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A Word from the Editors

The Bard is a student-run magazine with the primary objective to foster student self-expression and encourage a thorough approach to language, literature, and culture. The magazine comes out biannually and is published by the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, Serbia.

The Bard publishes original works of poetry, prose, flash fiction, and literary translation, along with impressions and studies of intertextuality in contemporary literature, music, and cinematography. By virtue of being the student magazine of the English Department of the Faculty of Philology, University of Belgrade, the scope of **The Bard** is Anglophone and, thus, the Editorial Board accept original works written in the English language.

The second issue of the second volume consists of works of students and alumni of the University of Belgrade.

The Editorial Board extend their gratitude to the Faculty members for their invaluable guidance throughout the process of creating and ultimately publishing the magazine. With their help, **The Bard** aims to create a space for creativity and discourse, thereby nurturing the love of the written word amongst its student body and beyond.

Happy reading,
The Bard Editorial Board



Original Poetry

Nursing a wound

There is a sickness skittering up the sides of my ribs,

Rolling lotion between each of them

To secure an oily, flawless slip of a knife

To the side.

The knife is snug here,

And although a thorn in your side,

It keeps the puncture filled.

Taking it out would be waves and seas of work,

Sandy winds and scorching sun,

Your white, glistening skin on the beach,

And the wet, glossy bikini around your hips.

The days roll and run like the droplets of sand stuck

To your inner thighs,

I shiver,

At the skitter through my ribs

At the sweet watermelon running down your lips,

And the Sun laughs.

The Sun keeps laughing and laughing at me. The

Moon,

Her arch-nemesis,

Her long-distance lover,
Offers a lie.
You hate lies so I shake my head,
And thank her for not laughing.
The Moon's teeth are yellow as she smiles,
Twirls around, and whispers,
Don't tell the Sun,
As she hands me a pair of tweezers.
In the morning,
The Sun scoffs at the hole gaping
In my side.
She rolls her eye and her teeth are brown when she says,
Lay down. It takes time.
The stars only glimmer shyly,
Winking and dancing,
Crying, then singing, twirling, then giggling,
And the sand flies by in their company.
With everyone's hands nursing your ribs,
The puncture closes up
And the sickness leaves.

Andžela Kostić
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

The Line

Tears dust the white, pristine shelves of your home.

They slip off,

Sometimes,

Swelling the floorboards the longer they linger

Before the humid air picks them up,

Makes them a part of its already watery army,

And floats back up to the ceiling.

This is an assumption.

Nothing more,

Nothing less.

I do not know how you function.

I do not recognize the rust under your fingernails,

Though I wish I could.

I wish I could so I could maneuver them flat

Against my sternum,

Make you push and press down until I am flat

With the bed,

Until the pressure is unmistakably yours,

And I am unmistakably mine again.

Your palm might thrum with possession of my

Heartbeat,
But the heartbeat is mine
And the only thing I thrum from
Is the pressure.
The flat pressure on the cusp of my throat,
The grip of my sternum,
Or the center of my stomach,
The soft of my belly,
I show it for nothing but the heart-shaped shadow
The plant on your shelf,
Surrounded by dust,
Casts toward the floor.

Andela Kostić
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

The eternal return/The and

I hear you snore, at night. Through the wall,
then another wall, the table and the plants around it,
even through bricks and windows,

I hear you snore.

My mother sleeps next to you.

The rotten accomplice of your perfect crime,

Your right hand,

Your wife,

And we all know what a wife is,

And what her job is.

Then, in the morning,

I hear you complain about her snoring.

My ceiling,

The sky

Littered with stars,

Fluorescent, half-torn,

There.

A silly pricking on my fingers—

where does love go?

We all know where it starts.

In the chest,

In the heart,

In the lungs,

Even the hands.

But what I want to know is,

Yes,

well,

rotten.

You have paved the way,

So, I must follow.

The worst question of all.

I know it travels, Mom,

You've told me so before.

I know it goes down, then up, down, and up, down...

Up?

Up?

Mom, right?

You've said so.

Chest, fingers, lungs, heart, stomach, guts, legs, toes, yes, mom, why isn't the last time up?

You are the right hand, mom, so you must know.

Ah.

You do know.

The dog that death is, weaving its muddy fingers

Through the sky —

where everyone sees it.

Everyone, always,

But that will never matter.

It hasn't knocked on our door yet, isn't that it?

Andela Kostić
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

My Son (Father's Praise)

My son, my precious Sun,
You're a rest for my soul
and a harbor to my toil
when others begin to shun.

You're a beacon of light
during a pitch black night,
when the world begins to crack,
you're someone on whom I can fall back.

When for some reason I start to fudge
you're someone who doesn't judge,
And if sometimes I actually do fumble,
you won't be the one who will grumble,
but act as a voice of reason and calm,
to soothe and care as if you were a balm.

When other's attitudes grow cold
You're the one who wears a heart of gold.
And when everything is already said and done,
Your words give heed, but don't ever stun
Because you just wanna have some fun
And your attitude is second to none.

All of the imperfections you will try to mend
and won't give up until the very end
. .
Your timely approach is always mild
This is how I know that you're my child.

My son, my precious Sun,
You're a rest for my soul
and a harbor to my toil
when others begin to shun.

Nebojša Damnjanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
MA student

Contemplations (Love is Divine)

I have always thought to know what love is,
for the reason of rules I did adhere;
Never have I known it was sheer bliss,
and for you it is always there.

Many people will amazingly stare,
when two lovers abide the desires of the heart,
because they know right from the start,
that what they have is quite rare.

Since what they feel can not compare
with anything else in the world,
or with the countless treasures of gold,
as if they were really that debonair.

And when I see two people merrily thrive,
then I know love will surely survive.

Nebojša Damnjanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
MA student

Mustang

Its scent is up in the air,
you can feel it everywhere.

Unbridled in all its might,
evokes pure joy and delight.

Nebojša Damnjanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
MA student

Seafood and Seafoam

If my eyes and hands can disappear,
And if that hair of mine which is dear
To you loses its softness and shine,
Would you still say "this one is mine"?

What would you do if I turned seafoam blue,
And became unable to tell you I love you.
I hope my words can ring a bell,
Would you love me if I became a seashell?

Would those hands, made for wiping
The tears off my cheeks as I am crying,
Now open my shell with all their force?
That'd be okay, as long as they are yours.

And if you finally reach the part that's soft,
And see nothing that might cost
More than the pearl of our love in the past,
Will you look at me with despair and disgust?

Get disappointed, it's more than alright,
But remember I am the one who cried
All night because the fruit of my labor
Wasn't enough to feed your hunger.

So open my shell, throw the pearl away,
Put me in the oven, make it burn all day.
I hope I am more useful than I've been
Before I became your exotic cuisine.

Marija Ćirković
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

A Siren's Song

Tell me, siren,
how are the waters these days?

It's been a long time,
too long for me to feel this way still,
yet there's a chill I can't quite shake from your freezing waves,
reminding me of your sharp smile and the oceans reflecting in your eyes.

All the pretty things you sang to me
kept bringing me right back to your rock,
where you would wait,
wait for me to slip from the deck,
right into your crushing embrace.

It was never you that scared me, though
– you couldn't go against it, it was in your nature, I understood –
I was terrified of how easily, how willingly,
I was ready to drown in your oceans,
just for knowing how it feels to be in your arms, even for a fleeting moment.

I think I would've anchored my ship on your shores and stayed there forever
if you only told me you'd wanted me,
waited for a chance for us to at least try,
but as I kept coming back to your rock
you never even offered to leave it with me.

I fear there will always be a part of me that will always want a part of you:
a part which only exists in my head and in your songs,
one which doesn't let me wonder and pine
but takes my hand willingly
and swaps the comfort for the unknown
because it knows what it wants,
and what it wants is me;
just the same, that part of me –
the best part, my most perfect self –
will continue living in our memories,
but I have so much more to be,
and so much more of the world to see,
so leaving your rock is the only viable solution for me,
and I'm sorry.

Teodora Šejmeši
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

In Search of New Religion

I built this chapel alone,
placed every brick meticulously
with ruinous time in mind,
forgetting the foundation was shaky.

I built an altar to every memory with you,
conscientiously praying for a sign
with my knees painted a permanent blue and my hands cramped;
painted murals of scenes yet to happen,
the halos shining over our blissful faces
paling in comparison with our smiles,
forgetting my lone hands did all the work.

I spent my days haunting the holy ground,
faithfully awaiting my first confession;
spread word of my faith,
gained followers until they started preaching instead,
until I was the one in the booth,
confessing my feelings for you and hoping someone would forgive me for them,
relieve me from the burden of them.

But a priestess once devout could hardly be persuaded to abandon her faith,
so I kept the candles alight
and whispered selfish pleas;
yet, still, in the dead of night,
the first hand to throw a brick
shattering the stained glass was yours.

So, with the sign sent and the message received,
I folded my black attire and placed it at the altar.

I built this chapel alone,
and by myself I shall leave it;
the candles there will remain burning
but soon the walls will crumble,
its ruins now only serving as a landmark in the map of us.

Teodora Šejmeši
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

Everywhere I look

Everywhere I look
I see a leather-clad lad
He is like a tree, exceptionally tall
In a field of flowers considerably small

Every time I look at him
My eyes follow him carefully like a cat
Such is the elegance of his walk
That it makes everybody talk

Everywhere I go
I hear sweet whispers in my ear
"Come to me, my dear
Let go of thy fear"
Thus, I draw near

But as I halt
I see a figure rearing its ugly head
It utters the words
"He is soon to be wed"
And so my heart bled

Everywhere I look
He is nowhere to be seen
A figment of my imagination
The most beautiful creation

Teodora Kutlača
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Third-year student

Regret

I'm so sorry
For the words I said,
Now they echo in my head.
It would have been better if we just never met,
Now I'm drowning in regret.
I regret what I said,
Didn't think it through,
But can't take it back.
Old wounds always find a way to reopen.
Thought I healed, but the scar never sealed.
Guess I was wrong.
I know you won't accept my apology.
I'm so sorry I've told you this before,
But you won't look me in the eye anymore.
Fate has a funny way,
When feelings come to play, It won't let us look away.
We have to pass by each other every day.

Hurija Pajaziti
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

Spark

My eyes don't shine the same anymore,
not even when my favorite movie plays.
The things that once made me feel alive
now leave me feeling empty.
Even my laugh sounds strange,
like it's not mine.
I stare at myself in the mirror
and search for the person I used to be,
but all I see is someone whose smile
doesn't reach their eyes,
someone who's slowly being consumed by the dark.
It consumed me whole.
I don't think there is anything left anymore.
They once told me,
"You have that spark in your eyes.
Make sure to never lose it."
Then they drained the light from my soul,
watched me fall,
and still looked me in the eyes
like they had done nothing wrong.

Huriya Pajaziti
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

Dinner for one

I open my heart and I show it to you,

You eat it from my hand, you savor each bite,

Fed, yet still unsatisfied, you look around.

You turn your back on me.

My offerings do not seem worthy of your attention.

So, I step back,

I take one final glance at you.

Realizing I will miss something that never was or something that could never be mine.

One single tear streams down my face –

This was never love and of that I was aware.

You remain the same, unmoved by my attention.

All from the start, this took a wrong direction

My mind is so used to imagining pictures of you

And I must leave you be.

I pray to God to give me peace.

Elena Dokmanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student

My Relationship with the Dark

The night falls, the light is on
Doors locked, me in my bed
The black cat is sitting on my desk
Staring at the letter I left
Unfinished, unsent
And it meows
Like it wants to wake the dead
I pick up the letter and write down few words
Then I look up
There is no cat
No locked doors
Just a dark picture where I might get a glimpse of you
I close my eyes; I imagine my lips on yours
As the dark swallows me whole
The smile is on my face
The cat is on the street
And the moon gets a new star

Elena Dokmanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student

Stormman

Where the gaud redwood
Had witty branches, woken
In the dry smell of unspoken
Delight, the stormman stood,
Calm, listening to the night:
“Dear sky, yours is the fright,
Yours is the slight return,
But beware, the light
Seizes to burn.”

Darko Atlija-Despotović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student

Slowly, the night of breeze falls

slowly the night of breeze falls
into the blossom arm of springs
and in whitest chaste petals
rose the quiets of mornings
but now risen with the blaze
of the spilled crimson sun
heaviest of clouds haze
pon the midwest run
slowly the night returns
while the light reburns
the desperation of dawn
and so our lifeless flow
washes frowns wit' glow
but never withdrawn

Darko Atlija-Despotović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student

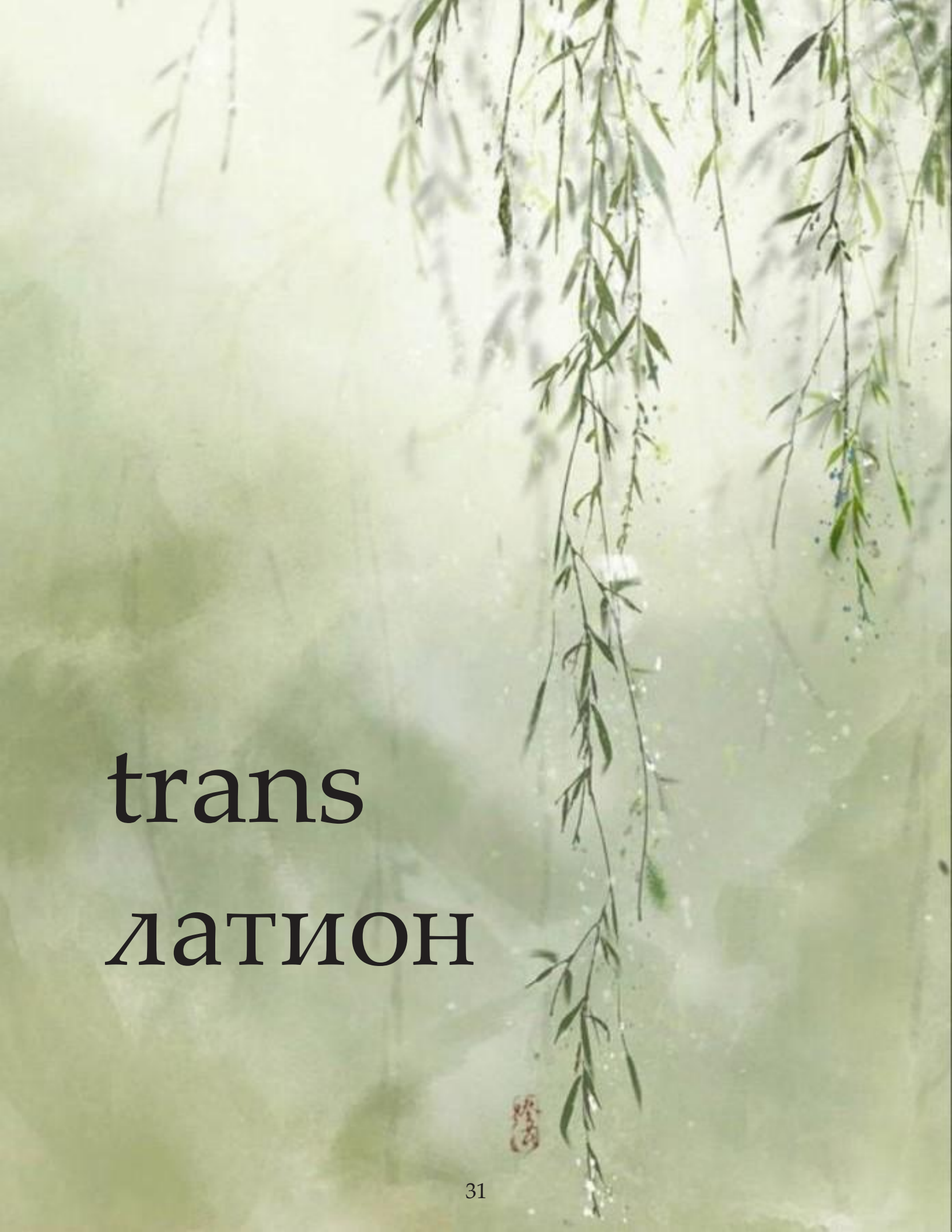
The Divine Heart

For I was more than I have felt,
more than roads taken and well
thoughts that led me into melt
(among the dark entry of Hell)

“If I seek failure and within dwell
wouldn’t I begin a yarnin’ quest?
Would I outlive the gaud foretell
if a divine was in my chests?”

And may I joked within me
but all has been, never swept,
for my blinded eyes saw an’ see
that the divine heart is kept

Darko Atlija-Despotović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student



trans латион

Youth

Translated by Milica Rakić

I (only) know that I want, but don't know what I want.
Hundreds of things at a moment's notice of a lifetime
to run only into the world, seeking solitude to flaunt,
and if I could, to the sky I'd climb

I'd play and sing without order and bond
Crazy tunes, desperate and sassy grail,
The sky is ablaze, the birch trees weep beyond
The wind stums and the reeds wail.

Like some Asian tribe's savage
Who's angered by pain, but miserable is not
Flogging the unclad ladies, making a ravage
Striking a tambourine, howls and drinks a lot

Then he seeks poems so far unheard
To chase away that pain without the pain from his chest
I flare up, I seethe, blood surges through me blurred
And a hundred lyres toll within my soul blessed

To clash with fate! Then I flare, until
I succumb utterly crushed like a rotten mass, belittled,
Then, as a man the Lord had damned at his will
I profane God, so the sky may ripple.

The youth, now ripened, yearns for the cause
It'd, from the soul, the heart, the breast
Even the pain would want: when it infuriates and shows claws
To waste away, to wither, to rage and go insane at best.

Milica Rakić
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
Fourth-year student

Mladost

Ja znam samo hoću, a ne znam šta hoću,
stotinu bih stvari u jedan mah hteo,
bežao bih u svet, tražio samoću
i kad bih mogao, na nebo se peo;

Svirao, pevao, bez reda i veze
melodije lude, očajne i drske,
kako plamti nebo, kako plaču breze,
kako svira vetar i vapiju trske.

Kao kakav divljak azijskih plemena,
što besni od bola, a nesrećan nije,
šibajući tela obnaženih žena
u daire lupa, jauče i pije,

Zatim traži pesme dotle nečuvene,
da taj bol bez bola iz grudi mu gone,
i ja praskam, besnim, krv struji kroz mene
i stotine struna u svesti mi zvone.

U koštac sa sudbom! Tada praskam, dokle
ne klonem sav smožden kao trula masa;
Tada, kao čovek koga Gospod prokle,
Hulim Boga, da se nebo ustalasa.

To sazrela mladost nekog cilja traži:
Htela bi iz duše, iz srca, iz grudi,
čak i bol bi htela: kad je bol razdraži,
da se troši, krši, i besni i ludi.

Milutin Bojić

A Night of Paris

(From mother's last recording)

Translated by Andrijana Prodanić

Was my father toward
was my father toward you, mother, a beast
that wild, most magnificent beast that is man?
Mother, was my father a beast
Or a mere historian:
for I too am a beast?
What is there of this life and its fleeting charm,
Mother, if even you – my cradle – were a beast!
Well then, and those eyes from your deathbed,
suffering so terribly: I shall never be able to break free from
them! by no brute strength shall I be able to veil them.
Was not your life animal-like too:
by some fatality I shall die in terrible dread!
Here lies this senseless pain of all flesh, of your hands, your head!
Never, oh never!, shall I nightmares from reality unthread! Never!
What horror: to have such an apocalypse for an origin!

Oh, all that blood, if I could imagine!
Never! Why did you never beat me hard enough
for a purple bruise
to blossom on my chubby boyish flesh?
That burn, that imprint of your hand, so dear to me,
a trace of me would be
To my cradle full of blood,
To the origin of your flesh –
Only not these eyes, not these eyes of agony. Look, what
fury! Mother, let me strip me of my agony!

Paris, 1922

Andrijana Prodanić
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
MA student

Noć Pariza

(Sa poslednjeg snimka materinog)

Da li moj otac prema...

Da li moj otac prema tebi, majko, beše zver

ta najdivljija, najdivnija, što je čovek?

Majko, otac moj beše li zver

Kraj tebe, il' samo istoričar:

jer i sam ja zver?

Našto mi sav ovaj život i prolazna mu čar,

Majko, ako i ti — moja kolenka — ne beše zver!

E dobro, a te oči sa slike tvoje na samrti,

užasno što pate: nikad ih se neću moći osloboditi!

nikakvom ih neukrotljivošću moći neću zastrti.

Nije li i tvoj život bio životinjski:

jednom fatalnošću ću u užasu strašnom umreti!

Tu taj bol bez smisla sveg mesa, tvojih ruku, glave!

Nikada, o nikada neću izdvojiti košmare od jave!

Nikada! Užas: ako je meni ovakvom apokalipsa poreklo!

O, hoću da znam koliko je za mnom tad krvi isteklo...

Nikada! Zašto me nikada nisi išopala,

da se jedna ljubičasta modrica
na mom dečaćkom debelom mesu rascvetala?
Ta opekotina, taj otisak ti ruke mi drag
i danas bi mi evo bio trag,
Do kolevke mi pune krvi,
Do porekla mi tvoga mesa,
samo ne ove oči, ne ove oči patnje. Gle, besa!
Materice, ja bih da zderem sa sebe tu patnju.

Pariz, 1922.

Rastko Petrović



Flash Fiction

Anabasis of a Mother's Debouch

Nine years later, while soundlessly sitting beneath the flush mount light in the kitchen, I notice my legs stretched up on the wall, like yours, once. Your manners are palpably catalyst, larger than life but you never died within me; you span incomprehensibly beyond the dead and the living. Your tenacity moved alongside you into the afterlife. My posture won't allow me to wash my hands of your gestural heirloom. I burst at the seams with the weight of you, yet I cannot hold enough of you. When I grow up, I will come and find you. I promise.

Jovana Cvetković
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
First-year student

Art

“Art, freedom and creativity will change society faster than politics.”

– Victor Pinchuk

“The aim of art is to represent not the outward appearance of things, but their inward significance.”

– Aristotle

“A dreamer is one who can only find his way by moonlight, and his punishment is that he sees the dawn before the rest of the world.”

– Oscar Wilde

“The true historical upheavals are not those which astonish us by their grandeur and violence. The only important changes whence the renewal of civilisations results, affect ideas, conceptions, and beliefs. The memorable events of history are the visible effects of the invisible changes of human thought.”

– Charles-Marie Gustave Le Bon, *The Crowd* (1896)

Since the dawn of human history, people have been developing different ways of expressing their values and opinions through art. It has always been used by humans in order to transcend their limitations and to make them think outside the box. Therefore, art is always a precursor for fundamental changes and advancements in the entire human society in a more substantial way than any political ideology can ever be.

Having art as a part of someone's life can bring many benefits. Through art, people can give themselves a break from the everyday grind and have an opportunity to advance themselves on a personal level. Having artistic tendencies and hobbies in life can create a living atmosphere of higher quality for an individual. Different perspectives on things will help in other areas of life when facing various kinds of problems.

On the other hand, art has its downsides as well. Humans can indulge themselves too much in experiencing art, consequentially forgetting to fulfill their duties and responsibilities. Misunderstandings of the messages that are transmitted through art can degenerate people's behavior. Wrongly focused creativity can undermine the very existence and survival both on an individual and societal plane if negative types of convictions are mentally absorbed.

Art is an occurrence that encompasses the whole globe and is one of the crucial elements of human experience. Discerning with a meticulous tendency towards things which are beneficial and positive of utmost importance for the future of mankind. After all, Benjamin Olinde Rodrigues (Wikipedia, 2025b), a French banker and a mathematician, on one occasion mentioned that artists have a moral obligation to realize social, political, and economic reforms by serving "as [the] avant-garde" of the people, since art truly has the ability to bring them about in a swift manner (Wikipedia, 2025a, para. 2). Ergo, I can confidently express my firm stand that the function that art has is incomparably more important in society than politics.

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Nebojša Damnjanović
University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology
MA student

The primordial bear

"You don't understand! I am telling the truth!" I cried as the elder priest's frustrated gaze ate my soul like the forbidden fruit "Believe me, not for the sake of my own sanity, but for the safety of our monastery and humankind!"

"Sister Justitia, there is no such thing as a Primordial bear who will one day wake up and make the world disappear, as we do not live in its hibernation. Now please, let me rest, for I feel my stomach burning." The priest left.

I felt that burning too; it is a sign the bear is awakening.

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Fiction

Ichor

Fresh white fog descended from the rocky north upon the ragged old man and the dirty young boy as they were leaving the village via the high-arching Plaka bridge in Tzoumerka. By now, years have passed and the wounds left by homesickness and foreign lands have yet to close, and with each breath a fetid yellow ichor oozes out of their hearts. Every so often, in mute pain, the boy looks down at his tragic, hairy, and hoofed legs.

The man waits for him and lets him sulk. After a while he tapped his walking stick covered in grape vines on the wet cobblestone to urge the boy to hurry up, but the river below flowed with such intense vigour and anger that no other sound besides its rushing could be heard there on the midpoint.

After crossing, they went westward up the hills with no footpath to guide them through the thick pines thinly interspersed with languid leafless oak. The boy was a gifted climber and would often in their past journeys climb rocky terrain long before the old man even began his ascension. But this time the boy just sat on a rock, collecting deep in himself some hardly nameable feelings.

– I’m tired, he said, of being deemed a monster by these lay people whose ancestors would’ve once adorned me, who would deem this whole region my dwelling and who would sing hymns and have feasts in my name.

– Now, Pan, you are merely articulating an embellishment of your own memories. We’ve changed just like those lay people. You’ve lost your horns and I’ve been outperformed as a winemaker. Even Zeus, the Thunderer, lost his title after a clash with one of His disciples!

– Has some slave taken your mania as well, Dionysus? Pan scoffed sardonically.

– Maybe not all of us have changed, he replied with an unexpected soft crease at the mouth.

Pan simply sat in silence and contorted his face, disturbed by Dionysus’ mild amicableness. He watched, disgusted how the once noble and frivolous, insane, fruitful twice-born god moved his withered and frail heteroclitic frame, a husk without any remnants of halcyon days, across rocks, sometimes leaning on a tree trunk, breathless and steaming from exhaustion. That sight wounded his heart more than his separation from Arcadia, or his degeneration in the eyes of men. That sight was evidence of the total putrefaction of Dionysus’ soul.

As he was lamenting his friend's wretched new life, a great humid wind blew through the densely packed trees and created a gentle and silky melody, like that of a flute, which he had not heard in centuries. It started to resonate through his entire body, causing him to shake from excitement and causing his veins to boil with a clear liquid scented with ambrosia and honey. Mania completely possessed him, heightening his mind and his spirit, his nous.

"The great Pan isn't dead", he thought to himself; "no, the great Pan never dies!"

Manic as he was, he let his own body, with ecstatic glee control itself and in a fit of drunk sobriety, full of newfound will, he lunged towards Dionysus with an open mouth. Dionysus groaned as Pan bit off a debilitating chunk of meat from his leg, but as he turned around he saw that, though his flesh was clenched in Pan's jaws, he could walk with a renewed vigour.

– Look! You have no blood! Look at that sweet-scented liquid, don't you remember? That's it, that's ichor, our lifeline! *Evoí eváv!* You have not died, Dionysus, how could you? Our ancient spirits still reside within us, unwillingly dormant. Awaken yourself, great Bacchos! *Evoí eváv!*

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School of Hard Knocks¹

He got the tip-off from a verified and trustworthy insider. He should have known better that you aren't going to meet this kind of people downtown. The marina, on the city's outskirts, was a tranquil, although fairly secluded place to reside. One would wonder why should a person willingly choose to stay here? Was it security? Or being close to the sea? Perhaps it was for the stillness, the only thing that his conscience most probably could not afford.

The boat looked decent, but the guy wasn't there. So, he decided to take cover and wait for him to come back. Several hours later, the two-seater arrived. The sound was getting louder, one step after another. He stepped inside, but suddenly froze. Despite the fact that the interior looked as before, something was off. In a jiffy, he was forcefully backed up against the wall, faced with oblivion.

Before this occasion, they had only met once – that night when the guys in suits slipped through his fingers. While he was trying to find his way around, he met him, eye to eye, in the mists of experience. He was irritated, because he didn't know what his intentions were in fact. In an instant, he left his surroundings, in the same manner he approached, stealthily.

– I bet you're in for a surprise, aren't you? Who are you, scoundrel? I saw you, that night, I saw you! – how you responded with composure when all hell broke loose, while having that look in your eyes. You are not one of them, but you most certainly don't look like you're one of us. Where do you come from? Who trained you? Whom do you answer? Should I, perhaps, greet you with open arms each time we meet?...

– If you deem fit. It's hard for me to fathom that somebody managed to locate me, especially a person like yourself. It is a highly disappointing and unfortunate situation. All these years, all of my effort... Everything will be in vain. This changes everything. And changes do not necessarily always carry along pleasant consequences. I don't know if you're aware of this, but I've already got in touch with your like-minded associates and advised them that you should back away from this for your own good. Were you followed?

– Not that I'm aware of.

1 The short story was partially inspired by several scenes and dialogues from Woo, J. (Director). (1992). *Hard Boiled* [Film]. Golden Princess Film Production; Milestone Pictures.

— And, the other thing... Who am I?... Indeed, this is a good question... And the answer largely rests upon who's asking. I'm for so long embroiled in all this that now it seems to me as if it's going on for ages so that I don't even know anymore which part of me is real. The truth is that you don't know who I really am, and in a certain way, it doesn't even matter. There, as you said it yourself, to you I'm a trickster. To my family, a son. And to them, I'm a hero.

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Events

8th Week of American Culture and Society

In an annual celebration of American studies, the 8th Week of American Culture and Society, organised by the Centre for American Studies of the Faculty of Philosophy, University of Belgrade, brought together students, researchers, and scholars for a week of critical reflection on American cultural history. On the occasion of the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence, the five-day event examined pivotal aspects of American culture, centring the programme around four foundational historical and cultural pillars: the Constitution, the American dream, the Space Race, and pop art.

The programme included lectures on the founding of the United States (Prof. Nataša Jovanović Ajzenhamer, Faculty of Philosophy), traditions in American foreign policy

(Prof. Milan Krstić and Prof. Dragan Živojinović, Faculty of Political Sciences), imperial and capitalist vertical expansionism (Prof. Radina Vučetić, Faculty of Philosophy), American mass media (Prof. Ana Martinoli, Faculty of Dramatic Arts), and the symbolism of the Statue of Liberty (Prof. Dubravka Stojanović, Faculty of Philosophy).

The visit to the Belgrade Astronomical Observatory deepened participants' knowledge of Serbian astronomy and astrophysics from the 19th century to the present day, as well as the mechanics and political history of the Space Race.

The final two days featured interactive workshops where students assumed the roles of decision makers debating constitutional reform ("The Constitution before the Court", Vukašin Zorić), 1960s advertisers selling the American Dream.

("Everyday Icons", Ljubica Vujović and Ana Filipović) and analysts examining its mechanics and intersectional (in)stabilities ("The American Dream under the Microscope", Katarina Beširević).

Ultimately, the programme underscored the difficulty of defining America in 250 terms, let alone 50, ideas, notions, and concepts. Examining the enduring, multifaceted legacy of the United States from Thomas Jefferson to Dolly Parton, the 8th Week of American Culture and Society highlighted critical reflection and reexamination as key tools in contemporary studies of history, politics, art, and culture.

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