

alchemy journal of translation



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*Photography by Alexander Zeleniuch (New York University, Bachelors Program, Global Liberal Studies)*

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# Letter from the Editor

Only 3% of books published in the United States are translations. Needless to say, the literary world and mainstream media have essentially closed their doors to works being produced in other countries and in other languages. Our intention, in initiating this journal, is to open a window. This issue represents the first of what will be many opportunities for contemporary readers to find work from all over the globe that they may not have had access to before. It is also our goal to encourage young writers to consider translation as an integral part of their creative writing and reading. *Alchemy* is a space for cultures and writers to intersect.

Translation is an art in and of itself. As Jerome Rothenberg has put it in his book, *Writing Through: Translations and Variations*: “There is a thin line between translation and composition.” As a poet, I have used source texts and imitated other poems and writers. I have found poetry on flyers, postcards and Google. Basically, I have taken other people’s words and ideas—and translated them into something new. Creative writers are translators. Translators are creative writers. This is why *Alchemy* has set out to include creative as well as traditional translations.

When we announced the journal, I was pleasantly surprised at the positive responses we received. Students, faculty, and staff at UCSD were eager to take part in the project and lend their support. The number and quality of submissions from the U.S and abroad was overwhelming, and it was a wonderfully difficult task to make our final selection for this first issue. Here is what the inaugural issue features:

Dariush Azimi’s translation is inspired by a poem originally by Puerto Rican poet, Julia de Burgos. Burgos has been considered one of the greatest

female poets or Latin America. The poem, Bitter Song, invites us to feel the “loving caress of futility” and to ask ourselves “to be or to not want to be?”

Susan Hogan offers her take on a poem by the Russian absurdist Daniil Kharms. “Kharms” was a pseudonym that Daniil Ivanovich Iuvachev adopted in high school for its appealing proximity to the French *charm*. A Most Delicious Cheese Pie reminds us how difficult it is to conquer temptation.

Ricardo López translates a piece from the Mexican writer and critic, Álvaro Enrigue. The short story comes from a collection of stories Enrigue wrote while he was living in Washington D.C. The story, Affront, gives us a glimpse into the life of garbage man, Drake Horowitz.

Diego Martin brings us a variation on a short piece by another Mexican writer, Juan José Arreola. ENER-G echoes Arreola’s use of satire to comment on the world of advertising and consumerism.

Magdalena Mullek’s contribution comes from a larger work by the Slovak writer Július Satinský. Satinský’s Letters from the Other World is a collection of letters from the Other World written to Satinský by various famous figures. This particular letter comes from Dostoevsky.

Anita Sagástegui introduces us to René Desparte, a Haitian poet, who became a controversial figure for his rejection of the Negritude movement. Anita’s translation of Creole Son of the Francophone World takes us through the vibrant imagery of the French Caribbean from its “coves and cobalt bluffs” to the “little cod cakes” while claiming “a history that is ours at last”.

Mia You translates a poem by contemporary South Korean poet, Chung Ho-seung. Korean literary scholar, Kwon Yong-min describes Chung Ho-seung as “a poet crouching down and singing with a soft voice”. The translation of South Han River tells the story of a ferryboat that has been frozen in the river.



Meagan Youngdahl has contributed two poems by acclaimed Swedish poet and translator Tomas Tranströmer. In 2011, Tranströmer received the Nobel Prize in Literature. *Turbulent Meditation* transports us into an ocean during a storm while *Weather Painting* captures a village in October.

Lastly, Alexander Zeleniuch has provided us with the cover art for our first issue. This selection comes from a series of photographs from his travels while he studied abroad in Buenos Aires.

It has been exciting to be a part of creating a space where borders don't exist. On behalf of *Alchemy* and staff, I present you with our inaugural issue, and look forward to seeing more work by talented new translators in the future.

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*Allie Moreno, Editor-in-Chief*

# Letters from the Other World

A letter from Fyodor Mikhailovich, of Great Russia, to Július Voitekhovich, of Great Slovakia, in which the Great Russian poses some fundamental questions

Dear Július Voitekhovich,

If you're thinking about heading to the Other World, I must warn you about the grave injustice being perpetrated here. *There is NO gambling!* Not even in our mansion, in which so many of the seasoned and daring players of interstellar space "live," ready to gamble day and night. You can't play any roulette or Baccarat here in the Other World, and, believe it or not, those rattling boxes – slot machines – are nowhere to be found either! You know just what a notorious gambler I was during my life on Earth; how publishers only got a book out of me because I needed money to go to the casino in Baden Baden. But if you're not a natural born gambler – damn you – you've got a lot to look forward to. Elite "players" from around the world carry on endless discussions about art, literature, human nature, politics, and history. Last Saturday, that old ribald MAUPASSANT showed me your letter about how clever young ladies are back in Slovakia. I was quite entertained. I do hope you'll stand by what you wrote to TURGENEV, and allow your letters to be published here in the Other World. After all, you're publishing our letters in your daily paper, the *Národná obroda*. Come to think of it, you're making money on our ideas! Then again – to hell with our ideas, since they're from the Other World. You wouldn't be able to prove they're ours anyway. More ideas float around interstellar space than stars or meteors. When you see a shooting star in the clear summer sky, could it actually be a bright idea falling? We should really ask ourselves whether this rainfall of ideas can save mankind. Wouldn't it be healthier to spend our earthly existence in careless reverie, folly, or in working for the Lord? It's not important which Lord:

the Lord God, the lord of the manor, or Lord only knows.

Anyway, you wrote Maupassant about what happened to you with an eighteen year old Slovak co-ed. I heard you offered to lend her that ever-popular book *Modern Times* by Johnson, saying:

“Read this and then pass it on to your classmates!”

The young lady asked with a smile: “Isn’t all that literature a bit depressing?”

“Sure,” you answered her, “quite depressing...”

Laughing, the co-ed responded: “In that case, I’ll read it when I’m older!”

Ah, your co-eds, they’re so clever! Just think how much depression, hopelessness, anxiety, even gloom I have caused young readers from St. Petersburg to New York City with my *Brothers Karamazov*, *The Possessed*, or *Crime and Punishment*! Many have asked themselves whether it was worth it to “chew” their way through my pages, to suffer in the “hell” of my heroes’ minds. But I’m not about to apologize. I’m convinced that even a thousand years from now readers will benefit from visiting my literary limbo, that panopticon which God instilled in my Great Russian brain – as much as gallery visitors benefit from looking at Hieronymus Bosch’s grotesque scenes or Rembrandt’s *Anatomy Lesson of Dr. Nicolaes Tulp*. Forgive my pride, but I truly value certain chapters of my books, even if they were born of the need for gambling money. Sometimes the best in art doesn’t come from an all-consuming urge to say something, but from the passion of a gambler, or from the unbridled excitement of encountering absolute beauty, even if that beauty is “possessed.”

Here in the Other World we frequently discuss questions I posed back in the eighteen seventies. Some of them haven’t been answered clearly to this day.



In my *Diary of a Writer*, published in 1877, I asked whether we Russians were anything more than intruders in Europe. I wrote: “Our landowners are selling their serfs and using the proceeds to travel to Paris, where they publish social tracts. We have become so alienated from our Russian land that we cannot differentiate between the soul of a Russian peasant and that of a European. After all, Russian landowners have never given any thought to the nature of the Russian peasant. They did not acknowledge he had a nature to begin with. We have forgotten that he could have any such thing, and we have certainly not bothered asking about it. We believed that our people would unquestioningly accept all things European we exposed them to, that is to say, we imposed upon them. Meanwhile, our so-called humanitarians still act like they own Russian serfs, even though serfdom has been abolished.”

Even now, at the end of the twentieth century, it looks like we Russians are really just intruders in Europe. Though I must say, America and Europe should be grateful to us for the last two centuries of literature and music. I feel I can be frank with you, my dear Július Voitekhovich, because I know you’re a Rusophile.

So, what is to be done with our “expansive Russian soul” these days? Should it be exiled from Europe for good? You’ve clipped our wings, to be sure, but our young people in Petersburg still speak English to each other... It may take us a while to pluck up our courage again, but you should be on the lookout for it. Those of us who have experienced the dazzle and comfort of European spas, who have set foot in the casinos of Monte Carlo, Baden Baden, or Ostend, will never reconcile ourselves to the mud of central Asia.

I look at that world of yours with my friends from the Other World, Russian writers of noble and common birth, and I can’t help shaking my head. Nothing has changed. The Don Cossacks are back to carrying their whips; the Ukrainians are making off with Crimea again. What will come of all this without God and without a Tsar? Then again, the Russian peasant may be returning to both. After all, the peasant (who survived the Communists) never gave up his

God or his Tsar, just like Muslims don't give up their faith. I expect you'll be hearing a lot more about them all.

Well, that's how things are with me, old Dostoevsky, infamous roulette player and gambler with the human soul. You know, my story "White Nights" has always been my favorite piece. I wrote it in 1848. I was 27, and I had no idea what was going on with your nations in Austria-Hungary. At the time, the Russian nobility was too busy strolling down the promenades of European health-resorts, and someone (it might even have been Pushkin) came up with the term *lishnie liudi* (superfluous men).

Now there's a big topic for your reply, my dear Július Voitekhovich... *Lishnie liudi*. Doesn't that smack of racism? Whom can you call superfluous? Is anyone ever superfluous?

Send your reply to:  
Fyodor Mikhailovich Dostoevsky  
The Other World

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*By Július Satinský*  
*translated, from the Slovak, by Magdalena Mullek*

**Magdalena Mullek** is a Ph.D student in Slavic Languages and Literatures at Indiana University. **Július Satinský** (1941-2002) was a famous Slovak actor, comedian, singer, musician, and author, whose works continue to enjoy great popularity even after his death. "Dostoevsky's Letter" is an excerpt from Satinsky's 2007 *Lissty z Onoho Sveta*.

# ENER-G

Ladies and gentlemen, for the first time your children's energy can be used to power your home! The ENER-G has hit stores near you, sure to change the way you manage your household.

The ENER-G boasts resiliency yet is light enough to fit harmlessly on your child via special belts, clasps, and buckles. The conductive, metal limbs of the ENER-G store the excess energy of a moving child in a small, removable container that he or she will barely notice sitting on their back or chest! If you are anxiously wondering when you will be able to make use of this innocently acquired energy, you will be pleased to know that a colorful meter lights up on the jar to show your child's progress. The energy stored in the removable jar can be discharged at any time with our free and complementary Power Tank, which can be kept anywhere in the house, proudly displaying to your friends and family how resourceful you are. More than a decoration, however, the Power Tank is a source of energy available at any time to power your lighting, heating and, of course, your endless cache of completely necessary devices.

The ENER-G will shed new light on the endless pitter-patter of your beloved children. In fact, you will begin to cheer them on when they lose their temper, keeping in mind that you didn't pay the energy bill! As your newborn baby keeps you and your spouse up all night, take comfort in knowing that you will be able to watch television to your heart's content the next day! In fact, if you have enough children, why not share some energy with the neighbors for a little profit?

Don't worry, the ENER-G's metallic frame poses no threat to your child's health or self-esteem. Everyone in school be wearing ENER-G suits, so do you really want your child to be left out? Your loving praise for your children and

their new accomplishments will even encourage them to be more active in life, and remember that rewarding them with sugary candy can only help your cause.

Some critics believe that the ENER-G is a target for sparks and lightning, but with proper adherence to the manual and prudent use on your part, your child's safety is guaranteed. Our company is not responsible for any disasters that might result from use of the ENER-G. We know that your experience with the ENER-G will be unforgettable, both for you and your child, so order now!

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*After Juan José Arreola*

*adapted, from the Spanish, by Diego Martin*

**Diego Martin** is an undergraduate student at the University of California, San Diego, in International Studies-Linguistics. Mexican writer **Juan José Arreola** (1918-2001) worked many jobs during his youth, and his real world experiences may have influenced his work, famous for its satirical and allegorical nature. This piece is an excerpt from *Confabulario* (1952), originally titled "Baby H.G."

# Affront

*Para qué quiero vida sin honra.  
Si hasta 'onde tuve aposté.*

“Why would I want a life without honor.  
If I bet all I ever had.”

- A. Esparza Oteo

A highway can be like the sea. The sun beating against your face, a breeze that cleans your respiratory system's pipes, your hands clinging to the rails of the steel deck, a putrid smell rising from the bilge. Drake Horowitz believed this for some time without being able to prove it: riding outside the cabin was forbidden when traveling at high speeds. So he stayed in his seat, studying the results of the American League in the sports section of the *Baltimore Sun* and letting his resentment build. He barely paid attention to the endless chatter between Verrazano and the driver, who exchanged ideas, comments, and insults while slightly leaning forward to get a clear view of each other: as the greenest one on the job, he had to sit in the middle of the Outrageous Fortune's bench seat.

The idea of christening the garbage truck came from a photograph in a *National Geographic* magazine salvaged from a black plastic bag. Everything made its way to the ship that way, as if following the drift of a secret tide. As he lifted the bag, fat Verrazano felt the lump of printed material. He held the bag in his fist and lifted it up and down, weighing it for a moment with squinted eyes

and pursed lips. Then he set it on the floor, squatted, and told his partner as he felt the bag's contents, "These sons of bitches think they can fool a man who's been picking up trash for fifteen years." His expert olfactory sense pondered the smells that emanated from the bag every time he squeezed it. "They're magazines," he went on, "recent issues in good condition; perfectly recyclable." He didn't throw the bag into the compactor. On the way back to the waste collection plant, he undid the bundle and saw that it held *National Geographic* magazines and catalogues. No pornography. The driver, who within the company's ranks was captain of their ship, suggested that they report the tenant: not for violating recycling regulations, just for being a pain in the ass. "It's the white man's goddam hypocrisy," he concluded in a thick, low, and cavernous voice. Verrazano let out a sigh of boredom and let the bag tumble to the back of the cabin. Drake, having finished the sports section, reached down for one of the magazines and began to thumb through it. He showed them the photo during lunch. They had stopped in a park and were at a picnic table sharing a parcel of dried fish and crackers. "Look," he said, "south of the Rio Grande people name their trucks." On the cover was a dump truck with, "No me olvides," written on the back bumper in red letters. The next day, before arriving at the neighborhood where they picked up trash, he proposed that they write "Outrageous Fortune" on the stern of the truck. Verrazano immediately agreed. He liked the idea of personalizing his workplace: his own car bore embellishments that made it unique, and in his opinion, elegant. The captain didn't even bother to turn and look at them while they talked it over. Drake pointed out that they could add a flag, "a black one," he said, which Verrazano thought was odd but also manly. It was weeks before they persuaded the old man into letting them paint the name on; he ended up acquiescing on the condition that they forego the flag: regulations prohibited hanging anything from the truck's exterior. The fat man made one final attempt and reminded him that the flag would be black. "Just like your ass," he noted. The captain told him that if he didn't shut up he'd take the rosary he'd insisted on hanging from the rearview mirror during their first trip together and throw it out the window.



Contrary to popular superstition, the day arrived without any omens: the day that Drake Horowitz verified for himself that a highway can be like the sea and a garbage truck like a ship. The previous night he'd gone to a minor league game with his brother and nephews, who came by the plant early to pick him up. He didn't call his wife to tell her he'd be home late; during the last few weeks the most minor of disagreements would incite in her an anger of uncontrollable volume that often had to be suppressed with a slapping, and he wasn't the type to hit women. In the car his nephews asked for their cousin, and Drake unenthusiastically shrugged his shoulders and said he'd preferred to stay home, with his mother. His brother, aware of the personal hell he was going through, patted him on the back before starting the car. They didn't say anything during the drive, with the kids arguing from time to time and their father shouting to shut them up whenever he found them too irritating. During the game they drank to the point of worrying the eldest son, who tried everything, even crying, to stop them. When the sale of beer ended at the top of the eighth inning, they drove to a biker bar just off the highway. The idea was to buy a case and drink it in Drake's apartment – the kids could settle in with their cousin -, but they found the place so pleasant and the return to the city so long that they decided to stay. After the first glass of bourbon the brother went out to give his kids a small dish of peanuts and the car keys, in case they wanted to listen to the radio. Drake's memories ended a little while later.

He woke up alone, covered in sweat, and guilt-free, stretched across one of the benches of his neighborhood's basketball court. He rubbed his face and looked at his watch. It was almost five in the morning. The night had hardly made the weather any cooler. He quickened his pace, thinking the heat would soon be oppressive; he had just over half an hour to shower and eat something before Verrazano honked his horn outside of his building.

The christening of the Outrageous Fortune was one more harmless peculiarity, just another among the many generated by the infinite monotony of working as a garbage man. The captain felt that officially recognizing the name

chosen for his galleon by the afflicted Horowitz couldn't do any harm. The captain himself used it to refer to the ship after he accepted the name on the rear bumper. He'd previously noticed that agreeing to Drake's whims caused Drake to work better. His outlandishness was always modest and tolerable: eating jerky and crackers on days it was his turn to bring lunch; getting accustomed to using certain terms: hatch for door, quarterdeck for cabin, tiller for steering wheel, binnacle for glove compartment. They were minor obsessions, at least compared to Verrazano, whose lunacies made him as likely to provoke a police officer as he was to kick over a house's trash cans when he thought their waste was poorly bagged.

Drake had always seen the garbage truck as something like a ship, but this tendency had gotten worse over the year ever since that autumn morning when the waves washed up a box of books before them. He was tying the remnants of a piece of furniture onto the upper deck when Verrazano fell still, his hands on his waist and an incredulous expression on his face. "Guess what?" he yelled. Drake, occupied as he was with his task, hardly paid attention. "This has to violate all waste disposal regulations in the United States; look at this, Horowitz. Books, and in an open cardboard box; I can't believe it." Coming down the stern's ladder, Drake suggested that he put them in the compactor and forget about them. "Impossible," he responded. "Just leave them in the box and move on." "It's a crime," he yelled. "Why?" "What do you mean why? It's perfectly recyclable paper and they're books; inner city kids lack proper schools while the suburbs' rich throw books out." "Well then, take them to the library or file a claim against this address for failing to recycle." The fat man stammered, said he would do exactly that, and put the books in the cabin. After lunch – the fat man's wife had prepared a glorious lasagna for them – relaxed and bored by the length of the return trip back to the plant, he began to look through the box's contents. He leafed through two or three books. He stopped at one. "Look at this," he said, showing it to Horowitz. "What is up with this? *Song to Myself*. That much pride can't be good for children." He took the volume by the binding and flung it out the window. The other two laughed. He continued rummaging. "Please," he said

after a short while, “look at this.” He was showing them a copy of *Junkie*. “This isn’t right,” and he repeated the antics. This time the book hit a mailbox. “Ah, *A Doll’s House*, about hookers,” and he threw it gracefully, as if it were a frisbee. Then he barked, “*Mexico City Blues*; I want nothing to do with beaners.” “I’ll throw that one away,” said the captain. “No way,” Verrazano replied, “because here’s one especially for you,” and handed him *Heart of Darkness*. “And this one’s for Horowitz: *Drake in the Pirates’ Era*.” By the time they arrived at the plant all the books had ended up on the street except for the one about pirates, which Drake began to read that very night. Things at home were still good then: neither he nor his wife could drink that much if for a couple of weeks he stayed home every day to read for an hour or two.

During the summer the highway was like the sea, that would have been impossible. Verrazano found it strange that Horowitz, with the face of a castaway, would already be waiting for him on the stairs outside his building. It was even stranger that Drake hadn’t reacted when Verrazano stopped his white Galaxy right in his face: it wasn’t the kind of car that went unnoticed. With great effort, he had to roll down the passenger window and whistle loudly to get his attention. Drake greeted him and clumsily stood up, like a diver moving slowly and carefully across the ocean floor. He was wearing the same clothes as yesterday. The fat man watched from inside as he reluctantly opened the rear door and dropped a canvas duffel bag on the seat, a bag much larger than the one he normally carried. The seat’s thick, padded velvet cover hardly muffled the dull and metallic sound of the bag’s contents. “Are you playing ball after work?” Verrazano asked. “No,” said Horowitz. He insisted, “You’re bringing a bat, aren’t you?” “And a shotgun.” “Right.” Once they were out of the city, they randomly chose, as they did every day, a street to steal the newspaper from. “We’re lucky,” said the fat one as he made out the blue bag of the New York Times in the front yard of a prefab mansion. When they pulled off the highway to buy coffee at a gas station convenience store, Drake told Verrazano what had happened to him.

When he returned to his apartment after spending the night, or part of it, at the neighborhood basketball court, he was still on the tranquil mezzanine that separates being inebriated from being hungover. In that uncoordinated state, it took him some time to get his keys out of the pocket of his jeans. He had a brief spell of dizziness while he picked out the correct key, and so he rested his head against the door, which gave way as he leaned into it. Although at that instant he knew his wife had left him, he preferred to think that the door had been left open out of carelessness and even planned to tell her off as soon as she woke up to prepare the kid's breakfast. He went directly into the kitchen and, still with nocturnal stealth, drank a glass of milk. As he closed the refrigerator door he saw the Post-it, on which the most laconic of messages had been scribbled: I left. He took the note and read it a few more times, surprised that he didn't feel anything. Before going in the bathroom he made sure she hadn't left him his son, because he wouldn't have known what to do with him.

Feeling alone gave him a sense of relief. After turning on the hot water, he sat on the toilet and waited for the room to fill with steam before getting in the shower; he'd always thought that breathing steam had some sort of healing effect. He felt the urge to piss. He stood up, lifted the lid of the toilet, and saw a pair of condoms floating in the bowl. A burning wave split from his lower back and its shock enveloped him completely. He kicked chairs, knocked tables over, smashed plates. He found his bathrobe on the bedroom floor next to the contraceptives' metallic wrappers; from the headboard hung a pair of briefs that weren't his. He grabbed the briefs intending to light them on fire, and as he did so, Drake noticed that they belonged to a man much larger than he was. He dropped them and sat on the bed, his temples throbbing, his mind in transit from ire to self-pity. He was rubbing his face when he noticed the smell. It wasn't long before, in precisely the center of the bed, he discovered a shit so big that it could not have been produced by a woman.

Verrazano's reaction to the story was surprisingly calm and equanimous. "You're saying he took a shit on your bed?" Horowitz nodded assent. "He must

be Arab, or Chinese.” “Why?” “A Christian wouldn’t do that; besides, he left his briefs. Real men wear boxers.” They remained silent, Drake sinking into his seat under the weight of the hangover that was beginning to take on oceanic proportions, and the other steering with his left hand, his right hand on his chin. Once on the side road leading to the plant, the fat man said with the air of someone who has finally solved an enigma: “And you brought the shotgun to kill her in case we come across them.” Horowitz shrugged. “I’d do the same, brother,” he concluded and gently patted the back of his companion’s neck. Drake was so miserable that the gesture felt comforting.

It wasn’t even 6:30am and it was already hot. The hazy sunlight, blurred by the humidity and reflected off the concrete floor of the plant’s parking lot, entered directly into the softest and most sensitive part of Drake’s brain. The sweat was irritating as it slipped down his unshaven cheeks. In order to look at his watch, he had to use one hand to stop the other from shaking. With ten minutes left until they set off, he walked all the way to the bathroom. He vomited the coffee and vigorously washed his face. He was looking at himself in the mirror when he remembered that his brother had foreseen the storm. It was a Sunday afternoon and they’d met up in Drake’s apartment for lunch and to watch a World Series game. They had a beer while they grilled hotdogs on the deck. The women were in the kitchen, busy with the salad; the children, taking advantage of the fact that the pre-game show hadn’t yet begun, played on a more or less outdated video game console that Drake had found days earlier in a trash can of a well-to-do suburb. The Horowitz brothers were happy and recalled childhood episodes they’d lived in that neighborhood, the same one that Drake, the younger sibling, still couldn’t move out of. Everything was so pleasant – the fresh breeze, the bright sky, the clear light – that Drake’s tongue slipped and spoke about how he’d found his name’s origin in an English admiral of mixed renown. He stepped into the apartment and returned with the biography of Sir Francis Drake and a telescope, possibly the only object in his house that had actually been purchased. The older brother ignored the hotdogs a moment to extend the telescope’s lens and peer at the building across the street. As he did

so, Drake asked if their father might have thought of the pirate when choosing his name. His brother retracted the lens and glanced at the book's cover. His attention back on the grill, he opined that he'd never heard of any Polish sailors and so it was most likely that their father had actually wanted to call him Derek. "He was always so drunk and so dumb," he concluded, "that surely he made a mistake on your birth certificate." A few hours later, when they were alone in front of the TV, the women and children in the park, the older brother confided that while he didn't want to meddle in anyone else's business, he'd noticed that his sister-in-law was acting strangely, as if she were hiding something. "What?" Drake asked, alarmed. "I don't know," he responded, "maybe she's afraid of telling you she's pregnant again or maybe she's looking for a job." The younger brother shrugged. The older brother went into the kitchen for a couple of beers during the commercial break. When he returned, he sat on the couch, handed a beer to Drake, and told him in the most casual tone he could fake, "And, frankly, this thing about pirates is weird. It seems like an escape, like the Batman costume you refused to take off after Dad left. Try to find another job, a normal one where you don't have to sit all day in between two morons."

Drake left the bathroom and put his overalls on in the changing room. He felt weighed down by the destiny in his bag as he crossed the parking lot. The captain was already aboard the truck, the engine running. Verrazano stood beside the open door, smiling and waiting for him. "Cheer up, Horowitz," he told him, "we've got a long, hot day ahead of us." He felt the plastic lining of the forecastle's seat already hot against his bottom. The fat man climbed aboard and shut the hatch. Drake sunk an arm into his bag and took out the telescope; he extended it, looked ahead, and murmured, "Anchors aweigh."

The driver shifted into first gear and set off, pleased that despite the fresh tragedy that Verrazano had summarized for him, operations on the Outrageous Fortune were proceeding as usual. The captain decided to risk a joke in order to ease the tension inside the forecastle. He thought that the unfortunate Horowitz needed to understand that dumping and being dumped by women is simply a



part of life for anyone devoting time to a ship's crew. The plant's gates were hardly out of sight when the captain tried to break the ice. He said in his deepest voice, "So it turns out your wife got tired of good Polish sausages and wanted the fig of a Bedouin." Verrazano couldn't help himself and burst into laughter. Drake didn't react, and so the captain attacked Verrazano to make clear that he was on Drake's side, "I don't know what you're laughing about, fat ass. My whore of a wife says Italians have it olive-sized." The response was immediate, and the squabble the same as always. Horowitz listened as if from the other side of a wall made of water. He didn't have the energy for anything, so he shut his eyes, hoping to get some sleep before starting his daily dance with the trash cans. Soon afterwards, from the obscure limbo of his half-sleep, he heard the captain who, thinking him sound asleep, was reveling in the odd detail of the shit on his bed. He said with gravity, "How old could the boy be?" "About 3 years old," replied the fat one. "I wonder," continued the old man, "had he been present while the lover exerted himself, how much he would have clapped after that turd emerged."

Consumed by rage, Drake opened his eyes. He saw fear on the captain's face before covering it completely with his palm and slamming the man's head against the window. Horowitz, without letting up on the driver, grabbed the steering wheel with his right hand and took the vessel off its course. He pulled the emergency brake and once he felt all movement halt, he resumed the thrashing until the window was covered in blood. Perplexed, Verrazano watched him; it was maybe the first time Drake surprised Verrazano. Drake told him, "This is a mutiny; whose side are you on?" His hand was still pressing down on the captain's face while his right one felt around for the bag to take out the shotgun. The fat man didn't need to think much, "On the side of the people," and himself withdrew the weapon and pointed it at the old man. He said, "I'm sorry, cap'n, but there are new rules."

They gagged him with electrical tape and used wire to tie his hands and feet. The old man didn't put up the slightest fight. With evident pleasure,

Horowitz placed him in the middle seat and took over the helm. They hadn't gone far when Verrazano asked what they were going to do with him. "We're going to abandon him on an island." "Well then, we need to get going before traffic picks up." They took the next u-turn on the left. Drake stopped the truck in the middle of the road and they both carried the old man to some bushes. "I'll let the police know that you're here," the fat man promised the deposed captain once he was certain Horowitz couldn't hear. Before setting off again, Drake produced a black flag from his bag and attached two of its four corners to the Outrageous Fortune's antenna.

The rest was degradation and barbarism: pursuing and boarding other vessels, assaulting, kidnapping; the siege and burning of a liquor store. The bombardment of three parked mini-vans drew so much attention that for weeks ladies in the metropolitan area trembled at the mere sound of a garbage truck. All in the hysterical span of a few hours. By midday they were already enclosed by their own havoc.

With Verrazano behind the wheel, they went northbound on a scarcely trafficked road and docked the ship at the first bend they came across. Drake played the only hand he was willing to bet on and said, "You'll spend the rest of your life in jail after what we've done today." He unfolded the navigation chart and pointed to a marsh in the Chesapeake Bay. "You can only get there by back roads," he continued, "so it's likely we'll reach it before they find us. There's a large, abandoned marina that extends far into the sea. My father took us fishing there a few times." The fat one expressed his hesitance, "I have friends in jail, and I'm sure that in jail I could make more friends. Besides, I promised the captain that I'd let people know which island we left him on." Drake shrugged. His partner said apologetically, "There's nothing to do, Horowitz, my solidarity with your pain has its limits." "Well then, help me navigate that far." "With pleasure." Without another word, Drake left the ship deck and climbed the ladder up the stern. After Drake maneuvered his exit from the cabin, fat Verrazano advanced northeastwards at full speed ahead. For Drake, the highway

was like the clean and open sea. Hands firm around the deck's rails, he felt the sun on his face, the breeze filling his chest, the putrid smell permeating the bilge.

---

*By Álvaro Enrigue*

*translated from the original Spanish, by Ricardo López*

**Ricardo López** is an undergraduate student of Spanish and Portuguese Languages at Princeton University. **Álvaro Enrigue** (1969-) is a Mexican writer and critic. He is considered one of the most innovative Mexican writers of his generation, and is currently a writer in residence at the New York Public Library. "Affront" appears with permission of Dalkey Archive Press. A complete translation of Álvaro Enrigue's *Hipotermia* will be published next year by Dalkey Archive Press.

# South Han River

a ferryboat floats in the center  
of the frozen South Han River

before the season's first frost had iced  
it had wanted to go someplace far  
and had decided on its own upon the faraway ocean  
but instead it simply froze to a stop

that the South Han River reeds  
had overnight called forth the winter  
to grasp hold of their beloved ferryboat  
so it could go nowhere else  
was only unknown to the ferryboat itself

---

*By Chung Ho-seung*

*translated, from the Korean, by Mia You*

**Mia You** is a Ph.D student in English literature at the University of California, Berkeley. **Chung Ho-seung** (1950-) is recognized as one of South Korea's most popular contemporary authors. He has won almost all of Korea's most prestigious poetry awards, including the Sowol Literary Prize and the Dong Suh Literary Prize.

# Bitter Song

“Do Not Disturb” hangs upon my self, but sadness seems to sneak its way past.  
Shadow-heavy, this thing pummels me,  
even though I used to grab fistfuls of stars  
when now I can only clutch at agony.

More likely than not, it’s the loving caress of futility,  
the endless misery of the poet’s existence,  
to sing and to sing without ever being able to  
tear tragedy away from life.

To be and not want to be? That is the divide,  
the battle that dries up all hope,  
discovering, with the soul about to breathe its last,  
that the miserable body isn’t quite ready to give up the fight.

Forgive me, love, if I never give you a name.  
Without your song these wings become dry and brittle.  
If I close my eyes, will it be death who rocks me to sleep?  
Singing to you, only you, is what keeps me awake.

---

*By Julia de Burgos*

*translated, from the Spanish, by Dariush Azimi*

**Dariush Azimi** is a Masters student in English literature at Queen Mary, University of London. **Julia de Burgos** (1914-1953) 1914-53), considered by many to be the greatest poet born in Puerto Rico, worked towards attaining civil rights for women and Afro-Caribbean writers until the day she died. Her poetry continues to be read and shared widely, making de Burgos one of Latin America’s greatest and most influential poets.

# Turbulent Meditation

A storm makes the mill blades go around wildly  
in the dark of night, grinding nothing. –You  
are kept awake by the same laws.  
The gray shark's belly is your weak lamp.

Diffused memories fall to the ocean's depths  
and solidify there into foreign residue. –Green  
with algae is your crutch. Those who  
wander out to sea come back stiffened.

---

*By Tomas Tranströmer*  
*translated, from the Swedish, by Meagen Youngdahl*



# Weather Painting

The October sea glistens coldly  
with its dorsal fin of mirages.

Nothing remains of memory  
of racing yachts' white dizziness.

Amber light over the village.  
And all sound in slow escape.

The barking dog's hieroglyph painted  
in the air over the garden

where the yellow fruit outwits  
the tree and drops of its own free will.

---

*By Tomas Tranströmer*

*translated, from the Swedish, by Meagen Youngdahl*

**Meagen Youngdahl** is an undergraduate student in Film and English at the University of California, Berkeley. **Tomas Tranströmer** (1931-) is widely regarded as one of the most influential Swedish poets of the 20th century. He is the recipient of the 2011 Nobel Prize for Literature.

# Creole Son of the Francophone World

Ours are the hills of the old *marronnage*  
ours are the coves and the cobalt bluffs  
the sovereign trees blooming  
in the eye of the cyclone!

ours are the dark rum beaches  
under the moonlight  
companion stars facing the sea  
warmly dazzling!  
ours are the dancing evenings  
offering one last glass  
of punch to our dead!

ours is the frenzied carnival  
the cock fights the Catholic feasts  
so intertwined with the *Vaudou*  
free-spirited at the table and in bed!

ours is the soaring to seventh heaven  
at the taste of sweet potato and manioc  
of black beans and *dion-dion* rice,  
of *akra* and little cod cakes,  
of fish and plantains–  
mischievous guards  
of the paradise  
of spicy dishes!

ours is the freedom to escape  
the outrages of the past: the white-hard  
times of hisses, spirt and endlessly shackled feet,  
souls and hands  
angels burning with lime  
and bird pepper  
on the wounds of long, long ago  
and by the blood that runs even faster  
than Somalia's entire dark misfortune.

A history that is ours at least  
sailing through the French-speaking world  
a life-lost ocean for us  
the sensuous jubilation of a drum  
when we drink, eat and climax  
to our *gourmand* and Creole imagination!

---

*By René Depestre*

*translated, from the French, by Anita Sagástegui*

**Anita Sagástegui** is currently pursuing her Masters in Art Education at the Academy of Art Univeristy in San Francisco. She also teaches visual arts, and has taught with the Center for the Art of Translation. **René Depestre** (1926-) is a Haitian poet. He lived in Cuba as an exile from the Duvalier regime for many years, and helped found the Casa de las Americas publishing house.

# A Most Delicious Cheese Pie

I organized a formal party,  
And for the guests I

Bought the flour, bought the cheese,  
Baked a crumbly

Pie. Knives and forks were set,  
And then for the guests

I waited. But the pie enticed me,  
Perhaps... maybe... one thin slice...

See, I pushed aside the chair, succumbed  
To desire: soon it was gone.

When the guests arrived,  
There were not even crumbs...

---

*After Daniil Kharms*

*adapted, from the Russian, by Susan Hogan*

**Susan Hogan** is an MFA student in Poetry at San Diego State University.  
**Daniil Kharms** (1905-1942) was an early Soviet-era surrealist and absurdist poet, writer, and dramatist.

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**Alchemy** is committed to publishing quality, contemporary translations of poetry, fiction, and non-fiction creative writing. By dedicating our journal to the publication of high quality translations by students, we aim to encourage a new generation of translators. We publish creative translations and adaptations, including homophonic, homolinguistic, and other poetic forms. It is our belief that translation can teach us new things about writing and about language itself. We look forward to publishing work that is fresh, engaging and thought provoking. Alchemy is based in the University of California, San Diego's Literature and Linguistics departments, and is edited and published by UCSD students.

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