



Photography by [Eve Survilo](#), a Bay Area to Brooklyn transplant, currently pursuing her Bachelor of Fine Arts degree at NYU. She is artistically inspired by New York City in all its dimensions.

Table of Contents

Letter from the Editor	4
------------------------	---

Fiction

A Selection of Short Fiction by Lili Potpara	6
-----------------------------------------------------	---

Translated, from the Sloevne, by Kristina Zdravič Reardon.

- The Lie
- The Key
- Over the Edge
- Through the Window

<i>excerpt from The Drunkard</i> by Liu Yichang	16
--------------------------------------------------------	----

Translated, from the Chinese, by Charlotte Yiu.

Poetry

Desert Island Boris Vian	23
---------------------------------	----

Translated, from the French, by Claudio Sansone.

Fins by Boris Vian	25
---------------------------	----

Translated, from the French, by Claudio Sansone.

In Order to Live I Do Not Need by Pedro Salinas	27
--------------------------------------------------------	----

Translated, from the Spanish, by Claudio Sansone.

In an African City by Hans Christian Andersen	29
------------------------------------------------------	----

Translated, from the Danish, by Arendse Lund.

There Were Two Sleepless Nights by Wu Ang	32
--------------------------------------------------	----

Translated, from the Chinese, by Leah House.	
Honeymoon by Wu Ang	34
Translated, from the Chinese, by Leah House.	
In a tomb I build my house, and in the dark by Juan Soros	36
Translated, from the Spanish, by Ming Holden.	
I am twenty-three years old by Lucas Mertehikian	40
Translated, from the Spanish, by Jennifer Croft.	
Credits	46

Letter from the Editor

It's hard to believe more than a year has passed since I started working as Editor of *Alchemy*. One of the most important goals when I took on this role was to continue the legacy of the journal. Namely, to grow as a venue for student writers to publish rigorous literary translations, to provide readers with a space where they could find fiction and poetry from around the world, to open a window. And now that I'm coming to the end of this period, it's with a certain level of pride and sadness that I write my last letter as Editor.

But let me first tell you what we have in store for Issue 5. We have Leah House presenting her translations of contemporary Chinese poet Wu Ang. Ming Holden offers her renditions of Juan Soros' poetry, the pseudonym Chilean writer Edmundo Condon used for his second book of poems. Kristina Helena Reardon presents her translations of awarded Slovenian fiction writer Lili Potpara. And our cover art showcases Eve Survillo's work, a Bay-Area-to-Brooklyn transplant currently studying art at NYU.

Also in Issue 5, Jennifer Croft shares with the readers of *Alchemy* some of the results of her ongoing collaboration with Lucas Mertehikian, one of Argentina's most interesting younger writers. And we always like to receive international submissions; this time around we have Charlotte Yiu, from the University of Hong Kong, presenting her translation of "The Drunkard" by Liu Yi-Chang. And rounding out Issue 5 we have Claudio Sansone from Trinity College, Dublin, who offers two poems from Boris Vian and one from Pedro Salinas.

I would like to take a moment to extend my gratitude to *Alchemy's* Editorial Staff. It has been a pleasure to work alongside Bella Brody, Monica Yimeng Geng, Adrianna Wu, Tipkretar Sirisarnsombat, and Jacob Valadez. And it would be impossible not to mention Mika Kennedy's immense contribution to

the growth of the project. This journal would not be possible without the commitment and perseverance of the *Alchemy* team.

Finally, I would like to thank Prof. Amelia Glaser, creator of the *Alchemy* project, for her ongoing support and patience. I would also like to extend my gratitude to the Faculty Advisory Board and the Literature Department at UCSD, as well as to all of our contributors during the last year. It takes a whole community of people devoted to literary translation to inject life into a student journal. I'm happy to have been a part of the process.

And now, a new period. Entering Editors Paola Capó-García and Pepe Rojo come with exciting and innovative ideas, and are already working on Issue 6. I can't wait to see the results. The future looks good. Our window is still here. Welcome to Issue 5.

Jose Antonio Villarán, Editor

The Lie

“Don’t go home!” Tinka implores her grandmother, who is already combing her hair and glancing at the clock. Grandpa will be coming home soon from work, and he will be hungry, this Tinka knows, but she still doesn’t want Grandma to go home. When Grandma leaves, it gets kind of strangely cold in the apartment, even though Mama and Papa come home afterwards. “Stay a little longer, you’re not in a hurry.”

Grandma caresses Tinka and says: “Okay. I’m just going to the store, then. I don’t have any bread, and I’d like to bring Grandpa some coffee.”

Tinka stops whining, and Grandma puts on her coat. She glances into the hall mirror, picks up her bag, and leaves. Tinka quickly runs to the window in the bedroom because from there she can see the courtyard, where no one could walk from the store back to the apartment block without Tinka seeing them. Tinka crouches by the window. She sees Mama, who comes through the front gate. She sees Papa, who parks his car next to the Kočevars’ Ford. She sees people coming home from work.

“Tinka, come to the kitchen. What on earth are you doing? What’s so interesting out there?” says Mama, as she reheats the lunch Grandma had made. Papa doesn’t say anything because he is hungry after work and wants to eat as soon as possible.

Tinka looks out the window. She has to pee, but she doesn’t go because she knows that Grandma would come back the second she left. She should do her homework, but she doesn’t because Grandma will be coming back any minute now.

The sun is slowly setting. Tinka quickly runs to the bathroom to pee, her sister comes home from music school, Mama is grumpy, and Papa leaves for a soccer game. There is a misty cloud on the glass where Tinka has been pressing her face.

Then it is almost night. Tinka has a bitter taste in her mouth, and it feels like there is a funny cobweb in her stomach. Like there were hundreds of sticky spiders crawling inside her.

“Honey, come watch cartoons. What’s going on with you today?” says Mama, who is still in a bad mood.

“I’m not coming,” says Tinka, and quietly adds: “Grandma just went to the store. It will close soon, and she has to be coming back now.”

Grandma doesn’t come back. Tinka puts on her pajamas and eats a yogurt. She doesn’t look out the window anymore. She doesn’t look anyone in the eye. She doesn’t want to look anymore, but closing her eyes is also hard because when she does, she sees Grandma, how she leaves through the door, how she goes to the store. A hundred times she leaves, and a hundred times she does not come back.

The next morning it seems to Tinka that she aged a few years just overnight.

By Lili Potpara
translated, from the Slovene, by Kristina Zdravič Reardon

Kristina Zdravič Reardon is a PhD candidate in Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at the University of Connecticut. After earning an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Hampshire in 2010, she was awarded a Fulbright grant and spent a year in Ljubljana translating fiction. Her work has been published in *World Literature Today*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Slovene Studies*.

Lili Potpara is a Slovenian writer and translator. In 2002, her collection of short stories, *Zgodbe na dušek* (*Bottoms up stories*), won the Prize for Best Literary Debut from the Professional Association of Publishers and Booksellers of Slovenia.

The Key

The rooftop terrace is really the best place. You can see so far from there, and it has showers, too. It's like being at the beach. We like to play there most of all. There are three apartments, and sometimes we peek through the windows when no one is home.

You can reach the terrace from all four entrances. Through the locked door on the top floor. The elevator only goes up to the fifth floor, and you have to go to the sixth by foot, and from there it's only a few steps to the terrace.

There is a small window by the door. You can open it wide. If the door is locked. The parents all have keys. But they do not like us playing on the terrace. That's why we crawl through the window. If you are small, you can get through it. We are: Alen, Jolanda, Branka, and me.

One day, we want to play doctor on the terrace. Jolanda has cotton balls and shots, Branka has bandages from the first aid kit, Alen has little bandaids, and I've got glass slides. "What are you going to do with those slides?" asks Jolanda.

"You know, it's for when they look through the microscope at a lab, when they take your blood," I say.

"But we don't have a lab, and we don't have a microscope. And who's going to take blood when we don't have a real needle?"

Jolanda has a point. But today I have nothing but slides. I know how to imagine that I also have a microscope and can see all the things that swim through our blood, those things called cells.

The terrace door is locked. It's usually like that. But the key is in the lock. We glance at each other.

"Somebody forgot!" says Alen.

"We must return it," I say.

"But to whom, if we don't know who forgot it?" says Jolanda.

"Ana, you take it," Branka says to me.

I unlock the door and we go onto the terrace, and I lock it behind me, putting the key into the pocket of my jeans. We play. They laugh at my slides. I'm not mad. I bandage wounds when I'm the doctor, and I lay down and moan when I'm the patient. Then we get tired.

I unlock the door and lock it again. I put the key back in my jeans pocket. Then I go to the yard, and at the top of the stairs leading to the school I dig a hole and drop in the key, covering it with one of the little collectible pictures that come in bubble gum wrappers. On top of that, I add a glass slide. Then I bury it all. This is a memento. Only I know where it's buried.

The next day, Mr. Kovac looks for us around the yard.

"Did you, perchance, find our key to the terrace?" he asks, as we play Stealing Countries, drawing a grid of the world in the dirt.

"No, we didn't," we all say at once.

"Well," says Mr. Kovac, "I don't know where I put it. I thought..."

My cheeks flush. They burn so much that I steal half of Africa from Jolanda. Then I rush home.

After lunch, when there's nobody in the yard, I go find my memento. You can't see anything where I buried it yesterday, at least not much. I think it over. Should I dig up the key and put it in Mr. Kovac's mailbox? I think about whether to ask Jolanda to do it. In the end, I leave it there.

It's been many years since then. Now when I get to that yard, it seems very small. They paved the path at the top of the steps leading to the school. I know I'll never go to the terrace again, that I'm too big to fit through the window. Anyway, I don't have the key. Only the memory of the memento remains with me. I just still wish I'd thrown the key into the Kovac's mailbox.

By Lili Potpara

translated, from the Slovene, by Kristina Zdravič Reardon

Kristina Zdravič Reardon is a PhD candidate in Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at the University of Connecticut. After earning an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Hampshire in 2010, she was awarded a Fulbright grant and spent a year in Ljubljana translating fiction. Her work has been published in *World Literature Today*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Slovene Studies*.

Lili Potpara is a Slovenian writer and translator. In 2002, her collection of short stories, *Zgodbe na dušek* (*Bottoms up stories*), won the Prize for Best Literary Debut from the Professional Association of Publishers and Booksellers of Slovenia.

Over the Edge

Simon is being difficult. Mama's nerves are frayed. She has problems of her own; there comes a time when children are a nuisance even to their mother. And that's the last straw, she doesn't feel like a good mother, and she wishes her own mother would take her in her arms and hold her like a small child.

Simon starts to break things. Starts to throw things on the floor and shout. Mama picks things up here and there and tries to soothe him, but she cannot calm him down because she cannot even calm herself down. Simon shouts like a wild banshee, Mama says, though Simon never asks who or what a wild banshee is. Mama wants to scream like a wild banshee, too, but mothers do not scream because mothers are mothers, and mothers always know what should be done.

In the blink of an eye, Mama no longer knows. What should be done, that is. Her hand flies across the small face all on its own, drawing five fingers over his soft skin. It stings Simon, and he falls silent. He stops. Mama also stops and in slow motion watches the hand that slapped him somehow return to her body. "Over the edge," says Mama, somewhat desperately, more to herself than anyone else.

Simon goes to his room, but Mama stands there, frozen. She is no longer angry, not even sad anymore. She is helpless, and this is something no self-respecting mother ever wants to admit. She would rather be little Simon, or better yet a little Simone. She would be able to deal with the burning on her face, but she does not know what to do with the funny hand that so violently escaped her.

Mama knows that she should not hit a child. Mama knows how a slap hurts. Mama knows because she, too, was once a child. Mama knows how heavy the word "sorry" is and how it fills the ears that hear it. And yet how little it sometimes means, and that's why you shouldn't say it too fast.

Mama says it that night, but for real only after several years have passed. When Simon is already a big boy, bigger than her, and his own hand is about to fly out uncontrollably. Then Mama feels the time is right. And it is. Then “I’m sorry” slips easily out of her mouth and Simon becomes small again, and suddenly they are the same size. Small and large at the same time, small enough to know how it hurts and big enough to know how to steady that hand. Mama hugs Simon and he doesn’t try to escape, even though he is so big that it is not cool anymore to hug your mother. And Simon says: “I’m sorry, too.”

By Lili Potpara
translated, from the Slovene, by Kristina Zdravič Reardon

Kristina Zdravič Reardon is a PhD candidate in Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at the University of Connecticut. After earning an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Hampshire in 2010, she was awarded a Fulbright grant and spent a year in Ljubljana translating fiction. Her work has been published in *World Literature Today*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Slovene Studies*.

Lili Potpara is a Slovenian writer and translator. In 2002, her collection of short stories, *Zgodbe na dušek* (*Bottoms up stories*), won the Prize for Best Literary Debut from the Professional Association of Publishers and Booksellers of Slovenia.

Through the Window

Anka was sitting by the window, looking into the yard. There, sitting on a bench, were Neža and Karmen, giggling, leaning in together in laughter. It seemed to her that they were, from time to time, peering up at her window. Anka pursed her lips and her light blue eyes darkened until they almost became a little bit black. “I hate Neža and Karmen,” she thought, but apparently she thought it out loud, so that Oma heard it, who was just then bringing clean laundry into the room.

“What is it, my little Anka? Why don’t you go down to the yard? And what did you just say?”

“I’m not going outside! I won’t go out there anymore!” she said, tight-lipped, again thinking out loud what was becoming a gigantic thought, one too big for her small head.

Oma was a true grandmother, and she’d been around for a long time in this world. She went to the window, as if she wanted to adjust the curtain, and quickly glanced outside. When someone has seen much of the world, they can see very quickly what is happening in a small yard, even through she had spectacles resting on her nose and complained every day that her vision was getting worse every day.

“Come to the kitchen, little Anka, I’ve baked you something!”

“No, no, I’m just fine where I am now!” Anka stubbornly replied and pressed her nose up against the glass.

The smell of fresh apples and dough was already wafting through the apartment, and her tummy began to rumble.

Oma didn’t say anything else. She left the room, but Anka for some reason followed against her will.

In the kitchen, Oma was cutting the fresh, sweet-smelling strudel. And then she put pieces on three small plates.

“Who is that for, Oma?” Anka asked, surprised.

“Neža and Karmen are also coming, aren’t they? Go call them in. Last time Neža’s grandmother baked cookies, you told me how good they were—remember?”

Anka pictured Neža’s kitchen: the table with cookies, plates, juice, and her grandmother, along with the three girls—how they are munching on their cookies, how they are laughing and are the best friends in the world. Her dark thought wanted to stifle this picture but couldn’t, and somehow it became grey and then completely faded.

Anka ran to the window and opened it wide. The girls looked up in surprise when they heard their names, and then their mouths stretched into sunny smiles. “Oma baked strudel? Of course, Anka, we’re on our way!”

Anka pushed the button that opened the door below, and then she thought: we are up on the third floor, and there are a few too many stairs and no elevator.

“Why didn’t you come down?” they asked, panting, as they walked through the door. “It would be so much fun to play Chinese jump rope, and you jump the highest, Anka!”

The three girls were eating the strudel and giggling, drinking juice and leaning in together in laughter as Oma quietly left to finish hanging the laundry.

By Lili Potpara

translated, from the Slovene, by Kristina Zdravič Reardon

Kristina Zdravič Reardon is a PhD candidate in Literatures, Cultures, and Languages at the University of Connecticut. After earning an MFA in creative writing from the University of New Hampshire in 2010, she was awarded a Fulbright grant and spent a year in Ljubljana translating fiction. Her work has

been published in *World Literature Today*, *Words Without Borders*, and *Slovene Studies*.

Lili Potpara is a Slovenian writer and translator. In 2002, her collection of short stories, *Zgodbe na dušek* (*Bottoms up stories*), won the Prize for Best Literary Debut from the Professional Association of Publishers and Booksellers of Slovenia.

excerpt from **The Drunkard**

I.

Another rainy day descends on my rusting sentiments. My thoughts chase after one and another in wreaths of smoke. Gently opening a window, I see raindrops blinking on a branch. The drips trickle down the leaves like the flowing footsteps of a dancer. I turn on the radio and hear the summons of God. Probably it's time to go out. In a bar, a waiter in white is serving wine. In front of me I see a pair of sparkling eyes. (I should invent a character based on her and put her in a cheap novel. She is the mistress of the kung fu master Wong Fei-hung. She's up on a skyscraper in Queen's Road, levitating, hanging upside down, peeping at the secretary sitting on Wong's lap.) My thoughts roam around the curling smoke. The smoke vanishes. A bottle of blues and a cube of empty air in the corner. Between two glasses of brandy grows a twining intimacy. Time never wearies. The minute hand pursues the hour hand in despair. Happiness is like a wanderer, hovering behind the equal sign of an equation.

Music marches into my ears. A solid smile. It emerged at dusk yesterday, and again today. Lies are white because they are lies. Misery in the heart is happiness on the face. Happiness and misery do not seem to be different things.

— Vodka, she says.

— Why are you drinking spirits? I ask.

— To melt the solid smile, she replies.

I order two vodkas. (This woman has an ever drunken belly, like mine.)

My eyes wander about the kaleidoscope of light and shade. Philosophers search for treasure within the human body, but in vain. Music marches into my ears. Smoke gets in your eyes. There is something magnetic about the way black people sing. If James Dean were alive, would he have given up car racing and be dancing the twist instead?

— Do you always come and drink alone? She asks.

— Yes.

— To drown the pain of memory?

— To drown the happiness.

That solid smile swims in the wine glass like an ice cube. No question about it, she is laughing at my immaturity.

Not all hunters are brave, especially in a neon jungle. The innocence of youth has long become a rarity.

One glass. Two glasses. Three glasses. Four glasses. Five glasses.

I am drunk. Nothing but solid smiles in my mind.

I have a lot of peculiar dreams. I dream of an astronaut singing on Venus. I dream of a poker king fumbling around in a murky dancehall: 'fingers only'. I dream of a pack of dogs crunching bones. I dream of Lin Daiyu making plastic flowers in a factory. I dream of Hong Kong sinking into the sea. I dream of her dreaming of me in my dream.

I dream of winning a lottery

I throw away my pen and go into a fingers-only dancehall in Wan Chai wearing an immaculately pressed suit I send for all the dance girls to sit at my table I purchase pride

Then I buy a new six-storey building

I live on one storey and lease all the rest out

I never have to make up to the landlord or worry the owner will in case raise the rent

Then I drive my car and go to see Chiu Chiyiu

Chiu Chiyiu is a mean fellow

When I was poor I begged him to lend me twenty dollars He curled his lip and turned his face away

Now I am rich

I throw my money in his face

Then I drive my car and go to see Lily Chang

Lily Chang is a snob

When I was poor I implored her to love me She curled her lip and turned her face away

Now I am rich

I throw my money in her face

Then I drive my car and go to see Chin Shifu

Chin Shifu is the owner of a publishing house

When I was poor I begged him to publish my novel He curled his lip and turned his face away

Now I am rich

I throw my money in his face

Then I drive my car along Queen's Road because I want people to gaze at me enviously

Then I sober up

Wide awake. My head aches. I squint at this woman who's deep in sleep and realize how unbeautiful she is. Not just unbeautiful. Very ugly. Her hair is a mess. A lot of it has fallen on the pillow. Her eyebrows are long and thinning. The two penciled eyebrows are cut in half after her tossing and turning in sleep all night. Her skin is rough, with rather large open pores. (When I saw her in the restaurant last night, her skin seemed so snowy and delicate. Why is it so different now? Is it because the light was too dim, her face was too heavily powdered, and I was too drunk? Or maybe... Anyway it looks completely different now.) Her nose has a foreign look about it. Actually, her nose is the only interesting part of her face. There are still patches of rouge on her lips. Just like discolored cherries soaked in a can. But this is not the worst. The ugliest is the crow's feet at the corners of her eyes. A few faint lines. All she can do is to powder them over. She is not young anymore. Probably in her forties. But in an obscure light, painted with powder and rouge, admired by drunken eyes, she is still a flower in bloom.

She is fast asleep. From time to time she twitches the corner of her mouth in hazy consciousness. I cannot tell what she is dreaming of. But I am sure she is dreaming. She turns around and breathes out. Foul breath. It makes me want to

vomit. (If I had not been so drunk last night, I would never have slept with this woman.) I roll off the bed, wash and dress, and stuff half of my pay from the newspaper into her bag. I don't get paid much, but I decide to be generous this time because I am wide awake. I often pity myself when I am sober. But I pity her more. As I leave the hotel, the first thing that hits my mind is drink. I buy a bottle of whisky from a store, and go back. I'd better not drink. I still have two installments of martial arts fiction to write for two newspapers. I spread a sheet of writing paper on the table, feeling bad about it. (I have been writing these two wuxia novels for over a year. Debasing my talent to write such stories for living is bad enough. What is even worse is that readers are actually willing to enter the author's imaginary realm, and they never tire of it.) I laugh. I pull off the bottle cap and pour myself a glass of whisky. (If I could, I would write a novella, entitled Hemingway in Hong Kong. Hemingway is a destitute man of letters, who staves off hunger every day with bread soaked in syrup. Steeling himself, refining himself for his art. He finishes *A Farewell to Arms* and attempts fruitlessly to sell the novel to a publisher. But they want Hemingway to write martial arts novels to satisfy readers. They promise that he can make it big and he'll never have to fill his stomach with bread and syrup again. Hemingway refuses. They say he is a fool. He goes home and continues writing and writing. He finishes *For Whom the Bell Tolls*, and hasn't a penny to buy bread. The landlady kicks him out and rents his bed to a hawker who sells Chinese patent cures for impotence on the street in Shaukeiwan. Hemingway still does not wake up to reality and endeavors to sell his new novel, only to be disappointed. He pawns his last down coat buy a couple of meals and some writing paper and goes on writing under the stairs of a building. The weather turns cold but his desire for writing is burning in his heart. One morning a dance girl living on the second floor comes home. Finding a dead body lying under the stairs she screams. Passers-by crowd around the body but not a single person recognizes him. The police come and discover that he is clutching a manuscript. The title is *The Old Man and the Sea*.) This is an interesting idea. I laugh. I take a swig of whisky and start working on my martial arts novel. (Yesterday I made up a bit when Taoist

Celeste is revenging his dear disciple Rain Canopy, yet his deadly foe Steel Augur is miles away. How should I carry on with the story?) I raise my glass and drink the rest at one gulp. (Oh I've got it! Taoist Celeste picks up a bamboo chopstick in his fingers, blows on it and casts it in the air. The chopstick whizzes through a mountain like an arrow and hits Steel Augur exactly on his temple.)

One glass. Two glasses. Three glasses. Four glasses.

I put down my pen. It's still raining outside. Like glass rods piercing the concrete. I wish I could somehow see that distant smile through the veil of crystal rain. Thousands of horses gallop on the ridge of a building facing onto the street. The north wind yawns.

Two circles. One is a pale purple 36. The other is a dark green 22.

The feelings mix in my wine glass. The shapes of the numbers make small talks. The autumn sun gives a crazy laugh. 36 turns into 44.

Sometimes above is below. Sometimes below is above. Viewing from the top or the bottom is all the same. Add one circle is to another circle. Of course that doesn't make two separate circles.

36 is not at all equal to 36. The one above has two circles. The one below only has one.

Autumn strolls around the contours of 8. The sun likes the day. The moon also likes the day. But the night is never lonely. Whoever lies on the bed of memory because someone is good at toying with pretence.

In the days when I danced with number 8, I have not cut my wisdom teeth. Misery is happiness. It will all fade away.

The autumn wind has come late. Beads of sweat.

I must declare war on myself in the hope of conquering the fears in my heart. In the depths of my soul, it is raining.

(Poets are busy debating tradition. Actually, the answer is obvious.)

(Take The Story of the Stone as an example.)

(Stone is the greatest work of classical Chinese literature. There is no question about it.)

(In the eyes of today's people, Stone is a traditional work.)

(But what was the situation at that time? What were the style and tradition of novel writing two hundred years ago? If Cao Xueqin had intended to stick to the way people wrote, he would never have written such a brilliant novel as *Stone*.)

(If Cao Xueqin had stuck to traditional ways of writing, Liu Quanfu would never have written in his postscript six years after acquiring the Jiaxu manuscript: *Stone* does not just break fresh ground as a novel, it is another way of writing all together...)

(But in the eyes of today's people, *Stone* is a traditional work.)

(If Cao Xueqin had stuck to traditional ways of writing, *Stone* would not have been distorted by Liang Gongchen and his ilk.)

(But in the eyes of today's people, *Stone* is a traditional work.)

(Why don't we listen to Cao Xueqin's own soliloquy: 'Come, your reverence, must you be so obtuse? All the romances ever written have and artificial period setting — Han or Tang for the most part. In refusing to make use of that stale of convention and telling my *Story of the Stone* exactly as it occurred, it seems to me that, far depriving it of anything, I have given it a freshness these other books do not have...')

(Cao Xueqin was against traditional ways of writing. There is no question about it.)

(He was not satisfied with 'those dreary stereotypes with their volume after volume all pitched on the same note and their different characters undistinguishable...')

(T.S. Eliot once said, 'Yet if the only form of tradition, of handing down, consisted in following the ways of the immediate generation before us in a blind or timid adherence to its successes, "tradition" should positively be discouraged.

(So... when Rousseau was writing his *Confessions*, Cao Xueqin was already employing realism in *Stone*. That was after thirty years before Goethe finished *Faust*. Forty years before Jane Austen's *Pride and Prejudice* was published. Eighty years before Gogol's *Dead Souls*. A hundred years before Turgenev's *Father and Sons* and Dostoyevsky's *Crime and Punishment*. A

hundred and ten years before Tolstoy's War and Peace... Forget it! Why am I bothering with all of this? Why not just drink?)

One glass. Two glasses. Three glasses.

I finish the first glass. Someone knocks on the door. It's the landlady. She's asking me when I am going to pay the rent.

I finish the second glass. Someone knocks on the door. It's the errand boy from the newspaper. He's asking me why I haven't sent the next installment..

I finish the third glass. Someone knocks on the door. It's a fat flabby middle-aged woman. She asks me why I took the apple her son has taken a bite out of, when I came home this morning.

(Cao Xueqin was a drunkard too. It was an arduous time. He and Dun Cheng were meeting at the Pagoda Tree Garden. It was a biting cold day. Dun Cheng unfastened his sword and exchanged it for wine. The two of them had a good drink. In Red Ink Stone's notes, Cao Xueqin died on the Eve of 1763. Is it possible that Cao Xueqin had a heart condition, that he drowned his sorrow in drink and died of a sudden heart attack?)

(Drink is not a good thing. I should give it up...probably.)

By Liu Yi-Chang
translated, from the Chinese, by Charlotte Yiu

Charlotte Yiu just finished her Bachelor of Arts and Master of Arts at the Chinese University of Hong Kong, majoring in translation. She is currently translating the novel, *The Drunkard* by Liu Yi-Chang into English. The book will be published in August 2014.

Liu Yi-Chang (1918-) is a writer from Hong Kong, famous for his stream of consciousness novellas.

Desert Island

The children of today
When they are between fifteen and twenty
Are sad and quiet
Afraid of of vicious old men
They get bored in cafés
And nothing makes an effect on them
And when you speak softly to them
At first they are still afraid
And after, little by little they open up
And they dare reply to you
The young men they say
There are no jobs
We cannot accept
To work for our food
And then there will be war
And we are sick of waiting
The trees are green with tender eyes
The sun is out, and in fifty years
We will have skin so thick
That it will not be crossed again
And to what end, to what end
We will have become old or crippled
And will no longer gain from it
And the women
They will not love the men
A man can hurt them
Can buy them, leave them, can have his child with them
We must work, they are so pretty
We will sink ourselves
The unattractive women don't have any problems
Or at least their problems are resolved
They think of other things: those that pass by
They are waiting for their bus
How would you live with
People that are interested in their bus
It doesn't stand to reason
And so, brothers? Shall we go
Live on a desert island?
There is no desert island
But one can always hope

Without engaging one's engagement
That we will build one
That, then, that makes it all easier
But the desert island takes on water
For after we are no longer making it
Just like for the three violent old men
The secret is lost to us.

By Boris Vian
translated, from the French, by Claudio Sansone

Claudio Sansone is a Foundation Scholar in English Studies at Trinity College Dublin. He has published a number of poems, academic articles, and a short story. He is currently the editor of *Icarus* (Ireland's oldest creative writing publication) and the *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*. He will be starting his PhD research in the U.S. in the coming academic year.

Boris Vian (1920-1959) was a French writer, engineer, and musician who was an extremely importance influence within the French jazz scene.

Fins

The Siren is a beast, usually blonde
That chooses a corner for herself in a much-frequented sea
And spreads herself upon a great rock
On the lookout for hardy sailors
With intentions that are beyond nautical.
The siren yells like a polecat
Apparently, to reel in the men
But in reality, with the end of also proving
That she is not really a fish.
In spite of this inferiority complex
She never hesitates to make advances on fat, hairy captains
But the Siren is not vain
For following Monsieur Dufrenne
She knows that sailors face (inevitably) awful deaths.

By Boris Vian
translated, from the French, by Claudio Sansone

Claudio Sansone is a Foundation Scholar in English Studies at Trinity College Dublin. He has published a number of poems, academic articles, and a short story. He is currently the editor of *Icarus* (Ireland's oldest creative writing publication) and the *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*. He will be starting his PhD research in the U.S. in the coming academic year.

Boris Vian (1920-1959) was a French writer, engineer, and musician who was an extremely importance influence within the French jazz scene.

In Order to Live I Do Not Need

In order to live I do not need
islands, palaces, towers.
What a great joy it is:
to live among pronouns!
Take off the costumes, already,
the gestures, the portraits;
I don't want you so,
unmasked by others,
always someone else's daughter.
I want you pure, free,
irreducible: you.
I know that when I will call to you
among all the people
of the world,
only you will be you.
And when you ask me
who it is that is calling you,
who wants you for his own,
I will bury the titles,
the labels, the history.
I will go breaking all
that which they threw onto me
since before I was born.
And already turned to the eternal
anonymity of the nude,
of stone, of the world,
I will say to you:
"I love you, it is me."

By Pedro Salinas
translated, from the Spanish, by Claudio Sansone

Claudio Sansone is a Foundation Scholar in English Studies at Trinity College Dublin. He has published a number of poems, academic articles, and a short story. He is currently the editor of *Icarus* (Ireland's oldest creative writing publication) and the *Trinity Journal of Literary Translation*. He will be starting his PhD research in the U.S. in the coming academic year.

Pedro Salinas y Serrano (1891-1951) was a Spanish poet, a member of the Generation '27.

In an African City

I.

In an African city,
 In Cartagena where I live,
In the small and narrow street,
 So narrow you can barely believe it;
I can reach with my hand the balcony
 Of the neighbors across the street.
There, the lovely daughter sits
 Blossoming with youth,
So rich, powerful and fiery.
 Now the Mother loosens her braid
Of the long, coal black hair;
 It reaches down to her feet.
Her shoulders are like the antique,
 And her eyes like lightning bolts;
It is almost not possible
 To endure this sight.
From Africa the air burns
 And my blood contains fire; -
Now I will extinguish the lamp
 And every word with it.

II.

With castanets they dance,
 their only music;
They gaze at each other in the eye,
 It is an intoxicating drink.
They whirl about as if Maenads,

everything gracefully adept;
O what infinite beauty
is there in the human race!
Both flowers: one a carnation, the other a garnet!
In the dance they live and grow.
You two, who became the chosen subjects of art,
are overcome in this dance.

III.

How the heaven shines with stars! Each one I know;
Friends from home, how they sparkle here!
They send a breeze, so fresh and so mild,
A cool drink in the midst of burning fire,
A puff of wind over the glowing sand,
Seems like a kiss from the Danish land!

IV.

How my thoughts fly to tomorrow!
Eternal life is uncertain;
My body will become a sunken wreck,
But a drop in Eternity's fount,
My life is on earth! A blink and it's over!
My thoughts have fought a battle so great,
In it Our Lord was present.
- My childhood's sacred "Lord's Prayer"
Be now my resting comfort.
I close my eyes to eternal rest,
And to clarity in God and faith.

By Hans Christian Andersen
translated, from the Danish, by Arendse Lund

Arendse Lund is a writer and translator. Her current endeavor is to translate Hans Christian Anderson's lesser-known works and make his poetry accessible to an English-speaking audience.

Hans Christian Andersen (1805 – 1875) was a Danish author best remembered for his fairy tales, though he also wrote novels, plays, travelogues, and poems.

There Were Two Sleepless Nights

There were two sleepless nights
that carried the sound of imaginary footsteps
little by little
I sat up in bed
I opened the door
I saw you
your hair was damp
the unripe flavor of tree leaves
are you my olive tree
or are you my pigeon
are you my
straw hat forgotten in Spain
or the unpronounceable name of Roman airport

Where were you grown, carrot
what flavor of coffee are you
are you the water in sugar?
Do you stay here
for the sake of moonlight underfoot
or for sunny cliffs

Here
Beijing has brightened
its alleyways
for me
are a freshly spread map

I seem to not have a reason
to feel depressed over you

Because you
are brighter than they
Your ordinary love
is brighter than all of them
and it hurts my eyes

There is nothing I can do to make you fade away
if you do not agree
I am unable to make you nod or shake your head
Like a naughty student put in the corner
I willingly
accept your damp kiss

By Wu Ang
translated, from the Chinese, by Leah House

Leah House is majoring in Asian Studies with a concentration on Chinese language at the University of Michigan. She also studies Spanish Literature.

Wu Ang is a female contemporary Chinese poet born in China's Fujian Province in 1974. She later attended Shanghai's prestigious Fudan University, and proceeded to attain a postgraduate degree in contemporary Chinese fiction at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Her writing is recognized by its simplicity in vocabulary which she says is because she feels complicated words take away from a poem's main ideas.

Honeymoon

One whole September
I was never without him
So much so I frequently turned my head to look around
for fear there was a shadow following me
Waves lapping on the island
schools of fish in the water
we gradually grew bored with looking
sunrises and sunsets were nothing unnatural
the restaurant's owner treats us
like his long lost friends
each time pretending so
must be difficult for him

I say: Noodles
He says: Rice
there's also a shared bowl of soup
during this honeymoon we should treat each other as honored guests
so I ladle him some soup
he also ladles me some

In the forest is a peculiar bird
That at midnight starts to trill
I think: That's another day over with
What is he thinking
I don't know

Endless honeymoon
that bird still sings in the forest

it thinks nobody knows
but I'm in the forest listening closely
I don't dare turn my head to look around
for fear that behind me
he has replaced my shadow

By Wu Ang
translated, from the Chinese, by Leah House

Leah House is majoring in Asian Studies with a concentration on Chinese language at the University of Michigan. She also studies Spanish Literature.

Wu Ang is a female contemporary Chinese poet born in China's Fujian Province in 1974. She later attended Shanghai's prestigious Fudan University, and proceeded to attain a postgraduate degree in contemporary Chinese fiction at the Chinese Academy of Social Sciences. Her writing is recognized by its simplicity in vocabulary which she says is because she feels complicated words take away from a poem's main ideas.

In a tomb I build my house, and in the dark

I.

In a tomb I build my house, and in the dark
I make my bed; I have made a pact
with my eyes, “The eyes of those who see me
will see me no more: your eyes
will be on me, and I
will cease to be.”

(To See)

The promise is usually
to condemn. Worship, fallen to the earth,
about my ripped cloak, shorn and naked
as I left my mother’s womb cloaked in blood
and crying; as I return
stumbling over the dark, groping
at midday.

Percussion of air, a stowaway
arrives – the guide
does not remember the morning
in which he found Tiresias abandoned
on the road – until the Soul
in the hearing.

Closed, from birth,
First Door
of comprehension, ache and light.

The vague sound articulated
without matter, existing
in the middle of time, enters

into the potency of the soul
that holds the past, this clear part
of the intelligible world, one
of the two unequal sections;
Your home and your echoes
for the rumor that is echo,
in each of the tempest's breaths,
in each breathe of mine, your water
always changes, the river
remains.

It only persists in memory or on paper, persists
like the souls of my dead ones within my soul,
and that is enough.

II.

Scar of embers surrounding
these basins,
where the saliva in your hand does not encounter
tears, is the spare word
caressing.

O sancta simplicitas: John in flames,
bring logs back to my pyre;
because now I see the men, I see them like trees,
but they walk.

More sticks, more fire, more
light for these eyes.

Bring the hand once again
to the face of this stranger, Vexed
with God, again and again. Who could
stop the voices? Who would want
to stop them? Paroxysm of sound,
anxious, eager for spells, speeches,
words, more.

Man of Hus,
bring wood back to my pyre;
don't bring weeds, which burn so quickly and smoke,
go and come back again, go once more,
because I see bodies, they look like tombs,
but they walk.

More sticks, more fire, more.

The demons form flames, tongues
of fire, tearing my skin with words
and the meat does not want cover any longer.

He who inflicts the wound is
he who tends to it; sore

from the sole of the foot
to the crown of my head, and a fang
to scratch (out) the scab, which is renewed. The air
sings of the flesh, the blood cools and I cannot
avoid the sticky ashes. I walk
without cease around the landfill.

(I don't need a mirror to see
the prosecutor among my embers
of purging, and hear his voice
like an echo)

To stumble while roaming under
the seizure threshold, sweating,
and in the reflection of a column
polished by the mouths of pilgrims, I see
the one addicted to light.

By Juan Soros
translated, from the Spanish, by Ming Holden

Ming Holden is an international development worker and writer whose first book, a nonfiction work about a theater group she founded in Nairobi for refugee women called *The Survival Girls*, came out in 2013.

Juan Soros (1975-) is an industrial engineer and a Ph.D. candidate in Hispanic American literature at the Universidad Complutense in Madrid. He has published the poetry volumes *Tanatorio* (2002), *Cineraria* (2005), and *Tarsis* (2010). He is the director of the Transatlántica/Portbou poetry collection.

I am twenty-three years old

1.

I am twenty-three years old
but today I played in the sea
like I was ten, eleven
at best.

I blasted through the waves until I reached the shore
and then I went back in
leaping over the foam.

More than once I stumbled
upon some pits of sand
that stretched out underwater.

The sea here is tepid
and if I was completely underwater I could escape
the wind from the coast.

Dad stayed on the shore
without taking off his shirt,
with his black glasses on.

He was standing with his legs apart
at the width of his shoulders
and his hands together behind his back,
on his belt.

Every so often he would move his arms
to give me signals that I come up.

The sea was rough, and when I wasn't trying,
the current, very slowly,
carried me out.

2.

Two kids hide
underneath the waves
from their dad's sight.
One is a teenager, and the other is
less than twelve years old.
When the sea foam retreats
they barely lift their heads
to breathe and see the man
getting anxious on the beach.
From his lounge chair, blocking the sun
with the palm of his hand,
he tries to see them
on the horizon.
I did it too,
one summer in Pinamar
before I started junior high.
Dad got upset and I was grounded
for the three days we had left of our vacation,
stuck in an apartment
that didn't have A.C.
My parents and the girls would get in at noon
to eat on the balcony.
We would all have lunch together, and they
would go back to the beach.
On my headphones the noise of the water
gets tangled up with a song by the Beatles,
but I can't remember the name.
McCartney's soft voice tells someone to please
step inside his house.
Now the guy comes running into the water,

darting around the people on the shore.
The two kids laugh
just on the other side
of where the waves break.

3.

It's winter, and although it's hot
it gets dark early.
Today at four o'clock in the afternoon the sun
had already quit shining on the coast.
The only person left in the sea was a surfer girl
sitting on her board.
She had her legs in the water
up to her knees.
Her blond hair slicked back, damp,
looked like it was glued
to her wetsuit.

4.

At night we go out for a walk
along the coastal highway.
It's hot, and on the beach side
there's not even any breeze.
The stones on the ground are white, and they're decorated
by circles in colored paving stones.
They're on vacation here,
And the pedestrian area fills with people
all the way to the part with the restaurants.
There are also artisans and painters
that sell their prints on the street.
On the sea they always sketch

little wooden boats
but so far while I've been here
I haven't seen a single one.
Other people sell tours
to go and see the sand dunes
or go swimming with the dolphins.
In among the electric wires in the sky
bats flutter.
"It's because of the heat,"
Dad says.
"I never saw so many of them
as that time in Seville,"
Mom says.
I walk faster
without looking up,
and my sister asks further on
what the price is of a bracelet.

5.
While we wait for a flight
that's been delayed to land
the Argentines start to gather
in front of Gate Eight.
Behind me, a man notes
with astonishment
that he saw costing eighty pesos
the wine that he buys in Buenos Aires
for thirty-five per bottle.

6.
We came thousands of kilometers

to get away from the cold.
And we did it. What do we take away from this?
We have sunburns
and highlights in our hair.
I packed two kilos of cashews
covered in caramel.
We can still
look each other in the eye.
Talking over dinner I expounded heatedly
upon an idea for a doctoral dissertation
that I am never going to write.
Mom was listening to me attentively and Dad
asked several questions when I got done.
The plane that brought us back
passed through a large area of turbulence.
Outside it was dark, and out the window
you couldn't see anything but the intermittent light
of one of the wings.
Next to me a guy started reading
the safety precautions that the airline provides.
My little sister muttered, glancing at him out of the corner of her eye,
what an idiot.

By Lucas Mertehikian
translated, from the Spanish, by Jennifer Croft

Jennifer Croft is a translator, writer, and literary critic. She is a Founding Editor of the *Buenos Aires Review*.

Lucas Mertehikian is a poet, translator, and editor from Buenos Aires, Argentina. He is Associate Editor of the *Buenos Aires Review* and Managing Editor of *Dakota Press*.

Credits

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.

Editor in Chief

Jose Antonio Villarán, MFA Candidate

Editorial Staff

Bella Brody
Monica (Yimeng) Gend
Adrianna Wu
Jacob Valadez
Tipkretar Aimly Sirisarnsombat
Mika Kennedy

Faculty Directors

Amelia Glaser (**Literature**)
Roger Levy (**Linguistics**)

Faculty Advisory Board

Gabriella Caballero
Larissa Heinrich
Jin Lee
Cristina Rivera-Garza
Pasquale Verdicchio