



**alchemy** journal of translation

Issue Two | Summer 2012

*Photography by Eleanor Leonne Bennett, a sixteen-year old internationally award-winning photographer and artist.*

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# Letter from the Editor

*Alchemy* is pleased to bring you Issue Two—we have been very excited about it because we were able to feature such a unique variety of content, from homophonic translation to book reviews and work translated from Russian, Japanese, Serbian and more:

Jenna Jauregui brings us “Fishtory,” a homophonic translation of her own short fiction. With this translation’s energetic pace and seemingly non-sensical phrasing, it makes English feel different and new.

Mariya Lipmanovich has translated a short piece from the well-known Russian writer, Anton Chekov. “A Little Prank” could have been merely a sweet little story—but much is left unsaid and unsolved, making it a richer, more intriguing story.

Asheli Mosley introduces us to the work of Kajii Motojiro, a Japanese writer, through his story, “Caress.” Motojiro’s piece about cats, particularly their ears, makes us see the ordinary and the familiar through a lens of the strange and unfamiliar.

Julio Enriquez translates from the Spanish, a work of UCSD Literature professor Cristina Rivera-Garza. The story, “La Cresta de Ilion,” is illuminated with rich imagery and symbolism through a mysterious encounter with a stranger who enters the narrator’s home.

Katya Jordon has translated “Man With Man,” a piece from Russian writer Alexander Grin. This story she brings us is filled with questions of suffering, solitude and the nature of human relationships.

Chloe Park brings us the work of Korean writer Shin Hae-Wook—and with this poem, “Hands,” a world of tiny and tender details, of gloves and palm lines.

Katherine Klaric’s contribution, “Bone to Bone,” is a series of poems from the Serbian, by Vasko Popa. Popa’s work is written simply but often asks us to consider the body in writing—“muscle of darkness, muscle of flesh.”

Courtenay Selden translates a poem from the French poet, L.G Damas. “Hiccup” plays with sound in interesting ways by drawing on the hiccup, on music and breaking down syllables.

Mia You is back with a poem entitled, “Snail,” by Korean poet Chung Ho-seung. “Snail” puts its readers in the perspective of the tiny, overlooked creature and reminds us to be more careful where we step.

Last but not least, our artist, Eleanor Bennett has provided us with the cover art for Issue Two—she is a sixteen-year old, internationally award-winning photographer.

Once again, I am thrilled to bring you another issue of *Alchemy*. The editorial team has worked hard this year to launch this venue for talented student translator’s and we are very proud of the work of our contributors. I have been fortunate enough to work with an amazing, hard-working staff and since I will be passing on the editorial torch, I cannot wait to see what great content *Alchemy* brings next year.

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*Allie Moreno, Editor-in-Chief*

# Fishtory

Spy feather used to be a fish. This is the sail my lavender used to spell me those dice beneath the lining spoon fable, whispering as she toned my flair. Shore feather was thorn a fish, she rolled three. I was fifth poor grasshopper one jasper dune on the beach. Spy jelly swelled with the gait of shore feather untied bee. My bless was honey-yellow and I disclaim part of the sand as poor grasshopper wished in the tea. Fee was a distant blot lee four the spades, a hazy blink that marbled in my lies. I nosed my flies and my chin sipped the bun bright. In flea, shore feather crept. Eye slept.

I bee cane water. I buzz a ripple in key motion. I mumbled, moan flirting my liquid sin. I shrugged each brave that lifted key board poor grasshopper, who was mill landing fee-sleep on the moor. I gnaw his swishing pine catch the bun bright, and men disappear. Untied tree, shore feather giggled.

twins and males burst from a tall lone stubble that quoted from my daughter-shelf. Ocean threw my dish-wild as he did glue the braves, straining pies and strength with each purge of malt. Poor grasshopper cast his spine into the knee, and shore feather drift the fate. I slide to scout for shore feather to scum crack to tree, but I add no south.

Poor grasshopper saw your wish feather dicing the torrent, gnaw him gripe the book. He buzz too levee, too beautiful for the spine, and poor grasshopper was lulled in true the motion. Poor grasshopper couldn't skim. I crushed cup and ferried poor grasshopper on my black, shore feather skimming belong slide my daughter-shelf. True weather, we slept him shack to the hand.

Hen I buzz a woe man again I shawl poor grasshopper scolding shore feather in the bun. He spied a lady pail and poor grasshopper lied at me to shake

pup. I nose drum the land and chucked shore feather to fly nest. Tree mill had  
ebbing bee teen his hose. Hat is why shore feather has bunny feet. Flea was a  
dish bee four he bee cane a toy. And spat is fly we visit the knee slide for a slim.

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*By Jenna Jauregui*

*Translated homophonically, from the English, by Jenna Jauregui*

**Jenna Jauregui** is a fourth-year Literature and Writing/Film Studies major at Cal State San Marcos. She and the homophonic translation of this piece.

# A Little Prank

It is a clear winter noon... The frost is thick; it crackles, and silver flakes of ice are gathering on Nadenka's locks by her temples and on her face, as she holds me by the hand. We stand on a high mountain. Its sloping surface stretches from our feet all the way to the ground, and the sun gazes into the slope like in a mirror. Near us is a small sled, its seat upholstered with bright red cloth.

"Let's slide down, Nadezhda Petrovna!" I implore. "Just one time! I assure you that we will be safe and sound."

But Nadenka is scared. The whole expanse from the tips of her small boots to the foot of the icy mountain seems to her a frightening, immeasurably deep chasm. As she looks down, her insides are paralyzed and her breath stops in her throat – and that's when I only suggest we sit down in the sled! What would happen if she risked flying off into the abyss? She would die, lose her mind.

"I beg you!" I say. "No need to be scared! You should understand that it is simply faint-heartedness, cowardice!"

Nadenka finally concedes, and by her face I see that she does so imagining her death. I sit her down, pale and trembling, into the sled, embrace her, and together we dash downwards into the abyss.

The sled flies like a bullet. The air is split as we pass, and it beats into our faces, roars, whistles in our ears, rips, pinches painfully out of spite, as if to tear our heads off. We are left with no strength to breathe from the pressure of the wind. It seems the devil himself has clasped us with his claws and with a roar drags us into hell. The surrounding objects merge into one long, running blur...



In just one more moment, it seems, we'll perish!

"I love you, Nadenka!" I say in a low voice.

The sled begins to gradually slow down, the roar of the wind and the hum of the runners are no longer as frightening, our breathing evens out, and we are finally at the bottom. Nadenka is neither dead nor alive. She is pale, hardly breathing... I help her get up.

"I will never go again, not for anything," she says looking at me with wide eyes filled with fear. "Not for the world! I almost died!"

A little later she comes to her senses and now questioningly peeks at my eyes: was it I who said the four words or did she imagine hearing them in the clamor of the wind? Meanwhile I am standing next to her, smoking, and carefully examining my glove.

She takes me by the hand, and for a long while we stroll around the mountain. The mystery obviously won't let her stay still. Were these words said or not? Yes or no? Yes or no? This is a question of vanity, honor, life, happiness, a very important question, the most important question in the world. Nadenka impatiently, sadly, with a penetrating gaze, peers into my face, answers awkwardly, waits for me to speak first. Oh, what a game on this lovely face, what a game! I see how she struggles with herself, she needs to say something, ask something, but she cannot find the words, she is uneasy, frightened, her happiness prevents her....

"You know what?" she says without looking at me.

"What?" I ask.

"Let's go... one more time."

We go up the mountainside. Again I sit the pale, trembling Nadenka into the sled, again we fly into the frightening abyss, again the wind roars and the runners hum, and again at the noisiest and most exciting moment, I say in a low voice:

“I love you, Nadenka!”

When the sled stops, Nadenka looks back over the mountain we have just ridden down, then for a long time scrutinizes my face, listens for some clue in my voice which is passionless and apathetic, and entirely, entirely, even her muff and hood, her entire figure expresses utmost perplexity. And on her face is written:

“What is the matter? Who said *those* words? Was it him or have I imagined it?”

The suspense worries her, angers her. The poor girl cannot keep up the conversation, frowns, is ready to cry.

“Shall we go home?” I ask.

“But I... I like these rides,” she says, blushing. “Should we go one more time?”

She “likes” these rides, yet as she sits down in the sled she is, as before, pale, barely breathing from fear, trembling.

We descend for the third time and I can see how she looks into my face, watches my lips. But I put a kerchief to my lips, cough, and, when we reach the center of the mountain, manage to utter:

“I love you, Nadenka!”

And so the mystery remains a mystery! Nadenka is silent, she is thinking of something... As I accompany her from the mountainside she tries to walk more slowly, delays her steps, and waits in case I might speak those words. And I can see how her soul suffers, how she makes an effort to stop herself from saying:

“It cannot be that the wind said them! And I do not want it to be the wind!”

The next day in the morning I receive a note: “If you are going to the slope today, take me along. N.” And after this day, I go there with Nadenka every day, and, flying down in the sled, I always say the same words in a low voice:

“I love you, Nadenka!”

Soon Nadenka gets accustomed to that phrase, like one would to wine or morphine. She cannot live without it. To tell the truth, flying off the mountain is still frightening but now the fear and danger impart a special charm to the words of love, the words that still incite a mystery and torment the soul. The suspects are the same two: the wind and I... Whichever of the two confesses his love to her she does not know, but it appears she no longer cares; it does not matter from what vessel one drinks so long as one gets drunk.

One day at noon I set forth to the mountain by myself; merging with the crowd, I see how Nadenka comes to the mountain, how she seeks me with her eyes... Then she tremulously goes up... It is frightening to go alone, oh, so frightening! She is pale as snow, trembling, she walks as if to her death, but on she walks without looking back, resolutely. Clearly she has decided to find out once and for all: will those marvelous sweet words still be heard when I am not there? I see how she, pale, with her mouth open from terror, sits down into the sled, closes her eyes, and, seemingly parting with the earth, takes off. “Zhhhh” hum the runners. Whether Nadenka hears those words or not, I do not know... I

only see how she rises from the sled, bleary, weak. And from her face it is obvious that she herself does not know if she has heard anything. As she was going down, fear took away her ability to hear well, differentiate sounds, understand...

The spring month of March approaches... The sun becomes more tender. Our icy mountain darkens, loses its splendor, and melts at last. We stop sledding. Poor Nadenka now has nowhere to hear those words and there's nobody left to voice them, as the wind can be heard no longer, while I prepare to leave for St. Petersburg, for a long while, perhaps forever.

Once, before departure, about two days prior, at dusk I sit in the garden which is separated by a tall fence with nails from the yard where Nadenka lives... It is still cold, there is still some snow under manure, the trees are dead but it already smells like spring, and, as they settle for the night, the rooks shriek noisily. I walk over to the fence and for a long time peer into a crack. I see how Nadenka comes out onto the doorstep and directs a sorrowful, yearning gaze toward the sky... The spring wind blows directly into her pale, crestfallen face... It reminds her of that wind which roared on the mountain when she heard those four words, and her face becomes melancholy, melancholy; a tear slides down her cheek... And the poor girl extends both arms, as if asking that wind to bring her those words again. And I, waiting also for the wind, say in a low voice:

“I love you, Nadenka!”

My goodness, what happens to Nadenka! She cries out, her whole face smiles, and she stretches her arms towards the wind – happy, joyous, so beautiful.

And I go off to finish my packing....

That was a long time ago. Now Nadenka is already married; whether she

was married off or chose herself to do so does not matter; her husband is the secretary of a noble tutor and she now has three children. The times when we used to go to the mountainside together some time ago, and how the wind brought her the words “I love you, Nadenka,” are not forgotten; for her this is now the happiest, the most touching and beautiful memory in her life...

And now, having grown up, I can no longer understand why I said those words, what possessed me to joke in that way...

---

*By Anton Pavlovich Chekhov*

*Translated, from the Russian, by Mariya Lipmanovich*

**Mariya Lipmanovich** is studying Spanish and Comparative Literature with concentration in Russian Literature at New York University. **Anton Pavlovich Chekhov** (1860-1904) was a prolific Russian short story writer and dramatist. His prominent works include *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Three Sisters*, among many others.

**Endnote:** “A Little Prank” was first published in the magazine “The Cricket” 1886, N10. For the collected edition, A. P. Chekhov revised this story; in the magazine’s editorial office “A Little Prank” had a different end:

“I walk out of the bushes, and, not letting Nadenka lower her hands nor open her mouth in surprise, I run to her and...

But here allow me to get married.”

# Caress

Cat's ears are very strange things. They're flimsy, cold, the front side is like the bark of bamboo sprouts with soft hair that sticks out while the back side is shiny. Cat ears are of a special class of things that one can neither call hard nor soft. Since my childhood, I've wanted to just once take a ticket puncher and punch a hole in a cat's ear, but I was unable to bring myself to do it. Perhaps this is my cruel imagination?

No, it just has to be a type of mysterious suggestive power that cat ears possess. I can never forget the sight of a serious looking guest who came to my house and while making conversation continuously pinched a kitten's ear he had lying in his lap.

These kinds of suspicions are more tenacious than one expects. Childlike games resembling imagination, such as taking a ticket puncher and punching a hole in a cat's ear, will exist far longer in our idle minds than in the appearance of how we actually look—as long as one doesn't dare move these imaginary thoughts into actual acts. Even for adults who are able to have good judgments fervently think of thoughts like, “What if I tried with all my strength to cut a cat's ear placed in-between cardboard resembling a sandwich?” Anyway, recently from something that happened accidentally, I discovered a fatal miscalculation in my imaginary thought.

Fundamentally speaking, even if a cat's ears hung down like a rabbit's, the cat shouldn't show any signs of pain; whereas, when pulled, cat's ears possess a peculiar structure. This means that every cat has some indication that its ears have been pulled or torn in some way. At the place where there's indication of a tear, there is an ingenious complementary piece of the cat ear. This part of the cat's ear, to believers of creation and evolution, would remain a mysterious, comical aspect. Undoubtedly, when the complementary piece of the ear is pulled

it becomes loose and relaxes. Because of this, when one pulls on a cat's ear, the cat is calm and collected. Thus, if pressure is applied, even if you use your fingers and pinch a cat's ear, no matter how hard it won't hurt the cat. Just like the one guest that I watched pinch the cat's ear before, it's only in rare cases that the cat will start to scream. The skepticism of the cat ear's seemingly insensitivity to pain exposes the cat to the dangers of the "ticket puncher." One day in the middle of playing with my cat, I wound up biting the cat's ear and this is what I discovered. No sooner than I bit the cat's ear, the good for nothing thing immediately screamed. My old imagination at that point was shattered. Biting a cat's ear brings it the most pain. The scream started from a very faint interval and then the harder the bite, the louder the scream became. I felt maybe, it was like a woodwind instrument that produced a decent crescendo.

My long held imaginary thought had disappeared. However, this type of thinking seems to have no end. During this time, I began to think about another imaginary thought which was cutting off all the nails of a cat. What would happen to it? The fellow would probably die right? Almost every time it would think, "Let's climb a tree"—it's not able to. When it aims and jumps for a person's coat tails—it feels different. When it thinks to sharpen its nails—there's nothing there. I'd expect it to try and do these things a number of times and every time, it will gradually realize that it's different from its former self. It will gradually lose its self-confidence. It can't help but tremble in fear at the fact that it's at a certain height. That's because the nails that continually protected it from "falling" aren't there. It will waddle when it walks and become a different animal. Ultimately, it will not even be able to waddle. Such despair! Then, while seeming to continuously be in a frightening dream, it will even lose the will to eat anything and finally, it will die.

A cat with no nails! Such an undependable, pitiful thing it is. It's similar to a poet who's lost his imagination or a genius who is reduced to premature dementia. This imagery always makes me sad. To me however, it's not a problem of whether the entirety of this sadness is correct or not. Even so, what would

happen to a cat that had its nails pulled off? Even if its eye was pulled out, or its whiskers pulled off, there's no doubt the cat will live. However, hidden within the sheath of the soft foot pad, bent like a hook and as sharp as a dagger—the cat's nails! This is this animal's vitality, its wisdom, its spirit, and all of this I believe without question.

One day I had a peculiar dream.

It was in a lady named X's private room. The lady usually owned a cute cat and whenever I went, she would always let the cat that she was holding to her breast come toward me. I usually winced at that. When taking it up in my arms, this kitten always had a faint scent of perfume to it. The woman in my dream was putting on makeup in front of a mirror. I was reading a newspaper or something like that, and I was trying to catch glimpses of her when I let out a small surprised voice. What was she doing! With a cat's paw, she was applying white powder to her face. I was appalled at the sight. However, getting a closer look, I realized, she was using the makeup brush, much like a cat does with its paws. However, it was way too strange, so I couldn't help but to ask her from behind.

“What is that? Something you use to rub your face?”

“This?”

With a smile, the lady turned her face toward me. Then she tossed it in my direction. When I picked it up, just as I thought, it was a cat's paw.

“What the...what happened to this!”

While I was questioning her, I thought about the kitten that was always here, which wasn't here today and how that paw looked awfully similar to the cat's and like a flash of understanding I got it.



“You don’t understand? That’s my cat Mule’s paw.”

The woman’s answer was nonchalant and she said that nowadays, that type of thing was in fashion overseas so she tried to make it out of Mule’s paw. While thinking to myself how astonished I was at her cruelty, I tried to ask her if she had made it herself. She said that a custodian at a medical school gave it to her. The custodian, after the dissections, took the heads of the animals and buried them in the soil for a little while to make skulls of them. Because I heard that this was some kind of secret deal between the custodian and the students, I started to have an unpleasant feeling. In any case, isn’t it better to not ask favors from guys like that? Even though she is a woman, from the callousness and cruelty of such a thing, it dawned on me that I began to detest her. Also about having animal paws for makeup tools being popular overseas, I feel I also read something like that in some women’s magazine or newspaper.

A cat’s paw as a makeup tool! Always laughing alone, I pull on my cat’s front paws and stroke its fur. Cats have thick grown, short pile carpet like hairs on the side of their front paws used to wash their face, so no wonder their paws can possibly become human make up tools. But for me, what use could that be? As I was sprawled on the bed lying on my back, I brought my cat to my face. Grabbing the two front paws, one by one I hold its soft paws on my eyelids—the comfortable pleasant weight of the cat—its foot pads are warm. My tired eyes express a deep nostalgia that this relaxation is not of this world. Kitten! I beg you, for a little while don’t lose your footing. Because you will instantly bring your claws out.

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*By Álvaro Motojirō*

*translated, from the Japanese, by Asheli Mosley*

**Asheli Mosley** is an undergraduate majoring in Japanese at Georgetown University. **Kajii Motojirō** (1901-1932) was a Japanese writer mainly of short stories beginning his career in the Showa era (1925) of Japan. Kajii created vivid, imaginary descriptive prose which defines his writing style, and was one of the founders of the magazine “Aozora” (Blue Sky). With only 20 published works, this author had a very short life, dying at age 31 of tuberculosis.

# La Cresa de Ilión

Now, time has passed by, I ask in the same incredulous manner. How is it possible for someone like me to allow a stranger to enter my house during a stormy night?

I doubted to open the door. For a while I debated between closing the book I was reading or continuing to sit on my couch, in front of the lit up chimney, with an attitude as if nothing had happened. Finally, her insistence beat me. I opened the door. I observed her. And I allowed her to enter.

The weather, certainly, had worsened at a fast pace during those days. Suddenly, without warnings, Fall moved through the coast as if it was at home. There were long nights and meager mornings, mild winds, skies cloaked in the evening. And later came Winter. And the rain of Winter. One gets used to everything, it's true, but the rain of winter —grey, endless, bland— is difficult to digest. These are the types of things that inescapably take one to nestle at home, in front of the chimney, full of boredom. Perhaps that is why I opened the door of my house: tedium.

I would deceive myself, and I would deceive all of you, without a doubt, if I so much as mention the weary and lengthy storm that accompanied her apparition. I remember, above all, her eyes. Suspended stars inside the devastating face of a cat. The eyes were enormous, so vast, as if they were mirrors, achieving the effect of expansion all around. Very quickly I had the opportunity to confirm this first intuition: the rooms grew under her gaze; the halls stretched out; the closets became infinite horizons; the narrow entrance, paradoxically reluctant to her welcome, completely opened up. And that was, I want to believe, the second reason I allowed her to enter my house: the expansive power of her gaze.

If I halt myself now, I would still be lying. In reality there, under the storm of Winter, surrounded by the empty space created for me by her eyes at that moment, what really captured my attention was the right pelvic bone due to the way in which it leaned over the doorframe and the weight of the water over the skirt with faded flowers, it let itself to be seen under the unhemmed blouse right above the elastic of the waistline. It took me a while to remember the specific name of that part of the bone, without a doubt, the search began in that instant. I desired her. Men, I am sure, will understand me without the need of adding another comment. I tell women that this occurs frequently and without a stable pattern. I also warn you that this cannot be reproduced artificially: all of you as much as we are disarmed when we carry it out. I would dare to argue that in fact, this can only happen if both of us are disarmed, but with like many other things, I could be wrong. I desired her, I said. Immediately. There was the characteristic stroke of the lower abdomen just in case I dared to doubt it. Also, there was, and above all, imagination. I imagined her eating blackberries— with fleshy lips and the tips of her fingers painted in burgundy. I imagined her slowly coming up the stairs, barely turning her head to see her own stretched out shadow. I imagined her observing the sea through the windowpane, absorbed and solitary like a flagpole. I imagined her leaning on her elbows on the right space of my bed. I imagined her words, her silences, the way she pursed her lips, her smiles, her laughter. When I realized again she found herself in front of me, whole and moist, shivering cold, I knew everything about her. I suppose this was the third reason I opened the door of the house, and without leaving the doorknob, I invited her to come in.

– I am Amparo Dávila– she mentioned it with her gaze placed, just as I had imagined her minutes before, over the windowpane. She approached it without adding anything else. She put her right arm between her forehead and the glass, and when she was finally able to discern the contour of the ocean, she sighed noisily. She seemed relieved from something heavy and menacing. She gave the impression she had found what she searched for.

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*By Cristina Rivera Garza*

*translated, from the Spanish, by Julio Enríquez*

**Julio Enríquez Órnelas** is a Ph.D. graduate student in the Hispanic Studies program at the University of California, Riverside. **Cristina Rivera Garza** (1964-) is a prominent and influential Mexican writer. She is the only author who has won the Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz Prize twice. She also writes “La mano oblicua” (“The Oblique Hand”), a column for the cultural section of a weekly Mexican newspaper.

# Bitter Song

“Those human relationships you’re talking about,” said Anosov to me, “are so complex, painful, and mysterious that at times I wonder: Isn’t solitude a real and thus far the only attainable happiness?”

Up till then we have been talking about the case, sensational at the time, of Makarov, a man who shot his wife out of jealousy. Condemning Makarov, I expressed the opinion that human relationships are simple, and a person who has realized this clarity and simplicity will never become an aggressor.

We were traveling by railroad from Tver to Nizhnii. Our acquaintance took place by accident, near a train-station restaurant. I waited to hear what Anosov would say next. This man’s appearance deserves to be described: with a long full beard, high forehead, dark, big eyes, upright stature, and a perpetual smile that expresses a keen interest in an interlocutor, he produced an impression of an extraordinary man, or, as they say in the provinces, “He intrigued me.” He most likely was fifty to fifty-five years old, although he seemed younger due to the liveliness of his conversation and the absence of gray hair.

“Yes,” continued Anosov slowly in his deep voice, looking out the window and stroking his beard with his big, white, ringed hand, “not everyone is able to live with people, in others’ field of vision, running along in a common harness. In order to endure the overwhelming mass of someone else’s interests, cares, ideas, desires, whims, and caprices, constant lies, envy, insincere kindness, pettiness, ostentatious nobility, or—what’s worse—self-complacent nobility; to tolerate accidental and groundless animosity, or what, due to the imperfection of human language, is called ‘instinctive antipathy’—to endure that, one must have a colossal power of resistance. The torrent of other people’s wills rushes to subjugate, humiliate, and enslave a person. It’s fine if this is a person whose

inner eyes are shut, blind like the eyes of a statue; he will stand firmly and whole-heartedly on that little pedestal that life has given him. It is also helpful to be someone with a pagan outlook on the world or to place your pursuit of a distant goal as a barrier between you and other people. That preserves the soul as if in a tin can. But there are people who are extremely sensitive to the absurdity of actions transpiring around them—anti-human, even if they appear most trifling at first glance—and who have such a painfully heightened sense of life’s avarice that they, these people, should be protected. You would not readily identify and understand such a person. Most of them perish, or become embittered, or leave.”

“Yes, such is the law of life,” I said, “and such is the lot of the weak.”

“Of the weak? Not at all!” objected Anosov. “A truly weak person cries and complains because his claws are thin. He would willingly take part in a common brawl because he sees life through the eyes of others. Yet those I’m talking about are people who—alas!—were born too early. To them, human relationships are a source of constant suffering, and the realization that evil is a natural event, strange as it might be, increases this suffering to the utmost degree. Perhaps a thousand years from now, when discoveries in the sphere of the human spirit will be made and it will become possible to hear, see, and feel only that which is needed, but not what any stranger would want to bring into our consciousness by means of persuasion or action, then these people’s lives will get easier, for in their minds they have decided a long time ago that a person’s character and soul are beyond evil’s grasp.”

I argued a little, demonstrating that evil is a relative term, just as good is, but in my heart I agreed with Anosov, although not on all issues; for instance, I thought that such people did not exist. He heard me out carefully and said:

“That is not the point. An evil man will always say that good is a relative term, but a suffering man will never say the same about evil. Right now we are

using very primitive and vague terms. That is all right, because by association we invoke a multitude of ideas that swarm around these two notions. But let us get back to our special people. We all are like them to a degree. Isn't this the reason why, for example, works like *Robinson Crusoe* enjoy such vast, such true success—because the idea of a sorrowful, beautiful liberty, of a departure from human vice is combined in them with a special exertion of human spiritual and physical strength. If you remember, the appearance of Friday weakens our interest in the story; the particular charm of Robinson's life fades, because he is no longer merely Robinson, but is becoming 'Robinson-Friday.' What is there to say about the lives of populated countries where at every turn, at any given moment, you are not your own individual person, but a combination of yourself and everyone you come across, who, by the worthless but terrible power of an accidental movement—a smirk, a shrug of the shoulder, a hand gesture—may arrest all of your attention, even though you wish to turn it in a different direction. This is a minor example, but I'm not yet talking about matters pertaining to society as a whole. People live in this state of incredible dependence on each other, but had they fully comprehended it, the without a doubt their words, conversations, gestures, actions, and their attitude towards each other would have become thoughtful, careful; they would have become the actions of a reasoning man.

“Recently, in one of the weekly magazines, I read a story of two adolescents. A young brother and a sister spent a summer together on a small island, in some meadows; the girl played the role of a housewife, and the boy obtained provisions with his fishing rod and a rifle; there was nobody else on the island. The interviewer who visited them was probably biting his lips in order not to smile when the little owners of the island declared that they were having a good life there and that they were quite content. Of course, they were children of rich parents. But I see them just as they were depicted in a picture printed next to the article: they are standing at the water's edge, holding hands, in the grass, squinting their eyes. I like this picture very much because of a dim idea that it expresses of what is desirable in human relationships.”



He leaned forward, as if asking me with his glance what my thoughts were on the matter.

“I wonder,” I said, “if a different form of protection, other than an island or a monastery, is available.”

“Yes,” said Anosov readily, “but rarely, more rarely than a thunderstorm in early spring, do we come across people who are fully aware of their own human dignity, calm but uncompromising, courageous but remote in their understanding from primeval forms of life. I’ve mentioned their attributes; they, without even thinking to turn the other cheek for a blow, never break off their relationships with people; but a shadow of sorrow that clamped the brave seaman’s heart during the blessed, radiant, sunny days of Robinson’s blooming island, is cast upon them, and they always remain in the shadow. ‘When janissaries, having taken Constantinople, were slashing people under the dome of Hagia Sophia—legend has it—a priest walked up to a wall, and the stones, parted by mysterious power, concealed him from the spectacle of bloody massacre. He will come out when the mosque becomes a temple.’ This is just a legend, but what is not a legend is the fact that sooner or later a day will come for people who stand in the shadow; they will come out of the shadow into the bright light, and nobody will slander them.

As I was pondering his words, I envisioned a sorrowful Robinson on a seashore in the quiet of his thoughts.

Anosov said, “I wish to tell you something. But perhaps you have little interest in the topic?”

“No,” I said, “what can be more interesting than the human soul?”

“In 1911, I had a chance to meet an extraordinary man. I was waiting on Trinity Bridge to continue my journey. I had spent half the night sitting with

other people who had no night's lodging. I, like them, was dozing on a bench on the bridge, with my head drooping down and my hands between my knees.

“Dozing off and on, in a dream I saw all the temptations that fill this world, and my hungry mouth, full of saliva, awakened me. I woke up, stood up, made up my mind and—I confess—I started weeping. I still loved life, yet life was pushing me away with both hands.

“It was terrifying to stand by the railing. It was like being on a deserted scaffolding. The summer night, illuminated by lanterns and stars, surrounded me with cold, indifferent silence. I looked down and thrust myself forward, but, to my great surprise, fell back on the pavement. Then a strong hand, painfully squeezing my shoulder, made me stand up on my feet, released me, and slowly shook its finger at me.

“Stunned, I quietly looked at the shaking finger and then decided to look at the person who was standing between the river and me. It was a bearded and solidly built man with a fatigued, calm demeanor, in a black hooded cloak and hat.

“‘Wait a while,’ he said. ‘I want to talk to you. Are you disappointed?’

“‘No.’

“‘Hungry?’

“‘Very hungry.’

“‘And have been for a long time?’

“‘Yes ... for two days.’

“Come with me.’

“Naturally, I obeyed. He silently walked to the embankment and called a carriage. We sat down and were off. I was just about to introduce myself and explain my situation when, startled, I heard quiet, steady, and deep laughter. My companion was laughing joyfully, from his heart, as adults laugh when they see a child’s amusing trick.

“Don’t be surprised,’ he said when he finished laughing. ‘It is funny to me that you and many others would starve when there is so much food and money in the world.’

“Yes, in the world, but not in my hands.’

“Take it.’

“I cannot find work.’

“Beg.’

“For charity?’

“Oh, nonsense! Charity is a word like any other. As long as you don’t have a job, ask—calmly, prudently, and convincingly, without despising yourself. There are two parties involved in any request—a beggar and a giver, and the will of the giver will remain with him—he can give or not give; it is a simple bargain, nothing more.’

“Forgive me!’ I retorted with bitterness. ‘But you know how lonely, dumb-witted, cruel-hearted, and malicious towards each other people are.’

“Of course.’

“What are you talking about then?”

“Don’t pay attention to that.’

“The carriage stopped. We crossed the courtyard, went up to the fourth floor, and my benefactor pressed the button of a doorbell. I found myself in a modest, cozy, rather simple, and ordinary apartment. A woman and a dog greeted us. The woman was as calm as her husband, who brought me there. Her face and shape were typical of all healthy, young, pretty women; I am speaking about my impression. A tranquil Newfoundland dog, a tranquil woman, and the tranquil owner of the apartment all seemed to be very happy creatures; that is how it was indeed.

“Calmly, like an old, familiar guest, I sat down at the table with them and ate. The dog too sat down right there, on the floor. Having satisfied my hunger, I got up, and then listened to my rescuer’s explanation of life.

“A man needs to always know, Mr. Suicide, that no one needs him in this world except for his beloved woman and a true friend. Consider each of them. You will not find a better friend than a dog. Women—you will not find anyone better than a woman you love. And so, all three are one. Consider that out of all the bliss in the world, you can take so much and at the same time so little—in the eyes of others. Leave the others alone, for in truth, neither they need you, nor you them. This is not egoism, but a sense of self-worth. In the entire world, I have one favorite poet, one artist, and one musician, and each one of them has one work that to me is the best: Godard’s Second Waltz, Edgar Allan Poe’s poem ‘For Annie,’ and Rembrandt’s portrait of his wife. That is enough for me; no one will trade the best for the worst. Now tell me, where is the horror of life? It exists, but it does not touch me. I am in a shell that is more impregnable than an armadillo’s plates. So much is required to attain this that it is available to anyone—one just needs to keep silent. And then no one will offend you and no one will strike you in your heart, because evil is powerless before your wealth. I

live on a hundred rubles a month.'

"'Egoism or not,' I said, 'but one first needs to get to that point.'

"'It is necessary. It is very easy to get lost in the enormous evil of the world, and then nothing will save you. Take ten rubles; I cannot give you any more.'

"And I saw that he truly could not give me more, and simply, as calmly as he gave it to me, I took the money. I left with faith in my ability to stand up against hostile life with silence and composure. *Absit omen!* Get away!"

---

*By Alexander Grin*

*translated, from the Russian, by Katya Jordan*

**Katya Jordan** is a Ph.D. candidate in Slavic Languages and Literatures at the University of Virginia. Her research deals with questions of visual perception and instances of intercultural miscommunication. **Alexander Grin** (1880-1932) was a Russian writer whose work emerged outside Russia's mainstream literature yet is enjoyed by adolescents and adults alike. His stories and adventure novels are about ordinary people who struggle with loneliness and rejection, dare to dream, and see the exotic in the ordinary.

# Hands

I put on the gloves.  
My hands shrunk absurdly.  
When I put them on my knees  
they look so strange.

\*

What I actually envied  
was not you  
but your soft fingers.  
With your fingers  
to hold my hand  
to touch my face  
and to touch your face as well.

I wonder why love can't be done in three's.  
Why in this world  
there are only you and me.

\*

I pulled off the gloves and placed my hand on the window.  
If I carefully peel it off  
my palm lines will stick to the glass.

They might grow recklessly.  
But because fate must be obeyed  
let's tape the window so it will not break  
and never take off our gloves again.

\*

Inside the gloves, two hands.  
One is mine I hope the other is yours.

---

*By Shin Hae-Wook*  
*translated, from the Korean, by Chloe Park*

**Chloe Park** was born in Seoul, Korea in 1991 and moved to the U.S. in 1999. She is currently a senior undergraduate at University of California, Berkeley, and is working on her English major. **Shin Hae-Wook** (1974-) was born in Chuncheon, Gwangwon-do, and earned her Masters in Korean Literature at Hanrim University. She has published two collections of poetry, *Biological* and *Concise Arrangement*, and a collection of essays, *Heat of the Unadult*.

---

# Bone to Bone

## I. At the Beginning

Now it's easy for us  
We're rescued from flesh

Now we'll be what we'll be  
Say something

Do you want to be  
The thunderbolt's backbone

Say something more

What might I say to you  
The storm's hipbone

Say something else

I know nothing else  
The heavens' ribs

We're no one's bones  
Say something else

## II. After the Beginning

What will we now



Really what will we  
Now we'll dine on the core

The core we finished for lunch  
Now the laburnum's the hollow in me

Then we'll make music  
We love making

What will we when the dogs find us  
They love bones

Then we'll stop them by the neck  
and bask

### III. In the Sun

Divine is that naked sunlight  
I never cared for flesh

And for me those rags were never seductive  
The same way the wild naked was for you

Don't let the sun caress you  
It's better that we're loved as two

Only not here not in the sun  
Here everyone sees the dear little bones

#### IV. Under the Earth

Muscle of darkness muscle of flesh  
Captures you the same

But what will we now

We'll call all bones of all time  
We'll be fried in the sun

What will we then

Then we'll come up clean  
Rise as far as is willed for us

What will we later

Nothing we'll go there here  
We'll be eternal beings of bone

Wait just so the earth yawns

#### V. In Moonlight

Now what's this  
As if flesh some snowy flesh  
Captures me

I don't know what it is  
As if my cross ran to my core  
Some rimy core

Even I don't know  
As if it begins all again  
With some worse beginning

You know what  
Can you howl

## VI. Before the End

Whither will we be now

Whither we'd be nowhere  
Whither would be two bones anyway

What will we be there

There already a while we  
There eagerly waiting we  
Nobody and his wife nothing

What will we be to them

They're aged they're without bones  
we will be daughters born for them

## VII. At the End

I a bone you a bone  
Why'd you swallow me

I'm no longer seen

What's the matter with you  
You swallowed me  
Neither I nor myself am seen

Where am I now

Now it's no longer known  
Neither who is where nor who is who  
All is unsightly slumber dust

Do you hear me

I hear both you and yourself  
Crowing from our crowing

---

*By Vasko Popa*

*translated, from the Serbian, by Katherine Klaric*

**Katherine Klaric** is majoring in Russian, East European, Eurasian Studies at the University of Michigan. **Vasko Popa** (1922- 1991) was born in Grebenac, Serbia. He served a short stay at a German concentration camp during World War II, survived, and returned to Vienna to study French and German literature while working part-time as a tram conductor. In Belgrade, in 1994, he got involved in publishing, writing and working for literary magazines, and found a lasting niche in the Slavic society of letters. In a way, his poetry is a lasting tribute to his life—or life in general—especially in how it manages to assert itself as convoluted yet cohesive.

\*\* Attempts have been made to contact the original publisher of this work regarding permissions to publish this translation. If you are the current rights holder, please contact us immediately.

# Hiccup

And though I've tried swallowing seven gulps of water  
three or four times every twenty-four hours  
my childhood comes jolting back  
in a hiccup  
instinctively  
like a criminal to the scene of the crime  
disaster  
tell me of disaster  
tell me of it

My mother wanted a child with good table manners  
Hands on the table  
don't cut the bread  
break the bread  
don't waste the bread  
the bread of God  
the bread won by the sweat of your Father  
the bread of breads  
A bone you eat with slowly and carefully  
a stomach must be sociable  
and all sociable stomachs  
politely burp  
a fork is not a toothpick  
picking your nose  
in plain sight of everyone  
is absolutely prohibited  
and don't forget to sit up straight  
a high class nose  
never grazes the plate

and this and then  
And then in the name of the Father  
of the Son  
of the Holy Spirit  
at the end of each meal  
And then and then  
and then disaster  
tell me of disaster  
tell me of it

My mother wanted a son at the head of the class  
If your history lesson is not learned by heart  
you will not go to mass  
sunday  
in your sunday clothes  
this child will be the shame our family  
this child will be our oh dear Lord  
be quiet

Have I not always told you you must speak french t  
he french of France  
the french of the french  
the french french  
Disaster  
tell me of disaster  
tell me of it

My mother wanted a son to belong to his mother  
You forgot to say hello to the neighbor  
your shoes are dirty again  
and I find you in the street  
on the field or the savannah

in the shade of the War Memorial  
playing prancing around with someoneorother  
with someoneorother who was never even baptized

My mother wanted a son so do  
so re  
so mi  
so fa  
so sol  
so la  
so si  
so do  
re-mi-fa  
sol-la-si  
do

I see your skipping your vi-o-lin lesson  
A banjo  
you said a banjo  
what do you mean  
a banjo  
No no sir  
You know that in this house we tolerate  
not ban  
not jo  
nor gi  
nor tare  
mulattos do not to that  
so leave that to the blacks

---

*By L.G. Damas*

*translated, from the French, by Courtenat Selden*

**Courtenay Selden** recently graduated with a degree in French Literature from the University of Virginia. She is currently teaching in a first grade Spanish-English bilingual school in Houston, Texas. **Léon Gontran Damas** (1912-1978) was born in Cayenne, co-founded the review *L'Étudiant Noir* with writers Aimé Césaire and Léopold Sédar Senghor and is credited as one of the first leaders of the Négritude movement.



## snail

my heart is tender so my shell is strong  
my shell is tender so my heart is strong  
if not lonely, people will not set forth on a road  
if not lonely, a snail will not set forth on a road  
the moon, now fading, is cold like quartz  
the grass on my road has already turned damp  
kettle in hand, stepping on the morning dew  
someone approaches from the way I must go  
a blameless boy  
the boy, by chance, steps on me, goes on  
he must have thought I was the morning dew

---

*By Chung Ho-seung*

*translated, from the Korean, by Mia You*

**Mia You** is doctoral student in English literature at the University of California, Berkeley and received a Masters degree in Korean literature at Harvard University. **Chung Ho-seung** (1950-) is one of South Korea's most acclaimed and popular contemporary writers. His poetry collections include *From Sorrow to Happiness*, *Jesus of Seoul* and *Dawn Letter*.

## All the Garbage of the World Unite

Written by Kim Hyesoon. Translated, from the Korean, by Don Mee Choi.

“Therefore as woman, as poet, I dance and rescue the things that have fallen into the coil of magnificent silence; I wake the present, and let the dead things be dead.” -Kim Hyesoon

*All the Garbage of the World Unite* is Kim Hyesoon’s second full-length book, translated from the Korean by Don Mee Choi. Hyesoon and Choi create a world that is full of sacred filth, an experience that is beautifully ugly. It is a world where mountains copulate, where pigs are gods, where people peel like onions. *All the Garbage of the World Unite* contains a collection of work called *Your First* (2008) and the nineteen page poem *Manhole Humanity* (2009) –and as you make your way through, each poem is a little more delightfully terrifying and disgusting than the one before it. It’s gold. Or it’s garbage. Either way, it exemplifies what contemporary poetry should be: fresh, exciting, and unpredictable.

Hyesoon’s writes nature poetry in a way we have never seen. In the poem, *Seoul, Kora*, the mountains are transformed into wild creatures:

*“...The mountain gives birth The mountain licks a mountain The mountain’s litter sucks on its nipples The mountain cold-heartedly discards all of its litter The young mountains copulate in broad daylight, the stench The mountain roams like the pack of dogs inside a maze...”*

What we might believe to be peaceful and sacred is turned rabid and for some reason it feels very right. It is strange, but it is also exciting and fresh. It makes language feel new. Hyesoon also introduces us to characters and situations that at first we think we know: “that woman who walks out of the

gynecology clinic” with her “legs [...] like scissors” and with “blood scented dusk flooding out from between her legs.” People and places are suddenly grotesque but not completely unfamiliar as in *Onion*:

*“Under the faucet a man peeled a woman’s skin The woman  
cacklecackled and peeled easily like an onion As a layer of dark  
night peeled off transparent day soared Blood drained down a  
pipe like the mushy inside of a fresh egg...”*

This strange moment between man and woman both sickens and fascinates me. The images stick to the insides of my eyelids and won’t let go. In Choi’s translation of Hyesoon, the work dances in and out of intimacy in a way that the same force that pushes us away actually sucks us back in.

Something that I was very drawn to in the title poem, *All the Garbage of the World Unite*, was its pace. Hyesoon’s lines are long and full of heavy consonants. However, they are lines that demand to be read aloud at a strong pace. There are literally no spaces to breathe. This poem does not apologize. This poem is a force that challenges not only poetry, but also the potential of translation. In this piece, Don Mee Choi seamlessly navigates the space between English and Korean. This poem reads as if it were originally written in English:

*“...Do you know? Eyesnavelgod.  
Forearmsearflapgod. Sweetpotatokneeseedgod.  
Pigstoenailschickgod. Dreamingdivingbeetlesashtreegod.  
Lovelygirlsheelstoenailgod. Antsghostscatseyeballgod.  
Ratholescatsrottingwatergod. Mrsdustingarmselephantgod.  
Salivadropexplodeslikefreongas. Salivafountainevenmoremortifying  
nauseatingthanthesmellof- lionsrottenbreathgod. Do you know all  
the dearest gods that are hanging onto our limbs?”*

At this point, words become jumbled and become something entirely new bringing us to a place where poetry transcends language. Several words become one new word. These new words become gods, complete entities.

The book, *All the Garbage of the World Unite*, opens with an essay that Hyesoon had presented at the American Literary Translators Association in 2006. She compares poetry to a maze and “as the maze grows more complex, it contains the flexible logic of non-alignment. This logic of non-alignment demands from me a new experience with language.” This is certainly what Hyesoon is demanding of us in her book. The poems dance and create new experiences by celebrating garbage and pigs, by transforming mountains and turning people inside out. We have new experiences with language and through those experiences, we develop a new understanding of the potential of poetry and poetry in translation. What Choi has created here in this English version of Hyesoon’s work is a beautiful beast of a book.

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*Written by Kim Hyesoon. Translated, from the Korean, by Don Mee Choi.  
Published by Action Books (November 2011).*

Reviewer **Allie Moreno** recently received her MFA in Poetry from the University of California, San Diego.

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