. Although it did fit. Hamlet moved as little as possible. Even his face was mostly without expression. But with his voice and his nonchalance he quickly caught the audience's attention and sympathy, making fun of all those surrounding him. Yet his apathy was a bit of a burden in the final duel scene. When Laertes stood in the correct pose, his rapier vertical, his feet in position, Hamlet slouched in front of him, his weapon trailing on the floor. For a long time, nothing happened. When Laertes finally attacked, Hamlet backed away several times, until slowly, he mustered up the energy to fight back, but then with force. In the end, this Hamlet was convincing - from the beginning, one could understand that he would have trouble making up his mind. Whether he only pretended to be mad was not quite clear to me - maybe this was also left mysterious on purpose. The "To be or not to be" speech was postponed for a little bit, so that Ophelia didn't have to listen to it.

Ophelia was quite a surprise (although the actress was a bit too old, possibly); she said "I shall obey my lord" in a tone which let one presume quite the contrary. She was very energetic and was often seen running across the stage. Sometimes she seemed to mumble objections under her breath - which Shakespeare's text obviously doesn't provide her with. Her madness started slowly, at the end of the nunnery sequence. (As there were many young students in the audience, the reaction to "Get thee to a nunnery" was laughter. Much of the performance was played for comedy. Poor Ophelia.) She distributed her flowers (branches with leaves) to the audience.

continued on page 23

Review of *Hunger! Richard III*

by Kareen Klein

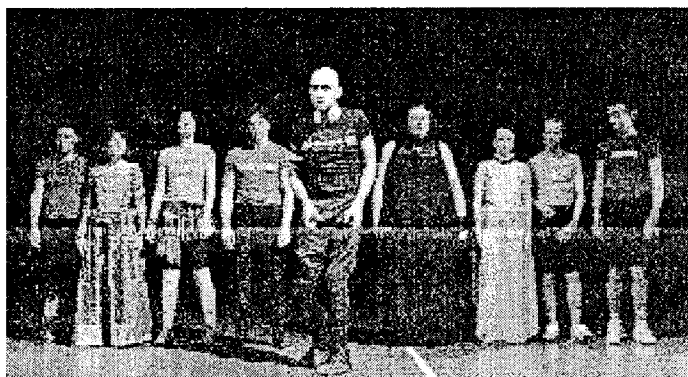
Premiere at the Comédie, November 29

Directed by Maya Bösch

About six or seven years ago, I had seen an unusual production of *Richard III*, which was set in a nursery. All actors were dressed up as children, many secondary characters were played by puppets or stuffed animals, merely held up by the actors while they spoke their words. The hunchback himself was dressed in a romper suit - all very impressive, especially the killing of the children, which was presented by Richard banging a baby doll onto the floor.

Now this production was also unusual and original in its approach. Maya Bösch is a young director and most of the cast were also young. The whole play was set in a gym, with all actors wearing sneakers, stockings, short pants, and T-shirts. (At least this was the case at the very beginning, afterwards some costumes changed more towards Elizabethan style). The male characters wore an imitation of knickerbockers (reminiscent of Shakespeare's time) over their sportswear, the female characters had wide, long skirts, which were however slit at the front, which not only enabled them to run or stretch, but also to show their legs in a tantalising manner at given moments. The most remarkable item of their dress was probably the T-shirt - with the name of the character written on the front and the number of words they speak at the back.

Before the performance started, and also during the intermission, the actors were already on stage "warming up," as one would before a match (because that was what the play was, according to the program - a match). The audience could therefore get a good overview of who's who before the play started. Additionally, when a character was first mentioned, he or she would wave to facilitate recognition (and cause laughter amongst the audience). Most of the time, the whole cast was on stage, sometimes lying down, sometimes running around. This also implied that actors would change T-shirts on stage during the performance, in order to assume a different identi-



ty. Further sporty activities throughout the play included massages, drills, rhythmic (at times rather threatening) movements performed synchronically by all actors, ball games, huddling up in groups, lining up or standing in triangle or circle formations.

There was a giant, light blue mattress propped up against the wall at the far end of the stage, presumably representing the tower, against which Clarence threw himself repeatedly before narrating his dream, and on which Richard climbed to watch the following murder.

One actress (Joëlle Fretz) always spoke in English, often giving a voice-over to the French text. Her T-shirt said "All the world's a stage", possibly referring to her representing Shakespeare himself. She would at times stretch lines of scotch on the floor, as if marking specific positions (or the place where a body had lain). She also played King Edward IV (dressed in a white boxing morning gown). Clarence (Roberto Molo) also spoke in Italian while narrating his dream to the keeper of the tower (Thierry Jorand).

Richard III (as the T-shirt informed us) did not have a hunchback, his left leg was made to look very thin, with the pants tied tightly around it, while his right leg seemed to be supported by knee and thigh pads and the like, making it look much stronger. His posture was always rather hunched, with his left arm dangling or gesticulating rather aimlessly through space. His head was shaved, which accentuated his black eyebrows. His dress was also entirely black. The actor (Frédéric Jacot-Guillarmod) delivered a very convincing performance. He was extremely repulsive, but not without the nearly spell-binding attraction which needs to emanate from Richard to make his character credible on stage.

The women (especially Queen Elizabeth, played by Véronique Alain) frankly got on my nerves

by the end of the play - with all their wailing. There seemed to be few nuances in their acting. (But then again - what else can they do, having all their relatives killed off around them.) Queen Margaret (Barbara Baker) was quite a fury, cursing with all her might at the beginning and constantly (physically) haunting the stage for the rest of the play. One of the women (the Duchess of York) was played by a man - Thierry Jorand, whom I remember very vividly as Ariel in *The Tempest*, a few seasons ago in the same theatre, and who also played Horatio at the Théâtre du Loup's *Hamlet* earlier this year. Jorand was quite convincing as an old, fat woman. His performance of an overenthusiastic Hastings was also quite a sight.

An intriguing feature of the stage (which was largely empty) was a horse (natural size and so convincingly crafted that one had to assure oneself that it did not move). The animal was lying on its side at the beginning of the performance. As the play went on (nearly four hours, with the intermission), it was hoisted up, so as to finally disappear into the ceiling. At the other end of the rope was a huge football-like metal structure which was lowered down to the ground, as the horse rose up. This structure finally took up the entirety of the stage. The symbolism of this was not quite clear to me. The metallic football-skeleton might have stood for the crown - so that when Richard finally possessed it, the important thing ("A horse, a horse, my kingdom for a horse!") was way out of reach. I was reminded of the production of "The Complete Works of William Shakespeare (abridged)" by the Reduced Shakespeare Company (RSC) - 37 plays in 9 minutes - who set the Histories as an American Football match - "And now the crown passes to Henry VI" Somehow, I was halfway expecting the actors to climb into the metallic structure, but its sole purpose seemed to be in the way of everyone.

The most important thing to mention here is probably that Act V was re-written. I must admit that after nearly four hours (is the addition of "Hunger!" to the title supposed to refer to one of the main feelings the spectator has at the end of the play?!) I did not think that it was a very good idea that all that could be seen on stage were strange coloured projections, a giant metallic football-skeleton, Richard wriggling around on the floor, and the red light of a microphone (the person speaking into it made invisible through the lighting). Richard's famous cry for a horse could barely be heard above the increasing sounds (which caused a feeling of eeriness throughout the play, although they also made me wonder whether there was simply something wrong with the sound system - all that hissing and rustling) and the speech of the invisible man. "Une

deconstruction du dernier acte à tenter" - says the program. Why not?



The editor also went to see this play and had some thoughts to add to Kareen's. In effect, the sports metaphor could have worked very well. Richard's body makes up such an important part of his crooked personality that foregrounding the physicality of the characters makes sense. Moreover, the athletic choreography gives a dynamism to the play that makes it very watchable. The fascistic mass hysteria of Richard's court is given an apt visual metaphor in the energetic group exercises of the actors. Finally, the actor playing Richard the Third paces around the stage like a boxer about to go into the ring or a caged panther. One of his legs is prosthetic, giving his physical performance an uncanny edginess.

Visually, the play is terrific. The round metal structure mentioned by Kareen Klein is probably partly an allusion to the Globe and partly a kind of hourglass. It descends slowly, like the blade in Poe's "The Pit and the Pendulum," while the black horse next to it is slowly, incrementally lifted up and off the stage. The temporality of fatalism and inevitability, essential to tragedy, is thus visually incorporated into the play as a prop. In short, the production is daring, ambitious, and unafraid to take risks.

So, one is forced to ask, why is the director so afraid to cut down the flab? The performance is just too long. The sports metaphor that comes to mind is a marathon. Richard III himself, otherwise brilliantly and effectively performed, staggers under the weight of the other characters' speeches. He almost disappears during the second part of the play, where the wailing women, as Kareen noted, take over. By this time, however, our balcony had emptied as many people took advantage of the intermission to cut out of the race. The *Tribune de Genève* called the second half "*passionant*," but I found it emotionally and dramaturgically weak after the muscular build-up of the exhausting first half. The momentum of Richard III's hunger for power seemed smothered by the long speeches of the queen mothers and the man next to me actually fell asleep. When it was all over, I was proud of my endurance but I was still hungry for the cathartic climax of a well-paced and well-seasoned tragedy.

A.Soltysik

The Nuits du court

by Michael Rössli

Every year, early November sets the cinephile Geneva atingle. The festival called **Cinéma tout écran** presents filmic works conceived for both cinema and television from all over the world. Newly emerging authors are discovered and awarded in various competitions.

One section of the festival is entirely dedicated to short films, and the second weekend invites the spectators to the so-called *nuits du court*, a run-on projection at the Alhambra theatre on Friday and Saturday night from 6.30 to around four o'clock in the morning.

This event is not only remarkable for its exciting setting and duration, but also for the unusual genre of work it accommodates. Indeed, a very small space is provided for short films at the local theatres, and even on television, their appearance is sparse and far off the spectatorial rush hours. As a consequence, such films cannot be produced with either a mass audience or financial issues in mind. Very often they therefore embody innovative and artistic ideas which their authors could not realise in a larger project which would involve considerably higher funds and a taking into account of spectator response. The *nuits du court* therefore give the audience a chance to witness the birth of new authors and give them a glimpse at less commercial productions of already established ones.

Not entirely unlike the short story - as opposed to the novel - a short film treats its subject matter in a different way and to a different effect than feature films. It must find ways to bring an idea across to the spectator in a very short time. Needless to say that narrative devices which make the audience identify with the protagonists through a gradual revelation of their background and character during the two hours of a feature film are quite out of the question for the short film. Other ways must be found to pass the message in the two to twenty minutes of the work. Therefore, in addition to the fact that short films are less commercial and propose ideas or perspectives which are more daring than those presented in feature films, they also use endlessly innovative technical, stylistic and narrative methods to fully immerse the

spectator in the most peculiar of universes in a matter of minutes. Given the brevity of the work, these ideas never cease to surprise and amaze the audience, who, in feature films, get quickly used to coherent stylistic extravagance, and their initial excitement ebbs out during the rest of the film.

Now imagine being bombarded with such originality, such uncommercial and innovative, sometimes radically experimental creativity for eight hours on end! The *nuits du court* indeed get the adrenaline at the Alhambra flow-

ing. After an initial difficulty to cope with this intensity, the spectator soon disconnects from the world outside, and floats along with all the various impressions, styles and ideas, lost in time and space, no longer knowing or caring whether it is 8 p.m. or 3 in the morning.

Witness an unusual friendship between a South-Korean Olympiad aspirant and the Russian Oleg in a hospital, neither of them speaking the other's language (*Oleg* by Min-Seong Kim, South Korea). Together with two sports commentators, root for a guy in the hardest and most common fight of all: getting out of bed. Travel with little Antonio and his granddad to Mars in the brilliant animated *Viaje a Marte* (Juan Pablo Zaramella, Argentine). See the ancient computer game Pong come back to life with people as pixels, a match game composed of digital photographs (*Pong* by Guillaume Raymond, Switzerland) and dive into the strange world of Stephan Flint Müller (*Fliegenpflicht für Quadratköpfe*, Germany), where people turn into active participants in ad posters in the street, and where the world is made up of transitions between matching patterns found in everyday life, from street signs down to paper bags.

From peaceful utopias to murder most foul, from the magic moment of smoking the first cigarette to the war in Irak - the spectator goes the whole range of experience from helpless laughter to pure terror, with lots of surprises, stylistic twists and marvels. Let yourself be captivated in the spell of the *nuits du court* - two nights you won't forget.



Alumni Column



As each issue of *Noted* features an English Department alumni, this time I decided to interview Oona Connolly, a former student of the English department (1989-1994) who is also one of the most visible faces in the “Rhino” squat across the street from us. Just to remind readers: Rhino was started in November 1988 by Beaux Arts students unable to find affordable housing in the neighborhood and has been occupied by students, often from the ERASMUS program, and other people working in art or culture, ever since. Rhino houses a performance space, the **Cave 12**, devoted to experimental music and generously supported by the city of Geneva (its program can be found on the net at www.cave12.org). In the building on the corner, just under the red horn, is the **BistroK**, a café offering cheap hot meals to students and the general public, as well as daily newspapers in several languages. They also regularly organize fundraising parties for various local associations and are available to student groups who need a space for film screenings, parties, or other events (ADEA take note!). Oona Connolly, who has lived in Rhino since 1997, was born in Geneva to a German mother and Irish father, speaks French and English fluently, and studied English, French and Spanish in the Faculty of Letters from 1989 to 1994.

What are you doing now?

I teach English in the *parascolaire* program in the afternoons and work for CODHA, a cooperative that helps housing cooperatives buy their buildings. I also work for an NGO (non-governmental organization) that provides housing and meals to diplomatic dele-

gates from developing countries. I cook for them, eat with them, and sleep there one night a week, so that they have someone who speaks the language to be on hand.

That sounds like a lot of work.

Actually, it all adds up to only 50%. I like to have time for myself as well.

I didn't know that the parascolaire program offered English courses to children. How old are your students?

It's something the parents organized. I teach a group of 5-year-olds, and a group of 8-to-10 year olds.

How did you get involved with Rhino?

I started squatting in 1989 with Valeria Wagner [also formerly of the English Department, now *maitre-assistante* in Spanish]. I was a first-year student in Letters and lived in several different squats before coming to Rhino in 1997.

We heard that Rhino was going to be evacuated in November. What happened to stop that?

Well, basically, Zappelli was in such a hurry to evict us that he went about it illegally, and there was a problem of jurisdiction and the federal court ruled in our favor, which has had the effect of temporarily suspending the order for now.

What is Rhino's long-term project?

We would like to get bought by the state and rent the ground surface, which is what other squats have done, like Ilot 13 or the rue de Lausanne. The state would own the land and we would manage everything ourselves - it's like managed privately social housing. The point is to get the building out of the market, which is the goal of our association as written into our statutes, and this seems the best way to do that. Also, there's the initiative, for which we had 11,800 signatures this summer, which proposes that Rhino become recognized as a public good and allowed to continue to exist.

How many people live here?

58 adults and 10 children. About half are students. We tend to take in a lot of foreign students who

don't know how to find housing elsewhere.

Who thinks up all the ideas for the façade that you have had over the years?

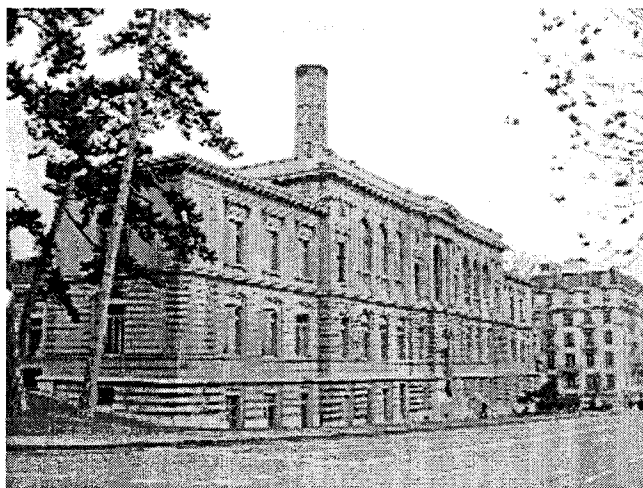
Well, we all meet every Sunday and discuss everything, and this is one of the things that we discuss. Sometimes the discussions take hours because we have a horizontal structure and there are no real leaders or anything, and we require everyone to participate. But as for the façade, we have had a lot of Beaux Arts and Arts Deco students over the years because of our location [Beaux Arts is just down the street] and this has created a lot of energy and ideas for visual interventions.

One of the decorations I remember best was a giant sign speaking about the "poétique du logement." What does that mean to you, the idea of a poetics of housing?

It means having time, first of all. Time to contribute and to express yourself, and giving time to the building and leaving a trace that you lived there and you gave it something of yourself.

So you think that squats contribute something to the poetic vibrancy of a city?

Definitely. These buildings are normally just an eyesore - they're left empty for years while owners wait for property value to rise or something (which by the way, is illegal in Geneva - buildings are not allowed to be left unused and unoccupied for long periods of time). When students or squatters move into a building, they fix it up, maintain it, and often



decorate it in interesting and colorful ways - think of the photos on the Hotel California in the Paquis, the murals on the rue Lissignol and Montbrillant, and even the front of the squat next door, La Tour.

What do you plan to do next?

Stay here, and keep doing what I'm doing.

Is there anything else you'd like to say?

Just that I'd like to thank all the people who supported us during the period in early November and came to the demonstration. Maybe we haven't had enough of a chance to make clear how much we appreciate all the support.

Well, thanks for your time, Oona, and good luck!

Interview and photos by A. Soltysik



Fiction Section

The Prozac Lady

by Ericka Olsen Stefano

Blue hair

Young women dye their hair blue to annoy their mothers; old women dye their hair blue to annoy their daughters. Only we call it a "rinse." Like the color comes out with water, but it doesn't. I remember when I had some bridgework done; there was an assistant there who had blue hair. She kept playing some local radio station while they were digging in my mouth. I had my mouth open all the time and couldn't talk, and all I could do was look at her hair. It was blueberry blue.

Talking

It's one of the few pleasures I get out of life these days. I talk to everyone. I talk to the garbage collectors. I talk to the check-out clerks in the grocery store. I talk to (I knew I'd have to admit this) I talk to the squirrels. Reminds me one of the songs on the radio station the blue-haired assistant at the dentist's office played; there was this song about sushi, I guess. I remember it went "You can ask a fish head anything you want to. They won't answer. They can't talk." That's why I like the squirrels.

Sushi

Raw fish. And all these years I've been cooking it. How was I to know? My teeth aren't what they used to be, even after the bridgework. Sushi just slides in. I can savor each piece; push it around in my mouth. I put a ton of wasabi in the soy sauce, and feel it opening up my sinuses with each piece. Apparently some kinds of sushi can kill you if it isn't prepared right. I prefer death by wasabi to death in my bathroom, like Gladys. Crapped out, quite literally. But you didn't know Gladys, did you?

Prozac

I can say it did help, for a while. I was so down when Gladys died. She and I had a great time together. She used to go tell everyone their business in the park near our building. She would say the most outrageous things and no one would dare say anything to that sweet old lady. She and I would compete on how fast we could make someone want

to leave the conversation. She always won. But maybe it was all that talk about her bowel movements that did her in.

Skin

My skin is becoming transparent. You can see the blue in my veins. Soon you'll be able to see my organs, the air filling my lungs and the food in my stomach. You'll see my heart, probably wrapped in a lifetime of fat, pumping away. You'll be able to see when it stops. I can trace my veins in my hand all the way up to my elbow, and another goes across what's left of my bicep. I don't even have to flex my muscles to make the veins pop out. Just like Arnold Schwarzenegger.

Reincarnation

I like trying to think about what I might come back as. Did I do well enough to be a human again? Like the joke "You've been reincarnated as a mayfly. Have a nice day." But at least you could go through the life cycles pretty quickly. If you came back as an oak you'd be out of it for a while. I'm pretty sure Gladys will be a Jack Russell Terrier. Every time I see a Jack Russell puppy, I try calling it. One day I'm sure she'll answer me. Probably pee on me, but that's Gladys.

Naps

I wake up early but compensate with a four-hour nap in the afternoon. My dreams are not what I might have thought old lady dreams would be. I dream about playing ping-pong. There's some Asian girl on the other end of the table, and when I play her, I'm brilliant. The game is fast in my head, but the moves I make are slowed down. I can see where she's going to strike and I'm there ahead of her. And when I look down at my hands, they're an Asian girl's hands.

Aches

Okay, as if everyone didn't know this already; it stinks being old. It hurts. Bones, hips joints, ankles, I sneeze and I think I'm going to put my back out. I take Prozac because otherwise it all gets to me. With Prozac I have perspective, without it I'm myopic. Gladys had picked up some phrase "Be kind to your knees, you'll miss them when they're gone." Mine are long gone. Tap-dancing in Tijuana with a gorgeous gigolo. Without me.

Habits

For years now, I've set the alarm in the morning. I wake up because that's my job these days. I get up and go to work. I bathe. I take my pills. I eat breakfast. I brush my teeth. I get dressed. I go out. I talk to people. That's my job. Each day is one more day that I've won.

Tattoos

I've decided to get one, finally. My mother always said "If you get a tattoo, you'll have to live with it for the rest of your life." Fine by me.

Birds of a Feather

by Sarah J. Moloney

I walked into the kitchen and he was sitting at the table, eyelids drooping, slowly lifting his breakfast spoon up and down, up and down, up and down. I thought about last night's fireworks. I liked the ones that looked like they would envelop me as they rained down. I imagined what it would feel like if I stood underneath one of those: it would tickle, and trickle, and leave tiny sparkles on my skin.

He smiled his sugar smile. I tasted it and it tasted like honey.

'You taste like honey'.

'It's the cereal'.

'Do you love me?'

'Please. I haven't had my coffee yet'.

Here is what I can fit into the empty space inside me:

A hummingbird,

An eggcup,

A light bulb,

A birthday card,

A brick,

A lung,

A jellyfish,

A pillow,

An armchair,

A fireplace,

A sidecar,

A kidney-shaped swimming pool,

An elephant,

A cloud,

Mount Kilimandjaro,

Jupiter...

And Jupiter's moons.

I helped myself to a croissant. I bit into it and chewed, thus fulfilling my morning ritual of reminding myself that I was alive. He will not get the better of me. Not today.

I put my wings on and walked out the door.

'See you tonight, darling'.

I was sitting on the bus playing I Spy with myself when I heard a dull little thud. I turned around and found that I had a neighbour in the shape of a small, slight girl with dark, untidy brown hair and even darker eyes.

'Look!', she whispered, holding her hand out to me.

In her tiny pink palm lay cradled a snail shell. 'I found it in the grass'.

'Is there a snail in it?'

'Of course not, silly. I wouldn't have picked it up otherwise'.

'Of course...!'

'Isn't it pretty? I'm going to put it in my treasure box'.

'That's a good idea... You know what else you could do? You could make a little hole in it and put a string through it. Then you could wear it as a necklace'.

My stroke of genius met with a confused stare. Several minutes elapsed in deep silence. I didn't dare break the concentration which was by now etching delicate lines into her forehead.

Finally, she looked up and with her dark, solemn gaze, proclaimed:

'No, thank you. I don't think I want to'.

We always break the things we find most beautiful.

The Siamese Cat of Plainpalais

by Calvin E. Poe

I can't tell why I felt such dread when the doorbell rang, but it was as if the gray Geneva day suddenly got even darker. A cold leaden lump of fear hardened in my guts and reached up into my chest and throat. "Don't be silly," I chided myself. "You have nothing to fear. It's just that student from Munich who's coming to see the apartment." Still, I hesitated to open the door, stood in the kitchen motionless and wondered vaguely if I could pretend not to be home.

The bell rang again, more insistently this time. "No," I told myself sternly, "you're not going to give in to this weakness. You are a smart man. A man of method. A man of *discipline*. You're not going to let this kid spook you like this. There's nothing to give you away. The wood panels in the closet are like brand new. There's no reason for him to suspect you. He won't even look in the closet - few people are as thorough . . . as methodical . . . as *penetrating* as you are. So calm down and answer the door - there you go, *showtime!*"

I opened the door and there was the student. The *GHI* had come out just the night before and already I'd had half a dozen calls for the sublet. Most said they could come only the next evening, but this one said he would come before noon. I'd agreed to let him come see the apartment because I was in a hurry to leave town and he sounded particularly stupid. Maybe it was the Bavarian accent. He said he was studying at the university - part of a year-long exchange program, Razmuss or something. He looked just like I had expected. Blond, squat, soft, trusting. Like a young pig just before Christmas.

"Come in," I ushered him inside, foregoing the optional handshake since I wasn't absolutely sure I wouldn't have to kill him. I didn't *want* to have to kill him. I wished I hadn't had to kill Caroline. Or even that damn cat I'd walled up with her after it had gotten all bloody and I didn't know how to clean its damned fur. I'd ended up having to bash its head in just like I'd done to its mistress. Who would have known that heads could splatter and spray blood like that? Not the cat's head, but Caroline's. I'd thought I would just give her a tap to knock her out and then drown her, quietly



- neatly - with no mess . . . no blood. But I was wrong. No one could have been more surprised and more horrified than me to see how her skull cracked, her ears bled, and her nose positively squirted blood. I will never forget the disgusting clot of gore that matted her hair and dripped all over the parquet as I carried her to the closet, where I'd prepared the metal trunk that would

be her coffin. Thank God for the parquet! I could never have gotten that blood off a carpet. I shuddered to think of the close call I'd had. It was too bad about the cat. I'd actually liked the beast - it was a Siamese - ugly, but with class, dignity, and best of all, short hair. I couldn't stand animals that left nests of long hair all over the furniture.

"You don't have any pets, do you?" I asked.

"Oh, no, I'm only here for the academic year," he answered vaguely.

"You don't smoke either, I hope. I don't like the smell of cigarettes. It gets into the walls and furniture and I wouldn't be able to get rid of it even after you'd moved out." I only needed to rent the apartment until next summer - after that I imagined the body would be dried up and I could get rid of it easily. For now, I had just one wish - to get out of town. I couldn't stand the pitying looks of people who'd known us together and who believed the story I'd made up, that Caroline had left me and gone back to America. It was humiliating, but at least plausible. And the body did bother me - I couldn't deny it - it disgusted and disturbed me. I couldn't get my suit in the morning . . . I couldn't even get a sock out without thinking of her rotting in that chest behind the wall. I'd locked it and replaced the drywall and wood in the closet, painted it white, and was sure there were no traces of anything anywhere - but I knew she was there. And it bothered me. I wanted to go to Thailand to change my ideas, as they say here in Geneva, and to work on myself. The Center for Advanced Spiritual Enlightenment, which I had looked up on the net, was in Bangkok, and I thought this was a good moment to reward myself for these years of

hard work in sales after I'd lost the job at UBS. I made decent money but it was grueling. Vortex Force is a telemarketing company and I had to go to people's houses to do the demo for their vacuum cleaner, which I admired enough to own myself, and which I tried to persuade bored housewives and tense bachelor bankers in Champel and the Vieille Ville to buy. That reminded me. "I am a clean person," I told the student. "I can only sublet my apartment to someone who will take as good care of it as I do myself," thinking of my *ultra puissant* Vortex Force in the closet underneath my suits.

"Oh, I'm a very clean person," he replied. "I'm German," he added and laughed stupidly. I looked at him closely for the first time. He was in his early twenties. He wore green Adidas with trendy white stripes, blue jeans, a black turtleneck sweater and a black leather jacket. "No parties," I warned forcefully. "No drugs, no drinking, no problems." He shrugged and answered lamely, "Sure."

I showed him the apartment then, starting with the spotless kitchen, gleaming bathroom, the simple, modern living room with the couch we'd bought at IKEA, the glass table I found at the flea market, the bare black bookshelf (I'd had to get rid of her books), and the huge Phillips television and home cinema system. Finally, I showed him the room where Caroline and I had slept for nearly a year up to the night last week when I'd realized that she was cheating on me with one of her colleagues. I'd seen her eating lunch with him in the covered terrace of the *Remor* - a long-haired artsy, hippie type - a Bulgarian, she told me later when I confronted her. She'd "forgotten to mention it!" Forgotten? The lying, cheating, treacherous b***h!

I'd started to sweat and hoped the student didn't notice. Just thinking about her betrayal, her lying eyes, the maddening way she called me paranoid and crazy, the crocodile tears she cried as she begged me to believe her - just thinking about that last night made the lava boil inside my temples. If she were innocent - then what was I? I'd killed her with an iron and buried her in our bedroom closet. No, it was perfectly clear to me that she'd started sleeping with that Bulgarian hippie working with her at the museum. She had betrayed our love. She had betrayed everything. She had made a fool of me! Maybe I had reacted a little too violently at the time - I should have waited and planned a better way. I'm not proud of all the blood and gore that I had to clean up. But I couldn't bear the idea of another man - a long-haired hippie

freak! - touching what was mine. It was a question of honor as well as love. There are countries in Europe that still recognize that a man's honor is his most prized possession (my Phillips television flashed inexplicably before my mind's eye for a moment) and understand the "crime of passion." The Bulgarian should have known - I think that *his* is one of those countries. Yes, I had been right to set her straight. I just wanted to find my serenity again. I had concluded that a trip to Thailand - to heal and to keep evolving on a spiritual plane - that was the solution to this nervousness.

I gripped the back of the chair at Caroline's dressing table as the student looked around the bedroom, blinking idiotically at the round bed and wide-open window facing onto the Plainpalais five stories below.

"Why are you leaving for a year?" he asked hesitantly.

"Personal reasons," I answered coolly.

"It's cold in here," he added, staring at the open window.

"I like fresh air," I said as curtly as possible without being openly rude.

"There's a funny smell," he wrinkled up his round pink face and sniffed accusingly. In spite of myself, I glanced at the tall mirror doors of the armoire and saw us standing in the doorway: the pale young man with short dark hair and neatly pressed white shirt, and the unbearable blond boy all dressed in black like a raven who'd bleached its head.

I stared - I saw that I was not just pale, I was *ghastly*. I saw beads of sweat on my forehead, and worse, I saw rings of sweat under my arms. My head reeled a moment and I clung tighter to the chair.

Just at that moment a gust of wind slammed shut the window and I heard a faint noise, like a baby feebly crying . . . *or a cat*. A wall of ice broke over me as I realized that the beast I had walled up with Caroline's body *wasn't dead*. The student's eyes were open wide with unasked questions as I looked around for something heavy to strike him and the unmistakable cry of the Siamese monster rose into a vertiginous *screeeeeeaaaam*.

Morning on the Metro

by Jessica Stevens-Campos

Preliminary note: This is a story of my own invention the ideas of which date back to July 2005 in London. I have edited parts here and there according to a friend's advice.

Short black blazer buttoned over burgundy t-shirt, flower printed skirt. Finish the remains of my breakfast (snap and crackle and pop!) and sip the tempest in my teacup while getting dressed for another day at the office. Morning debate on BBC radio (turn up the volume) as to whether or not the national education system should include disabled persons. Wonder what it means to be disabled. Glance at the clock, frozen in thought. Get up to finish washing the dishes and feel the soapy warm water on my hands. Drip drop drip drop, pitter patter pitter patter. Droplets of diamonds falling into a bubble bath of sunken cutlery and dishes, bathing mugs, and a bobbing teapot on the surface. I seize the taps and turn them tightly closed. Ouf! Need stronger arm muscles! Drip. Dro p. Pit-ter pat ter. Soft sound of crackling foam and popping bubbles when you put your ear to it.

Second glance at the ticking clock. No time to continue listening as I am running late for work. Roll up transparent stockings and hop into comfy sneakers. Snatch a paper bag from the kitchen draw (how striking! A picture of the hare & tortoise on it from the Japanese take-away close by) and pop fancy shoes in to switch with at the workplace. Reminds me of the turtle swimming across Hokusai's folding panels of the twelve months seen from down under (Simple, but what a perspecti- Must stop over-interpreting banal logos. Get back on track: running late. 8:21. Won't make it on foot, better take the metro. If I run I can catch the 8:24. Check in handbag for oyster card (cute name really for an electronic swipeable device)). All ready, skip down flight of stairs, lightly banging the front door behind as I jog to Olympia station.

Letters jingled together forming aggressively bright advertisements greet entrance into the tube. Would be better to keep eyes closed so as not to absorb marketing blurb (no need to be so radical, I say to myself, its only commercial gibberish). If you are lucky, you can find poems on the underground squeezed between tacky junk cards. Provides a few seconds and minutes of *détente* before facing main-frame PC for square eyes and keyboard for agitated fingers.

Sit down on a dried chewing gum seat and gaze up at the frieze of running ads above tired faces and scratched windows. Scanning from left to right. There's one, a little to the left. Can't read the first lines because of convex and bulging card. Squinting my eyes, I focus, as I foolishly forgot my glasses at the office yesterday. 'Forth row back and clutching your viola, bright hair spilt across'... can't read the rest.

'Next stop Earls-Court. Please change here for the District and Piccadilly lines'.

Stepping out of metro, I look at the giant clock on the quay: hands read precisely 8:27. Glance over my shoulder at the panel indicating the incoming tube. Arrow lights up in direction of Upminster - yes that's the one. Out from the dark tunnel two level-headed lights shine. Gliding metro slowly comes to a halt.

'Please mind the gap'.

Passengers step out, others step in. Like some type of urban dance where feet step to a marching pace, arms by the side. Vertical dashes. This time, no space to sit in the tube. I stand up, arm around one of those silvery metallic poles. Two stops - Gloucester Road and South Kensington.

The slithering tube suddenly jerks (sounds of un-oiled hinges creak) and carries on forward at a paralytic pace. Seems like this carriage is too heavy for the rails. Wheels screech, as if sticks had been jolted in the mechanism (poor Saint Catherine having such a lame attribute, pretty useless!). Scrambling, screeching, jolting, the tube barely makes it to Gloucester Road. Doors open, a few get out, most people stay in. Repetition. Doors are open and a few people have gotten out. Why is the metro stopped? Anonymous faces begin to share perplexed looks. Tapping feet, drumming fingers. Coughs, shuffling newspapers, whiffs of men's cologne meddle with women's perfumes. A woman standing up, hand on a pole, book in the other, takes advantage of delay to continue reading. A man sitting down takes out his portable phone, presumably to dial his office number to inform of late arrival. Life by the clock, time counts lives. Tick tock tick tock. Inbetween, shuffle, cough, confusion, darting glances. Peer out at digital railway clock. 8:38. Few seconds ticking to round up yet another minute.

Rustling sounds of radio waves.

continued on next page



continued from page 22

'Good morning, ladies and gentlemen'. The conductor's voice reverberates from the overhead speakers.

'We are sorry to keep you waiting, but we have encountered a technical failure. No worries, we'll be starting off again shortly'.

Once again close-in to normality. Tick. Tock. Tick. Tock. Minutes march by. After five, worried eyes begin to inquire others nervously. 8:49: a handful of people have already stepped out. Realising that I too am going to be late tread out, wandering through the passageways to the nearest exit sign.

In the underground labyrinth, a man with a wavy beard plays the *prelude* to the second suite in B Minor by Bach on his fiddle. I think I've seen him before. Yes, there was an article about him in the latest *Time Out* magazine where he talks about an audition he had to pass to be able to busk. The neon lights make his hair shine purple, electric purple. He is dressed in a brown mackintosh like Chagall's *Violoniste* except that his hat is upside down on the floor rather than planted on his head. Humanist music. Ironic to see him play on a backdrop for the latest technological gadgets. Sad to see people enfolded in their private worlds engineered by the hub of their I-pods or tangled in telephone wires talking to...who?

The day passes. Figures increase.

That evening, the Royal Albert Hall is packed. The protruding and overturned mushrooms on the ceiling rebound to the sounds of Grava Rattle's interpretation of Chopin's *Marche Funèbre*. Asthmatic gasps of air. Seems like she plays from her intestines. In the hall, people from different areas of the city (you can even find seats for £1) encircle the diva and her shiny beast. And the beat plays on.

News from the Library

by Lise Magnollay

As some of you may be aware already through posters and fliers entitled *Fusion*, the database of the city of Geneva (the BPU, BAA and some smaller museum libraries) and the University database will merge on January 16 and will be called *Réseau des bibliothèques genevoises*. The main advantage is that you will no longer need to search for books in two different databases. It will also mean that you will have a single reader file, so if you have two cards, please check at the library which one has been kept. There will also be some small changes in the lending rules as the rules applied by the groups of libraries had to be harmonised.

continued from page 12

Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are not dead - at least not in this performance. Hamlet is sent to England in their company, and returns. More is not known. No narration about pirates, purloined letters or any other perpetrations. It must be said to their credit that one of them played rather well, though I can't say which, since, as is often the case, no one on stage seemed to be able to tell them apart (except, perhaps, the Queen). One immediately saw the sleazy spy in him.

The gravediggers were well presented, and the comic relief was a bit eerie (purposely so, I suspect), since all the laughing, joking and singing went on above Ophelia's very visible corpse (not just a bundle - the real actress in a shroud).

Fortinbras and any mention of him were cut (only Norway was mentioned). The end of the play was entirely silent. The final scene contained only one word: NO! shouted by the King, when he realized that his wife had just downed the poison meant for his nephew. This was also the last word of the play. The audience had already seen the ending of the play in the dumb show, so there was apparently no need for more words. The four characters on stage (Hamlet, Laertes, the King and the Queen) died very, very slowly, accompanied by music. This made the (younger part of the) audience somewhat impatient, so that some applause started trickling in before the music, the lights, and the actors had entirely died.

Cinema Corner

Review of *King Kong* (Dir. Peter Jackson)

Some of you may remember that *King Kong* (1933) was taught in Analysis of Texts not long ago by Veronique Fernandez. One of the elements that students were asked to analyze was the game of oppositions between black and white (in terms of costumes as well as skin and fur) and its relationship to sexual opposition. For example, Annie was always dressed in white, while the all-male crew of the ship was often dressed in black. Her whiteness was also continuously contrasted to the blackness the "savages" on the island and King Kong himself. This new version, though sweeter and more sentimental than the first, is no less fascinated by these culturally constructed and culturally *constructing* oppositions. The natives on Skull Island are represented as completely "Other" as any human possibly can be. We are back to the nineteenth century, where aboriginal people are very black, very violent and incomprehensibly vicious. The film makes much of the "heart of darkness" trope. One of the sailors is reading Conrad's novel, and like *Apocalypse Now*, the film wants us to *think about it*. As in that other movie, *King Kong* seems to want to show that it is actually the white men who have black hearts (notably Carl, the ultra-capitalist film-maker), but at the same time it represents the natives as so demonic that the message gets lost.

Having made this *caveat* about the movie's over-the-top racism (just slightly balanced by a noble African American sailor, who predictably dies), I must admit that in all other respects it's a pretty fun film. The brilliant Jack Black plays the self-promoting and manipulative entrepreneur leading the expedition. Naomi Watts takes a licking but keeps on ticking and looking great. She gets pulled through sea-rocks, shrubs and trees, she's held in Kong's hand as he runs through the jungle and fights off T. Rexes, and she never gets a bruise or even tired. There are too many close-ups of her looking at

King Kong with tearful affection, but Watts' performance is otherwise spunky and campy enough to make the whole thing bearable. Adrian Brody plays the cute but ineffective love interest who gets muscled out by the ultra Alpha-male Kong. This remake plays up the reciprocally romantic aspect of Kong and Annie's affection for each other. He's seduced by her beauty and playfulness, while she obviously finds his combination of loyalty, protectiveness and forcefulness irresistible. The film shows her surrounded by weak, self-interested, and unprincipled men, making her attraction to King Kong at least somewhat plausible. Like many Hollywood stories, then, this can be described as a tale of impossible love. Always pushing the envelope, Hollywood asks us here to get all weepy about the doomed love between a girl and a giant gorilla. And why not? Part of the point of the film finally is to show us the magic of cinema, the thrill of great special effects, the total suspension of disbelief, and the ability of the silver screen to conjure up a wide palette of Technicolor emotions.

The Film Critic also recommends:

The Three Burials of Malquiades Estrada (Dir. Tommy Lee Jones): powerful and quirky contemporary Western.

And on DVD:

Mysterious Skin (Dir. Gregg Araki): an intelligent and haunting film on the trauma of pedophilia.

Crash (Dir. Paul Haggis): excellent film about race relations in the U.S.

The Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy (Dir. Garth Jennings): the smartest and funniest sci-fi film you will ever see.

Agnieszka Soltysik

Noted is the newsletter of the English Department at the University of Geneva. We publish anything of interest to or by the students and staff of the English Department. The deadline for contributions for the next issue will be April 28th, 2006. You can send your reviews, interviews, musings, fictions, photos, cartoons, or drawings to either: agnieszka.soltysik@lettres.unige.ch or michael.roosli@lettres.unige.ch. Texts should be in Microsoft Word. Photos and drawings can be in jpeg.

NOTED -- Département de langue et de littératures anglaises -- case postale, 1211 Genève 4

Calvin and Hobbes by Bill Watterson

