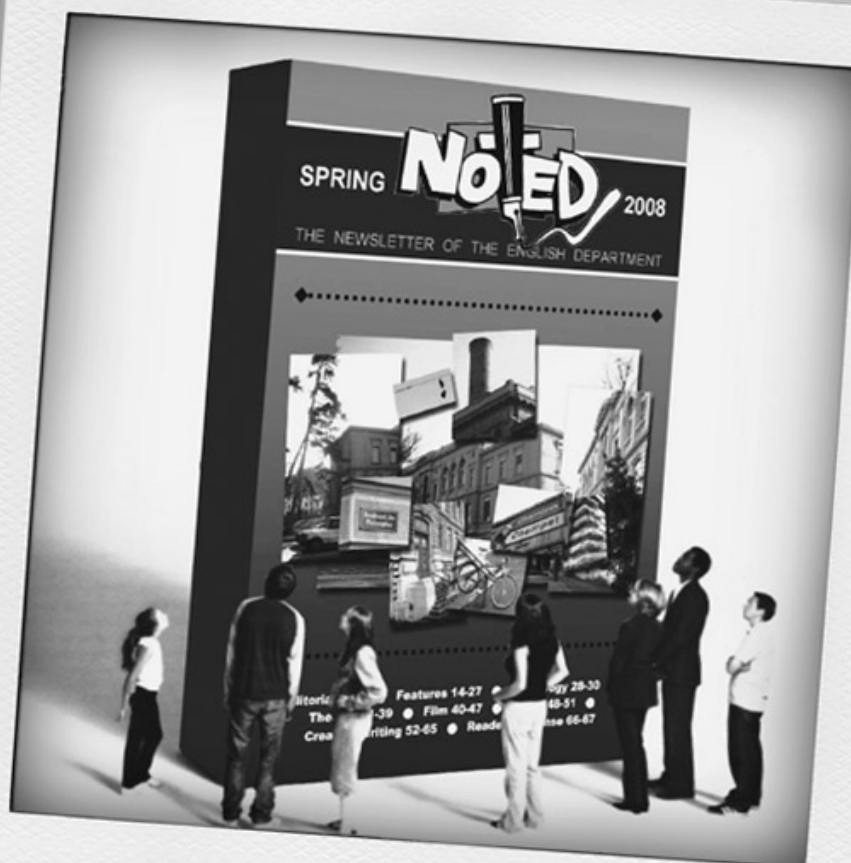


SPRING



2009

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE ENGLISH DEPARTMENT



Spring 2009

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Cover illustration based on the film poster of Todd Solondz's *Storytelling* (2001).

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Editorial



Did travelling abroad feature among your New Year's resolutions for 2009? Travelling, studying and improving your mastery of English, that is. If so, then the present issue of NOTED contains inspiring examples designed to give you a further push in the right direction. You could, for instance, apply for the Study Abroad programme and go to the UK or Ireland and attend the University of Oxford, Leicester, Aberdeen, or Limerick. A helpful introduction telling you how to proceed, what to expect, and whom to contact, is awaiting you on pages 12-15. The current issue's 'Note from the Director' is also an invitation for all students from our department to seriously consider such an enriching, instructive initiative.

For further adventures abroad, lovers of Shakespeare and theatre in general should sign up for one of the Shakespeare seminars proposed this spring: 'Shakespeare and Performance' at BA level, taught by Emma Depledge, and 'Shakespeare in Performance' at MA level, taught by Prof. Erne. These courses will offer insights into the plays and the culture you will be

scrutinising, especially as they involve a trip to Stratford-Upon-Avon, Shakespeare's birthplace and major Shakespearean theatre venue, and London, for a visit to the Globe theatre, a replica of the theatre where many of Shakespeare's plays were performed before it burned to the ground in 1613.

There is also the possibility of travelling and reviewing shows you attend, as exemplified by Karen Klein's introduction to the Berlin theatre scene, with articles on plays she has recently seen in Germany. It's as easy as that: you jump on a tram, a train or a plane, and go off to a theatre, attend a performance, and come back with a piece for NOTED. We look forward to reading about your experience.

Or, for the time being, you can browse over the Creative Writing section and invite yourself to a traditionally copious and authentic Ukrainian dinner, on a stuffy, stormy North-American summer's day. Or peep at a rather claustrophobic sort of eggshell. This is the second series of short-stories coming to us from students who followed Alan Sternberg's



seminar 'Writing Short Stories' in spring 2008. There's plenty to discover and ponder while on that journey.

Or, as a radical variation on the travel-abroad theme, why not cross over and step into the skin of a NOTED contributor or section editor? It's an easy journey, but one that would certainly open new creative perspectives for both your present and your future. As Prof. Erne states in his 'Note', extra-curricular activities look great on your curriculum vitae!

I would like to thank those who have undertaken that cross-over, thus

making the present edition possible. Thank you all for your generous contributions, either as authors, editors, designers, or proof-readers. Collaboration is a wonderful thing, especially when it produces such diversity, in the guise of interviews, quizzes, reviews and stories. I leave you to read 'through' and explore at your own rhythm, in your own time.

NOTED would like to wish its readers and contributors a happy and inspiring 2009, should you stay at home or travel abroad.

Ioana Balgradean

Note from the Director

I am writing these words as Director of the English Department, not as a travel agent. Nonetheless, I would like to seize this opportunity to encourage students to travel, to go abroad, preferably to an English-speaking country, for as little as a few months, or for as much as a year. While I wouldn't discourage sight-seeing during your time abroad, its chief aim should be progress in your English studies, an objective that can be met in a variety of ways but for which the chief requirement is immersion in an English-language environment for an extended period of time.

In line with the present 'Note from the Director', the English Department has recently set up a Study Abroad encouragement scheme. During the autumn semester, all 2nd-year BA students received an email inviting them to make an appointment with an assistant so as to talk about the possibility of a stay in an English-

speaking country. The aim of these appointments is not to coerce students into doing something they do not want to do. As you know, in our department (contrary to other English departments in this country), spending time abroad is not an obligatory requirement (though lack of ease in English may prevent students from obtaining a BA). Rather, we believe that some students have so far passed up the opportunity to spend time abroad more for lack of guidance than lack of interest. So we hope that the helping hand and considered advice of a staff member may provide the necessary assistance for you to take the decisive steps. We are convinced that a period spent abroad can make your studies in the English Department more rewarding and more enjoyable.

While encouraging you to spend time abroad as part of your English studies, I might as well dispel a few unfounded myths. →



Myth number one:

The English Department does not provide sufficient opportunities to study abroad. Not true. In the past, the offer has regularly exceeded the demand. Recently, we have further extended the offer: there are several openings every year for students wishing to spend one or two semesters at the Universities of Leicester, Aberdeen, or Limerick, and there is an opportunity every two years (next time in 2009-10) for a student to go to the University of Oxford, St. John's College (one of the oldest and most prestigious Oxford colleges). Moreover, additional ERASMUS places often become available when other departments or faculties do not make use of their own. Also, Faculty or University exchange agreements provide opportunities to study in the US (Smith College, University of Washington in Seattle, University of Wisconsin-Madison, or, at MA level only, Johns Hopkins University and University of Pennsylvania), Canada (Bishop's University, Concordia University, McGill University), or Australia (Australian National University in Canberra, University of Sidney).

In addition to all these opportunities to study abroad for course credits, students whose mother tongue is either French or German can apply to go to the United Kingdom as part of the Language Assistant Programme (LAP) and teach their own language while being immersed in an English speaking environment.

Finally, another option is to go abroad neither to study for credits, nor to work as a language teacher, but so as to follow an advanced language course with the aim of improving your mastery of the English language. There is an almost limitless supply of such language programmes.

See Dept. website for a good selection:
<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/etudes/bourses/nocredit.pdf>

Myth number two:

Going abroad is costly. No, not necessarily. If your parents pay taxes in the canton of Geneva, you can apply to the Faculty for a special grant. If you come from elsewhere in Switzerland, your cantonal authorities may award you a grant or a tax-free loan. The Faculty's *Conseillère aux études*, Mme Nguyen, and the University's *Relations Internationales* can provide further information about getting financial help. Also, at least one option, the Language Assistant Programme, is cost-neutral, insofar as it comes with a modest salary that covers one's living expenses.

Myth number three:

Going abroad is a waste of time. Wrong, wrong, wrong! The new Bologna system, which ties credits to individual seminars and comes with tightly organized study plans, has been encouraging students to advance in their degree with a certain pragmatism and economy. This is partly a good thing: far be it from me to encourage desultoriness. Yet if students rush through their studies with little else in mind than acquiring as many credits as possible at maximal speed, they may deprive themselves of something rather important. There are occasionally good reasons for not completing a BA in three years, and spending time abroad is definitely among them. When applying for a job at some point in the future, what will distinguish you from your fellow applicants may not be your degree (which many or all applicants may have). Instead, your potential employer may be interested in what use you made of your time during your studies. Here, having functioned as section editor for NOTED, to give an innocent example, may turn out to be a decisive distinction rather than a waste of time. And a semester or a year spent



in the UK or elsewhere may well be considered evidence for the sense of initiative, adaptability, and open-mindedness that makes a candidate stand out. So it is true that a stay abroad means that it may take you slightly longer to complete your degree, but the time invested is likely to yield considerable benefits.

Myth number four:

It is difficult to get full credit for the course work done abroad. No, not if you prepare a learning agreement and have it signed by the staff member in charge of Study Abroad (in the English Department, this has been Prof. Madsen who will be replaced by Prof. Haeberli during her sabbatical in 2009). The learning agreement defines what courses you will attend and how you plan to credit them upon your return. It is always possible to revise the learning agreement if the courses you originally planned to attend turn out to be unsuitable. After completing their coursework and returning to Geneva, students arrange to meet with the Department director, equipped with their learning agreement, a transcript of results, the course syllabi, and the essays written.

* * *

Spending a period in an English-speaking country is thus useful in more than one way: you will get intimately acquainted with the language and culture you study, you will feel more at ease speaking English in class, and the quality of interactions in seminars will improve as a consequence. All said and done, it should not go unmentioned that study abroad, like virtue, is its own reward. Almost invariably, students who return to Geneva report that they've had a wonderful time, learnt a lot, made close friends, and been altogether transformed by the stay abroad.

This, incidentally, matches my own experience. When (all too long ago!) I was a student at the University of Lausanne, I decided to study abroad for a year, at the University of Exeter. Yes, the first few weeks were unsettling, but soon enjoyment took over, and by the end of the year, my heart was bleeding at the thought of having to go home. I worked awfully hard, read more novels, plays, and poems than I can remember (by Shakespeare, Wordsworth, Coleridge, Keats, the Brontës, Dickens, Henry James, T. S. Eliot, and Samuel Beckett among others), travelled to Cornwall, Portsmouth, Bath, London (repeatedly), Stratford-upon-Avon, Wales, the Lake District, and Scotland, and discovered more of Britain (including its ales and single malts) than I ever thought I would. For those who remain unconvinced that a stay abroad is an attractive option, I recommend the film *L'auberge espagnole*, by Cédric Klapisch. It successfully captures some of the excitement and life-transforming capacities of ERASMUS studentship.

So my advice, dear Student Reader, is: Go Abroad! As soon as possible! In the meantime, I wish you a productive and rewarding spring term.

Lukas Erne

PS: During the spring semester 2009, the staff members in the English Department who can be consulted about Study Abroad matters are:

Prof. E. Haeberli: eric.haeberli@unige.ch

E. Scheidegger: erika.scheidegger@unige.ch

The Department website also provides much useful information:

<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/etudes/bourses.html>

Note, in particular, that some of your colleagues who spent time abroad have produced reports which you can now access via the website of the English Department.



Department News

Various News

Shakespeare Study Trip

This semester, Prof. Lukas Erne and Emma Depledge will be organising a study trip to London and Stratford-upon-Avon from June 14-19, 2009 (in the first week after the May/June exam session).



The Study Abroad Programme has taken a new form so as to make the initiative of studying abroad even more accessible to students in the English Department. For more information, see the 'Note from the Director' and Keith McDonald's 'Study Abroad' article.



The Commission Mixte of the English Department met on 3rd December, in order to discuss matters relating to the smooth-running of the Department. Present were: Lukas Erne (president) for the *corps professoral*, Valerie Fehlbaum and Erzsi Kukorelly (secretary) representing the *corps intermédiaire*, Lydia Sonderegger, Leonard Zumstein and Kimberly Gaydon for the student body. Jennifer Wong was excused, being on study leave in Hong Kong.

The minutes of the meeting will be made available (in the English Department secretariat and in the English Department library) in due course.

Prospective members of the student body of the *Commission Mixte* are strongly encouraged to attend the Annual General Meeting (AGM) on the 25th of February.



The English Department website has been busily used and extended during the last few semesters. A slight reorganisation was called for, in order to keep its structure nice and clear.

The new 'Studies' section introduces our Department to future students, provides you with information about your current studies (the *plan d'études*, the course programme with the academic calendar, the exam regulations with official paper deadlines etc.), as well as everything you need to know if you are planning to study abroad for a semester or a year.

'Research and Writing' provides you with everything you need to know about the library (and our valuable online-resources), the Writing Lab, and useful documents like the Style-Sheet and the Short Guide to Research.

The website now also offers a handy overview in one glance of all our teaching staff, their contact details, and office hours.

Anything concerning the social life of the English Department is gathered under 'Student Life', a link which tells you about opportunities to meet your fellow students in a less formal context.



ECCO, Eighteenth Century Collections Online is the latest digital database available at the University of Geneva.

Visit the departmental website & click to: Research & Writing > Libraries & Online Resources

Or type:

<http://galenet.galegroup.com/servlet/ECCO?locID=ugd&ste=23>

Happy browsing!



Staff News

Keith McDonald will be leaving the English Department at the end of January. NOTED would like to thank Keith for his wonderful, enthusiastic collaboration over the past year, and to wish him all the best for the future.

Visiting staff members for the spring semester 2009 are Prof. Neil Forsyth, who will be teaching a seminar entitled 'Charles Dickens', Christina Ljungberg, who will be giving a seminar entitled 'Visuality and Narrativity in Postmodern and Postcolonial Texts', and Julianna Bark, who will be teaching an AT seminar.

Prof. Deborah Madsen will be on leave for the whole of 2009.

The Study abroad representative in the Department during Prof. Madsen's sabbatical year is Prof. Eric Haerberli.

Within the MobiLettres initiative, Prof. Eric Haerberli has been undertaking an outgoing *acte de mobilité* to the University of Lausanne during the autumn semester 2008. Prof. Neil Forsyth from the University of Lausanne is coming to teach at Geneva in the spring 2009 as part of the same scheme.

Corinne Fournier Kiss has won the *Prix européen* of the *Grand Prix de l'Imaginaire 2009*, awarded at the festival 'Utopiales' in Nantes, for the published version of her thesis called *La Ville européenne dans la littérature fantastique du tournant du siècle (1860-1915)*.

Corinne was an assistant in Comparative Literature from 1996-2003 (when that programme was based in the English Department) and a *chargée d'enseignement suppléante* in English in 2003-4. She completed her thesis under the supervision of Professor David Spurr. Congratulations to Corinne on this fine achievement.



Doctoral Programme in English Language and Literature



The doctoral programme in English Language and Literature, sponsored by the *Conférence Universitaire de la Suisse Occidentale* (CUSO), officially begins its activities in teaching, research, and scholarship in 2009. This programme, operating with a budget of more than Sfr. 50,000 per year, brings together the talents and resources of faculty and doctoral students from the universities of Basel, Bern, Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchâtel. Members of other Swiss universities are also welcome to participate. The purpose of the programme is to provide the best possible environment for doctoral study by creating an active, collaborative,

and lasting research community in English studies. The most visible form of this collaboration will be an annual series of seminars or workshops designed to appeal to a wide range of intellectual interests, while also demonstrating how research is conducted at the highest level. The faculty of the programme will also offer practical advice to doctoral students on the organisation, composition, and eventual publication of their theses.

While recognizing the thesis as the substance of the doctorate, the doctoral programme is based on the conviction that better doctoral theses are written when the writer is in contact with other researchers with whom to share questions of methodology, theory, and scholarship. In keeping with the spirit of a research community, therefore, the programme is designed to be a laboratory for new ideas where doctoral students and other researchers come together on an equal basis, away from the institutional structure of examinations and course requirements. For this reason, the programme is not a degree-granting institution, and faculty and student participation is wholly voluntary. However, doctoral students may obtain an *Attestation d'études doctorales* for active participation in four seminar offerings distributed among at least three different modules. The general academic plan for the programme calls for modules to be offered in the following areas:



1. Research methodology, including electronic research tools and databases, palaeography, archives and artefacts, manuscripts and editions, treatment of secondary sources, selection of materials, definition and other thesis related issues.
2. Theory, including definition of theoretical assumptions, and the fundamental questions of knowledge, language, text, authorship, authority, discourse, translation, intertextuality, cultural value, disciplinarity, and interdisciplinarity. In 2009, this module will be represented by a workshop at the Nietzsche-Haus in Sils Maria, August 31 - September 4, on "Genealogies of Modern Literary Theory and Criticism," organized by Prof. Patrick Vincent.
3. History, including the material history of books: their production, transmission, and description; history of the discipline of English, history of genres and media, history of social contexts and institutions, including gender, class, and colonization. In 2009, this module will be represented by a workshop at the University of Basel, April 10-11, on "Medieval and Early Modern English Literature and the Question of Periodicity," organized by Prof. Ina Habermann.
4. Special topics and problems, including material not easily subsumed under the categories of methodology, theory, or history. In 2009, this module will be represented by a workshop at the University of Geneva, October 15-17, on "Literature and the Environment," organized by Dr. Martin Leer.
 In addition to faculty members from Switzerland, other internationally-recognised scholars have been invited to participate in the workshops mentioned above. Interested persons should contact the organizers of these workshops for additional details. It is hoped that every doctoral student in Switzerland will take part in at least one workshop every year. Doctoral students, members of the *corps intermédiaire* and professors from the six participating universities will be reimbursed for travel, food, and lodging expenses.

The programme will be overseen by a *comité scientifique* to be elected in early 2009, and consisting of one member from each of the four CUSO universities (Fribourg, Geneva, Lausanne, and Neuchâtel) as well as the two collaborating universities, Basel and Bern. The programme director is Prof. David Spurr, who will be assisted in this capacity by Joëlle Richard, a recent graduate of the Universities of Lausanne and London.

David Spurr

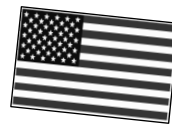
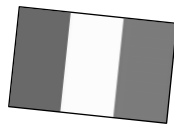


Features



Study Abroad: Where Could You Go?

by Keith McDonald



As the 'Note from the Director' states, most second year students (and a few third years too!) have come to speak to members of staff about the different study abroad opportunities available through the Department. Some arrived having already undertaken some research, while others had previously spoken to someone from *Relations Internationales* at Uni-Mail. Many simply came with an open mind, ready to receive more information. We have gladly spent time with students and provided information, we are happy to help with questions, and we will be glad to help with applications. What we have consciously not done, however, is act as tour guides. Had we supplied

huge brochures advertising the wealth of detail about all the possible destinations, we would have removed the incentive for you to investigate the locations which interest you most. It is an individual decision and therefore down to you to get involved.

What we can offer is a starter's guide. Most of you will now be aware of the available schemes and the destinations; if not, much of this information is available in the 'Study Abroad and Scholarships' section of the Department website. Since the main focus is on undergraduates, this article will offer a little more on the most likely exchange destinations: the UK and Ireland.



ERASMUS UK & Ireland

We currently have four possible connections with the UK and Ireland, with ERASMUS places available at the Universities of Oxford, Leicester, Aberdeen, and Limerick. Some offer more places than others and with some there will be more competition for places. That is the nature of supply and demand. Since the promotion of the scheme began in October, the English Department in Geneva has acquired more interest from new partners, and the list of possible connections can only grow.

Useful Links:

ERASMUS Network:

<http://www.esn.org/>

British Council:

<http://www.britishcouncil.org/erasmus>

Leicester



Leicester is the largest city in the East Midlands, located between Sheffield to the north, Birmingham to the west, and London to the south. Leicester is known for its internationally diverse culture, promoting ethnic backgrounds

and a wide variety of languages. Students make up a sizeable portion of the city's population during term time. Leicester is both culturally diverse and culturally rich. The DeMontfort Hall hosts performances from classical music and theatre to stand-up comedy, while sport is also taken very seriously. The Leicester Tigers are consistent performers in the Rugby Union Guinness Premiership, while the 32,000 capacity Walkers Stadium hosts the Leicester City football club.

Not only has the University of Leicester recently been labelled the University of the Year for 2008 by the hugely influential Times Higher Education Awards, but it also currently ranks second in student satisfaction amongst full-time students at English universities. These two factors show Leicester to be among the elite of English institutions. Leicester's English Department pays close attention to students' needs, offering pastoral support through personal tutors. A wide selection of small English Language courses are also offered throughout the semester to complement your literary studies. The University is located on the edge of beautiful Victoria Park, where one may pass a delightful afternoon reading under the shade of an English Oak tree. The Students' Union, meanwhile, helps to operate an ERASMUS Society as well as an International Student Committee. →

Useful Links:

<http://www.le.ac.uk/english/>

<http://www.le.ac.uk/international/erasmus/>



Limerick



Useful Link:

<http://www2.ul.ie/web/WWW/Services/International%20Education%20Division/Submenus/Erasmus>

Limerick is the third largest city in Ireland, situated on the river Shannon in the southwest. This capital of the 'Mid-Western' region lies approximately 50 miles from Cork. Its tourist hotspots include King John's Castle, St. Mary's Cathedral, and several museums, including the Hunt Museum for medieval Europe and the City Gallery of Art. Don't forget: the currency of Ireland is the Euro!

This campus-style university was previously famed for excellence in technology, but now boasts its own designated business school, an Olympic swimming pool at the University Arena, and its own purpose-built University Concert Hall. Many of the student accommodation blocks are conveniently situated on the university precinct.

English studies at Limerick are often combined with other arts or humanities-based subjects, including history and 'new media'. Many of their courses are centred on chronological periods, fitting very easily into a Genevan *plan d'études*. You may wish to dedicate your time in Ireland to

courses on James Joyce and Irish Poetry, or the wide range of other topics offered at Limerick, including courses on Feminist Theory and Science Fiction.

Aberdeen



Useful Links:

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/english/>

<http://www.abdn.ac.uk/english/international/erasmus.php>

Aberdeen, a city of impressive granite architecture, surrounded by breathtaking scenery (Britain's largest national park, no less), is the third largest city in Scotland. Located in north eastern Scotland, Aberdeen literally translates as 'between the Don and the Dee' in reference to the two rivers which border this historic city.

Much of Aberdeen's heritage comes from nautical industries. Once famed for fishing and textiles, Aberdeen is now renowned for its trade in oil. The Maritime Museum details the history of the city's industrial debt to the surrounding North Sea. The city also thrives in popular culture, with Aberdeen's International Youth Festival gathering more attention every year. Included in the headline acts for 2009 is the Iceland Youth Symphony Orchestra.



The university dates back as far as 1495, with the founding of Kings College. The English Department has specialists in several areas, and has quite a wide range of courses. It also operates a safeguard scheme for study abroad students to ensure that courses are matched to students' capabilities. Students accepted to Aberdeen have the option of a much wider choice of BA courses available to them if they pass a diagnostics test, which is similar to a first year Analysis of Texts exam (an example is available online: see ERASMUS link above). Aberdeen's flexibility allows students to follow courses in almost any other subject, if they choose to do so.

Oxford



Little can be said that is not already known about Oxford. It is a city characterised by a fascinating history, and one of the world's finest universities. Oxford became the centre of the King's printing press during the

English Civil War, and today, the Bodleian Library, the university press, and Blackwell's Bookshop (with the largest sales floor dedicated to books in Europe) all ensure that scholarly books remain one of Oxford's highest priorities.

St John's College, with whom the Geneva *Faculté des Lettres* is associated, is a consistently high performer in the university's own Norrington Table, which ranks Oxford colleges according to exam results of undergraduates taking their finals. The college strives to make good use of up-to-date resources. It hosts its own TV channel online, with a student video prospectus, and the construction of a new quadrangle is also underway.

The single placement will be open to the whole faculty. As it is biannual, however, the academic year 2009-10 could provide the only realistic opportunity for current undergraduates to apply. It will be competitive; strong grades to date will be useful in an application. Tutorials are also likely to be intense. This exchange will not suit everybody, but it does present an outstanding opportunity for the right student.

Useful Links:

<http://www.sjc.ox.ac.uk/>

<http://info.sjc.ox.ac.uk/sjctv/Content/JCR/JCR.htm>



Finding Calvin

by Susan Heller

The International Reformation Museum features an exhibit wherein a digital talking John Calvin head appears in a Snow-White style mirror and trumpets, “Open your eyes! It’s everywhere!” His proclamation is given in response to the question, “Does evidence of the Reformation in Geneva still exist?” This question is posed by another digital talking head. Although Calvin’s tone suggests he’s appalled that the question would even merit asking, I’m glad the little digital boy disagreed, because I’ve been asking myself a similar question: Who was John Calvin? And what clues can the city of Geneva give us about the type of man he was?

I’m not terribly interested in the subjects of his sermons, what the acronym T.U.L.I.P. stands for, or the finer points of his thoughts on predestination. While these are relevant questions for someone raised in the church, they don’t give me a clearer picture of who Calvin was on a personal, day-to-day level. Rather, I want to know the kinds of books he had on his bookshelf. What sorts of things I would have found in his pockets, if, indeed, his frocks came with them? In 1562, artist René Boyvin sketched a profile of Calvin with the slogan “Johannes Calvinus: Prompte et Sincère” headlining it like a 16th-century personal ad. What words would Calvin have chosen himself if given the chance? In the end, when I open my eyes, I’m looking for a wallet-sized mental picture of Calvin,

something I can tuck into my religious back pocket and carry with me. And what better place to look than in Geneva, the city Calvin first visited in 1536, when he was 27 and, in true expat-in-Geneva style, turned his original one-night stopover into a 25-year one?

Today, he presides silently over the Parc des Bastions cloaked in five meters of flowing stone robes. To his right lie giant chess-boards painted on the ground and old, ruminating men sitting on green wooden benches; hordes of camera-armed tourists stream past him with the awed stares of children in front of toy store window displays; he is flanked on both sides by statues of other immortalized protestant reformers. Even in statue form, as the keystone figure of Geneva’s 100-meter-long Reformation Wall, this John Calvin evokes the same kind of solemn fear as that of a stern headmaster.

Interestingly, it turns out that in 1559 Calvin almost did become a stern headmaster. It was during this year that he founded the Academy of Geneva for the purpose of training ministers, but passed the role of rector on to his theological colleague Théodore de Bèze in order to continue preaching to as many of Geneva’s 20,000 inhabitants as possible. I attended a Church of Scotland service at the Auditoire de Calvin, the original site of Calvin’s Academy, to get a feel for the place. If the unadorned architecture reveals anything about Calvin, then I’m



guessing he wasn't the kitschy type and that his government-sponsored house was a bleak one. Cathédrale St-Pierre, the Catholic-turned-Protestant church, whose giant spire overshadows the Auditoire, appears to support my theory, in chair form at least. The back of "Calvin's chair," which sits beside the pulpit where Calvin preached most of his c. 2,300 sermons, looks like the ornate spine of a rather thin Bible, with the seat portion widening to form a trapezoid. Rumor has it that when Calvin was ill with all sorts of maladies, he was carried to church on this uncomfortable-looking object. John Calvin: Loquacious and Tenacious?

History reveals that Calvin the Tenacious was also Calvin the Obstinate; he not only practiced what he preached, but made sure that others did so too. In addition to being known as the "Protestant Rome," Geneva also earned a reputation at the time as the city "Without crime and destitute of amusements," thanks to the strict morals Calvin and his friends in the Geneva Council imposed on their fellow citizens. One resident was banished from Geneva for three months because, upon hearing an ass bray, joked, "He prays a beautiful psalm." People were fined for not going to church, plays considered immoral were banned, and even, as three unfortunate men discovered, laughing during a sermon could lead to imprisonment. At one

point during his morality crusade, Calvin even tried to introduce psalm singing in Geneva's taverns. John Calvin: Cold and Bold?

As a student at the University of Geneva, Calvin's Academy's descendent, whose main building bookends the other side of the Parc des Bastions, I often sit on one of the green benches that flank the edge of the main lawn and stare at this French poster child of the Reformation. Why not try to

telepathize my way into knowing him? Questions clamber to the surface of my thoughts. What would Calvin think if he could slip out of his nearby unadorned grave for an afternoon, float through the streets of his former city, and sit on his own green bench for a while? Would he agree with others' descriptions of him as theologian, social reformer, and

humanist; the father of written French and modern Capitalism; a heartless and cruel tyrant; and even a contributor to the popularization of bovine milk for human consumption? Would he criticize the grandiosity of the Reformation Wall? What would Calvin feel upon learning that one of the most famous cartoon characters in U.S. history was named after him?

Again, who was John Calvin? As the Protestant world, with Geneva as its epicenter, gears up for "Calvin09," a year of lectures, tours, and events in celebration of Calvin's 500th birthday →



on July 10th, 2009, I find myself wondering how different organizations, countries, and religious groups will paint this influential, polemical, and ultimately elusive man. As the big birthday bash approaches, will Calvin's image be dusted off and shined to a glimmer, or will he be presented from multiple angles? Calvin never even particularly liked Geneva, and only reluctantly, even begrudgingly, returned to the city after being exiled from it between 1538-41 for attempting to force Geneva's citizens to affirm a confession of faith. It's hard to know how to view a guy who supported burning a man at the stake and, in the same lifetime, wrote, "Wherever you turn your eyes, there is no portion of the world, however minute, that does not exhibit at least some sparks of beauty."* Maybe "John Calvin: Sadistic and Artistic"?



It's these controversial and paradoxical aspects of Calvin, along with his influence on my own religious heritage, that bring me back to the International Reformation Museum in search of more clues. While listening to the media-enhanced exhibit again, I laugh at how the cartoonishness of the talking Calvin head does, in fact, remind me a bit of Bill Watterson's cartoon-version Calvin and his misadventures with Hobbes, his imaginary tiger. Or maybe I just want it to. After loading my head with so many different pictures of Calvin the man, he still feels distant and, well, historical, as foreign to me as the Latin of his magnum opus, "Institutio Christianae Religionis." I walk through the rest of the museum, whose last room spits me out into the gift shop. After perusing the post-card rack and flipping through some of the books for sale, I come across a shelf with bottles of beer whose labels are plastered with profile pictures of Calvin which are strikingly similar to Boyvin's except for one minor difference: In place of "Prompte et Sincère," the words "In Birae Predestinas" are inscribed across the front. This Latin I understand. As I purchase a bottle of Calvinus beer, an image of Calvin materializes in my mind like a Polaroid picture coming into focus: It's of Calvin and me, sitting in a pub, drinking a beer, getting ready to sing a Psalm or two.

* Calvin, John. "Institutio Christianae Religionis." Trans. Ford L. Battles. *Calvin: Institutes of the Christian Religion Volume 1.* (I .5.1) Ed. John T. McNeill. London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1960.



Women and the Theatre (October 16-18th, 2008)

An interview with conference organizer Dr. Valerie Fehlbaum by Kimberly Gaydon

Mid-October was the occasion for the English Department's Women and the Theatre conference, organized by Dr. Valerie Fehlbaum, along with Erzsi Kukorelly, Emma Depledge, Ioana Balgradean, and Kareen Klein. Having wetted my conference appetite a few months earlier with the Reading Visual Media conference, I couldn't resist the temptation to ask to be among the few fortunate audience members. Three days of enlightening and inspiring presentations interspersed with lovely meals. I found it to be a very rewarding experience and I'm sure that the other participants did too.

But while my experience lasted three days, the event has existed in the minds of Valerie and her muses for over a year now. I met with Valerie to ask her a few questions about the "behind-the-scenes" organization process.



KG: Was this the first conference you've organized? What inspired you to organize it?

VF: It was my first, yes. I was talking one day with my muses, Erzsi, Emma, Ioana, and Kareen. We were talking about women and the theatre and we realized that we all had something to say, so I went to see David Spurr, the Department director at the time. We wanted to have a little day conference just for us, and a seminar 'room of our own' to hold it in. And he suggested that we organize it for the *Troisième Cycle*, put forward a program, and make an event of it. People who know me know that I can't resist making an event out of something. So, I found myself at the head of this, but my muses were with me every step of the way.

KG: So you had a lot of help from your muses?

VF: On my own I would never have done it. They were lovely. Although I was the go-between with the CUSO and my name was on the official documents, it was a joint effort. There's something very nice about working together.

KG: How long did you work on it?

VF: We worked on it for at least a year. You have to ask guest speakers a long time in advance and you have to think about how many days you want the conference to last. We had to think about who we would invite from abroad. Emma already knew Prof. Richard Foulkes, who was important for me as a 19th century expert. Pascale Aebischer's presence also offered our students a former wonderful example of a Swiss student who has established →



herself as a prominent academic in the UK. She proves that students can get a good degree here that's recognized elsewhere. As with Prof. Foulkes, Emma knew Dr. Aebischer from her studies in the UK. We had other people in mind at first, but you have to think about people who have good pedagogical skills, who have to listen to papers and give advice. Some people are marvelous orators but aren't interested in listening to students.

Because we were talking about women from the Middle Ages to the present day, it seemed appropriate to have three days. And we tried to arrange the program chronologically.

On Thursday evening when the conference began, I arrived in Bastions B112 to find it full of enlivened, animated students and professors, sipping wine and munching on the wide array of aperitif items that could have easily constituted a generous buffet. I was welcomed with a folder, complete with name-tag, programme, and maps and brochures of Geneva. Later, we all settled down with more nibbles in front of us for the screening of Stage Beauty.

KG: Was *Stage Beauty* an obvious way to begin the conference?

VF: It was an obvious choice to start with a film because Thursday is the day of the Department film cycle. It was nice to include everybody, nice to take the opportunity to use the film cycle as a sort of festive start for the conference. And the film offered an interesting perspective of the moment when women first started acting on the public stage. It was Erzsi's idea to show the film and Anna Gebhardt said she'd do the introduction. Several people contributed for the aperitif.

On the Friday, I met several other participants in front of Bastions, where a van picked us up and whisked us off

to the Fondation Bodmer. It was a crisp, clear day and the view from Coligny onto the lake was magnificent, there for our admiring, until we were directed into a sunlit room with book-covered walls, the backdrop for the morning and afternoon presentations. Lunch was a short bus ride away to a lovely little café on the lake, after which we returned to the Fondation where we were treated to a guided tour of the most significant manuscripts of its collection. Later in the evening, the group reconvened for dinner at Le Grütli.

KG: Was holding part of the conference at the Fondation Bodmer a priority? And the tour?

VF: It was there from the beginning, for the renaissance manuscripts they have. For research, it's just marvelous. Over the past years, the English Department has been trying to reach out and extend its links with the wider community. Sylviane Maesserli is trying to increase awareness about the Bodmer and its wonderful resources. The library is out on a limb and if you don't know it's there, you don't go. I would like to think that we contribute to the cultural life in Geneva.

Plus, it's a comfortable atmosphere for doctoral candidates to present their ideas. To put forward your work in progress, and go public with your ideas, is always very scary.

The last day of the conference took place at La Comédie, where coffee and croissants were waiting for us in the morning. After the final presentations, brunch was served. And, while happily digesting, the conference finished with a roundtable discussion with La Comédie's director, Anne Bisang.

KG: And was having part of the conference at La Comédie a priority as well – the perfect setting for talking about theatre?



VF: La Comédie seemed ideal – to have one day at the University, one at an academic library, and one at a theatre run by a woman. Anne Bisang is definitely trying to pan the theatre to the general public. She’s very keen on not becoming an elitist, so they were only too happy to have us. La Comédie is our neighbor. If we’re talking about women and the theatre, it would have been ludicrous not to have some link between a local theatre which is run by women.

KG: What did the roundtable bring to the conference?

VF: The roundtable was very nice. People from the audience participated. A good thing, because, what often happens at conferences is that people give their papers and academics offer their comments. However, this had more to do with women and the theatre in practice. Everyone was keen to share – there wasn’t a sense of hierarchy. We got lovely feedback from the women of the roundtable (there were five of them, each making their living in the theatre in different ways), saying that they hadn’t thought about certain issues and were grateful to have them raised. It was so lively and fun. What quite often happens when we deal with women is that it becomes women complaining about their disadvantages. Instead, this was a celebration of the progress which women have made in the world of theatre.

Erszi did a marvelous job leading the discussion. In the end, we had to sort of interrupt, as we could have gone on all night. Luckily, the Comédie had a show that night. Otherwise, we might still be there. Everybody got so enthusiastic. They just felt comfortable. If you feel comfortable, you feel confident enough to put forward ideas.

KG: With the aperitif on Thursday, lunch and dinner on Friday, and finally, brunch on Saturday, do you think it was also a wonderful social gathering?

VF: If people are enjoying themselves, there’s always a lot of valuable interaction. I don’t think you have to suffer to share ideas. I think you can also make memorable occasions by sharing in a relaxed atmosphere.

For the Friday night dinner, we chose the Grütli because it used to be a school for naughty people. A few years ago, it became a cultural center, and now it has a restaurant and a theatre, called Le Black Box, run by women. Dinner went on forever. Nobody wanted to go home.

KG: Any final thoughts you’d like to share?

VF: I’d like to thank the *Journal de l’UNIGE*. I asked them to give us a bit of publicity and they gave us a half page spread. We were the envy of so many people.

I could never have done it on my own. It would not have been the same without the support of the head of the Department, the secretaries and all those invisible people in the background.

I was particularly touched that at some point, everybody sort of chipped in. People from the outside have commented on the fact that we’re very welcoming. We’re not hierarchical. Everybody participated.

My only regret is that I didn’t give a paper. So I’ll have to have another conference for that!

On the whole, it was just such a lovely uplifting experience. There was bonding that went on between me and my muses. We had great fun. I think all of us would do it again.

Well, I’m certainly looking forward to the next one!



Alumni Column: Evelyne Blanc, Bookseller

an Interview by Leonard Zumstein

Hello, Evelyne. Let's get straight down to business. Tell me, what does your present activity consist of?

Hello, Leonard. I'm a bookseller.

Where are you working at the moment?

I'm working in a second-hand bookshop, doubled with a restaurant.

Could you describe a bookseller's typical workday?

In this very small shop, a typical workday consists of two main activities: welcoming clients and selling books on the one hand; sorting out, labelling, and dispatching books on shelves on the other hand. I additionally have to answer e-mails, since I am also responsible for book reservations. The most interesting part resides in speaking to clients about books which they really appreciate, learning about these books, as well as discovering little treasures while sorting books out.

Perhaps we should go back in time a little: why did you choose English as an academic branch?

I knew pretty soon that I wanted to study, but I did not know what to choose, because I was interested in many fields, including law, medicine and literature. However, since at school my capacities for science were rather limited, it made more sense to choose literature. I chose English because I liked the language and I was fascinated with medieval English literature and the related culture.

What were your favourite subjects of study?

Medieval and post-colonial literature.

In what way does your degree in English relate to/influence your present occupation?

It turns out that my degree in English is related to my present activity in a number of ways. The bookshop sells books in English and translated works originally written in English, and some customers are happy if they can be advised in their own language. Knowing authors and their works is also helpful at the moment of deciding whether I should buy a book or not, whether it will be easy to sell.

How do you see your professional future? Do you view your current job as only temporary?

This job is clearly temporary. I consider it rather as a student job. I applied for it because I needed something to live on, while I was looking for my first "real" job. Even though it is temporary, I'm glad I have the opportunity to work here, while enjoying a good atmosphere with friendly colleagues, and spending all day among books, which are a real passion of mine.

Every job has its virtues and its vices. What do you think are the advantages of your present job? Any particular aspects you dislike about it?

The advantages are the low amount of stress, the friendly atmosphere and colleagues, the opportunity to express my personality at work, and a great freedom in the way in which I carry out my work. Furthermore, I work part-time: I thus have enough time to think about my personal projects. The aspects I dislike are the low income



and the lack of promotion or career development with the company.

What are the transferable skills one learns during one's studies at the English Department?

In my opinion, the "soft skills" one learns in the English Department are finding one's way through the administrative paths of the University, and dealing with one's work on one's own. Being able to organise one's work so as to meet deadlines and prepare for exams, being responsible for one's work, and leading a research project alone are all skills which students of English must learn. Being curious and acute while reading and looking for correct information are also important attributes one refines during one's studies.

Would you say that studies at the Faculty of Letters and at the English

Department qualify students for a wide range of careers? If so, does such freedom present a negative counterpart?

Studies at the Faculty of Letters obviously open many doors towards various professional possibilities. Nevertheless, these possibilities (apart from teaching and journalism) are not precisely defined: this diversity may be misleading to some undecided students.

Any particular message you would like to send to students and readers of NOTED?

Thank you for your interest, and good luck with your studies and future professional life!

Thank you very much for the interview, Evelyne.

This interview was conducted by e-mail.

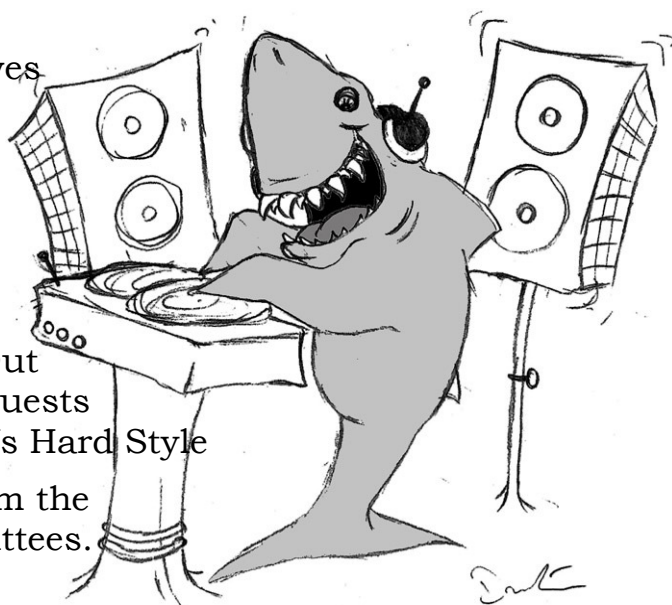


Interdepartmental Party

English – Spanish – French – History of Art



- Location:** Le Bateau Genève
Quai Marchand des Eaux-Vives
- Date/time:** Saturday 28/02/2009
19:00 – 04:00
- Prices:** 5.- (tickets are pre-sold and not available at the Bateau!)
- Music:** DJs C-Rex & Jack McOck
19:00-21:00 Ambient/Chill Out
21:00-02:00 All Styles w/Requests
02:00-04:00 Drum 'N' Bass Vs Hard Style
- Info:** Tickets can be purchased from the respective department committees.
The party is open to all.
- Contact:** Dominic Réamonn: 078 / 684 15 64



Theatre



Barbe à Papa Steps Forward

by Tania Gentet Ganose

“From the start it has been the theatre’s business to entertain people... it needs no other passport than fun” (Bertolt Brecht, *A Short Organum for the Theatre*, 1949). Such is this year’s motto of the Barbe à Papa theatre group.

Barbe à Papa has been under new management since September 2008. Sophie Badoux and I have replaced Nicholas Weeks as joint directors of the English Department’s theatre troupe. The role of director naturally involves great responsibility, whether material (in the renting and maintenance of the rehearsal space), or organisational (in the preparation of the workshops).

In addition to this, we are now four actors richer than we were last year, reaching a total of nine highly motivated amateur thespians. The start of the academic year was met with high levels of interest in the English Department’s theatre workshop. New members have come to fill the ranks of the troupe, not only from the English Department, but also from other

faculties. With no fewer than nine actors, Barbe à Papa is now enriched with a great variety of people, backgrounds and ideas. We are proud to boast members from nearly every corner of the globe: from the exotic lands of Thailand and Malaysia to the spice-filled realms of Turkey and Algeria; from the rolling hills of Croatia to the frozen fjords of Norway; from the snow-topped peaks of Switzerland and France to the orange blossoms of Spain and the diverse terrains of Uruguay. However, despite this cultural and linguistic assortment, which mixes Arabic, French, German, Malay, Spanish, Thai and Turkish, we are all united by the English language and its theatrical wealth. What is more, we are proud to have among us not only actors, but also musicians, dancers, artists and athletes.

Barbe à Papa takes a specific approach to theatre, developing skills which are useful not only in the theatre, but also in everyday life.



Through theatrical games and text work, we try to develop oral and postural skills. On the one hand, voice work enables students to improve in their communication, whether towards another individual or towards a group. On the other, body and space work help improve one's posture, yet again facilitating one's interaction with others. We also try to relate the theatre workshop to the academic classroom through the use of English literature, be it poetry, prose or drama.

This year's show will consist of a series of funny sketches from different English texts of different periods, from Jane Austen, Samuel Beckett, Oscar Wilde and George Bernard Shaw. These extracts are all linked by the fact that they are humorous in one way or another. Aside from their comic value, the extracts all form part of the greater theme of parties. Moreover, not only do the texts re-enact picnic parties, tea parties, and balls, but the show is, in itself, organised as a dinner party; with

cocktails, starters, main courses and desserts.

Coming up with this theme was the trickiest part. Although we had the general idea that we wanted to perform something funny, it was only thanks to the invaluable help of Valerie Fehlbaum that we managed to construct the show. After having described our general ideas, Dr. Fehlbaum came up with a possible theme – parties – which we immediately fell in love with. We have been building on this theme ever since. In the meantime, actors, as well as directors, have been getting rather excited about the different aspects of putting on a show. The first challenge is finding a way to combine text and movement in a new way. We want to try to make the show as varied as possible, appealing to the widest possible audience. We want people to be curious about our concoction. Hopefully, this will encourage as many people as possible to come to our show. →



The most exciting aspect of putting a show together is the moment when you see a text come to life through the combination of performance, costumes, lighting and props. Each actor starts with a few sheets of paper with his/her lines. Little by little, word by word, the text starts to develop into something much greater than a few words on a page. Through the process of trial and error, each actor gives birth to something that they can touch, see, smell, taste and hear. This creation finally breathes its first breath on the day of the show, when the audience and the actors simultaneously witness the rebirth of words written long ago. The Barbe à Papa troupe looks forward to sharing this special moment with you at our forthcoming show.

The following are comments received from some of the actors in the Barbe à Papa theatre group:

Nadim (1st year BA student in SES):

The theatre workshop feels like a breath of fresh air. We are here because we want to be here, and there is no sense of obligation. Each of us is free to give his/her own opinion and share his/her mind with others.

Kristijan (1st year MA student in English):

For me, theatre is a social activity above everything else. It is mostly about getting to know others. It is a form of social networking that

helps you make friends with people you may never have met.

Anne (3rd year BA student in English):

Thanks to the theatre group, students have a greater sense of belonging to the English Department and feel more integrated. Theatre puts you in a good mood and gives you greater ease when talking to people. It is challenging to think about the show at the end but I am looking forward to it. The fact that students manage everything makes a nice change.

Evren (1st year MA student in English):

Theatre is very fulfilling. It gives me a sense of accomplishment.

Marisa (1st year BA student in English):

As a new student, coming to theatre workshops gives me more confidence to speak in class. I feel included in a group that helps me with my classes.

Dimitri (2nd year BA student in English):

This year is my first experience in acting, and my expectations have been fulfilled. The group is strong and I am proud to be part of it.

Knowing what takes place during the workshops and having read the impressions of the actors, we hope to see many of you at our show. Enjoy our menu on the following page, a 'mise en bouche' of the spectacle to come.



Barbe-à-Papa
Geneva University's English Theatre Group presents...

An Ideal Party

The 4th of April 2009 at 20:00
and
The 5th of April 2009 at 17:00

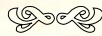
Aula de l'école des Grottes
Rue Eugène Empeyta 5-7
1202 Genève

You are cordially invited to a theatrical dinner consisting of
culinary extracts from the following plays:

Menu

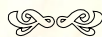
Cocktails

Waiting for Godot by Samuel Beckett



Starter

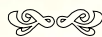
The Importance of Being Earnest by Oscar Wilde



Main Courses

An Ideal Husband by Oscar Wilde

Pygmalion by George Bernard Shaw



Dessert

Pride and Prejudice by Jane Austen

The Crew is composed of:

Sophie Badoux, Tania Gentet-Ganose, Alex Gjerpe, Marisa Jotikasthira, Evren Kiefer,
Kristijan Marinkovic, Dimitri Monnin-Gillot and Anne Tournier.



Shakespeare in Trouble

Bremer Shakespeare Company, Renaissance Theater Berlin, 22 August 2008
by Kareen Klein

"So what's this play about?" – "Well, it's just like *Shakespeare in Love*, only that he's not in love, but in trouble." I didn't have a clue, really, but Shakespeare sells, and I'm an eager buyer, so off we went to see a play with this intriguing title, put on by the renowned "Bremer Shakespeare Company" for its twentieth anniversary season.



'Will Shake'

We start out by seeing *Richard III* – exaggerated movements, pathos, cries for horses, the usual... Then the scene switches and we find ourselves in the midst of the Lord Chamberlain's Men's curtain call.

Oddly (and historically inaccurate) enough, Queen Elizabeth herself is among the spectators and converses on stage with Burbage, Will Kempe & Co. During this conversation, Robert Armin has the unfortunate idea of warning Her Majesty about Essex's plans of rebellion (the program tells us that the scene is set in 1601). Burbage silences him with a blow which results in poor Armin wearing a bandaged mouth for most of the play – unable to speak. With this impediment, the actor proved the funniest amongst the group, for example, when he yet again tried to persuade the Queen that Essex is planning to assassinate her – with a string of mimed deaths, from hanging, to stabbing, to poisoning.

As the plot around Shakespeare & Co. thickens, the play adds another layer: in the middle of a monologue, the light just having adjusted itself to the gloomy mood, Shakespeare suddenly asks "Why is it so dark in here?" and a voice from offstage tells him that there is a spotlight provided for him, if he would just step forward. We thus have the play (e. g. *Richard III*, but later also *Richard II*) within the play (the Lord Chamberlain's Men rehearsing) within the play (a modern group of players rehearsing a play about Shakespeare) – very Shakespearean indeed. We learn that we are witnessing the dress rehearsal of a rather chaotic group of actors who, as the Lord Chamberlain's Men, have plenty of conflict material to disrupt the play again and again.

Within the second layered play (bear with me), two new members



appear to join the Lord Chamberlain's Men. Both are women disguised as men. One of them is Judith, Shakespeare's sister (check *A Room of One's Own* to see where she came from) who takes over the female roles with considerable success, and the other is the Queen herself, who works backstage, calling herself "Crowns". Quite appropriately, the mute Armin is the only one to see through them at first sight.



Crowns, aka Queen Elizabeth: All the world's a stage – and it needs to be cleaned!

Let me spare you the rest of the machinations of the plot and only add some glimpses thereof: Will Kempe's attempts to persuade Shakespeare (whom he calls "Shake") to write a

clown figure into *Hamlet*, Essex asking the players to perform *Richard II*, Burbage falling in love with Judith (still believing her to be a boy, of course), many glimpses of other Shakespearean plays, and, at the end, Robert Armin's taking over as the new kind of witty clown, replacing the old slap-stick-below-the-belt-jig-Kempe – who goes off on his famous dance from London to Norwich.

There were in-jokes for the multitude (Shakespeare writing "2br2b" on one of the columns of the Globe, then crossing out the second "2b") and some finer ones (such as Shakespeare being wounded by Burbage during a duel and then asking Judith why she came between them, causing this injury). But, to the great delight of the audience, the bard and his plays were not spared either: Kempe provided a jig-version of *Hamlet*, where the protagonist's lines were mainly "blablablablabla," and then reproached Shakespeare: "People come to see your plays only to be cured of insomnia!" Be that as it may, I certainly did not fall asleep while watching Shakespeare getting into and back out of trouble.



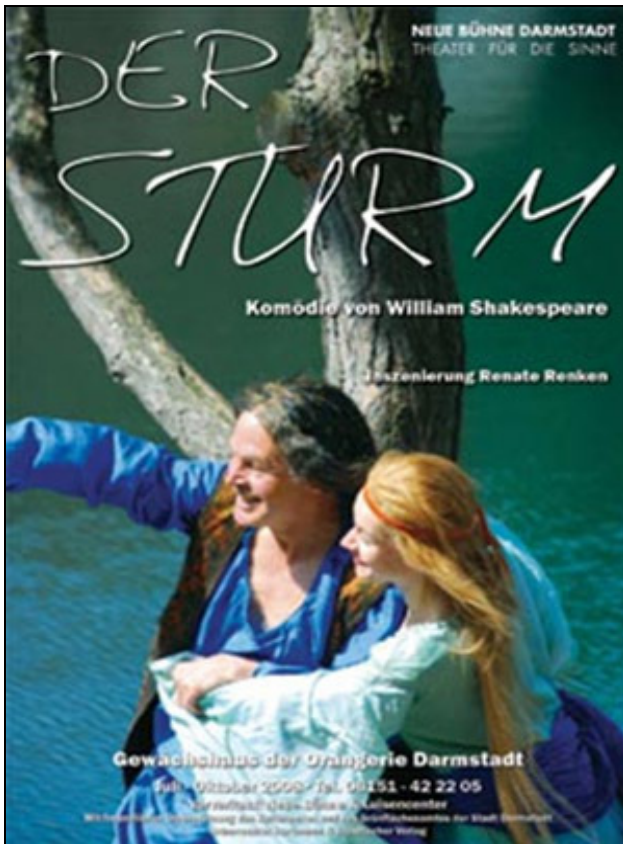
The Boys



The Tempest by William Shakespeare

16 August 2008, Neue Bühne Darmstadt

By Karen Klein



Flier with Prospero and Miranda

To make a theatre visit an event in itself is always a good idea. One possibility is to lure prospective spectators with food. The “Neue Bühne Darmstadt” thus welcomed its audience into the greenhouse of the “Orangerie” of the Castle of Darmstadt one hour before the performance started. Seated at little tables, one could order food from a menu containing, for example, a dessert called “Miranda” (vanilla cream with fruits) or a mixed salad (“the little tempest”) or a cheese platter entitled “cheese thunder”. The actors not only served the food, but they did so in character. Stephano was thus slightly drunk, and Trinculo, in this interpretation, more than slightly camp. Ariel, clad in yellow shreds, with

something akin to glass-fibre-feather-dusters on its head*, was constantly on the run. The tables were decorated with little candles and the glass front of the menagerie allowed a view of the night sky as soon as it turned dark. A nice setting, completed by a couple of rocks that constituted the set. Additionally, the whole floor was completely covered in sand, through which the audience had to wade to get to their seats. An island was created, a magical setting in the middle of the beautiful castle gardens.

Unlike some other recent German Shakespeare productions (I recall reports about a production of ‘the Scottish play’** which not only included a nude cast but also a lot of theatre blood and flour being thrown around), this one was played straight. Also, none of the darker undercurrents which the text of the *The Tempest* would allow were pursued. A light summer comedy on a light summer evening, served with a light summer salad.

No thespian heights were achieved, but the actors nevertheless maintained the illusion so well that I didn’t notice that Trinculo/Sebastian and Stephano/Antonio were doubled and hence wondered why two of the main actors did not appear for the curtain call. The programme later solved the riddle.

* Note from Editor: this is not a typographical error. The actor in this production may have had male genitalia, but Shakespeare’s Ariel is neither male nor female.

** Note from Editor: the author is referring to *Macbeth*. It is bad luck to say the play’s title, hence why it is frequently referred to as ‘the Scottish play’. I will take my chances for clarity’s sake.



The audience's favourite was doubtlessly Trinculo – camp, wiggling his hips, sporting a very short motley-dress, showing a great deal of leg (“No, I didn't shave”, he explained in the interval, “my legs are naturally hairless”). He was also clutching a basket which resembled a hand bag, and – the *pièce de résistance* – a little wooden pig which he carried everywhere. The latter was possibly an allusion to the new (?) fashion of having pet dwarf-pigs instead of pet dwarf-dogs. Before the performance and during the interval, while serving drinks and desserts, Trinculo also chatted and flirted with everything that moved, to the great delight of the audience.



Trinculo and Stephano

Caliban was played by a woman, in the conventional patchwork, earth-coloured outfit, with quick, animal-like movements, cocking of the head, smacking of the lips, crouching close to the ground. Gonzalo became Gonzalia, a mothering servant to Alonso. These were the only male roles played by women, which worked quite well and

did not disturb the production as a whole.



Caliban

Prospero and Miranda's blue-hued costumes stood in stark contrast to Caliban's brown and Ariel's yellow, while the stranded Italians were all dressed in dark red and black. Miranda was presented as a very simple creature, and her curiosity and wonder at “this brave new world” of human beings was very touchingly portrayed. Quite literally so, since she kept wanting to touch the faces and garments of everyone she met, repeatedly but gently corrected by her father and fiancé.

The production used a new German translation by Frank Günther, held entirely in prose. The style was kept poetic and quite high-brow, without becoming unintelligible and while still allowing Trinculo & Co. some casual lines.

On the whole, a very pleasant evening, gentle, tasty, entertaining – with a little bit of magic and a whole lot of love ...



A Faithfull Shakespeare Next Door

by Michael Rösli

On December 9th, a curious event took place right next door, at the Théâtre de la Comédie. A middle-aged woman read 20 sonnets with musical interludes by a cellist. Nothing special? Well, how about this: the sonnets were by William Shakespeare, and the performer was none other than Marianne Faithfull. This rather peculiar tandem turned the poetry reading into a very unique experience.



Despite Faithfull's occasional reference to Shakespeare in interviews, and the fact that she played a memorable Ophelia in Tony Richardson's adaptation of *Hamlet* on a London stage in 1969 (with Anthony Hopkins as Claudius), she is not commonly associated with the English playwright and poet. You may remember much more clearly her career as a folk and rock singer of

London's swinging 60s, her long-term relationship with Mick Jagger of the Rolling Stones, her forays into the drug world that landed her on the street, and her miraculous revival initiated by the release of her album *Broken English* (1979), which shocked her previous fans with her suddenly low and rasping voice, the unchangeable result of severe laryngitis.

In turn, and apart from many other artistic merits, Shakespeare's sonnets enjoy lasting controversial status in popular reception, due to the fact that a large number of the 154 sonnets address a young man. Notably, Faithfull chose from amongst the earlier sonnets, avoiding the less ambiguous ones addressed to a 'Dark Lady' (sonnets 127-152).

Now imagine the collision of voices of these two artists, separated by roughly 400 years, each with a baggage of mythical status and dimension, in one and the same performance. Faithfull's voice booms out the opening sonnet of the event:

...And for a woman wert thou first created,
Till nature as she wrought thee fell a-doting,
And by addition me of thee defeated,
By adding one thing to my purpose nothing:
But since she pricked thee out for women's pleasure,
Mine be thy love, and thy love's use their treasure.

A true Babel of confused and blurred voices confounds the spectator. The poem, addressed by a male speaker to a young man, is performed by a female voice, though in such a raucous tone and pitch that any point of reference seems irretrievably lost. The seemingly



conventional sonnet reading by a 62-year-old woman, sitting at a quaint wooden table, nobly dressed and bespectacled, in fact harbours an explosive mix of two revolutionary minds. Their two voices on stage mingle and mangle any preconceived notion of gender and sexual preference (Faithfull declared herself bisexual in her autobiography). They are both participating in (and appropriated by) their respective cultures, speaking at once and intertwining over a gap of four centuries, both presenting witty, as well as radical, ideas, but in the guise of a most conventional form.

Anyone who has read a Shakespeare sonnet aloud knows that this is far from easy; the texts are multi-layered fabrics of discourses, negotiating themes and traditions of the sonnet genre, often with clever undertones alluding to motivations that need to be transformed. Any recital requires a lot of interpretive decisions in order to render some of these ambiguous layers. At the same time, these decisions are enhanced by the tones of voice or gestures that establish a more intimate form of communication between the reader and the audience, adding a further layer to the process of creating meaning. Faithfull's recital thus drew on an oral tradition that is resurfacing more and more these days, and her interpretation of the sonnets strongly emphasised the various forces at work in them. Although her reading was calm, she managed to bring out the cocky twists in which Shakespeare's

wit takes a step back from tradition and opens the text to different readings.

Even the instrumental interludes by Vincent Segal seemed part of the boiling mix of voices. While his cello solos alternated with the sonnets, giving the spectator some time to digest the storm of information with such a smooth and treacherously simple surface, they, at the same time, and in their own way, elaborated on the theme of interpretation. Segal's melodies were sometimes soft and cautious, sometimes agitated and hectic, picking up on and distorting themes from Faithfull's musical career. Producing sounds which seemed utterly impossible on a cello, he plucked strings, used the sonorous body of the instrument to turn out uncanny beats, and elicited sounds reminiscent of aboriginal instruments.

Nobody seems to have emerged from this unusual performance confirmed in their expectations. One part of the spectatorship may have expected a dignified recital of the work by one of the most famous and enduring authors, and instead have been drawn to the playful ways of the Sonnets. Other spectators were clearly attracted by Marianne Faithfull's iconic status; and while she entered to some enthusiastic cries and hoots, the exit of the lady and her reading glasses (carrying roses from some audience members and a huge bunch of flowers from the Comédie), was to prolonged, and uncannily conventional, applause.

To the amateurs of Shakespeare's Sonnets: the recital included the following poems, though, apart from the opening sonnet, not necessarily in this order: 20, 14, 18, 26, 27, 29, 34, 36, 40, 42, 50, 53, 54, 77, 93, 95, 96, 105, 110, 116.



Theatre Calendar for NOTED

compiled by Michael Rösli

17.02.2009	<i>Breath of Life</i> by David Hare	GEDS
03.03.2009	<i>Lost in Yonkers</i> by Neil Simons	GEDS
10.03. - 14.03.2009	Gaslight by Patrick Hamilton	GEDS
24.03.2009	<i>Dial 'M' for Murder</i> by Frederick Knott	GEDS
27.03. - 28.03.2009	[to be announced]	EDGE
14.04.2009	<i>Sweet Bird of Youth</i> by Tennessee Williams	GEDS
17-18 & 23-25.04.2009	Chess – The Musical	GAOS
28.04.2009	<i>Candida</i> by George Bernard Shaw	GEDS
19.05.2009	<i>Hobson's Choice</i> by Harold Brighouse	GEDS
02.06. - 06.06.2009	It Runs in the Family by Ray Cooney	GEDS
16.06.2009	<i>A Midsummernight's Dream (abridged)</i> by William Shakespeare	GEDS
18.06. - 20.06.2009	Cymbeline (at the Château de Prangins) by William Shakespeare	Howard Productions

Playreadings are printed in regular typeface, **full productions** are printed in **bold**. Please check the respective websites for information about venues, dates, and times:

The Geneva English Drama Society (GEDS):

www.geds.ch

Howard Productions:

www.howardprod.ch

The Geneva Amateur Operatic Society (GAOS):

www.gaos.ch



Music



What Makes a Good DJ?

by Gig-in-a-Box

The following was not overheard in a male strip club that happened to be playing very poor music at the time.

DJ Goldilocks: What makes a good DJ, methinks, is the ability to take two totally different tracks, mash them up in real time, bung on a bunch of flashy effects, no questions asked. You won't always get what you want, but then that's part of the fun!

DJ Juliette: You're crazy, forget the effects, mashing up is plenty. Finding two tracks that fit together like a contraceptive on an Italian race horse is well sufficient a plot. How or why don't matter either. So long as everything comes together in an appropriate fashion, the crowd will love you forever and study your technique indefinitely.

DJ Amidala: No, no, no, you're both going too far, young padawen (sg: padawan)! A good DJ should be a leader, a visionary. There is no right or wrong, just strong and weak. And if you're not leading, you're following.

DJ Grettel: Ach, the mix is a DJ's bread, butter and gingerbread house. Forget yourselves and those around you, and just go for the candy.

DJ Tinkerbell: But I still think there's a certain magic to just closing your eyes, and letting the music take you where it wants you to go. The places you'll see, the people you'll meet... that is the stuff of dreams.

A stranger at the bar turns to face the group.

DJ Sellout: Wrong, wrong and wrong again. As DJs, your one and only mandate is 'give the chimps what they want'. People don't care about mixes, effects and musical styles. They don't want to think. They want to have a good time. Try giving them anything else, try playing something different, and you'll just be playing yourself.

Find out more about Gig-In-A-Box at:
www.gig-in-a-box.com



Film



Interview with Pierre-Yves Jeanneret, President of the NIFFF

by Michael Rösli

Every year, Swiss cinephiles feverishly look forward to late June or early July. The reason is of course the Neuchâtel International Fantastic Film Festival (NIFFF), which attracts great crowds from all over Switzerland and adjacent countries. President Pierre-Yves Jeanneret gave NOTED an interview which offers our readers a glimpse behind the scenes of this renowned and fantastic (in both senses of the term) event, which will celebrate its tenth anniversary next year.



MR: What is your function in the Organisation of the Festival?

PYJ: The NIFFF is structured as an association and above all as the result of team work. As an event, the festival is co-directed by Anaïs Emery and Michel Vust, who take care of the purely

executive part. As president of the association, my role is rather oriented toward supervising management, particularly in terms of the global vision of the festival, its objectives and evolution.

MR: How does the NIFFF define the 'fantastic'?

PYJ: A definition of the fantastic is always difficult to establish. We decided to take a broad and diversified view of the fantastic. For cinematic work, one can depart from the difference between the films of the Lumière brothers (rather naturalistic), and those by Méliès, who grants an important role to magic and the imaginary (Méliès was a magician, by the way). To us, the fantastic derives from Méliès' cinematic work and covers all genres. It is rather an approach of reality through a more or less distorting mirror. This broad approach allows us to include a great number of works in our programme and show *films d'auteur* by directors such as Godard (*Week-End* or *Alphaville* are fantastic) or Truffaut (*Fahrenheit 451*), as well as popular films that are strongly anchored in the canon of defined genres, such as gore, horror or science-fiction.

MR: What are the geographical limits of the productions shown at the NIFFF?



PYJ: There are no limits. First and foremost, we aim at a discovery of the universality of popular genre cinema. For instance, we screened fantastic films from Nigeria, a Pakistani Dracula and a Mexican one, Philippine super-hero movies, a Malaysian zombie film, not to mention countless productions from Korea, China, Japan, India, Argentina, Finland, Sweden, Iceland... and also Switzerland. In short, the NIFFF is an invitation for a ride through the fantastic imagination of the entire world.

MR: Your program has an excellent reputation and includes masterpieces which cater for all possible tastes. How are the films for the festival selected?

PYJ: That depends. Our retrospectives mostly emerged from research work coordinated by Anaïs Emery, our artistic director, on the basis of a specific theme. We try to go beyond the obvious, and to uncover rare filmic material, cult films, or works that illustrate the themes of our retrospectives in an original way.

As for the competitions, we have a

commission charged with the selection of a body of works among all the films submitted. In addition to that, we are active participants in a certain number of markets – such as those of Berlin or Cannes – and festivals – like those of Brussels, Udine and Sitges – which permit us to see new filmic works and to establish the necessary contacts for projecting them in Neuchâtel.

MR: Does a festival like the NIFFF have functions in the domain of cinema beyond offering a large public the opportunity to discover rare and sometimes inaccessible filmic treasures?

PYJ: The festival is a meeting point, so to speak. A meeting point for creators and the public, but also among creators themselves. In parallel to the festival, we also organise a symposium called 'Imaging the Future', which is dedicated to the creation of digital imagery and technical evolutions in the field. In 2008, we had the great pleasure of welcoming Syd Mead, one of the most influential designers, who worked on films such as *Tron* and *Blade Runner*. →



Pierre-Yves Jeanneret, Catherine Montalto (president of the AANIFFF)
and Stuart Gordon (director of *Re-Animator*, *Dagon*, *Edmond*)



MR: Do you already know what the sections and/or retrospectives of the next edition are going to be?

PYJ: We are working on it, but shush! This is still top secret for the time being. But worry not, as always, the festival-goers will have a vast choice between the international feature film competition, one dedicated to Asian cinema, the Swiss as well as European short film competitions, retrospectives and a special programme for open air cinema.

Currently, we are brooding over various concepts ... but also about financing the event, which is always a delicate organisational stage. A first glimpse at the 2009 festival programme will be available in early spring. Anybody who is curious can sign up for the NIFFF newsletter at www.niff.ch.



Autograph session with John Howe

MR: Who will be among the special guests of the 2009 edition, or who would you invite, if you had free choice?

PYJ: Unfortunately, this, too, is top secret for the moment. Our list of special guests depends largely on the shooting schedules and agendas of the artists. The NIFFF has already had the honour of welcoming numerous key figures of the fantastic cinema scene. To mention but a few, we've been joined by Ray Harryhausen, Terry Gilliam, Dario Argento, Roger Corman, Tobe Hooper, Park Chan Wook, George Romero, John Landis, Joe Dante, Kiyoshi Kurosawa...

Personally, I dream of meeting John Carpenter, Sam Raimi, or Peter Jackson at the festival.

MR: What was it like meeting the directors invited to the NIFFF?

PYJ: These are always highly intense moments. For a great fan like me, such encounters are absolutely amazing. Since my interest for the genre developed through films such as *Gremlins* (Joe Dante), *Clash of the Titans* (stop-motion special effects by Ray Harryhausen), *Dawn of the Dead* (George Romero), *Brazil* (Terry Gilliam) or *Re-Animator* (Stuart Gordon), inviting their directors to Neuchâtel, showing them the surrounding area and permitting the public to meet them is an extraordinary experience. Moreover, the NIFFF takes place in a rather relaxed ambiance, which allows spectators to easily approach the special guests after the screenings and engage in informal discussions over a drink.

In 2003, we welcomed Ray Harryhausen, the ingenious special-effects creator of *Jason and the Argonauts* and specialist of image-by-image animation. He was accompanied by his dinosaurs and the miniature skeletons, carefully packed in their little coffins.



Ray Harryhausen and his creations

MR: Are there any special programmes you would like to propose for a future edition of the festival?



We are currently contemplating several ideas. It's all a question of timing and budget. However, as a great fan of John Carpenter's (for me, *The Thing* is among the greatest fantastic films of all time), I'm dreaming of welcoming him for a retrospective or a *carte blanche*.

MR: In 2010, the NIFFF will celebrate its tenth anniversary. Are you planning any special events to mark the occasion?

PYJ: Of course, even if it's still too early to talk about it. We certainly intend to

celebrate this event with an edition worthy of the occasion. With the help of the *association des amis du NIFFF* (AANIFFF), we will establish a honorary committee, composed of people whose role will be that of ambassadors of the NIFFF.

The next NIFFF edition: 30.06 – 05.07.2009
For more information: www.niff.ch



Film Classics – Quiz

by Annick Challet

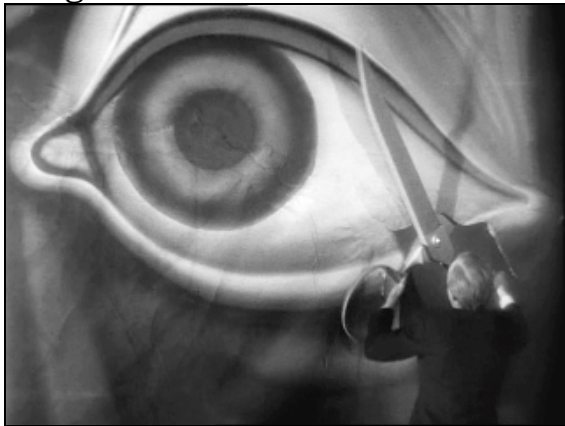
- 1) Salvador Dalí is famous for his collaboration with Luis Buñuel on *Un Chien Andalou*, but which other famous director sought his help to design a number of sequences in his 1945 movie?
- 2) “We will need a bigger boat,” says who in which movie?
- 3) Film critic John Grierson coined the term “documentary” after seeing the second version of this film.
- 4) Producer David O. Selznick used the *OED* to argue that the word “damn” used in this film was not obscene and should not be censored.
- 5) *Scarface* by Brian de Palma (1984) is a remake of Howard Hawks’ 1932 version. Al Capone was well aware of the fact that the main protagonist, Tony Camonte, was modeled after him and requested to see the film before the premiere. What was Hawks’ answer?
- 6) Before the days of computer-generated imagery, making an animated movie was a real challenge that required patience and precision. The skeleton battle in *Jason and the Argonauts* (Donald Chaffey, 1963) is a good example of the fluidity of movement that could be achieved with stop-motion animation. Who designed the visual effects for this film and developed stop-motion into an art?
- 7) Alfred Hitchcock’s *Rope* (1948) appears to be made of one single tracking shot. Because of technical limitations — at the time, the maximum duration for a 35 mm shot was 10 minutes — Hitchcock had to find a stratagem to create this illusion. 54 years later, which director filmed his movie in one single take thanks to digital technology?
- 8) *Nosferatu*, *Dracula*, *Interview with the Vampire*, etc.: famous vampires are often male figures corrupting young women, but in which black and white movie is the vampire an old woman?
- 9) Which film released in 1952 features several shots of clocks to remind the viewer that the film was shot in real-time?
- 10) Which 1992 movie is a tribute to Hitchcock’s *Vertigo* (1958)?

Solutions on next page



Solutions to the Film Quiz (previous page)

- 1) A true art connoisseur, Alfred Hitchcock asked Salvador Dalí to design the dream sequences in *Spellbound*. Although many of the scenes designed by Dalí had to be cut, the remaining dream sequence is easily recognizable as an emanation from his surrealist imagination.



- 2) Prof. Martin Brody, played by Roy Scheider, in *Jaws* (Steven Spielberg, 1975). *Jaws* was “the first movie to crack the hundred-million dollar mark [at the box-office] and spawned the biggest merchandizing frenzy since the Davy Crockett fad of the mid 1950s” (Friedman 161).
- 3) *Nanouk of the North* by Robert J. Flaherty came out in 1922 and soon came to be considered the precursor of the “cinéma-vérité” trend. Flaherty’s film caused a great controversy regarding its authenticity because of certain changes Flaherty made: for example, he shows Nanouk using harpoons, which he deemed more ‘authentic’, when the latter was actually using a gun to hunt for food.

- 4) “Frankly my dear, I don’t give a damn!” is the line that started the whole controversy around *Gone with the Wind* (Victor Fleming, 1939). Censor William Hays was difficult to convince, but he considered the *OED* authoritative enough to drop the charges: Selznick was allowed to keep Rhet Butler’s line against payment of a fine. Fleming’s movie is also famous because it was the first film shot in Technicolor.

- 5) Howard Hawks answered that the only thing Capone had to do to see the movie was to buy a ticket. Like many filmmakers of his generation, Hawks had problems with the Hays office who found the original ending too immoral: Camonte’s murder by another gang was seen as justifying violence. None of the alternative endings requested by the censors met their requirements, and Hawks finally released the movie without their approval. The only compromise he made was to add a subtitle, “the shame of a nation”, to show that his film was not meant to celebrate violence.



- 6) Merriam C. Cooper's *King Kong* (1933) started Ray Harryhausen's career as visual effects designer. Fascinated by the effects used in the film, he started to make his own animated movies in his parents' garage, cutting up his mother's fur coat to make mammoths and other beasts.



- 7) Hitchcock used close-ups of characters, following them from one shot to the next, to hide the cuts. Thanks to digital technology, Aleksandr Sokurov did not have to worry about this particular aspect in his film, *The Russian Ark*. Instead, he focused on directing the 2,000 actors in this film spanning more than 200 years of history and shot inside the Hermitage Museum in St. Petersburg.
- 8) Carl Theodor Dreyer's *Vampyr* (1932) is based on Sheridan Le Fanu's novella *Carmilla*. Dreyer

proved an extremely innovative filmmaker when it came to creating certain atmospheres. In *Vampyr*, the dreamlike images were achieved by exposing the film to light prior to shooting. The funeral scene is famous for its perspective: it is filmed from a coffin, from the dead person's point of view.

- 9) The action of *High Noon* by Fred Zinnemann takes place between 10:35 and 12:15. The film was originally planned to match the duration of the action, but was re-edited because it lacked rhythm.
- 10) In *Basic Instinct*, not only did Paul Verhoeven use the same film locations as Hitchcock; he also had dresses designed especially for the movie to match the outfits worn by Kim Novak in *Vertigo*, thereby transforming Sharon Stone into the perfect Hitchcockian heroine: a very elegant, deadly blonde.



Sources:

Douin, Jean-Luc. *Dictionnaire de la censure au cinéma*. Paris: PUF, 1998.
Friedman, Lester D. *Citizen Spielberg*. Urbana; Chicago: U of Illinois P, 2006.
The Internet Movie Database. 7 December 2008. www.imdb.com



Upcoming Events, Cycles, and Festivals

compiled by Michael Rösli

Geneva:

- 19.01. – 06.04.2009 **Cinéclub Universitaire: Cinéma Helvetica**
www.a-c.ch/index.php?id_production=102
- 30.01. – 08.02.2009 **Black Movie**
www.blackmovie.ch
- 19.02. – 14.05.2009 **Our English Department Film Cycle**
www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/vie/film.html
- 07.03. – 16.03.2009 **Festival international du film sur les droits humains**
www.fifdh.org
- 20.04. – 29.06.2009 **Cinéclub Universitaire: Agnès Varda**
www.a-c.ch/index.php?id_production=102

Switzerland:

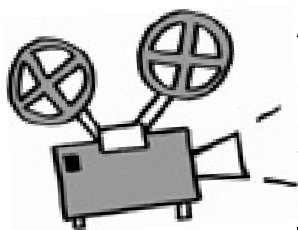
- 19.02. – 21.02.2009 **Lichtspieltage Winterthur** Winterthur
www.lichtspieltage.ch
- 11.03. – 15.03.2009 **Schweizer Jugendfilmtage** Zürich
www.jugendfilmtage.ch
- 14.03. – 21.03.2009 **Festival International de Film de Fribourg** Fribourg
www.fiff.ch
- 09.04. – 12.04.2009 **Les étranges nuits du cinéma** La Chaux-de-Fonds
www.2300plan9.com
- 23.04. – 29.04.2009 **Visions du réel** Nyon
www.visionsdureel.ch
- 29.04. – 06.05.2009 **Pink Apple** (gay/lesbian film festival) Zürich
www.pinkapple.ch
- 19.06. – 20.06.2009 **Time Film Festival** (short films) Lausanne
www.timefilmfestival.ch
- 30.06. – 05.07.2009 **International Fantastic Film Festival** Neuchâtel
www.niff.ch (See Interview about the NIFFF, p. 36)
- 05.08. – 15.08.2009 **Festival del Film Locarno** Locarno
www.pardo.ch



The Department's Spring Film Cycle

compiled by Valerie Fehlbaum and Michael Röösl

- Schedule:** Our films are screened every Thursday evening
Place: Room B112 at Uni-Bastions
Time: 19h15
Who? All students of the English Department are welcome!



This programme is also displayed on the notice boards of the and it is available online on our departmental website, Philosophes and of the English Department at the Comédie together with more detailed information about the film cycle:

<http://www.unige.ch/lettres/angle/activites/film.html>

Date:	Film Title:	Director:
THU Feb. 19, 2009	Oliver Twist (1948)	David Lean
THU Feb. 26, 2009	Rear Window (1954)	Alfred Hitchcock
THU Mar.05, 2009	Short Film Night Twelve short films of various origins and genres.	[various directors]
THU Mar.12, 2009	Blowup (1966)	M. Antonioni
THU Mar.19, 2009	Hamlet (2000)	Michael Almereyda
THU Mar.26, 2009	2001: A Space Odyssey (1968)	Stanley Kubrick
THU Apr. 02, 2009	As You Like It (2006)	Kenneth Branagh
EASTER BREAK		
THU Apr. 23, 2009	The Winter's Tale (1998/99) Performed by the Royal Shakespeare Company.	Gregory Doran
THU Apr. 30, 2009	Death in Venice (1971)	Luchino Visconti
THU May.07, 2009	Mulholland Dr. (2001)	David Lynch
THU May.14, 2009	Great Expectations (1946)	David Lean
THU May.21, 2009	The Pervert's Guide to Cinema (2006) A cinema-essay by and with Slavoj Žižek.	Sophie Fiennes



Creative Writing



The Twelve-Layer Torte

by Alexandra Bishko

Saturday, July 16. Sun filtered through the polyester curtains, magnifying the dust floating in the air. The dust intensified the filmy effect of the curtains, so the light reaching Sonia's eyes was dull. Although the farmhouse had more than enough space – it had housed all of her five children growing up, and a record eleven grandchildren for Christmas a few years back, just before the last was born – Sonia's bedroom was small, and she felt stifled by the sun, dust, and summer heat. Before she had moved a muscle, she knew she had gotten up on the wrong side of the bed.

When Sonia turned eighty-five in December her children and grandchildren gave her a large party: a corsage, lunch at the locally famous Italian restaurant, a limousine to take her and several other family members back and forth, a gold cross on a dainty chain, a green leather handbag, and countless drawings and cards and little offerings from the grandchildren. What she remembered was feeling isolated: alone surrounded by everyone else. Of course that could have had to do with her hearing problem. In loud places she couldn't follow conversations. She was sitting at the head of the table when it dawned on her that she was an eighty-five-year-old Ukrainian eating Italian food, and that the only cooking legacies

she had left so far were all-American apple pie and cupcakes. Sonia realized that not one of her children or grandchildren knew how delicately to roll the casing for a cabbage roll, not one could tell her the correct ratio of cheese to potato necessary for *pyrohy*, and most certainly of all, not one, not one, was familiar with the nuances of making a twelve-layer *torte*. All of her children could speak Ukrainian, and most of the grandchildren knew at least “good night,” “good morning” and “thank you.” They could decorate *Pysanky* – Easter eggs – using the traditional method of melted wax and successive layers of dye, even if most of the grandchildren preferred drawing rabbits and flowers instead of the traditional motifs of wheat and intricate geometric patterns. Her daughters knew some basic embroidery. Her sons donated regularly to the Ukrainian Catholic church. But not one knew how to cook. Sonia felt this keenly: a void left by a task unfulfilled.

Since her birthday, a knot of dissatisfaction had been growing in her stomach, so that everything seemed to get on her nerves. Especially anything having to do with food. Her son Mark, and his family visited for a week in February, and the boys refused to eat anything but Fruit Loops and hamburger patties. Her daughter Oksana and her



children came by one weekend not long after that and the girls turned up their noses at *borscht*. Although they loved *pyrohy*, potato-filled dumplings, Sonia found that small comfort. She went up to Toronto to stay with her other daughter, Irene, and realized that Irene had no idea how to make the traditional Easter bread, *Babka*, much less any of the other components of a traditional Ukrainian Easter meal: *holubtsi* (cabbage rolls), *kapusta* (sauerkraut and peas), or *borscht*, the beet soup her sons called “Ukrainian life-blood.” Forget the twelve-layer torte, reserved for the most special occasions, such as weddings, funerals, and Christmas: a recipe requiring two dozen eggs, eight cups of ground walnuts and more sugar and butter than anyone cared to keep track of. What made it a supreme challenge was that after baking, the cakes had to be sliced thinly and perfectly so that the twelve layers sat parallel and unbroken. The alternating fillings of orange jam and chocolate cream had to be applied in just the right quantity and consistency so as not to gather cake crumbs when spread. The beauty of a torte lay in the perfection of the layers once exposed.

That July morning, Sonia bustled out of bed to the phone. She called her oldest daughter, Oksana.

“Mama, it’s 7 a.m.”

“Listen. There are five weeks between now and the family reunion in August. Nobody in this family knows how to cook. You have to come. You, me, Irene, and the grandchildren. Come stay for a week before the reunion.”

Sonia knew this was unreasonable. The grandchildren always had summer camp or sports, and of course their parents were tied down at work. Oksana started to confirm this. “Mom, come on, you know that Ana and Valya are signed up for riding, John has a ton of work at the office and—”

“But aside from me, there’s no one else to ... I mean, when I go...there’ll be no one left to...”

Oksana could hear the distress in her mother’s voice.

Years earlier, when Oksana left for college, her mother had confided in her

that for the first time she felt “old.” Since then, Oksana had been particularly sensitive to comments about “going” and “without me.” Perhaps also because she was the oldest, she thought most about the time when her mother would not be there.

“OK Mama, I’ll talk to the others. I’m sure we can pull something together.”

And they did. On August 14, five days before the annual Kryschenko family reunion, Sonia, her two daughters, three sons, and twelve grandchildren, ranging in age from two to eighteen, gathered at the farmhouse in upstate New York.

It had been a particularly hot and humid summer, even if seventy-five percent humidity on a July day was considered normal. The weather forecasters on Channel 13 kept referring to “another scorcher” and “a day to keep the AC on.” One thing was for sure, the continual humidity gave rise to violent thunderstorms: heavy rains which had flooded part of her vegetable garden and damaged half of this year’s peas.

The first arrival was announced by the slamming of car doors, gleeful screeching of “Baba!!!” and the light thudding of feet through grass as grandchildren ran to find their grandmother. Following Oksana’s family came Irene, then her sons Igor, John, Mark and their broods, the parade of arrivals continuing until nine that night, a small group of cars multiplying in the grass behind the chicken coop.

Sonia’s two daughters-in-law would take care of the six grandchildren who were too little to cook. At Sonia’s there was never a lack of things to do: swimming at the lake, picking blueberries, or walking in the woods behind the house.

Igor, John, and Mark would spend the next few days cleaning the garage. Their father’s passion for tools had filled it to the brim. Sonia’s husband had been an architect in Ukraine, but that was before the war. Although he never found work as an architect after emigrating, he retained his passion for building and for carpentry. It was up to the sons now to sort through their father’s treasures, →



and, most importantly, to find the planks their father had made to fit over the tops of the picnic tables as extensions. If all went the Ukrainian way, there would be a lot of eating going on.

Sonia had no doubt of that, especially with such a full kitchen. Oksana, her daughters Anya and Valya; Irene, her children Anastasia and Cyril; John's wife Eliza and their two sons Stephen and Nikolai, made nine apprentices in all.

She decided to cook five dishes and to devote a day to each. They would move from easy to difficult: from *borscht* (soup was foolproof), to *pyrohy* (this way everyone could practice filling and dough-pinching techniques), to *pampushki* (the jam-filled donuts that everyone loved), to *holuptsi* (requiring a more delicate touch) and finally the torte (which required the most patience and care of all). With nine cooks, there would be more than enough food to stock up for the reunion weekend.

Sonia had never given cooking lessons before, but the first day proved successful. Cutting vegetables and making broth was not difficult, and everyone was able to follow along. On *pyrohy* day, they encountered a small hang-up when Stephen asked his grandmother how she knew how much flour, cheese, and potatoes to use. Sonia paused in helping ten-year-old Anya to mix the dough, which was getting harder to stir as it got closer to being ready.

"I don't have any recipes. I just know."

"Yeah, but like if you want to make a little or a lot. How do you know how much to use?"

Sonia put one hand on a wide hip and rested the other on the back of Anya's chair. She was breathing hard from the heat and from moving to and fro between her apprentices; perspiration beaded on her upper lip.

"Well, I never make a little. Always a lot. Easy." She looked down at Anya, who was just the right height to lean her head against her grandmother's soft middle. Sonia looked up again and laughed, showing her strong, corn niblet teeth.

Anastasia looked skeptical. She was on the verge of saying that she'd take

notes, but was drowned out by a cry from the *spisharka*.

"Look at all these potatoes, you gotta be kiddin' me! Peelin' and mashin' potatoes – by *hand*? Don't you have any instant mix?"

Sonia blanched. She had never considered using anything other than real potatoes. She could excuse Eliza since she wasn't Ukrainian, but just to prove her point, Eliza went out to buy some. She returned forty-five minutes later and continued making her *pyrohy* with the mix. Sonia eyed them. Maybe instant potatoes could work, she didn't know. But in any case she resolved to keep that batch separate from the real ones.

After that, each day seemed to present a challenge. The *pampushki* donuts fell apart during boiling, either because inexperienced hands hadn't pinched them well, or because they had over-filled them with jam.

"Don't worry, Ma," said Oksana. "The dough cooked just fine. We can spread some jam on them before they're served and they'll be just as good."

Sonia shook her head and sighed.

On *holupsti* day, Cyril complained about the "stinky" cabbage, refused to touch it, and spent the rest of the day kicking a football. Anastasia followed him not long after that – she wanted to work on her tan before going back to school in a couple of weeks. Nikolai, seeing his cousins get out of stuffing ground meat into cabbage leaves, announced he was tired of eating Ukrainian food and demanded pizza and hot dogs.

If Sonia was discouraged, she didn't show it. Maybe she didn't even know it. At least not until she walked into the storage room off the kitchen late that fourth day and stepped into something soft and slippery. She stopped bustling and looked down. A *pyrohy*? She turned on the light at the risk of attracting mosquitoes through the holes in the window screen. Everyone else was out back getting ready for the barbeque her sons were cooking that night. Her eyes fell on a sight that made her stomach drop. She had stored the uncooked



pyrohy on plastic platters to keep them cool here. The platters had been piled with dozens of *pyrohy* but were now turned over and aside from the one she had stepped on, there weren't very many left the floor. The platters hadn't simply been knocked over. She approached the small swinging door that led outside. The small hook at the top was unlatched. Alright, so someone had forgotten to re-latch the door. But she was genuinely at a loss to explain the *pyrohy*.

"Mama, we're just about ready to eat."

Sonia heard John coming by the side of the house, then she felt him over her shoulder. "What the..."

"I put them here to stay cool before we cook them tomorrow —" Sonia's explanation broke off and there was a pause.

"Ohhh... I *knew* that dog was up to no good."

"What?" Sofia knew he was referring to the neighbor's dog. Now she remembered that she, too, had seen it cross the yard earlier that afternoon. But it was always getting loose. She hadn't thought anything of it.

"You know, I saw it hanging around and I chased it away..."

Together they looked down at the mess. The unlatched swinging door... *pyrohy* on platters... not hard for a dog snuffing around to get into. Sonia didn't know whether to laugh or cry, thinking of the state of the dog after eating more than four dozen *pyrohy*, yet knowing that the only possible back-ups for the weekend were Eliza's, which Sonia had frozen immediately intending to send her home with. It was too late to make more; tomorrow they needed to concentrate on the torte.

Later that night, they had a bonfire out back. But Sonia took part in all this with a feeling of increased irritation and failure – did anybody else feel it, too? This time it wasn't so easy to make an excuse for feeling left out of it all – Sonia's hearing clearly was not the issue.

"What is it?" Sonia asked herself. Fed up and anxious about the next day – the last day of cooking – Sonia left the festivities and headed toward the house.

Oksana noticed her leave, and signalled Irene. They followed their mother inside.

"Mama, what's wrong? Have we tired you out? Is it the heat?" Oksana's questions streamed together.

Sonia shook her head and shrugged her shoulders as frustration rose in her chest. She had no words, only a jumble of feelings.

"Is it the cooking? The kids love it, I know..." Irene's voice trailed off.

"Mama, listen. Everything's been great. You're being hard on yourself. Give everyone another day."

"Things always look darker at night," Irene teased gently. "Get a good night's sleep and we'll all dive in tomorrow."

In spite of her daughters' words, Sonia went to bed feeling dissatisfied and apprehensive. The heat and humidity made for difficult sleeping, so she flipped and flopped until four-thirty, listening to the rumble of thunder in the distance. Finally, she went into the kitchen at five and started preparing torte "stations" for everyone: melting chocolate, candying orange peel, whipping buttercream, cracking, mixing, slicing. An early morning thunderstorm had cleared the air. Her resolve was strong; if she was going to have them succeed at one thing, let it be this.

By twos and threes the family straggled into the kitchen for breakfast.

"Wow, Baba. What's all this?"

"It's for the torte. You still want to learn, don't you?"

"Are you sure we can?"

"Sure."

She *was* sure. "We'll start as soon as everyone's done with breakfast."

The batter, the chocolate frosting and the orange jam were done by early afternoon. Before a late lunch they poured the batter into cake pans. Sonia left the chocolate and the orange jam covered on the stove. She'd bake the cakes in the afternoon, while everyone else went down to cool off at the lake. Today really had turned into "another scorcher." By the time they got back, the cakes would be cool, ready to slice and assemble. She poured herself a glass of water and caught a glimpse of her →



reflection in the mirror over the kitchen sink. She looked hot and tired. There was a small cot in the cool storage room off the kitchen, and a nap sounded appealing, just for a few minutes.

She was woken by, “Baba? Baba?” and “Mama? Where are you?” Sonia pushed herself off the bed.

“I’m here, I’m here.” Her left leg was asleep and she limped slightly into the kitchen. “I just wanted to take a few minutes...” She looked at the clock. Five o’clock already! She went straight to the oven. It would take it about twenty minutes to reach two-hundred and fifty degrees, then another hour for the cakes. The air was heavy.

“I’m sorry, I—“

“What are you apologizing for? It’s no big deal. If there’s no time tonight, we’ll finish the torte tomorrow.”

Sonia considered this. Torte was better if it had sat for a day, but it was true, they *could* fill the layers tomorrow. But she had to do the baking now.

“You should have come to the lake, Baba,” said six-year-old Maryka. “We made sand castles, and dug holes, and Nikolai swam out to the big rock.” Sonia looked down at impish Maryka, with her round face, wide mouth, and green eyes. “Like mine,” Sonia thought.

“Yeah, but we left at the right time,” said Oksana. “There are some black clouds on the horizon.”

Sofia went over to the kitchen window. Nothing out that way, just sunny, blue skies. She went to the living room on the west side of the house. Billowing clouds were fat with rain.

“I hope it doesn’t do too much of this over the weekend, or we’ll be inside the whole time. Did I tell you we found Tatu’s wooden table planks in the garage? Everything’s ready for tomorrow.”

“Very good. Everything will be fine for tomorrow.” But like the sky, something deep inside Sonia roiled.

By six, the cakes had twenty minutes to go.

“Mmm, do they look *good*,” said Valya, eyeing them through the glass oven door.

“They *smell* good,” added Stephen, just in from a game of Frisbee. “It’s getting dark out there.”

It was. Dark clouds had arrived, and rumbles of thunder were booming in the distance.

“I saw a bolt of lightning just over the hill!” Nikolai excitedly ran inside.

Large drops of rain started plunking on the windows, and the grown-ups jogged to their cars to make sure that sun roofs were closed. A moment later, the family gathered in the kitchen and listened to the downpour outside. The adults opened beers and sat around the table, some of the women on their husbands’ knees. Several of the older kids hung around, listening to their parents’ conversation or playing with the younger ones on the floor.

Thunder shook the house, and Sonia went to unplug the TV. She came back into the kitchen and John offered her a place to sit and a beer.

“Just half,” Sonia answered.

She partially sat down and rose up again.

“Phew! I didn’t realize it was so dusty behind the TV – I’ll go rinse my hands.”

Sonia turned the tap, wetting her left hand as her right reached for the soap. There was a resounding crack and in a split second Sonia registered intense pain before everything went black. One of the babies started to cry. Later, Cyril would say he felt the boom in his chest. There was a strong but dull pop from the innards of the stove, the oven door blew open and a cake was projected against the opposing wall, scattering several large morsels. The half-empty tin rolled across the floor and the smell of burning aluminium and sugar filled the air. They all registered at once that the house had been struck by lightning.

Oksana’s “Oh God, Mama!” converged with Igor’s “Shit. Nobody touch anything.” Oksana and Irene ran to Sonia’s side, and Oksana quickly cradled her mother’s head in her lap. Igor jumped up and made a tour inside the house, looking for fire or smoking outlets. Mark and John grabbed the fire extinguisher out of the *spisharka* and cautiously approached the stove. Smoke



was beginning to curl from the coil burners and the oven. Eliza called an ambulance and the fire department. She attempted to reassure the wide-eyed grandchildren who huddled in small groups, unmoving.

“Everyone’s okay, right?”

“Baba...” Anya’s throat closed. Tears were already spilling down her cheeks. Several cousins followed suit, and the rest remained white-faced and silent.

“She’s alive. I can feel her breathing,” said Oksana.

Irene rubbed her mother’s legs and arms.

By the time the ambulance arrived, Sonia had regained consciousness. She answered the EMT’s questions lucidly but weakly, and allowed herself to be placed gently on the stretcher. She saw Mark and John by the oven, holding the fire extinguisher. Their shoulders drooped in a slight pose of regret or defeat and she noticed cake on the floor, but she didn’t think of the tortes at all. She closed her eyes and her skin prickled.

Irene, still holding Sonia’s hand, squeezed through the doorway as the EMTs carried the stretcher out. “We can’t go with you, O.K.? But we’ll meet you at the hospital. Don’t worry about us. Just stay strong.”

It was after ten o’clock that night by the time Sonia was settled in her hospital room, surrounded by the clan. Even the littlest ones had been allowed to stay up past bedtime to say *dobranich*.

“The doctor said that she responded well to the tests, but they want to keep her for a couple of days to keep an eye on her vital signs,” Irene was patiently explaining Sonia’s prognosis to the grandchildren.

Igor snorted and shook his head.

“Yeah, apparently only thirty percent of lightning victims pull through with no side effects,” he said. “You were— We were lucky, Mama.” He awkwardly leaned over the bed to hug his mother.

“Sure, it could have been much worse – but did you hear what the firemen said?” asked John.

It hadn’t taken long for the firemen to establish what happened. A quick check around the outside of the house revealed a blackened burn spot where the electric lines met the house. They said lightning had probably struck somewhere nearby and travelled through electric lines before reaching the house. Once inside the house, the electric charge had raced anywhere it could – through pipes and wires – before finding an outlet in the stove. They speculated that most of the charge had come through the stove and oven, while only a portion was diverted through the pipes when Sonia turned on the water. The hospital confirmed this, given that Sonia appeared not to have sustained any serious injuries.

Maryka solemnly approached her grandmother’s bedside, hands in her jacket pockets. She peered over the side of the bed and reached through the bedrail. Her already wide mouth broke in to an even wider smile as she deposited a small pile of crumbs on the sheet.

“Mmm, *dobreh* Baba.”

It’s good.

Sonia pushed herself up on her elbow and Irene leaned over her daughter.

“When did you—?” Irene began.

Sonia chuckled uncertainly before letting out a deep laugh.

“Really? It was good?” Sonia smiled at Maryka and looked around at her family, who were amused by now as well. “Well, we’ll have to try making torte again sometime, I think.”

“In a new oven,” Nikolai added.

“Here’s to a new oven!” they cheered, and raised theoretical glasses in a toast.

Sonia watched the city lights through her hospital window as she fell asleep. In spite of the disaster, something had begun. Maybe next summer she would start embroidery sessions with the grandchildren; maybe next time she made *pyrohy* she would try instant potatoes; maybe... Sonia was asleep. The knot in her stomach was gone; even without eating she felt pleasantly full. Sonia slept better that night than she had in a long, long time.



Can You See the Music? (Synaesthesia*)

by Lydia Sonderegger

I feel so grateful and privileged –
Every day I thank God
for being alive and healthy,
for being able to use my brain
and enjoy my body.

His blessings are everywhere
to be seen:

It is only a matter of
developing our willingness
to look around us
carefully
respectfully
lovingly;

It is only a question of
opening our eyes
to the music of life
to the soft whisper of trees
to the white song of rain
and to the melodious,
eternal wisdom
WITHIN.



* *Synaesthesia is the description of a sensory experience defined in the terms of another sense ; the synthesis of, for example, color and sound : a blue note (Oxford Advanced Learner's Dictionary).*

Gathering Time

by Susan Heller



A book of poems. That would be lovely,
he said.

But where would you go to gather your words? And
how would you arrange them?

Would you gather them in springtime
along the side of the road, or,
heaven forbid, at the local grocery store,
wrapped in plastic with instructions and
a "plant food" packet tucked in one fold?

A book of poems.

A book of words, yes,
that would be lovely.

But just make sure to go picking after
the rains have come
and the letters are refreshed
and ready to be gathered.



The Eggshell

by Frank Gianella

Silence; there was nothing but silence over the buzzing of the machine. Strange how an annoying and repetitive sound could become imperceptible to the point leading to... silence. Yet another sound was pulsing behind. It was hissing like a serpent creeping in the background just beyond earshot. Difficult to know if it was a trick of the imagination, something built up from memories, or an echo of a resurgent past. Nevertheless, it was there, a growing sound in quest of an identity.

"We're out of trouble now," said Luc. His hand tried to reach Sofia's knee in front of him but she brushed it away.

"Are we, doctor?" Her voice was a mixture of irritation and anxiety. She was seated on the only bench, opposite the men.

"It's just a matter of time. Please, call me Gillian."

"You see, Sweetie, it wasn't worth the rush we went through."

"Shut up! Use your head! Do you really think he's here to chaperone us?" She took a deep breath and her tone became softer. "Doctor?"

Gillian took his time answering. He knew his silence would be misunderstood. He planned to use this effect to lessen the girl's anger and anxiety. As a matter of fact, he was there to assist them and to react to any symptoms they might experience, but his responsibility was also to see that everything went well between them. They didn't have to know that he was trained and used to resolving conflicts.

"Miss Carluso, if there were any risks I wouldn't be here," he said. "The hyperbaric chamber is entirely safe. It

has been built and certified by the US Navy and ..."

"Doctor!" the boyfriend cut in.

"Answer Sofia! Please." Gillian had to raise his head to look at Luc, who was too close for his liking. The chamber seemed to contract upon itself, compressing them a bit more. Sofia took her boyfriend's hand and he softened his gaze before looking at her. *One point*, thought Gillian. *Not bad for a beginning, especially with this big guy*. She definitively would be the one he would have to concentrate on.

"My role is to guide the decompression process. Because you experienced typical symptoms, specific checks will have to be performed."

"That's all?"

"That's all, Miss Carluso."

"Hmm! Call me Sofia. This mountain here is Luc." Her boyfriend laughed and silence fell again. Freed of tension, the space seemed to widen although the smell of neoprene mixed with sweat hadn't lessened. It contributed to the impression of a dry atmosphere weighing on them. Sofia and Luc hadn't had a chance to take showers before entering the shell. Stripped of their diving suits, they now wore blue hospital blouses.

"Is there an ashtray, Gillian?" asked Luc after a while.

"Sure! Help yourself. It's behind the door," answered Gillian, doing his best to conceal his annoyance. Luc began to search for something in pockets the blouse didn't have.

"Looking for a lighter?" guessed Gillian, who hoped the joke would not drag on. →



“Lighter’s fine. Can’t find the key.”

“Four bars lock the door. The key won’t help.”

“No key means no ashtray! No smoking then?”

“That’s right, and for a long time.”

“Don’t you have a smoking decompression chamber?”

“Come on, stop it!” pleaded Sofia. “Save some breath for the trip.”

“Sweetie, you shouldn’t be the one talking about air.” Sofia brusquely withdrew her hand. “What do you mean?” she hissed.

“The eggshell is an ashtray,” cut in Gillian, who had foreseen the clash. “One single spark and *pfuit!* Back to ashes.”

Luc and Sofia seemed to have forgotten their dispute and were watching him intently. Somewhere in the back of the doctor’s mind, a voice was trying to tell him he had shouted the last part. He never heard it, as images of the incident came back like a tsunami washing away reason. He had witnessed his girlfriend’s death in the Milan decompression chamber when it burst into flames.

A pain in his palm brought him back to reality. His nails were biting there. He released the fists he had made, although in a way the pain was soothing.

Sofia’s mouth was hanging open. She was staring at him.

Another place, another time! He closed his eyes and desperately wished he wasn’t there.

“Sorry,” he managed to say. “Pure oxygen! I mean, we’re breathing pure oxygen. It’s highly flammable.” Saying the words helped, he realized. *Fire.* Hell had haunted his nights since the accident. *Time to lead the conversation somewhere else. This is not the place to*

have these thoughts, he told himself.

“What really happened to you down there?” he asked. Sofia and Luc exchanged a look. Then Luc leaned his head back against the wall and invited his girlfriend to tell the story.

Near the border, the water was translucent, showing pebbles that spotted the sandy floor, but as the depth increased, so did the turmoil of the muddy water. The pebbles vanished and the reflections of distant clouds were engulfed by the darkened water. Sofia and Luc did the last checks.

“Ready?” asked Luc.

“Fine!” answered Sofia as bubbles ran to the surface. As always, once submerged she smiled at her recurrent thought. Funny how divers were able to communicate underwater without words, with a face deformed by a mask and an octopus stuck in the mouth to convey air from the tank.

The coldness of the water was an unwelcome sensation. It soon faded. They palmed their way down toward the first wreck at 17 meters. It was like an iceberg appearing out of a fog. Luc began to circle the sunken sailing boat, inviting Sofia to see the details. The brief exploration done, they continued the descent. The new aim was the 35-meter wreck. Luc wanted to reach this depth to do some training for their upcoming holidays. Both hated the cold, dark, and boring lake, but it was a good spot for testing and renewing their diving skills.

When they reached the plateau at 35 meters, they began to circle in an effort to find the wreck. The visibility was poor. Holding hands to avoid losing sight of each other, they turned for a while. The little plateau was featureless. Sofia felt Luc’s hand loosen. Turning her head she nearly dropped her octopus as she gasped.



Luc's head was on the ground and a cloud of mud was enveloping him like a silent explosion in a black-and-white movie.

Sofia's words brought the doctor back to reality. Like a butterfly inexorably attracted by a freeing candle, his mind had been caught by the light over her head. It was a simple globe enclosed in wires.

Life was about imprisonment. His lover had been trapped in the decompression chamber. Sofia and Luc had willingly enclosed themselves underwater. They were now trapped in the eggshell with him.

Gillian had been locked up with sorrow and pain for many years. Now, the conjunction of Sofia's account and situation; of being in the eggshell against his will; of having been able to confront his fears; all these factors contributed to freeing him from his chains. He felt like a bubble rising again to once forbidden heights.

Gillian was conscious of having been the smith who had forged his own links. He tried not to smile as Sofia continued.

Sofia immediately went down and took Luc's head in her hands. Heart pounding, she shook it, throwing mud particles around. Grapes of bubbles coming out of her direct system were storming to the surface. There were no bubbles from his. He wasn't breathing. His octopus left his mouth and floated over his head. She clung to what remained of her self control and desperately tried to put it back in his mouth. He suddenly opened his eyes, winked at her, and smiled.

Sofia froze and stared at him. Their masks were nearly touching. Luc put

his octopus in his mouth to breathe the precious oxygen. A welcoming grin appeared behind it. She realized he had played a trick on her. She punched him in the face. Fist closed, she continued to hammer at his head. The resistance of the water slowed and attenuated her blows. Luc finally caught her hands. The grip hurt, but she still tried to punch him. Luc shouted in vain, his voice perceived as a deformed, distant echo in the darkness of the water.

"Calm?" Luc's eyes asked. Any trace of his malicious expression had vanished, replaced by concern and fear.

"Hum!" she replied by nodding. Luc released her. Water was inside her mask, water from the depths but also from her tears. Her hands flashed.

"Dive over! We go back!" The sharpness of her gestures said that she wouldn't suffer any discussion.

"OK." There was no point in arguing. Luc wanted to get out of there, too. His joke had been a bad idea. He knew it.

He didn't ask if she was all right because he knew she wouldn't like it. Instead he took her by the hand and they palmed their way out of the salvage spot. The visibility was no better. Luc cursed. He hadn't taken the course and now he would have to guess the direction to the surface. A pressing on his arm stopped his thoughts.

"Depth gauge 40 bars!" Sofia's fingers emphasized the number. "We go up. Now!"

"All right! Follow me," he answered. Fear colder than the water was making its way into his belly.

"Yours?" insisted Sofia with pressure on his arm. Luc had a look at his pressure gauge and missed a heartbeat. →



“70 bars!” he showed quickly and began to palm in the direction he thought was right. He was in a hurry to go up. But mostly he feared to see his own distress reflected in her face. The darkness seemed heavier. It wasn’t long before Sofia called for his attention again.

“Stop ! Going down! Other direction!”

Luc cursed. Sofia was right. They turned back and finally found the slope leading to the surface.

At 30 meters, Sofia ran out of air and required Luc’s second stage octopus. Both were breathing from his tank now. They weren’t going to reach the surface safely. They continued the ascent with the sound of their computer ringing them to slow down. The idea of nitrogen bubbles trapped in her bloodstream and tissues wasn’t a thought Sofia wanted to have in mind. She shivered more from fear than from cold. The warnings of their computer were clear. Nitrogen compressed in the depths had to be evacuated by their metabolisms before they reached the surface. That meant a slow ascent with decompression stops. The alternative was to face decompression disease. They had no alternative; they were running out of air.

At 13 meters they breathed Luc’s last gulp of air. They left the slope and paddled directly to the ceiling above. Their salvation was in this illuminated garden. Sofia kept the urge for air at bay and focused on the light. Fear was a dead weight impeding her ascent. Fear was also what kept her from breathing. She broke the surface and realized she had closed her eyes. She breathed but liquid rushed in her lungs as her head went underwater again. She coughed and breathed again. Her

head was up this time and she managed to inhale. The light of the sunset blinded her. It was like a pyre burning on the horizon.

“Jesus!” shouted Luc. “Are you all right?”

“Dammit!” she managed to say between coughs.

“I’m sorry...”

“Shut up! We’ve got to move!”

They swam to the sandy beach and abandoned their diving gear. The people lying on their towels and playing in the sand didn’t notice their hurry.

“That’s it, Gillian. We came to the emergency department and after the tests they told us to come here.” The doctor avoided looking at Luc. He was like a volcano on the brink of erupting.

“You were lucky,” he managed to say in a cold voice. “Next time, call the hospital before rushing here. The eggshell could have been occupied.” *And Mat could have had time to arrive and accompany them in here*, he added for himself. Behind the anger, the doctor was conscious of having won a battle against his trauma.

“There won’t be another time!”

Sofia’s tone meant that those words conveyed more than just what they were saying. Gillian smiled. Right now, he didn’t care about Luc’s reaction. The doctor had vanished, replaced by a man released from a painful load.

“Never again,” admitted Luc, who was thinking about the lake. Gillian noticed that Sofia had relaxed. She didn’t want to bring up the matter of their future together now. *She is clever. She will wait for a better time and place*, Gillian thought.

“...the hell are you saying, Renaldo?” boomed a voice in the speaker. Sofia sprang to her feet and hit the low ceiling of the chamber, while Luc tried



to protect himself from an imaginary threat.

"This can't be! Check again! I..." continued the voice, loud as a bell ringing in a cauldron. Gillian hadn't been taken aback by his colleague's intervention, although the volume of the speaker was at its maximum.

"Mat! Turn the interphone off!" he shouted.

"...through the process again and..." There was a pause. "Gil?"

"Turn it off, Mat! You're breaking our ears." A loud scratch followed and the lights faded.

"Sorry, Gil," said Mat, after restoring the interphone to its normal volume. "I didn't turn it on." There was silence. Sofia was rubbing her head, but felt more concerned about what was being said. Luc was looking at Sofia.

"Gil ? Do you hear me?"

"What's up Mat?"

"Nothing." Silence again. "We're doing some checks. The coffin's fine? Shit! Is the chamber fine from within?"

"The coffin?" repeated Sofia.

"Private joke," explained Gillian. *Bloody Mat! He knows I hate that term.* Then it occurred to him that Mat would not have used it in his presence. The narrowness of the space they were locked in became threatening. The white of the metallic walls reminded the doctor of shrouds. He shivered and became aware that the temperature had decreased since the recompression process had started.

"Mat?"

"Yes?"

"Mat!"

"There's a noise we can't identify. Can you hear it?"

They fell silent. The buzzing of the machine was perceptible. Gillian was

aware of his respiration and the pulsing of his heart. Sofia's hand had frozen on her head. There was an audible sizzling. It was a familiar sound, although Gillian was not able to remember where he had heard it.

"Gil?"

"What's that?"

"No idea?"

"Find it!"

"OK! I'll be back."

"Seems a crackling to me, like a short circuit," said Luc.

"Mat, don't turn it off!" shouted Gillian.

The interphone made a small *tchunk* and the light faded again. The air literally vibrated for the blink of an eye.

Then hell fell on the eggshell. Fire rushed into Sofia's lungs. It was like an avalanche of cold ice running through nose and trachea. She saw the blazing flash. She saw the doctor's face wither like rotten fruit. He then vanished as her eyelids melted from the warmth. She wanted to scream but her tongue was dry. A tear braved the furnace and left the corner of her eye. Her last vision was of a storm of red dancing flames. *Blood*, she thought in agony, and fainted.

Mat opened the newspaper. A cloud of vapour danced over his coffee cup. *Divers Burn to Death*, said the headline. Tears fell from the end of his nose and dripped on the article in a vain attempt to extinguish an imaginary fire. *Short-circuits caused the fire... The emergency water system failed to work...* His vision blurred and the letters faded. Gil had been his best friend. Now he understood Gil's torments. Images of the inferno were dancing in his head. Jaws of fire were inexorably locking him in a jail fuelled by sadness and guilt.



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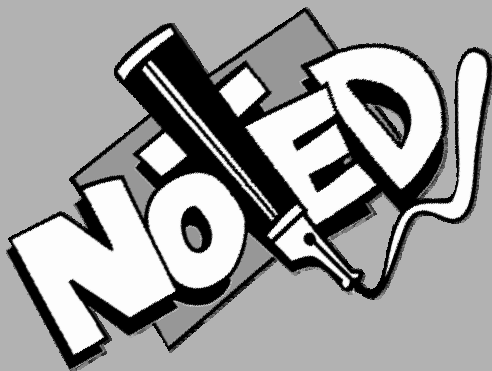
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