

ERATO'S ARCHIVE: EDITION - REBIRTH

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Dear Reader,

2024/2025 saw a big reworking of Erato's Magazine. From a new emphasis on visual works, a new logo and presentation format, as well as a shift away from its own Website to being hosted on the Euphorion Site in the form of Pdf files, we unfortunately have had to leave behind the old site and style.

In an effort to preserve what has already been created, this Pdf is a unstylized compilation of the Spring 2024 Edition of Erato's Magazine, "Rebirth".

We hope you enjoy this Archived version of the old Edition and can draw inspiration for your own works and pieces!

All the best,
Chloe

Commissar of Internal Affairs, Board XVI

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TRAVEL DIARIES LISBON

13. of April

Majka Hakkers

Saturday 13. april 2024 - Majka Hakkers

It is Saturday, the day of the flea- and food market. I started it like all the rest of my Lisbon-mornings: with a big lack of sleep, after a great last night. My system however, decided to wake up at 8 o'clock, while I really had the plan of sleeping at least until 9. Well, because of my involuntarily early morning-rising, I didn't really see myself going to two markets. Let's clarify, in combination with a city walk full of steps, mostly up-hill, where you could easily reach your 12,000 step-goal.

So, I tried to do some aesthetic main-character writing in my diary, on my not-so-aesthetic upper bunk bed. As you are probably thinking right now, I also realised after some 30 minutes that it wasn't really aesthetic nor the vibe, nor comfortable, at all. And so, did the entire up-hill-step-climbing city-walk anyway. It really was fun though and very sunny.

A food market was on the afternoon-program that day and I was on my way. On my city-climb, I took the opportunity to enjoy a real fresh-made coffee, that I got at Coffee Company – not very local of me. Portugal is cheap, but even here the coffee was overpriced, and you might wonder how 'real' the coffee actually was. But still, it was a refreshment after the breakfast-buffet-coffee in the hostel I drank the past mornings. That was suspiciously a little bit too see-through-brownish.

I installed myself on a bench in the park near the food market to wait for the group, where I did an attempt to read. The lovely greenery and trees made me feel instantly at home and I could only smile and enjoy my view. But for the people that know Jill Mansell (yes, I'm a little bit disappointed in myself for it too sometimes), you don't really have to concentrate very well to follow the story. Nor will you miss any intentional, well-thought-off poetic literacy if you skip a line. And so, I wasn't concentrated at all. I think a strange old lady noticed my mind wandering face as well, because she came up to me and started randomly speaking to me in what I believed to be Portuguese. Normally, I enjoy a conversation with a stranger and somehow have them quite a lot, but this lady didn't look or sound very happy. As she probably saw my surprised face (not only because of the language I didn't understand anything of), she switched to French and asked if I was a tourist or if I lived in Lisbon (flattered). Although I have some French in my language reservoir, it's been a while. I assumed she had some more things to say, looking at me very intrusively with big eyes. Thus, I asked her if she perhaps could speak English. She answered a bit passive-aggressively that "you have more to French here than to English". With her big intrusive eyes. I took this meeting as my sign to go, and joined the others at the food market. There, I enjoyed a nice nutritious green-salad bowl. In the meantime I also scored different sorts of fancy unknown teas to bring home with me.

On the way back we enjoyed some more park greenery and city walking in the lovely warm, sunny air. And not to forget, I found a great inspiring quote by fate while opening a book at a random page when we spontaneously walked into a bookstore. Sharing life's wisdom, I of course can't keep this only to myself:

“I go boo
Make them shoo
I make fun
Way they run
I won't cry
So they fly
I just smile
They go wild
LIFE DOESN'T
FRIGHTEN ME
AT ALL.”

- The mystery bookpage by fate of Lisbon

And while I was walking, I let this quote sink in - enjoying the sun, the warm and soft air, the lovely architecture, the little streets, the colours, and even the steps, but mostly the company - I prepared myself for the same late night and early morning. Gotta keep the routine going.

I couldn't wait.

14. of April

Ruben van Vessem

Sunday 14. of April 2024

Dear Diary,

This is going to be a classic diary entry where I reminisce about my favourite day of self-indulgence: birthdays. Today I turned 20 years old, and once again: it was not at home. This time I celebrated in the lovely sunny city of Lisbon.

The weather forecast granted me a summery twenty-eight degrees Celsius. As you might know, I have experienced a myriad of weather phenomena on my birthday, usually somewhere in between disappointingly rainy and miserably cold. Thankfully, Portugal threw me a very welcome surprise! I must confess that this beautiful weather made it hard for such a sun-princess like me to visit a museum. Can you imagine looking at beautiful art in a well-conditioned room? No, I prefer risking severe sunburns.

So, after sleeping in for an acceptable number of hours, I skipped breakfast at the hostel to get something at the café up in Jardim do Príncipe Real (very fancy). Afterwards we bolted back down to the hostel and fixed ourselves a ride to the beach (also, quite fancy). I have heard a lot about Costa da Caparica, and so have you, I presume. Never had I seen such a beach – an endless sandy coastline, broken up by breakwaters and a surfing school here and there. At the sight of the enormous Atlantic waves that greeted us, I immediately understood their vitality. Swimming was impossible, but jumping the waves was a very exciting workout for both me, my travel companions, and the dead fish bobbing on the water's surface beside us. RIP.

But, we did not go to the beach for a workout. What does a real human do on their date of birth? Get wasted, of course. (I did not mention that before taking the taxi to the beach, we went to Aldi to get an assortment of liquid bread and adult grape juice). The getting wasted part is one of my great skills – something I could add to my LinkedIn if I were to apply for the job of beach.

However, days like these cannot last forever, and in the evening when the glorious sun left the sky, we returned to the city and ended our evening with a great dinner at a Swiss restaurant. Never had I thought Swiss food could be this stellar! And oh, I should not forget to mention the stellar cocktails we had in the street named after me!

Oh well, at the end of such a cunty day, you must give the attention back to the rest of the world, enjoy your surroundings and spend time with good friends. Thank you very much for listening my dearest diary, and thanks everyone for the great gifts I have received and many lovely congratulations.

Lots of love from Lisbon,

Ruben

14. of April, Oceanário de Lisboa

Erika Frieswijk

Sunday 14. of April 2024, Oceanário de Lisboa

So, I really wanted to go to the aquarium. Excuse me, oceanarium. Oceanarium sounds way fancier than aquarium. Anyways, three other people wanted to come with me: Sebastiaan, who is a holy moly mola mola sunfish superfan; Anastasia, whose enthusiasm for the sea is unmatched, and essentially turned into a sea otter when we went swimming earlier during the trip; and Elze, who just didn't care about what she was going to do that day. That is everything you need to know about the people going to the aquarium. Excuse me, oceanarium. Can I say aquarium? The Oxford dictionary defines oceanarium as "Oceanarium, noun, ˌɒʃəˈneəriəm: an extremely large container in which fish and other sea creatures are kept to be seen by the public or to be studied by scientists." But aquarium is defined as "Aquarium, noun, əˈkwɛəriəm: a large glass container in which fish and other water creatures and plants are kept." Since a sea creature is also a water creature but a water creature is not necessarily a sea creature, I think I am right in writing 'aquarium'. Wow, it suddenly feels like five million liters of water are lifted off my shoulders, now that we have concluded this critical point.

So, the four of us went to the aquarium. And it was great. Right when we walked in, we saw the biggest tank, filled with fish, rays, sharks, the SUNFISH and, most importantly, water. This huge, cylinder shaped tank contained approximately five million liters of water. Before going to the aquarium, Sebastiaan had told us all sorts of things about the sunfish: their scientific name is 'mola mola' and, in Dutch, 'maanvis.' They have a strange look, because they have fins on top and underneath, while having a vertical, flat body. They sort of look like the moon. They are not very well adjusted to swimming, so they rather drift in the ocean currents. Sunfish are also rare (hmm, I wonder why)... Another fun fact: they swim to the surface to bathe in the sun. All very interesting, and kid you not: exactly what was written on the sign next to their tank. The aquarium only added that the moonfish sunbathes to regulate its body temperature. So even Sebastiaan learned something new!

Side point: when I looked up the Wikipedia page of the aquarium, it turned out it also had barracudas! I totally did not recognize them. Barracudas are ten times scarier than sharks. I have seen people pet sharks on Youtube. Do NOT pet a barracuda. They are really aggressive and attack everything that moves. Wait, why are they in a tank full of fish, then?

Let's ask chat GPT: "Barracudas are indeed known for their aggressive behavior and are skilled predators, but they can coexist with other fish in a large tank if properly managed. In aquarium settings, careful consideration is given to tank mates, habitat design, and feeding schedules to minimize potential conflicts. Additionally, the barracudas in aquariums are often well-fed and accustomed to their environment, which can help reduce aggressive behavior."

Well, after seeing the sunfish, the trip had already been successful, but we were only five minutes into it. We looked further. The main tank was placed in the middle of the aquarium. We walked around it while seeing other small tanks with fish that cannot go in the biggest tank. These specially treated fish were, for example, sea dragons, pufferfish, starfish, beautiful jellyfish who seemed to light up in the dark water, and Marlin and Dory, still swimming,

with Nemo all grown up. They also had penguins (cute) and sea otters. The sea otters were hard to spot, but Anastasia and I were lucky: one otter swam straight to our window and turned right in front of us, before it went to the surface to splash around. At that moment the otter must have stolen Anastasia's heart: she says the otters are her favorite. Sebastiaan likes all the weird fish. I think he sees himself in them. The jellyfish are Elze's favorite and mine are the penguins (cute) and the rays, because of their way of swimming. They glide so gracefully through the water. We ended our time in the aquarium with, out of the blue, a serene underwater forest. I never knew it could be so green underwater!

15. of April

Sebastiaan Wortelboer

Monday 15. of April 2024

I had volunteered to write for the 15th, the day we would visit Sintra. Sintra Old Town is beautiful, a host to hundreds-of-years-old Moorish ruins. However, on the actual day itself, I felt unwell, and was unable to join the trip. Therefore, I've written a poem on the perspective of one left behind; left behind by both circumstance and time itself.

They showed me pictures of the stone
Of burnt but smiling faces
I've looked at pictures on my own
Felt parts, felt minor traces
But still, it's hard to reconcile
The image in my head
Of ancient stone and modern smile
With memory of hostel bed
I wonder though, if what I sought
Could ever have been found
If pictures taken, trinkets bought
Could resurrect the history
And show me those who used to be
Could touch my hand, speak to me
Could let me touch the past
Give me something that will last
I doubt it, I admit
The memories, I'm sure, would be
The highlight of the trip
For now, they're all just maybe
What would have been, had I not skipped
Like ancient stone untouched
Or picture never taken
What would have been, had I not skipped

16. of April, Trying Korean BBQ

Erika Frieswijk

Tuesday 16. of April 2024, Trying Korean BBQ

This is our last day in Lisbon. On this last day, you can clearly see a divide between two groups: the first group runs away in a panic, trying to finish their travel list. The second group is tired, fears the upcoming travel day, and says: "let's take it easy, isn't that too much for the last day?". Naturally, I'm the kind of person that fits into the first group. This past week however, I had rooted myself in the second group. You can hear it in our name: 'let's go to the beach beach brunch bitches.' But today, I am tired. Maybe an idle last day wasn't such a bad idea?

Not until 10:30 did we start our walk to the harbor, where we were going to have a long, delicious lunch. We picked a great place with a sea of choices. I had granola with yogurt and fruit, because the fruit (and vegetables) are so flavorful here. Others picked pancakes with strawberries and whipped cream, avocado on toast or poached eggs. Two hours later, when our bellies were filled we decided to walk along the promenade to the LX factory, which was some sort of mix between a good old market and a modern mall. We came across an artist who blew enormous soap bubbles. The image of pastel colored soap bubbles, flying in the bright sun in front of famous Lisbon buildings, felt like it belonged on a postcard. It matched perfectly with the artstyle of the city drawings sold on the streets. It's all so colorful: a rose building here, a yellow tram there, some trees and flowers accompanying the street tiles. And another fun fact about Portuguese cities is that you find a guitarist on every corner. Some play hit songs we know, and others play something that sounds more like authentic local music. During our walk along the seaside, we came past several stalls selling watermelon and pineapple drinks in hollowed out versions of the fruits. All of this created such a nice vibe.

In the afternoon, Anastasia and I impulsively decided to wrap up some sightseeing goals. It turned into a busy day after all. We wanted to take the tram in the direction of the Belem tower, but it didn't show up. So instead we took the bus. Halfway to our destination, the driver started yelling something, and the packed bus suddenly emptied. Anastasia and I looked at each other.

"Shall we get off as well?"

"Yeah, just to be sure." The cause of this became clear after 5 minutes of walking. Apparently, the house of the president was on our route and he was having a meeting with other people about 'the situation in Iran.' It's about time, I thought, being on vacation and not at all knowing that Iran attacked Israel with drones and rockets. They are at war now. The misery of the world doesn't get a break. Why do I find the fact that the Belem tower has a swimming pool, while being a tower built in the sea just as interesting? If I had to pick a Lisbon building to live in, I would pick that tower. When we walked on, we again saw a guard just like the one we were standing in front of at the president's building. I wondered why he was guarding a children's swimming pool. Well, it turned out to be the Monumento Combatentes do Ultramar. A monument for Portuguese soldiers who died in a war from 1961-1974 with Portugal's African colonies.

All that misery makes one hungry. For dinner, we planned to eat Korean BBQ with the 'beach beach brunch bitches' group. One member, Emmy,

had tried it before and knew exactly what to order. I prefer vegetarian food so I got a bowl of my own. A really, really hot bowl. I had to keep stirring the food otherwise it would burn, that's how hot it was. Let me tell you, I cannot remember the last time I used a gourmet or pizzarette without burning myself. A warning from the waitress, even though taken to heart, is not going to save me. Not if I have to eat with sticks. Experience is worth its weight in plasters. I've become sensible enough to give up after burning myself once. A spoon is what I grabbed. But truly, none of that matters. The food tasted really good. So good, the group went lyrical about it. You should try it as well. It's fun. And you don't even have to lift a finger, they have spoons ready on the table.

17. of April, The Journey Back

Erika Frieswijk

Wednesday 17. of April 2024, The Journey Back

The journey back always seems to go faster than the journey there. The night before, we had already packed our suitcase and checked whether it could be closed. I had bought lots of souvenirs, a highlight being a Portuguese tile with the image of a pirate ship. Around me I saw similar struggles: we each must have had at least a kilo and a half more luggage than when we had arrived with. Thankfully they aren't too precise with weighing luggage at the airport, or this trip might have had an expensive ending. Next time, I will plan extra space for souvenirs in my luggage. I always try to bring something back for my family, even if it's just a two euro magnet (and most times it is). As a little girl, I was always so eager to investigate the gift my dad got me when he came back home from a far away place. As long as I keep getting my family gifts, they sure won't forget about me when they travel somewhere fun, right?

With all of the souvenirs and memories in my luggage and in my mind, in the sky I had to execute a personal mission of mine: watching an episode of *Air Crash Investigation* on a plane. I had downloaded an episode about Portugal. S21 E5: it was even about a flight from KLM, from the Netherlands to Portugal. The flight crashed during the landing in Faro, and 56 people died. It was storming and the air traffic controller had mistakenly given the conditions of a different runway, with wind 28 km/h less strong than the actual runway. Had the pilots known that, they wouldn't have proceeded. The plane was hit by three microbursts right before the landing. The first microbursts were headwinds which thrust the airplane in the air, so the pilots reduced the thrust of the engines. They wanted to hit the ground a bit harder than normally to avoid hydroplaning on the wet runway. Unfortunately, right after the first microbursts came a tailwind. This downdraft pushed the plane into the ground, like a Pastel de Nata being crushed by the hand of Zeus.

I still felt safe on our plane. What they often say on *Air Crash Investigation*: an accident is always caused by multiple mistakes in a row, never just one mistake. So I made myself comfortable, and enjoyed the turbulence. The episode ended with the captain saying: "Never let your guard down. You can be having a beautiful, wonderful flight, and in the blink of an eye, things can change." With that echoing in my mind, I tried to catch a little bit of sleep before the landing. And so we crashed.

Just kidding, of course we didn't. I awoke to the captain's voice on the intercom. He was warning us about rain in the Netherlands. Despite the wet runway, we all landed safely and got back to our mommies and daddies, to whom we now tell beautiful stories about the sunny Lisbon and write in our travel diary, while we stare out of our rainy window, thinking we never should have stepped back on the plane.

SHORT STORIES

A Sky Full of Wishes

by Berke Yazan

Following her late mother's footsteps, Alicia was the witch of her village, and she was trying her best. At the age of 43, she was the permanent substitute teacher on subjects from alchemy to history to nature - essentially, everything. She also had an animated skeleton cat, Hiccups, who we'll get back to.

She lived on an interesting planet. Every half-century, her planet's orbit aligned with a diamond asteroid belt. Each time missing it by a slight margin. But each time luring away some diamonds into its gravitational field. On their slow atmospheric descent, these fragments created a breathtaking meteor shower. This was one of the most mesmerising views in the entire cosmos. A shiny celestial clock that ticked every fifty years. Some called this two-in-a-lifetime event 'the Cascade'; some 'Tears of Gods'. Universities had the boring name 'Astro Debris Mineral Entry Event'. Whatever the name was, one thing was certain: those diamonds were the most valuable thing in the world.

It was straightforward, diamonds provided wishes. The more you had, the bigger the wishes got. A single diamond might grant you a farm, while a handful could supply an entire army. However, like everything in the universe, this had an unforgiving balance. If you were to wish for something grander than your diamonds or knowledge, you still could have got your wish, but definitely with a curse alongside. Magicians and scientists looked for ways to dance with this balance, giving birth to wizardry, witchcraft, and physics. Alicia too had a small amount that she used for her magic.

Naturally, but ironically, such precious materials were distributed randomly. Depending on their entry, the diamond cluster could have dropped anywhere on the planet. Of course, everyone wanted some of it, but no one was willing to share. Inevitably, each Cascade resulted in a contrast of hope and greed across the lands, giving rise to wars, treasons and land disputes. Some saw this as a divine test to determine the mightiest empire, while some believed it was a way for the gods to pick their champions. A minority argued that the diamonds were plentiful enough for everyone. Yet, arguing for fairness was difficult with thousands of spears directed at your face. It was a complex web of politics, warfare and religion, which Alicia was teaching now.

'Good. Again. Which battle led to the fall of the Sophian Empire?' she prompted.

The class rhythmically affirmed their collective memory. 'The siege of Thalís.'

'Key commander at this battle?'

'Prince Thalin.' Voices echoed again.

She continued, 'What caused the city to fall?'

Peter stood abruptly, a spark of ambition in his eyes. Alicia liked him. 'I don't think it's ideal to give such simple answers to such complex events. First, we have to account for the-'

'Oh come on, shut the fuck up. Not again.' It was Anna. She was annoyed at his perfectionism. 'It's a class, not a debate club.' She asserted.

'I'm sorry Miss Alicia.' She turned to her with no visible guilt. 'The correct answer would be the naval blockade, betrayal of King James, and lack of lanterns.'

'Exactly.' Alicia affirmed with a nod while catching sight of the sundial. 'Okay, good. I think we are done for today.' She scanned the zoned-out faces. 'Any questions before we leave?'

Eyes unwillingly drifted to Peter. 'What if the Cascade lands on the sea?' He asked.

Anna rolled her eyes.

Alicia gave a proud nod, 'It's a rare event, but the universe likes surprises. There's a great story about Captain Blackparrot's treasure. It goes like this: There was this pirate emperor with the biggest di-

'Sorry again Miss Alicia.' Anna pragmatically interrupted. 'Will this be on the exam? Some of us need to prepare for the tournament.'

Alicia exhaled deeply, "No. But those who wish to hear the story are welcome to stay." The room emptied, leaving only Peter and Alicia behind.

Mom would have known how to keep them engaged, she mused on her way home. The excited rattle of Hiccups greeted her in their garden, sparking the memories of her first Cascade. She was with her mother in the garden that now marked her resting place. Not many understood why, but if children's hearts were in the right place, their small wishes would come true during the diamond fall. Fortunate homes would be blessed with wooden swords, dolls, and puppies. But she had a more childish wish in her mind. She raised her eyes to the surreal sky. The incandescent dance of the diamond rain illuminated it as if it created new colours along its trajectory, a display that defied reality. Under this silent symphony, against her mother's cautious advice on grand wishes, she wished her beloved cat to return. Her wish danced in the air for a while and disappeared. Hiccups, named after his, well, constant hiccups, indeed returned. But just as he was in death: as a skeleton. This was the curse. Still, over time, she grew accustomed to his bony presence and rattling hiccups, and they became an inseparable pair: the witch and her familiar.

Despite her role, the villagers seldom called Alicia a witch; to them, she was the teacher, the alchemist, the scientist. She even purchased a pointy hat and broomstick to fit the part. It didn't work. With her inappropriate jokes, uncontrollable giggles at serious events, and her passion for tap dancing, she couldn't maintain the aura of mystery. She aspired to be like her unattainably talented mother, Spring. People called her that because their small village had only three weathers before her: Annoying rain, chilling winds, and their combination. Her mother had transformed this tormented village into a corner from heaven. With her passing, the essence of spring vanished too. Since then, Alicia tried to fill her hat, learn her mother's magic, and relight that essence. But she was getting crushed by the bar she set.

Years passed with reading, experimenting, and teaching. Anna and Peter got married, obviously. Despite her outward display of annoyance, Anna got curiously drawn to Peter, secretly enjoying how his stupid little face lit up as he delved into macroeconomics or democracy or whatever he was rambling about. She always denied this when Peter asked. Together with Alicia, they founded a more structured academy of magic and science to preserve their wisdom.

The wheel of time turned until the next Cascade. But despite Alicia's best efforts, the secret of her mother's magic remained beyond reach. It had been exactly 50 years since she sat here with her mother and wished Hiccups to come back. It was the same garden, the same scene, and in a way, the same child while she sat near her grave. And again, she had a childish wish in her mind. The heavens above started to shimmer with a bewildering spectacle. For Alicia, it was like stepping into a fairy tale for the second time: once as a curious child, and again as a wise adult. It was as beautiful as she remembered. She watched the sky turn into a cosmic disco ball for the second time in her life. Millions waited in anticipation to see who would receive the dangerous gift.

Under the skylight she looked at the skeleton cat, then her mother's grave. Then she looked up, ready to wish. 'I want my mom to-' She hesitated, *return? come back? teach me her magic?* With a broken heart that yearned for approval, she finished her wish, 'be proud.'

The wish hung in the shiny sky and slowly dissolved. Nothing seemed to change. *At least I tried*, she shrugged disappointedly.

Then a voice pierced the silence.

'Dumbass.'

What?

'She's already *hic* proud of you.'

The unexpected and crude words caught her off guard, 'I'm an old lady, you can't speak to me like that,' she turned to the voice.

'I'm a *hic* dead cat, I can say whatever the fuck I want.' *Was she dreaming?*

'You are-' she tried to make sense.

'I am what?'

'Talking'

'I got my wish as well, you human-centric asshole.' Hiccups said, licking his skeleton paws.

'Oh-' she stuttered.

He can - she is -

'Okay but-' a deep breath, 'are we sure about the profanity?'

'Sorry, getting used to it.' He maintained eye contact. 'It's funny *hic*. I'm sure I'll get bored of it quickly.' He did not.

'As I said, Spring is already *hic* proud of you. You just have to – just believe in yourself, or something.' He lingered, 'Do – magic stuff.' *What?* 'Focus – on – things.' He stopped. 'I don't know, I'm not the wisdom cat. Just figure out your own thing. You are a much better witch than her at this point.'

'My own thing' Alicia repeated quietly. *My own thing.*

I'm not doing my own thing. She hadn't realized she had been walking someone else's path all along while trying to replicate her mother's journey. In doing so, she overlooked something: True magic, was the magic that was yours. She held onto her diamond pouch. A garden of possibilities blossomed within her. It was obvious now in hindsight. She was supposed to fill that garden with her own flowers, not with her mother's soil. It should have been Alicia's spring, painted with her dreams, vibrant with her laughter, filled with her soul. This was the most powerful kind of magic, a magic of one's own.

'That was actually great advice.' Alicia smiled.

'I know *hic* I am the wisdom cat.'

The sun rose, illuminating the greenest field the village had witnessed. The gentle rustling of the trees accompanied the birdsongs and the laughter. The academy maintained the spring after Alicia passed away. She taught them how. Nested inside this vibrant scene, Peter was deep into his lecture about the Cascade and its political implications. He was determined to teach it right.

Midway through his lecture, he was woken up from his flow by a curious voice:

'What if the Cascade lands on the sea?'

'Aah, interesting.' he excitedly turned to the voice.

'It's been on my mind for a while.' With her guilty smile, it was Anna.

Peter grinned back, *it's a rare event, but the universe likes surprises.* His thoughts echoed his amusement.

"So, there was this pirate emperor with the biggest di-"

De Lenteschoonmaak

by Dody Ventura

Een paar jaar geleden besloot mijn vader dat de kast in de badkamer opgeruimd moest worden. Hij is er aan begonnen zonder iemand dit te vertellen, waardoor de hele onderneming zinloos was- niemand wist waar alle potjes nu hoorden. Een echt systeem hebben we nooit in kunnen voeren met zijn allen. Ik besluit op deze zonnige middag zelf eindelijk alle oude, zure crèmes en gels weg te gooien; hoewel ik ze nooit opnieuw zal vullen, was en droog ik de flesjes zorgvuldig.

De haarproducten van mijn broer plaats ik helemaal links bovenin, het minst bereikbaar. Zijn miserabele tienerjaren staan er op volgorde van producten en ik weet best dat hij ze nooit meer gaat gebruiken, maar ik durf ze niet weg te doen. Ik pak er eentje en ruik nu naar hem.

Rechts staan nu de aftershaves van mijn vader. Ik hoop dat hij genoeg spullen heeft meegenomen. Misschien kan hij in zijn huis nu zelf een systeem bedenken zonder hysterische dochters, depressieve zoons en paniekerige vrouwen een systeem voor boze en moeilijke mannen.

Op de middelste plank zet ik de potten vaseline: wij delen toch allemaal dezelfde droge huid. Links ervan zet ik mijn moeders nagelproducten in een mooi schoon bakje. Op de onderste plank sorteert ik haar shampoos voor beschadigd haar (mijn liefdevol gebaar, de beste plek).

Wanneer alles netjes opgeruimd staat, zie ik dat maar twee van alle flessen in de badkamer van mij zijn. Ik zet ze in een nietszeggend hoekje, zodat niemand last van mij of mijn anti-roos shampoo heeft.

Vol trots zet ik een stap achteruit en kijk naar het resultaat van mijn middag, maar zie iets wat ik eerder niet zag. Ik heb helemaal geen flessen opgeruimd. Ik heb de tijd dat wij een geheel waren opgeruimd. Ik was vergeten internationale postzegels te kopen en ik was vergeten dat inmiddels bijna al onze toiletpullen ongebruikte souvenirs zijn.

Spring cleaning

A few years ago my father decided the bathroom cabinet needed to be cleaned out. He started the process without telling anyone, so the whole project was useless- nobody knew where all the jars were supposed to be now. We never achieved a real system together. I decide on this sunny afternoon to finally throw out all the old, sour moisturisers and gels myself. I carefully wash and dry the bottles even though I will never refill them.

I place my brother's hair products in the top left corner, the least accessible. His miserable teenage years are stored in the order of products and though I know very well he will never use them again, I don't dare to throw them out. I grab one and now I smell like him.

On the right side, I put my father's various aftershaves. I hope he took enough stuff with him. Maybe he can make up a system of his own in his house without hysterical daughters, depressed sons and panicky wives- a system for angry and difficult men.

On the middle shelf I put the jars of vaseline: we all share the same dry skin anyway. To their left I store my mother's nail products in a nice and clean container. On the bottom shelf I sort out her shampoos for damaged hair (my loving gesture, the best spot).

When everything is neatly organised, I see that only 2 out of all the bottles in the bathroom are my own. I put them in an unassuming corner, so that no one is bothered by me or my anti-dandruff shampoo.

Proudly I take a step back and look at the result of my afternoon, but I see something I did not see before. I did not clean any jars at all. I cleaned away the time we were whole. I had forgotten to buy international stamps and I had forgotten that by now almost all of our toiletries are unused souvenirs.

Incorrigible Scoundrels by the Sea: Jellyfish

by Dung Ly

Part three. Please explore the previous editions in which the previous parts were published.

Trigger warnings: obscenity, death, threats of suicide, violence, mockery of religion

280 meters in length; a beam 40 meters wide; a draft 13 meters deep: the submarine of tomorrow unloaded its cargo by a frontal screw mechanism. The screw would pull the containers in their frame out forward, which would be unloaded by the port's colourful machines and refractive longshoremen. The full stake-holding crew had returned to the boat this evening, the screw remaining open up until its departure as per tradition. Two of its members sat in front of it playing a game of liar's dice, beneath the indoor LED lights of its great pen.

"I don't think you have what it takes to become part of the core crew, Sati. Three two's."

Sitting with her back to her native land, Sati contemplated the lack of senior crewmembers willing to take time out of their duties for her final board interview. "Eh, what do you know?" She said with a crooked smile, "My *marketing* is a real addition; I qualified for my watch stations on time. I can recite *the Law* by heart *and* I got put on bread and water three times in three years by the bosun. Three three's."

"That would prove that you can stand the life, but can you stand *betraying* the land for *our thing*? Four two's."

"What is left to *betray*, as you put it? I took a bachelor literary studies I couldn't be bothered to complete, then ran from home to not marry instead. Four three's."

"Yet you save hard cash to retire as a citizen, rather than letting the Sailing Bank pay out your pensions. Which reminds me: we're poor as shit now because of the engine refit, so I just want to let you know we will take on less *contractors* for the voyages hereafter. Five two's."

"Investing in gold is just better, shut up- but, hear me out: I like your simple life and I want it *now*. The passport, job certainty, the premium menu with the vegan sausages Ulagan is always eating, *respect*- and the resumé to jump this stinking boat someday for another stinking boat but *with a pool*. Swear me in and *the Law* will be divine law to me: like the *Heavenly Liege* granting me fief in heaven or the *Ancestors of Water* or *what-have-you* recognising me as their earthly heir. I even swear off drinking to clear my *karma* and *reach enlightenment* like Good-Guy-Ulagan. Six three's. "

Sonar specialist Gadi didn't laugh. "But we might ask you to stand watch while we beat senseless, say- a niece of yours, protesting for say- the League to outlaw the admiralties. But that doesn't really quite catch what I am clarifying about *the Law*. I just don't think you get it. Show me the dice."

Gadi had a six, a five, a four, and two three's; Sati had four three's and a two. "See? Focus on the game! Next game to sponsor me- against one of my gold bars."

As Gadi handed over a fistful of paper money, he leaned in to whisper, checking whether anyone was watching from the cargo hold. "A limping man is coming over behind you. This is your ticket: say no to him. We are voting out the quartermaster now that she has gotten us the refit."

This "consul of the ship" was the elderly woman who had generously allowed Sati to bunk with her, five years since her first day. She was the first one Sati imagined to sponsor her, but more were needed and she knew Gadi had the *respected* bunkmates to see to this.

The stranger came up to them with a wild look in his eyes and Sati noticed how out of breath he was. She was more inclined to think he was here to argue with a crew member about an insult to his mom or something- perhaps hiding a gun in his jacket. So Sati kept her hand on the gun in her pocket as she let the stranger speak first.

"Refuge, that is what I am here for."

Sati felt Gadi's gaze upon her, knowing that he was going to let her do the talking.

"We... have to interview you first. Let you know your consequent *lack of rights*."

"I have experience handling explosives too."

Sati immediately looked for Gadi's face, who kept calm. "So? What use have we for that? Your leg suggests not enough too. Are you on the run or something? We *flog people* for smaller crimes than yours."

Then another group of eight men entered the pen. The stranger opened his jacket, but as both sides drew their guns, they only now noticed that he had no weapon: a row of pipe bombs were slung around the stranger's waist, connected to a wire tied to his middle finger. Not a word needed to be said, but someone did feel the need:

"Please Kasih, we're like family: I meant it when I said I wouldn't hurt you."

"Let me on! I rather owe you than them!"

Sati imagined the bombs were fake. But the look in his eyes she found very real.

"He asked for refuge." Sati looked to Gadi and back. "He is ours now - by *law*."

"The common law, yes. But this one is in debt to a retired sailor, who too is protected by *the law of the land*- written by the admirals you voted in. The harbourmaster will vouch for us."

"Will he? Why did he not send someone with you? Why the muscle?" Sati regretted her words as she saw three of them aim their guns at her.

But the lead man dissuaded them. "Alright- I take my losses: living is what matters after all. But this is not over yet- just nothing to be done about now."

And that was the end of the story. Kasih apprenticed as a technician, but would be handed over to the authorities in his homeland as revenge for his bomb threat, being convicted to prison for forty years for his previous bomb-threats and outstanding debts. Living to the age of eighty, he would never see his family again- as he initially wanted.

The debt shark gossiped on the crew of the *Drowned Secret*, which became known as a selfish and controversial element of the Freefleet that so generously sponsored its engine refit. The boat became unviable as a transport company a year later as it was shunned by contractors and core crew members left for more prestigious and successful boats. But everyone lived to old age.

Except for that Sati shot the debt shark. Two tried to drag him away, so without hesitation she shot the two others trying to run. The remaining three men shot back, their shots going out through Sati's back. As Gadi had spent money on a gold-plated machine pistol, he shot them, but fell down because several bullets zipped past his ears. When the first crewmembers came out with rifles, led by the boatswain Ulagan, Kasih told them what had happened from his perspective. So the boatswain had the crewmembers take the bodies into the boat.

Gadi got up with the help of his mate and stood over Sati as she was being patched up. "Looks like they got your kidney... or was it called the liver?" He looked towards Kasih being questioned by the boatswain, still wearing his bomb vest. "He is definitely getting on board now." He grabbed Sati by the scruff to breath on her face before she fell unconscious: "You cost me my *hearing*."

Not long after, Sati was visited first by the boatswain in the sickbay. "I am here to administer your last rites." They were silent for a moment, Ulagan smiling his mysterious smile.

"You are a monk that *fucks*- I will live."

But Sati felt as if the light she was looking into held a greater significance; looking at her deeds with new eyes and knowing that when she shut her eyes now, she would be in a different place, being different.

"Tell me – I know you can – did I do the right thing? I did not know them, which was enough for them to deserve to live. That is what I believe, but that is not good enough to be part of the crew – the fleet – is it?"

Ulagan sat down on the stool he brought. "I will not. But think on this: why do we who say that the sea belongs to us that ply it- commit to these laws? Why care to claim the sea as yours by these laws? Do rest assured: I *will* sponsor you... if only to convince you to recover. But I trust you to know whether these questions are for you or not."

Sati's lip trembled and she closed her eyes. She did not live to be *reborn*, as Ulagan believed. So she could only talk with him until she had told him all about her life preceding the company in the limited time she had.

Three lives taken, one returned

by O.D

“We, the jury, unanimously found the accused Leonard Jones guilty of second degree murder, and therefore sentence him to death.”

When a man hears those words, there are several reactions one may have. The first and most common one is despair, accompanied by cries and tears. Which is perfectly understandable, and quite frankly, probably the most appropriate and sensible response, given the circumstances. Another alternative is denial; again, understandable. Although it is always eventually followed by cries and tears. Then we have anger, violence and speeches of conspiracy. There is also the option of the unusual, although not unseen, total surrender. Slouched shoulders, low gaze, complete silence. It is truly a miserable sight. And for the most cruel and psychopathic of all, there is always the sick and yet complete lack of regret — and even a pinch of pride — in their eyes.

However, Mr. Jones did not follow any of these. He had been waiting patiently for the five hours and forty five minutes the trial had lasted in silence, but strangely calm. His back was straight, his shoulders relaxed and his eyes fixed in the stance, following the procedures as just another spectator. Even when the mother of the victim testified, crying her eyes out, yelling and pointing at him, he merely looked her straight in the eye, with — believe it or not — a look of sympathy. Sympathy! For the woman whose son he had killed not two weeks ago in a moment of animalistic fury — if the witness was to be believed.

So when the spokesperson of the jury announced the fearsome word “guilty”, there was no doubt in my mind that the entire room expected one of the reactions I have previously mentioned. But no. As I have also stated, Mr. Jones was — is, actually, for now — not a usual man. For when his death sentence had been declared out loud, all he did was straighten even more, if possible, his back, look at his condemner and say “Very well”. It is to say that the whole room stood there in silence, processing the situation. More so than the condemned one himself! Even the judge was waiting for some following words to his short and matter-of-fact statement, but all the accused did was turn to his lawyer, whisper a few words that I bet the entire room was wishing to hear, and stood there waiting. After a few seconds of silent expectation, the judge closed the session, the police officer led Mr. Jones out the door and the room started to clear out. And just like that, a man’s death had been decided upon; and he had accepted it with the grace one can only pray to hold if one is to face death in the eye the way Mr. Jones had done that day. If I am to be honest with you, I had entered the courtroom that day with a mix of morbid curiosity and moral disgust, and yet I had left with an uncomfortable sense of respect towards a murderer. And, even though I will not admit this to anybody out loud, I thought it was a real shame that man was going to die.

Next time I heard about Mr Jones was a year later. It was all over the local news: Leonard Jones, murderer in the death row, is given grace and has been pardoned.” No one was quite sure how or why it had happened, but there it was: Mr. Jones was free. It made me remember all over again that strange trial, and it’s accused’s attitude. I remembered his strong stance and his calm voice. And I admit I was relieved to hear the extraordinary news of his release. However, it seemed I was the only one. It meant a grave offense for a lot of people all round the state, particularly the town where it had happened. Which is not that surprising. Led by the victim’s widowed — and now childless — mother, the entire town raised with spikes and marched towards the State Courts. They protested in the entrance for three weeks, but the judge was an impenetrable old man,

whose entire career was based on making tough decisions and sticking to them. And so the mob tired down eventually, leaving only the heartbroken mother at the gates of the court. I felt quite sorry for her as well; no mother deserves to outlive their child. I'm not sure what happened to her. I only know that Mr Jones did live. However, I am getting a bit ahead of the story.

I couldn't stop thinking about it, about *him*. About the man who had known his date of death and then survived it. So, on an impulsive whim, I called the prison Mr Jones was in, and asked for a visit. Frankly, I didn't expect anything from it, but for some strange will of fate, he accepted. And so I went. The first thing that crossed my mind while I was entering that place was how I wished I would never have to cross those doors again. What a horrible place to be in.

The guard led me to the visiting room, with a few tables and chairs and nothing else. There was only one more prisoner, talking to his pregnant girlfriend or wife. I sat in a chair and waited. A few moments later the door in front of me opened and there was Mr Jones. I stood up and waited for him to reach me, and I held out my hand. He grabbed it firmly and we shook hands. Then we sat down, still in complete silence. He looked me in the eyes, expecting me to speak first, which was only natural since it was *I* who asked to see *him*. However, once I was there, sitting right in front of him, it hit me that I really didn't know what to say. Don't get me wrong, I did have a million questions to ask him, but somehow they all felt too personal or too menial. But before I could even decide what question to pose, he spoke.

"You were at my trial, right?"

"I... Yes."

"You are the one who makes the drawings."

"Yes."

"I like them. I always saw them in the paper. Jonathan Berkeley, right?"

"Yes, that is me. Thank you."

Then it was silent again.

"Why did you want to see me?"

And even though I wanted to know what had really happened the day of the murder, and what he was thinking at the time, and what he was thinking at the day of the trial, and when he was condemned, and when he was pardoned, I could only get one sentence out.

"What are you going to do now?"

He thought about his answer for a few seconds. "I don't know. What *can* I do?"

"I'm sorry, about your wife. It was a terrible accident."

I could see his eyes water a little bit, but he didn't shed any tears.

"Me too. I miss her, every day. I don't know what I will do without her."

I didn't know what to say. What can you say to a man who had lost his wife, who is so heartbroken by her death that he beat to death the man who caused it?

"Would you believe me if I told you I was relieved when they sent me to the death row?" The man whose strength I had admired so much a year before was now crumbling before me; not for being condemned to die, but condemned to live.

"Yes, I would." And I did.

"But now... I don't even want... What the hell do I do now?" He whispered, staring down.

I'm not sure if he was asking me, himself, his dead wife or God. Perhaps all four at once. Perhaps anyone who would —and could— listen and give an answer. Perhaps no one at all. But whatever the case was, it was I who answered.

"Two people have died. You have not. Do not throw that away." Then he looked up, and locked eyes with me. His eyes were filled with sorrow, regret and unshed tears for his wife, for his victim, for the childless mother and for himself. But still, not a single tear slipped out. And then, just for a second, I saw again that calm determination I saw in that courtroom.

He nodded twice, stood up and stretched out his hand. I stood up as well and we shook hands.

"Thank you," he said, and he was gone.

I never saw or heard of him again. I suppose he lived, for I didn't hear any differently in the news. I do wonder what he did after our talk. I meant what I said. Not many people get a second chance. A second life. What can you do but take it?

Stairway

by Hugo Wolters

I awake from soft tapping on the wood. “Hello?” I mutter into the dimly lit room. I’m unable to move towards the noise. In hindsight I should’ve seen the signs. Jamming your blade between the ribs of a friend invites the devil to your doors. I gasp as the tapping returns. “What do you want?” I barely contain myself from yelling. The noise swallows every thought and I break out in a helpless stammering. “Please” I yell, “Please!”.

I can't remember why he had to die.

I awake again, this time in bright daylight. Next to me stands nurse Arany. Good. I like her the most of all the nurses. Nurse Johnson can be a pain in the ass sometimes. “Good morning mister Porter.” She looks at me with a soft smile. “You had a rough night? The monitors show you awoke a couple times, and your heart rate went way up.” I nod, still drowsy from the bad night’s rest. “Okay, well, we will be increasing the dosage diazepam. It will help you sleep better. The other medication will stay the same, the list is over here as always.” She swiftly points to the list on my nightstand. I nod again. “Thank you.” She smiles at me warmly before walking towards the door. “Oh, one thing misses Arany”, I say. She halts and turns around. “What is it?” I reply: “Could you please lock my door again? I believe he’s still trying to come in. I could hear him last night.” She smiles at me once again: “Of course, mister Porter. I will make sure of it.” She leaves the room.

Some nights I don’t hear him at the door. Those nights I only see the vague resemblance of his face, then him looking slowly down towards his chest. When I follow his gaze, there is a hand holding a knife which disappears in his chest. It had taken me a long time to realise that the ring on one of the fingers was mine. I’m not sure where it went. It was a pretty ring.

I’m not sure how many times nurse Arany or otherwise Johnson had stood at my bed now, always telling the same news. “This medication will be increased, this will be decreased, yada yada yada.” Words that don’t have any meaning for me. Whatever they do, he doesn’t disappear. This time it was Johnson who walked out the door. I stayed in bed. Now, looking at the roof of the room, I heard crying, and I can’t do anything else then join. I don’t know why.

If someone is like a millstone around your neck, do you cut off the millstone or the neck?

Some time went by. I don’t know how much though, which makes me giggle. I immediately stop as my body starts to hurt. I’ve gone frail, I think. I look around the room, and then my gaze rests upon the note with all the medications I take. Or rather, that they give me. Some are familiar; some are weird names I have never heard of. Haloperidol? Uninterested, my gaze wanders the room again. Suddenly I see him again. My hairs raise as I start to shiver intensely. He stares at me. Finally, I mutter: “You..”. His beady eyes look into mine. He’s been dead for how long now? He looks like he’s been under for a while in any case. His sharp, raspy voice fills the room: “It is time. Are you ready?” Tears fill my eyes. “Please...” my frail voice tries to regain strength. “Please!” I stammer again. “I beg you, what do you want of me?” He slowly walks towards me. “Are you ready?” he hisses at me. Abruptly, my last tear dries. In front of me, the earth slowly opens its mouth and begins singing the most mind-shattering song it knows.

I'll be Icarus. But reaching the sun won't be my downfall, it will be my triumph.

I'm walking after him now. A warmth fills me. Not only within me: the deeper down the stairs we go the warmer it gets. From here I can't see the knife I stuck in his chest. The knife bears similarity to the reason I killed him: it is there, somewhere, but out of sight. That's what alcohol does to you. Same reason I don't know where my ring went. I burst out in laughter at my own joke. Down I go; rapture.

The evil sleep well at night.

NON-FICTION

Thunderous Words: Finding and Using Your Voice in Stone Butch Blues

by Lotte Oosterbaan

“I need to talk and I don’t even know how. (...) I needed my own words—butch words to talk about butch feelings. (...) I can’t hear my own voice say the words out loud. I’ve got no language.” (Feinberg 301). This quote from *Stone Butch Blues* (1993) by Leslie Feinberg perfectly illustrates one of the main themes of the novel; that of finding your voice, your language, your expression. Leslie Feinberg was a self-proclaimed “anti-racist white, working-class, secular Jewish, transgender, lesbian, female, revolutionary communist” (Self) Zie worked as a writer for the Workers World Party from 1974 to 2007 and authored 6 books, *Stone Butch Blues* being the first fictional one. Feinberg declared that the point of his writing is “not simply to understand the world, but to change it” (Words). This idea of changing the world by using your voice is omnipresent in his work, but how does Leslie Feinberg show the importance of finding and using one’s voice with *Stone Butch Blues*? I will answer this question through analyzing the development of the main character Jess and how s/he finds h/er voice in political and union activism. Additionally, I will open up a larger discussion on the matter of fictionality and political expression.

Being the Force of Change: Jess’ Journey towards Finding He/r Voice

Stone Butch Blues is a “highly political polemic, rooted in its era” (Feinberg, “Author Notes” 333) that explores the complexities of gender through the life story of its main character Jess. The reader follows Jess throughout h/er life, from growing up in Buffalo in the 1950s to h/er first encounters with butch/femme bar culture to passing as male and finally to moving to New York to start anew. Jess goes on a gender journey in h/er life, s/he discovers h/er identity as a butch lesbian, resolves to pass as male in order to sustain h/erself in factory jobs and eventually stops administering testosterone and lives in between genders. Aside from this ‘gender journey’, Jess simultaneously goes on the journey of finding h/er political voice, helped along by many important figures in h/er life. In my reading of *Stone Butch Blues* I recognize three phases on this path; firstly, Jess finds h/er identity and voice as a butch lesbian; secondly, Jess is forced to reckon with, to h/er, unknown forms of oppression, such as racism in h/er community, and learns to stand up to this with the help of the people around h/er; and lastly, after a brutal attack s/he realizes the power of h/er voice and that s/he can no longer stay silent. The resolution of this development comes when Jess speaks at a gay demonstration and afterwards decides to become a union organizer; s/he starts using h/er voice.

In the first leg of this journey, Jess goes to a gay bar for the first time and leaves school to start working in factories, all the while building a community of (butch) lesbians. The second leg starts when Jess speaks up politically for the first time against racist remarks made towards h/er friend Ed, a Black butch lesbian. S/he realizes that s/he might not be as progressive as s/he thought. Eventually, after discussing the conflict critically with h/er butch bar friends and standing up for and talking to Ed, s/he realizes that s/he “always fall[s] back on assuming that what Ed and [h/er] deal with every day as butches is pretty much the same” but that “Ed reminded [h/er] about what she faces every day that [s/he doesn’t]” (Feinberg 139). From here on out s/he strives to be more mindful of others’ experiences and struggles and more vocal about injustice around h/er.

The third and last leg of this journey starts when Jess is settled in New York, after s/he has gone through and concluded h/er gender journey, allowing h/er to find h/er voice. S/he starts opening h/erself up to new information and growth and realizes that maybe s/he should start speaking up in the previously exclusionary women’s movement, which might have benefits for h/er too. Tragically,

when Jess is finally ready to use h/er voice, s/he is beaten up so severely that s/he has to get h/er jaw wired shut, rendering h/er literally unable to speak for several months. In this period, s/he reflects on h/er life, thinking “about how fear and silence had welded [h/er] jaw shut for more of [h/er] life than [s/he’d] realized.” (Feinberg 289). When healed, s/he gradually reclaims h/er voice, starting by typesetting queer history in h/er free time. On a trip to Buffalo, where s/he apologizes to people s/he’s hurt and reflects on h/er life, s/he finally realizes h/er need for h/er own words. The final, crucial, moment in Jess’ journey to finding h/er power is when s/he speaks at a gay demonstration:

This is what courage is. It’s not just living through the nightmare, it’s doing something with it afterward. It’s being brave enough to talk about it to other people. It’s trying to organize to change things. And suddenly I felt so sick to death of my own silence that I needed to speak too. (...) I moved closer to the stage, nearer to finding my voice. (Feinberg 324)

After speaking at this demonstration, Jess reconnects with a union organizer that s/he had been reluctant to work with in the past and decides that it is time for h/er to start using h/er voice. The final message that Feinberg sends us in this novel is that one should always hope for more, be that force of change. Interestingly, when we look beyond the narrative, we can see that Feinberg too found hir voice through writing this novel.

A New Voice: Discovering the Potential of Fiction

Up until the release of *Stone Butch Blues* in 1993, all of the work that Feinberg wrote was non-fiction and almost all of it had taken the form of journalism. This changed with the release of *Stone Butch Blues* in, a fictional work that reached larger audiences than Feinberg’s work ever had. It is also the first work that fully embodies the intersectional and broad nature of Feinberg’s political convictions. *Stone Butch Blues* contains, aside from an exploration of gender, traces of Marxism and class consciousness (shown through the power of unionizing expressed at various moments in the novel) and anti-racism (previously discussed briefly, but more extensively in the novel), all of which Feinberg fought for in hir activist work. These three concept intersect, for example, to powerfully illustrate how butches’ identity did not only revolve around being a masculine lesbian, but also how this masculinity intersects with their ability to keep blue collar jobs and to be part of unions, all of which necessary for them to earn money.

This is one of the many instances in *Stone Butch Blues* where identity and intersectionality is explored. The full-length novel format gives Feinberg plenty of room to work out different iterations of intersectional activism and to show how a person can grow to become an activist, to become someone who stands up for others, how one can find their voice (as shown in the exploration of Jess’ journey above). The fictionality of the narrative allows Feinberg to base it in hir own experience as a butch lesbian in this historical and geographical context, but also to go beyond and add to this, so as to strengthen the message zie tried to convey in all of hir work (see introduction). If we look at the novel from that perspective, we can begin to see that *Stone Butch Blues* marked the discovery of a newfound voice and language for Feinberg. Zie used fiction for the first time, which allowed hir to work in a different way, use hir voice in a different way, than before.

Looking Further: Discussing Political Expression and Fictionality

With all I have explored so far, I want to place this small case study in a larger discussion on political expression and fictionality. Fiction is a much discussed concept with vague and subjective boundaries (explored by e.g. Roland Barthes, Wolfgang Iser, Roman Jakobson) and while political work is often non-fictional (works by Plato, Machiavelli, Frederick Douglass), some of the most influential political works of the last century have been fictional (one can think of George Orwell's oeuvre, *Brave New World*, *Fahrenheit 451*). The choice of fiction as a first full length work by a so far strictly political and activist nonfiction writer allowed Feinberg to express hir political ideas in a condensed, intersectional manner and its content to reach a potentially wider audience (Jacques 358, 363). On the question of the fictionality of *Stone Butch Blues*, Feinberg comments "Oh, it's real all right. So real it bleeds. And yet it is a remembrance: Never underestimate the power of fiction to tell the truth" ("Author Afterword" 337). This novel shows that political expression can take many forms and can evolve over time, through its main character and its author (Jess grows, Feinberg finds new forms) it contributes to a discussion of political expression and fictionality.

Conclusion

In conclusion, Leslie Feinberg shows the importance of finding one's voice with the politically engaged *Stone Butch Blues* through showing us the journey of Jess' discovery of h/er voice in union activism and the hope it gives h/er, and additionally through the fact that Feinberg uses a previously unexplored genre (fiction), in which zie discovers a new language. This use of fiction and the way that Feinberg blurs its boundaries places *Stone Butch Blues* in a larger discussion of political expression and fictionality. All in all, Feinberg wrote a powerful piece on never losing hope and using your voice for good and acted on this resolution all hir life. Jess asks h/er friend "[w]hat would our words sound like?", she responds "[I]ike thunder, maybe." (Feinberg 301), and Feinberg surely stirred up a thunderstorm.

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POETRY

Reborn

Watch! There it lies on a velvet cushion. Raised from the ground by a marble pillar, one that only exists in palaces of old and illuminated like a star in the bright sky.

See the crimson egg, so smooth you desire to touch it.

The red reminds you of your own blood.

Step forward, only to stop and fall to your knees and see the others around you do the same.

Inch closer by dragging your body over the floor. Your arms are trying to drag your body towards its light.

Wanting, no needing, to be closer than anyone ever has before. You raise your hand, only inches away from touching the egg's smooth surface.

You stop, there, do you see it?

A tiny crack on the once blemishless surface.

Your ears ring as the cracks expands like a broken dam, the water starts flowing and the egg continues cracking.

Light, bright light so bright your raised hand shields your eyes.

Your ears stop ringing and you can open your eyes again.

Behold the spectacle before you. Finally the egg of your dreams has burst and a fine specimen has come forth from it.

Gasps of surprise come from those around you. Your hands and those of the ones beside you clasp themselves as prayers are heard, inspired by the light and that of the stranger before you all.

A dark shadow engulfs the humans. They don't notice it but you do, maybe because you are closest to the stranger. The darkness spreads and envelops the rest, taking them to a place unknown. You and the stranger are the only ones left.

A chill enters through your toes.

A bright light illuminates your face.

A voice is saying words you can't make out anymore.

A darkness surrounds your body,

And you remember that the brightest light casts the biggest shadow.

Emmy Swart

Only you among the petulant flowers

Only you among the petulant flowers

who grind their teeth

when they prick me on their thorn,

do not wish for blood, but morning dew.

Only you among the petulant flowers

who writhe and coil

as the soil molds their legs to sewer,

cultivate what is forgiven,

not what is lost.

Only you among the petulant flowers

flourishes with all that blesses idyllic.

When the wind greets your reaching stem,

only you, among the petulant flowers

will have the soul to miss the garden

while you leave its sunken bush.

E.M. Colazingari

Visions of the Holy Sea

Ah, spread the church doors open
Caress that timely bell for attention,
Let the incense consume your holy lungs into an ecstatic fever,
Just to realize I am no longer there.
What cloud of pious opium I had buried myself in.
What rhythm of tradition justifying its spread.
Lay back down, don't cripple your pareo,
Lazily turn your sunglasses to the waves.
Wade in your dolce vita.
The Mediterranean has chosen you as its Tantalus.
What else could you possibly do, then,
But wince at my name, then in church say:
"My fault, my fault, my greatest fault."

E.M. Colazingari

Twinkle Twinkle Gendered Star

Snatch and turn faint stars with fingers before the naked eye: 14

The male body is born and wielded in the dreaming mind. 14

Curiosity: 5

“What mean I to do?” 5

The male is made by the media outside the social constellation. 18

2e

“Don’t ask for a lighter load but for a stronger back” they say.

The wounds of the body are steroids for the mind, I say.

Humiliation

Drive to male power

Falling stars thinking themselves comets, unrelated to the nebulae.

3e

Heavy stars create supernova’s and heavier still

collapse under the weight of their pressured and silent being

Remediation:

the lone and own task

berthing manhood between Venus and mars, which may be mistaken for stars.

4e

What is a man but a miserable pile of secrets?

Notions of manhood hoarded lest they be tested in

Participation

Bodies so comply

But planets lack the twinkle of stars: a real man orbits these media?

5e

So do lots of boys chart their days by heavenly bodies.

Navigating not constellations but dark manospheres.

Socialisation

Birth of a star

Manhood is not reborn but dissipates, hot air for the next samsara.

Dung Ly

COLUMNS

Untitled

My parents brought me to a country, to which I do not belong. Many years have slipped away since I first glimpsed that spark of hope in my mother's eyes - a silent promise of a better life, a brighter future. In her gaze, there was utter conviction that this foreign land held the key to the dreams they dared to dream for me.

Yet, as I navigate the winding streets and towering uncanny shapes of this Western haven, I am silently but steadily distraught by a sense of disconnection—a yearning for the soil that cradled my ancestors, the air that carried their whispers on the breeze. The sun that burned the wrinkles into the skin of my grandmother and her grandmother before her. The sea that washed my grandfather and his grandfather before him, clean of all his sins. The country that my parents call home. Here lost in a crowd of faces that do not mirror my own, I repeat the mantra of belonging, like a bird singing its dawn chorus, each morning, the same hymn. Each morning I reassure my kind, curious neighbour that I belong, with a smile and a wave. My teachers, my classmates, the cashier at the grocery store. Like a bird, I sing my song.

My parents have planted me in this foreign soil in the hopes that something healthy, happy and whole would grow, safe from the scorching sun of their home, but I am a sapling struggling to take root in unfertile ground, yearning for the nourishment of familiarity. To honour my parent's dream I keep ploughing these empty grounds. Amongst the fallen branches scattered along the path, I find kinship in shared longing, in the silent understanding that binds us together in our quest for a home. Together, we dig our hands into the earth, each stroke a prayer whispered to the winds, a plea for redemption in the embrace of the land we left behind.

My parents brought me to a country, to which I do not belong. Though I speak the same tongue, the taste is different. A strange taste of *Jamais vu* and unfinished business. My parents came to a country to which they don't belong. In their sacrifice, my parents left behind the land they loved, aching for its embrace even as they dreamed of a better future for me. Yet, as I stand here, a testament to their courage and love, I realize that the home they sought for me may not be found in this land. Instead, it lies in the echo of distant shores, the scent of familiar spices carried on the wind, and the quiet whispers of ancestors who call me back to where I truly belong.

Final Remarks

Dear Reader,

I hope you have enjoyed this archived version of the *Erato's Magazine Edition: Rebirth*. This version may lack the fun designs and stylings of our newer editions, but I have tried my best to emulate the way these pieces were presented and categorized on the old Erato's Website and mix it with the newer elements we have introduced over 2024 and early 2025.

Hopefully these works have served to amuse, interest and inspire you and that you feel emboldened to contribute to future Editions of Erato's Magazine!

Chloe

Commissar of Internal Affairs, Board XVI

THANK YOU FOR READING