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From the Editors

Dear Readers,

A query: what does it mean to live in more than one language?

This is one of the questions that lie at the heart of the topic our editorial team chose for *Lyre Magazine's* seventh edition: "Language and Identity". When we chose our theme last fall, we had more questions than answers: how are language and identity related? What happens when someone finds themselves at a linguistic or cultural crossroads? How are they to reconcile that tension, if at all?

Regardless of the myriad of questions and complications that are part and parcel of this edition's theme, it is nonetheless a topic that resonates with every person. Language is an integral part of who we are, both as individuals and as communities. Language and identity shape how we think about the world, and how we perceive ourselves in it. You could go so far as to suggest that language, identity, and culture *are* the world; that's a discussion you will have to take up with the contributors to this issue.

We would like to congratulate the writers and artists whose work is featured in this edition. Your insights and opinions provide a range of responses to the question of identity and language, and handle the topic with the wisdom that comes from diverse experiences. May your pens stay sharp and your muses be many.

We would also like to thank the editorial team for their hard work and dedication. The *Lyre* could not exist without you.

Finally, we would like to thank our faculty advisor, Dr. Melek Ortabasi, for her mentorship and high standards, and for helping introduce the *Lyre* to SFU's Burnaby campus. With this transition, the *Lyre* is poised to grow in coming editions, and we are excited to see where it will fly.



Melanie Hiepler and Elda Hajdarovac
Editors-in-Chief

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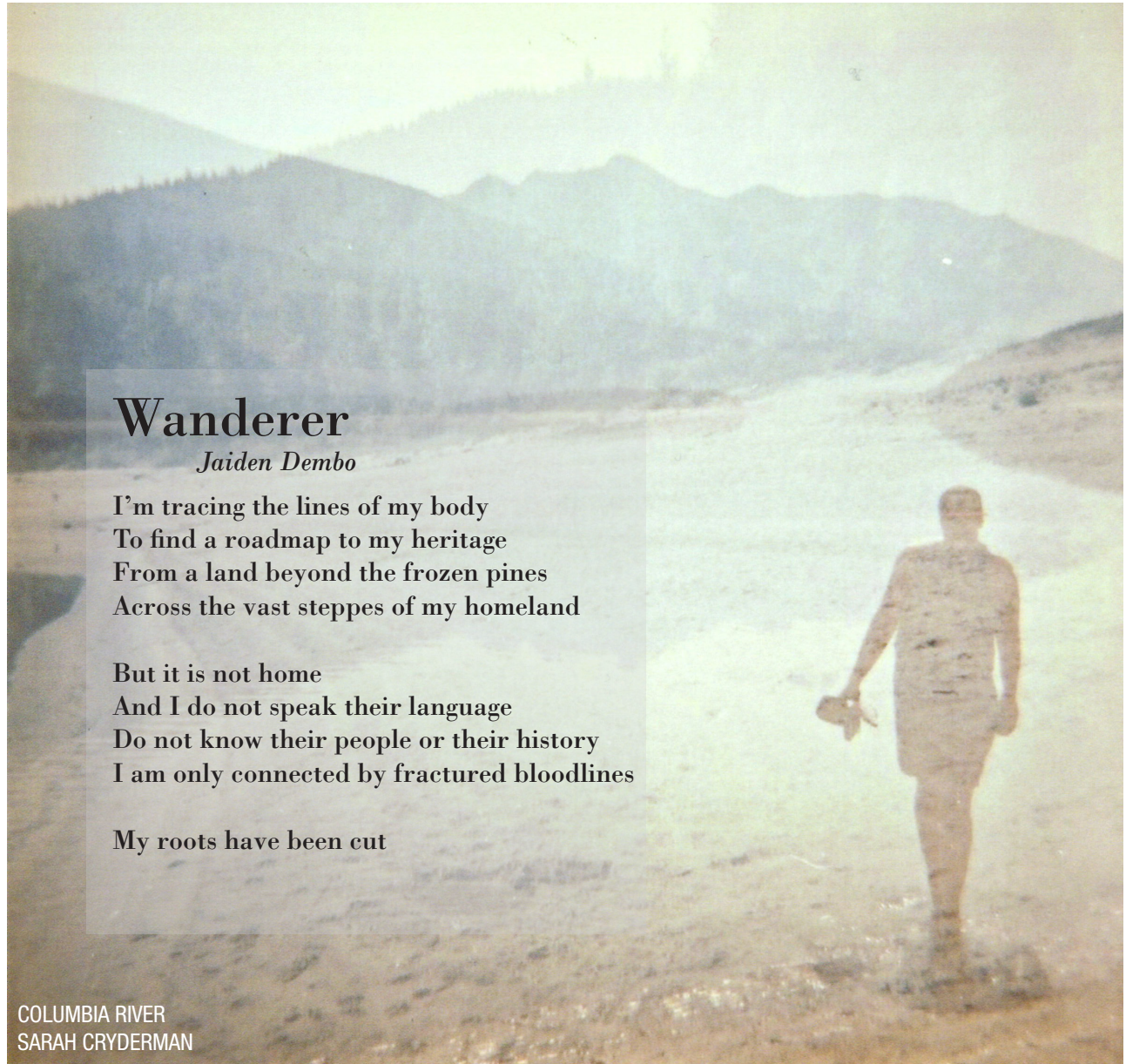


From a Train Window Headed Toward Mission City

Sam Weselowski

I look to riverbanks with reeds and then
the black ditch, the muddy horseless pasture,
and pond scum that is green and still and bright.

The baby loon that drifts to the shore
is as small as discernment, smaller than
the fist here that lives inside of my hand.



Wanderer

Jaiden Dembo

I'm tracing the lines of my body
To find a roadmap to my heritage
From a land beyond the frozen pines
Across the vast steppes of my homeland

But it is not home
And I do not speak their language
Do not know their people or their history
I am only connected by fractured bloodlines

My roots have been cut

COLUMBIA RIVER
SARAH CRYDERMAN

Mystery

Hardi Mistry

I am not a poem
Hidden between the lines,
Made of deceiving metaphors to be fathomed.
I am not scattered across these stanzas
Like a puzzle to be pieced,
For you to make sense of me.
Nor am I written over these words
To be translated and understood,
Read and explained –
You cannot put these sentences into a story.
This drift between you and I,
Between question and answer, will remain.
I am not a puzzle to be solved,
I am not a poem.



Born Without Borders

Nolan Janssens

Born privileged within walls of privatization.
Diapers changed in three continents within three
years.
The first time I was asked to draw myself
I drew myself naked.

Born without borders.

I've crushed affection into dust just to cough
it up into coquetry and self-indulgence.
I've stared at a ceaseless ceiling of thought
wondering if there were answers in the patterns.
There are.
But I was too busy seeking a mountain
high enough to see all three continents.

(Excerpt from "Born Without Borders")

Mirror, Mirror

Melanie Hiepler

I.

“Mirror, mirror, on the wall” –
Behold: instrument of reflection,
made to show us what we look like.

A fine piece of trickery it is, though.
In it, I strive to see myself as I appear to others,
but the only view I’m ever afforded is my own,
and I am left staring back at myself in an endless infinity loop.

II.

According to the rules, mirrors are supposed to reflect:

one source, one image.

They drew it in my science textbooks as a single line touching a surface and changing directions;
never stopping, whole, single, true.

I’ll tell you a secret: true mirrors don’t.

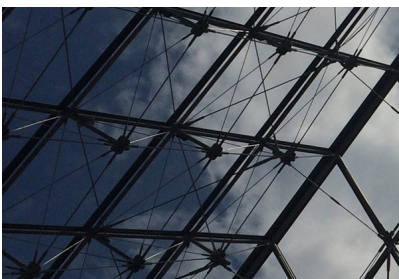
(They say that the best way to test whether it’s a mirror or one of those dodgy
one-way nightclub bathroom windows is to look closely for a double reflection).

True mirrors lie.

Two impossible reflections:

Me, and just to my left, or maybe right,
depending on which eye I close,
stands another me, echoing the first.

This doppelgänger, trapped in layers of glass and silver or aluminum or tin, or whatever it is,
(I’m inclined to trust the poets more than the textbooks these days),
staring back and placing the world just
 slightly out of
focus.



P, O, E, M,

Sam Weselowski

P, O, E, M,

Saratoga, Saratoga,
New York.

Saratoga, Saratoga,
California.

Cal-i-for-nia, Cal-i-for-nia,
where the highways are all spent
languoring in the fields,
languoring in the sun.

Sar-a-to-ga, California
in the sun

sweating on the bus
where the highways are spent.

Saratoga,
Either/Or.

Two points that touch the map
hedge the ocean.

The Saratogas connected together by a big sky
that drops away like a blue guitar.

The shadows run into your feet,
the shadows run into your legs.

The houses are selling fast in Saratoga.

Sar-a-to-ga, this morning's morning.

California. The blonde in a blonde window.

Sun. Saratoga is still inside me.

New York, where I have spent only a short time.

California, where I have spent only a short time.

What I can recall is this



Supersymmetry of Beautiful Things

Tremaine Friske



Act 4 - One Feeling at a Time

“we,” it said:

[Anger]

I know someone said my name. Pavlov spent our entire lifetime to train us to respond to it, even when we aren’t listening. More uncommon name, easier to notice. Someone said my name. Laughter from a table somewhere. Someone is looking at me looking at someone. I feel warm. Nothing fits right. my hands shake. I look at my hands and wonder what they did. Someone said my name. Everyone is looking at me and I hate them. Who the fuck said my name.

[Anxiety]

Someone said my name. I don’t know what I did. I can’t remember their name. What if I did something wrong. What if everyone sees how bad I’m sweating. Can they smell me. I smell me. I feel drenched. I feel hot. Everyone must be able to read my mind. They know I’m a fraud. I know I’m a fraud. Everything is a lie. I am a fiction. I hate my name.

[Sadness]

Someone said my name. They are looking right at me. I don’t remember their name. I remember everything they write, and they write about suicide like someone who has an armchair understanding of loss. I remember 1 of the people I’ve lost. I remember all of the pets I’ve lost. I remember all of the happiest moments I’ve lost with hideous hindsight. I remember when I lost myself.

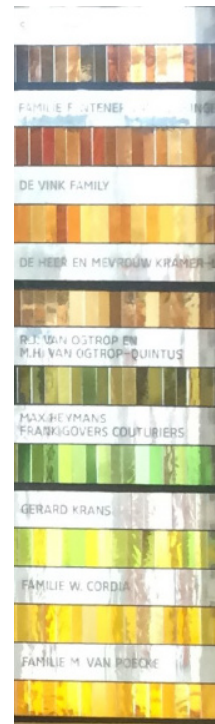
[regret]

Someone said my name. I wish I could remember names better. I wonder, if I could remember their name, how long a friendship can survive. I remember when I used to have friends. I remember where they all went. I remember how long I pretended like it didn’t happen. They say my name still. I’m not around. I remember when I was. Someone always says my name.

[depression]

Someone said my name. I wish I could forget my name. I wish I could have a new name. I wish my name was normal. I wish I was normal. I wish Someone would say my name the right way. I wish someone wanted to say my name. I wish I could say my name. I wish my name meant something else. I wish I was around when people said my name. I wish the people who said my name wanted to.

(excerpt from Supersymmetry of Beautiful Things)



RIJKSMUSEUM GLASS
ELDA HAJDAROVAC



LA DOLINA CUBANA
MING WANG

Right Here

Katie Elsinga

Right here. This is where I belong.
Who are you to tell me I'm wrong?
In the middle I will remain,
Choosing neither side to attain
My rightful place among the throng.

“Why not gay or straight? Play along.”
Hurtful, jabbing words, like a prong,
Attacking from all ends.
Right here.

Same thoughts, in different tongues:
“It won't last. It's a phase. You're young.”
But as time goes on, I won't wane.
And through this, I will bear the pain—
Through trying times, I will stay strong.
Right here.

Next time you are about to tell to your mother
she does not know anything,
or grow impatient
with your father's broken English,

Consider how they have
built an exquisite empire.
How you could only imagine
getting to where they are today,
with what they
had to begin with.

So how dare you not
treat your mother and father
like the King and Queen
they are.

-A Daughter of Immigrants

Avnit Garcha

The Day Moira Dinglegrout Gave Up Her Name

Rhiannon Wallace

It was 6:24PM the night before her 150th day as a server at Fin's Fresh Fish 'n Chips that Moira Dinglegrout decided to give up her name. She had been tidying the apartment all day, and had finally gotten rid of the old floor fan that made an odd sound and took up too much space. Somehow, she wasn't quite sure why, this got her thinking about her name. As long as she was getting rid of unnecessary things she might as well finally let go of that too. So the next day, she went to work without it.

"You forgot your name tag, Moira," said Neil Peterson as she left the cubby room. It took her a second to figure out that he was talking to her.

"I don't need it anymore," she explained to Neil. "I am no longer Moira Dinglegrout." She didn't blame Neil; it was an easy mistake to make.

The morning went quite nicely. It occurred to her that even though it was her 150th day as a server at Fin's Fresh Fish 'n Chips, it was her first day as a server who was not Moira Dinglegrout. At first, her new namelessness didn't seem to cause any problems.

Unfortunately her manager heard Neil Peterson and Sadie Kim talking. He intercepted her on her lunch break as she was going to the cubby room to get her sandwich.

"No name tag today, Moira?" asked Phil Webb.

"You may have heard..." she began.

He motioned toward his office.

Phil's office was a desk in the storage room where used cardboard boxes went to rest. Someone should really clear up all this stuff, she thought as she sat on a box opposite Phil.

"If you've changed your name," Phil began, "you must inform me so that I can make the necessary changes in the system."

"I haven't changed it," she said.

"It's fine of course, but it's a lot of work for me," Phil added grouchy.

"I haven't changed it, Phil," she repeated. "There would be no point in getting rid of my name just to replace it with another one. I decided I was no longer attached to it and I gave it up, that's all."

Phil interlaced his fingers on the table and gave her his "sympathetic" look. "Is it because you think your name -- your surname perhaps -- is..." he turned a bit red. "Do you find your name...embarrassing?"

She smiled wistfully. "I've always quite liked it actually," she said. "Moira Dinglegrout was great while it lasted, but now it's just another thing to find space for, you know?"

She didn't get the impression that Phil knew. Phil had a nice compact name.

Most of his concerns, it turned out, had to do with tedious things like bank transfers and reports. "How can I keep you in the system?" he kept asking.

"I thought systems were supposed to be efficient" she muttered. "Obviously not as efficient as I am."

Phil didn't hear her. "What about identification? Driver's licenses? Taxes? What about healthcare?" he was almost yelling. "A person with no name might as well not exist. You'll disappear entirely," he concluded melodramatically.

She really didn't understand why Phil was so upset.

"Do you really want me to take your name out of the system?" Phil asked. "Do you really want to cease to exist as a Fin's Fresh Fish 'n Chips crew member?"

“I can still work without a name,” she reminded him. “Just today I’ve served thirty-one Fisherman’s Breakfasts.” She got up and moved to his side of the desk to look at his computer screen. There was Moira Dinglegrout.

Phil looked at her. He looked at Moira on the screen. He placed his mouse arrow over “Delete,” looked back at her, held his breath, closed his eyes and clicked.

“It says ‘Are you sure you want to delete Moira Dinglegrout,’” she told him.

“Are you sure you want to delete Moira Dinglegrout?” he asked her.

For just a moment she wanted to say no. You always end up needing these things a week after getting rid of them, she thought. But she would stay strong. It had to go. And she was fairly sure that she wouldn’t disappear when Phil pressed the “Yes, I’m sure” button. But maybe she’d better eat her sandwich first, just in case.





Race

Youeal Abera

Familiar, yet peculiar, this concept of race.
In full view is my shade, and by one glance of my face
they create:

My struggles,
My victories,
My interests,
My pain,
My strengths,
My weaknesses,
My dreams,
My insecurities,
My character,
My spirituality,
Notions of belligerence to my sexuality,
My culture,
My intelligence,
My education,
My essence,
Me.

Like an artist or author, they create my future and past.
My skin is my story, so they never do ask—

Who I am.

TRUTH FROM THE MARGINS
KEN IP

Multiculturalism in the Americas: A Visit with Dr. Imbert

Iulia Sincaian and Olivia Leyser

Dr. Patrick Imbert, a scholar and professor in the Faculty of Arts and French Department at the University of Ottawa, paid a visit to Dr. Yamini-Hamedani's WL 300 class on Tuesday, March 1st. His research aims at producing socially responsible work that can help better understand stereotypes in order to improve relations in a multicultural Canada. He prefaced his lecture by explaining how, twenty five years ago, he took an unusual approach to the field of comparative literature: while most scholars were comparing the cultures of the Americas to their European origins, Dr. Imbert decided to compare the cultures of the Americas to each other.

Dr. Imbert was inspired by Brazilian poet and polemicist Oswald De Andrade, who suggested that although Europe is commonly seen as the basis of American culture, the converse is also true: the Americas have greatly shaped European thought and values. The "discovery" of America was a shock to European people, who were confronted by a continent populated by peoples whose cultures greatly different from their own. European thought was decentred as they were made to realize that the world was a much larger place than they had thought of. In spite of these effects, the Americas are rarely given due credit for the impact they have had on Western thought. Rather, Andrade sees American identity and culture as being constantly drawn back to their colonizing European nations. As an example, Dr. Imbert noted how, during his research, he found that in previous centuries, people who were born and raised in Canada were referred to as British citizens because of Canada's relationship with Britain during the time. The past itself then becomes a contested site, a series of stories that can be reread today.

Dr. Imbert moved on to explain some theories on narratives, using the thoughts of philosopher René Girard as a starting point. Girard argued that there are things that, although in existence for a long time, have been hidden through the way they are presented. For example, certain cultures are excluded from popular cultural narratives, and therefore made to seem less significant. Dr. Imbert argues that the exclusion of Indigenous people in narratives, especially in literature, led to racial stereotyping under a paradigm of barbarism vs. civilization. In this paradigm, colonizers are considered "civilized", while indigenous populations are ascribed relative "barbaric" characteristics. This method of thinking began to change in the 1960's and 70's, and the process is ongoing. Dr. Imbert was very optimistic about this ongoing change. He sees Canadian multiculturalism as an entire culture of its own. Shared space is a possibility, one in which every culture would ideally be able to express themselves while being mindful of the community of nations it finds itself in. This shared space results in a new conception of multiculturalism, one that Dr. Imbert feel is strongly reflected by Canada.

After Dr. Imbert's talk, our class had the opportunity to ask some questions and discuss his work with him. Multiculturalism was a key topic of discussion, particularly as it relates to Canada. Canada can be considered a leader in multiculturalism and multicultural narratives, especially since it has a history of not only being colonized but also of being colonizers. Our discussion acknowledged that narratives in literature,

however, are not enough to rectify the negative stereotypes caused by imperialism and othering. Laws, education, and institutions need to be put in place to mend the negative consequences of these ideologies, but there is also hope that younger generations will bring forward fresh perspectives on these issues. We also discussed how multicultural narratives are no longer exclusive to colonized peoples, but have grown to include other excluded groups. LGBT narratives are one such example; as they grow and gain narrative authority, they have the ability bring about more change in society.

All in all, Dr. Imbert's visit was a pleasant and thought-provoking one. We appreciated his lecture and the thoughtful discussion he led afterwards. Multiculturalism is a strong aspect of life in our university and in our cities, and we appreciate the concern that Dr. Imbert has for this issue and his optimistic outlook on the future.



Empty Epics, Hollow Heroes

Ken Ip

Empty Epics, Hollow Heroes

Nameless and Voiceless:

These two empty thrones did I pass,
In long-hidden halls of Antiquity.
Their owners sit entombed in grey divinity –
Fierce features lying dormant, deathless.

The final results of their handiwork go unwitnessed,
Standing on trial before unseeing eyes.

I came to claim my line and likeness -
To trace the blood in my veins to the dust in theirs.
There lies nothing of my own in that emptiness;
No words; no wealth; no wisdom.



Angel's Song

A. V Testani

I know you so well
I am Plath at the heart
I am darkest of dark
When the light on me shines

You are the sweetest of souls
Those tortured, not whole
That are slit by the simple
Those I can barely hold

I'll pull you from hell
Don't worry about a thing
I've claimed you for heaven
You are the song I sing

I breathe in the clouds
Heavy with rain
That cry with your pain
Flung from home yet again

Please hold onto my hand
And make me understand
Why you think hurting
Makes you more of a man

Gnawing at my Language

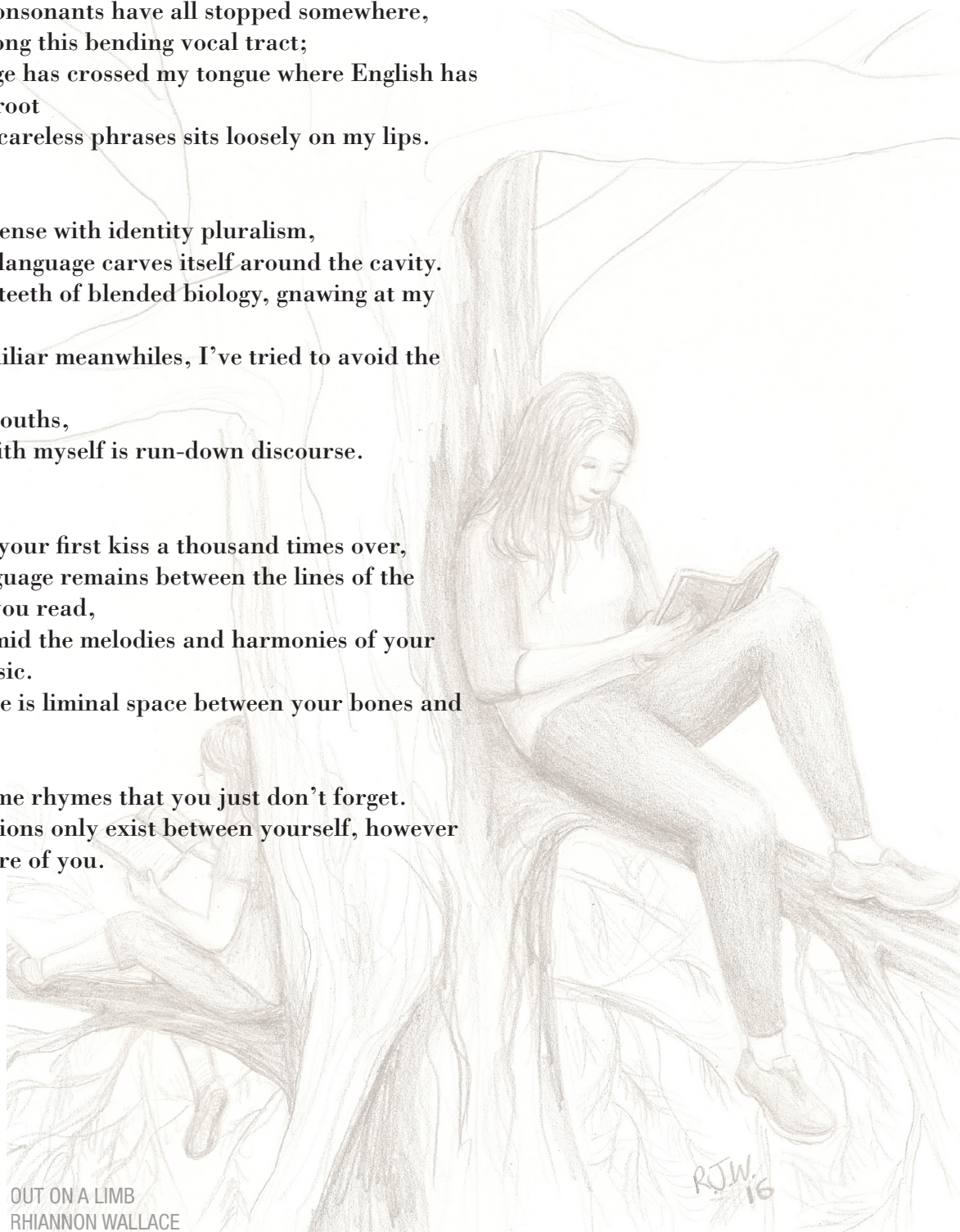
Anisa Maya Dhanji

The archs of my vowels rest quietly
In a Robert Munsch book I sounded out in 1998.
These lithe consonants have all stopped somewhere,
sometime, along this bending vocal tract;
a liquid bridge has crossed my tongue where English has
settled in its root
and a city of careless phrases sits loosely on my lips.

A mouth so dense with identity pluralism,
but only one language carves itself around the cavity.
Here are my teeth of blended biology, gnawing at my
cheeks.
In all the familiar meanwhiles, I've tried to avoid the
'somethings'
I'm mixing mouths,
conversing with myself is run-down discourse.

You can lose your first kiss a thousand times over,
but your language remains between the lines of the
newspapers you read,
and pulses amid the melodies and harmonies of your
favourite music.
Your language is liminal space between your bones and
reality

There are some rhymes that you just don't forget.
Some intonations only exist between yourself, however
many there are of you.



OUT ON A LIMB
RHIANNON WALLACE

RJW.
16

Tribes of Snow

Sam Weselowski

T, r, i, b, e, s: T
is for Christ and twelve
tribes of Israel; r is for reindeer,
i is for imaginary numbers;
b & e are both for bees in a lion's carcass;
s is for Santa Claus in San Sebastián on September 2nd.

“Of” isn't a word, it is a fat head and a cocked finger.
It has no true meaning. Imagine: a cruse of honey—
see? The voice is too much in the word “cruse”
when it shouldn't be. The voice misses the point. In the beginning was the word and it spent all its time in the voice, “cruse.”

Snow is the only perfect word in English.
Snow begins when nothing else has happened for awhile, snow living out its many quick successive lives, icy rinds of cloud. One cannot see oneself in snowfall, cannot see their eyes aglow inside it.
Snow dreams colder dreams, conjures more than mirrors

conjure. It is actually a near-perfect word.
Note: our poetic vocabulary should not only be a mirror,
it should be able to blind us entirely,
make us as blind as a man on Mt. Sinai in the shrill desert sun. Harken to my voice: we should be blind and believe in as few words as possible.



DANIEL DE CULLÁ

We Lie to Plan

Nolan Janssens

“Get a job you filthy Vagrant!”
Said the man in front of me.
“I work too god damn hard for my money!”
Says
almost everyone.
The beggar clenched his hand into a fist
crushing the hope inside of it.
Will I help this man today I thought
because I can do a lot.
I can buy food from across the world in a day.
Send pictures in a second.
It takes seconds for me to find the answer
to a question I didn’t need to ask.
I can multi-task to the extent
of assimilating ADHD.
I can get love from a pill.
I might need a machine to save my heart.
You see, I can do a lot.
But I can’t seem to reach into my pocket
and change
This homeless man’s day.
It’s hard to find change
when all you have is credit.
I bike past him feeling the same way I woke:
Empty.
Fait says to help; fait never lies
but man lies to himself
more than he does to others
because fate doesn't overrule freewill.



(Except from We Lie to Plan)

Bad Words

Tremaine Friske

Aaronson, Adam A. *A Homestead Primer*. Self-Published. Maine: Portland, 1889. Print.

An interesting late 19th century work detailing many of the little tasks that, to our modern sensibilities, are intrinsic to transforming a house into a home. The author discusses many of the less-than-trivial tasks that have become mundane to us, such as managing finances, arranging renovations, acquiring materials and the importance of maintaining a correspondence with both distant neighbours and rarely-received family. Additionally, he makes several interesting observations about modernization and the importance of making one's home 'readily available for the reception of the irrepressible march of the tomorrow.' At its core, however, this book remains a text about transforming a drafty house into a warm household with a minimum of false-starts and aggravation.

Aaronson, Adam A. *Brick and Mortar: Making a House a Home*. Self-Published. Maine: Portland, 1892. Print.

An interesting text in which the author exhorts the reader to make considerate observations on the character of the home and its many former occupants before commencing, willy-nilly, on broad remodelling projects that could transform the fundamentally important character of a home into something less a welcome environment and into something cold and unfeeling. He spends many chapters tasking the reader with everything from examining the hows and whys of a choice of wallpaper to the mathematical considerations involved with window placement. Ultimately, the text avoids resolution or summary as to the actual constituent elements of what a 'home' is. Despite this shortcoming, it is replete with numerous anecdotal observations about Porter, Maine and the residents who dwell in this interesting corner of New England. The most interesting tale involves a visit he made to one of his neighbours, ending rather unceremoniously with both him and his neighbour imbibing a rather generous quantity of basement moonshine.

Aaronson, Adam A. *Black Grass Gardening*. Self-Published. Maine: Portland, 1899. Print.

An interesting un-treatise on gardening, more concerned with clearing land, removing unwanted flora and the means of dealing with incipient mould growth in dark, damp and hard-to-access areas of a house. Especially interesting for the characterization placed on the land as an opponent to be overcome with hard work and chemical assistance, describing it as 'obstinate and unwelcome; a guest knowingly overstaying his welcome despite energetic protestations to the contrary.' Sadly, it remains an unfinished work, ending after a scant 140 pages and is clearly written with a draft mentality. Very little of the advice given actually materializes into useable knowledge, instead detouring into venomous diatribes against the unwelcome Maine damp and cold, the inescapable taste of salt on everything, despite the position of Porter several hundred miles inland.

Aaronson, Adam A. *The Cold Forest Trilogy*. Westeros Publishing. Maine: Portland, 1898. Print.

A too-late aborted trilogy of romance novels begun in 1896 that end abruptly near the end of 1898. A beautiful local woman who captivates the gentleman main character with her beauty but bewitches him, and twists his love of her into monstrous possessiveness. He slowly comes to see her beauty as a curse, her chains of love binding him, trapping him in this unwelcome homestead. Shackles of affection compel the main character to stay in Porter and, despite her genuine feelings of love for his handsome countenance, he kills her and buries her in the most distant corner of the woods. The final book remains unfinished; as the main character begins to succumb to his crumbling sanity and question his role as the town physician the book ends mid-sentence as he plunges headlong into the woods, howling madly.

Dunwich, Chester. "Dark Skies in Porter." *Porter Herald* 29 July. 1903. A1+. Print.

A newspaper article written by a local reporter documenting the unusual goings-on in the region as relating to the weather, rumblings from the local sewers, and other miscellany of news reportage over the month of July in the year of 1943. While much of it can be attributed to a bout of unseasonal summer storms, there remains a few choice events that, despite being an educated man, Chester simply leaves as 'inexplicable acts of god' as those acts relating to the flocking of birds and exceptionally high instances of miscarriage in the local region.

Dunwich, Chester. "Howling for Blood." *Porter Herald* 29 July. 1905. A1+. Print.

A news article written in July of 1905 describing the unusual actions of local dogs reported upon by many of their owners and visitors to the town. Some of the uncharacteristic canine activities include packs of dogs simply gathering in the middle of the road and staring at passers-by, continuous nocturnal howling and the uncharacteristic slaughtering of fenced food animals. It remained a marginalized occurrence until it came to light at a general assembly in a nearby town that the citizenry of porter had killed every dog within the city limits after a particularly violent altercation between some citizens of repute. Despite the severity of the account, evidence remains anecdotal and no records remain within the town of Porter itself.

Dunwich, Chester. "Tragedy in White." *Porter Herald* 29 July. 1908. A1+. Print.

The final article written by this particular author on a variety of subjects related to the goings-on in Porter but primarily concerned with the sudden and inexplicable rash of stillborn children between January and June 1908. A series of interviews with local utilities workers, teachers and council officials reveals little save a shared opinion that the local water supply must be to blame. An investigation revealed that there was some groundwater leakage from an older homestead which had lay empty for some years. Some renovations on the house, the old Aaronson estate, returned the house to a liveable state and cleared up some leakage into the water table from outdated pipes.

Dwight, Hammond. "My Dear Friend..." Letter. 1911. Print.

A missive written to a university correspondence from a retired gentleman who moved into the Aaronson estate shortly after becoming available for purchase after a series of short ownerships. In it, the author discusses primarily the oppressive winter cold and the humidity in the summer with oblique references to the unwelcome reception from the locals. He recants a story about how his faithful Irish wolfhound went missing and, upon investigation, discovered that there were no dogs within the township whatsoever. He ends with an unusual moment at home wherein he peered out his window one evening and saw the glow of dozens of eyes from the edge of his carelessly-cleared property late one evening. They simply stared up at him and he at them until the sun set and they returned to the woods. He details his feelings of apprehension and announces his desire to return to New York State at the earliest possible convenience.

I Asked Her

Tremaine Friske

I asked her but she refused to answer
so she embraced me
until I was blue in the face
despite knowing better
though I knew the answer
over and over again
only once
against my better judgement
who
what
she said so what?
but she wouldn't look at me
but I couldn't look at her
and neither of us spoke
and we started yelling
but it was too late
and regretted it
one too many times
and begged her, and pleaded
everything I could think of
once she had calmed down
at the end
on the way down
on the way out
on that day
about Venice
about hotels
about commuting
about missing minutes
what his name was
what next
and she asked me
I asked her and regretted it
I asked her.

Tell Me

Rachel Wong

About the last time I saw you
When I didn't have to use words
To describe my feelings about you
It seems so distant now
Everything
Changed suddenly
You moved out of my heart
There is this unprecedented vacancy
I don't know what more
You want
From me
I thought that I had given you
everything you needed
But I guess I didn't see
That you had other plans that didn't
include
Me
And you, together
What you had once wanted
But this 'forever'
Isn't all it's cracked up
To be
I wait every day
For you to come back to your senses
For you to say
That you want to start over



ROMAN COLOSSEUM
ELIZA COOPER



Europe Through My Eyes: Prague

Jasmin Ring

This past summer, I was fortunate enough to be selected to participate in SFU's Prague Humanities Field School. Before I heard about this experience I had never placed the Czech Republic on my list of must-see destinations; however, after 6 weeks in Europe's most intriguing and captivating city (in my opinion!) I would visit it again and again.

The Old World beauty of Prague is absolutely breathtaking. Everywhere you turn there are cobblestone streets and red-roofed buildings. Prague is known as "The City of One Hundred Spires" because of the soaring spires that appear throughout the city. Every day, as I walked over the 650-year old Charles Bridge to school, I could not believe that a city of such majesty existed in this world. The prolific writer Franz Kafka was a native resident of Prague, and scenes from his novels came alive as I wandered Prague's streets and alleyways. The city has borne witness to extraordinary political and social events throughout history. In some parts of the city there is almost a heaviness to the air, as if the memories of times past are bearing down upon you. As a student of both History and World Literature, Prague fulfilled all of my dreams.

One night, the other field school participants and I decided to explore Prague by dark. Our accommodations were in Mala Strana, right at the base of the park at Petrin Hill. We found ourselves walking the park's winding paths, heading higher and higher, not knowing what we would find at the top. As we turned the last corner, we found ourselves gazing at a stunning view of Prague Castle by night. Its lights (funded by Mick Jagger and the Rolling Stones!) illuminated the night sky. That day was also the start of the Prague Spring International Music Festival and a barge on the river had a live orchestra playing on it. As we stood staring at the wonders before us, we could hear the strains of classical music drifting up from the river below. For that moment at least, we were transported to an entirely new world.

The most amazing part of this travel experience was the connections made between the participants. There were fourteen of us on this field school and although we are all very different, we complimented each other beautifully. It was invigorating to be surrounded by passionate, curious, and open-minded individuals. Through the experiences we had together, whether it was late night adventures, weekend excursions to Bratislava, Vienna, or Budapest, or wandering in a tiny Jan Hus museum in the Czech countryside, I felt I was able to truly find who I was at this point in my life. Ultimately, Prague is a threshold into discovering your hidden strengths.



Editor's note: We neglected to include these pieces in the printed edition of Lyre 7



A WALK IN THE WALLENSTEIN GARDENS
JASMIN RING

On the Shores of Salvatore

Jaiden Dembo

Restless nights and bloodshot eyes were the result of the unrelenting drive to solve what people were calling an accident. Leon's body ached from withdrawal as he dragged it through the winding cobblestone streets only by his will. He could feel the throb of the bass in time with his heart as people cheered and sang only a few blocks away, dressed in their feathers and jewels. Locals would drift past him, drawn by the call of the party and oblivious to one of the many foreigners who came to drink on their shores. Except Leon was not here to drink and lose himself to the beat of the drum, not this time.

The narrow streets were dizzying as they carved through the packed city, the buildings leaning into each other like drunken friends. Moonlight paled their bright pastels and highlighted their white moldings, and around every corner Leon was met by ancient stone churches. Energy vibrated through the air, sizzling with the humidity of the jungle that had been cleared centuries ago, and every so often a breeze from the ocean would give him a cooling kiss.

Leon wiped the sweat from his brow and dug into his jean pockets for a now crumpled piece of paper, the black ink of an address smeared but still legible, 33 R. Maciel de Baixo, Salvador. He glanced from the paper to the powder blue building before him, with its arched windows and green doors, vines twisting through the iron railings of the second floor balcony and climbing to the roof. The doors were thrown open to let the night air into the bustling bar with people spilling and stumbling out at their leisure. Leon shoved the paper back into his pocket and walked across the threshold into the golden glow of the drinking den.

If it had been hot outside it was Hell inside. Sweat immediately began to accumulate in every possible crevice and made his skin slick, he was still not accustomed to this Brazilian heat. His dry throat yearned for the refreshment of a cold beer, or the burn of some wicked spirits that would make him forget the temperature of the room. Leon slowly navigated his way to the dark wood of the bar, pushing through the crowd and bumping bodies with too many people he wished he hadn't. Except for the one woman made of curves and lust, he could have lingered for a moment longer with her.

Over the discord of drunken conversation and blaring music Leon signaled for the bartender who was currently serving a set of girls who barely looked eighteen.

"Olá, senhor," the bartender said as he meandered over, winking at the girls before he came to serve the lone man.

"I am looking for a Damien Guerra, they said I could find him here," Leon said as he leaned over the bar.

"O demônio," echoed through the bar, a whisper soon lost in the undercurrent of the noise. Leon wasn't familiar with the lilting Portuguese and he didn't have time to register the word other than its sound.

The bartender eyed Leon with crossed arms, "Why would you be looking for a man like that?"

Leon gritted his teeth, the smell of alcohol filling his nose and calling his name from behind the bar. "He knew my father." He did not want to elaborate to a stranger.

A silence hung between the two men, and Leon resisted the urge to pull the man across the bar and crack his knuckles against his jaw.

"Buy a drink and I'll tell you," the bartender finally offered.

Leon motioned to a green beer bottle in the glass fridge behind the bar, and the bartender shook his head and reached for what was clearly a more expensive bottle. Leon shrugged and slid the reais to the

bartender in return for his overpriced beer.

As the liquor hit his tongue every cell in his body sang with satisfaction. It was like they had been screaming for months and he hadn't realized until they'd stopped. His muscles surrendered their tension and Leon stroked the bottle lovingly. He could not let another drop touch his lips.

"So tell me, where is Mr. Guerra?" Leon said.

The bartender motioned upwards, "Take the stairs, he's on the second floor."

Leon abandoned his unfinished beer at the bar and headed to the stairs at the back of the room. He stepped over the chain strung across the entrance and left the cacophony below.

The second floor was a studio, left with its marble floors open. From the outside it appeared much smaller than the high ceilings and lofty space that was the room's reality. All of the floor-to-ceiling windows were left open, their white gauze curtains dancing in the breeze. The room was lit by dozens of burning candles, while incense added layers of musk to the air. Cacti, succulents, and lush jungle greens crowded every surface that wasn't claimed by fire, and Leon half expected a parrot to fly out from one of the small potted trees. A record player was hiding somewhere in the room and murmured smoky jazz. At the far end of the room a man sat at a lone table with a bottle of liquor and a glass, shuffling a deck of cards with finesse.

Leon cleared his throat and took a hesitant step forward, "Damien Guerra?"

When the man lifted his gaze Leon swore he heard a gunshot. He took a step toward him, the man with a jawline that could cut and cheekbones made of razorblades.

"That is one of my names." He nodded.

Leon crossed the space between them, "You testified for Joseph Delacroix in a case last month. The trial of Vincent Costa?"

Damien had returned to shuffling his cards, and then dealt himself a game of solitaire. He took the final shot of his drink and rested the glass of ice on the table.

"Awful man, a rapist, murderer, and molester. And devious enough to rival the Devil himself," he lilted in his Portuguese accent. This was ironic coming from a man who was as equally deplorable. A true gangster in his own right, according to the case file at least.

"Yes," Leon said with a nod, "Mr. Delacroix spent months working on that case, but could never find enough evidence to put Vincent away. It was your testimony that gave Vincent a life sentence."

"If you're here to kill me you're doing a horrible job." Damien didn't even glance up from his game of cards.

Leon sighed; he had spent days shifting through his father's casework, and weeks hunting down every man and woman who had helped in the case. He wasn't leaving until he got what he came for.

"I'm not here to kill you. I'm here to ask you about the death of Mr. Delacroix," Leon said.

With a single, swift movement Damien cleared his game and returned the cards to a complete deck. He folded his hands on the table and watched Leon for a moment. "Sit." He gestured to the chair across from him.

There was nothing that made Leon want to sit across from this man but he did as he was commanded.

"I have already answered all of the police's questions. It is my understanding that he was in a car accident," Damien said.

Those words dragged through Leon like a dull knife. He was exhausted from hearing the same response over and over. It was an accident.

"No," was the only word Leon could manage through gritted teeth.

A wicked grin spread across Damien's face and he chuckled, "You don't think so?"

“I know that it wasn’t,” Leon said.

Damien shook his head, “What’s your name, boy?”

“Leon.”

“Delacroix,” Damien echoed, “I knew I recognized you. You look so much like your father.”

The amount of times Leon had heard that through his life was without number. Every time he stood next to his father he was a faded reflection, the print of a masterpiece, identical in looks but lacking the effort and prowess. Now the world had lost the original and all that remained was a half-hearted effort.

Something was clearly entertaining because Damien was laughing to himself again as he rose from his chair, “Let me pour you a drink.”

“I’m fine,” Leon said.

“But I insist,” Damien said as he turned to the liquor cabinet behind him to retrieve another glass. Soon he was pouring the gold spirit over two glasses of ice. Damien left the bottle on the table.

“What is it?” Leon asked as Damien slid the drink over to him.

“Like me it goes by many names,” Damien said as he returned to his seat.

The urge to roll his eyes was strong but Leon refrained, if Damien wanted to dance then Leon would dance, “Give me one of them,” Leon said.

“Cachaça,” Damien replied, “but the locals call it água-benta, holy water. Perhaps that’s why it burns so badly for sinners like you and me.”

Drinking, gambling, and drugging, was that what made Leon a sinner? Living life fast and hard, with the accelerator melted to the floor of the car. Avoiding his family, dropping out of law school, and fighting with his father could also be added to the list. He could still remember that frozen winter night when the windows shook from their screaming, and how his mother stood between them with cheeks wet from tears, begging them to stop. The only reason he had even been present at his father’s final case was because his father had cut the artery of cash flow, and he had been expected to sit in court and learn from one of the masters.

Damien raised his glass, “To your father. He was a great man.”

“He was,” Leon said as he lifted his glass to Damien’s, and then tilted it back to his lips.

There was no kiss sweeter than this, and the burn she left you with faded into the comforting warmth of a fire. Leon had spent too many nights at this fireside, and he quickly set the glass down. He could still hear her siren calls ringing through his head.

“My father was murdered. Do you know anything about it?” Leon asked.

Damien ran a hand across his jaw, “I might.”

“What do you know?” Leon’s heartbeat had picked up and adrenalin stabbed down his spine as he leaned forward.

There was a glint of mischief in Damien’s eyes, “You’re a gambling man, let’s play a game of Gin Rummy. If you win, I’ll tell you what you want to know.”

Leon sat back in his chair, “And if I lose?”

“I name my price,” Damien said.

The thought of losing his family’s entire fortune was not appealing, but neither was the thought of losing another lead. Leon took another drink and swallowed any fear he had with it.

“Let’s play,” Leon said.

Damien stretched out his hand and Leon shook it, “It’s a deal then.”

The cards were shuffled and dealt, a pile left in the middle of the table, and the two men began their game. Leon found his lips frequenting the glass of holy water, and it wasn’t long before Damien was pouring them both a fresh glass. There was that familiar haze setting in, that made the edges of Leon’s vision soft but maintained focus on what was important.

Both men discarded cards and picked up new ones, taking their turns in synchronized flow. Leon had just picked up a new card when all of the candles wavered, their flames dancing back and forth trying to

escape their death as a draft whipped through the room.

“Ghosts,” Damien said.

Leon paused, glancing from the windows to the now settled candles. “What?” He asked.

Once again Damien found humor in the situation, he laughed and finished off his drink. “It’s carnival, don’t you know what that means?” He asked.

All that Leon knew of carnival were the huge crowds, packed streets full of drunken dancers, and the parades. It was all one giant party that lasted for days and attracted the youth of wealthy foreign countries.

“No. Do explain,” Leon said.

“During carnival the wall between this world and the spirit world is at its thinnest. The spirits and demons come over to this side to play. Why do you think people’s blood runs so wild?” Damien asked.

“I thought it had something to do with alcohol,” Leon replied.

Another laugh won from Damien. He could laugh as much as he liked because as Leon knocked one last card his hand became a winning hand. Laying his cards out on the tabletop he arranged his cards into a suitable amount of runs and melds. He couldn’t help the smile creeping up on his lips, it was about time he had a victory.

“Well, look at that,” Damien said as he laid out his cards, “You’ve beat me.” His hand only had one run, the remainder were mismatched cards.

Excitement swelled in Leon’s chest, amplified by the alcohol running through his veins. It felt good to be on top, and as celebration he drained his glass.

“Now, tell me what I want to know,” Leon said.

“There are times when you need to make a deal with the Devil in order to put away a demon,” Damien said as he collected the cards.

A nagging feeling began to grow in the pit of Leon’s stomach, “What do you mean?”

“Your father needed my help, and he had something I wanted,” Damien said, “Every man has a soul, but your father’s was darkness dressed in honour, which makes it something irresistible.”

Ice trickled through his bones and the muscles in Leon’s back tied themselves into knots, “You killed him?”

“There was a mechanical failure in your father’s car that night. It happens from time to time in those older models. I had nothing to do with it,” Damien said as he dusted off his hands. “And even if I did, no one would ever know,” he added in a whisper.

All of the previous joy Leon had felt was drained from his body, now he just sat staring at this man. The nights drenched with sweat from the withdrawal, endless and aching flashed before his eyes. One thought had held him during those nights, the thought that he would solve at least one case in his life and make his father proud. He had followed every lead, and now he was left with this as his answer.

Damien stood from his chair, a king rising from his throne, “You made a deal with me, and this time I let you win. A sinner like you belongs to me, and so I say until next time.”

The flames flickered without a breeze and the candles went out, leaving the room in darkness, and Leon sitting alone at the table. He pushed back his chair and stood up, grabbing his glass and hurling it at the wall with a scream. The liquid dripping down onto the floor was the only sound left after the shattering of glass, and Leon sank to his knees.

Incarnate

Alicia Blimkie

In the case that we are angels cast down from heaven
Shackled to flesh like a prisoner to concrete
I affirm my right to exalt this moment and sing in these chains
I will rinse my mouth with salt to burn away old words,
rebrand healed scars to reinvent past pains.
Creating a version of myself from stray musings and daydreams
because we are who we think we will be, not who we thought we were.

Let the earth drink me up, the smooth blades of grass enfold me.
Buried deeper and deeper in the dirt, my veins are roots,
the life source, the belief.
Encased in this damp, soft world there is no air;
I can only breathe with my mind.
Tender skin aches where my wings were torn off
and as feelings recede the last sensation is a thought:

Is it over
or has it just begun?

PENTHIÈVRE
MELANIE HIEPLER

You Heard

Abby Zaporteza

Few things compare
To feeling and knowing that you are understood.
To be heard even when you're tripping over your
Words
Which actions always speak louder than
More than that which you can sufficiently express
To say less
Or little
Or whatever you want
Or nothing at all and to be caught regardless of
Whether or not you speak the same language
Or have sailed any of the same seas
Is freeing, to say the least.

To be met halfway
Even when you're not where you think you ought
to be
Is to be hoisted on the shoulders of a listening ear;
Helping you to reach the heights of the deepest
parts of you
And harness the courage to articulate yourself
Even though you don't know how to
Yet.

How wonderful it is to speak,
And know that someone is all ears.
To know that in spite of whatever you do or say or
didn't
Or didn't intend to and shouldn't
Someone is listening.
Someone understands.
Someone hears.



52.1333 °N, 118.4500 °W
SARAH CRYDERMAN

Segment 1

Tremaine Friske

PART 2

The Sleeping Eye

...And pressed tightly into her hands; she gave willingly like cool, liquid glass. Inwards, falling blossoms at the end of spring and a rising tick-tick-tick spun wrong way 'round as the needle dropped. She swallowed the darkness, folding up; overcast dawn grey at the first sign of rain. Hands and fingers blossomed, peeled away on a soft wind skin first, then bone in fits and starts just like her ninth birthday. Delicately floating away on a breeze but she was so, so sad whenever she blew out those candles.

A rumble, shudder, explosion of realization in an instant; there was no longer the comfort of loneliness this deep down. She was. Simply being was too basic so forwards and backwards met to make her now a passed present, like a gift one could only give and never receive. Something was consuming those foundation tastes and smells and grew hungry for sights and sounds, true treasures to have and hold.

An echo played, plucked on steel strings and her self knew the shape. Downwards and away the curved horns of the bull rose on either side of that disappearing silver cord, so onwards and upwards she went; a fade-in rising pitch she climbed with expert ease. Little lightning on telegraph lines leaped forward, unbidden; a day spent in the park beneath that tree covered in letters while thunder crashed overhead, overheard, those long-faded lips meeting again and again.

What colour were his eyes? Him, so much like the thunder on that last day spent free from the bull, the beast, the bidden time all-caught-up. Try as she might, the colour of his eyes stayed a pale, unremarkable grey.

I always wish I could say it one last time / it always feels like a long, slow goodbye

She remembered crying on that day.

It was late fall and the tired sunlight lit her kitchen. On sunny days she got exactly ten minutes of direct illumination before the sun, with all its titanic power; sank uselessly behind a long row of glass and steel condominiums left empty for all but the short summer months. She watched the sunlight crawl languidly across her kitchen table, catching and snagging, for just a moment, on each small drop she had left. Some minor defiance on her part; the conceit that something so small could move the world and stall the sun itself, and yet even those things felt microscopic next to the feeling that summoned her tears.

She looked up only once, hoping to see something, anything, but she was too late. All she saw was the distant gold shadow cast from behind those empty, glass prisons until it too, was gone beyond some distant horizon she could never hope to reach.

PART 2

The Bull

There was no further to go; all that was had come and gone, food for that dark shape that wandered this way and that on irregular, slow thumping hooves. Every staggered step closer took a little more and left a little less; the world shook and rattled in that quaking and the colours fell like loose dishware resting on some shelving display, hitting the floor, shattering, sinking away in impossible directions. It bellowed; the I, he would have said, should stand and fight but the Me was a coward without strength. Everything was circles falling down the rabbit hole, the growing existent poverty from which the idea of escape was just one more meal.

A quiet moment stretched out cat-like across a brown sofa with small white spots, bringing back innocent days of forts and balloons and spilled juice. Wind chimes and pine needles spilled through the westward windows; small fingers held lemonade up to her eyes and the blue sky turned gold.

Raytracing in the 20th century / Spirals

She was torn apart by a pack of dogs, screaming, gnashing, barking, howling and the sound of ripping skin and clothes pulled away by flashing white and red. A steel box, a white room, whispered crying and shaking heads inside 301 – the same as his. The persistent beat was measured and cut with a stabbing bleat-bleat-bleat interrupted by the distant sounds of long, slow incisions being drawn and silenced.

Everything seemed flat, 2-dimensional; a sleeping eye pried open, alone, its other long departed. Open, shut; an independent polyrhythm (he would be so proud) concurrent but separate from the others. A one-sided strobing; light on the right and forever dark on the left. The strobing stopped and a blackness took hold that moved and breathed wherever she felt.

The first eternity was the hardest; before The Bull took over the edges, before the cliffs and chasms rose and fell, before the music and behind the scenes she searched. All those delicate, crystal promises touted her whole life about the lost and the found and how riding at the front of the train meant being the first one through the tunnel but whatever you do, don't stare directly at it or you'll go blind. What was blindness, if not a less imprisoning loneliness than what she felt now?

An utter, absolute blindness and deafness had robbed her of something more precious than the simple sights and sounds; it had rendered her apart from an irreplaceable nothing that moved her in ways nothing else ever could.

PART 2

Event Horizon Dawn

There was nothing left but downward, away. Everything else has dipped below the most distant horizon she could imagine, the places all enraptured with The Bull.

She was so, so tired; the iridescent rainbow-filled clouds seemed to go on forever and there was never anything to revel in up there. Her music stretched as wide as possible; the whole of everything seemed to curve away at the edges, falling inwards as one drifted outwards.

A ripple became a wave / in search of

The Bull took her by his horns and dragged her away, into the centre of his world of twisting truths and rhetoric given wings. There was no fanciful ball, no king on a throne or queen proclaiming truths, nothing but a tree of the palest white standing on a mound of rotten fruit. Golden apples hung, sprung, fell and rotted as quickly as a raindrop, as slowly as molasses. The hidden sun cast its light from beyond the hill, just out of sight but never rising.

She was naked; The Bull stood behind her; it had his face. She scrambled up the slick, mouldy hill on her hands and knees, trying to reach the tree at the top. Its branches sprawled out in every direction with cold, delicate and leafless fingers. The fruit stained her skin red and yellow as she struggled up to the trunk, the sickly-sweet stench filling every pore.

A golden apple in her hands; it shone like the afternoon light that slid over her body. She looked for the sun, but all she saw was a profound void; a total lack of existence from which not even terms like light and darkness could be derived. The light itself simply was cold.

She took a bite of the apple.

She heard the sound of waves crashing on the beach in September; they were making love under the stars. She heard the sound of acid jazz saxophone; they were fucking on the kitchen table in her apartment before dinner ended. She heard the after-movie music play as the credits rolled; they were holding one another as they left with the wind. All of it slowly disappeared into the profound silence; that absence of being.

The world faded out at the end of the record and left the echoing click-click-click of a needle forever skipping the last groove. She cried in the darkness breathlessly with sad, silent sobs and tears like the rain of her first summer kiss at camp. She rubbed her eyes, held her face.

Toska

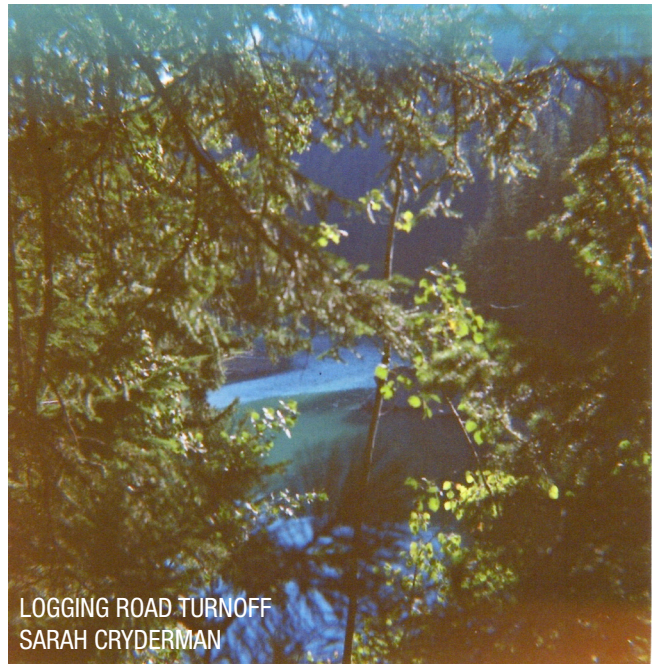
Jaiden Denbo

Electrify me
Shock me alive
Hook up my heart with cables
And send lightning bolts
Scattering under my skin

I'm trying to wake up
Because I'm lost in a blur of reality
Shapes and colours passing by
As the days trip over each other

Time is dragging me through the dirt
And I can't feel a thing
The gravel is stripping me
To my bones and grinding me down

I'm driving on the open road
Through the dry heat of the desert
With the hood down and the wind
Giving me sex-hair
Press the pedal to the floor
Hear the engine snarl
And I long for the burn of the crash



Empathy at a Crossroads: On the Impact of World Literature

Ken Ip

World Literature is a multiplicity, such that one might call it a multiple mess of assorted things. It evades definition. Yet, in a post-modernist academic setting where identity and plurality are to be embraced, and furthermore in a political cultural environment such as multicultural Canada, World Literature has the potential to be the vanguard of the endeavor brought into being by long traditions in the Arts and Humanities.

One might ask, how?

To look into that question one must look at what World Literature demands of its students. Analysis of a broad spectrum of not only world-derived cultural content and systems of meaning, but also in terms of their unique media and the forms of meaning is what drives the project of World Literature. In the pursuit of as many points of perspective as can be found, the endeavor produces discourse unparalleled in terms of the interdisciplinary. While perhaps ambitious in its objectives, the potential to see where one holds unjustifiable views and to see where one can build upon another's viewpoints, and to take action to change the world accordingly is something that cannot be discarded. As a student embedded in social science disciplines, there is a particular synergetic clarity that emerges when one blends the approach of World Literature's blend of close reading and context analysis to the individualistic qualitative accounts and mass statistical data that form the base of scientific methods.

To add to that, one must look into what World Literature demands of its instructors. Professors that I have encountered, who have taught true to the roots of what I consider the ideal of World Literature, have come into the classroom ready to listen even while speaking. They bring in creative methods of inquiry – creative areas of inquiry. They bring untold and unknown pieces of the puzzle that is the academy into the classroom such that students who have never been to other places can experience, even at a removed distance, the worlds of experience created by words.



That is what I see in World Literature in terms of its form as an area of inquiry – an unbounded discipline suited to exploring an unbounded world. It is a field that follows language as its structure, which in turn is infinitely generative in itself. This is the key factor that drove me to seek it as my specialty, and which I believe lies at the heart of its importance. The discipline is engaged in very current discussions that integrate old roots into new contexts. Questions of how the human can define themselves, of how environments on the physical, aesthetic and social levels can shape life, and of how theory can become not simply a lens on life, but in their ideals ways of life – these are what drive me to pursue World Literature. It is where we explore questions that might perhaps never be universally answered – it is where we explore these questions in such a way that we can see what others might think of it. It is where there is a blank canvas upon which to paint selected parts of whichever experiences, perspectives and knowledge a student might bring to the room – and it is then where this canvas decorated by the individuality of the student might be shared.

At its heart, World Literature is a pursuit of empathy. Here, when other disciplines veer towards the skills limited to the academy and the formalities of qualification, a student who has already learned what they need of these things can go a step further. To pursue World Literature in its ideal requires that one embrace their individuality, yet at the same time acknowledge, pay homage to, and learn from the perspectives of others. World Literature is important quite simply because it is an arena that could encompass all, or nothing at all, simultaneously. It is important because I know that whatever lens or world I choose to explore, it is a crossroads to which I can return and share what I have learned.

Black Woman Stride

Youeal Abera

You will never find a being quite like them.
Not in the grandest of safaris, with the most mystical creatures,
Not in the highest galleries, showcasing arts greatest features.
Not in the plains of any land,
Not in any sculptures crafted by man.
Nothing in the sea could compare to the gift
Of a black woman, for it's a blessing to the eyes-
To see a strong black woman walk with a lion's stride.



REVELSTOKE
SARAH CRYDERMAN

Conversing with a Fruit Tree: An Interview with Shiraz Ramji

Alex Harasymiw and Charles Mao

Shiraz has something of a reputation around the Burnaby campus. Already the subject of numerous interviews, the man has become something of a local celebrity, known for his outgoing personality and willingness to use his poetry to connect with passersby.

“That is the purpose of why I write,” he said to us. “I like to share with others, sharing is a part of creativity. It connects me with people... they share their story, I share mine.”

Inspired by the encouraging words of his former elementary school teacher in Tanzania, Shiraz harnesses his confident observations on aging, sports, and gender justice, along with the sheer economy of five-cent photocopying, to get his poetry out into the world.

“If I give my poems to people, eighty percent of them read in front of me; otherwise, since I’m not famous, they won’t read it... I want to see their reaction.”

For Shiraz, the immediacy poetry can sustain between poet, poem, and reader takes precedence over what many of us may see as the poet’s principle preoccupation: searching for some profound inspiration, or brooding endlessly over a particular poem’s formal aspects. When asked about his writing style, Shiraz breezily replied, “I’ve never done a creative writing course, so I don’t know what types of poetry there are.”

Far from a purely aesthetic object, Shiraz sees poetry as a means of engaging with members of the campus community as a whole, and finding commonalities to bridge the wide, imaginary gulfs that separate one culture from another. Shiraz noted, ‘often times, it’s our very notion of multiculturalism that serves to isolate communities, and individuals, from one another.’

“I volunteer at a lot of cultural events and festivals. Sometimes I feel multiculturalism is becoming an institutional form of segregation, with every ethnic culture pretending to be the best, without understanding the values of other cultures.”



While discussing multiculturalism, Shiraz revealed the importance of having both cultural variety and commonality. He works to transcend boundaries of cultural identity by drawing attention to the very commonality of the earth beneath us. It may not be surprising, then, that many of Shiraz’s poems grow out of an affinity for nature, cultivating fruit and tree imagery to illustrate the common origins of seemingly disparate identities.

For Shiraz, the fruits born of a common earth speak to a shared sense of space, spurring one to act on behalf of shared goals, rather than divided national goals. Rather than employ what he sees as a Canadian tendency to use negative language to disclaim other cultural perspectives in order to reinforce one’s own sense of self and belonging, Shiraz strives to bring out a positive global vision in his poetry.

But this vision refuses to merely remain in the realm of the imaginary or the shifting fashion of poetic representation. Instead, Shiraz sees a positive, global vision as necessarily spurring activism towards its realization. Just as his fruits of the earth serve as a common source of nourishment, creativity nourishes social activism. In the same way that poetry unites poet, poem, and reader, the interplay between shared creative acts has the ability to reach across cultural boundaries, and to allow members of different communities to empathize with one another, each taking pleasure in the simple act of sharing stories.

For Shiraz, moments of connection are key. In crossing the boundaries of culture and experience, we create a stronger sense of global unity. Even the smallest encounters leave an imprint on our individual experiences of what it is to be human. As we say our goodbyes and thank Shiraz for his time, we are reminded of the universality of our own struggles with isolation and connection.

“Every person is a fruit tree.
Justice-friendly books,
songs, poetry and music
are nutrients and water
for the fruitful trees.”
-Shiraz Ramji



Alumni Snapshots: Alex Anaya

Rhiannon Wallace and Elda Hajdarovac

This March, the *Lyre* executive team had the opportunity to meet with Alex Anaya, an SFU World Literature alumnus who graduated in 2012. An outstanding student during his time at SFU, Alex has since completed a Masters at the University of Toronto and is pursuing a second MA at the University of British Columbia.

Alex was a student in one of the first classes offered by the World Literature Program in 2008. At the suggestion of Dr. Paulo Horta, one of Alex's professors, Alex declared a World Literature major in addition to his Linguistics extended minor. At the time, Alex's goal was to become a teacher, and Dr. Horta advised him that understanding multiple perspectives, which is a key component of World Literature, would help him reach this goal. In 2010, Alex spent a semester abroad in Kansai Gaidai in Osaka, Japan, which proved to be a formative experience for his academic pursuits.

Near the end of his degree, Alex decided to pursue an honours thesis in World Literature under the supervision of Dr. Melek Ortabasi. His thesis focused on three adaptations of Faust by Osamu Tezuka: *Fausuto*, *Hyaku Monogatari* (Hundred Stories), and *Neo Fausuto*. His research focused primarily on the progression of the narrative through the three versions. Alex submitted the first draft of his thesis to the American Comparative Literature Association, and it was accepted for the 2012 Annual Meeting at Brown University. He enjoyed the opportunity to talk with like-minded students and to participate in an event that helped him to prepare for graduate school.

Alex was the first SFU World Literature graduate to be admitted to the University of Toronto's Comparative Literature graduate program. Only a year long, the program is intense but rewarding. Lectures incorporate professors from various areas of study; for instance, one course features a new guest lecturer for each session. Students are also able to choose courses outside of the core syllabus that correspond to their areas of study. The program requires prospective students to know English as well as another language. Students in the program learn to read in a third language by the time they graduate; Alex chose to study German as his additional language. He highly recommends the program for students wishing to continue their studies in literature.

Alex is now pursuing a Masters in Library and Information Studies at the University of British Columbia. He still has an ambition to become a teacher or professor, but hopes that his current program at UBC will give him a wider variety of job opportunities as well. Since returning to the West Coast, Alex has been asked by Dr. Melek Ortabasi to sit on the World Literature Advisory Committee as an alumnus representative. Alex assured us he has not given up literature; he is interested in attending an upcoming conference in Japan with a focus on Japanese pop culture mediums.

Contributor Bios



A.V. Testani is majoring in Archaeology at SFU while writing for The Peak newspaper. Her writing stems from a deep love of words and the art of storytelling, inspired by her father, mother, and grandfather. In tenebris, in lucem.

Abby Zaporteza is a World Literature student from Simon Fraser University with a varied Liberal Arts background. She considers herself an ordinary writer with a zest for wisdom and positive thinking.

Alex Harasymiw is a sometimes third-year, sometimes fourth-year World Literature Major. When he's not biting off too much, Alex savours the smells of new and used books, new and used theories, and new, but preferably used, metaphors. Don't let him near your bookshelf.

Alicia Blimkie is in her final year at SFU, majoring in world relations and minoring in dissecting books. She aims to change this world - one stanza at a time.

Anisa Maya Dhanji is in her third year at SFU. She's a Linguistics major and a French minor. When she's not grooving to jazzy music, you can find her enjoying Canada's coastlines.

Anna Lechintan is a third year World Literature major at SFU. She loves to read books and writes in her spare time. She hopes to make a career out of her degree one day.

Avnit Garcha is an SFU student studying World Literature and Education. She enjoys reading and writing poetry, and hopes to one day be a teacher encouraging creativity amongst her students.

Charles Mao is a World Literature at Simon Fraser University. Outside class, he enjoys reading history books, playing saxophone, and skiing.

Daniel de Cullá is a writer, photographer and poet based in Spain.

Dennis Kamdar is a second-year SFU student and an aspiring photographer.

Elda Hajdarovac is a fourth year World Literature Major. When she is not buried amongst her books she hopes to one day perfect the almighty "Stairs of Dressage" — Rhythm, Relaxation, Contact, Schwung, Straightness, Suppleness, and lastly Collection.

Eliza Cooper is a third-year student at SFU who has a passion for travel, literature and photography.

Hardi Mistry is currently a third year student at SFU. When she began writing she did not know where it would take her or what it would eventually become, but it has carved a very special place in her heart


Iulia Sincaian is a third year student at SFU. A World Lit honours major, she's also completing a minor in international studies and in gender studies.

Jaiden Dembo is a World Literature major from Simon Fraser University with a minor in publishing and a never-ending passion for the craft of creative writing.

Jasmin Ring is a History Major and World Literature Minor in her last semester at SFU! She is enchanted by beautiful music, stories, art, and is always ready to explore something new!

Katie Elsinga encourages imagination to be explored without boundaries, by allowing oneself to freely express who they are, through words of inspiration and intellect.

Ken Ip is planning his Honours project in World Literature. He tries to portray selective facets of the world in his writing.



Melanie Hiepler is a World Literature major at Simon Fraser University. As a literature student, she is intrigued by the way that words and language shape our experiences of the world.

Ming Wang is a third-year engineering student at McMaster University in Ontario. He enjoys capturing the beauty of the natural world.

Nolan Janssens is majoring in the English language and minoring in Creative Writing at the University of British Columbia. He aspires to be subversive and honest in all writing forms.

Olivia Leyser is a 4th year International Studies and World Literature student who wants to go into social work.

Rachael Sykes is a fourth year World Literature student from Simon Fraser University. She started out as a visual arts student, but quickly fell in love with the WL program and switched. As an artist, she enjoys expressing herself through portraits, and highly enjoyed working on her piece “Within”.

Rachel Wong is a 2nd year Communications major and International Studies Minor. As a regular contributor for SFU’s student newspaper The Peak, she loves telling other people’s stories as through her writing. She is a poet, storyteller, and hopes to one day read news to you for a living.

Rhiannon Wallace is a World Literature and International Studies student at SFU. She enjoys writing, drawing and composing songs with her sister, brother and cousin.

Youeal Abera is in his fourth year at Simon Fraser University. He has declared his major in English, and a minor in Criminology. Writing, and the art that is poetry, has always been a platform in which he can express any passion, love, or thoughts on a social issue that is close to his heart.

Sam Weselowski is a fourth year English student at SFU, currently preparing a thesis on the serial poems of Jack Spicer.

Sarah Cryderman likes hot tea, good books and warm blankets. Sometimes she takes photos of nice places or people.

Tremaine Friske is an English major at SFU who views writing as a cheap parlour trick gone horribly right, over and over.