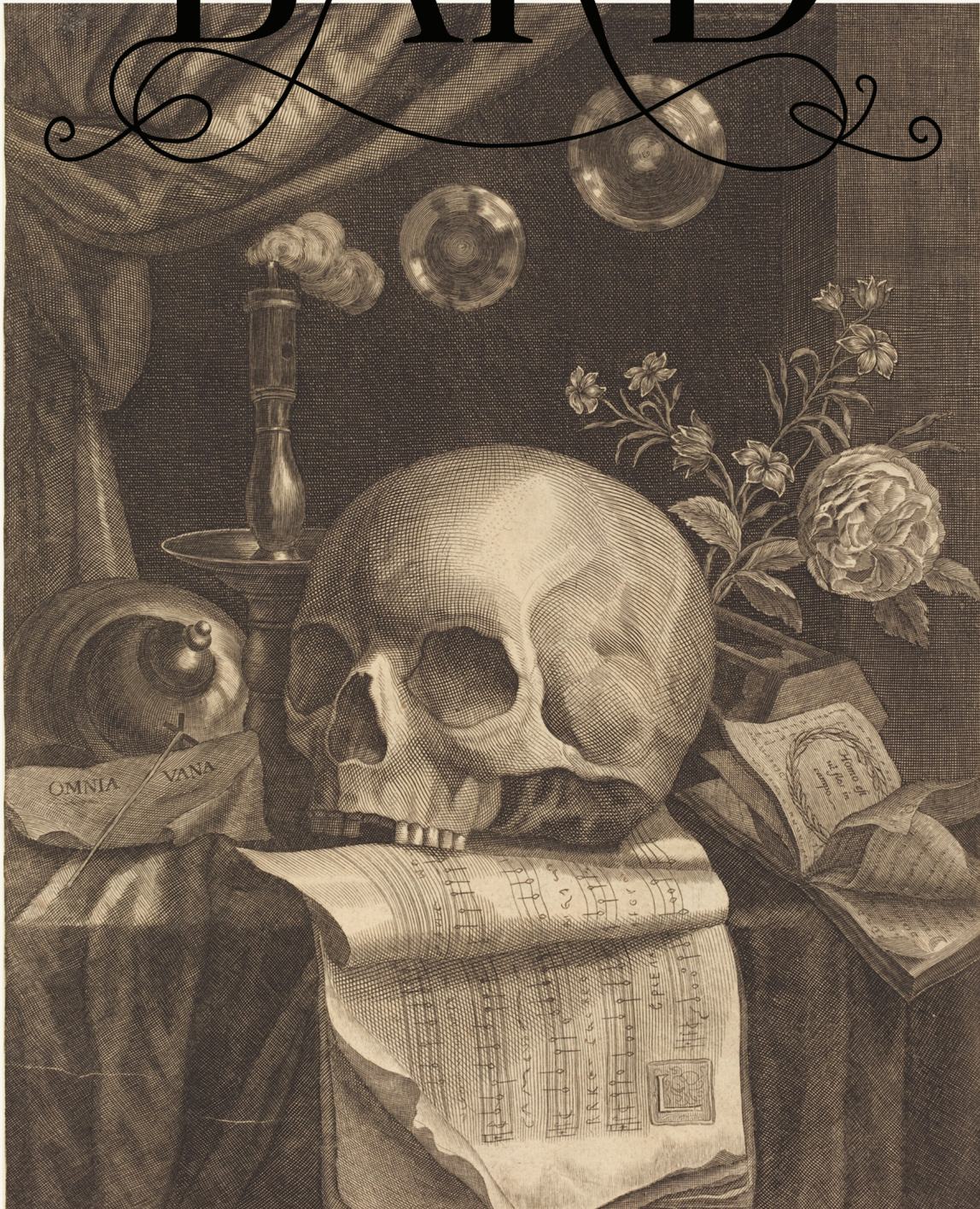


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THE **BARD** EST
2023



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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 University of Belgrade — Faculty of Philology, Serbia.

The Bard publishes original works of poetry, prose, and literary translation, along with impressions and studies of intertextuality in contemporary literature, music, and film. By virtue of being the student magazine of the English Department of the Faculty of Philology, the University of Belgrade, the scope of *The Bard* is anglophone and thus, the editorial board accepts original works written in the English language.

The maiden issue includes works of students and alumni of the University of Belgrade, the University of Niš, the University of Kragujevac, as well as the University of Arts in 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 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



GOETRY

Submissions

Memories of a Tabby

In a sultry summer setting,
Of the days well foregone,
Stood a beast, faintly letting
Out a roar, for our upsetting
Paths, have converged thereupon.

In my hands with all its might,
Lay a creature, fluff and flabby,
A cornered vermin, in its fright
My fingers softly, it tried to bite,
A little orange tabby.

In a damp dwindling daze,
Summers ago I carried you,
As I do now, in many ways
The same, but of you, worthy of praise,
Only a memory, I fear, will do.

Vojin Ćirović
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department, Third-year student

Entangled with

Colors she had seen have since become
Pale and shallow and seem to dissipate
Throughout the space inside her skull

Coherence is an illusion to me
How else would I understand
Her, useless were the ordered

Flashing sequences of candlelight
Sentences spoken softly
Never consequence of the set before
Misunderstand forever
Until we decoded the compromise

Dušan Cvetković
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Physics,
Third-year student

Almost true

Heavy rain,
and out of the wounds,
unhealed and almost forgotten,
crawl these faces and hands that grip
for someone who is no more.

Almost true,
are the tears
dropping from their blue eyes,
once promising the world.

And almost real,
is the wine
drowning the fingers and sharp teeth,
but not quite.

Nikola Sretović
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department, Third-year student

Curtains

Somewhere beyond the darkness,
a desolate curtain of sunlight
makes people turn.
Shadows burn with delight
and the poor drop to their knees.

The broken melodies ring deep inside,
longing to be let out.
They sing and weep,
beg and plead,
and the birds, dropping their wings, fly into tomorrow.

Nikola Sretović

Torpor I

hypomaniac musculature
as a still landscape,
the wetness of ribs
in the contingents of the torso,

concave torpor
instead of a reinforced chapter
is a metamorphosis

emptiness and fullness
become a skeleton esthetic

Dunja Ožegović
The University of Arts in Belgrade, Faculty of Fine Arts,
Painting Department, Alumna, MA, BFA

Torpor II

from all the incorrupt beams
I swallow a bundle
of non-verbal elements
for a fetal therapy
concerning all forthcoming movement—

with primitives of meaning
postoperative infection
ousts its own choice
at the trimestral examination

Dunja Ožegović

Warmth

I am a wound and a skillful rebel of death
death's greatest and disobedient renegade with bare
limbs and thoughts
my hearing is acute and I am ready to run like blood —
my bloodstream has hinterlands that you cannot imagine
I am like an omen of all that is to be lost,
tell me all your wishes backwards,
my cheeks tingle under the pounding billows

Dunja Ožegović

Sculptoimage

An impression, like constancy,
is defiant —

streets freshly swept
brushed past by light

Dunja Ožegović

In situ

the lungs inscribe oblivion.

within they contain
inky,
gaseous,
homologically bumpy,
invasive
material

/formation of plaque/

Dunja Ožegović

Spiritus movens.

today I awake —
in the blue pool of blood
of your petal

Dunja Ožegović

marbleborn

Blind with θυμός
My forearms pulse
To the rhythm of a god of war
You can choose which one

I'd burst my skull open with an axe to see what happens
But I fear
I would crawl out of the wound
Like a justborn from the ashes of a new-burnt city

I travelled through the womb of the mountain
Trod upon my father in a closed casket
I put the casket in my pocket
(now I'm a grave)

With hatred I scratch the walls of my cradle
The walls are of marble
I am of marble too
The marbleborn

The mountain cries

Ana Milojković
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department, Third-year student

Watching you come out of the river, I think of the
first creature to venture onto land

flapping from the whirlpool of complacency.
Wide-eyed and with a toothy grin, it traded a fin
for a thumb. Swelled with unbecoming pride
until its wrinkly rind split into two,
like an overripe fig.

At dusk, I crush an army of yellow ants
and graze your wet brow with the same finger.
You, too, are tired of pretending.

Slouching in the amniotic of a red-soiled epoch,
this is how I like your body best—
mid-blink, mid-laugh, mid-leap.
A blemished fruit, a green, crescent thing,
you have so much more growing to do.

Andrijana Prodanić
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department, Third-year student

Lucky and Stooge

Greetings and salutations weary friend!
I have a tale your mind to mend.
Mine is an eye, it sees near and high,
Many odd locals and passers-by.
All types of people, by actions tall,
And bigger actors than in a theatre hall.
But no other story was similarly huge,
As was the tale of Lucky and Stooge.
The strength of this parable lies in its merit,
A cerebral gold nugget, yours to inherit.
You may take its wisdom and do as you may,
To live out your life in a meaningful way.

I had been in soar for a fortnight and a day,
Before landing on marble my wings to lay.
So vast were all of those beds of bones,
My eyes saw nothing from rows of tombstones.
But then my retinas saw a deleterious sight,
Two darkened men in a shoveling fight.
Their shoveling was swift and too was the end,
At which point Stooge gently consoled his friend.
The soil beneath their feet was flat as water,
A neatly filled grave for Lucky's poor daughter.
The sight seemed clear like a drop of rain,
So I added my caw to the father's pain.

'We must continue to live!' he said with a brave voice,
'A cruel world it is, we have no choice.
May I please borrow some gold, for a woolen toy?
To mask the absence of a sibling in front of my boy.

I will repay what I am given, so think not of theft,
I only wish to make happy he whom I have left.’
‘You will recompense me, I have no fright.
No one dares defy me because of my might.
And do not expect to hear any joy with the ear,
My children have every toy, and still seldom cheer.
The world is cruel, but life is nothing to commend,
The only consolation is that one comes to an end.

Stooge’s words were harsh, but Lucky did not care,
With his dear friend lives to compare.
He was downtrodden, but perfectly aware,
That his perspective Stooge did not share.
‘You still have a beloved, a woman to praise,
A lifelong companion for the rest of your days.
I loved my beloved, and care for her still,
It pained me to see her become cold as an anvil,
I did not mind her leaving without a goodbye,
Her pain was the most visible thing that met the eye.
And I pray not for reconciliation to God in the sky;
But for her to be a happier person than I.’

‘You exercise great empathy’ Stooge said.
‘However, for women there should be no dread.
Mine is not a position that should be sought instead.
They value me for what I have, not my heart or head.
My wife serves my house, but spares not my nerves.
Is that something that a working husband deserves?
The children serve duly, but only when asked,
And are greatly ungrateful, but modestly tasked.
I know too well, my friend, a feeling you lack,
Which is to return home and to want to go back.

My life is made miserable on certain occasions,
Which is why I engage in unchaste recreations.'

Lucky remained stood, and shocked as ever,
But supported his friend on whichever endeavor.
The silence was thick, but was soon ended,
When Lucky's perspective was sensibly defended.

'I love my life. I would not change it now,
I lived my moments the way I knew how.
There were pities and there are still,
But I was given a life with God's will.
My dear, Stooze, I haven't a choice but to live
Until the day humanity goes through God's sieve.
Shall we be off? I have neither strength nor reason,
To remain in the weather at this cold season.'

And the two were off, like they had never been,
Both wealthy, but only one within.
And each satisfied with the words that they gave,
But only one throwing a pouch of gold on the grave.
The one with a sour face cloaked in warm fur,
Bid good day to the vividly shivering sir.
The latter came to his knees and wept,
Before disappearing in the night's depth.
This is the conclusion to the tale of friends,
Which can be interpreted to different ends,
And all of this was beheld by my own eye,
The tale is now yours, friend. Farewell and goodbye.

Nikola Stanković
The University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy,
English Department, MA student

Chilling May

You break me in one movement of your hand
People like me live under water for many days
Letting other to crush whatever it is shiny with them
Some nights seem too intense to ever comprehend

In the morning — chilling May
In our lungs — short breaths
Still I get excited about easier steps
Floating motions underneath the Earth's bed
Always on the first guess, I would say:
It is never your fault and forever my bad

Today I met a soul who reassured me
He said that my frustration is the Saint's part in me
The most genuine one, actually

The world is at such a perfect place
To break me in one movement of its hands

Elena Milosavljević
The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
German Department, Second-year student

Inner peace

O slave of time, you hopeless romantic,
Say, what is it that you most desire?
Could it perhaps be a gentle fire,
Such an embrace that subdues the frantic?

O silent warrior, soldier in peace,
Be honest, what is it that you most crave?
Up until this moment, you've been so brave
As to withstand all the pain piece by piece.

Unknowing advisors settled the ground
After the storm, so now it's safe to rest;
Take a deep breath, lose yourself in the sound.

Just don't rush; I know you're doing your best.
And remember, you should never feel bound
Because you never were; there is no test.

Elena Maričić
The University of Niš, Faculty of Philosophy,
English Department, Second-year student

Живот¹

Every October greets Its admirer coldly
I would like you to open your mouth
For a new mother tongue
Since no one is around the corner
A touch would make it bearable
Under the layers, we always end up emptier
Someone will always be missing
Emptier.

Gizzard which tangles our responsibilities
If I do not chew more than I can take
Gizzard would eat me alive
Gizzard gets by the nicest things
Because It never seems to take them as they are
Gizzard negotiates that my hands have never been
emptier

Elena Milosavljević

¹Stomach (Russian)

The First Sentience

No eyes beheld that original immeasurable gloom,
Strands of tenebrous gossamer
Assailing one another,
A primordial ritual of mawing and clawing,
Cells torn and reborn,
Creation of life,
Birth of the first form.

And black-veiled nothingness began to sing,
Cognition sans origin spawned and began to think,
All cells within cells within one stem,
By a single sentience interlink.

A primordial mind filled with thoughts of light,
For now absent goal, absent sight,
Shining and magnificent,
A dancing aurora,
A luminous pestilence,
A contagious radiance,
Scattered all the matter,
Automated pattern,
And eternal night it began to shatter.

The chaos, the cold, the gloom, the luster,
The unaligned comforting warmth,
All cells in existence began to cluster,
Ripping and tearing,
Nurturing and caring.

Paradoxes merged and melded,
And the universe for the first time blinked,
Natures opposed yet unified,
Interwoven, intertwined and interlinked.

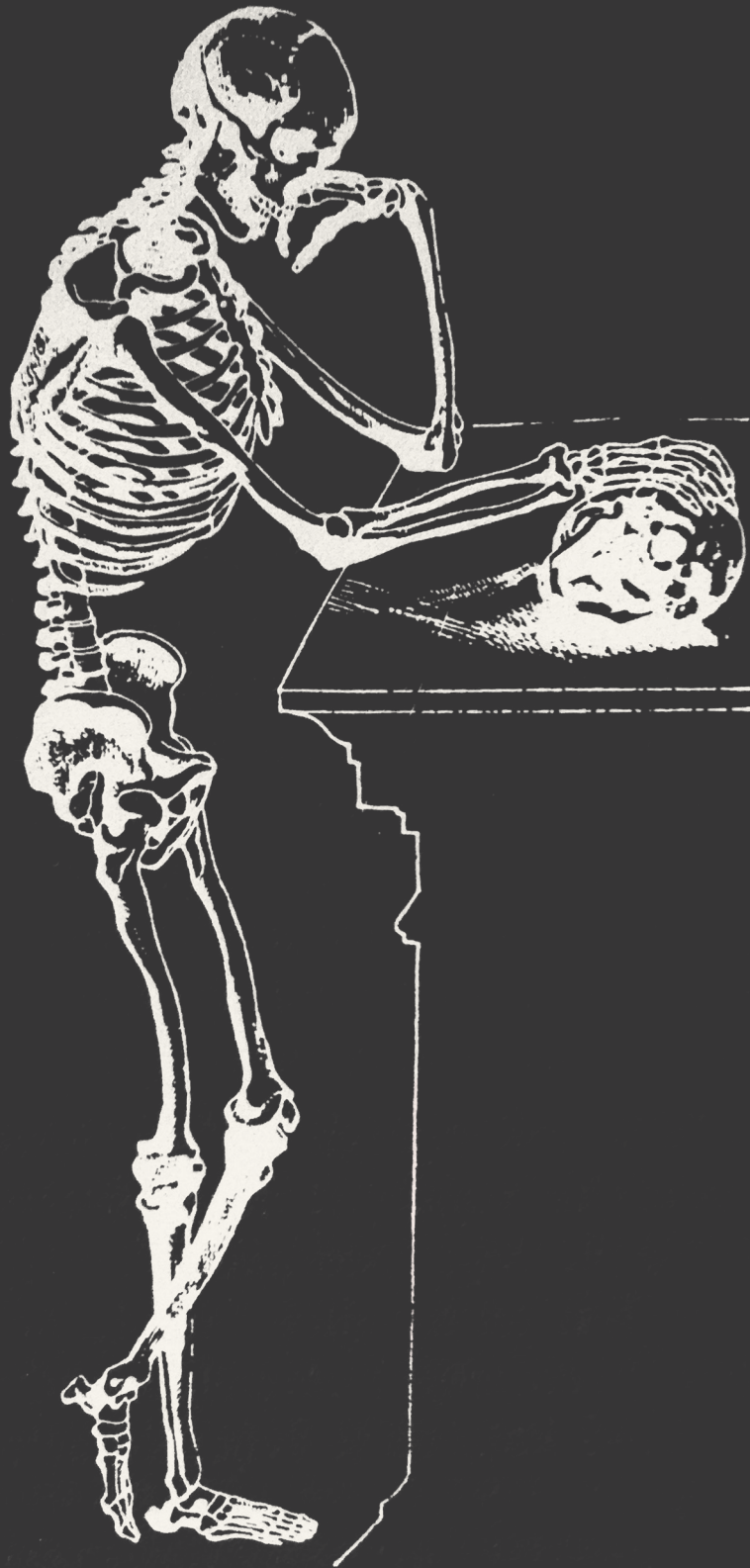
Gordan Perišić
The University of Kragujevac, Faculty of Philology and Arts,
English Department, Alumnus

The Moon Eater

Behold our luminous orb, the moon,
Spoiling in its incandescent majesty.
For eons gazing at thou,
Yet waning it is now, losing its cosmic shine
As something chants from its shrine:
"Decay you false god!
Relinquish your power, it's mine!"
Now it burns in its valley of gloom
With a verdant rotten flame;
Making it continually swoon
Until it's forgotten its name,
The ever-glorious Moon.
The flame saps and enervates our Luna divine,
Surrounding it in a fiery constellational sign
Signifying ruin, a celestial calamity.
And through all this harrowing wonder,
Our eyes descry over yonder
A monstrous shape rising on our orb with a tune,
And we behold a vile Presence on the moon.
It was it that commands the flame of decay,
It is it that orchestrates the death of our orb,
Its body is twisted and to our dismay
That tune by its maw turns into a song.
And echoed this song of mist and fog
And in its style of death's denial.
This entity's clad in the knowledge of ancients,
It wishes to prolong that life of its own,
For years it's been searching for arcane-bound agents,
From the moon it wishes immortality to loan.

And an agent it found deep underground, it's true,
This creature, it's seen its quest through and through.
A harrowing spell it found scroll-bound,
Adorned in evergreen runes,
Awakened only by revenge-fueled hunger and tunes.
Through cataclysmic melodies
The Presence summoned a fire,
Furious pillars of viridian ire,
That drain and steal and fuel a master,
Abiding by only the words of their caster.
And the caster spoke:
"Now twist and burn and give me your life!
There is solace in death, an immortal's last breath,
Feel the transient time that took my beautiful wife."
And through dark magic of rot and decay,
Necromancy, hate, and sorrow turned gray,
The Presence and the Moon swapped faces,
The latter now mortal, the former Immortal,
And of the emerald embers there were no traces.

Gordan Perišić



trans | ЛАТИОН

Ophelia

Arthur Rimbaud

translated by Andrijana Prođanić

I

In a celestial cradle upon a calm, black wave
Like a great lily, pale Ophelia floats,
Floats very slowly, resting in her veil,
As deep from the woods sound the distant notes.

For a thousand years ago woeful Ophelia
in the vast, black stream did death seize.
For it is a thousand years of her honey mania
Whispering her tale to the gentle, evening breeze.

The wind kisses her bosom and in petals deep
Waters with wreathed veils her endow.
The swaying willows on her shoulder weep
As the reeds rest upon her high, slumbering brow.

Each wrinkled lily floating 'round her sighs
For she seldom awakes, on a resting alder bough,
Some nest from which a nestle of wings flies
Like arcane chants from golden stars—gently, down.

II

Oh, pale Ophelia, beautiful as snow!
Thou, child of mine, to the water kingdom
Passed, the winds of Norway humming low
Taught you bitter, borrowed freedom.

For it was that gale, twisting your locks,
Bringing strange sounds to your spirit's heights,
While your heart listened to the seas and the rocks
In the cries of the trees and the sighs of the nights.

'Twas the sea's mad roar, the call of ruth
That broke open your child's bosom, too naive and sweet.

'Twas that April morning when that fair youth,
A poor fool, sat wordless at your knees.

Heaven! Love! Freedom!

 What foolish, childish dreams.
You took to him like a flake to a pyre
Your future, bright, was torn at the seams
And your blue eye put out by the blazing fire.

III

And the poet says, that in the darkening night
Searching for the picked flowers on a starry hill is
Thou, bathing in your veils of plight.
Thou, Pale Ophelia, floating like a great lily.

Ophélie

I

Sur l'onde calme et noire où dorment les étoiles
La blanche Ophélie flotte comme un grand lys,
Flotte très lentement, couchée en ses longs voiles...
-- On entend dans les bois lointains des hallalis.

Voici plus de mille ans que la triste Ophélie
Passe, fantôme blanc, sur le long fleuve noir;
Voici plus de mille ans que sa douce folie
Murmure sa romance à la brise du soir.

Le vent baise ses seins et déploie en corolle
Ses grands voiles bercés mollement par les eaux;
Les saules frissonnants pleurent sur son épaule,
Sur son grand front rêveur s'inclinent les roseaux.

Les nénuphars froissés soupirent autour d'elle;
Elle éveille parfois, dans un aune qui dort,
Quelque nid, d'où s'échappe un petit frisson d'aile:
-- Un chant mystérieux tombe des astres d'or.

II

O pale Ophélie! belle comme la neige!
Oui tu mourus, enfant, par un fleuve emporté!
—C'est que les vents tombant des grands monts de Norvège
T'avaient parlé tout bas de l'apre liberté;

C'est qu'un souffle, tordant ta grande chevelure,
A ton esprit rêveur portait d'étranges bruits;
Que ton cœur écoutait le chant de la nature
Dans les plaintes de l'arbre et les soupirs des nuits;

'C'est que la voix des mers folles, immense rale,
Brisait ton sein d'enfant, trop humain et trop doux;
C'est qu'un matin d'avril, un beau cavalier pale,
Un pauvre fou, s'assit muet à tes genoux!

Ciel! Amour! Liberté! Quel rêve, o pauvre folle!
Tu te fondais à lui comme une neige au feu:
Tes grandes visions étranblaient ta parole
-- Et l'infini terrible effara ton oeil bleu !

III

— Et le poète dit qu'aux rayons des étoiles
Tu viens chercher, la nuit, les fleurs que tu cueillis,
Et qu'il a vu sur l'eau, couchée en ses longs voiles,
La blanche Ophélie flotter, comme un grand lys.

The fish and the maiden

translated by Milica Rakić

The fair maiden sits by the sea,
The fair maiden spoke for her ears:
"Oh my Dear Lord, God almighty!
What could be wider than the sea?
What could be longer than the field?
What could be faster than the horse?
What could be sweeter than honey?
What could be dearer than the kin?"

The fish speaks out of the water:
"Girl, you utterly foolish gal!
Wider is the sky than the sea,
Longer is the sea than the field,
Faster are the eyes than the horse,
Sugar is sweeter than honey,
Dearer is the lover than kin."

Milica Rakić

The University of Belgrade, Faculty of Philology,
English Department, Second-year student

Riba i djevojka

Djevojka sjedi kraj mora,
Pak sama sebi govori:
„Ah mili Bože i dragi!
Ima l` šta šire od mora?
Ima l` što duže od polja?
Ima l` što brže od konja?
Ima l` što slađe od meda?
Ima l` što draže od brata?"
Govori riba iz vode:
„Djevojko, luda budalo!
Šire je nebo od mora,
Duže je more od polja,
Brže su oči od konja,
Slađi je šećer od meda,
Draži je dragi od brata."

Poetry shall be written by all

Branko Miljković

translated by Milica Rakić

Dream is an ancient and forgotten truth
that no one is able to verify
now the foreign country sings like the sea and worry
the East is west of the West and the false motion is the fastest
they now sing of knowledge and of the birds of my uncared
illness

the flower between the ash and the scent
the ones rejecting to survive love
and lovers who turn the time around
the garden whose smell the earth does not recognize
and the earth which stays faithful to death
for this world is not the only concern to the Sun
but someday
where once was the heart, the Sun will stand
and in the human speech will not be those words
which the poem would renounce
poetry shall be written by all
the truth shall be witnessed in all the words
in places where the poem is the finest
the one who first sang will retreat
leaving the poem to others
I accept the big idea of the future poets:
One unfortunate man cannot be a poet
I take upon myself the verdict of the chanting crowd:
The one who cannot hear the poem shall listen to the storm
but:
will the freedom be able to sing
like the slaves sang of it.

Poeziju će svi pisati

San je davna i zaboravljena istina
koju više niko ne ume da proveriti,
sada tuđina peva ko more i zabrinutost,
istok je zapadno od zapada, lažno kretanje je najbrže...

Sada pevaju mudrost i ptice moje zapuštene bolesti,
cvet između pepela i mirisa,
oni koji odbijaju da prežive ljubav
i ljubavnici koji vraćaju vreme unazad.
Vrt čije mirise zemlja ne prepoznaje
i zemlja koja ostaje verna smrti
jer svet ovaj suncu nije jedina briga...
Ali jednoga dana
tamo gde je bilo srce stajaće sunce,
i neće biti u ljudskom govoru takvih reči
kojih će se pesma odreći,
poeziju će svi pisati,
istina će prisustvovati u svim rečima
na mestima gde je pesma najlepša,
onaj koji je prvi zapevao povući će se
prepuštajući pesmu drugima.

Ja prihvatam veliku misao budućih poetika:
jedan nesrećan čovek ne može biti pesnik,
ja primam na sebe osudu propevale gomile:
ko ne ume da sluša pesmu, slušaće oluju,
ali:
Hoće li sloboda umeti da peva
kao što su sužnji pevali o njoj?

September

Stevan Raičković

translated by Andrijana Prođanić

Oh, poem, cease your flee!
We've lived, haven't we?

The gayest hours of blowing breeze
In the boughs of golding poplar trees

In a haze, in deceitful glee —
Alas, thou took from me.

Septembar

Stanimo malo, pesmo.
Jesmo li živeli, jesmo?

Ti si najlepše sate
— Jablani kada se zlate.

U lakoj magli, peni —
Odnela tužno meni.

The day

Vitomir Vito Nikolić

translated by Milica Rakić

This day cannot go into any diary,
This mockery of the day, despondent, of light deprived,
No rain to get you drenched entirely
No wind, no Sun, nothing remotely alive.

And it continues to smoulder — beyond people, tepidly,
No one lives like that. I shout outside furiously:
Day, you bastard, try to wake up allegedly,
Get lost and ascend decently.

Dan

Ni u kakav dnevnik ovaj dan ne može,
ovo ruglo danje, malodušno, sivo,
Ni kiše da se pokisne do kože,
ni vjetra, ni sunca, ničeg živog.

I to tako tinja – izvan ljudi, mlako,
Niko tim ne živi. Vičem srdit vani:
Dane, đubre jedno, ne sviće se tako,
Gubi se natrag pa pristojno svani.

Suffering

Duško Trifunović
translated by Milica Rakić

I suffered more than anyone
Until I got used to misfortune as any and
I suffered it wasn't as easy as a feather
Then somehow, I got myself together.

Can you imagine me, a human
Suffering because of an ordinary woman,
Running and bringing her flowers,
But she keeps me on the edge for hours.

I took as much as she gave
Kissed her, said my thanks and waved.
And I see misfortune nearing me larger than before
For I suffer because I suffer no more.

Patnja

Patio sam više nego iko
dok se nisam na nevolje sviko
patio sam nije bilo lako
onda sam se sredio nekako.
Možete li zamisliti mene
kako patim zbog obične žene
kako trčim i nosim joj cveće
kako molim a ona me neće
Uzeo sam koliko je dala
Poljubio i rekao hvala
Opet vidim crno mi se piše
jer sad patim što ne patim više.

The Kiss

Dobrica Erić

translated by Milica Rakić

Out of everything hidden in the head
Out of all the wonders multiplying there

The kiss is the most diligent
Marvel of which you can be aware

When orbiting this space
Numerous hearts, by a path long enough

Two hearts glid with the same restlessness
And mirrored each other up

Then the heads also pause for a while
With crowns of dewdrops

And lips come together and flare up
With a flicker of a kiss and the whole world pops

And like that through two bodies gushes high
The light and a new planet twirled

For the kiss is, as said by
The poet, the most wonderful meeting in the world

Poljubac

Od svega što se u glavi krije,
od svih čuda što se tu množe,

poljubac je najdivnije
čudo što ti se desiti može.

Kad se, kružeći ovim svemirom
bezbrojnih srca, putanjom dugom

dva srca ozare istim nemirom
i oglednu se jedno u drugom,

tada i glave malo zastanu
s kronicama od rosnog klasja,

a usnice se sretnu i planu
plamičkom poljpca što svet obasja.

I tako kroz dva tela poteče
svetlost što stvara novu planetu,

jer, poljubac je, kao što reče
pesnik, najlepší susret na svetu!



prose

I Wanted to Say Something, but I Just Left.

I saw burning cities, in a day I saw about twelve eclipses of the Sun and I touched the whisper of the Moon. I saw the ground shaking and great waves crashing the world as we know it: forests, mountains, people and their buildings. I saw it all. And I wanted to say something, but I just left... a seed. A seed for the things that are yet to come, and be there, to succeed.

I saw life come out of the oceans. I saw dozens of beings evolve and transform. I praised those brave enough to change, and I grieved all the dead. I saw humans separated as a race, and I wanted to say something, but I just left... a finger-drawn heart in the sand and a sunny day to come to their land.

I saw people claiming the land, water and day; I saw fear in the eyes of animals killed in May. I wanted to hug them, there was so much to say, but I just left a fresh breeze and the promising light of the new day.

I saw people evolve in a manner no previous beings did, I saw their factories rise here and there, and I coughed on their noxious, dark air. People collapsing, greed in someone's eye, just as a mother and her child, embraced on those wicked, cold streets - die. With tears in my eyes, I wanted and silently begged to say something, but it was only a ray of sunshine on their dead bodies that could have left.

Graceful and divine, the Spirit of this Unholy world, I saw the children of the Earth come, live, and go by my word. But this place was getting so dark and gray, that no matter how much I still loved them, they no longer could stay. Breathing heavily, aware of all that's about to be lost, I raise my hand and command the clean water that the world needs the most.

Teodora Mitrović
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The Connoisseur

I've never quite believed in Heavens, my lord. Perhaps, it is because I am a scientist. I don't know who laid out these foundational prejudices, but I study Man, therefore I must denounce religion.

I've begun turning to the Divine for unclear reasons, while spending time with the Kiloo tribe. Better said, for reasons I'm still exploring, jotting down notes at the end of my research journal.

These people are unlike anything we've seen, and each day of observation uncovers more about life than all my university days. I say this not to drag the educational systems through the mud, but to highlight a pioneer's enlightenment.

I've come here to do research, and, admittedly, escape from the machine. Yes, from the mindless man-made current that strikes the river banks endlessly. At the cost of many. But these words are also said by many, and I'm a practical man — what mankind knows need not be written down.

These people are different — so incredibly different. They paint their fingers with sharp streaks to remind themselves where the future lies, and the very arrows pointing at their fingertips remain inked under their skin forever. The streaks then gather at their chest, forming an orderly spiral concealed by their wraps — it reminds them of what their work is for.

I study, and fall in love with their energetic dances, where the inked streaks ending at their feet symbolize their three smiles. One of those is of communal joy, awakened by dancing. Their whole world has gathered, and they cheer for what little they had hunted during the drought, they flirt among what little youth has been raised, they smile upon what little world they feel, yet they do not need more.

The sick are cared for, those afraid are reassured, the doubtful... They are loved. If the first smile is from the others, the second is for them.

They took me in, if I understood correctly, because of my blue eyes. "When a blind man sees the morning star, the world shall end." I decided to believe their saying, but have promptly added that my sight is almost perfect, despite my similarity to their gray-eyed sightless prophet.

After the preliminary week, they invited me to dance, showing me the strange jumps and steps. I was a decent pupil, and they were content. The third smile must be our own.

That night, I dreamt they pushed me into the midnight bonfire and waltzed around my burning corpse. Yet the grim undertones disappeared once I left the verypyre, charcoal for skin, becoming one of them. I still ache at the realisation that that the latter part of the dream hasn't come true.

At last, they tell me of the streaks which cut their necks and spread into an array of sprawling dots around their eyes.

'We are born blind.' It is why we do not remember infancy. 'We learn to see.' Most do not — was my thought, yet for the first time I decided to challenge their beliefs.

'But I remember my youth. I remember my mother's silken touches and my father's tired kisses.'

'And then?' the prophet stabbed at me. 'Here', I think he added, 'we are born under the sky and know nothing. But we learn through marks. There, you are born under steel domes and over churning roads, and you forget what you should know.'

And as I look back — he touches my forehead — I forget. No friends, no school nor childhood. No university nor love which I'd so treacherously searched for there.

Only scorching metal wastelands and deserted islands from which each person waves to the other, but cannot hear, cannot see their faces. I see what was, what is and what could have been, but I need help finding the answer. Where did we fail?

We? Is it us, lord?

I observe the lines on every member but the suckling child, from their working hands and dancing feet, from knowing eyes to the hearts which work as one, for one, unlike the many I'd been among. Among many, one bad part ruins everything. Here, one is, and one cares for itself.

I struggle to take all this in as the metallic screeches tear the nearby land, steadily consuming what little of the tribe's world is left. I know — I've never believed in Heavens, my lord, but I do pray that Hell exists and yearns for those of many gone astray.

Or perhaps, do we need to help them?

Luka Jekić
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My mother's orchid

Displayed neatly in the crossfire of the sun's thousand exploding Trinities lay the potted orchid divided into its very own trinity, a Holy Trinity, of three flamboyant petals, which unlike the leaves of the clover shelter a story in their dissimilarity. The first third, a petal of longing for the spirit of youthful life, much like my poor mother, replaces the father in this holy trinity. This petal was beautiful once. It held great potential in its youth. Its bloom surprised even the expert hand which watered it, and attracted the admiration of the entire garden. Armed with this respect, the orchid petal could do no wrong as it was the sole petal on the body of the flower. Its infallible beauty was the pride of the watering hand, which single handedly overshadowed that of the sunflowers, the tulips and even the houseplants from within the estate.

Such an ungodly beauty could only be stifled by an ungodly intervention, and in only one winter's time the most beautiful leaf was stifled in its progression, regardless of it being sheltered from the elements in those cruel months. It had reached its zenith and was forced by the unforgivingness of time and nature into a steady decline. The fortunes of the petal ceased to be and the harsh reality was discovered. The whole garden had always hated the petal for its appearance which glared and shone almost as if it were resonating the sun's rays back to the sun during photosynthesis, gaining its personal spotlight above it in the hot summer days when the most watchful eyes enjoyed the serenity of the garden. The other flowers were not as frequently looked at for their beauty, but once the orchid petal became just a normal, still beautiful, but not transcendently stunning petal, the garden regained its equilibrium.

Every flower, every plant wondered why the orchid petal had one day turned its back on the sun and curved its surface as if shunned from its flames. And almost no plant had noticed that in that same span of time a new petal grew above the first. The second petal, the son of the Trinity. It was a timid petal upon its bloom, not overly stimulating to the eyes, but always watchful and curious about the garden and its flora. The second petal was not interested in its own beauty, or whether such a thing even existed, it was a preoccupied spirit that inspired the petal, making it a arduous companion, impossible interlocutor, and on a personal level provided the petal with a series of questions about its own meaning. It was a handsome petal, of course, and maybe one day would be

so beautiful as to leave a lasting impression on the watering hand, or the eyes that frequented the garden. But somehow the second petal was simply not convinced in any value it would have after withering. After all, his mother was proof of how feeble-minded the garden was in respects to her extraordinary beauty. Bothered by thoughts of meaning which other flowers, and even his own mother considered to be delusional, the second petal, the son, pivoted each day slightly more to the right, thus creating a space between itself and the first petal.

The garden felt ill at ease with this sudden and ungrateful divide of a hardened mother and a dreamer son. One third of the Trinity was well grounded in the reality of the garden, while the second third wanted to have no part in this reality. Both petals withered at uneven rates and loved the other in secluded silence, but could not understand the essence of each other's being.

As inconspicuously as the prior two, a third orchid petal rose between the two thirds of the Trinity. Not a son of the son, nor a daughter. The second petal called the newly formed petal his Holy Artistic Spirit. It was not beautiful, nor spectacular, but it was the third orchid petal, and it drew people from all around the world directly to it, to witness it, to feel it, to understand it. Some tried to possess it, and, of course, failed. Many artists painted pictures of it, and hung their paintings in the garden. Many poets wrote sonnets about it.

The Orchid soon withered. The art, however, never did.

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Remembrance of All Things

As per usual, I sit down on the terrace for my morning tea before breakfast. I have never really been known as a person with an appetite, but I've always found that some nice camomile or mint tea, accompanied by biscuits or better yet, a madeleine, tend to go a long way. It is my favourite routine, to sit down on the greyish, marble balcony, looking upon the green lines of treetops that go on and on until they are cut by an adjacent body of water, which strangely looks as still as its viridescent companion. There is no breeze to brush against my back and arms, or to wave my hair until it touches my face and tickles my lips. But at least it won't disturb the madeleines on the table. As a sort of contrast to the thick, firm rails and balusters, the tables and chairs stand miniscule and slender, yet in the same colour. I would like to imagine the smaller furniture acting as the tender, fragile, younger siblings protected from the outside world by their domineering, older counterparts. Should I have made such an analogy?

Nonetheless, I will not be denied my enjoyment of the mandatory teatime. Looking at the madeleine tucked between my fingers, I notice that they, the fingers, seem to be a bit chubbier than they usually are, and quite younger, as well. Smooth, unwrinkled. I am no longer on the terrace, but rather in my mother's old living room. The grey scenery has been replaced by the greenish and brown furniture, the old wooden cupboards and the soft, woollen, carpet on which many dreams had been dreamt. On that carpet, I played with my sister, and I also played with her. They would always try to take my madeleines from the table. Their mischievous laughter would follow me.

As it did, one of the voices died down, and only her laughter remained. She could be seen sitting beside me in the garden at her home. Grounded. No view of the picturesque sea in sight. Trapped between the garden walls and the houses surrounding us, as if in a box. She laughed at my recently drowned madeleine, which had fallen into my cup. Didn't she buy it for me, when she heard I was coming over? Well now, she laughed at my loss. The garden walls around us and the cramped block were now out of my vision. I only observed the madeleine decomposing on the surface of the small well in my hands. Soon her laughter abandoned me as well.

I sit alone in a dark room. There is nothing worthy of note.

keeping your memories within a journal of any kind, transforming them, makes one an artist? To preserve and to defeat time. Am I an artist? I confuse myself and those around me, for there is no passion, no fire emanating from inside me. I only walk under the guise of a humble friend.

And now I return to the terrace, to the bright light, alone again, with only the plate of madeleines and the full cup of tea to keep me company. With that one madeleine still in my hand, I dip it and bring it closer to my lips. The sensation that arises as the soft, wet pastry comes in contact with the tip of the tongue makes me shudder a bit. The tea has grown cold.

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Shelley

Jelena Perić
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Lecky, the chameleon, was colourful like a peacock's tail or lollipops and delicacies on fair counters, but also like concrete under those counters or like grass on which a peacock walks. He couldn't choose when to blend in with the surroundings, unlike his other fellow chameleons. However, it hasn't always been like that. Once, while he was walking through the meadow, he saw something gleaming in the distance. Curious, as always, he dashed through the tall grass overgrown with brightly coloured flowers and after a few seconds he was a stone's throw away from that brightness. He was approaching it cautiously, and it was gradually fading. Suddenly, he saw something he had never seen before. It was him. Scared of his own reflection, he blended in straight away with the grass and vivid flowers which were surrounding him. From that moment on, he was everything and nothing. Sometimes it was of help being invisible to others, like when he was playing hide-and-seek with his friends. However, sometimes it was not, especially when he was stuck in a queue at the post office and everyone would shout at him every time they bumped into him. He could never understand why no one could notice him. There was something on him which stayed opaque, and those were his eyes, the ones which made him like this and he didn't like them.

Currently, Lecky is standing at the bus station and hoping that the bus won't pass by without stopping because there is no one around him who the driver would be able to see. Not long after, a female chameleon comes and sits on the bench. Lecky knows that she can't see him. Suddenly, she turns and starts walking towards him. He is surprised because he hasn't done anything which would give away his presence.

"Hi, my name is Shelly."

"How... How can you see me?" he stutters.

"Eyes, you have beautiful eyes."

At that moment, a tear comes from his right eye and its trace begins erasing the background in which he is blended in. Once again, he becomes the same old Lecky who was walking through flowery meadow.

Sweet Oil of Vitriol

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Surrounded by chairs and tables thrown into disarray, an almost empty bottle of ether on the table, and a radio incoherently singing something, he woke up. Alone. It felt like it's been days since he came here, and the bone-dry rag cuddled in his shriveled and pale hand only enforced the fact. "It's time to go home", he mumbled.

His legs were stiff and numb. As he tried to get up, his head filled with pressure and unease. Almost instinctively, he brought the rag to his nose and took a deep breath. It was unexpectedly dry and tasteless, and the high was non-existent. Anxious pale hands hastily soaked the fabric with the little ether left in the bottle, and then enveloped his nose and mouth with it. The hollow room was engulfed in muffled gasps, and in an instant, the feeling of unease was gone — euphoria kicked in.

He got up, not only by his will, but also pulled up by the lightness. Yet he continued rising — continued as if his limbs were stretching, yet never enough to touch the ceiling. The door started moving towards him, stretching and becoming narrower, but still enough to let him through. Carefully, as if on stilts, he went towards the door apparently within reach, but his hand was just short of grabbing the handle.

After every unsuccessful attempt, the delirium he was in was slowly slipping away, and when he finally grabbed the doorknob, the euphoria stopped. Suddenly, spine-chilling sounds of a trumpet echoed through the air. He pushed the door and all kinds of thoughts flooded his mind.

He vaguely remembered a priest whose mass he had attended recently, as well as the oddly captivating words the holy man read, stories about the end times, about fires and earthquakes, monsters and plagues. He specifically remembered all that would be announced by a choir of trumpets — "Could this be it?". Fear struck him. "But what is there to fear? God is merciful." He remembered hell, from a book he had read long ago, the depictions of sinners, and their punishments. "Have I sinned? No, no, never. Only once. But who hasn't? That one other time... And... but I do repent! I promise!" And the thoughts and pictures of flames, and hurricanes, and swarms of locusts, and giant terrifying monsters continued piling up in his mind. It was too much for him to handle. Again, his pale hand pressed the rag against his face. He inhaled the fumes. He felt better. The door was open.

Outside, an intense light blinded him. The choir of trumpets grew larger and louder. In the distance he saw a couple of silhouettes approaching. He felt fear. Thoughts of running swarmed him, but running was futile. After a couple of steps, he fell as a bolt of lightning hit him. The light around him grew dimmer, yet the brass sounds roared even stronger. He tried crawling away, but again, a strong force akin to a thunder strike overwhelmed him. All around him, darkness started spreading, and out of it, familiar buildings rose, now covered in huge crimson cobwebs and pitch-black ash, as if they were standing on the verge of starvation. On the barely noticeable sidewalks in front of them, instead of people stood pillars of char and brimstone, smoldering and silently screaming in pain, yet unable to move an inch. They produced huge pillars of smoke which fed the sky and gave it an ominous dark red hue that melded with the rooftops below. The ground was dry and eroded, but covered in blood which seeped into crevices and fed the unceasing thirst of the earth. But he had no wish, nor time to look around the terrifying landscape.

Unwillingly, he was thrown onto his back. Above him stood seven angels, or demons, he wasn't sure, but either way terror surged through his veins. They talked among themselves, and then spoke to him, but he didn't understand. It all sounded like mumbling down a well. All he could do was stare helplessly into their lifeless, eyeless metal faces. They started yelling, and with the cries and the instruments in the back, the noise was unbearable. His weak hand reflexively made a motion towards his face again, but as soon as the first move was made, he was struck by a bolt of lightning he saw coming out of one of the being's fingers. He felt pain and weakness. His body was limp and the only movement he felt he could do was that of his hand which still desperately tried to reach for his face.

Soon, he regained his sight, but only shortly. The buildings around him lost all their terrifying color and were now a monotonous gray, akin to the sky and the ground. The demons were there too, but were now walking away. Their clean coats and metal helmets set them apart from the surroundings, along with a tank, a steel beast that slowly followed them and drowned their speech in its own loud roars. But they disappeared around the corner, or in the distance — it didn't matter — they were gone. He was still lying on the dirty ground and the hand teased him with twitches mimicking a motion all too familiar, but the rag was gone. Soon enough, after a few minutes that felt like an eternity, his eyes closed, and he laid there cold and alone, left to rot.

The following text has been deemed above par by Milica Vitaz, PhD, Senior Language Instructor, during the 2022/2023 Contemporary English G-2 course and is thus included as an exemplary piece of student writing.

Serbian higher education systems are better than the U.S.
Discuss:

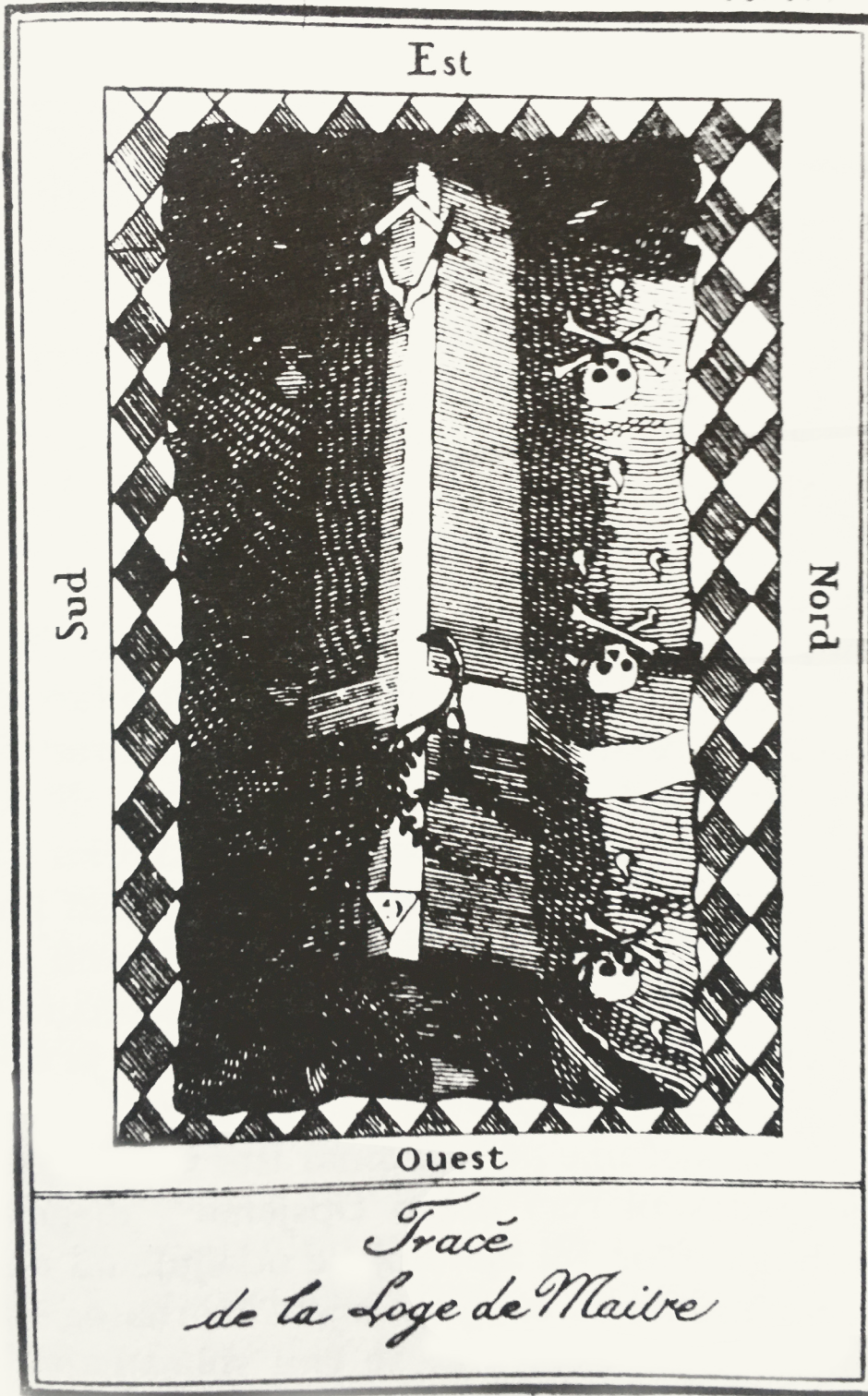
Getting educated is one of the key parts of one's life. Apart from acquiring theoretical knowledge, we also get to meet people and build our social skills. One step further in our journey is higher education. Good higher education systems are crucial and I believe that Serbia's is better compared to the U.S.

Serbia has shown time and time again that its universities are superior to the ones in the US. Firstly, there is not as much student debt in Serbia since tuition isn't as costly as in the U.S. This makes the whole uni experience less stressful for the students. Secondly, the enrollment procedure itself is more fair because only your knowledge is taken into account, there are no application letters like in the U.S. where you're judged based on your enthusiasm and background.

On the other hand, U.S. colleges have their advantages and are not subpar in every sense. One reason is that sports are more appreciated and rewarded than in Serbia. They offer student athletes scholarships. Another reason why the U.S. could be one step ahead is the fact that their facilities are better equipped. They have more modern buildings which include new cafeterias, lecture halls, libraries, etc.

In conclusion, even though on the surface it may seem the opposite, Serbia's universities outdo the American ones. Despite not having the most modern space and equipment, they offer equal opportunity for enrollment and don't require a fortune in terms of tuition, making higher education accessible to anyone.

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comparative analysis [2024]

Wasteland, Baby!: T. S. Eliot's destruction of love through the lens of Hozier

If one decides to take a deeper look into the world of T. S. Eliot's "The Waste Land", it should come as no surprise to find that this masterpiece has influenced many different artists since its publication. One of those artists is Andrew John Hozier-Byrne (better known as Hozier), a world-renowned singer/songwriter whose lyricism is often described as "pure poetry" by many of his devoted fans. On his album "Wasteland, Baby!" it can, without a shadow of a doubt, be said that a song with the same title is inspired by T. S. Eliot's work.

Hozier is no stranger to taking inspiration from the world of literature, with his latest album "Unreal Unearth" taking inspiration from Dante's "Inferno", and specific songs being allusions to other literary works (e.g. the song "Eat Your Young" clearly being inspired by Jonathan Swift's "A Modest Proposal"). He is known for writing songs about love, longing, and desire. In his music inspired by the greats, he masterfully incorporates these themes with clear indications of the source material.

The Dialog between T. S. Eliot and Hozier

T. S. Eliot's "Wasteland" discusses the destruction of human values as we know them. It is a broad look into a land where everything is horrific and nothing is as it should be. Every one of the five parts of the song dives into different forms of destruction. A few of the themes being discussed are a loss of identity and faith, the destruction of love, the deprivation of purpose and meaning in life, the destruction of nature, and so forth.

Part I: The Burial of The Dead

By taking a look into Part I: The Burial of The Dead, the story about the girl with the hyacinths shows us how meaningless love has become in this barren land. With the second to last line alluding to Joseph Conrad's "Heart of Darkness", it is abundantly clear that, in this land, love does not give power to people;

it makes them feel tired and weak, lulling them to sleep.

‘You gave me hyacinths first a year ago;
 ‘They called me the hyacinth girl.’
 —Yet when we came back, late, from the Hyacinth garden,
 Your arms full, and your hair wet, I could not
 Speak, and my eyes failed, I was neither
 Living nor dead, and I knew nothing,
 Looking into the heart of light, the silence.
 Oed’ und leer das Meer.’

Now, if we take a look at Hozier’s song, a different perspective on the destruction of love can be seen. His song has a nonchalant approach to the ending of love. The tone of it expresses to the listeners that yes, this is the wasteland, but it does so with little to no desperation. Perhaps this interpretation of the song has to do with both the lyrics of the song and the way it is sung. With his airy and warm voice, Hozier paints the picture of a person who sees the darkness but accepts it.

‘And the day that we’ll watch the death of the Sun
 That the cloud and the cold and those jeans you have on
 Then you’ll gaze unafraid as they sob from the city roofs’

This is the story of two lovers, looking at the world’s ending. The fearless tone is seen in the lack of desperation that the lovers feel upon the end of time. “They” will sob from the city roofs—others, not them. Because their love, to a certain extent, does give them the strength to accept that they are doomed.

Part II: A Game of Chess

Another example of these artists’ different views on the death of love can be seen in the second part of T. S. Eliot’s “Wasteland”, and the chorus of “Wasteland, Baby!”. Here we see the difference in the way that a person whom the narrator loves is presented. T. S. Eliot paints a picture of the artificial beauty of the narrator’s beloved

as her perfumes are described as "strange" and "synthetic". In the room with her is a scene from the myth of Philomel. The horrific story of the destruction of all kinds of love suggests that this woman is not loved. She desperately asks her lover what he is thinking about after he unwillingly enters her room.

"And other withered stumps of time
Were told upon the walls; staring forms
Leaned out, leaning, hushing the room enclosed.
Footsteps shuffled on the stair.
Under the firelight, under the brush, her hair
Spread out in fiery points
Glowed into words, then would be savagely still."

In contrast, Hozier shows adoration for his beloved. Calling them "indelible" and "unbreaking". Despite the unavoidable bleakness of the world, he still shows that he is in love, with that being a repeating refrain of the song. He confesses and expresses his love constantly, never even thinking of insulting his partner or showing an unwillingness to talk to them. He is even accepting of the ending of their love, which proves the selfless nature and purity of his love. He sees the beauty in even the bad and painful parts of love, seeing it as a sort of legacy that proves the strength of true love.

'And I love too
That love soon might end
And be known in its aching
But shown in the shaking
Lately of my wasteland, baby
Be still, my indelible friend
You are unbreaking
Though quaking
Though crazy
That's wasteland, baby.'

Overall, it is clear that these two works are connected by the same theme: the destruction of love. However, the artists chose to approach it in completely different ways. T. S. Eliot's nihilistic and fearful visions of the future contrast with Hozier's calm and accepting attitude toward the unavoidable and bleak ending of times. While T. S. Eliot in his "Wasteland" depicts a dystopian hellish world where humans have lost all virtues, love included, Hozier's "Wasteland, Baby!" gives us hope. He goes on to stress that while the world may be on fire and all we can do is watch it burn to ashes, love still has its worth and beauty, and we must see and appreciate it.

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Angels among us

"I found him in the garage on a Sunday afternoon. It was the day after we moved into Falconer Road. The winter was ending. Mum had said we'd be moving just in time for the spring. Nobody else was there. Just me. The others were inside the house with Doctor Death, worrying about the baby.

He was lying there in the darkness behind the tea chests, in the dust and dirt. It was as if he'd been there forever. He was filthy and pale and dried out and I thought he was dead. I couldn't have been more wrong. I'd soon begin to see the truth about him, that there'd never been another creature like him in the world". (Skellig, 1998)

David Almond grew up in Felling on Tyne, close to the city of Newcastle. He looks back fondly on his childhood. He and a couple of his friends would spend their summer holidays roaming the streets of Felling and exploring the nearby fields, and as teenagers, they would go to Seahouses and spend the night on the beach. While resting on some hill above Felling, or watching the sunset on the beach, Almond was in awe of the magnificence of it all. He still remembers how free he felt in those moments, and maybe that is exactly why he writes for children now, to make those fleeting seconds filled with magic last, to remember how he felt then, surrounded by his friends, admiring the little things.

Years later, he strove to find something special in the ordinary, in the things that looked really simple at first glance, while writing. He did not realize William Blake would play such a big part in his first novel, *Skellig*, but he surprisingly fit the narrative. Many people dismissed the 18th century author as just some wacky man who talked nonsense, but there was also something irresistibly captivating about him. He was taken out of school at the age of 10, and was homeschooled by his mother. Over the years he developed a passion for writing, painting, drawing and engraving, even inventing his own original printing method known as "illuminated printing". He is known for painting in nude and for seeing angels since childhood. They would look down at him from tree branches, peering at him through windows, addressing him in stairwells. He had a negative opinion of the school system, accusing it of stunting the development of children by making them sit in one place for hours instead of letting them explore the world around them.

Because of this, Almond was able to first introduce Blake into his book, through the character of Mina, the bird-obsessed dreamer.

Mina is a little girl who lives in the same neighbourhood as Michael, the protagonist. She spends most of her time reading, making animals out of clay, or sitting on a tree branch drawing various types of birds that visit her garden. She doesn't go to school, of which she is proud. Multiple times throughout the book she quotes Blake, recalling how he, a long time ago, said that a caged bird could not sing. A child in school cannot truly be happy. She talks a lot about how delighted she is to be able to spend the whole day drawing and reading, exploring and feeling the sun on her skin, and at the same time openly mocking the school system, even in front of her mother, while Michael is there. She would always remind him of the fact that she was free, while he was trapped in a place which she regarded as one of the worst places on earth, which was one of the causes of a fight they have later on. While Michael takes her teasing seriously, her mum doesn't seem to pay it much attention, brushing it off multiple times. Mina is a child, so her understanding of certain topics is rather simple, and her opinions, worded in a certain way, can sound excessive, almost comical, to an adult. Children are known to idolize people they find likeable. She probably sees Blake as someone relatable, since they both paint and draw, and they were both home-schooled, which is enough for her to become fixated on his character, seeing him as the ultimate role model, someone with all the right opinions. Because of this, Almond was able to incorporate William Blake into the story in an organic way. After Mina, many other characters mention him later on, like Mrs McKee, Mina's mum, who recites Blake's verses frequently, and Doctor MacNabola, a witty doctor whom Michael meets in the hospital while wanting to learn more about arthritis since Skellig suffered from it.

William Blake was a strange person. Surely many people found him unnerving, which is probably another reason why David Almond chose him as his biggest inspiration. At many points throughout the novel, a peculiar sense of uneasiness washes over us. An owl's call in the middle of the night. The face of a familiar person lit up by a flashlight from below in a dark room, their eyes and mouth looking like hollow, gaping holes.

A sound of tiny feet skittering about on the dusty concrete floor. The putrid breath of the meat-eating creature lying in your garage, just a couple of meters away from your house. Sleepless nights. At the beginning of the novel, the only out-of-place thing about the whole neighbourhood is Skellig. Michael discovers him on accident in the garage in his overgrown garden, behind the run-down house his parents bought in the hopes of transforming it into a nice family home for them and their two children, Michael and a sick newborn baby girl, still unnamed at the beginning of the book. The protagonist finds him lying behind some tea chests. He is tall and pale, dressed in a black suit. On his back is a pair of weird, bony lumps - wings. Michael exits the garage calmly, but his heart is racing. A couple of nights after this encounter, he cannot sleep. He keeps imagining the pale man entering the house in the middle of the night. He can almost see him standing at the foot of his bed covered in webs and dead flies, staring him down. Michael keeps telling himself that it was all just a weird dream. If he went back to the garage, would the creature still be inside?

Skellig is still in the garage, refusing to move when Michael goes back. Over time, Michael's fear of the creature lessens, but other unusual things start happening the more time they spend together. Michael and Mina manage to move him into a vacant house that belongs to Mina's late grandfather. A couple of days later, they notice that owls that live in the old house feed Skellig, they bring him various little animals and drop them onto the windowsill for him. We also get a feeling that something is different about Mina. Her gaze is piercing, and her skin is so pale that it almost glows in the dark. Both Mina and Skellig have this hollow, owl-like look in their eyes. The local doctor does not know who she is, even though he treated the man who lived in Michael's house before him. How come he never saw her? Also, how does she know where to find Michael without asking where he would be beforehand? Mina is not scared when dancing with Skellig, while Michael feels uneasy.

Blake's infatuation with angels can look scary to an average person, obsessive even. He would mention that he used to talk to them, and firmly believed that anyone could do so too, if they just opened their minds to the possibility of them being here, with us. This is also something that Mrs. McKee mentions.

We never find out what Skellig actually is, but we know that he has a seemingly tight bond with owls, in addition to being capable of helping those in need by performing miracles. In his own words, we learn that he is something similar to us, humans, too.

Life as a child is scary and confusing. Everything is new, and life is hard to navigate. The dark is engulfing, and Michael and Mina try their best to understand what is happening, to understand their new friend. But by doing so, they learn much about the world around them and how to appreciate it more. How to sit in silence under a tree and listen to the chirps of baby birds up in the branches, when to go watch those same baby birds when they fall out of their nest and hide in the bushes, waiting to get strong enough to fly away. Michael learns much about the evolution by asking what shoulder blades are for, after finding out that Skellig's are different. At one point, he is not scared anymore. The point of it all is to not be afraid to be curious, to try to understand, to believe that there is more to this world than meets the eye.

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Film Column

The Virgin Suicides (1999): Death and Pleasurable Looking

"OF LADIES MOST DEJECT AND WRETCHED"

Dead women, they are everywhere. Forever etched into the stones which line the walls of human history, the image of a beautiful, dying body has always been the highest form of female cultural expression. Beneath the veneer of high art lay the intrinsically ineluctable pains of girlhood as told in the stories of Medusa, Procne, Ruth, the Virgin Mary, Lavinia, and Marilyn Monroe. Tales of female suffering have undoubtedly shaped contemporary culture and in turn, conditioned how we perceive and value art. Thus, there arises a question of who gets to recount these stories, and more importantly, how reliable they are by virtue of being told by men. With cinema "satisfying a primordial wish for pleasurable looking" (Mulvey, 1975:807), Sofia Coppola's 1999 debut film makes for a meditation on the ethics and aesthetics of perceiving and being perceived.

With cinema satisfying a primordial wish for pleasurable looking (Mulvey 1975), Sofia Coppola's 1999 debut film makes for a meditation on the ethics and aesthetics of perceiving and being perceived.

In the 20-frame opening scene, the halcyon illusion of the American dream is built only to be broken. Shattering the sequence of orange-tinted shots of idyllic life in the leafy Michigan suburbia is a close-up of the plum-lipped Cecilia floating in a bathtub of her blood. Coppola reinforces the idea of the collective spectator by imposing the feeling of intrusion— Cecilia is whisked away past the shelves of half-empty perfume bottles, make-up brushes, and rosaries while clutching her bloodied prayer card.

Ergo, Coppola sets a narrative framework based on the absence of an autodiegetic narrator—the narrative becomes unreliable as we move from within the walls of a teenager's bedroom whose death we anticipate from the opening lines to the outside world of fascination and mysticism.

"GOOD NIGHT, SWEET LADIES; GOOD NIGHT"

Beauty and terror of girlhood are amplified under the scrutiny of the male gaze, or rather the male voice of intradiegetic-homodiegetic narrators—a chorus of teenage boys who live across the road. Finding it hard to grow out of the hyper-conservative family home, the Lisbon sisters quickly become objects of their fascination. In robbing the sisters of their voices, Coppola makes a poignant point in making the sisters romanticised, surface-level characters who lack agency. Such plot devices are foreshadowed from the opening scenes where Cecilia, floating in the bathtub, is eerily reminiscent of Sir John Everett Millais's pre-Raphaelite *Ophelia* (1851-2), even beyond the realms of physical semblance.

Shakespeare's Ophelia commits suicide once she can no longer fulfil any of the roles society thrust upon her, be it that of a subservient daughter or a good wife (McCormack, 2021:144). Similarly, Bonny, Lux, Mary, and Therese enter a suicide pact after finding themselves on a tightrope, swinging between patriarchal obedience and "teenage promiscuity". In stripping the Lisbon sisters of agency, the voyeuristic narrative framework casts a Hamletian shadow upon the suicides: the central "events" in which the plot should culminate are there to serve the male narrators.

The plain truth is striking—the girls' hamartia is their girlhood, but they are no tragic heroines, jilted lovers or archetypal hysterical women. They are the ghosts haunting the cul-de-sacs of Detroit and indelible lipstick stains on the minds of the narrators and in their death, "most beautiful, most loved, most perfect" (McCormack 2021:145).

The neighbourhood voyeurs collect the girls' personal trinkets (dubbing them "evidence"), from diaries to brasseries.

Such a deboning of girlhood through mystification and romanticization leaves the already objectified young women commodified and thus reduced to tangible artefacts.

In his 1886 essay *The Philosophy of Composition*, Edgar Allan Poe proclaims that "the death of a beautiful woman is unquestionably the most poetical topic in the world. The honeycomb cinematography of *The Virgin Suicides* (1999) offers a first-row, subversive view into the terrible beauty of the bare-bones of girlhood, a girlhood that is a state of rewiring, degradation, and entombing. Ripping the patriarchal, scopophilic fabric at the seams, Sofia Coppola dares to jump out of the fishbowl that is female suffering and to look, fearlessly, beyond the glass fortifications, inward.

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Andrijana Prodanić

Life, Death, and Barbie: A Cinematic Perspective on Mortality

Since her creation in 1959 by Ruth Handler, co-founder of Mattel, Barbie has always embodied an enduring, timeless ideal of beauty and perfection. Her perpetually youthful appearance, unchanging and flawless features, paint a picture of immortality. While we humans grapple with the natural course of ageing, Barbie remains frozen in her prime, evoking a sense of perpetual timelessness. Across evolving societal norms and cultural shifts, Barbie has been a constant presence, transcending time's boundaries.

Yet, it is in Greta Gerwig's recent cinematic interpretation that Barbie's eternal essence is starkly contrasted against the unyielding reality of mortality. As the film unfolds, we witness a moment of profound introspection for Barbie, where she confronts the concept of death—a notion entirely foreign to her idyllic world.

"Do you guys ever think about dying?"

She was forced to reflect on the impermanence of all human experiences, the very nature of existence, and the certainty of death when the illusion of their happiness was abruptly destroyed. She finds herself in a condition of existential contemplation, which forces her to reconsider her perceptions of both herself and the world she knew.

On our human journey towards reconciling with mortality, cultures spanning the globe and epochs have sought to fathom the inevitable passage of life. From ancient philosophical inquiries to religious beliefs promising an afterlife, our species has forged diverse paths to confront the reality of our mortality. One thread unites this collective human endeavour—a quest for wisdom and enlightenment. Through philosophy, literature, and art, we have sought to probe the profound questions surrounding life and death, using intellectual pursuits as a means of harmonising our finite existence with the universe's vast mysteries.

This brings us full circle, back to Barbie, not just as a cinematic creation, but as a representation of a timeless ideal.

Barbie's quest for answers leads her to our world. Here, she learns that embracing imperfections is integral to the human experience. She witnesses the beauty in ageing, recognizing the depth and wisdom that accompany it. This realization mirrors the concept of "memento mori," urging us to remember our mortality as a means to cherish the present moment. Barbie's acceptance of imperfection enables her to experience gratitude and self-awareness in previously unimaginable ways. She learns to hold space for both joy and sorrow, acknowledging that the duality of human existence enriches our lives. By relinquishing the pursuit of perfection, Barbie discovers a newfound sense of purpose and fulfilment.

Barbie's transformation challenges the current cultural obsession with eternal youth and unattainable ideals. Her experience serves as a moving reminder that accepting our mortality is not a reason for hopelessness but rather a chance for development and self-discovery. The developing character of Barbie inspires us to find meaning in the face of life's temporary moments in a culture that frequently tries to avoid the reality of ageing and impermanence.

Embracing our mortality is not an act of resignation, but a declaration of profound empowerment. It is an acknowledgment that our time on this earth is finite, and in that very finiteness lies the impetus to live authentically and purposefully. Just as Barbie's journey illuminated, the pursuit of an idealised, eternal existence is a futile endeavour. Instead, it is through acknowledging our imperfections, cherishing our fleeting moments, and accepting the natural course of ageing that we discover true fulfilment.

Among the myriad works that delve into the relation between life and death, several classic texts stand as timeless testaments to our enduring contemplation of mortality. "The Death of Ivan Ilyich" by Leo Tolstoy offers a poignant exploration of the human condition, as does the epic of Gilgamesh—an ancient Sumerian tale that grapples with themes of ephemeral nature of life. "The Book of Ecclesiastes" from the Bible is a spiritual reflection on the cyclical nature of existence, while Shakespeare's "Hamlet" delves into the complexities of mortality, revenge, and the afterlife. "The Stranger" by Albert Camus, with its absurdist philosophy, challenges conventional notions

of life's meaning and his "The Myth of Sisyphus" confronts the human struggle in the face of an indifferent universe. "The Death of King Arthur" by Thomas Malory paints a picture of chivalry and mortality. Franz Kafka's "The Trial" invites readers to contemplate the enigmatic nature of existence. Oscar Wilde's "The Picture of Dorian Gray" grapples with the consequences of seeking eternal youth, and in "The Stranger in the Woods" by Michael Finkel, the true story of Christopher Knight prompts reflection on the solitude and impermanence that define the human experience.

These literary works, spanning epochs and cultures, collectively offer profound insights into the enduring human quest to reconcile with the inevitability of mortality.

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Bloomsday

Remembering James Joyce

*The First Ever Bloomsday Festival at the Faculty of Philology,
The University of Belgrade*

16 June is the day known to all the bookworms in the world as Bloomsday, the day on which James Joyce's sprawling modernist novel *Ulysses* takes place. Throughout the years, the day has become a fine excuse to celebrate literature, Joyce, and Dublin.

This year, The English Department of The Faculty of Philology, Belgrade University, made its debut at the Bloomsday Festival with the idea to celebrate the year following the 100th anniversary of the publication of *Ulysses*. The event was sponsored by the Bloomsday Festival in Dublin, Ireland and was included in its Global Bloomsday 2023 programme. The brains of the idea were Alumni Production director, Prof Branko Vuksan and Andrijana Prodanić, who spent the following few months further developing the idea with four other students — Ana Radaković, Jasmina Filipović, Marija Đorđević, and myself. With the help of the Zurich James Joyce Foundation, the team was provided with reference materials which contributed to the Happening being original and on a par with those in London, Melbourne, Los Angeles, etc. For the occasion, the happening with which we presented the faculty included a poster exhibition, a short film, and a public reading.

The poster exhibition, *Non Serviam*, was based on *Ulysses's* worldwide negative and positive reception and was on display at the Multimedia Centre from 16 June to 8 July. The idea was to create something which would evoke important aspects of *Ulysses's* interpretations in the minds of new and previous readers alike. The radicalism that extends into the novel's fearless exploration of taboos around class, politics, money, sexuality, marriage, colonialism, religion, ethnicity, and even language itself certainly did leave a lot of material for the critics of the time. Confronted with such an enigma, they vainly sought clarification from the author through the critiques that the Zurich James Joyce Foundation shared with five undergraduate students (Andrijana Prodanić, Tijana Prišč, Jasmina Filipović, Ana Radaković, and Marija Đorđević).

The film, Bloom's Belgrade Breakfast, is a round-table discussion on Joyce's influence on contemporary Serbian writers such as Danilo Kiš and Milorad Pavić. Shot at Tri šešira, a restaurant in Belgrade's bohemian quarter, the film puts Ulysses in a unique, traditional Serbian setting. In an homage to Leopold Bloom's iconic kidney breakfast, Prof Branko Vukšan and the student team, joined by Prof Aleksandra Vukotić, Prof Mina Đurić and MA student Konstantin Ađanin, engaged in conversation over a customary Serbian breakfast. Its authenticity lies in the spontaneity of cameraman Dušan Cvetić, who was responsible for the gripping shots.

On the afternoon of 16 June, the meanderings of Leopold Bloom led to the Multimedia Centre, where the opening of the exhibition and the film premiere took place. The rest of the afternoon was devoted to the public reading which was streamed on the Alumni YouTube channel with the help of Dušan Cvetić and Aleksandar Pašalić. Thanks to Petar Slijepčević, who captured everything on camera, the evening was immortalized through photographs. With each part read, a little Dublin in Belgrade spreaded and further meandered through the city. Notably, as the legacy of the novel may reside in how attentively and scrupulously it concentrates on the music of tentative and shambolic urban lives, live music could not be missed. With traditional Irish music in the air, the guests could experience a taste of the Irish pub with complimentary food and beverages. Moreover, the team set up a souvenir stand, where Joyce fans could purchase badges, mugs, bookmarkers, and tote bags — all with a universally known celebrity.

In this fashion, Bloomsday 2023 was concluded while the team was enthusiastically encouraged to work on the next one with the hope that such a happening would become a tradition at the Faculty. All the bits and bobs were put away in boxes agogly waiting rattle next year.

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≡ In memoriam

Charles Simić ≡

Charles Simić, a renowned Serbian-American poet whose work mixed an eerie old-world sensibility with a sensual and humorous sense of modern life, passed away on 9 January at an assisted living home in Dover, New Hampshire. He was 84 years old.

When bombs were falling down on Belgrade during World War II, Charles Simić was just a young child. Afterwards, he recalled hearing laughter in the cellar where his family sought refuge. In 2013, Simić told Publishers Weekly that "Serbs in general have a great sense of humor." When the bombs would keep falling he said "someone would say something funny and everyone would laugh. That's black humor. I guess you survive that way."

A prolific author of numerous volumes who didn't begin writing in English until well into his 20's, Simić was considered by many to be one of the greatest and most innovative poets of his time. Growing up in Yugoslavia during the war helped create his grim but humorous outlook, which led him to declare that "The world is old, it was always old." His poems were typically brief and to the point, with unexpected and occasionally abrupt changes in mood and imagery, as if to reflect the harshness and randomness he had experienced early on in life.

He took night studies at the University of Chicago while working as a proofreader and office boy for The Chicago Sun-Times because his parents could not afford to pay for his college tuition. In 1958, he relocated to New York, where he carried out odd jobs during the day and wrote poetry at night. He claimed that he always wrote in English because he wanted the women he was in love with and his friends to be able to understand his poetry.

Simić wed Helene Dubin, a fashion designer, in 1964, and they had two children together. He became a citizen of the United States in 1971, and two years later he joined the University of New Hampshire's faculty, where he stayed for many years.

His major works include *Walking the Black Cat*, which was nominated for a National Book Award in 1996, *Unending Blues*, *The World Doesn't End*, and more recent collections like *The Lunatic* and *Scribbled in the Dark*. He also won the Pulitzer Prize for *The World Doesn't End* in 1990. He was hailed by judges as "a magician, a conjuror," and a master of "a disarming, deadpan precision, which should never be mistaken for simplicity" when he won the Griffin Poetry Prize in 2005. He translated poetry from French, Serbian, Croatian, Macedonian, and Slovenian thanks to his multilingualism.

In a recent collection of poems titled *The Lunatic* (2015), he appeared to be unfazed by the thought of getting old and dying. He wrote that a spring day had made him so pleased that, even if he had to face a firing squad, he would "Smile like a hairdresser giving Cameron Diaz a shampoo."

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The body

This last continent
Still to be discovered.

My hand is dreaming, is building
Its ship. For crew it takes
A pack of bones, for food
A beer-bottle full of blood.

It knows the breath that blows north.
With the breath from the west
It will sail east each night.

The scent of your body as it sleeps
Are the land-birds sighted at sea.

My touch is on the highest mast.
It cries at four in the morning
For a lantern to be lit
On the rim of the world

Charles Simić

