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englist

The English Students' Newspaper

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EDITORIAL



Ema Karo

This year a new ENgLIST editorial board was created. This has made a lot of people extremely happy and has been widely regarded as a good move.

We have brought forth an interesting selection of articles in an effort to make your procrastination much more intellectually stimulating. Among this carefully selected array of articles you will find some (more or less current) film and book reviews, tap into the wonderful world of literary creations, dive into the world of music and fascinating new gadgets, feel sorry for the linguists, endure the agony of Black Friday, pay tribute to the Loch Ness monster and learn what it means to be a linguistic prostitute.

If you're reading this, that means that you're already a proud owner of your very own issue of ENgLIST, so what are you waiting for? You're in for an exciting read, but keep in mind: ENgLIST is best read with one hand on the "Bible", swearing off all other false gods. Grab a beverage of your choice and the entertainment is on us.

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Current Affairs Section Editor: Aleš Oblak
 “Sarcasm is the spice of life.”



The US Presidential Election 2012

by Miha Špiler

While it's probably not as exciting for Europeans as it was for people in the US, I found myself quite interested in the US presidential elections of 2012. By now, of course, everyone will have heard of Barack Obama's victory over the Republican candidate Mitt Romney. I guess that's the end of the story but how did it happen? Has Obama just been such a good president for the last four years? Not everyone seems to think so. Was it Mitt Romney? Maybe he wasn't the best person to run this campaign. Did he do something to make himself less popular? Is it even about these two? Both of them represent a large political party. Isn't it more about The Democratic Party and The Republican Party and what they stand for? But then again, both candidates got a lot of attention. In fact, they probably received a bit more attention than either of them would care for, especially the runner-up.

The election night may have been a short event but the campaign lasted for months full of interesting developments. Even that wasn't the true beginning though. A lot of people, myself included, had already started paying attention during the Republican primaries where the question on who will represent the Republican Party in the 2012 election was still an open one. Without going into too much detail, in February 2012, primaries boiled down to four candidates. One of course being Mitt Romney, and his three opposing candidates were Rick Santorum, Newt Gingrich and Ron Paul. Any of these three candidates could easily be lengthily analyzed on their own. Ron Paul was probably the least typical candidate for the Republican Party. In particular, his anti-war message brought him support that was enthusiastic but in the minority. Santorum and Gingrich fared better running on a conservative basis, a basis that Romney seemingly lacked. He was perceived as a more moderate candidate from his Governor days. Nevertheless he managed to strengthen his conservative position and win the primaries.

Now he would face the current president and Democratic candidate Barack Obama. Obama ran an incredibly enthusiastic campaign in 2007 and he's had four years to prove his abilities as president. A tough candidate to beat, for sure, but not everything in Obama's four years of presidency had been favorable to him. The honeymoon was over and many of his supporters realized that not all of his promises were being realized. By the end of his first term his healthcare reform had been passed but it was not everything the people had hoped for, the economy was still in a bad place and showing only small signs of improvement, and social security was hardly ideal. In 2010 the Democratic Party also lost the majority in the House of Representatives. While by no means a bad president, Obama could not simply run the campaign on his old glory alone. Romney wasn't an inexperienced candidate either. Besides his political history as Governor of Massachusetts, he was also CEO of Bain Capital, a highly profitable company. A man with good business sense would appeal to a lot of people in a time of economic crisis. The battle was far from over.

One thing to note about this particular campaign, and probably most others as well, is that the large majority of voters had already decided on their choice long ago. These votes are won by each candidate simply

through the virtue of being the candidates of the two large political parties that exist in the U.S. There were actually 14 other parties, each with their own candidate, as well as several independent candidates. Together they accumulated a total 2% of the votes. That's how big the Democratic Party and the Republican Party are. Only a candidate representing one of these two parties stands any chance of successfully running for president. So it comes down to these two parties with these two candidates. Both had raised around a billion dollars (not an exaggeration) to persuade the indecisive minority.

So what tipped the delicate scale? Looking at some statistics from exit polls, we see that Obama won the majority of voters up to forty years of age. Forty and up were won by Romney. Romney also won the majority of white voters while Obama won African-Americans, Latinos and Asians. These are the numbers you would usually see in elections and American minorities are growing in population so that's obviously a factor in Obama's victory. Obama also won 67% of single women voters. How did that happen? That's a pretty large victory in a pretty large group. Romney did suffer a very poor choice of words in the second presidential debate, where he used the phrase “binders full of women” when answering a question about pay equity and women employment. The incident didn't make Romney look good, but his comment seems hardly relevant when looking at the comments of his fellow Republicans, senate candidate Richard Mourdock: “Even when life begins in that horrible situation of rape, that is something that God intended to happen,” and senate candidate Todd Akin: “First of all, from what I understand from doctors, that's really rare. If it's a legitimate rape, the female body has ways to try to shut that whole thing down.” Both of these comments caused a huge scandal and while they weren't something Romney said personally, it was certainly a stain on the Republican Party, and not the only one concerning women. We also mentioned racial minorities who mostly voted for Obama, since the Democratic policies on immigration are much more in their favor. The same goes for the LGBT group, especially now that Obama has advanced from having conflicting issues on the matter to fully supporting same-sex marriage. From a demographic standpoint it feels like the Republican Party has become the party of one major interest group while the Democrats try to support as many different groups as possible. Now it seems the smaller groups are tipping the scale.

Clearly, Romney's party wasn't in very good standing to help him win, but he didn't do himself any favors either. What was possibly the most interesting thing to me in the entire campaign was Romney's persistence to say anything that will make him look good, including completely changing his positions on important matters. As I wrote before, Mitt Romney established himself as a more conservative candidate during the primaries to appeal to the Republican voters. Even then he was called a flip-flopper by his opponents, since he was a lot more moderate as a Governor in Massachusetts, and after the primaries he had to go back presenting himself as a moderate candidate to appeal to the nation as a whole. On top of that he has proven that lying as a politician has become much harder than it used to be, since the internet media machine has become fast enough to call you out on it before it can bear fruit. In an age when a Twitter post can have as many views as a television advertisement, telling a lie that sticks becomes pretty much impossible. In Romney's case, it was a statement claiming that Obama bailed out the

Chrysler car company, which was then going to be sold off to Italians and start manufacturing Jeeps in China. Romney's campaign even made a TV advertisement about it. Even after the media, as well as Chrysler's own CEO Sergio Marchionne, called Romney out on his statement, his campaign made no response and continued running the ad.

In the end, Obama won by 4% or by five million voters in a country of three hundred and fifteen million people. It feels almost unreal for so many things to happen in the scope of just one election. I never identified myself as a political person but I would be lying if I said I didn't care about any of the issues that these political parties are discussing or any of the actions that the candidates did during the elections as well as before and after. And now that it's over, I'm looking forward to seeing the effect its results will have for the next four years. I'm sure you'll be hearing about them as well.

The Age of Change

by Aleš Oblak

My generation found an ingenious excuse in popular culture to feel sorry for itself. One of the most influential films of our time is arguably David Fincher's *Fight Club*, where it is stated that we are the middle children of history, without a great war, great depression or in fact any reason to live. Indeed, this has been true and for most of our lives we were fed with the notion that we are the spoiled generation and that we know nothing about the trials of life.

Now they are here. We can no longer say that we are the generation without its purpose, without a cause to fight for, because we now do have a reason to raise our voices. And if I may be forgiven for use of some propaganda clichés; this may be our finest hour and we may be asked one day by our grandchildren: “Where were you, when it all went down?”

We live in a changing world. In this fast age of computers and internet, technology is becoming ever more important, the way we receive information has changed and even our social interactions have taken a whole new form in these past few years. The world has found itself on the precipice and it has to leave the present and embrace the future. This also applies to Slovenia. We are the first generation that hasn't actively experienced socialism; we've grown up in this fine country of ours and have never known anything else and now it seems to be falling apart.

For the second time in recent history, the Faculty of Arts stepped into the fray and protested against the establishment in an academic manner. On 5th December 2012 we began expressing our dissatisfaction. We gathered and we listened, and teachers spoke, and we sang, and we sent, or at least attempted to send, a message. Both students and teachers have several goals, which they wish to achieve and, with the power of argument, all of them were pointed out, though one thing that, for me at least, stood out, was something a professor said about time. It was a simple quote, one of the many that deal with the rushing of time, but was special, because it was Lenin's. Of all the possible people she chose to quote the champion of the socio-political system that came before.

Now, given that the current ruling power very strongly believes that the banner with the red star was the worst thing that ever happened to our nation, they must have felt a slight jab if they were listening. And

they should have. Because it has never been as obvious how dissatisfied the people are with our government as it is now, when even the quarrelsome Slovenians are stepping together to make their discontent heard.

Of course, it is not about communism or socialism or being left-wing or right-wing, but it seems there is no symbol that goes with revolting quite like a raised fist on red. The solution does not lie in the past, and the Red had their chance, but in a change to something new. So perhaps it is high time that we set aside this petty division among the left and the right and join together to forge a better nation. One where theft will not be legal, where our government will not steal from us and where everyone will be given the opportunity to study, to learn, to work, to live a decent life.

So until we find a way to go beyond this impasse we will protest. We've done so on the fifth and on the sixth and we have done it on the nineteenth. We claimed the streets as our government wishes to claim our education and we attended classes in public places. In an attempt to make our cause known, teachers had their lectures in the public eye, where all who took a moment to look saw how valuable knowledge is. Personally I attended a lecture on American literature, where slavery was discussed in some detail. A suitable topic, I think, for these troubled times when our freedom is being tampered with.

For the Faculty of Arts, December was a month of protest, a time when we cried out for a change for the better, when we demanded that what is good should be preserved, what is bad should be altered and, what is most important, we showed

that we will not sit idly by while drastic measures are enforced upon the University of Ljubljana.



Discussions Section Editor: Nina Filipič

“There are all kinds of love in this world, but never the same love twice.” (F. Scott Fitzgerald)

DISCUSSIONS

Capitalism Has Failed Us

by Pia Pirc Žagar

During the recent debate on capitalism at the Faculty of Arts, the Deputy Leader of the Opposition made a surprising claim that the capitalist pursuit of profit to the exclusion of everything else actually has a positive effect on human rights. This was said to be because “markets are non-discriminatory” in the sense that the only thing that matters to them is selling a product and they are not concerned with factors such as the race, gender or religious affiliation of the person who created it. While it is true that the situation in the developed countries has improved with regard to issues such as LGBT rights, this cannot be credited to capitalism itself. On the other hand, it can take credit for the increasing disparities in wealth and the breakdown of social services. I believe that, in addition to its devastating environmental consequences and its failure to offer a satisfactory way out of the current crisis, capitalism has also failed us in terms of human rights.

Given the global impact of capitalism, the most glaring injustice it perpetuates is the stark difference in lifestyles between the developed countries and the poorest countries of the world. Although some attribute the prosperity of the former to hard work and advancements in technology, the fact of the matter is that it comes at the expense of the rest of the world. Long after the end of colonialism, poorer countries continue to be exploited for their natural resources and cheap labour. In *The Story of Stuff* Annie Leonard points out that the United States of America, whose inhabitants represent just 5% of the world's population, use “30% of the world's resources and create 30% of the world's waste”. Even more perversely, the poor are denied basic sustenance so that relatively frivolous commodities might be sold to the rich. One of the reasons for the 2012 famine in West Africa was the rise in food prices caused by a high demand for crops that are to be processed into biofuels (Monbiot, 2012).

Compared to the plight of people in the Sahel region, the impact of the current recession on the average European can seem almost trivial. Consequently, such comparisons are frequently exploited to silence legitimate protests about the situation here. However, knowing that we could have it much worse does not change the fact that social inequalities in Slovenia have

been increasing at a worrying rate. To make the search for possible solutions even more difficult, the majority of Slovene citizens no longer believe that our government has our best interests at heart. We have witnessed too many instances of nepotism and corruption to believe that the same laws apply to the average person as to the members of political and economic elites. The government's insistence on fighting the crisis with neoliberal reforms that include alarming budget cuts is a further threat to public welfare and will serve to aggravate social inequalities. Future generations may be forced to cover their own health and education expenses, which would place the country's poorest into an even more desperate situation.

One argument that can be made in favour of capitalism is that it is not inherently incompatible with all movements for increasing equality. In the developed world, for instance, the message that discrimination is unacceptable has never been louder. It is impossible for a public figure to overtly express their intolerant views without facing an immediate backlash. In practice, however, the rich elites still predominately consist of white men, women continue to be paid less, and subtler forms of discrimination have taken root in our society. To make matters worse, capitalist ideology directly encourages discrimination against the poor. Judging people for not working hard enough seems positively reasonable compared to judging them for their skin colour, and, in some cases, prejudice against the poor can be used to conceal the less acceptable forms of discrimination. Mitt Romney took advantage of this logic during his failed presidential campaign; according to liberal analysts, his anti-welfare rhetoric was actually an example of thinly veiled racism (Reeve, 2012). This is because dependence on welfare is stereotypically linked with African Americans and often used to portray them as lazy and stupid. By criticising government programmes that help the poor, Romney could appeal to racist voters without mentioning race directly.

The idea that everyone has the opportunity to succeed through hard work is a very appealing one, but in reality capitalism has failed to eliminate inequalities. It has only changed them. As the differences between the rich and the poor become more and more dramatic, we are once again left with a fairly rigid hierarchical system, albeit one where a person's purchasing power, rather than their skin colour or gender, has become what determines them most.

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Has Capitalism Failed Us?

by Rok Novak

Free market. Private property. Individual freedom. These are the pillars upon which capitalism is built. The pillars which have made capitalism a driving agent of economic and technological development, and a development of society itself towards a safer, more creative, more educated and more prosperous civilization.

Few would argue the benefits that capitalism has offered us. Through global transnational cooperation, products which would be impossible for any one individual to produce are commonly accessible at reasonable prices. Take the example of the average personal computer. It is composed of hundreds of different pieces, made from different materials, which themselves require raw materials and skills from all over the world to produce. You cannot produce a computer on your own. The miner who supplies silicon and iron ore cannot do it. Neither can the software developer from the Silicon Valley or the engineer who develops hardware for it in India. The free market encourages these individuals to cooperate, create a product they could never create on their own, and profit from their contribution to society.

In contrast to previous systems that relied on centralised control, which was difficult, if not impossible, to maintain without force, leading to totalitarian systems, capitalism relies on free choice and, consequently, a free market. While socialist economies employ governmental economic planning, a

free market economy is based on the exchange of goods or services between willing parties in pursuit of mutual benefit.

Nevertheless, in our aspirations for freedom we have neglected a very crucial detail: with freedom comes responsibility! In this case, the responsibility to stay vigilant, and control the freedom of the market so that it does not violate the freedom of individuals, either in the short term or in the long term. For freedom without limit can never be freedom for all. Unfortunately, we have done quite the opposite. Since the majority remains disinterested in politics and economy, our ignorance and apathy have allowed a constant abuse of democracy.

On the one hand, governments have imposed regulations where they are not needed, and on the other, they have failed to regulate the market where regulation is due. The market has been crippled with countless unjustified anomalies which are, more often than not, a result of specific interests. Subsidies are a good example of this. Instead of being aware that each and every subsidy disturbs the balance of the market and hinders its inherent self-regulatory function, subsidies

are commonly welcomed with little thought about their consequences. This is not to say that subsidies as a concept are unacceptable, but we should be much more conservative when opting for their implementation.

We have also buried ourselves in endless bureaucracy, and complex, often unnecessarily so, legislation. This is especially evident in tax legislation. Not only in Slovenia, in many countries round the world, it is almost incomprehensibly complex. Filled with a plethora of exceptions and made worse by attempts to prescribe morality, it is an enigma to all but a few. One would at least hope that "a few" refers to tax inspectors or politicians. No. It refers to wealthy businesses which not only take advantage of the exceptions, but, through manipulation, lobbying and corruption, make sure the right kinds of exceptions are put into practice in the first place!

Our society exhibits a frightening lack of active citizenship, critical thinking and general awareness, and yet, we expect our system to work flawlessly! Capitalism isn't what has failed us. It is this mentality of taking everything that the system provides for granted, while turning a blind eye to all that it requires from

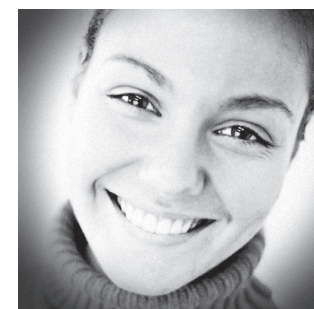
us to function both effectively and fairly, which has failed us. Milton Friedman, one of the most influential economists of the previous century, and a man often unjustly demonised in our time for his role in the development of modern capitalism, warned in one of his lectures: "Capitalism is a necessary condition for freedom, but not a sufficient condition for freedom." His words should resonate with anyone who values their freedom. Capitalism is not the threat, but neither is it, by itself, the solution to our problem.



EVENTS

Events Section Editor: Biljana Makuljević

You see things that are and say: "Why?" I dream things that never were and say: "Why not?" (G.B. Shaw)



Thanksgiving Dinner In Slovenia

by Miha Špiler

As you're all very well aware, studying at the Department of English entails more than just learning a foreign language. Literature, history and culture of English speaking countries are all involved in one class or another. For that reason, every year KŠAG organizes a traditional Thanksgiving dinner to celebrate one of America's more important non-global holidays. And this year was no exception.

Though earlier iterations of thanksgiving feasts exist, the Thanksgiving that's celebrated today originates from the three day feast that happened at the Plymouth colony in 1621 after their first successful harvest. Needless to say, the Pilgrims' struggle to survive in the New World left much for them to be thankful for. The holiday didn't become official until it was proclaimed so in 1863 by Abraham Lincoln in the middle of the civil war no less.

The choice for KŠAG to organize this holiday is quite obvious. It's a major holiday in the States and it is specific to America's history and tradition. We could have gone with Independence Day but I imagine the local police wouldn't take kindly to setting off fireworks in the middle of Ljubljana in July. Though it usually takes place within the Faculty of Arts' walls, there was a change in the night time management of the building that proved inconvenient. This turned out for the best, though, since our usual success of filling up the K16 bar was this year upgraded to filling up the entire Foerster bar. Though our plights probably aren't as large as those of the Pilgrims and our feasts don't last for three days, this one evening was something for everyone to enjoy. Old friends gathered and new faces were met. The weather outside was cold, but not cold enough to stop us from taking over the outside seats as well. For me, the party lasted well into the night and it was a night worth remembering.

But of course, Thanksgiving cannot happen without its most sacred tradition, the food. As always, members and friends of KŠAG made sure to deliver a thanksgiving feast with typical thanksgiving dishes. The delicious turkey was a given and so were the mash potatoes. Our salad was quite popular as well but my personal favorite was definitely the cranberry sauce. I rarely like sweet with my meat but damn if that juicy flavor doesn't work with a nice slice of turkey. And we weren't exactly short on some wonderful baking products to sweeten the meal.

Well, the night had to end and with it we all left on our merry little way home and then some of us, namely me, awkwardly returned the next day because I forgot my food cases. It's quite an interesting experience to celebrate a non-native holiday, but celebrate it we did and just try and stop us from doing it again next year. And since it is a holiday to be thankful, I'd like to thank everyone who made this happen and everyone else who attended. Happy Thanksgiving!

There And (Hopefully) Back Over There Again

by anonymous

It is only reluctantly that I begin this short excursion summary; firstly because I myself am not an avid reader of texts about how other people had great fun (I'd rather just do it myself), and secondly because such texts usually aren't all that interesting. But here's to hoping that at least one pair of eyes glances over these lines, and to a potential free beer when I finish. "But wait," cries the bewildered owner of said eyes, "where did you travel?" Prague, my dear friend, we went to Prague.

An ungrateful task, this: writing about a city that has had so much written about it already, all the while trying to avoid an overwhelming amount of cheese oozing

from your sentences. Since I didn't start with the basics, I had better continue with them: from December 11th until December 14th, about thirty or forty students of Comparative Literature and/or English (mostly the former) made a little trip to the capital of the Czech Republic. And here's what we did...

The bus left at 3 am. And the only thing worse than getting up at 2.30 am? Nothing, seriously, that is the worst. Most of us, therefore, wisely decided not to even go to bed and then slowly dozed off on the road (except for the driver, thankfully). Since it was night-time and the route was littered with tunnels miles long, we didn't miss out on any wonderful landscapes. Not to our knowing, anyway. We arrived shortly after 1 pm, unloaded the bus (oh syntax, you're funny), walked to our nearby hostel, unpacked, and immediately started exploring the city, conveniently grouped as we were in our hostel rooms.

Over the course of the next few days, we visited about six museums and numerous local landmarks (the castle, the Astronomic clock, Charles' bridge, etc.), and still had the time and the willpower to go out every evening and enjoy the obligatory kitsch of December's Prague, complete with tourists, Christmas lights and fairs, Czech (fast) food and more tourists. It isn't a tourist trap, though; for the most part it's cheaper than Ljubljana. Especially the beer; and you know you can't go wrong with Czech beer. However, all the hustle and bustle in the centre dies out fairly quickly, so that there's hardly a living soul to be found wandering about the winding streets past 12 am – except an occasional streetwalker (indeed!) and of course a bunch of students from Slovenia, desperately searching for an open fast food joint. Curiously, for all the different ones we located during the day, not one was open past 10 pm, other than those with "traditional Czech food", which in translation meant sausages, bratwursts, wieners, frankfurters and what have you. With all the running around, we had to eat something; but I swear I've had it up to here (I'm pointing over my head now) with elongated, meaty... hold on, I don't think I want

to finish this dubious sentence – or another wurst, for that matter.

If you're looking for a proper pub, definitely ask the locals. Some might be reluctant to give away their precious get-together spots, but with a bit of luck we managed to find a lovely reggae bar and a very proper pub wherein only Czech was heard. As soon as we found the one free table able to sit the six of us, we were greeted by six pints and a slip with printed mugs, six of them crossed out. What more could one wish for?

Back to the museums: most of them are worth checking out – the sinister, grotesque and slightly wacky Kafka museum, built around and viewed through his life and prose; the simple Mucha Museum with a refreshingly enthusiastic guide; two modern art centres, DOX and AMoYA. The latter should be visited just for the sake of a very muscular and athletic Jesus, about 10 feet tall, hanging on a set of gymnastics rings, arms spread and all. Most of the other installations are really good as well, but that thing really sticks to you. DOX is slightly more thematic, with 4 or 5 exhibitions, ranging from photography to sculptures to videos of (slightly disturbing) performances. Lastly we checked out the Museum of Communism, but being the sophisticated students at the Faculty of Arts with nothing better to do than complain about political systems, we were not impressed: a bit of history, a guy who hates Russians (can't blame him), and some, admittedly funny, American Anti-commie postcards at the end.

We packed on Friday evening and arrived in Ljubljana at approximately 5 am, tired and calmly satisfied. How to wrap it all up? I'm running at my word limit so I'll be brief. Prague definitely deserves its glory and there is a plethora of things to discover with each new visit – as an outsider, I can imagine myself living there for a while, maybe even longer. Let's cut the sugar intake. 'Twas most pleasant, forsooth!

Give Me an F! Give Me an I! Give Me ... Oh, You Get The Point. Filofest!

by Maruša Pangeršič

Ah, Filofest, that magical time of the year when the Student Office turns into a madhouse. The pleasure of watching films in a lecture hall all week can almost make up for all the nervousness and barking comments we so selflessly give and take during The Week. Looking back, it was probably one of my busiest weeks at the Faculty of Arts. It was, however, also my first time on

the team, so that could be it.

Filofest is an International Student Film and Video Festival, hosted by our beloved Faculty of Arts every now and again (once every three years, once every two years, every year ... who's counting?). In 2012, December was the time of The Week, led by Hana Radovan and Tamara Klavžar. When you walked into the faculty, you could immediately see something was going on: a) there was cine-film everywhere and b) a team of volunteers was instructed by Maša Žnidaršič not to let you through without a programme booklet.

Our programme team received a record number of 180 films this year! Under the strict eye of Jan Nalesnik, they chose wisely and devised a programme of projections that could easily put Kolosej's listings to shame. We saw some films from acting or media schools, most notably AGRFT, EICAR, Hamburg Media School, NOFIŠ and Institut des Arts de Diffusion; some animated films, a lot of great Slovene and foreign independent films and, for the odd artistic soul, Filofest offered an experimental section. Munching on sandwiches and chocolate provided by Črt Zorič's team, the tech support group saw them all. Equipped with cameras, a projector and a Mac that none of us knew how to use, we were snuggled boldly under a desk, making our leader Nejc Ribič proud.



photo: Maruša Pangeršič

However, it being a film festival and all, there is much more to Filofest than just films. It all began a good week before the festival itself with lectures on sound in films. And it continued during The Week with a thrilling accompanying programme, provided by our lovely Ksenija Vozelj: a New Wave Syria concert at the Opening Ceremony, screenings of *Angela Vode*, *Hidden Memory*; *I am Janez Janša*; *Aleksandrinke* and *Bread and Circuses*; discussions and round tables (Maja Weiss, Metod Pevec and Marta Verginella), karaoke nights and fancy dress parties. The week between 10th and 14th December was, indeed, one to remember. In addition to our fellow students, we had guests from Finland, Georgia, Greece, UK, Austria, Montenegro and Taiwan.

They were kept safe by Janoš Ježovnik's team, and they report they had a great time in Slovenia. Besides, everything was professionally translated by our team of translators, led by Alenka Lavrin, so they could understand all the films and enjoy to the max.

The very last day was the day when the Filofest Filips were awarded to directors whose films stood out in certain categories. They were picked out by a strict jury: Katja Čičigoj, Darya Nikitina, Karpo Godina and Doris Bauer.



photo: Maruša Pangeršič

And this year's winners are... drum roll...

- **best film:** *7 Dreams* (2012, Hungary), directed by Alexandru Căpățoiu, 10';
- **best directing:** *The Most Precious* (2012, Georgia), directed by Joseph (Soso) Bliadze, 28';
- **best performance:** *The Most Precious* (2012, Georgia), directed by Joseph (Soso) Bliadze, 28';
- **best fiction:** *The Most Precious* (2012, Georgia), directed by Joseph (Soso) Bliadze, 28';
- **best documentary:** *Broken Border* (2011, Iran), directed by Keywan Karimi, 19';
- **best experimental film:** *7 Dreams* (2012, Hungary), directed by Alexandru Căpățoiu, 10';
- **special mention:** *Lapindo* (2012, Indonesia), directed by Felix Jäkel, 7' **AND** Diego Menendes.

Whether you are a director, a screenplay writer, an actor or you just own a camera and have a few wicked ideas and crazy friends – don't forget to join us next time. Same goes for anyone and everyone who would like to help us with organisation. Filofest is a vast place and we will definitely find somewhere for you to fit in. Cheers and see you ... sometime between December 2013 and January 2015!



photo: Maruša Pangeršič

P. S.: For more photos you are more than welcome to visit our photo gallery at: <http://filofest.com/en/gallery/> (Shameless promotion that our PR person, Tina Orešnik, would approve of.)



photo: Maruša Pangeršič

Foreign Correspondents Section Editor: Nejc Oblak

“All that is gold does not glitter, not all those who wander are lost.” (J.R.R. Tolkien)



‘Guid Gear Comes in Sma’ Bulk’¹ - As Did Our Incredible But Brief Erasmus IP Summer School in Glasgow

by Nina Stankovič and
Ajda Plauštajner

Scotland. A beautiful land where people’s ‘r’s are as rhotic as ours, where many diphthongs become one long monophthong, where William Wallace roamed up and down the Highlands, where frightening Nessie scares the living daylight out of people on a daily basis. That was what most of us knew about Scotland when we applied for the IP Erasmus Summer School that took place in Glasgow this August. Seven students of English from the Faculty of Arts joined 21 others from Ireland, Germany, Croatia and Portugal. As soon as we got to Glasgow, all of the students were accommodated in a huge house practically in the city centre and within a walking distance from all university buildings. When we saw the house, we first thought of sorority houses from the series *Greek*. And that’s exactly how it turned out to be.



photo: Nina Stankovič

the bell rang, with a glass of cider in our hands. Five countries with five different cultural backgrounds had a lot to share.

Our daily schedule was very intense and we had trouble keeping up, at least the first week. However, we decided that wasting time sleeping for more than five hours a night just wasn’t in our interest if it meant we’d miss precious time out and about with our fellow colleagues.

The afternoon activities organized by the Summer School didn’t leave us much time to do stuff on our own, which turned out to be anything but a problem since they encompassed all the sights we were going to go see anyway, and many more for which we probably wouldn’t get as easy an access as we did this way (city tour, visits to universities, colleges, museums, art galleries, cathedrals).

Evenings were reserved mostly for national nights, which were a great success. The participants put great effort into organising their own show weeks beforehand and surprised us with up to two-hour-long activities, including presentations, singing, dancing and even tie-tying lessons. We all of course had a bite of their traditional food. As the Slovenians were the ones to break the ice, we were able to bring home-cooked and home-baked goods, which were crowd-pleasers.

On our weekend off, we went on a road trip around Scotland – everything from Loch Ness and The Isle of Skye to the Eilean Donan Castle. What made the experience especially unique was travelling around in a minivan with the greatest Scottish guide in a kilt who made us learn ‘Loch Linnhe, Loch Lochy, Loch Oich, Loch Ness’ by heart and sing ‘baby baby ooooooh’. All of our travelling days concluded with us cooking a lovely dinner at one or the other loch.

The weather proved to be in our favour – or maybe not, since we all brought mostly warm clothes and ended up wearing the three T-shirts that we had with us just in case. Out of the twelve days spent in Scotland, we must have spent three days at the most complaining about the



photo: Nina Stankovič

awful British weather. A couple of us even spent the few spare hours jogging in the park nearby, accompanied by the sound of the pipes, as our summer school happened to coincide with the Glasgow International Piping Festival. Talk about feeling like a true Scotsman!

Almost six months later we are still in touch with the people from all around Europe we got to know in Glasgow. After all this time we still catch ourselves thinking about the topics we discussed in classes. We don’t only have the advantage of a unique life experience but were also pioneers of this IP summer school of our department. We strongly believe we could use this knowledge to contribute greatly to next year’s summer school which will, as rumour has it, be held in Wales. Honorary guests maybe? We are appealing to the department to give that some thought.

There And Back Again – My Journey to Maryland

by Maruša But

Ever since I received a scholarship to study in Maryland for a semester, I knew that it would be a special experience, but only now that my journey has come to an end, I am slowly beginning to realize just how amazing the whole adventure was. Not just the opportunity to study at St. Mary’s College and improve my knowledge of the English language and literature, but also other things that came together with that: such as meeting new people, traveling around the Eastern coast, wild shopping sprees with my ‘gals’, experiencing the craze and mania of the holiday season (both of the Thanksgiving and Christmas one), exploring American traditions, being able to watch TV shows in real time, read the many US magazines I always wanted and much more. Yes, the exchange indeed was ‘the whole package’.

It all started on a sunny August morning, when I departed to the States. I was full of expectations, but also nervous, anxious, unable to really grasp what I was getting into. I knew little of Maryland, less of St. Mary’s City. Whenever I thought of the USA, big and important places popped to my mind, such as New York, L.A., Washington, Las Vegas. St. Mary’s was a mystery to me. I was really going into the unknown. Still, I fell in love with St. Mary’s instantly. There is something charming about that little part of the States, something that makes it feel ‘homey’. Partially it is the landscape, which is similar to Slovenia’s – just without the hills (not to speak of mountains), and partially because everybody (here I must especially mention Robin and Julia Bates, who were my hosts as well as my substitute parents for those four months) was so friendly from the very start that it was hard not to feel accepted.

The first few days passed in a blur. I was suffering from major jet lag and minor cultural shock. I was suddenly surrounded only by the English language, wider roads, huge cars, stores filled with items I could not identify if my life depended on it. Thinking back on it, it seems silly, but I really felt like a child adjusting to a whole new situation. Then the international orientation began and things started getting back to normal. A big help was also the realization that all of the international students were equally confused as I was. So, of course, we bonded in our confusion and formed a tightly knit group. For the first few days at St. Mary’s College everything seemed surreal; eating in the great hall, which looked like it was taken from a Harry Potter movie, walking



photo: Nina Stankovič

The bit that made us get up cheerfully every morning after getting hardly any sleep, were the great classes. They started in the morning and lasted till mid-afternoon. The approach to learning was quite different from the one we are used to at our faculty. All the classes were in form of a discussion and we were able to debate certain topics and exchange points of view. As the Summer School’s topic was Cultural Encounters, we got the chance to get an insight into how students in other countries perceive the same topics in different ways. The classes were on road movies, house and home, immigration and multiculturalism, pragmatics, war and soldiers in American writing, English as an international language, body and health, military jargon. They were taught by teachers from their respective countries, each discussing topics that were within their field of research and which were also covered by the basic theme of our Summer School. The relationships established between teachers and students and among students created a relaxed, non-judgemental atmosphere in which everyone could express their thoughts on the matter and was encouraged to do so. The discussions went on even after

¹ Good things come in small packages.

around campus, discovering different kinds of coffee and smoothies every day, hanging out at the Waterfront while watching the majestic Maryland sunsets, reading books cosily seated in a library that I (being a major bookworm) can only call perfect ... After a few weeks all those, at first, fascinating things became second nature to me. And I really liked my new American way of living.



International students in DC, photo: Maruša But's archive

The academic part of the exchange was a blast. I really enjoyed the classes I was taking. One of them was titled *We Other Victorians*, the other one was called *British Fantasy*. In the Victorian class we were reading Victorian novels (that all English students at the Faculty of Arts in Ljubljana know very well), but then we were looking for the connections between the Victorian era and our contemporary society. It was really fascinating to see how much we have inherited from the Victorians and how we still follow in their steps in almost every aspect of life. The other course, *British Fantasy*, was a dream come true for a fantasy freak like me! Which English student does not dream of a class, where *Harry Potter* and *Lord of the Rings* are the canon and referred to all the time? Where you are totally not a geek if you know every little detail about your favourite novel? In the *British Fantasy* class our semester goal was to develop our own theory of fantasy through writing journal entries about the books we have read and through in-class discussions with the professor. It was encouraged in both classes to speak up and express our own opinion, to be creative, innovative and to contribute with personal anecdotes, stories, experiences. Yes, I really liked being an 'American' student.

But my favourite part of the exchange was traveling. I am a wandering soul, so the opportunity to explore unknown territories was one I took advantage of as much as time allowed. Through traveling I really got to see and understand the rich American culture a bit more. With my girls we made quite a few trips around Maryland and the surrounding states. We mostly explored cities, however, one of my favourite trips was

not one we made to a city, but our trip to the Renaissance Fair. A Renaissance Fair is something that you expect to see in Europe, at least I never equalled Renaissance with the USA prior to the fair. To tell the truth, I was really surprised by how popular events of this sort are on the other side of the ocean. The basic idea of a Renaissance fair is that people get dressed up in Medieval costumes and have fun as they imagine people did a few centuries ago. So at the fair we saw people dressed up in abundant and lavish costumes dancing quadrilles, singing medieval songs, eating giant turkey legs and other bizarre dishes, performing sketches and having recitals. There were also knights' games, jugglers, elephants and fortune-tellers. There was colour and commotion. It was a delightful sight!

This semester was not filled just with academic activities, traveling, hanging out with new friends and shopping; there were some other factors that made the fall of 2012 unforgettable and unique to me as well as to Americans. Some of them I knew we would experience, some struck everybody by surprise. Firstly, there was the notorious hurricane Sandy that hit the East coast right before Halloween. Suddenly there was the expectation of something terrifying. Waiting for the storm to come and looking at the sky getting darker by the hour. Watching the trees move like they were made of paper. The 24 hours seemed as if they would last forever, but that day also passed. The consequences in this part of Maryland were not as severe as in other parts of the state and country, still we stayed without electricity and there were quite some broken trees and some parts were flooded. Just a few days later I experienced another sort of craze; early in November, the presidential elections take place. Two candidates, two teams, two different ideas. It was very interesting to observe the campaigns, both on and off TV, and be a part of this special feeling that was spreading amongst the people. The climax was the proclamation of the results and the different reactions to the re-election of the new-old president.

Then there were the American holidays. The first one was Halloween, which I was looking forward to experience because I always wanted to see trick-or-treating. I got more than just an insight into the holiday; I was the head trick-or-treater in the Bates' household. I also got to dress up for the traditional student Halloween party at the Hallow-Greens. I spent the Thanksgiving break in Washington DC, so I did not have the traditional Thanksgiving turkey with gravy and pumpkin pies, but I got to see another day that the Americans almost religiously worship – Black Friday. This is the Friday right after Thanksgiving; a day when stores are open all night long, when discounts are ridiculously high and when people are willing to wait several hours to get into a store to buy something they don't really need at all. Right after the Thanksgiving



One of the many extravagant Renaissance masks photo: Maruša But's archive

break the Christmas holiday season started. Overnight stores were suddenly filled with Christmas items, were decorated and radio stations only had Christmas songs. It was crazy! And to make the whole thing even crazier, it is crucial to mention that the holiday season started already in November! With all the holidays and celebrations, I got the impression that the Americans live from holiday to holiday. There is always something that they are expecting, looking forward to and shopping for. Both impressive and shocking; certainly very American.

In all respects I experienced all that I thought I would and also much more. My exchange was full of adventures; some of them unpleasant, most of them incredibly good and even better. All of them unforgettable. I am grateful that I got the chance to go across the big pond and see the life in the Promised Land. I am grateful to be back home full of stories and memories that will last a lifetime.



INTERVIEWS

Interviews Section Editors: Domen Orosel and Zala Mojca Jerman Kuželički

Domen Orosel: "Don't panic." (Douglas Adams)

Zala Mojca Jerman Kuželički: "John Keats / John Keats

John / Please, put your scarf on." (J.D. Salinger)

Who Is J.B.?

by Domen Orosel and Zala Mojca Jerman Kuželički

If you guessed James Bond or Jason Bourne, you need to recheck what kind of newspaper you're currently holding in your hands, but if you guessed

Jason Blake, you were bang on. We're not talking about the Canadian hockey player, however, but a different Jason Blake, the one teaching a wide variety of classes at the department of English, though he too is an expert on hockey, especially hockey in Canadian literature. In this edition of *ENGLIST*, we'll get to know him and his career path a bit better and get a glimpse into the world

of Canadian literature.

Could you perhaps describe Jason Blake for us?

Do I have to? (laughter) How old are you?

Domen Orosel: I'm 22.

That means I arrived in Slovenia when you were about 10 or 11. My now wife is Slovenian, which is

basically why I moved here. I was teaching German at the University of Toronto and I was also enrolled in a PhD programme at the time. I happened to apply here and they happened to pick me, which is how I ended up in Slovenia.

So you first came here to teach German?

No. I came here as a “lektor” for English. You have to understand I had almost no idea of the system here. It’s entirely different from the Canadian system. It is closer to the German speaking world. For a while my official title was “lektor angleškega jezika neslovenskega rodu” or something like that, which is hilarious, but that was to get through an administrative hoop. Otherwise I translate a lot, proofread a lot, and teach a variety of classes, some practical English, some literature and some cultural. I published a book on hockey in Canadian literature and a book on Slovenia or how to live in Slovenia. So that’s me professionally.

What kind of books or texts do you translate?

I’m a linguistic prostitute, so it’s usually favours. Proofreading involves everything from articles on metallurgy, really bad polka lyrics (they go with me to the grave), some children’s books, and a lot of academic things.

When you first arrived in Slovenia, what was it like for you as a Canadian? Did you have any expectations as to how life would be here?

It was less different than I had expected. In fact, not long after I got here I ran into an American from somewhere small. He said he was disappointed how similar it was: “You take away the missing Doritos or peanut butter, which you can’t get easily, and it’s basically the same as my little town in Indiana.” But that exacerbates things. It makes it more difficult because the things that are different are shocking. I remember going to a bank and having the teller yell at me when I wanted to change my limit amount at the “bankomat”. I found it kind of funny because it was so honest. In North America you’re out of a job if you do that, especially in the States, where it goes too far in the other direction. I described most of these things in my book.

Do you know of any stereotypes about Slovenia that you find to be true?

Well, worldwide there aren’t many obvious stereotypes about Slovenia. Slovenians have many about themselves, most of which are negative. Slovenians are remarkable about saying negative things about themselves. I find many of those not true, such as “Slovenians are cheap”. The hard working thing I find fascinating, because the Slovenian work ethic is very different from the North American work ethic. I made a joke a while ago: “Oh, thank you for telling me you work hard. I never noticed that, being here for eight years.” A lot of work is done at home.

On a different note, do you follow Canadian events at all?

Absolutely. In many ways I’m more at home in Canada than here. I subscribe to quite a few journals from Canada and read the Canadian news almost every single morning.

Another thing you could perhaps elaborate on is the Slovenian school system. Since you have a daughter, maybe you could give us your thoughts on it through her experience.

My daughter is only in second grade so I can’t draw any firm conclusions quite yet. But my wife’s a high school teacher so I do have some more insight there. On the whole the Slovene education system is, I think, excellent. The Slovene national sport is clearly complaining about education, at least on primary and secondary level but when you look at the results you see that they’re remarkable. For example, if I’m stuck or can’t remember a philosopher, I can just ask the class and somebody will be able to answer the question. So in terms of the basics, the education system is quite good. That wouldn’t necessarily be the case in North

America. I noticed this when I taught at the University of Maine a couple of years ago. I asked what “apologist” meant, and I assumed they all knew, because everybody was jumping to answer the question, when in fact no one did. Slovenians, on the other hand, very often want to give the perfect answer. If you don’t get the perfect answer you don’t get any answer.

We were wondering why you became a teacher. Was that a wish that you had when you were young?

No, not really. I probably wanted to be a fire fighter. I can’t really remember. I somewhat drifted into it. It happened sort of through the back door, because I did literary things. I didn’t go to teacher’s college. In North America, you do your undergraduate, then you go to teacher’s college for one or two years, just like the professional schools (business MBA, medical faculties and law). This is unlike the Slovene system, where you teach at a high school or primary school for a while. The Slovene system is actually excellent because you learn how to teach, hopefully, before coming to teach at a university. I, however, didn’t have to make that step to teacher’s college. I got an German and English undergraduate degree at the University of Toronto.



photo: Zala Mojca Jerman Kuželički

Then, I spent a year at the Humboldt University in Berlin. I was also in Graz, Austria, for a semester, which was just fun, mostly. I did my Master’s in German at the University of Toronto, then I did my PhD here at Filozofska and my PhD on ice hockey in Canadian literature was published by the University of Toronto Press. That was the process.

Could you tell us more about Canadian literature?

Until the early 1970s, there’s still a question whether Canada has any sort of literature. Like Canadian food, it became more interesting when literature moved away from the white Anglo-Saxon Protestant heritage. Now, there’s a remarkable range of literature, among them the so-called minority voices in Canada. That was a big thing in the 1980s and early 1990s. But if the characters in those books are born and raised in Canada, it’s not really minority literature, because they have the same background as all other Canadians. The only difference is that they may speak a different language at home. Anyway, Canadian literary scene is incredibly vibrant. Only 15 years ago you could read most of the top novels that were published in Canada in a given year. Now, that’s no longer possible.

Would you say that historically Canadian literature is more British or more American?

It’s absolutely British. Until the 1950s, 1960s, it was very much written within the British vein. In the end, this had some comic effects, too: There were Canadian romantic type poets and novelists, who wrote 50-60 years after Romanticism ended, about nature in England, which is a lot different from nature in Canada. It’s hard to get nostalgic if you’re stuck in the middle of nowhere and you’re going to die. Nature was much more present at that time. Then, Canadian literature changed and got

its own voice. There were ridiculous times of cultural nationalism in Canada. It wasn’t that wide spread as Canadians make it out to be, but people did claim they only read Canadian books. That, of course, is just the essence of provincialism. A famous contra-example is Mavis Gallant, a brilliant Canadian short story writer. She’s around 90 years old and has lived in Paris for years. When she came to visit Canada once, someone asked her: “Well, why don’t you live in Canada?” to which she replied: “You, young man, have never been to Paris, have you?” This idea that a good Canadian should be home was formed in a supposedly neutral question, which was just a thinly veiled critique. On the other hand, there is also the great Canadian fantasy of making it somewhere else and that somewhere else is almost exclusively the United States. To be a star you want to be a star in the United States.

What about Canadian poetry?

The poets that are published in the magazines I get delivered here are not often that distinct. You can’t look at those poems and say it’s a Canadian poem, which is a good thing, because poets are a minority of minorities anywhere in the world. What does get exposure in anthologies and what gets taught is very often the kind of deeper poems. Nature still gets anthologised more than you’d expect, compared to anthologies from other countries. The lighter, more accessible verse is ignored. A friend of mine, who runs a journal called Poetry Quebec, talks jokingly about language poets that only do formal experimentation and are not being serious poets because you understand what he has to say.

Do you know some Slovene?

Yes.

Do you read Slovene books as well? Do you deal with Slovene literature?

I do deal with it a lot. But when I read Slovenian, I don’t get that kind of visceral joy that I get when reading in English. I read much Slovenian like a menu. That means I’ll enjoy plot driven narratives, page turners, whereas when reading in English I’m not so concerned with things like plots. I like to luxuriate in prose and the style of the writer, which is not the case in Slovene. It seems grim on the whole, especially historically.

Are there many Slovenians in Canada?

JB: Depends how you count it. There’s the question when someone stops being Slovenian -- which in the case of Slovenians is never -- but if you count those that can speak Slovenian ... Who knows. My guess would be around 30,000; the other number I’ve heard is 60,000.

How about the Slovene communities in Canada?

Do you know the German expression “Kommen zwei Deutsche zusammen, dann machen sie schon ein Verein” (If two Germans come together, they make an association)? Slovenians would make two, so they could each be president. There are plenty of cultural centres, parks and other places where people can get together.

Thank you for the interview.

You’re welcome.

“If You Could Choose To Live In Any Period Of The English History, Which One Would You Pick?”

by Zala Mojca Jerman Kuželički

and Domen Orosel

We’ve all imagined or dreamed of living in the past. Whether it’s because we want to meet our heroes of yore, see the social conditions of past generations or out of sheer curiosity, everyone has their own reasons

for such dreams. As becomes the department of English at this faculty, we wanted to find out which period in English history the staff would want to live in.

Mojca Belak: “I’d like to live in the 1920s because it was a crazy time, full of big changes. After World War One the whole atmosphere in the country improved greatly because of the new optimism that was in the air, and people started living a little. Women got more independent, had their hair cut short and started wearing dresses that revealed more of their arms, backs and legs, too. The wealthy purchased cars such as Ford model T, which they drove themselves, there were first radio broadcasts and in the dance halls the Charleston saw the light of day. In London buildings such as Bush House, the former seat of the BBC World Service, where I used to work, were being built. If I lived in this period, I’d prefer to belong to the upper, upper-middle or at least middle-middle class, because they had more fun than their poorer compatriots.”

Mojca Krevel:
“Although right now works for me just fine, I suppose I’d love to revisit the England of the 1990s.”

Mirjana Želježič: “I’d pick the time at the turn of the 18th century, The French Revolution period, the Romantic poets period, and I would most certainly make friends with William Blake, Mary Wollstonecraft and William Willberforce.”

Urška Sešek: “The Celtic times, though probably just romanticising ... Who knows what life was really like at any time in the past, even if you study all the historical data. We’d probably be shocked if we got a chance to experience a day in the life of our grandparents when they were young.”

Frančiška Trobevšek-Drobnak:
“If I was to choose the best period in the history of England (for me to live in) I would definitely have to know my social status (and gender). Since I don’t believe in romanticizing and idealizing the past, I think I should stick to the present.”

Jason Blake: “I would pick now. Even if things were better in the magical past, I wouldn’t want to like without my daily podcast diet, my smartphone’s dictionary, and other technological advances (including the option of foregoing Facebook).”
+ “In linguistic terms, it’s frustrating but exhilarating to see how the English language is being undermined yet enriched by its own global success.
Three random examples:
1) I learn at least three new words a week from my non-native speaker students - mostly from the realm of pop culture.
2) An article I once proofread came back with this critique: “The word is not ‘to weight’ but ‘to weigh.’” The peer reviewer, a non-native speaker oozing confidence but lacking vocabulary, was unaware of the meaning ‘to assign a statistical value.’ What a wonderful emblem of how native speakers are losing control of the language! In this instance, the language boss had the final say in what got published.
3) A fairly new Slovenian English textbook includes several articles from a Slovenian newspaper published in English. Almost all of the articles are error-ridden (in terms of grammar). What does that say about authenticity of language? Can we say that a physical newspaper that smudges our fingers is inauthentic just because there are grammatical mistakes in it?”

Veronika Rot Gabrovec:
A tough question, this one.
I’ve decided not to simply think about the English history but rather focus on a selection of exceptional women I would love to meet. (Yes, I know, I am tailoring your question to suit my own needs – boy, am I glad this is not an exam!)

The first century A.D.: It would be great to catch a sight of the charismatic Queen Boudicca. She must have been an extremely strong person (in all possible meanings of the word).
Around 1800: I’d like to have a chat with Lady Hester Stanhope and Jane Austen. A daredevilish traveller, a stay-at-home ‘observer’ with a wonderfully wicked sense of humour, and me – three ladies as different as chalk and cheese and a chunk of charcoal. There would certainly be much more than mere alliteration springing out of our debate.
1850 - 1900: I’d love to shake hands with Frances Buss, the woman who started a real revolution in education as she firmly believed that girls had to be properly educated. Then I would accompany Henrietta Dugdale on her voyage to Australia. I would stay there for fifty years or so, just to watch her develop into a pioneer suffragette, and then I would return to Britain to meet a very young Sybil Thorndike (I have always enjoyed a bit of drama in my life).



MUSIC

Music Section Editor: Aleksander Jovanović
“Kaj se dogaja?”

Distortion Worldwide: The Attitude of Rock Music Fans in Europe and North America

by Andrej Čuk

Every single person who’s been active in the sphere of music either as an avid fan or a performer must surely be aware of Europe’s prestige in the field of festivals and tours at least subconsciously. Our continent is constantly being praised for its intense summer festivals while the audiences are generally lauded as being more receptive to most performers who would normally struggle to get a crowd going in the US or Canada. This has resulted in the cold, hard fact that most American as well as European rock musicians make their living on The Old Continent since touring North America simply isn’t financially viable anymore; the distances between venues are often too wide a gap to bridge while the crowds most of the time are decent at best. After visiting a number of festivals both in Slovenia

and abroad and even playing two (the notorious Metal Camp being one of them), I finally decided to make the call and attempt to take in the alternative culture of the West properly. A phone call to my cousin and a plane ticket later and I was on my way to Vancouver, BC.
Initially, I got what I had been expecting: the city itself was unlike any European metropolis I had ever seen, seeming both new and possessing a spirit larger than life. A sense of order and geometry permeates the architecture of Vancouver unlike any other I had ever seen. Yet suddenly I could see where all the critiques of cultural diversity (or lack thereof) come from. Our cities contain a panoply of historical, architectural – plain cultural influences, with a similar level of cultural diversity noticeable among the populace itself. Be it Ljubljana, Paris, Vienna or Barcelona, the cities are in their own way as colourful as the people inhabiting them. By extension, wouldn’t a city made of rectangles also be inhabited by a bunch of squares? My first look at Vancouver’s neatly ordered suburbs certainly gave me that impression, with clean-looking cul-de-sacs and calm family life being the order of the day.
As I quickly learned from the relatives I was staying with, life can be good so long as you don’t give in to chance and “pointless” adventure. What’s tried and

tested truly works and learning a profession is generally perceived as a good path to financial and social stability. Opting for a higher education doesn’t allow for much leeway as far as wild antics go, since each student is either looking at eternal gratitude to a frugal parent, or years of paying back loans taken out to cover the tuition fee. Being happy has more to do with your abilities and wishes than anything else, because unlike Europe, Canada and especially the US know only one type of happy. And that type of happy does not involve summer festivals, spending your free time on playing rock music, let alone parading around town dressed like an outcast all year round. Naturally, these things aren’t prohibited by law; they just go against the social norm. Now it’s common knowledge that where there’s even the slightest notion of a forbidden fruit, someone’s bound to go after it. After this conclusion, I decided I needed to find Vancouver’s bastions of punk rock, heavy metal, indie and just all-around weird music.
When I first decided to narrow my search down to record stores I expected something in the vein of a family-friendly department store with a CD section reticently stashed somewhere in the back, yet I was in for a blissfully pleasant surprise. A small alley near Chinatown opened its way into a marvellous collection

of records and CDs unlike any I'd seen back home. It was obvious from the get-go that this is no place for a casual music consumer but something of a sanctuary for collectors, mostly in the form of old-school hipsters in their thirties shelling out fortunes for piles of Sonic Youth records. After following suit, I decided to interview the twenty-something working the counter about the local scene. His claims confirmed what I'd been expecting, namely that everything musical is held afloat by the attitude of the people. Music consumes both time and money as a serious hobby, which is precisely why each showgoer makes every music event count for them – they're living on a continent where time and money are valued above all else. Sporting wild hair, crazy clothes or a tattoo do make life somewhat harder (notably so in comparison with the way it is with these things in Europe), which is why most rock fans eschew the aesthetic part completely. To sum things up, there is little room left for posers and casuals who are seeking a social outlet in the form of alternative culture.

My curiosity piqued by what I had been told, I made the final decision to go and see two of my favourite bands play in the following weeks. After busying myself with family and sightseeing, the day of the first show finally came: I would finally be seeing one of the musical staples of my early teens live in a setting that finally did them justice. I had already seen the band in question before, however the Slovene festival setting hardly did them justice. Being surrounded either by passive bystanders or drunken lunatics is not something I see as a source of good vibes, and some bands truly do catch on to that as well. My gut was telling me that this time would be different, which was immediately confirmed by the setting as I was making my way to my first show

in Vancouver: a theatre billboard reading the name "Testament" in all-caps already made searching for the address redundant a couple hundred feet away from the entrance. "But this is where you go see Shakespeare, not speed metal," I thought to myself. Thus it was of no surprise to see none of the drunken shouting and tailgating I'm used to seeing at home, just a very neat line of people politely waiting to be let in. Everyone seemed relaxed, even cordial, that is to say, until the first note came through the PA. At that point, the whole baroque-styled theatre went berserk with soaring sing-alongs with the audience seemingly anticipating the band's every move. Not only that most of the audience knew the songs by heart (yes, even the new ones), these people were obviously happy to see Testament play the music they grew up with (or are currently growing up with, as was evident from the colourful mix of generations in the audience), everything else be damned. I quickly learned that there's a difference between a horde of concertgoers marvellously releasing stress and celebrating their preferred genre of music and patrons who take music for granted and go to shows for no other reason but to drink and fend off boredom. This time around, the former was definitely in predominant effect and after joining in on the good vibes, I left the place feeling like a happy fan should after seeing one of his favourite acts live.

The show I had lined up for the next day had offered more in the way of adventure (I'm leaving that to be described some other time) but was quite similar in spirit, if not even more magical. It might seem like a utopia of sorts just to picture people belonging to such an extreme alternative culture indulging in nothing but the music, however it does make sense once the

attentiveness (and strictness) of bosses and parents is taken into consideration. The system simply does not allow for week-long festivals and binge-drinking days on end if one wishes to maintain a steady existence, so Canadian (by extension, plain North American) music fans are left with one thing only: to focus on the music and give it their all in the heat of the moment, simply because every second must be accounted for. Sure, underground rock music might not be as popular as it is in say, Germany, which is why North American acts prefer to tour Europe to make ends meet. As a fan, however, I was impressed by the candid response of the audiences and the passion each musician or fan I spoke to defended their tastes with. Perhaps something we should take into account next time we're treating a show or festival we take for granted as just another meaningless mess of sex and drugs with rock 'n' roll on the side and remember that it should be the other way around.



CINEMA

Cinema Section Editors: Nina Frančeskin and Lucija Piršič

Lucija Piršič: "Fortune befriends the bold." (Emily Dickinson)

Nina Frančeskin: "If cats looked like frogs we'd realize what nasty, cruel little bastards they are. Style. That's what people remember." (Terry Pratchett)

Dr. Strangelove Or: How I Learned To Stop Worrying And Love The Bomb

by Matjaž Šmigoc

Stanley Kubrick, the director of cult classics such as *A Clockwork Orange*, *2001: A Space Odyssey*, and *Full Metal Jacket*, gave us a taste of the comedian within. Though of a film genre not typically associated with him, this comedy exemplifies the genius that is Kubrick.

In the time of the Cold War, General Jack Ripper (played by Sterling Hayden) goes insane. Because of his paranoia he sets "Plan R" in motion. When word about his actions reaches his superiors, President Merkin Muffley (played by Peter Sellers) and General "Buck" Turgidson (played by George C. Scott), they immediately start devising a way to stop him, but the real fun begins when the Russian ambassador joins them. The only person close enough to Ripper that can stop him is Group Captain Lionel Mandrake (played by Peter Sellers), who is on exchange from Britain.

Dr. Strangelove is not your typical comedy. It does not provide cheap laughs, so do not come looking for them here. But the setting, the plot outline and the over-the-top characters really bring out the humor. Can

you imagine a Russian ambassador working closely with the American president during the Cold War?

The performances by the actors were just brilliant. Peter Sellers plays three characters, who could not differ from each other more as they did; in the end you will not believe it is the same person. But let's not forget about the brilliant George C. Scott who looks like he was born to be a general, and Sterling Hayden looks as every bit as insane as General Jack Ripper is. Keenan Wynn, Slim Pickens and Peter Bull also do a wonderful job with their characters and there is also something to be found for all the Star Wars fans as future Darth Vader, James Earl Jones, makes his big screen debut.

Kubrick manages to blend the over-the-top characters together in such a way they even themselves out and work together perfectly. The plot seems impossible, yet probable on a certain level. He tops it off with a wonderful soundtrack that feels so wrong and so right at the same time. And let's not forget about the fact that this movie is a satire of the Cold War made in the time of the Cold War.

What about the title character, Dr. Strangelove? He is one of the three characters performed by Peter Sellers – a neo-Nazi scientist brought to help solve the Plan R situation. In the end he proves to be gruesome (with his solutions) and funny (with his broken mechanical arm) at the same time.

You will probably not laugh out loud during the

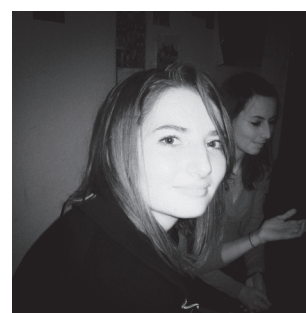
movie, but after looking back on it, you will see it is every bit as funny as it is brilliant.

I will finish off with a quote that best captures the movie: "Gentlemen, you can't fight in here. This is the war room!"

The Deep Blue Sea

by Lucija Piršič

A young, attractive woman is staring through the window onto the street, thinking. Calmly, she moves away from the window into the apartment. She goes to the kitchen, gulps down several pills, and proceeds to open the inlet of the metal gas fireplace, letting the gas seep through the holes. She places her farewell letter on the mantelpiece and lies down on a blanket stretched on the floor. Then she waits. Through flashbacks, her story starts unfolding bit by bit: she is trapped in a passionless, albeit affectionate marriage, with an elderly man, until a thrilling ex-RAF pilot crosses her way and sweeps her off her feet. Hester Collyer (played by Rachel Weisz) thus trades her tranquil, comfortable marriage with an elderly lawyer for the exciting adulterous life her new lover, Freddie Page (Tom Hiddleston), offers. Despite the knowledge that Freddie's love for her is not as strong as she would like it to be, she decides to stay with him, a



decision which in turn brings her to the brink of sanity. Weisz's convincing portrayal of the lovelorn Hester and the thought-provoking question whether life without passion is worth living are the main features that make *The Deep Blue Sea* worth watching.

Through the miserable, unfortunate love-life of the protagonist, Hester Collyer, the film convincingly examines the importance of passion in one's life. Hester clearly considers passion to be an indispensable part of life, which can be understood from Hester's remark while visiting her petulant mother-in-law: she says that she finds life without passion to be much duller. Here, it becomes apparent that she is deeply dissatisfied with her marriage, as her conscious choice of marrying a stiff, wrinkly judge has resulted in a dreary life lacking sexual tension. When she becomes infatuated with the lively pilot Freddie and they embark on a refreshing love affair, she discovers the element missing in her marriage: sex. Yet, as the liaison between the two of them progresses, their arguments become as fiery as their bedroom activities: Freddie becomes increasingly disrespectful and abusive, which reflects their profoundly dysfunctional union. Freddie's hunt for passion and excitement is also one of the main reasons why he behaves so crudely towards Hester; he is so engrossed in the need to seek further stimulation that he is unable to commit and to fully requite the love she feels for him. Even so, Hester finds herself unable to break the bond that tethers the two lovers together in this unhappy relationship.

Another strong trait of the film is the persuasive power of the main character, Hester Collyer, as the viewer can, at least partly, identify with her turmoil. Her continual attempts at saving an unsuccessful relationship and the heartache of unrequited love are instances one can relate to on the basis of personal experience. The forced restraint she sometimes exhibits when trying to suppress her emotions creates an air of entrapment and sorrow that stays with the spectator throughout the whole film. Furthermore, one is inclined to be sympathetic toward Hester because in her case, propriety dictates that she stay in an unfulfilling marriage, which would only prolong her misery. This is why rooting for her and Freddie's relationship to blossom is perfectly understandable, as one believes it will bring only abundance and happiness in her life. However, as one can see in the close-ups of her face throughout the film, the sadness pervading her eyes suggests a broken woman, whose misery one can understand.

The Deep Blue Sea is a film that will make one contemplate the significance of passion in one's life and ponder upon the complex nature of human relationships. It may also bring about memories of unsuccessful past relationships, so it is best suited for adults, for they will be able to appreciate its true artistic and communicative potential.

On the Road

by Ajda Ana Zupančič

On the Road, the American movie, which is, of course, based on the famous novel of the same name by Jack Kerouac, is directed by Walter Salles. Having been a huge admirer of the book, I was looking forward to seeing the movie version; however, I must admit that it did not meet my high expectations. At first glance, the movie is a brilliant piece of cinematography: visually, it is a masterpiece because of its evocative imagery, vivid colours, and occasional haunting expressions of human emotions. However, looking from a distance, *On the Road* failed to present Kerouac's famous story in a non-Hollywood manner.

In the novel Jack/Sal & Company are searching

for IT (the true purpose of life, pure and innocent eyes, freedom, banana trees :), experience), while in the movie this quest is not highlighted. Instead, the director decided to focus on the characters' promiscuity and Benzedrine consumption: things that attract average viewers but are not crucial for Kerouac's concept of freedom. Not to mention that in the book Jack/Sal is *eager* to experience different things, while his counterpart in the movie, *obsessively* yearning for new experiences, comes across as rather pathetic. Furthermore, Luanne/Marylou is suddenly boring and apathetic (due to Kristen Stewart's performance for sure :)), and even Neal/Dean's madness, the driving force behind the novel, is tamed. Overall, the acting is quite decent; especially Amy Adams and Viggo Mortensen stand out with their superb portrayal of Joan Vollmer and William S. Burroughs. Another "thumbs-up" is the soundtrack, which fits the period and sticks with you, especially the moving song "Hard to Love What You Kill".

I was also quite disappointed that the symbolic "Route 6" scene was not included in the movie. In the beginning Jack/Sal wants to hitchhike across the United States on Route 6, however, this dream of his is broken when he learns that the road is half-deserted. He still aspires to chase the myth of American sadness and madness, so he embarks on a different kind of journey, experiencing various roads and routes. The path leading to IT (his goal) is therefore more difficult and diverse. *On the Road* does depict this perpetual, despaired movement and characters that are caught in a vicious circle of their desires and fears. They do perform their one and noble function of the time, which is to move; however, in the movie, the road itself is not really present. Too many scenes were shot indoors, and even the ones on the road seem to lack substance. Kerouac's road is life itself, while Salles' road is rather pretentious. The movie just does not burn like Roman candles across the night.

2.5 out of 5 STARS

Cloud Atlas

by Marija Križ

Production year: 2012

Runtime: 172 min

Director: Tom Tyker, Andy Wachowski, Lana Wachowski

Cast: Tom Hanks, Halle Berry, Jim Broadbent, Hugo Weaving, Doona Bae, Jim Sturgess, Hugh Grant, Susan Sarandon

Cloud Atlas - a phenomenon that intrigues the audience throughout the whole world. Its budget exceeds 100 million dollars, making it one of the most expensive independent movies in the history of cinematography. Among other prominent nominations and awards, *Cloud Atlas* has been pre-nominated for the Academy Award for Best Visual Effects. Three directors, six plots, and a number of renowned actors, all intertwined in order to explore the development of an individual soul and follow the destiny of humanity from its early struggles for human rights, through revolutions and finally to self-induced doom. This thought-provoking film reflects a new perspective on life – the idea that the past, present and future are connected through the deeds of an individual.

The movie is an adaptation of the 2004 novel by David Mitchell. Through the six plots we are introduced to the story of a ship travelling across the ocean in 1849, a young composer struggling to leave his mark in the world in 1936, a journalist revealing a conspiracy in 1973, an old publisher and his plot to flee his nursing

home where he is held against his will in 2012, the story of Sonmi-451 who is a clone serving the society divided according to the rules of mass consumerism in 2144, and finally the story of Zachary, a man living in post-apocalyptic society "106 winters after the Fall".

As a student of English I cannot not mention the language in the movie. Many movies about the future way ahead of us are delivered to the viewer without considering this extremely important feature. Along with the constant changes in the society, we can observe the linguistic change culminating in the final plot where a new variant of the English language is developed. We may not be able to predict how the language will sound a few hundred years from now, but we most certainly know that it will not remain the same as it is today. Although the new vocabulary and altered grammar structures of "the English of the future" are probably not completely accurate, this attempt of presenting the evolution of the language is to be praised.

Another interesting fact about *Cloud Atlas* is that most of the actors play more than one role and take part in all of the six plots. Extremely dramatic transformations that are achieved through make-up, movements and gestures in some cases require an eagle eye to be able to recognize all of them. The directors filmed separated from each other, yet everything seems to be in perfect cohesion. The soundtrack has received nothing but positive critics and its status of one of the best new soundtracks has been reaffirmed with the nomination for the Golden Globe Award for Best Original Score.

My personal impression after seeing *Cloud Atlas* – an astonishing movie worth watching more than once. Nearly three hours of watching it pass in the blink of an eye. The interplay of six different plots would make you expect that *Cloud Atlas* is chaotic and difficult to follow, yet its complexity simply makes the viewer watch it with expectation while the plots disentangle into a perfect unit. All the riddles and mysteries are finally resolved, the stories are connected and bound together, making the viewer cast doubt upon everything that is known about life, love and future.

The Hobbit: The Long Expected Movie

by Lothlorien

That utterly predictable, but, I think, necessary, pun in the title done with, let's crack on.

Warnings: 1. This review was written by a fangirl and is unapologetically one-sided.

2. "Spoiler" alert. You'll notice I put spoiler in inverted commas. There are no spoilers in this review. You can't spoil a movie based on a book that's been out since 1937.

3. This review contains some fangirl terminology. If you don't understand it, Google is your friend.

The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey is the first of the three Hobbit movies based on Tolkien's book *The Hobbit*, or *There and Back Again*. It's directed by Peter Jackson and produced by New Line Cinema, Metro-Goldwyn-Mayer (MGM), WingNut Films and 3Foot7. Released worldwide on 13th December it has already brought much joy into the lives of fans everywhere. That's the technical details done with, so let's move on.

Allow me to begin with the main question posed by people who have not yet seen the movie: Is it any good? The short answer is 'Yes'. The long answer contains much queening and swooning and generally isn't as easily transmitted via writing. Another frequently asked question is whether three movies based on this one rather short book can be action packed enough not to be boring. Once again the answer is a resounding

‘Yes’. If the first film is anything to go by, the trilogy will be as epic as the Lord of the Rings. As expected, there’s a lot of running, many sweeping scenery shots and a few dramatic close-ups, this time mostly of Thorin Oakenshield’s face.

More importantly, the Hobbit doesn’t try to be overly serious. Though the main quest is, of course, of considerable importance, the characters aren’t constantly angsty about it. The film is a lot of fun. When transforming a children’s book into an adult film (not *that* kind of an adult film) the makers left in a lot of scenes with great comic potential. The troll scene comes to mind. While the protagonists are, technically speaking, in danger of being eaten, nobody’s taking the threat overly seriously. Trolls are depicted as quite silly, oafish creatures, reminiscent of the trolls in David the Gnome (Palček David), which makes the scene quite whimsical and funny. Another highly positive remnant of children’s literature in the film is the fact that the characters sing a lot more than in LotR. The dwarves sing in their lovely deep voices when remembering their exile, the goblins sing when taunting the dwarves, Gollum sings while killing his prey, and so on.

Now, let me speak briefly of the casting, which is one of the main reasons this film is as amazing as it is. Casting Martin Freeman as Bilbo is one of the best things Peter Jackson could have done. Martin is getting a lot of love from the fans at the moment, due mostly to his role as John Watson in BBC’s Sherlock. You may also know him as Arthur Dent from the Hitchhiker’s film or that guy from The Office. Those of you more involved in British television might also have seen him hosting a few episodes of Never Mind the Buzzcocks. If you haven’t seen him in any of those things, stop reading immediately and go spend the next few hours on YouTube. Go on, I’ll wait.

Have you watched it all now? Good, then we can continue.

As seen in Hitchhiker’s and Sherlock, Martin is very good at playing the reserved British types that patiently deal with whatever the universe throws at them, while secretly being totally bad-ass. He is therefore perfect for the role of Bilbo Baggins – a well-raised Hobbit who enjoys his quiet life in the Shire and is quick to assure everyone that he has no desire to embark on any adventures whatsoever. He is so wonderfully reserved and British about the fact that his house is invaded by a bunch of dwarves that go through his pantry like termites without so much as a thank you, mostly taking it all in stride with nothing but a few muttered complaints and despondent sighs. This makes the switch to BAMF!Bilbo that much more effective, though also quite predictable due to the film poster (which is amazing and if anyone can get me the one with Bilbo on it I will love you forever) and the fact that he’s played by Martin.

I think I’ve fangirled enough. In the interest of balance I should mention some bad points as well, I suppose. The picture quality is a bit CGI-ish every now and then. Or so I’ve heard overly pedantic people complain. I didn’t notice this, being too distracted by the sheer joy of 169 minutes of epic storytelling interspersed nicely with some adorableness and fluff that is the Hobbit.

Why 2012 Sucks More Than a Vacuum Cleaner

by Alejandro

The year 2012 offered us a lot of great films and TV shows to view and review. But it also gave us so many bad films which simply excel in sucking balls. In fact, they suck so much that it would be unfair to the directors

not to give them credit for all the hard work invested in making a film suck completely. So here it is: the 2012 “sucks” list.

In the first place, far away from the rest, the undisputable champion of the biggest movie disappointments of 2012; the film that’s so bad that people are still talking about it: *Prometheus*. This film is a clear-cut proof that God doesn’t exist; if he (or she?) existed, then he (or she?) wouldn’t tolerate such acts of blasphemy. Blasphemy? That and nothing else. Since the film’s release, some dictionaries have entered a new definition for the word “blasphemy” and it goes something like this: “blasphemy is an impious utterance concerning God; it is also an act of emptying one’s contents of explosive diarrhea, wrapping it up and labeling it as *Prometheus* – a prequel to *Alien*”.

The only acceptable parts of *Prometheus* are the visual effects. I admit, the film is total eye candy and it looks amazing, but so does my girlfriend with five layers of make-up. In other words, if you take a handful of feces, wrap it up real nice, put some glitter on it, you will end up having really fancy feces and nothing more. Once you regain your consciousness and are not baffled by the CGI anymore, you will start noticing all the bad things in the film. The story itself has so many plot holes that it makes a great example of how not to write. The characters are unbelievable and they don’t provide a single logical explanation for their actions. I mean, Stiffler and the guys from the *American Pie* look like geniuses in comparison to this bunch of morons. Acting is nothing special (at least we can give the acting a passing grade), but people are praising Michael Fassbender’s acting as revolutionary. Newsflash: he played an android - a robot with not that many facial expressions. In other words, he looked as if his face had had a stroke and he was unable to move his facial muscles for the whole length of the film. Fassbender knows how to act but this isn’t even remotely close to what he’s capable of.

Even the producers saw that they messed up. Maybe next time they will do a background check and won’t hire anyone who worked on the TV show *Lost* (remember that show that made no sense?). And maybe next time they mess up, they will have the face to admit it instead of saying “Well, it wasn’t actually an Alien movie, it was more of a prequel, but with not that many links...” Then why did you spend one year advertising it as such? And *Prometheus* is only the first part of a new trilogy. I can only hope that the sequel won’t suck balls as vigorously as *Prometheus*.

The next film is like a kid on a scooter with no brakes going down a hill: he will manage to hold on for some time but we all know he is going to crash sooner or later. And this happened to Christopher Nolan and *The Dark Knight Rises*. Though I usually hate remakes or franchise rebooting, I actually enjoyed the new Batman trilogy or at least the idea behind it (to present Batman in more realistic light in contrast to Burton’s gothic representation of Batman’s universe). But every single film had more and more plot holes, it was becoming nonsensical and it all peaked in the last part, *The Dark Knight Rises*.

Following the newly found tradition established by *Prometheus*, *TDKR* pays little attention to the story and whether it makes any sense or not. If the whole structure is shabby, eventually everything will fall apart. But the story itself isn’t what bothered most of us the most. It was the characters. This is probably the film with the highest number of underused/dumb characters with illogical actions. Catwoman, played by the princess Anne Hathaway, acts as if she had PMS lasting a month: nothing she does makes sense and all she’s good for is arousing the male part of the audience, wearing that tight suit of hers. Tom Hardy’s Bane was excellently portrayed, but the whole character was ruined by the story that mercilessly crashed on his masked head. And besides managing to sound like a chain smoker for over



50 years, Bale’s Batman does little to impress or to make things more interesting.

While writing this, I see that it doesn’t look like a really bad movie but when you combine the bad story with dumb characters this becomes one of the biggest disappointments of 2012. Maybe it’s our own fault for having high hopes that we will be given an epic conclusion to the whole trilogy. But it wasn’t epic. It was more like a cavity search: you were in for a ride, but that ride wasn’t all that pleasant and it seemed to drag on forever. However, maybe it’s a good thing that the film is bad since it has been marked by the Colorado shooting; now people won’t receive awkward glances when they say “Oh you have to see it; it’s to die for.” Because it simply isn’t.

Now, many of you will be shocked to find this particular film on my “sucks” list but here it is: *The Intouchables*. Before I start, I’d like to mention two things: first, I know that *The Intouchables* was filmed in 2011 but it was aired in Slovenia in 2012. Second, the film isn’t bad altogether. Sure, the story is to some extent cliché and predictable, but it is the story’s simplicity that makes it so charming. Set in France, the film revolves around Phillipe, a quadriplegic aristocrat, his newly found caretaker Driss (tough on the outside but – this is where the cliché part comes in – caring on the inside) and their relationship. Now, if I admit that the film isn’t bad, why is it on my list? One word: fans. I think this is the only film in 2012 that I actually despise because of all the publicity it got, from media and moviegoers alike.

Since the film’s release, it has been almost impossible to ask for a film recommendation without bumping into *The Intouchables* and into someone praising it as filmmaking in all its glory. But how can a film so cliché and so predictable be named as one of the best films of 2012? I kid you not, but this is the most frequent answer I’ve heard from movie enthusiasts: because of the relationship between the two main characters: “It is impressive to see that the caretaker treats the disabled aristocrat as if he was a normal person.” Of course he treats him as a normal person; he is disabled, not a mutant. Judging only by their facial expressions when people told me why I should see the film, I would bet all my money on the fact that they have witnessed the second coming of Jesus Christ, and not only a disabled person being treated normally. People actually started behaving as if they have never seen a handicapped person. “Yes, and he is so casual around him; he even made fun out of his disability.” Well of course he did; the aristocrat lost his ability to walk, not his sense of humor. Maybe the film would be less shocking if they both just sat in the room and cried for an hour and a half.

Bottom line: this film is OK, but it’s not a revelation

as some people tend to claim. If normal treatment of disabled people is in fact such an eye-opener that it becomes the main reason why someone should see the film, then it's safe to assume that, before seeing *The Intouchables*, you were convinced that the disabled people were lepers, carrying an infectious disease that makes you grow four wheels on your body.

Usually, while writing, we tend to wrap everything up with a positive thought or two. I wanted to do the same but the year 2012 gives me few reasons to be optimistic. For starters, how can you be optimistic after knowing that Disney bought LucasFilms and the whole Star Wars franchise; after knowing that they are planning to make a new *Star Wars* film? Weren't *Episode 1, 2* and *3* bad enough already, without Disney's help? Imagine a movie where the main role is given to Jar Jar BinkS (please notice the capital letters B and S), who is supported by future junkie piece of white trash Miley Cyrus or, even better, Lindsay Lohan – yes, the thought alone turns my nipples into glass cutters with excitement. Oh, wait. It doesn't. And don't forget to change the awesome story about Anakin's fall to darkness into intergalactic search for make-up, filled with glitter and sing-alongs. Just do me a small favor and please send someone over to have sex with my mom and force me to watch it – that way your movie won't be the worst thing I have ever seen.

And not only *Star Wars*, 50 more films have been announced for reboots or remakes. Why would someone try to "fix" something that isn't broken? Just because it's old, it doesn't mean it's bad. But according to Hollywood that's exactly what it means, so that's why they've decided to make remakes of *Robocop*, *Mad Max*, *Judge Dredd*, *Pet Sematary*, *American Psycho*, *Lethal Weapon* and many others. The Hollywood's answer is somewhere along these lines: "Well, we thought that the films might need a little bit of freshening up so they'll be more attractive to the younger generation." They don't need any freshening up, they are just fine. In fact, some of them look a lot better than their remakes. And if they are not attractive to the younger generation – well, I don't mind if I'm not attractive to the generation attracted to Justin Bieber and sparkling vampires. My point is: the films aren't obsolete, they are still there and available. And don't make remakes just because you're out of ideas and you need some fast earned cash.

Because that's the reason 2012 sucks: a lot of films, reboots and remakes where the story usually makes zero sense, as if it wasn't important at all; a lot of movies with a lot of fancy CGI and little else to offer. Please don't defend bad movies by saying: "Well, it's an action movie, you can't expect a good story." I certainly don't expect that *Batman* will be awarded the Nobel Prize

for screenwriting, but I expect that the screenwriters won't assume that I'm an ignorant ape who will be baffled with at least three explosions per second, or that Hathaway's ass will improve their film if they show it every five seconds from ten different angles. 2012 sucks because of all the people that ejaculate in my face with excitement when they finally see something better than *Twilight*, and all of a sudden, I'm surrounded by movie experts who recommend one single film all over the place. They claim that "this and that film" has the best acting. The best acting compared to what? Kristen Stewart's nonexistent facial expressions you've been watching for the past couple of years? 2012 sucks for even more movie-related reasons; however, judging by the announcements, the future films will suck with even more vigor.



BOOKS



Books Section Editor: Sonja Zupančič

"So many books, so little time." (Frank Zappa)

Literary Tweets

by Sonja Zupančič

John Steinbeck: Of Mice and Men

This is a book about simple dreams of two workers, Lennie and George, who travel farms to save money for a place of their own. The book deals with genuine folk English, serious issues of slavery and constant unfulfilment – a dream just beyond reach. The innocence of a child and fatal horrible deeds of a criminal joint in one man makes a lasting impression on the reader's mind.

Mitch Albom: The Five People You Meet in Heaven

Witty and ingenious, Albom's book introduces an old maintenance man, Eddie, who, surprisingly, dies at the very beginning of the book. In heaven, he meets five people who have made an impact on his life, directly or indirectly. Through them, we learn Eddie's fascinating and, in some ways, tragic life. With some, he crossed paths only for an instance but these encounters tell the fascinating story of people's interconnectedness on Earth.

Julian Barnes: The Sense of an Ending

The mysterious circumstances of his friend Aidan's death perplex the main protagonist, Tony Webster. The book is a mixture of his memories of the friendship between four close friends, his weird relationship with a girl named Veronica in high school, an awkward weekend spent at her house, and not always reliable flashbacks. Its wit is contradicted by the sense of the mystery Tony pursues in search of the truth: what really happened after Aidan and Veronica got together?

Caroline Nelson Douglas: Goodnight, Mr Holmes

Sherlock Holmes fans, this one is for you! The first

in a series of books which revisit some of the famous detective adventures, it tells the story from Irene Adler's point of view, a mysterious woman and a mystery-lover herself. In this particular adventure, the adventure of *A Scandal in Bohemia*, where Sherlock is outwitted by Irene, is patched up in some blank spots, making the original story, in a way, even more attractive.

Phillippa Gregory: The Boleyn Inheritance

Three women close to Henry VIII tell this compelling story of intrigues at Tudor court: Anne of Cleaves, whom Henry divorced after not getting an heir, Katherine Howard, a coquette and success-driven court lady, who wins Henry's heart but is later executed for adultery, and Jane Boleyn, an adviser to all of them. Gregory manages to combine historical truth with a touch of personal involvement and closeness to the story splendidly.

Tethered Fates: A Review of Emma Donoghue's Room

by Lucija Piršič

Meet Jack. He is five years old, adores watching Dora the Explorer, can count to one million and has a practical knowledge of complex words such as "nutritional" and "pasteurized". He lives with his "Ma", who is one of the two people he knows, and feels safe as days marked by routine pass by uninterruptedly, despite frequent visits by a man he calls "Old Nick". Due to his youth and inexperience, he is unable to comprehend that in reality, he and his mother are held captive in an eleven by eleven soundproof backyard shed, unable to escape. This is

how Emma Donoghue's *Room* starts: a tale convincingly depicting life in confinement from the point of view of an extremely perceptive child.

With the use of the first person narrator throughout the whole novel, Donoghue successfully immerses the reader into the child's reality and his musings. Due to his mother's decision not to tell him about the outside world, he had been raised to believe that other people, cars, animals and the environment he sees on TV are in fact, "only TV". When she finally decides to tell him the truth for the purposes of planning their escape, troubles arise as Jack becomes so extremely confused because of the influx of new information that he refuses to believe his mother's words. Despite understanding the reasons for his hesitation, one cannot help but find his repeated reluctance to cooperate almost infuriating, as their escape depends almost solely on the child's ability to assemble enough courage to carry out the plan. For example, the day before their escape, their conversation (which is slightly ungrammatical because of the point of view of a child) goes as follows:

"You shouldn't told him that."

"Jack—"

"Bad idea."

"It's a good plan."

"It's a stupid dumbo plan."

"It's the only one we've got," says Ma very loud.

"But I said no."

"Yeah, and before that you said maybe, and before that you said yes."

"You're a cheater."

"I'm your mother." Ma's nearly roaring. "That means sometimes I have to choose for both of us."

The familiarity and seemingsafety of the environment makes Jack wish they could stay in the "Room"; this feeling of security is compared to the mother's drastically different yearning for freedom, which makes the entire

situation incredibly frustrating.

The emotional appeal of *Room* is staggering. Because of his innocence, Jack is often not aware of the gravity of many of the occurrences that happen in the “Room”. The candour with which he describes their captor, Old Nick, coming in at night to have sex with his mother is excruciatingly disturbing for the reader: “When Old Nick creaks Bed, I listen and count fives on my fingers, tonight it’s 217 creaks. I always have to count till he makes that gaspy sound and stops.” The reader feels even more disgusted by the entire situation upon the realization that Old Nick regards the boy and his mother as his property, and even feels entitled to respect, when he remarks “I don’t think you appreciate how good you’ve got it here. [...] Aboveground, natural light, central air, it’s a cut above some places, I can tell you. Fresh fruit, toiletries, what have you, click your fingers and it’s there. Plenty girls would thank their lucky stars for a setup like this, safe as houses. Specially with the kid—”.

Through the eyes of the child, Donoghue successfully weaves the delicate problem of abduction, forced detainment and repeated abuse into the storytelling. At the same time, she avoids graphic imagery, and with it the possibility of overturning such a sensitive subject into an explicit, gruesome tale of horror. When Jack starts playing with his remote-control jeep in the middle of the night while Old Nick is asleep beside his mother, the jeep falls off the shelf and startles the man, who immediately assumes the captives are trying to escape. Here, Jack describes his reaction only as “Old Nick roaring like I never heard him [before]”. The next morning, while Jack and his mother have breakfast, Jack notices “the marks on her neck [...] like when I’m painting with beet juice. I think the marks are Old Nick’s fingerprints.” So, the abuse his mother had to brave does not evoke a vivid image of the inhumane cruelty of the act itself, but points to the consequences put into words only suggesting the real anguish.

In *Room*, Donoghue makes the shuddering truth not so hard to swallow by entrusting a child with the storytelling. Moreover, she gently reminds us that the bond between mother and child is unbreakable, especially in times of hardship. Although at times frustrating and even horrifying, the novel is a monument to parental love and will not leave the reader indifferent.

The Rise

by Nina Stanković

The footsteps echoed through the night. There was no other sound apart from distant city traffic noise. Everything was dark and quiet. This part of the suburbs has been abandoned for about 20 years, ever since the incident that drove most of the residents away. They moved to the other side of the city, where the trees were still green in the summer and orange in the autumn. You could rarely see any living beings on Taliesin’s Road these days – only an occasional rat now and then when they picked the wrong street to come sniffing around and they quickly retreated back to the sewers.

The man picked up the pace. He was late anyway and had absolutely no wish to find out what the consequences of being even more late would be. *It* was waiting. *It* didn’t care that he had to travel all the way to America to get the necessary information. *It* didn’t care for his begging to give him more time. *It* wanted the information quickly. *It* couldn’t let this keep happening anymore.

The man turned the corner and a big house appeared in front of him. He was finally there. He opened the creaking iron gate and continued towards the House. It was more of a mansion, really, but *It* was calling it a House, so it must have been one. He has been there

before and he didn’t like it any better than the last time. The windows were not lit, which made him feel uneasy since he knew *It* was in there waiting for him. The plaster on the House started coming off and the once luxuriant garden was now overgrown. He slowed down before he took the three final steps that led up to the dark massive wooden front door. There was a beautiful door knocker that represented some creature with ruby eyes he had never seen before. The knocker was indeed a piece of art and for a second he regretted he never got to use it. When his right foot reached the landing, the big door opened. He felt a drop of sweat leaving his forehead and continuing its way down his cheek. He didn’t bother to wipe it off because he was already too scared to move more than necessary.

He carefully entered the House and found himself in a big reception room. He stiffened every time the door closed behind him. He never thought himself claustrophobic, but the House made him feel restless. He took one final glance at a small piece of paper he’d been holding in his hand.

He knew where he will find *It*. He took the left corridor by the stairs and continued to the room on the far end. The wallpaper was dark brown, but, to be fair, all cats are gray in the dark. He felt the eyes of big framed portraits on him. He knew they couldn’t really be watching him, everybody knows that portraits with moving eyes existed only in stories. He smiled nervously and puffed air through his nose, as if to scorn himself. *After all you’ve seen, you don’t believe in such a normal thing as moving portraits?*

He saw the flickering candlelight coming from behind a door. He took a deep breath and pushed the door open. *It* was sitting in a big leather chair behind the desk. The only light was coming from the candle on the wall by the windows. He knew *It* didn’t need light to see and that the candle was there only for his sake. In *It*’s presence he felt so pathetically human. He couldn’t see *It*’s face but he remembered what *It* looked like. He took a seat and sank deep into the chair.

“I’ve been waiting,” it said.

“I – I know. Long road ...”

“Did you get everything I asked for?”

“Y - yes. N – no good news I’m afraid.”

“That was expected.”

The man didn’t know what to say next so he didn’t say anything. He didn’t sense anger in *It*’s tone but one couldn’t sense any emotions in *It*’s talk anyway.

“Studios?” *It* finally continued.

“I’m afraid so,” the man said quietly.

“As if the yellow girl and the star haven’t been enough,” *It* said. *“What now?”*

“The – the Gods.”

It made a sound that didn’t belong to this world. *It* was as if *It* blew the air out of *It*’s nose but more ... sandy. The sound made the man almost feel the tiny pieces of sand in his mouth.

The man was expecting *It* wouldn’t be happy with the news he was bringing. He just hoped that *It* wouldn’t shoot the messenger.

“The Gods,” *It* repeated slowly.

The man sat still and didn’t dare move a muscle. He knew this was bad, very bad. The Gods are the one thing that would have the strongest influence on people.

The sandy sound came from *It* again but this time ever rougher. The man’s throat got itchy and he cleared it politely.

“I am really sorry. That was the news, I ...”

“What are we talking about here, an hour and a half, a maximum two hours?”

“Six years so far,” the man answered and in that moment he knew he wouldn’t be coming out of this situation alive. Perhaps one piece of bad news wouldn’t get him killed but this was only the beginning.

“Six years! A whole show!”

The man nodded.

It roared in the language the man didn’t understand but he guessed *It* was cursing and cursing hard. *It* was breathing heavily and a few minutes passed before *It* spoke again.

“Any more news from America?”

“There’s another thing ... about a black cat ...”

“Is that the price?”

“Yes.”

It stood up quietly and walked to the window. *It* looked into the dark night. The man imagined the vein on *It*’s throat pulsating.

“What else do you know?”

The man thought for a second.

“The situation below London. It has already started. Actually, they’re practically already out there.”

“To listen ...”

“Yes. Sherlock is with them and Miss Tyrell and Buffy’s mentor.” He paused for a second. “And this is not all. They have Saruman on their side. And the Wanted one is leading the whole thing.”

“Everybody will be listening. It will come alive. Broadcast all around the world. Spreading like a disease.”

The man coughed. His throat was very dry and he wished for a glass of water.

“Are the rumours about him true?” *It* asked, still looking in the distance.

“Yes,” the man answered quietly. His throat was so dry he could hardly speak. “This summer ... there ... will be ...” he coughed again, “the ocean at the end of the lane.” He undid his tie and rubbed his hands on his throat. He suddenly felt hot.

It turned away from the window and looked at him.

“He’s been writing.”

The man was coughing hard now. “He has. A lot,” he said and fell from the chair to his knees. His coughing became unbearable and he could barely breathe anymore. It felt as if his throat was full of sand.

“If nothing else,” *It* said discouraged, *“the most important item is still untouched. Good omens remain out of sight.”*

The man raised his head and looked at *It*. He didn’t have to say anything, *It* knew. The good omens were out there, too.

More than fifteen centuries have passed since *It* created *It*’s last masterpiece. Nobody remembered the name of Taliesin anymore, people have been talking about somebody else lately. *It* envied and admired him at the same time. But despite everything, *It* couldn’t watch somebody else at the height of their fame. *It* missed the feeling of being admired and would do anything to prevent others from having it.

The man fell on the floor gasping for air. The last thing he saw was a pair of ruby red eyes as *It* stepped over him and left the room.

The piece of paper he’s been clenching in his fist fell on the floor beside his motionless body. It was tattered and you could see that somebody wrote on it hastily with black ink: Neil Gaiman’s novel *American Gods* to be turned into 6-season HBO series; story *The Price* now an animated short film; new novel *The Ocean at the End of the Lane* out in June; Gaiman’s hit *Neverwhere* a radio play with incredible cast out beginning of the year; Gaiman announces a mini-series of the novel *Good Omens*.





Literary Corner Section Editors: Leilani Štajer and Tine Lovišček

Leilani Štajer: “No need for big words, just great thunders.”

Tine Lovišček: A great artist is always before his time or behind it. (G.E. Moore)

May I Kiss You Then?

by Leilani Štajer

You have picked up this book somewhere on the way of your life. Perhaps you bought it in a bookstore, perhaps you borrowed it in a library. But here you are, holding the book covers in your hand and flipping through the first empty pages, the preface, the dedications and the title, finally getting to the beginning of the story. So here we are; you in this very moment of your day, perhaps coming home from lectures or from doing some work or from not doing any work if it happens to be the weekend, and me, this character in a book which doesn't really have a life of its own, but have somehow become a part of yours now.

Perhaps you might think that I am trapped somewhere in between the author's creation and your own imagination, but everybody is always trapped somewhere, so it doesn't really matter if I'm trapped in the middle of these pages or in a dysfunctional family, trying to give meaning to this process we call life by making a career at the expense of becoming an ambitious narcissistic someone, dressed in a nice suit, marrying someone I loved when I was still able to have feelings, but then cheating on him as soon as we move in together and have kids, regretting it all in the end when just before my final breath I find out that it was only love that mattered in the first place, but I was just too cowardly to listen to my heart and defy the demands of society.

But you are not like that. Finding you here makes me believe that you still value that precious moment of silence, building up a new relationship between your mind and a fictional character in a book. So what am I like, you start asking yourself. Well, let me tell you that I am old enough to separate love from lust and yet young enough not to care which of it prevails at the moment. My body is shaped in a way Francisco Goya depicted the woman's body with all the nicely shaped curves and breasts and curly long hair. And my mind? I honestly do not know, because there is no other mind to compare it with; in this infinite whiteness of pages, there is just me. So how do you look like? I know, don't tell me. I can feel it through the look of your eyes and through the tip of your fingers, gliding over the smooth passages of the book.

Has anybody ever told you that the hands are the most erotic part of the human body? And having you hold me like this, in the palms of your hands, makes me feel a bit excited. If you put the book in your left hand and slide the outer part of your fingers over the page – go on – I must tell you that you are, in fact, gliding over the soft inside of my pale thighs under the silk fabric of my dress. And when you press your palm against the text – you are in fact pressing it against my... foolish human, I don't even exist!

But even if I were to exist – what would make me more real than the inside of your head, imagining me in any way you desire. Don't we all make up realities in our heads which only rarely coincide with realities in other people's heads and the heads of society, the country, the world? But it's nice to be a part of your mind. If you like me, I hope that you find me some day somewhere in another human being, and if you don't, I hope you never meet anyone like me and that when you finish reading this book, you'll put it away and forget all about it.

And yet we will always have had this brief moment, this incredibly real illusion of a touch of our bodies and

our minds. I must admit that I'm slowly kind of getting to like you, silly human. I don't know why, but there is something about you humans that, even though you are led mostly by instincts of survival and recreation, there is this strange feeling of wholeness when in the presence of the right other person. And just like that you seem to forget all about yourselves and become that other being in that glowing feeling in your chest. I wish I could ever be able of producing that kind of feeling in another person, but you are the only one I'll ever know.

So may you kiss me then on this miserable paper? You might as well open the window and kiss the night's air! Either way, your lips will join mine in an incomprehensible touch, tenderer than the touch between the earth and the sky and more precious than Midas' touch of gold. Would you believe me then, if I told you I love you, though I am just a dream?

Rust

by Sandra Uranič

It was a cold and rainy Tuesday afternoon when Elliot decided to start looking people in the eyes. She had never been an eye-looking person before, she always felt most comfortable looking down at her shoes rather than at other people. She was a creature of habit and it wasn't easy for her to change her ways. Even buying a new pair of shoes was a problem for her, because it meant that she would need to get used to looking at a different pair of shoes while she walked. And when, by accident, she would actually make eye contact with a human she didn't know, she would blush, look away and start pretending that she's in a hurry. Eye contacts with strangers made her uncomfortable, she couldn't help it, and so she avoided making them. But on this particular sleety Tuesday afternoon, she would look people in the eyes. Or at least somewhere close to their eyes. Like their foreheads or hair. Or maybe legs. Legs are close to eyes, right? OK, no, not legs.

As she pondered whether the neck counts as being close to the eyes, she heard quick, determined steps coming from behind her. Elliot concluded that it was either a woman or a man wearing heels; the latter would definitely be more interesting. But alas, it was just a woman. She was walking at a much faster pace than Elliot and in a matter of seconds she rushed past. Elliot couldn't see her face, but from the back she looked tall and slim. A cascade of gorgeous black hair was falling down her back, covering a red jacket that looked like it had been submerged into a pool of glitter, and almost reaching her tight black miniskirt. Elliot was glad there were still people on this world who had the courage to defy weather. 'Screw you, rain,' she could just hear the tall woman say. In Elliot's mind she had an annoying high pitched voice. 'Screw you and all your rain relatives! I planned to wear a skirt and heels today and you will not stop me! Rain is nothing to me, I am a weather goddess!' Elliot smirked and rolled her eyes, partly on account of her own silliness and partly because she really couldn't understand why the woman would dress like that. Partly though, she had to admit, she was a bit jealous. The woman had a perfect figure.

The goddess was now quite a few steps away from her, rushing past a young man that tried very hard not to look at her too obviously. *Awkward*, Elliot thought in a singing voice and then forced herself to look at the man's face. He had a head full of curly brown hair, and on his nose sat a pair of thick black glasses that would

have branded him a nerd a couple of years ago, but today he would be categorised as a hipster. Except that he wasn't. Not really. His eyes gave away none of that high class confidence and pretentiousness that comes with being a hipster and his smile was more nervous than the I-am-so-much-better-than-you-because-I-have-a-beard kind you would usually get with hipsters. Besides, while his face was indeed covered with a beard, it wasn't very neatly trimmed, but more the kind that makes you think someone had a long party weekend. The man met her gaze as he passed, his mouth giving way to an involuntary smile, and then he was gone. He had kind eyes. Elliot wasn't sure whether she had smiled back or not. Her face definitely reddened and her heartbeat quickened, but she wasn't sure about the smile. Probably her face just put on that grotesque expression it always did when she got nervous. But what of it, it's not like she'll ever see him again.

After the hipster-nerd, Elliot walked a few yards without passing anyone, which was probably for the best. She was thinking of how, if her life were a movie, she would turn around and ask the hipster-nerd for his phone number and he would find that absolutely charming and not creepy at all and he would give her his number and they would get married and buy a house and a dog and whoa – there goes a man with a dog. She tried to snap out of her fantasy as quickly as possible and focus. She was on a mission, after all. The dog was a German shepherd, a young one. Rain was dripping from his fur; but if he minded that he didn't let it show. His tongue hung heavily from his jaw and his snout was all around the place, smelling what someone had drunkenly vomited on the street three months ago. His eyes looked old and somehow amused. She smiled at the dog as he and his owner passed. Oh, of course, the owner. The owner was a man. A male human being who owned a dog. That was a young German shepherd. Good enough.

After the dog and his human owner were well away, a man and a woman, both in their twenties, approached her. Their arms hung clumsily by the side of their bodies, the palm of one carefully and deliberately brushing against the palm of the other, but never lingering for too long. They moved slowly, the way football players do when their team is winning and they have the possession of the ball. Slowly, even lazily, they stroll across the grass to buy some time with it, just a few seconds more. *So*, Elliot realised, *in this metaphor one of the couple is a ball*. She had just managed to turn a sweet romantic situation into a football reference. And she wondered why people found her strange.

The couple passed without noticing her and Elliot walked on. A group of high school girls was moving towards Elliot, but she decided not to pay too much attention to them after hearing one of them say: "He was the love of my life! I'll never love anyone else ever again."

Now the next group was much more interesting. It was a mixed bunch consisting of three fifty-or-so-year-old women and two grey-headed gentlemen, all of them wearing clothes that were in fashion decades ago. But somehow they looked timeless. They didn't look like those pathetic celebrities that tried so desperately to look young; no, they looked their age, they looked confident and quite simply, cool. The women were all polka dots, stripes and strange hats. The two men made the whole picture even better, with their silver, carefully groomed beards and sleek suits. Elliot looked at them, smiling and trying to catch every detail from the colourful bowties on the men to the big earrings on the

women. One of the men noticed her staring and smiled back at her. To Elliot's surprise she didn't start wishing for a natural disaster at all; she blushed a bit, yes, but it actually felt good. She was doing it; she was looking people in the eyes and it felt good. It almost seemed that her positive glow made the rain stop. That thought brought back the memory of the beautiful woman from before. *Who's the weather goddess now?* Strangely, just as this though passed through Elliot's mind, that very same woman came back into sight. It was definitely the same woman, the same tight skirt, the same sparkly top. She was facing towards Elliot this time and it suddenly became painfully clear why the hipster-nerd was so obviously trying not to look at her.

There was a scar stretching from the woman's forehead, crossing her nose, cutting through her lips and ending on her chin. It was a wide red ridge that distorted her face, making her look like someone who had escaped from a Picasso painting. The scar made it hard to read her face, but it seemed to Elliot that her expression was one of a warrior fighting a war. Not because of the scar, but because of the way she looked at people. Every look was a battle and every time people dropped their gaze, the battle was lost. She walked on after every battle, her head still up high, blocking the disappointment with her invisible steel shield. But every time she lost, Elliot thought she could see a tiny speck of rust appear on the steel. Even the colourful group that Elliot had been admiring before looked away, ashamed.

Elliot was frightened. Her mouth stiffened into a tiny line and her neck wanted nothing more than to bend, look down, down at her shoes. The shoes would protect her, make her safe and erase the world around her. But she held her head up. She had to. In just a second, the woman's eyes were upon her and Elliot looked into them.

Eye contacts don't normally last long, and when they do, they're usually a sign of either intense desire or passionate hate. Except for when your teacher decides that you're the only person in the classroom and that he will explain everything to you and only you while looking you in the eyes the whole time. Not normally, though. Eye contacts with people passing you by on the street are reasonably short. This particular one, however, seemed to last for hours. Elliot's eyes kept on twitching, watering, itching, kept on escaping to look at the scar. She couldn't focus on the eyes, no matter how hard she tried. And she did try, honest. The last thing she saw before looking away and dropping her head was that the corners of the woman's mouth twitched, just about to smile, celebrate a small victory that was surely just about to happen.

With the woman past her, Elliot stopped and after a few seconds she turned around. The woman was still walking, even faster and more determined than before, seemingly unfazed by the exchange. It was nothing to her, simply one more battle lost. But there was a new speck of rust forming on her steel armour.

The Afternoon Of The Living Dead

by Sašo Braz

He's no longer human. Load. He ain't breathing no more. Aim. He doesn't feel anymore. Steady your hand. He isn't a father anymore. Touch the trigger. He isn't a son anymore. Wait for him to stop. He won't suffer. Shoot.

He's gone.

Is it murder if you kill a dead man? A corpse that walks and kills like an unstoppable virus? Do you have

to feel lousy for blowing a head off somebody that used to love, hate, want and dream? My consolation is I'm not killing them. I'm merely putting them down, like sick animals. Far from being an altruist; these sick animals have been gathering around my door since morning. They've been smashing on my door for the last six hours, with only one objective: me. Like I were the last fresh meat and they were a pack of hungry dogs. As if that wasn't far from truth.

When I was buying that house and admired that red tin roof, it didn't cross my mind that I'd have to fight for my own life on it. Had I known that, I'd buy a house with a roof that doesn't get so hot in the July sun. Had I known that, I'd build a moat like kings did, when they feared peasants will come and put them on hooks. But nobody expects a zombie apocalypse, right?

I was good at killing people when I was young. Thinking I'm defending my homeland, I shot dozens of peers, who shot at me for the same reason. But when three brothers in arms got their faces blown off by a sniper bullet in front of my very eyes, I instantly became a pacifist. I gave up my gun, left the army, became a stinking vegetarian – all that to get away from slaughter and blood.

But like some dead Greek once said, *life is a bitch*. I'm not good with names, so it might as well be Da Vinci. Either way, creatures around my house don't care if I find killing repulsive. They'd be happy if they still had brains.

"Bloody pests!" echoes my cry over the street, before my trained composure, a mixture of anger and despair, kicks in and I shoot another three invaders. Had I known, I'd buy a dog. Had I known, I'd buy a camera. How is the apocalypse going to be televised, if people start... *reload*... falling in the middle of the street... *aim*... and stand up again... *steady*... and attack anything that isn't dead yet... *wait until the creature sees you*... and the whole goddamn world turns into a walking graveyard? *Shoot, shoot, shoot*. What's the use of having cameras when there's nobody to record?

Who's going to clean this mess? I think. What if everybody in waste management turned to the living dead as well? How many people are still... people? When I cursed the white noise on every TV channel in the morning, I blamed the scrawny cable guy. Without the talking heads above the news ticker, it's hard to tell what's going to kill you next. When I wasn't awoken by lame jokes from the billboard radio hostess, I was just happy I didn't have to go to work.

The alarm clock died, I'd say to my boss after he'd finish his speech about discipline, identity and other corporal bullshit. But if those monsters from a cheap B movie focused only on my neatly cut lawn, that would be the best excuse in the history of the company.

I couldn't get to my car due to obstacles of zombie nature, boss. I haven't got a clue how surviving scientists call these things, but I've seen enough horror movies to recognize a zombie. According to fiction, some deadly virus emerged or some sick military experiment broke loose. Whatever it is (*shoot*), someone (*shoot*) needs to fix this.

Click.

Nobody expects to run out of ammo in a zombie apocalypse.

The advantage of being single is you don't worry where your family might be, while you stare into certain demise with rotting teeth. You don't have to worry about shooting someone that used to warm your bed. But there are disadvantages, too. When you're stuck on the roof like on an island in the middle of the ocean of bloodthirsty corpses, nobody's there to help you. You could take a shovel and thwack them to oblivion, one by one, but if Hollywood taught me anything, it's *don't get bitten*. The same goes if you wake up into a vampire invasion, really.

When you're watching a shaky video of extras wearing elaborate make up, screaming and trying to eat each other's faces, you don't think that might really happen. Your only fear is running out of popcorn. *You're nuts*, my friends told me when I were sitting on a cherry tree with an axe in my hands, trembling like a leaf. Listen to your mother, when she tells you *Dawn of the Dead* isn't appropriate for a six-year old. Had I known back then, I'd watch that movie three times, just to memorize how to get rid of those slimy and snarly hobbler.

The nostalgia of the zombie-free world is interrupted by the most obnoxious voice in town.

"Shoot those in front of our door too, will you?" he orders.

From all the tasty people zombies managed to eat, they had to leave my neighbor out. The neighbor that yells at his children every day, fights with his wife and calls meetings about drunken youth. Don't zombies know that in case you rise from the dead and become a murderous jerk, the first one you attack, are annoying people? You can't count on anyone these days anymore.

"I ran out of ammo," I finally reply to the old man.

"How can you run out of ammo? Can't you see they are climbing into my house? You're alone, but I have a family. Save us!" screams Arthur. I have no idea what his name is, but he looks like an Arthur.

"Buy your own guns, Arthur!" I yell back. "What kind of an alpha male are you, not having guns in your possession?"

"Who the hell is Arthur? Stop fooling around and go to the Moon's house. Nobody's home, but the gun should be there. A big one!"

Of course. Whatshisface Moon, one of the nicest neighbors, an ex-cop. We used to have prolonged debates about guns, since that was the only interest we had in common – besides caring about a neatly cut lawn. He showed me his gun cabinet once – a real arsenal. Every normal human being would be concerned that his neighbor owns an armory, but I was impressed. I'm even more impressed now, realizing, I can clear all these monsters from the street, save Arthur, maybe shoot him in the knee and then save what's left of the city.

When I get past the platoon of hungry stiff, of course. Hope reclines back into its cosy shell, while I start cursing. Had I known, I'd buy a house covered with bricks. A good part of invaders would be eliminated by a good aimed throw.

What if I fake I'm dead? Will they leave like bears? Or will they buy me a drink, becoming friends with me? So many important questions, but no answers.

Life is simply brilliant: no ammo means I can't kill them and not killing them means I can't get to more ammo. Moon's roof is too far to reach; Arthur definitely won't be of any help, which means I am left to my own devices. No matter how ammo-less those devices are.

I slide down the roof window back to the empty room with old and roughed pink wallpaper, a relic of past dwellers. Stairs always squeak, which makes hell of a dramatic atmosphere in a besieged house. I halt in the middle of the hall and think. What would MacGyver do? He'd probably make a machine gun out of a screwdriver and tyre chain. But it ain't that easy with no script at hand, which means anything lethal and volatile should do. While staring at the picture of the Eiffel tower and a series of unrelated thoughts, I think of the Molotov guy. *I could fry them!*

Twenty minutes and four glasses later, the deadly cocktail is ready. I stuff a kitchen cloth in the bottle, drink another shot of scotch and return to the roof – sun still burning, Arthur still moaning, me still thinking. *Will the concoction burn at all?* The bottle promised high percentages of inebriation, so the beasts will at least be stumbling drunk if not evaporating in flames.

“Lure them closer, Arthur!” I order the reluctant neighbor. “I will bake them, but not if they stand in front of my own house!” I just had a worrying thought about burning my house down if I attack them right in front of the door.

“You lure them! I’m not risking my life for your stupid plan!” Arthur bleats. As if he had a better one.

Cursing neighborly kindness, I notice the Moons have a pool. *How the hell didn’t I see it before?!* I check around, to see if anybody saw my stupidity. I almost burned my house down, while water would be of more

use. Jumping from the roof and hitting the ground would be a bad idea, but water is known for its reluctance to act like solid rock. I pull out the cloth and take a sip of the mixture. If that continues, I’ll turn alcoholic again.

But then again, a sober man would not do what I am planning to do. If I manage to reach the pool, I can search the house and carry on from there. I run and take a leap, jump over a bed of petunias and a steel gate, right into the pool. Cold water and no floor under my feet.

Had I known, I’d learn how to swim.

The Overdue Sunrise

by Tamara Lazić

The day when these hard metal bars start dissolving
And the fence falls down to the senescent concrete—
The day this pavement sprouts an Ambrosia crawling
The sunlight will illumine this abandoned street.

He swears he will forgive it all
If a tender sunrise should befall—

When sunrays betray this chasm for a small crack
And all spectral adversaries raise their flags white
He’ll forgive the wasted time and the sky pitch black
He promises and swears he’ll forgive his own plight
He’ll love the world entire when one loves him back.

Once this stony desolation is blessed aright
That day—I know—he’ll forget there was ever night.

If only a sunrise should befall
He swears he will forgive it all.

Sonnet

To dearest Petra
by Rok Mulec

The winter’s wind that pierced through poet’s heart,
Obsessed and broken by the recent past,
drank from it love, and filled it with despair,
engaging it and leaving it to rust.

At that point, it was God’s own mighty will to
resurrect the heart half-broken, lame,
enlightening it by bringing spring around
setting fire to it by love’s joyful flame.

This flame has reached the poet’s waiting mind
pervading it with will to live and love
escape the wretched clasps of fate unkind.

Tenderly you came and brought this flame of love,
renewed the feeling precious and so dear,
and I found my peace, I’m happy you are here.

Brave New World

by Leilani Štajer

Why can’t I know
the feeling of going somewhere
and getting lost without ever being found?

Why aren’t there any more places
unaltered by the hand of man
with hidden secrets that were not meant to be
uncovered?

Has Earth become too small,
or have we grown too big,
too greedy,
too hasty;

not in fact robbing mother nature’s treasures
but the riches of our own souls?

Not A Sonnet

by Lux

Four innocent letters a simple word form,
A duet of consonants two vowels adorn.
Together their meaning more power does hold,
Much force on man-kind they often unfold.

Forests burned down, villages plundered,
Castles demolished, mountains all sundered.
Feelings ensorcelled, treasons employed,
Hopes that be shattered, an’ dreams all destroyed.

A Mind cunningly trapped in jealousy’s maze,
A Body fervently burning in lust’s searing blaze.
A Soul fiendishly twisted in vanity’s praise,
A Heart silently poisoned by yearning’s cold haze.

No more of such things shall we further debate,
The word that we speak of is love – and not hate.

Off Chance

by Tamara Lazić

If you were to hold out your hand to me,
I’d let go of straws I’ve been grasping at
and holding to.
RISKING immersion in the coldest sea
on the off chance of being saved by you.

Let the water take me to the rapid;
I’d EMBRACE the waves lulling me
to dreams I thought had passed.
Risking nights most unbearably rapid
on the off chance of DAYS happy at last.





Linguistics Section Editor: Ema Karo
 “Buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo buffalo buffalo Buffalo buffalo.”

How Many Languages Do You Speak?²

A Linguist's Lament ...

by Adrian Stegovec

Prologue:

Midway upon the journey of our life (but hopefully not literally midway) I found myself within a cold bright room of waiting. The straightforward pathway had not been lost, but my wisdom tooth was soon to be. The sterile ceiling neon lights were starting to annoy me and there was only one other person waiting with me. We've done weather, we've done “everything is going to hell”, we've complained about our dentist, so sooner or later it was bound to come to ...

Root Canal: So, what do you do in life?

Wisdom Tooth: Linguistics.

I. The Question

RC: Ah, a linguist. And how many languages do you speak?

WT: Oh, this question ...

RC: Why? What's wrong with it?

WT: Nothing is wrong with it. It's perfectly grammatical, and that's just one of the reasons why language is so intriguing. And to answer your question, not that many. I wish I spoke more languages, but being able to speak just one is fascinating enough. Don't you think?

RC: I don't know, you're the linguist ... even though now I'm not sure what that means anymore. What sets you apart from people studying individual languages then?

WT: In a general way, nothing. They're linguists too.

RC: That was helpful ...

WT: OK, I realize that didn't really clarify anything, but that is only because it would be unjust to leave anyone out. In a broad sense, linguistics is the science of language, and there are many approaches to language related phenomena that, while interesting in their own right, I myself do not deal with. These include philology, sociolinguistics, lexicography, rhetoric, and the list goes on.

RC: I'll pretend I know what all of those are, but I still don't know what you do, “Mr. Linguist”.

WT: In a narrow sense, linguistics deals with the nature of natural human language.

RC: As opposed to artificial alien ones?

WT: If you're a Trekkie, I must disappoint you, as I can't tell you anything about Klingon.

RC: Too bad ...

WT: Any formal symbolic system that conveys information can be considered a language. That includes computer programming languages, naval flag signs, even Native American smoke signals. These are all artificial languages.

RC: What about the “human” part?

WT: As my first linguistics teacher [1] once asked the class, paraphrasing Bertrand Russell: “*When is the last time your dog told you that his parents were poor but honest?*”

RC: I beg your pardon!? Do I look like the Son of Sam to you?

WT: No, you don't. But I was trying to make a point there. You probably heard stories of bees communicating

with each other, or how complex bird and whale songs are. The fact is, while these animals *do* convey information by means of sound or movements with an amazing level of complexity, they are nowhere near to what humans do just by forming a single sentence.

RC: So what are these things no animal can ever hope to perform?

WT: For starters, we can lie.

RC: And that's good!?

WT: At least for having a conversation using natural human language it is. What I really mean by lying, is that no matter how complex, animal “languages” are directly causally correlated to the environment and sensory perception. A bee can communicate to other bees the location of some flowers, but cannot lie about it or decide to communicate it at a later time and not at the moment of discovery. The same goes for birds. During mating season a bird sees a suitable mate and it must sing. It will not struggle for hours with the decision of whether to call up a bird it thinks might like it back, but is not really sure, and when finally deciding to do it thinly disguising it as “going out for a cup of coffee”.

RC: Let's say I understand. But what about those chimps they taught sign language?

WT: It depends on what you mean with “taught” or “sign language”?

RC: The regular meaning? Does it *really* matter that much?

WT: In fact, it does. If by “taught” you mean engaged in the act of teaching without the chimp actually learning and by “sign language” you mean just a series of symbols associated to objects or activities in their surroundings, then I can reply: Yes, but what of it? However, if you are implying these chimps actually acquired a form of natural human language, I have to answer: Now that's just silly, who told you that?

RC: A movie, documentary, TV show, I don't remember ...

WT: See, that's why you shouldn't always trust what you see on TV.

RC: Whatever ... You still didn't explain anything about why that's not true.

WT: I already explained a bit about what natural human language is just before.

RC: Sure, but I remember these chimps supposedly expressed their wishes with hand gestures, like if they wanted a banana or something. Sure, they might be hungry and it's just a reaction tied to the circumstances, a reflex like with the birds and the bees before, but suppose a chimp learns how to take advantage of this and asks for food even when it is not hungry, just because it can, or for some other reason.

WT: I see you remember about the birds and the bees!

RC: Yes, my parents and I already had “the talk”.

WT: I didn't say this was the only defining characteristic of natural human language, there are plenty more I won't have time going into even if the dentist decides to take even longer to work on the poor guy inside ...

RC: ...

WT: But I digress ... again ... Where were we? Chimps! If you observe any sentence in our conversation, you will notice it has a default word order. We can't just switch around words as we please, unless we're Yoda, and even then we might find out if we took the time some default word order uses he. You said: “*How many languages do you speak?*” but you would never say: “*Many how speak you languages do?*” This is not only because of word order and I'll explain that if we'll have time. As far as I know, these chimps were never able to combine words into

sentences like we do, which manifested in inconsistent sentence word order. If they knew the symbols for *banana*, eat and me, they never actually figured out that you need to combine them in a particular order, they just associated a particular set of symbols with the activity of eating a banana. I'm being generous here, as I'm not sure they even bothered with pronouns ...

RC: So for them it's essentially the same if they say: “*Dog bites man*” or “*Man bites dog*”.

WT: Pretty much.

RC: But what if they didn't try hard enough? Maybe it takes them longer to learn, because they aren't smart as we are.

WT: It's not only time. Look at children. Even if the remarkable speed at which they acquire language is ignored, the process is very different from what was attempted with chimps. It appears to be completely automatic, and children seem to know things they couldn't possibly know if they were only repeating what they heard. This is called the *poverty of the stimulus* problem. The mother will say: “*Hewe comesh the aewopwane!*” And get: “*Oh dear Mother, I told you before, this thing you keep referring to as food is rather foul and displeasing, I shall tolerate it no more!*” I'm exaggerating, but it's really quite surprising. Children are also very resistant to negative input; they won't change what they are saying just because someone corrects them [2]:

Child: *Want other one spoon, Daddy.*

Father: *You mean, you want THE OTHER SPOON.*

Child: *Yes, I want other one spoon, please, Daddy.*

Father: *Can you say “the other spoon”?*

Child: *Other ... one ... spoon.*

Father: *Say ... “other.”*

Child: *Other.*

Father: *“Spoon.”*

Child: *Spoon.*

Father: *“Other ... Spoon.”*

Child: *Other ... spoon. Now give me other one spoon?*

RC: Now that I think of it, it is pretty weird how they do it. I wanted to ask why you used acquire sometimes instead of learn, but it makes sense now in since we absorb language like sponges at a young age.

WT: Look also at what we “grown-ups” can do once this amazing skill is fully developed. Almost everything we say is completely new and never spoken before. Knowing the intended readers of this text, they will probably remember the example from *A Bit of Fry & Laurie*: “*Hold the newsreader's nose squarely, waiter, or friendly milk will countermand my trousers.*”

RC: So we're already breaking the fourth wall!? Speaking of breaking fourth wall, do you say that even when referring to this meta-thingy in printed media? If so, why? I mean the term probably comes from TV, where in a sense the screen is a fourth wall of a kind ... Explain Linguist!

WT: Once again I must disappoint you. I don't know much on the subject, as this is not really what I do. It is true though that idioms, differences and changes in the meaning of words seems to be what intrigues laymen the most about language [3]. Oh, the times I had to “explain” why the stem for *bear* differs in Slavic languages from other closely related languages ... Interesting stuff, yes, but if you really want to know what I do, we'll have to move to a completely different set of phenomena. And the way I see it, they are infinitely more intriguing in the grand scheme of things ...

RC: Well then, what are you waiting for!?

² I would like to thank the editors and proof readers for their corrections and comments. All remaining mistakes, factual or of any other kind, are my own. Comments are welcome at: adrian.stegovec@gmail.com

II. How?

WT: I'll start with a question: Why do we only ever form grammatical utterances when we speak?

RC: I don't know. Do we?

WT: Yes.

RC: Like ... um ... when ... when we speak ... um ... talk like this ... um ... is this, like, also grammatical?

WT: I was overgeneralizing a bit. Language “in the wild” is not exactly what I was thinking when I said that. Like other scientists, linguists also have to perform controlled experiments to get relevant data.

RC: So you observe speakers of different languages in Petri dishes?

WT: No, but in a sense we do that with different sets of sentences and sometimes words. Unless you're interested in what we call *performance*, or sometimes, pardon my French, *parole*, what you uttered before just won't hold up as satisfactory linguistic data.

RC: And what will?

WT: Perhaps it's time I said something about my particular branch of linguistics.

RC: I agree!

WT: The framework I work in is called Generative Grammar, and it began with the pioneering work of Noam Chomsky in the late 50's of the previous century. Heard of him?

RC: Yes, but linguistics is mostly just mentioned when people talk about him. I don't think I heard any real details about it. Enlighten me!

WT: The problem of what constitutes proper linguistic data is not exactly a straightforward one, however, even before Chomsky some people concluded that we must research the underlying “invisible” rules with which we form grammatical sentences – our language *competence/lanque*, and to do this we must disregard how we actually use language in everyday life – the *performance/parole* from before.

RC: But if you don't analyze how we talk in everyday life, what do you analyze? Isn't observing how we use language the only way we can observe language anyway? It's like saying we should do physics without observing how things in our universe actually behave. It's counterintuitive to say the least. How can you say anything about anything without actually observing the thing you are supposed to be analyzing? It's like the anecdote about philosophers debating on how many teeth are in a horse's mouth without actually walking up to a horse, opening its mouth and counting the teeth.

WT: That's not the analogy you should be going for. Remember, I did not say we don't observe language at all. Think instead of the textbook physics experiment of dropping a rock and a feather simultaneously. If we observe the two falling in nature, the rock generally falls faster than a feather. But this appears to be breaking the law of gravity, as the two should be falling with equal speed.

RC: Yes, but you're ignoring the influence of the atmosphere and the difference in air resistance. The two objects are not breaking any laws of physics. If we observed the same thing in a vacuum, we would see them reach the ground at the same time, if dropped at the same time from the same height.

WT: Exactly!

RC: Exactly what?

WT: You figured out the problem yourself.

RC: I did?

WT: Yes. The laws of gravity are the same whether you are in a vacuum or not, yet it does not appear so when just observing. We have to stipulate they are the same everywhere and test it in a controlled experiment, then we can determine how air resistance and everything else fits in the picture. It's the same with language. There are many different things that could be affecting how we

speak in everyday life: we could be tired and leave out words, forget a particular word, get interrupted, say something intentionally ungrammatical like you did before to illustrate a point, and the list goes on.

RC: And what's your artificial vacuum tube, then?

WT: Grammaticality judgments.

RC: How does that tell us anything? I mean, don't we just learn either in school or from a grammar book what's right or wrong? And isn't any language essentially just a sort of agreement on an arbitrary set of rules and a list of words?

WT: You're forgetting that just moments before you agreed with me on how amazing it is that children acquire language so fast practically on their own. And this happens way before they go to school.

RC: Right ...

WT: And don't forget that there are peoples around the world with no writing systems, no grammar books, no school-like institutions, and that their children acquire language nonetheless, and the whole community uses the same set of rules without any enforcement.

RC: You're right, my bad. Tell me more about grammatical judgments then. I'm still a bit confused. If we only form grammatical sentences, wouldn't all of them also be judged as grammatical? I mean, ignoring all the “everyday language” stuff that's inhibiting us from seeing this underlying perfect set of rules, whichever way you achieve this.

WT: Perhaps it's easier with an example. Hear out these pairs of sentences:

1a.) *I am really annoyed right now.*

1b.) **Am really annoyed right now.*

2a.) *It is raining heavily outside.*

2b.) **Is raining heavily outside.*

RC: Well, the second sentence in each pair is not really a sentence. It would be, if you added the right pronoun, like in both first sentences.

WT: Could you also say they are ungrammatical?

RC: I guess I could.

WT: Well sir, thank you for participating in my linguistic experiment!

RC: OK, and what did you learn from it?

WT: I tested the hypothesis that every English sentence must have an overt subject. This is really a simplified account, but in principle, if English sentences didn't require subjects all we needed was a single sentence without a subject to disprove the hypothesis.

RC: Like “*Go!*” or “*Run!*” Aren't imperatives sentences too?

WT: I said simplified, but in a sense, you're right, my theory should also account for why they are different. I don't think we'll be able to do it here and now. Let's look at something different that's interesting about these sentences.

RC: Let's ...

WT: You said the second sentence in each pair was not a sentence. Does that mean you didn't understand what it meant?

RC: Oh no, I understood. They have the same meaning as their grammatical equivalent, they just don't sound right.

WT: Look closer at the first pair. In both sentences we have the auxiliary verb “*am*”. And you will agree with me, that it is only used when the subject is first person singular.

RC: Yes ...

WT: But why do we need them both, if they basically convey the same information? A “common sense” grammar would just instruct us to have either one or the other. Actually, in some languages you get just that, think of Italian or Slovenian, where you can have sentences without an overtly expressed subject.

RC: I was just wondering about that. Also, in the second pair, you don't really need the subject. No one is raining, and in the languages you mentioned, you don't have a subject there.

WT: Exactly! I was hoping to get there, but you already figured it out. The question here is why should a grammar work like that? It seems sentences can have meaning without being grammatical, and as we can see in Stephen Fry's example from before and the more famous Chomsky's “*Colorless green ideas sleep furiously*”, we can have a perfectly grammatical sentence essentially without meaning.

RC: Isn't this a problem?

WT: Yes and no. It just requires us to posit independent “levels” for the two: syntax, which combines words into grammatical sentences, and meaning, by which I don't necessarily mean semantics. The trick is to discover underlying rules of what is syntactically possible, by finding out what is impossible.

RC: Essentially, which words, in what order can appear in a certain type of sentence in specific languages?

WT: It's a bit more complicated. Remember I implied before that linear word order isn't everything.

RC: But sentences are just words spoken in a certain order. What else could there be?

WT: Remember those grammar exercises in school, where you had to underline individual phrases?

RC: Oh, don't remind me ...

WT: Just bear with me for a moment. You have a sentence like: *The nice nurse read my name.* The instructions are: underline all the nominal phrases. What would you underlie?

RC: *The nice nurse* and *my name.*

WT: You just unwittingly admitted there's more in a sentence than linear order – additional abstract information about the words and the relations between them that isn't perceived in the words we utter or write down.

RC: I did that?

WT: Let's go even further. If you had to choose, which of the two nominal phrases is “closer” to the verb. I know both are needed to form the sentence, but does it make more sense to group together “*the nice nurse read*” or “*read my name*”?

RC: I'd go with the second option, but mostly because my first instinct is to analyze the first one as a completely different sentence. It maybe helps that “*read my name*” sounds to me like its own activity, like it could be a verb on its own.

WT: Maybe I chose a bad example, but you got the point nonetheless. We generative linguists would say that read and my name form a single constituent – the verbal phrase.

RC: That doesn't sound that special. I mean we used this term all the time when we did these exercises in school.

WT: Did you also explain what the implications of it are? How much of a leap it is to posit a hierarchical structure of a sentence?

RC: No, I don't remember that. Things were generally there just because.

WT: Consider something else. Say you want to put an adverb in the sentence, like *almost*. Where can you put it?

RC: Um, let's see ... *The nice nurse almost read my name.*

WT: Anywhere else?

RC: No, I don't think so.

WT: How about: *The nice nurse read almost my name.*

RC: Yuck!

WT: And why is that?

RC: I don't know. You tell me.

WT: Because we can't insert the adverb between two components of a constituent. Here's why phrasal structure, this is how we refer to this phenomenon of certain words “belonging” together and being hierarchically related, is not just some notation that doesn't tell us much about

why something is grammatical or not, like underlining in those exercises. Actual generalizations can be made by assuming a structured architecture of sentences. It is a consequence of the structure that the adverb cannot appear just anywhere, not just an individual rule prohibiting it at that position within a sentence. This is also what the chimps in the experiment lacked, being able to form abstract constituents from individual words.

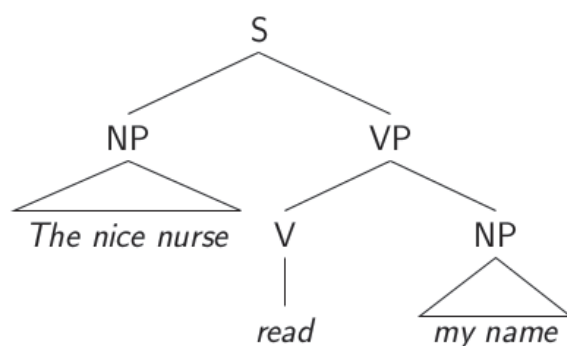
RC: I'm having troubles imagining this. Could you draw it for me? I assume you do have some sort of convention how to represent these relations ...

WT: We do. I'm just afraid I don't have anything to draw it on.

RC: Didn't we already establish we're fictional characters in a written text? What's stopping you?

WT: Alright. Here's a simplified syntactic tree of our sentence:

RC: I guess it does look kinda like a tree ... if you turned it upside down. And it is a bit clearer now.



WT: No problem. And before you even ask, there are plenty more things we can explain with structure, and plenty is an understatement here. Basically, pretty much everything in syntax is in one way or another related to structure. Generative linguists will even go so far as to say it is essential to language; that there is no other way to explain the properties of natural human language. This was actually one of Chomsky's first great discoveries [4] – it is impossible to develop an algorithm that would form grammatical sentences, if it only operated with linear order.

RC: Algorithm?

WT: A set of rules that apply in a certain order. Imagine a computer program if that helps. There's a neat example attributed to Morris Halle [5], another important figure in early generative linguistics. A word that is impossible to form with a set of rules working just on linear strings of words.

RC: And that is?

WT: *Anti-anti-missile-missile-missile*.

RC: A-what-now?

WT: Ignore whether this is an actual thing, or whether it is technologically plausible, but this is probably how we could refer to a missile designed to shoot down missiles designed to shoot down missiles. And the fun thing is, it doesn't have to stop here. We can go on and on with this, embedding the word we just got within another set of prefixes and suffixes, burying the original stem *missile* ever deeper in the structure.

RC: OK, you couldn't teach a *computer* to do that without some notion of structure, but what if this is just something that humans can do that computers can't do yet, because our brains work in a different way or something?

WT: Experiments were done, where it was attempted to teach people rules that use only linear order, such as "*this word can only appear as the third word in a sentence*", and people just couldn't operate with such rules using the regions of the brain normally associated with language. Also, there's no record of any language that works this way.

RC: Hold on a second! Brain centers associated with language!? Where did this come from?

III. So What's the Truth, Then?

WT: Oh, right! I thought you understood that was an underlying assumption all along.

RC: And what made you think that?

WT: I don't know, I guess I assumed it. In our field you're usually either talking to people that agree with the *innateness hypothesis* or have to argue with people who vehemently disagree with it. It's been a long time since I had to explain it to someone who doesn't know about it.

RC: You can still fix that ...

WT: Well, we talked about how humans are different from animals, because we have the ability to acquire and use natural human language ...

RC: ... yes ...

WT: ... and I also mentioned the poverty of the stimulus problem, where children seem to know things about language they could not have picked out from what they actually hear ...

RC: ... also true ...

WT: So the simple solution to this hard problem is: Our capacity to do all these things, or *the language faculty*, is innate.

RC: Right ... So what you're saying is, we're born with knowledge of our language already? I can see so many ways how this can quickly lead to eugenics ...

WT: And you're wrong. I didn't say we're born with knowledge of our language. We're all born equal, but with the capacity to learn any natural human language we're exposed to. There's nothing prohibiting a Japanese child to acquire English when raised by an English speaking family. In fact, this is exactly what happens in each such instance.

RC: But how can language be both innate and acquired?

WT: The general idea is we are born with an innate Universal Grammar, a set of universal principles that all languages follow with included parameters where different settings are possible. One such case would be the obligatory subject in English. Let's say the universal rule is "*every sentence must have a subject*". Now, we said that it doesn't seem to be so in some languages, but what if the subjects are there, but just remain unpronounced. We saw that there can be information that is invisible in pronounced sentences, but is still there.

RC: But how come subjects are only always pronounced in languages like English?

WT: This is why we have parameters, in this case the "*pro-drop parameter*". Pro is what we call a certain type of invisible subjects and there is reasonable evidence from other phenomena showing something occupies the spot of the subject in these cases. The parameter can then be set for a particular language as: "*subjects can remain unpronounced*" or "*subjects must be pronounced*". The child acquiring a language just sets this parameter and applies it everywhere. This is why in the process of acquiring a language children are so resistant to corrections.

RC: And this universal grammar or language faculty resides in a special portion of the brain? Is that why you mentioned special brain centers before?

WT: It's not that simple. We can't really point to a region of the brain and say: "*That's where language is!*" And no one's really claiming that there's a single region responsible for it, or even saying that the language faculty is an organ in the most literal sense, like a liver. It's probably not just a "chip" evolution inserted into our brains and suddenly we were able to talk. At this point we can just estimate which regions are and which aren't somehow involved with our language faculty, and maybe make rough speculations about their particular role. Furthermore, we don't really know the true nature or form of Universal Grammar or the number and true nature of parameters.

RC: So you really don't know anything ...

WT: I disagree. Linguistics has progressed more in the last fifty years than ever before. And it's not as if any other science, even physics, has a complete picture of how

things work.

RC: I don't know ... that Morgan Freeman show makes it look like physicists understand pretty much everything: the Big Bang, black holes, strings, quantum thingies, and all that.

WT: I dare you to put two theoretical physicists in a room, ask them to about their thoughts on a unified field theory and see how things pan out.

RC: And you like to work in a field with so many unknowns? Don't you have doubts about it all?

WT: All in all, I'm really hopeful about linguistics. Yes I know, it's what I do, it's only expected, but it seems to be going places. And I actually enjoy waking up knowing that there are still problems to be dealt with, that's part of what makes it fun.

The Nice Nurse: Next!

Epilogue:

The text above is an idealized account of what happens when I have to explain to people what I do. This frequently happens when I either had "one beer" too many, or when traveling home wanting for it to end as soon as possible, meaning: I am not always bringing my best game. So I came up with a fictional interlocutor, one who is much more cooperative and open than most, a quieter setting, despite the feeling of impending dentistry doom, played it out in my head and then in writing.

I hope you at least tolerated this mess I put together. If not for anything else, check out the references; they are not there just for me to boast I read them or to show you I did my homework. At least give *The Language Instinct* [2] a try, it is a very accessible overview of modern linguistics. The other references might get a bit technical [1, 5, 6], and maybe leave Chomsky [4] for the end, if you decide that linguistics might actually be your thing, too. And if you actually liked how this was written, a few of them I even kind of ripped off [3, 6]. It is debatable whether there is any purpose in making generative linguistics accessible to the general public [7], but if nothing else, it is a science uncovering truths about human nature which does not necessarily require expensive lab equipment, and maybe we should keep that in mind in these rough times.

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Sport Section Editor: Luka Finžgar

“...So please, be tolerant of those who describe a sporting moment as their best ever. We do not lack imagination, nor have we had sad and barren lives; it is just that real life is paler, duller, and contains less potential for unexpected delirium.” (Nick Hornby)

Basketball in England. What's That?

by Ina Parkelj

When you think of sports in England and even Britain, the last thing you would think of is basketball. And rightly so. Basketball is ranked fairly low on the popularity scale as football, cricket and rugby take most of the popularity trophies with their massive crowds.

But basketball in Britain has quite a rich history. It has been introduced by the YMCA soon after it had been invented in the USA. During the World Wars the popularity of basketball grew among soldiers (arrival of the American soldiers in 1917 boosted the popularity extensively) and civilians, but never had great support from the media.

In 1987 The British Basketball League (BBL) was founded, which is the premier men's professional basketball league in the UK. There is no relegation or promotion between the second tier leagues because of the franchise system used in the BBL which is otherwise typical for the North American sports leagues. Currently there are 12 teams competing in the BBL, with representation from both England and Scotland. The Newcastle Eagles are the most successful club with 5 Championships under their belt and the biggest fan base across England.

There are probably many reasons why basketball isn't as popular as some other sports in England. One of them is that Sky Sports is the only television channel with rights to broadcast BBL games. And they mostly do it with delayed coverage or live screenings every week. The other big reason is that during the regular season, team schedules are not identical and neither are match days, with games scheduled mainly around venue availability. Because of this, teams may find themselves playing a series of four or five home games consecutively followed by a straight set of away games. As the regular season is also particularly short many games are played over weekends as 'doubleheaders' whereby a team will play games (possibly a home and away game) on consecutive days. The last big reason is that none of the British clubs play in any of the European competitions that would possibly bring big, famous foreign players on the island and attract bigger crowds to the venues.

The fact that most of the venues for the basketball tournament in the London 2012 Olympics were sold out gives hope that English crowds do like the sport and are keen to learn it. Who knows, maybe in a couple of years and with the help of a wealthy sponsor we'll be seeing the Newcastle Eagles or some other team from BBL conquering European basketball halls.

Well, if you are a fan of basketball and you are one of the people who like to attend games live, I would invite you to come and support the men's and women's team of the Faculty of Arts, with representatives from our department as well!

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What Happened to The Premier League?

by Žiga Lesjak

Two days ago the International Federation of Football History and Statistics (IFFHS) published their rankings of the best leagues in the world. And like on Monday's FIFA ceremony, Spanish football continues to dominate. As in the FIFA XI, where all of its eleven squad members come from the Spanish Primera Division; according to the Federation, it is also the best league in the world. But the most surprising is the fact that the English Premier League isn't second best. The Brazilian league, the Italian Serie A and the German Bundesliga are all in front of it, having had similar or worse success in recent years as the Premier League. What are the arguments against Premier League's surprisingly low ranking?

Of course the two best players in the world, Leo Messi and Cristiano Ronaldo currently play their trade in the Spanish league, and the global audiences and economic bonuses that come along with the broadcasting of "El Clásicos" is second to none in the world at the moment. But does it really make it the best league? What are the criteria these institutes adopt when they make this kind of studies?

First of all, let's look at European success. This takes into account the Champions League and the Europa League. Last year a Premier League team won the Champions League. Defying all odds, Chelsea won against Bayern Munich last May in Munich. True, Chelsea's coup was a bit tarnished as both Manchester clubs went out in the group stage and Arsenal was dumped out by a sensational Milan. But, both Spanish giants, Barcelona and Real Madrid, went out in the semi-final. In 2011, yes, Barcelona won it, but against an English side, Manchester United. In 2010, again there was no Spanish club in the final; there was no English side as well, and Internazionale Milan went on and won it. In 2009 and in 2008, Manchester United was in the final twice in a row, winning an all-Premier-League encounter against Chelsea in Moscow and losing in 2009 against Barca in Rome. In 2007, Liverpool lost in the final against Milan. In 2006, Arsenal were in the final and they lost; in 2005 Liverpool were in the final and won it over Milan in dramatic circumstances. In a nutshell: in the last 8 Champions League finals, on seven occasions there was a Premier League club participating, once there were even two of them in the same final. From Spanish teams only Barca was in the final, winning all of its three outings.

From this point on, we can safely say that the Premier League is better, never mind winning or losing the final; this are pure statistics. And if the IFFHS do statistics, how can this go against the quality of the Premier League. Numbers don't lie.

Maybe the difference is done in the all-new Europa League, which has been won twice in the last three years by Atletico Madrid. But it would be unfair to say that this competition, which English clubs don't take seriously at all, makes the difference in the final classification. No offence to the competition, it is a good tournament full of exciting talents and prosperous teams, but you can't say it has reached global recognition as the Champions League or any of the five major leagues have.

Finally, let's look at the leagues themselves. In Spain

it is a two horse race every year, this year not even that as Barcelona are dominating the league with such ease it is scary to think how many points they will have on their rivals come the end of May. In England, there have been five different winners in the last twenty years: Manchester United have won 12 of those, Chelsea and Arsenal three, while Blackburn and Manchester City one each.

It is the sheer rivalry between clubs and the fact that anyone can beat anyone that constitute the magic of Premier League, as demonstrated by QPR, who, when being rock bottom in the league, stunned Chelsea at Stamford Bridge last December, or by Sunderland's 1-0 Boxing Day win over the reigning champions Manchester City. These things can happen on any match day, so fierce is the battle for survival and trophies in the Premier League. Last year the title was won by Manchester City in the 94th minute of the last game of the season on goal difference. No one can write this kind of scripts - this is football at its very best and it is happening in the English top flight, not in Spain or Brazil. My opinion is further reinforced by last year's dominance of Real Madrid and this year's invincibility of Barcelona. You always know at the beginning of a season that it is going to be one of these two to lift the cup; the economic situation and TV rights simply don't allow anyone else to compete at their level in Spain.

For me, this is the main point why English Premier League is much better than Spanish Primera Division. I'll leave the rankings to the experts, but as long as it is the most popular league in the world with over 2 billion fans worldwide and the most entertaining one, where we don't have a champion in December but on the final day in May, it will stay the best league in the world. Even without Messi or Ronaldo, there is team play, managers that attack each other every week, fans cheering and booing. That is what this sport and league is about, and not about Messi vs. CR7 and Barca vs. Real.



Geeky Corner Section Editors: Urša Rozman and Bojan Povh

Urša Rozman: “For a moment, nothing happened. Then, after a second or so, nothing continued to happen.” (Douglas Adams)

Bojan Povh: “Give it, receive it.”



Geeky Gadgets

by R.

INVISIBILITY CLOAK: What kind of sorcery is this?!

Dear Harry Potter fans! You have all been waiting for it, and now it's finally here! Far away from the Scottish plains and Hogwarts, the Canadian camouflage company Hyperstealth has been secretly developing a real-life invisibility cloak. It's called “Quantum Stealth” and, according to the company's spokesperson, it can hide objects by bending the light behind them. So, no mirrors, no cameras, and no magic. The only problem with the validity of the existence of this particular cape, or cloak, or coat is that no one has seen it yet (well, except for the super-secret US and Canadian military groups that have, of course, been using it regularly). Although the company gives no clear explanation of how “Quantum Stealth” actually achieves the effect of erasing objects, they do provide a handful of examples of use. The examples are also well equipped with photographs, which unfortunately do not feature the invisibility cape, but a mock-up of it (because of security reasons, of course).



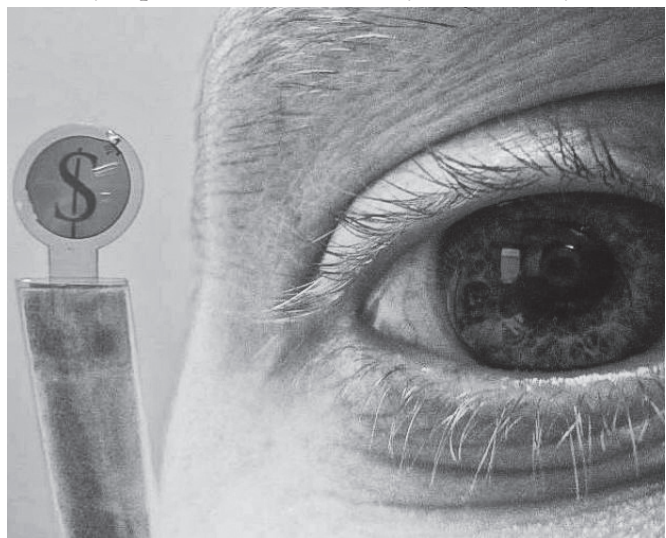
You see? There is most definitely a person in the picture. But you can't see him because he's wearing the super-secret cape.

Reference:

<http://www.hyperstealth.com/Quantum-Stealth/index.html>.

EYEBALL MESSAGES: you've got mail! Oh no, sorry, that's just an eyelash.

It often occurs that the most interesting emails or messages you simply must read are sent to you right in the middle of a lecture - preferably one in which the hawk-eyed professor has the ability to detect any mobile



device in the room. Fortunately, these first-world problems will soon be a thing of the past because of the scientists at Ghent University. The Belgian researchers have developed a liquid crystal-based contact lens display, which allows the wearer of the contacts to see images or messages wirelessly displayed on their lenses. According to the developers, the lenses should be available to real life customers in a couple of years. The prototype so far features a lens with only a dollar sign displayed on it, with which you'll be able to feel like Uncle Scrooge from the Donald Duck cartoons.

Unfortunately, talks of developing a texting-back-by-blinking system have not yet begun, but who knows what those quirky scientists might come up with next.

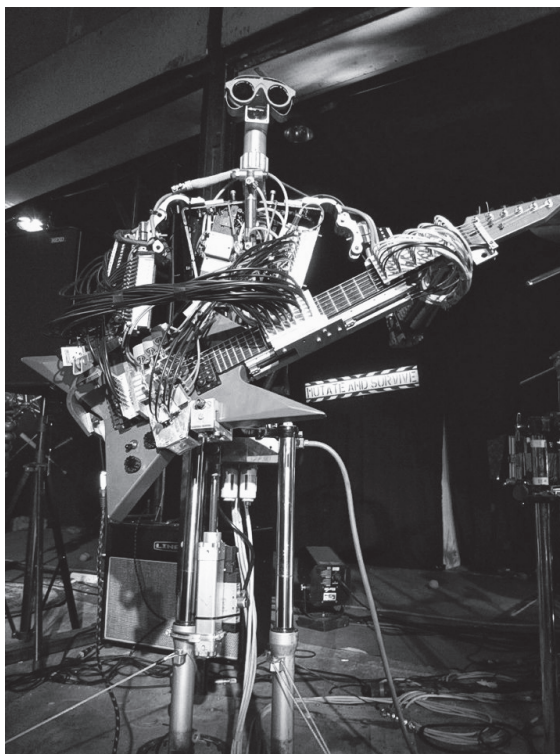
The amazing gadget can be found here: <http://news.discovery.com/tech/contact-lenses-beam-text-message-eye-121211.htm>

COMPRESSORHEAD: where gadgets and music meet

If you are one of those people who prefer an invasion of robots to a zombie apocalypse – your time has come. Apparently, it all starts with music. Compressorhead is the first (I am sure there will be more to come) music band which consists entirely of robots. Although there are only three members, each of them is built to perfection. The drummer, lovingly named Stickboy, is an upgrade from the limited two-handed human version to an extra fast four-handed machine. The guitarist Fingers (also the liveliest one on stage) can hit every single chord known to man or robot with his 78 fingers. The youngest of the bunch, Bones the bassist, is, according to his online profile, “the highest precision bass player in known existence”. Even though they can sometimes appear a bit stiff on stage when compared to their dancing-and-jumping contemporaries, they come fully equipped with heads to headbang. They had not had many live concerts yet, but their heavy metal covers of bands such as Mötörhead and Pantera will surely help them to acquire more robotic followers. Erm, I mean fans.

Move aside Justin Bieber, this is what the world needs.

For any tour dates and autographs, please consult their website: <http://compressorheadband.com/>.



Did I Ever Tell You the Definition of Insanity?

by Domen Orosel

November 2012 has seen the return of a well-known franchise, namely Far Cry. The first Far Cry was critically acclaimed while the second iteration of the series wasn't quite as well received. The developers, Ubisoft Montreal, were under pressure to produce something unique and exciting that would engage both the hard-core fans of the open-world first-person shooter and lure unsuspecting casual audience into its web. Have they succeeded? I believe that everything depends on whether or not you like the first cinematic cut scene of the game.

It all begins with a slightly worrying scene from a video diary of a bunch of seemingly ignorant, spoiled and annoying rich kids on one of their foreign adrenaline binges. As it turns out, their hyper luxury vacation in reality turned sour. They were captured by a native pirate group and were given a thorough dressing-down by the leader, Vaas, who, as it happens, was pretty much the best villain the gaming world has seen in 2012. Everything about him screamed proper evil and insanity (which he talks about at length, incidentally); coupled with the incredible voice acting by Michael Mando and the excellent motion capture of his facial features this made him very believable and it was a pleasure listening to his monologues. This is in an immense contrast to the transformation of the protagonist we see. Jason Brody, a brat lacking any experience of the real world, goes on a soul-searching journey, battling pirates, mercenaries and wildlife alike, rescuing some of his friends on the way, who he somewhat abandons for no good reason in the middle of the game. I have a feeling that the writers could've done much more with him, but in the end the gameplay is finite and a lengthier character development would've meant sacrificing the best parts of the game: the aesthetics and gameplay.

Whether or not you usually enjoy the sandbox FPS genre, this one could potentially blow you away. From the stunning vistas of a tropical paradise island to the ancient tombs hidden beneath Japanese World War 2 bunkers, Far Cry 3's aesthetics are simply gorgeous, and because the game was graphically so well-optimised, it will look pretty even on slower systems (if you can run it in the first place). Just as crisp is the gameplay. Smooth, exciting and offering a variety of approaches to most open-world objectives, of which there are plenty; from simple clay-pigeon-shooting-esque mini-games to capturing fortified pirate outposts with a bow and arrows and a little help of a captured tiger or bear. If your heart desires to go out with more of a bang, there's a selection of explosives and weapons Smokey Bear wouldn't approve of. But just as you think that it can't get any better, you accidentally waddle into a swamp and ... wrestle a crocodile and take its skin afterwards.

As exciting as the open world is, the game falls a bit flat when it comes to its story-telling missions. They are much more linear and restrictive, not leaving much to imagination. There is almost always the option of a stealthy approach with the bow and your trusty knife but there's sadly no non-lethal option available, like there is in Deus-Ex: Human Revolution or Dishonored. The boss fights are especially disappointing, as most of them consist of prompts to push a certain button to

perform an action, without actually having control of the protagonist, which seems to go completely against the grain of the rest of the game. These are quite severe



issues which might be game-breaking in less polished games with less to offer, but they just fade away when compared to the rest. For those who enjoy spending time exploring the unknown and fighting their way out of trouble with friends, there's the four-player co-operative mode, with a separate story, which is a delightful surprise. As is the more traditional FPS multiplayer; often an afterthought in more plot-driven games, but seems to have been well thought out by the developers.

While far from a perfect game, Ubisoft delivered a wonderful experience with an atmosphere that's not easily matched and gameplay that'll

get your blood pumping. Because the game has so much to offer, its supposed strength, the story, hasn't quite managed to convince me that it's a contender for game of the year 2012.



One for the Road Section Editor: Aleksander Jovanović
“Kaj se dogaja?”

ONE FOR THE ROAD

NEWS FROM THE WORLD OF TWITTER: #Hobbit

As opposed to the movie, this review will be short, concise and without dead weight: It sucked. #nolongersleepless

What!? This was nothing like Braindead or Meet The Feebles. Peter Jackson has really lost his touch. #jacksondoesnotkickass

I kept waiting for baby zombies and kung-fu priests that kick ass for the lord, but satisfaction never came. #whatastink

While watching the movie I kept asking myself who da fuck is Paul McCartney!? #clueless

Worst episode of GoT ever!!! #wtfHBO

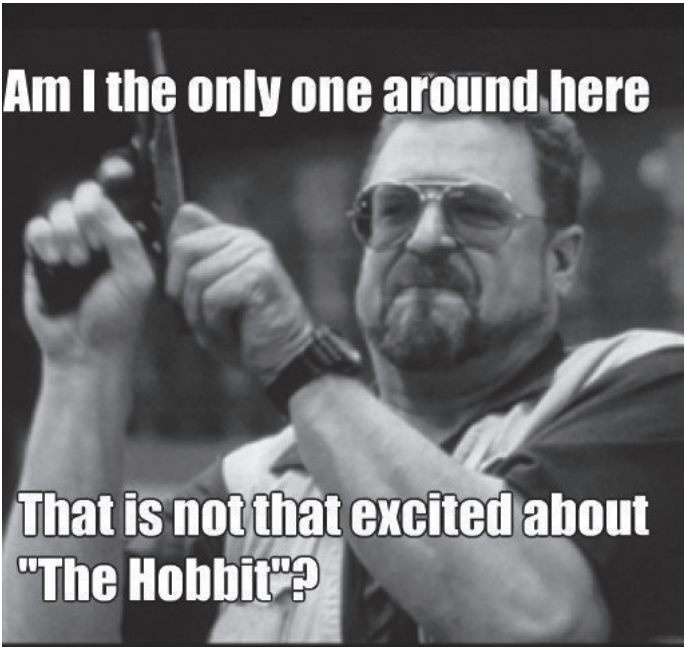
The 3h trailer for the Hobbit was awesome, can't wait to see the full movie! superexcited! #marrymepeterjackson

Unlike most movies today, this one lacked a key ingredient: Samuel L. Jackson. It really shows #getthatmotherflippinggollumoffmyneck

I don't know what's wrong with some people; I think The Hobbit was a perfect ending to Nolan's Batman trilogy. #gollumisthebestbatmanvillainever

Thank you, Mr. Jackson. We finally repaired all the damage caused by hordes of LOTR fans from all over the globe, and here you go again #savenewzealand

Aww, man, can't wait for the extended 27h version on BluRay!!! #watchhobbittillyoudrop



And Now For Something Completely Different...



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