

# The Lyre



*A Literary Journal*



Issue 12 | New Normal | Fall 2021



# *The Lyre's Ongoing Commitment to Our Community*

*The Lyre* is published and distributed on the traditional ancestral Coast Salish lands of the x̣m̄əθk̄w̄əȳəm (Musqueam), S̄k̄w̄x̄w̄ú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), sə́lilw̄ətaʔł (T'sleil-Waututh), q̄íc̄əȳ (Katzie), k̄w̄ik̄w̄əł̄əm (Kwikwetlem), Qayqayt, Kwantlen, Semiahmoo, and Tsawwassen First Nations. As a magazine focusing on World Languages and Literatures, we acknowledge the diversity of Indigenous cultures and the ongoing harm of colonization across the globe. Due to this ongoing struggle, it's important that we share stories and cultures that have remained untold. We encourage readers to be mindful of where we all stand within colonial systems, including Simon Fraser University, and how these systems affect the stories of this magazine.

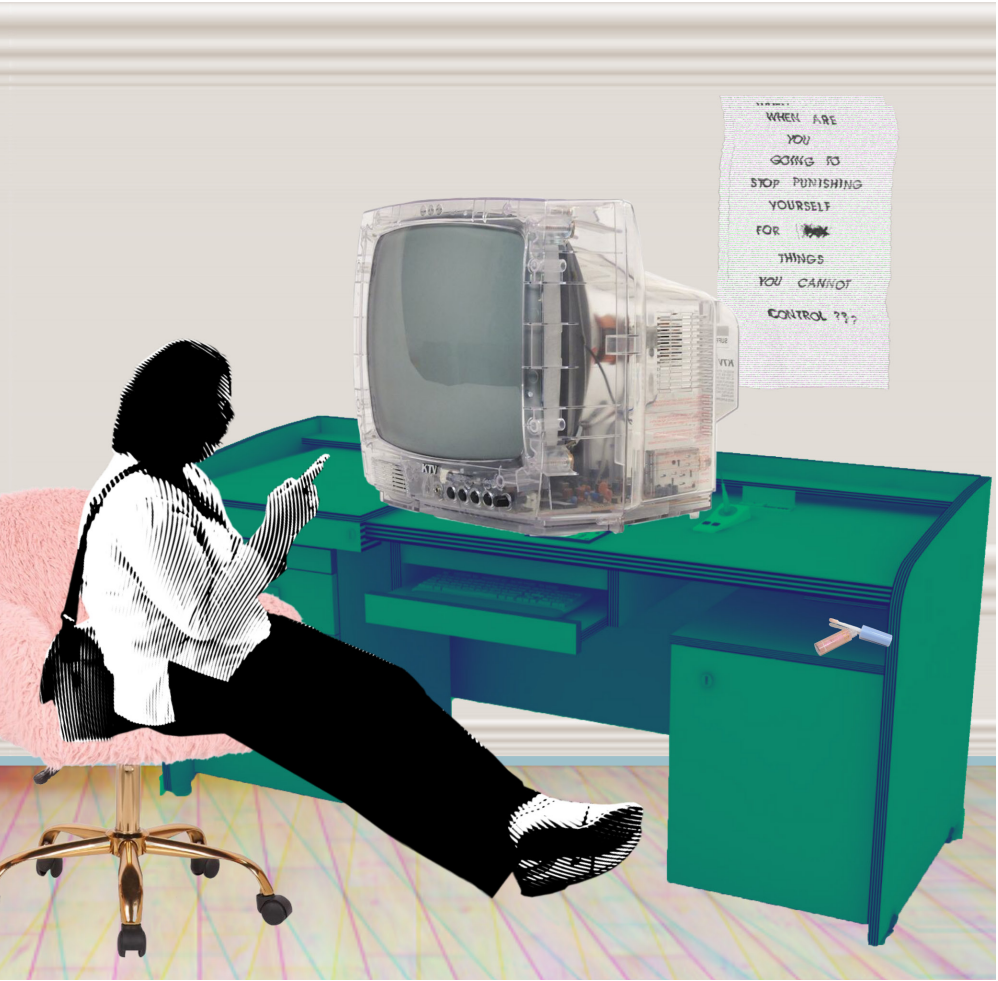
*The Lyre* is working to support resilient voices and strengthen intersectional communities through language and literature. As a publication, we make efforts to reach out to a diverse set of student groups, are committed to non-censorship in storytelling, and have historically conducted a double-blind editing process to reduce bias. Storytelling allows empathy to flourish, thereby combating intolerance in all its ugly forms. *The Lyre* is dedicated to uplifting all voices, including those of newcomers, LGBTQIA2+ students, and BIPOC students. Literature shouldn't be dominated by monolingual dead white dudes and we invite all those interested to submit their work.

We also encourage you, dear reader, to learn which Indigenous lands you are living on by visiting [native-land.ca](https://native-land.ca).



*UntitledUniverse* by Winona Young





WHEN ARE  
YOU  
GOING TO  
STOP PUNISHING  
YOURSELF  
FOR ~~THE~~  
THINGS  
YOU CANNOT  
CONTROL ???

# The Lyre



# *meet the team*

editors-in-chief	Duy Thinh Nguyen & Zeh Daruwalla	
managing editor	Anastasiia Lebedenko	
communications directors	Mizuki Giffin & Rachel Sargeant	
editorial designer	Kitty Cheung	
faculty advisor	Dr. Melek Ortabasi	
associate editors	Alyssa Wu	Gayatri Bhagavatula
	Amanda McRae	Hanna Araza
	Aritro Mukhopadhyay	Laurysssa Toews
	Aya Halliday	Marco Ovies
	Belle Villar	Parmida Saemiyana
	Daniela Roman Torres	Raghava Payment
	Diana Munir	Sara Aristizabal Castaneda
	Duncan Booker	Shannon Bryan
	Erin Brown-John	Tamanna Tamanna
	Eryka Quintos	Winona Young
cover art	<i>UNIVERSE.EXO</i> by Winona Young	

Copyright 2021 remains with specific authors.

*The Lyre* is produced and funded by Simon Fraser University's  
World Languages and Literatures Program.

[journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/lyre/index](https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/lyre/index)



## *from the editors*

Year two into the global pandemic has surely taught us an unprecedented lesson on how we see our life as ‘normal’. We can no longer take a casual conversation with a stranger, a walk on a sunny day, a family gathering, and perhaps even our very existence for granted. The biggest lesson is, perhaps, nothing is self-evident, not even our own perceived sense of normality.

Time brings forth changes. And during the pandemic our sense of time heightens. Time during the pandemic is not exclusively biological, but somewhat ideological. Many of us have come closer to self-reflection to make sense of the meaning of the word “normal.” We are all in this together and growing at every single moment to adapt to the new reality of pandemic living. That is why we choose the theme *New Normal*: to capture that gradual yet robust change from both within and without.

The pandemic dissects our community. Health and safety concerns turn into political and conspiratorial debates. The rise of xenophobia and anti-East Asian and Southeast Asian racism unveils the racist undertones of Western society. And the most disturbing of all is the persistence of colonial trauma. We are trapped in the pandemic, we lose our freedom, but only temporarily. On the contrary, the pains inflicted on Indigenous communities are permanent. The pandemic does not eclipse this problem but rather reminds us of the healing journey ahead to compensate Indigenous communities, especially in this challenging time.



*untitled* by Shenella Silva

We hope this 2021 issue of *The Lyre* can empower our Indigenous and other resilient readers, friends, and loved ones through our authors' stories of self-exploration and how they made their way through 2020. *New Normal* is open to interpretation. The works in this issue may suggest a way to acceptance, retrospection, and growth in adversity by putting social values, politics, and a dainty dose of romance into arts. Together may we develop a shared *New Normal*, one of healing the mistakes of colonization and building a better future after the pandemic.

Thank you to our editorial team for all your contributions. Thank you to our executive team for all your time and efforts. Thank you to our authors for your amazing works.

We want to send a special thank you to Dr. Melek Ortabasi, our faculty advisor. *The Lyre* would not be what it is today without her.

And of course, to our readers, thank you for always supporting us.

Sincerely,  
Duy Thinh Nguyen & Zeh Daruwalla  
Editors-in-Chief, *The Lyre 12*

# contents

## poetry

Alex Masse - <i>Long Hauler</i>	21
Alyssa Victorino - <i>There is a World Within Me</i>	74
Clarence Ndabahwerize - <i>Inherently</i>	72
Elise Volkman - <i>The Guest House</i>	33
Francesca Drake - <i>Single Houses on a Long Street</i>	18
Helen Han Wei Luo - <i>Happy Little Verses</i>	63
Isabella Wang - <i>Goodbye</i>	22
Jade Cameron - <i>Winter</i>	36
Joy Kuang - <i>Numbers</i>	13
Leila Bonner - <i>What Remains</i>	32
Nimra Askari - <i>Pillow</i>	76
Parham Elmi - <i>Modern Reality, Friendships I Don't Understand</i>	31, 37
Scotland Galloway - <i>Across the street</i>	37
Victor Yin - <i>Tastes Good</i>	31
Winona Young - <i>Heart_Emoji</i>	64

## short story & drama

Emma Best - <i>Within The Walls of My Room</i>	14
Kitty Cheung - <i>Blended</i>	25
Mina Han - <i>Daffodil</i>	66



## translation

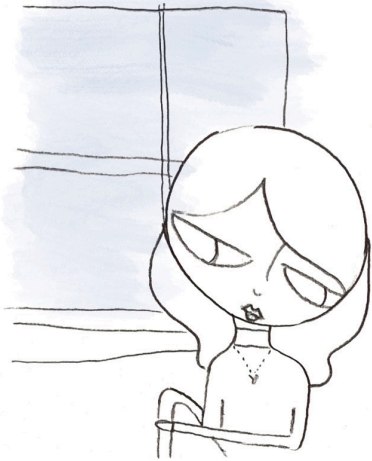
Belle Villar - <i>Seeking the Crowd</i>	69
Daniel Truong - <i>Return to Hometown Residence</i>	20

## dialogue

Anastasiia Lebedenko - <i>On Translation as Exploration: A Conversation with Anna Rusconi</i>	55
Daniela Roman Torres and Sara Aristizabal Castaneda - <i>A Look into Independent Bookselling with Hilary Atleo, Co-Owner of Iron Dog Books</i>	49
Mizuki Giffin and Kitty Cheung - <i>“Love, Always Love”: Conversations about un/settled with Otoniya J. Okot Bitek, Chantal Gibson, and Ebony Magnus</i>	38

## visual

Amy Groves - <i>Thirteen Months of March</i>	12
Kitty Cheung - <i>sagface, bamboo buffoon, bodies blooming bountiful</i>	14, 65, 75
Shenella Silva - <i>untitled photo series</i>	8, 21, 62, 71
Sun Woo Baik - <i>Absence (Photo Collection)</i>	19, 30-31, 35, 36, 72
Winona Young - <i>UNIVERSE.EXO, Untitled Universe</i>	1, 4-5, 82-83



*Thirteen Months of March* by Amy Groves

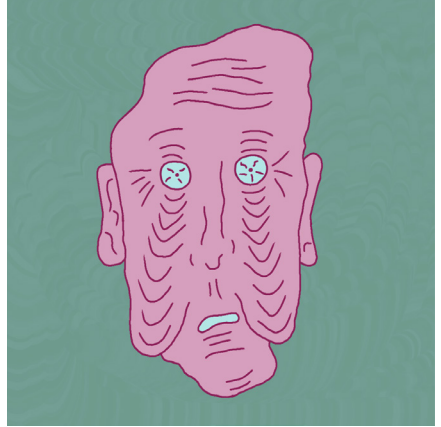
# *Numbers*

Joy Kuang

are well named, really.  
From checking headlines everyday,  
to not checking at all.  
Leaving my phone face down in my room,  
only to walk into a 3:00 PM update  
crackling through the kitchen radio  
reporting the predictable exponential growth  
that no one expected.

Numbers,  
they float around  
and pile up unnoticed  
until one sticks out,  
setting off the cascade  
of pins and needles  
that build up stealthily with every second  
in my legs  
and when I try to stand  
after Zooming left and right,  
I swear  
my feet get more sleep than I do  
and still more  
than my friend in Taiwan  
with her 10:30 AM PST lecture,  
wishing it were the dreaded 8:00 AM one instead.

Numbers,  
they were around before too.  
I guess this new set just feels worse,  
but only until I inevitably  
forget them again.



*sagface* by Kitty Cheung

## *Within The Walls of My Room*

**Emma Best**

I told myself I would stop making rash decisions like this in the middle of the night, but my bed has been in the far-right corner of my room for two weeks now and I'm sick of it.

It's just a mattress on a box spring, deep in the corner to the right of my window, but tonight I've decided that it would look way better in the open corner to the left of said window. In the last nine months of being stuck in my box of a bedroom, I've moved my bed against every wall and corner of this room. Corners, I've discovered, work best for my minimal space. It opens up the center of the room, leaving space for spontaneous solo dance parties or yoga if I ever decide to pull out the mat I bought at the beginning of all this.

Bending my knees to brace for the weight of the mattress, I lift it up and lean it against the wall, allowing me to easily glide the box spring across the floor. As I slide the box spring to the opposite side of the room, I see a polaroid I hastily taped next to my calendar fall off the wall. The flimsy piece of film floats down to my floor, landing face up on the dark grey carpet. Leaning over to pick it up, I look down to see three smiling faces looking back— it's me and my two friends, Alex and Jude, scrunched close together to try and fit in the frame. Dammit, I think to myself, I miss my friends. Pushing those emotions behind me, I stick the photo

back in its previous spot on the wall— fitting snugly between my calendar that I haven't changed in three months and the crease of the corner.

Despite the snow falling outside my window, I break a sweat moving the mattress across the room, plopping it onto the box spring. Stripping myself of my sweatshirt to escape the sticky heat, I'm left in just my undershirt and sweatpants. I grab my comforter and pillows from their temporary place on my floor, tossing them hastily onto the bed. My brain is flooded with the countless other tasks that I should be doing. I have a research paper due in two days. An unanswered message from my aunt on Facebook messenger. I don't know the last time I washed my sheets or the sweatpants I'm wearing right now. But, as my eyes glaze over the bright red 2:32 am on my alarm clock, I know that the only task I might successfully accomplish right now is sleep.

Closing my bedroom door behind me, I sneak out into the dark hallway. Tip toeing across the squeaky hardwood as to not wake up my parents two doors down. I slip into the white tiled bathroom, closing the door behind me and flicking on the light. I come face to face with myself in the mirror, dark bags below my eyes, my once chin length hair now grazing my shoulders. I

run the tap water warm, splash my face with it, and then scrub my skin dry with a towel. Grabbing my toothbrush from the counter to brush my teeth, spitting the minty backwash into the sink. After having a staring contest with the version of myself in the mirror, I creep back into the hallway.

I hear my name being called through the darkness.

"Leah," it's my mom, house coat wrapped around her, sleeping mask pulled to her forehead. "Why are you still up? It's nearly three o'clock in the morning."

"Why are you up?" I respond.

"Because I was awoken by whatever ruckus you were making in your bedroom. What are you even doing in there?"

"I moved my bed again," I reply sheepishly. She had told me before to stop doing that.

"I told you to stop doing that, Leah."

"I know you did, but I got bored again."

"Don't you have a paper due tomorrow?" she asks.

"Oh," I realize, "I guess it is due tomorrow."

She looks back at me, the same look in her eyes as the last time I left a school assignment to the last minute.

Disappointment, confusion, weariness.

“Well,” I decide to end this conversation. “I’d better get to bed, it’s nearly three o’clock in the morning. I’ll probably try to wake up early, work on that paper.”

“Goodnight, Leah,” my mom turns to go back into her and my dad’s room. “Try to not do any more spontaneous interior decorating tonight.”

I say I’ll try but she doesn’t hear my response. The bedroom door is already shut in her place.

Once I’m back in my room, I go to hit the light switch, my eyes catching the same polaroid from earlier on the floor again. I pick it up, Alex, Jude, and I smiling brightly. I do what I should’ve done earlier, grabbing a fresh strip of tape from my desk drawer, peeling off the old one and tossing it into the trash. I go to stick the photo where it was before – between my calendar and the corner of my room – but when I go to do so there’s no space. The edge of my calendar now sits right against the crease of my wall, leaving no room for a picture to be there before or now. Weird, I think to myself, I could’ve sworn that’s where I stuck it. But I choose to blame this moment of confusion on my sleep deprivation, sticking the picture above my calendar and flicking off the light before I flop onto my bed.

Now beneath my covers, I shut my eyes and beg sleep to come to me. Burrowing my face deeper and deeper into my pillow, I try to dig towards a place of quiet seclusion. Each time I think I’ve reached it my body awakens me. The muscles in my legs tighten, bracing for the impact of the fall I’m never landing. I hear a thud! in the far corner of my room. Sitting up in my bed, I adjust my eyes to try and see what caused it. That same polaroid has fallen off the wall, this time taking the calendar down with it. Grunting with frustration, I pull back my comforter and walk over to the fallen items. Crouching down to pick them up, the thumb tack I once used to put up the calendar lost somewhere in the darkness of the corner. When I stand up, I hear another thud! behind me, looking over my shoulder to see a stack of books I had once placed on my desk now tumbling to the floor. Okay, I think to myself, that’s odd. Now carrying the polaroid and calendar, I walk to the desk, leaning down to pick up each book and place them back on the wooden surface. I glance at my clock, 3:13 am, and hope that these noises weren’t loud enough to wake my mom again.

When the sound of her opening the door and calling my name never comes, I return to my bed once again. But as I reach desperately towards sleep, another sound erupts from the



far corner of my room. Jumping out of bed, I try to find the source of the noise. A loud, insistent whine emitting from the walls. Certain that the noises have awoken both my parents, I leap towards my bedroom door, opening and closing it behind me. Prepared to try and explain myself, I'm surprised to not only have no one waiting outside my door to scold me, but to find the whining noise gone. The hallway is silent apart from the light snoring of my dad two doors down. Weird. When I go to reopen my bedroom door, I'm met not only with the same whining noise but with another thud! The door opens no more than 45-degrees, hitting the wall it was once several feet away from. I gasp at the now significantly smaller room, stepping in as the door slams behind me. The whining noise grows louder, settling into the back of my skull. I watch as the space between my bed and my desk grows smaller, the two pieces of furniture being pushed together by an imaginary force. Jumping forwards, I try to escape the feeling that rises in my chest. The wall follows me, pressing forward, longing to make contact with the window on the opposite wall. I reach back for the doorknob, but the pressure of the other three walls makes it impossible to open. I instead press my hands against the wooden door, pushing as hard as I can, trying to get it away

from me. There's a buzzing beneath my fingertips, like a cell phone on silent is stuck within the walls, waiting to never be picked up. I push and push and push, but the space between the bed and desk still shrinks and shrinks and shrinks.

I am left with less and less and less space, claustrophobia settling in. The window behind me shatters, cold air entering the room. I am spit on by the snow. Seeping into the fabric of my undershirt. It's so so so cold, yet I am also so so so hot. Unsure if the moisture within my shirt is snow or sweat, I am forced to jump onto the bed, escaping the walls that continue to crowd in on me. The bed and desk meet with a thud! The wood of the desk begins to splinter. The springs of my mattress creak. The walls insist on moving inwards, taking the door and window with them. Left with no escape, I still push desperately against the walls. Calling out with no response. The bed and desk are slowly crushed, becoming a mess of wood and metal and foam and feathers. I feel my shoulder blades begin to grind against one another. The whining within the walls stops, only to be replaced by the sound of crushing bones. I cry out in pain but hear nothing. The walls continue to move inwards, even when there's nowhere left to go.

# *Single Houses on a Long Street*

Francesca Drake

Lucky to be cooped up  
pulling out book backs  
wiping counters and soaking dry plants  
living in the background of laugh tracks

through the kitchen window,  
the rose I propped up the day before  
sways from chickadee feet  
red buds reaching into my neighbour's yard

bright swells of sun pass along the garden  
awakening invisible small things  
until a heavy grey god sits himself down  
sluggish and fat  
keeping spring where it is

as it gets dark our curtains exhale  
we shut our windows on the rest  
forget the moving trees  
the sleeping birds  
the walking jackets passing by  
and fall into the little worlds we've made  
houses with hot pans and yappy dogs and  
siblings fighting and little messes  
and the last shake of a bed being made  
we settle into the distance  
and forget it all

in the morning  
dew arrives on all our yards the same  
wet grass weaving down our blocks  
roses reaching to belong in two yards at once.

*Absence 2* by Sun Woo Baik



# *Return to Hometown Residence*

translated from the traditional Chinese

by Daniel Truong

歸園田居

少無適俗韻，  
性本愛丘山。  
誤落塵網中，  
一去三十年。

羈鳥戀舊林，  
池魚思故淵。  
開荒南野際，  
守拙歸園田。

方宅十餘畝，  
草屋八九間，  
榆柳蔭後簷，  
桃李羅堂前。

曖曖遠人村，  
依依墟里煙；  
狗吠深巷中，  
雞鳴桑樹顛。

戶庭無塵雜，  
虛室有餘閑。  
久在樊籠裡，  
復得返自然。

**Return to Hometown Residence**

Without the immoral taint of youths  
My calling was the hills and mountains  
But by mistake, I fell into the earthly path  
And once gone, thirty years had passed.

As the restrained bird longs for the old woods  
And the pond fish, the deep  
I return to the outback west  
To be there for my hometown.

An acre half is my land  
The grass huts, numbered in 8-9  
In the back, the Elm Willow shades  
In the front, the peach plum grid.

Oh warm is the distant village  
And Cozy the kitchen smoke  
In the alley depths are dogs barking  
On the mulberry peak, the rooster perched.

My halls are untouched by filth  
My rooms vacant and free  
An eternity in the village cage  
But to me, a return to the natural.

# *Long Hauler*

Alex Masse

the fog that once filled my lungs  
now breathes in my brain  
every sigh a cyclone, a flood,  
a muddying of thoughts

it was cruel as it climbed  
cutting my throat, crushing my voice,  
my flesh nothing but footholds  
for its ascension

i fight to sing again  
scales, triads, trying to graze  
notes i once hit with ease

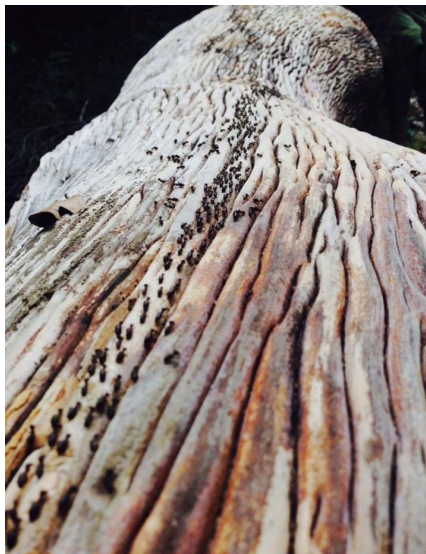
i fight to taste again  
yearning for all things sweet  
but even chocolate is just dust on my tongue

i fight to wake up energized again  
the mornings are the worst, consciousness a crack  
in a stone wall i can't squeeze through

it comes back slowly, in distant extremes  
the zing of lemon, shower melodies,  
being able to say good morning before noon

these little milestones  
are my battered body's new normal.

they mean it when they say long hauler.  
they really mean it.



*untitled* by Shenella Silva

# Goodbye

Isabella Wang

When I returned to the university again  
three months after pandemic closure  
I cried the koi in the pond  
were still there tails waving by  
lilies overhead the same blue  
dragonflies with gilded wings  
circling poised like miniature helicopters  
of the campus biome  
animal companions

No one knew how long the pandemic  
would last

*say we'll be back by summer*

then *fall*

then *maybe next year . . . ?*

No one took care of them changed  
their algae-grown water

The fish so used to the passing reflection  
of students carrying textbooks

and heavy back packs were sick  
bugs were dying

in the pond

and the fish were feeding off  
of the decomposing remains of their young  
like forced scavengers  
making best of a poisonous habitat



The koi were my favourite part  
of the university symbols of strength  
in my culture

My favourite amulet  
a koi carved in jade — a departing gift  
from my grandfather  
I asked him why he did not give me a dragon  
my horoscope as was customary  
and he said koi  
was the ancestor of the dragon  
the koi were stronger

I'd look for one  
swimming up against breeze over current  
and be reminded that once  
it took a koi 100 years to journey  
to the top of a waterfall  
that once there the Gods  
turned them into dragons  
the koi were comforting  
that way  
I didn't feel as alone in the semester  
the fish sensed  
my coming  
my hand as if sensing  
a foreign stick  
or bread crumbs though I didn't have any



# *Blended*

Kitty Cheung

EXT. BACKYARD GARDEN - DAY

FIONA (O.S.)

He's only marrying you for your citizenship.

Cut between close-up shots of the lush, if slightly tacky, garden: strawberry plants potted in cut-up milk jugs, beanstalks climbing makeshift trellises made from foraged tree branches, squash vines weighing down on a fraying clothesline.

SAMMY (52) squats in her backyard garden tending to a bed of Chinese leafy greens. She wears Adidas slippers and a comically large sun hat made of straw. Her daughter FIONA (17) stands nearby, arms crossed over a t-shirt and pajama shorts, exasperatedly trying to maintain SAMMY's attention as she gardens.

All dialogue in [brackets] is spoken in Cantonese.

SAMMY

[What a shame. The slugs are eating our gai lan.]

SAMMY holds a stem of gai lan up for FIONA to see. There are small insect-bitten holes in the leaf.

FIONA

(ignores the gai lan)

[You've only known him for six months, Ma. How would you like it if I married my boyfriend next week? We've been dating way longer than you two have.]

SAMMY

[It's different when you're older.]

FIONA

[As in he has] ulterior motives. It's legit marriage fraud. [Why do you think he's rushing this so much?]

SAMMY

[June said that if I add crushed eggshells to the soil, it will stop the slugs.]

FIONA

Ma.

SAMMY

[He's coming here for a better life, same as we did.]

FIONA

[He's skipping the line. What, did Dad sleep with some random Canadian so he could come here? Is that our immigration story?]

SAMMY

[Who cares about him? He left us.]

FIONA

He was deported.

SAMMY

[And he never even sent any money back from China! Meanwhile I was here working, taking care of you.]

FIONA

[Oh yes, because you kept me so well-fed with those] McDonald's Quarter Pounders.

SAMMY

[You were too skinny as a kid. Could see all your ribs.]

FIONA

[You encouraged me to overeat.]

SAMMY

[And look at you now! Such a healthy girl.]

FIONA

(under her breath)

With only a mild binge-eating problem.

SAMMY

[Was it eggshells or garlic?  
Grab that garden spade.]

FIONA begrudgingly plucks the garden spade from the soil near her feet.

FIONA

(waving the spade around)

[You've raised me alone for well over a decade. Why do you think you need him?]

SAMMY moves to the beanstalks, still focused on gardening.

SAMMY

[He's not so bad.]

(Beat.)

[He can cook for us.]

FIONA

[So you just want another servant.]



SAMMY

(cackles with delight)  
[The snow peas are almost ready. We can harvest them next week and make beef stir-fry.]  
Ah so yummy yummy happy happy!

FIONA

[Ma I swear I will rip those plants down—]

SAMMY

(teasing in sing-song)  
[Then you won't get to eat any peas.]  
(insulted and mocking)  
[Hm! How can a daughter be so disrespectful? Look at you. You've never had a dad. Ha! Now I've found one for you!]

FIONA is visibly upset by this.

FIONA

I never wanted a  
(mocks SAMMY's heavy  
Cantonese accent)  
new dad!  
(back to FIONA's own  
Canadian accent)  
This guy is a stranger! He's  
invading our house, invading  
this country, invading my mom!

SAMMY

[Nonsense nonsense! You should be happy. You get to be an older sister soon.]

FIONA

(appalled)

He's bringing his son?

(weakly)

What, you're like a two-for-one PR deal?

SAMMY continues gardening. FIONA clutches the garden spade, then hurls it at the ground. The tool clatters against the driveway. FIONA locks eyes with her mother—the first time this conversation where they've made significant eye contact—before running inside the house.



# *Tastes Good*

Victor Yin

I learned to cook in lockdown  
My first grocery run by myself  
done in hurried silence  
oil, pepper, butter, soy sauce  
Socially distant self checkout  
Forgot to grab hand sanitizer, but it was out anyways  
Full pantries from sparse shelves  
Tastes of home away from home  
No longer relatable recipe preambles  
Meal prep in plastic containers but who  
had prepared for a pandemic?



# *Modern Reality*

Parham Elmi

We live in a world:  
Evermore so connected,  
But we're so alone.

*Absence 1* by Sun Woo Baik

# *What Remains*

Leila Bonner

The sterility of the screen as you speak  
Framed in white, the color of purity and fear  
Hit us with lightning bolts  
They would hurt less  
Hospital beds won't have you  
Still, the painful relief of knowing  
Familiar tubes giving and taking  
What they took from her before

Rest, the double-edged sword  
Bringer of life sucking dry  
Lavender walls contain a hurricane  
I hear all the sad notes of your breathing  
The silence harmonizes  
You count out all the colorful things  
That take the colorful things away  
At her table

The past goads me

Moons ago, beige and chairs  
Loose skin clinging to darkened veins  
She was worlds away  
Just down the corridor

A stranger then  
Lost to the peace that needed her  
Already a withered, fond memory  
Small eyes lose the light  
Remember compartments for souls  
She is out of focus

There is safety in acceptance  
What was and is  
Why can't we be dangerous

The past is not repeated  
Wraith of what you hate  
Spring betrays itself  
Time may do better  
Erasing all but the sinking  
Brought by steel in skin  
For now, exist  
You will return in pieces  
I wish I could make whole

# *The Guest House*

**Elise Volkman**

*Inspired by a poem of the same title by Jellaludin Rumi (Iranian poet, 13th century)*

Out the age-stained windows set in old panelled walls, you slip through my mind on a distant flightpath. I glance up sometimes, out the windows into the cool grey sky, but my gaze never lingers long.

Too busy, too focused, too frantic,  
too scared.

Scared of the hole once filled by you — scared of the void that replaces you. You always answered my messages like a sentinel, watchful and still. And still, you remain, like a guardian in the corners of my mind. You remind me to think well, to be kind, to have mercy on myself.

Please,  
have mercy on me now.  
I missed my chance to say  
goodbye.

This being human is a guest house. The house is rarely empty; people come and go through the doorways like air on the pathways through their lungs. People come and go — people like you. Here today, gone tomorrow;  
or was it yesterday already?

I keep a portrait of you on the walls of my mind, though the image doesn't bear your face. It's a menagerie of words and hints of strategy, in the form of a poem by Jellaludin Rumi.

I never would have met Rumi if it wasn't for you. I never would have opened my Guest House to joy, depression, the meanness of new arrivals. If you hadn't taught me to sweep out the cobwebs, dust off the tabletops, and bat out the carpets, I'd still be a boarded-up old mansion; so many rooms to offer, but no lights to guide the way.

We made guest beds together in the forgotten corners of my mind, kicking up dust-trails with our feet. We meandered through the guest house like old friends, lingering on every floor. You took my hand to lead me down each darkened hallway, unlit and unwalked, trapped for so long in the recesses of my

world. You guided me even as I showed you where to go. You gave me an answer with every question you asked.

“When’s the first time you remember feeling this way?” you’d ask me again  
and again

and again. We’d go back —

Up and up flights of stairs, to the long-forgotten attics in the closed-up places abandoned since yester-year. You’d ask me to pull wide the curtains and swing wide the windows — it was always my choice.

I always said yes.

You knew what I needed before I believed it. You knew where the sunlight snuck through cracks; where it needed to break through with warmth, to wash me clean. You always managed to find my way there. To lead me,

to guide me

to peace.

I’d follow you anywhere, to any dark corner. I’d take your advice for any old thing. But now you’ve gone to that place, the one where I can’t go.

How do I welcome and entertain this wishing? Wishing you had lived longer?

Died

later?

The question plagues me: why do the good die young? You were older than me, younger than some. Your wisdom and gentleness unmatched, unrivaled. This being human is a Guest House. How do I welcome you in it

when you’re no longer here?

People wander the halls like spectres of thought on the pathways of my mind. The curtains hang open, letting in the light. Sun basks the floors with its warmth. Your kindest words hang in the corners where you cleared away the cobwebs. Your voice echoes in the highest reaches of the attic and the darkest cellar of the basement. You linger, you whisper, you stay.

You’re gone, but I see you everywhere.

You would say, *“Close your eyes. Take us back to the first time you remember...”*

My first memory paints you in a vibrant skirt of many colours. It floats around you like flower petals on a breeze. You sway gently in the doorway, waving me inside with a smile.

You always had a smile  
for me.

You'll never wave me over the threshold of my own guest house again.  
I'll never find you standing there,  
colourful skirt,  
warm smile,  
loving eyes.

You linger, just out of sight. I turn, yet never seem to catch sight of you.  
How do I welcome Sorrow as a guest? It tears at the curtains and brings  
cobwebs to every corner we swept. It tramples over my portrait of you as though  
to banish you forever.

Still, I catch moments. Glimpses.

Pieces of your voice, saying:

*"Be grateful for whatever comes  
because each has been sent  
as a guide from beyond."*

If anyone was sent as a guide,  
it was you.



*Absence 5*  
by Sun Woo Baik

# Winter

Jade Cameron

You paint two sad lemons  
sad human  
the hospital was as you felt  
    calm  
    sticky socks  
kept a piece of glass  
open old cuts  
at home you feel nothing  
    the empty  
    daily sedation  
    blister pack  
afraid to write  
afraid what might be said  
    or worse  
    nothing  
time has been bought  
and sold and left you  
    losing  
the winter kills the plants  
one by one  
    some



*Absence 6* by Sun Woo Baik

the days are nothing left  
    solitary  
    masked  
they call you every day  
    check in  
you say the same things  
they say deep breaths  
    keep doing  
today, a mildness  
evening threatens  
you still have hidden glass  
and emptiness  
    but groceries too  
    at least.



## *Across the street*

**Scotland Galloway**

Across the street, I hear a man speak,

“It’s so good to meet you.”

A woman replies, “I’m so glad to have met you.”

I can hear their happiness and beers.

I look to my left. Under the light of an apartment building entrance,  
the two are in embrace. They hold each other close.

The mask on my face tickles my nose.

“I’ve felt so alone. I can’t believe,” she says,

her voice fades as I walk on

## *Friendships I Don’t Understand*

**Parham Elmi**

You come and say hi

We smile, laugh, share food and chai!

Now only walk by—bye.

*“Love, Always Love”:  
Conversations about un/settled with  
Otoniya J. Okot Bitek, Chantal Gibson,  
and Ebony Magnus*

**Artwork by** Otoniya J. Okot Bitek and Chantal Gibson in collaboration with Mily Mumford and Adrian Bisek

**Photos by** Ebony Magnus

**Written by** Mizuki Giffin and Kitty Cheung

Anyone who has taken the R5 bus downtown or walked near Vancouver’s Gastown in recent months has surely noticed *un/settled*. This exhibit features the work of poet Otoniya J. Okot Bitek and artist-educator Chantal Gibson, shown in Figures 1.1 and 1.2. Gibson’s photos were taken in collaboration with Photographer Adrian Bisek and Artistic Director Mily Mumford. In an SFU News article titled [“un/settled art installation centres Black womanhood at SFU’s Vancouver Campus”](#) (2021), writer Chloe Riley explains that this exhibit covers 240 square feet of the windows at SFU’s Belzberg Library (Riley, 2021, para. 3). Okot Bitek is a 2021 Shadbolt Fellow hosted by the SFU Department of English. Meanwhile, Gibson is a University Lecturer in SFU’s School of Interactive Arts and Technology and a 2021 3M National Teaching Fellow. These two artists also worked alongside the Head of Belzberg Library, Ebony Magnus, to bring this exhibit to life. *The Lyre* is grateful to have spoken with all three collaborators about the accessibility of public art, expressing grief through creativity, and what it means to be un/settled.



Figures 1.1 and 1.2. This installation of poetry and photography looms over 240 square feet of the SFU Belzberg Library windows. Okot Bitek's poetry comes from her collection *100 Days*. Gibson's photos were taken in collaboration with Photographer Adrian Bisek and Artistic Director Mily Mumford. Photos courtesy of Ebony Magnus.

## A Union of Literary and Visual Art

Both Okot Bitek and Gibson bring a breadth of perspectives to this piece through their diverse backgrounds in literature and visual art. During an interview with *The Lyre* over teleconferencing software Zoom, Okot Bitek explains that she is an Acholi poet, noting that this is a term she has just recently begun to use and claim. Okot Bitek describes an Acholi poet as someone who documents what happens through poetry while inviting

audiences to think about and discuss what happened through the delivery of the poem itself. In this way, the poem is “both the container and the form” (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

The poetry displayed in *un/settled* comes from Okot Bitek’s collection entitled *100 Days*. In the SFU News article “[Otoniya Okot Bitek bears witness in Shadbolt Fellowship](#)” by writer Geoff Gilliard, Okot Bitek explains that *100 Days* was written as a reflection on the Rwandan Genocide (Gilliard, 2021, para. 7-9).

**Figure 2. Gibson’s image shown here was taken in 2019 and only titled “In Lieu of Flowers (for Breonna)” in 2020 as she mourned Breonna Taylor, a Black American emergency medical technician lost to police violence. Photo courtesy of Ebony Magnus.**



Meanwhile, Gibson explains in an email interview with *The Lyre* that her photos were taken in late 2019 with help from Bisek and Mumford. We note that these photos are both deeply personal yet distanced—the photographs are of her own body, though the images are faceless.

When asked about this facelessness, Gibson explains that she covered her face because she was using process to figure out an issue she was encountering as an artist. Gibson expresses that she was “trying to capture the dis/comfort and ambivalence of working and creating in this de/colonial moment” (C. Gibson, personal communication, April 7, 2021).

Gibson continues, “When Otoniya and Ebony and I decided to collaborate on a public art project about Black womanhood, the facelessness of the portraits created space for Otoniya’s poetry and [...] for others to identify with and find their own meaning in the work” (C. Gibson, personal communication, April 7, 2021).

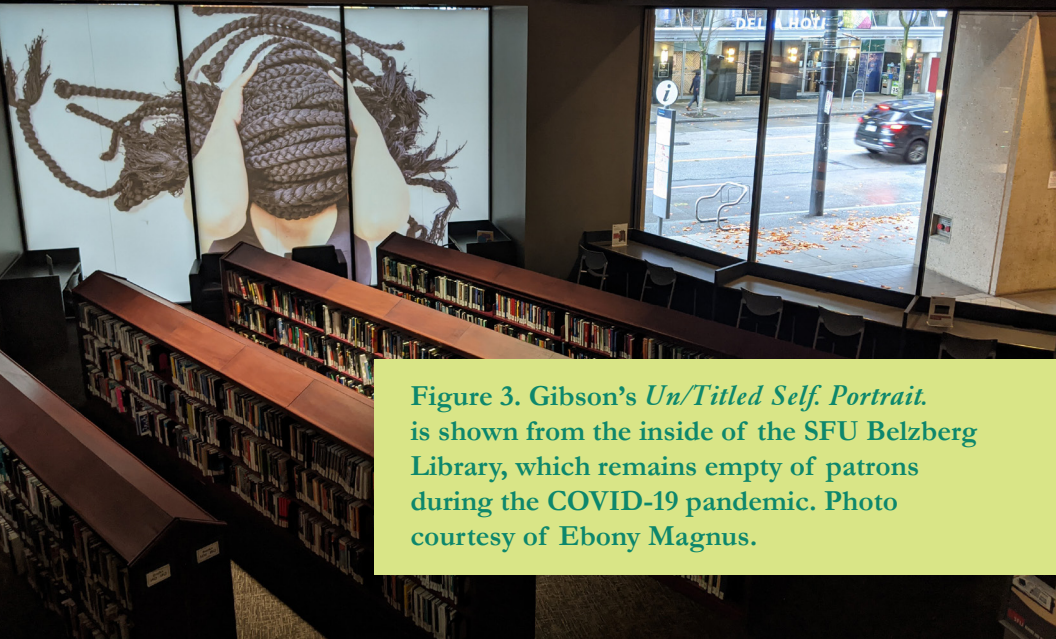
Having worked with braids in her series [\*HistoricalIn\(ter\)ventions\*](#) (Gibson, n.d., para. 6), where braided threads resembling Black hair are woven into colonial

academic books, Gibson explains that she has only recently begun to use her own body as a medium. She states this choice allows her “to get out of my head—and to consider how the braids may take on new meanings juxtaposed against the body” (C. Gibson, personal communication, April 7, 2021).

The vast interpretive potential of Gibson’s photos is evident in Magnus’s evolving thoughts about the piece. In a Zoom interview with *The Lyre*, Magnus mentions that she saw the photos before they were hung up in the library windows. For the image running along Richards street, photographed by Magnus in Figure 2, she had initially thought it looked like Gibson was carrying a heavy weight or burden. However, once the installation was finished, Magnus’s perception shifted into seeing an embrace. As for the image along Hastings shown in Figure 3, Magnus notes that the braids over Gibson’s face can be interpreted as silencing, though they can also be seen as secure when considering protective styles for Black hair (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021).

Writer Linda Kanyamuna expresses other interpretations in *The Peak*, SFU’s





**Figure 3.** Gibson's *Un/Titled Self. Portrait* is shown from the inside of the SFU Belzberg Library, which remains empty of patrons during the COVID-19 pandemic. Photo courtesy of Ebony Magnus.

independent student newspaper. In a feature titled “SFU celebrates Black womanhood through art,” Kanyamuna discusses the significance of this exhibition:

“Black womanhood is depicted in the artwork through the strands of braids, representing her crown, her history, her heritage, her protection, and her identity, all the while acknowledging her inner void through the dark, empty space on the inside of this art. The installation reminds us that Black bodies are allowed to occupy space, in a world where they are so confined” (Kanyamuna, 2021, para. 12).

## What does it mean to be *un/settled*?

Further in our interview, Magnus notes that *un/settled* came together out of sadness from 2020, with its quiet and empty streets, despair from recent events, and exhaustion from being isolated (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021). The title *un/settled*, adds Okot Bitek, speaks to our unsettling times, though she emphasizes that we *should* be unsettled because of these events. “It’s a proposition,” she explains, “for someone who wants to reflect on what it means to be unsettled. Because we should all be unsettled” (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

Yet, Magnus further questions whether being unsettled is *enough* in some circumstances. She notes that when a Black SFU alumnus was violently arrested on Burnaby campus in December of 2020, SFU President Joy Johnson described this incident as an “[unsettling event](#)” (Johnson, 2021, para. 6). Magnus adds that there was something disconcerting about describing an event which could have ended a man’s life in such language. Though events such as these may lead people to being unsettled, Magnus

notes that it’s important to think about for whom this unsettling feeling is temporary and for whom it is not (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021). In other words, who will go back to being settled, and who will never know what it means to be settled again?

Adding to the depth of *un/settled*’s title, Magnus and Okot Bitek both address the connection between this exhibit’s title and the common use of the term “settler” to describe those of us occupying Indigenous land. Magnus notes that this title serves as a reminder that she must unsettle herself and not be complacent in how she occupies this land from which others were displaced (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021). Okot Bitek adds that this title digs at those who call themselves “settlers” and asks how we can claim to be “settlers” in the face of those who can never truly be settled (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

Being unsettled is often perceived as a temporary moment of change—as the liminal gaps between dormant periods of being settled. This exhibit and its layered title forces viewers to consider the dangers that lie in being “settled”

and ignoring the glaring injustices that should never allow us to be comfortable.

“I think it’s taken at least 500 years for this unsettling,” says Okot Bitek, “So, it should take at least 500 more years for us to start to feel settled” (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021). Viewers are forced to consider being unsettled as a permanent, not temporary, state. This exhibit questions what our role can be within this space of reflection, growth, and change.

## Consuming Poetry as an Act of Window Shopping

Following this conversation on the exhibit’s title, we discuss the significance of *un/settled*’s location. Building on insights offered by Magnus at SFU Library’s “An un/settling event: Readings and reflections on Black art, identity, and place” in February 2020, Okot Bitek notes that before *un/settled*, passersby could see into the library and its tall shelves of books. However, it was unclear who had the ability or privilege to access the texts within. By covering these windows with poetry, *un/settled* serves as a piece of art accessible to

all, not just to those with special access inside (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

Otoniya compares this to window shopping: gazing into shop windows at the (typically expensive) goods within. However, she adds, departing from the inherently commercial act of window shopping, *un/settled* doesn’t demand that a viewer spend money to fully experience what is on display. Rather, it remains open for all to engage with and reflect on; no one is barred from the experience (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

According to [RDH](#), the building firm responsible for conserving the Spencer heritage building which houses SFU’s Vancouver campus, this location was once a department store (RDH, n.d., para. 1). When considering that Belzberg Library’s windows were originally a department storefront, *un/settled* more clearly comes to serve as a reclamation—it breaks down the barrier between who belongs inside versus outside a building, inviting everyone to experience and enjoy the art freely.



## Libraries - Spaces of Neutrality or Power Inequity?

*un/settled*'s public location allows it to be accessible to all, though it simultaneously calls into question why poetry needs to be on display *outside* of a library for it to be accessible. Aren't libraries meant to be public spaces open to everyone? In a promotional article for a 2021 panel event about *un/settled*, writing festival Word Vancouver describes Magnus's work as "[undermin\[ing\] myths of neutrality](#)" (Word Vancouver, 2021, para. 4). On this topic, Magnus notes that even though libraries are presented as free, open, and welcoming, there are written and unwritten rules that put limitations on who "belongs" in the space. For instance, she explains that there are often rules in place regarding how people are allowed to conduct themselves in library spaces, such as prohibiting patrons from napping or eating. Magnus emphasizes that such rules serve certain populations while inevitably creating disadvantages for others. When she entered this profession, Magnus explains that she really started to think about how these policies were designed. "Rules and policies don't exist in a vacuum," she notes. "Someone had to write them

for a purpose" (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021).

Magnus adds that libraries are an easy thing to feel good about, conjuring ideas of being free, open, and resourceful. Yet, she emphasizes, when it comes to social structures, there's no such thing as neutrality—the positive imagery associated with libraries can sometimes eclipse real problems of disparity and exclusion. Magnus adds that the vast majority of librarians in North America are white, making it hard to move through this field as a person of colour. Moreover, libraries must often demonstrate value to justify funding and support, though there are seldom conversations regarding the power imbalances this can create (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021). *un/settled* serves as a statement against this neutrality, revealing it to be a fabrication.

## Exploring Grief through Art

The *un/settled* installation was created as a tribute to Breonna Taylor: a Black American woman who was murdered by police in 2020, as reported by *The Guardian* journalist Joanna Walters in the article "[DoJ opens inquiry into](#)

Louisville policing over Breonna Taylor's death" (2021). In the process of creating art born from grief, *The Lyre* is curious how these three collaborators maintained a sense of hope or healing, or if it sometimes felt like only despair.

Okot Bitek attributes her friend, Irish poet Padraig O'Tuama, in stating that it is "better to write from scars than it is to write from wounds." Okot Bitek explains that when artists experience pain, they can find ways to cope and separate themselves from the art that is created from this experience. For example, Okot Bitek explains that *100 Days* is a work of memory two decades after the Rwandan Genocide and she writes from the position of an African from that region. She explains that this distance helps her find the space necessary to reflect on tragedy in her work.

Okot Bitek states that, for her, the job of the artist is to witness, and that in order to continue onwards as an artist, "you need to be able to wipe the tears from your eyes and be clear-eyed and be brave." To writers expressing pain in

their own work, Okot Bitek advises that their first priority should be to take care of themselves so that they can write about "it," whatever that "it" may be (O. J. Okot Bitek, personal communication, April 9, 2021).

Magnus mentions that, when collaborating on this piece with such prominent themes of grief and loss, it definitely felt like only despair at times. However, she adds that she, Okot Bitek, and Gibson spent a lot of time meeting and having conversations while coordinating this exhibit. Through these conversations, Magnus explains how they created a space for each other in a way that felt very needed at the time. She recalls how she felt comfortable and seen in this community with two other Black women, and even though they were brought together by despair, Magnus felt that they were also able to relish in joy and community. When she heads to work at the Belzberg Library, Magnus mentions that she can feel herself smiling the minute she sees the installation from the street (E. Magnus, personal communication, April 16, 2021).

Gibson also emphasizes the importance of community that emerged from collaborating with Okot Bitek and Magnus. While she doubts whether she will ever heal from this grief, she states,

“there was some relief and respite in creating a monumental tribute to Breonna Taylor with Otoniya and Ebony, both in the scope and size of the project, in the act of collaborating with two Black women who cared as deeply as I did, and in the process of sharing our grief and pain and love, always love, with Black women, BIPOC folk, and others trying [to make] sense of the senseless” (C. Gibson, personal communication, April 7, 2021).

We thank Okot Bitek, Gibson, Bisek, and Mumford for sharing their art with the SFU community, and Magnus for facilitating these opportunities for representation within a higher institution. We would like to especially and wholeheartedly thank Okot Bitek, Gibson, and Magnus for taking the time to speak with us. The thought and care they put into their interview responses have tremendously enriched this article.

## References

- Gibson, C. (n.d.). Historical In(ter)ventions. Chantal Gibson Writer-Artist-Educator. <https://chantalgibson.com/altered-books>.
- Gilliard, G. (2021, January 26). Otoniya Okot Bitek bears witness in Shadbolt Fellowship. SFU News - Simon Fraser University. <https://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2021/01/otoniya-okot-bitek-bears-witness-in-shadbolt-fellowship.html>.
- Johnson, J. (2021, January 6). Updated Jan. 6: My response to Dec. 11 event in SFU dining hall. President's Office - Simon Fraser University. <https://www.sfu.ca/pres/the-president/statements/2021/Update-My-response-to-Dec11-event-in-SFU-dining-hall.html>.
- Kanyamuna, L. (2021, March 13). SFU celebrates Black womanhood through art. The Peak. <https://the-peak.ca/2021/03/sfu-celebrates-black-womanhood-through-art/>.
- Riley, C. (2021, January 29). un/settled art installation centres Black womanhood at SFU's Vancouver Campus. SFU News - Simon Fraser University. <http://www.sfu.ca/sfunews/stories/2021/01/un-settled-art-installation-centres-black-womanhood-at-sfu-s-van.html>.
- The Spencer Building - Case Study: RDH Historic Buildings. RDH Historic. (n.d.). <https://historicbuildings.rdh.com/case-studies/the-spencer-building/>.
- un/settled: Reading Black Women, Art, Poetry and Place. Word Vancouver. (2021). <https://www.wordvancouver.ca/2021-events/2021/2/10/unsettled-reading-black-women-in-the-streets>.
- Walters, J. (2021, April 26). DoJ opens inquiry into Louisville policing over Breonna Taylor's death. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2021/apr/26/louisville-kentucky-policing-justice-department-investigation-breonna-taylor>.

# *A Look into Independent Bookselling with Hilary Atleo, Co-Owner of Iron Dog Books*

**Written by** Daniela Roman Torres and Sara Aristizabal Castaneda

**Edited by** Kitty Cheung, Rachel Sargeant, and Anastasiia Lebedenko

**The Lyre:** Tell us about your bookstore. What's special about it?

**Hilary Atleo:** In many ways we're a really normal kind of generalist bookstore. The pandemic has obviously made things different, because instead of just applying a vision to it, we've had to do a lot of adapting to what folks actually need ... We have been trying mostly to be a community resource over the course of the pandemic.

My husband got a job at SFU as a professor, so we moved to Vancouver and we had been planning on opening our own shop one day, and obviously real estate in Vancouver is ridiculous, so that was the main reason why we started with the truck. So I said, well, if we put it in a truck then we can serve SFU some days a week and we can spend the weekends going around the festivals and bigger markets.

Our bookshop is really important as a community space. Because my husband and I are both Native, we have a very strong Indigenous selection that we are always working on, not just because it's something that we think will sell or that we think we should have, but because we ourselves are interested in that. We also have a little science fiction section that I work on all the time and a little feminist gender queer sci-fi, which is my main area of interest. We are working harder to make things like our activism section, which is not in all of the bookstores you'll visit. We also have a critical race section and a gender studies section. I'm trying to work really hard to always find things that we think are interesting.

One of the questions about running a bookstore, or business in general, is the balance between doing the things that you care about and the things that you do to pay the bills. I feel really lucky in

our neighborhood because the things that we care about—that I think make us special, like these specific interests—and our level of customer service work really well for where we are.

**L:** Where did the bookstore’s name come from?

**HA:** We named it after our dog, I always called him the cast iron dog. We moved to Vancouver, and then we moved across the street in our second year here; that was our tenth move in ten years. We were really good at just packing everybody up and going, and so I always called our dog the cast iron dog because he’s totally bomb proof—he can eat anything. We moved him from place to place and he’s just going along with everything, totally easy going.

We were going to call it “Black Dog Books,” but there are about three million things called black dog something and so my sister said: “Why don’t you call it ‘Iron Dog Books?’”

**L:** What were some of the challenges of opening Iron Dog Books?

**HA:** The truck and the store each have their own unique set of challenges. The biggest thing with the truck aside from

the weather ... and people always laugh when I say this, but I swear it’s a real thing: the weather and the lack of a toilet are really big challenges with the truck. So aside from that stuff, with the truck the biggest challenge is finding a place to take it. There’s very few places where you can go sell, there’s all kinds of restrictions on markets ... It’s like we all love farmers markets, but because you have to make or grow everything you sell there—obviously a bookstore can’t be there.

And then it’s really hard to say with the store because we were only open for four months before the pandemic hit. That has had a significant effect, but I would say the biggest barrier for the shop is actually the same thing: real estate. Finding the right place, finding the right size of place, being able to take on the risks.

**L:** What’s your favorite part of being in the bookselling business?

**HA:** Do you want the real answer or do you want something that sounds good on paper? The real answer is: all the books. Opening the boxes and seeing all the books. But I think if you are asking why keep going, because I could just work for somebody else if all I ever

“ if we can be a place where a multitude of weirdos are like: “oh you have my books,” that is actually the best.

really cared about was opening all the boxes and seeing all the books, I actually think it's space making—it's building this space for things that otherwise I think aren't maybe represented. On the truck we have a sign that says: “we specialize in underrepresented narratives,” and I think that is true. What independent bookstores do is set down our roots. We think: *what does our neighborhood need?* My shop is always looking for that book that no one's talking about, but that everyone who shops at our stores would want, and there is a lot of that. There are a lot of things that aren't for everybody, that are just for this select group ... like for only a few weirdos, and if we can be a place where a multitude of weirdos are like: “oh you have my books,” that is actually the best.

**L:** We'd love to know what's selling well at your store and/or some of your top

book recommendations. Would you be willing to share?

**HA:** What's really cool about our industry as an independent is that a little bit of what sells is what we're excited about, and a little bit of what sells is what the community is excited about. So the thing that is selling really well without any help from us is a book called *Braiding Sweetgrass* from Robin Wall Kimmerer. It's hands down our top seller of all time—it's been number one on our list of sold books for the last couple years and I think it will be again for this year. We're selling a lot of Eden Robinson's *Son of a Trickster*, so these are both books by Indigenous authors. Especially the last book of the trilogy, *Return of the Trickster*, that just came out.

This whole past year we have seen real increase in reading critical race topics and activism topics, which is honestly great. In terms of hand selling, we have some new poetry that we're really excited about, such as a brand new release by Selina Boan. I've been reading a lot of Australian fantasy which is not my normal ... I mean, fantasy is my normal genre, but I didn't know that there was a whole Australian tradition and so I've been recommending and handselling that a lot. The one I just read is called

*The Rain Heron* by Robbie Arnott which is pretty weird and atmospheric.

One of the problems of recommending books is that, I actually think that you're trying to find the right book for the right human. So there's no good "this is the book everyone should read" because I actually think that only like 20% of the population should read anyone's books; we are all so different.

**L:** Since the theme of *The Lyre 12* is 'New Normal', we are interested in knowing what challenges Iron Dog Books has faced during the pandemic. Have the book sales been affected?

**HA:** A lot of it is really boring, like a lot of it is logistic challenges. Let's see, global shipping basically shut down, and if it didn't shut down, it really slowed down. We hardly do any importing ourselves and what importing we do as a business is directly from the States. But a lot of the things that we buy from Canadian folks are coming through the Internet and through international shipping, so they're coming in boats and they have to get to the ports. We buy a lot of puzzles from a Canadian warehouse but also puzzles made around the world. I found several North American and European suppliers, but the ones we

were buying at the time were all printed in China, specifically in Wuhan. So you know at the very beginning of this, it was all shut down.

Sometimes I think we don't appreciate the incredible interconnected nature of marketplaces and products and distribution. Shipping times went from being one to two weeks to being six to eight weeks for some products depending on where it's coming from. Or in some cases months.

The other practical things were ... when we first started, I really felt that it was our job to deliver anything no matter how cheap, if people needed it so they didn't have to leave the house. But then one day somebody ordered a \$2.99 book delivered quite far away from us for free. We had delivered other very cheap things but nothing that was only \$3, and so I was like "this is just a dead loss" and that was when we put in our shipping minimum, and we're still doing the delivery ourselves.

So, like I said, a lot of it is really mundane ... The flip side of all of this is that folks did become a little more aware of the interconnected nature of global markets. I think that the recognition of how problematic that take of consumption



is has led to folks, especially because you couldn't get things early on, saying "Well you are in my neighborhood and I can get it today. Is it the exact puzzle I wanted? No! But I can get it in twenty minutes if I come pick it up from you."

**L:** Did any specific type of book or item become more popular than usual?

**HA:** Puzzles. You know how everyone talks about the seasons of the pandemic? Where they were like: "and that's when we made sourdough" ... it is like that in my industry too. So the seasons of the pandemic were puzzles, and then stay-at-home activities. Let's include in that cooking and adult activity type things, not necessarily coloring books, but books on stay-at-home dates with your partner or books on those sorts of things. And then it took a really sharp turn into a critical race because of the letter of George Floyd. It's something that we always have wanted folks to read about and so it was a slightly dislocating feeling to have white folks watch and read this stuff.

So then there was that period in the pandemic. I don't think that we have necessarily been affected as much by trends after that, as we still sell so much critical race literature; I'm excited

because I get to curate more the way I've wanted to curate before. Maybe after that we could call it the "Season of Obama," because then [Barack] Obama's biography dropped and that was what we sold for a while, but those were the big things. The trends of the pandemic were like overtly puzzles and then overtly like do-it-myself, stay-at-home type things and then it's been this reckoning of ideas. Also recently and in the fall, a lot of self-love books like fat- and body-positive and mental health books were big.

**L:** Are you implementing any changes going forward as a result of the pandemic?

**HA:** There are a lot of things we started because of the pandemic that are permanent now. Until March 16th of 2020 we didn't have a public web store at all, like, you couldn't buy online. On March 16th, it was clear that we were going to close our doors. We told the small number of people who are on the shopping list that they wouldn't be able to get in the store, but we said we're turning the website on, so that's permanent.

We tried, as I said, a whole bunch of different shipping options, and I couldn't handle the madness of getting something shipped from Toronto to me

only to have it ordered by a customer in Toronto. So, one of the things we have done with our shipping is we have limited it, and now we just ship to BC and the Yukon. We won't ship to anywhere that isn't in BC or in the Yukon, because there aren't necessarily a lot of book shops in BC or in the Yukon who do that, and so I think you're totally justified buying from us in those areas.

Because I really believe in local resiliency. Let's take *Braiding Sweetgrass*. If you like *Braiding Sweetgrass*, you're significantly better off to go down to your local bookshop in whatever town you live in, and special order it through them to show that you want to read *Sweetgrass*, than you are from buying it from me and getting it shipped. Because what you're trying to do is create a community around you of ideas, right? To show that these ideas have value, to show your bookseller that there's a market for this so that they should work harder on their Indigenous Studies section. So because of the huge environmental costs with shipping, and the ideological one—where we really need to build the community capacity, not just provide the services, to show that the ideas are important—we don't

ship outside of those areas and that's a permanent change.

“ Because what you're trying to do is create a community around you of ideas, right? To show that these ideas have value, to show your bookseller that there's a market for this

I don't know if it's obvious, but I don't really care about making a lot of money. I just care about paying all the bills, paying everyone fairly and paying myself fairly, because we are rooted in this idea of reflecting our community back at us and also cultivating our own interests. I think Indigenous literature is really cool and I don't care if you don't like it, I'm gonna stock a whole bunch of it—that kind of stuff. I would like more space though, because I would like more books.

*Editors' note: This interview has been edited for clarity and length.*

# *On Translation as Exploration: A Conversation with Anna Rusconi*

**Transcribed by** Anastasiia Lebedenko

**Edited by** Duy Think Nguyen

**B**ack in March of 2020, the Department of World Languages and Literatures (WLL) had a chance to invite a prominent and prolific English-Italian literary translator, Anna Rusconi, for a talk about her own philosophy and approach to the translation process. Maria Barazza, a visiting professor specializing in Latin American literatures, hosted this engaging conversation on translation and its metaphors.



**Maria Barazza:** Anna, welcome! My first question is: what inspired you to pursue a career in literary translation?

**Anna Rusconi:** Actually, translation was not my first choice, as I probably lacked the courage to attend an acting school and fell back to something less visible, much less visible. It was still something as creative, something that had to do with words, which I was totally in love with and I still am.

I ended up attending a school for interpreters and translators, and as soon as I came out from school, I started knocking on the doors of the publishers. I was living in Milan, where all the big Italian publishing houses are based. It was 35 years ago, so you could physically open their doors and establish real-life relationships with editors, checkers and other people working there. You could sit right at their desk doing the work together: revising, checking your translations, learning, changing. That has changed a lot. Right now, it's much less poetic and adventurous: everything happens more at a virtual level. You can now do your job wherever you are and you need not be in touch with editors and publishers in-person. Nonetheless, it is convenient, but it's a great loss.

**MB:** What would you say are the biggest challenges that a literary translator faces and how do you personally deal with them?

**AR:** First kind of challenges come from the market itself, such as competition, low fees, being systematically forgotten by reviewers, critics, the steady uncertainty of going freelance (e.g. will there be another book after this one?) Thirty five years ago, you could establish a much more direct and personal relationship with the publishers and the checkers; you could work on paper together, seeing your mistakes, learning and exchanging. After the arrival of the email in the beginning of the 90s, you slowly stopped being handed back your checked manuscripts and you worked on PDFs, where you could no longer see the corrections and changes one had made in your text. The process becomes more complicated and impersonal; it's easier for certain things, but more complicated for others.

There are also the challenges that are inherent to the act of translating. These challenges are innumerable and have to do with interpretation, ambiguity, sometimes deliberate ambiguity, sometimes just unintentional ambiguity,

which result in different translation strategies. These strategies are based on style, rhythm, register choices, fine tuning of the voices of the characters and dealing with all kinds of linguistic problems: puns, quotations, intertextual references, jargon, technicalities, accuracy. Due to all these challenges, you have to decide what your translating plan is going to be for that specific book. There are nearly as many strategies as there are books; challenges are not always the same even within the same book.

The literary translator is literally a decision maker. You may think it is a very boring and mechanical job: it is not! It is an adventurous and risky business. You never know what you're going to deal with. There is no handbook you can resort to, only general rules. [You can only resort to] your skill, sensitivity, experience. It's a little bit like being a ship: you know what you're heading forward, you have the knowledge of tools and how to maneuver the ship, but you don't know what the weather will be like, if there will be storms, or how long the trip is going to last. You have to be prepared for anything. You are an explorer, a captain and lots of different things [at the same time].

**MB:** My next question is central to teaching and studying World Literatures in connection to translation. Who decides what gets translated and why?

**AR:** The biggest “why” has to do with marketing and sales. Most of the books that you find in bookshops right now, sadly enough, are very commercial books. Publishers are the ones who decide, more and more looking for the gain, pure gain. I'm talking about Italy, as we very much follow the American market. What could be successful on the American market is going to be definitely big and translated in Italy too. Books sometimes get bought after the publishers or agents offer just the first chapters of books-to-be to foreign publishers. This is very dangerous, as you can't really appreciate the whole book. You're betting on the books and what will sell. This is the current trend, but there are also smaller independent publishers who decide on different strategies and target a certain geographical area.

**MB:** Can you tell us of the authors that you most enjoyed translating? On the contrary, can you tell us of any authors that you had a bit of a problematic relationship with?

**AR:** I've translated many different authors from different countries, like America, Canada, the UK, Ireland, India, Australia. The English-speaking world is huge, and that is wonderful and scary at the same time because there are so many different cultures pivoting around the same language. As a translator, you're always dealing with two things that do not necessarily always match or overlap: the author and the book. You can love an author and feel incredibly in tune with them, but sometimes you don't really like the book or the way the story is built. And vice versa, there are books that you really love even if you generally don't feel in tune with your author, their style, rhythm, etc. The translator is always a professional and a private reader: the tastes of these two figures don't necessarily agree. This means that as a translator, I can totally be in love with the book that I don't feel particularly attracted to as a reader. On the other hand, I can enjoy reading books that I wouldn't necessarily enjoy translating because of many different reasons.

For example, Alice Munro: she is a wonderful and fascinating author to translate, but her books haven't held me so far as a reader. I really enjoyed translating her because she is so able

**“The English-speaking world is huge, and that is wonderful and scary at the same time because there are so many different cultures pivoting around the same language.**

and skillful, but as a reader, I'm not particularly attracted to her. And it's difficult to explain! Szalay is one of my favorite authors. His mother is Canadian and his father is Hungarian, but he was brought up in England and studied at Oxford. I really enjoyed translating him, but I really have no idea what I would think of his books if I was to buy and read them. I'm confused as I'm his translator and not his reader: it's difficult to keep those things separate. Anosh Irani is also worth mentioning. Even in the midst of the most painful and touching scenes, he can conjure up images that are so gentle, exquisite and poetic, emerging with an altogether different cultural and poetic imagination. It creates interesting contrasts, so it is incredibly rewarding to work with such an author.

**MB:** Since you mentioned Anosh Irani, there is a quote that I wanted to share with everybody. This is from Anosh Irani's latest work: it's called *Translated from the Gibberish*. It says: "I recently had the pleasure of reconnecting with my Italian translator Anna Rusconi. On the topic of translation, she mentioned that she doesn't like to touch the body too much. In other words, [the] translator is not a scientist who examines a text with a scalpel, she simply stands next to the work, really close, feels its breath and understands it as though heat is being exchanged by two people standing very close to each other" (8). So what do you think of that quote in particular and in regards to metaphors to describe the art and craft of translation?

**AR:** It is always so difficult to talk about translation without resorting to metaphors, as if there was no description or definition of this job sufficing in itself. It always needs to call something else into play in order to define it, to give an idea of what it actually consists of. What is it that we translators do when we sit in front of the pages, one that is already written and the other blank?

Blank is actually a very interesting word. There is a synologist Jean François

Billeter, who speaks about a sort of pre-linguistic blank. Fertile chaos, where the translator lives and works. It is the state of going blank that precedes the utter retrieval of the right word, turn of the phrase. It is where the translator surrenders at the merit of possibilities to the suggestions, the memories. You just listen and perceive with your whole being, with your body. What is the original text saying by means of rhythm, sound, color, texture, temperature? Slowly or sometimes quickly, you move towards something that you feel could be able to produce an equivalent effect in the target language you're working in. This is the place of inspiration.

Fernando Pessoa, one of the greatest Portuguese writers, said: "Without the inspiration, translation is but paraphrasing in a different language." Probably, the main difficulty in defining literary translation is the fact that it is the whole process made of many different stages that have nothing to do with education, skills and expertise, which are fundamental of course, but are not enough. It is a process that has to do also with talent and creativity: it is hard to carry and express all this in just one sentence or even just one book. For instance, think of how you define beauty or the actual state of feeling

beauty. An emotional experience of watching a sunset from a beautiful Mediterranean beach isn't exactly the same as meeting an all-time friend that you haven't seen in ages. Is it the same kind of joy or is it different? How do you describe and define the inherent quality of joy? It's difficult. That's why it has to do with creativity. So, translating is an experience where you have separate

**“ There is a more interesting question than how and how much I, as a translator, change and betray the original. This other question is: how and how much does that text change me? ”**

ingredients, but you have to mix them well and wisely to get a good cake out of it. You know that no recipe ever tastes the same. The recipe is one, but the cakes that come out of one recipe are innumerable, as many as the cooks are.

Maybe I can read some quotes that I'm collecting on my journey of translation.

For instance, Bufalino, a great Sicilian writer, said: “The translator, clearly, is the only one true reader of text, more than any critic and very likely more than the author himself. Because the critic is but the occasional suitor of the text, the author is its father and husband, but the translator is its lover.” This is so nice. Harry Kraus, an Austrian writer, journalist and playwright, also said that “translating a work of the language into a different language means shedding your skin, crossing the border and arriving on the other side, putting on the national costumes.” The problem of translators being traitors is another crucial point. Borges once said it is the original that is unfair to the translation, which is really accurate. Dealing with words is dealing with limits, necessarily and inevitably. Communication is a struggle even in your own language: think of the amount of misunderstanding that happens even at the most basic level of your daily life. So, we can't really say that translation is betrayal. We betray ourselves even when we try to put our thoughts into words.

There is a more interesting question than how and how much I, as a translator, change and betray the original. This other question is: how and how much does that text change me? What does it do to me? What happens to me when I



work with the text? Words get into my system and they establish a relationship with my body and my mind. If all of my system is thoroughly affected by the original, just like any meaningful relationship in real life makes me react and play lots of different roles, then translation awakens the actor, the director, the sound and light engineer, the makeup artist that is in me. As Walt Whitman said, “we contain multitudes,” and I, as a translator, contain multitudes of multitudes. I have an inner theatre staging the original play in me before I translate the same

book into different words. That is why if the book doesn’t change something in me, doesn’t challenge me, it becomes a useless offer, just pure exhaustion, pure drain. I need to feel that what I’m doing is worth doing. The physical exhaustion of these inner rehearsals must translate into good solutions: that’s how I reach the goodness of my words, a sense of rest, of relaxation that it brings to the inner turmoil. The body is important: be in touch with your body, listen and learn how to listen to the words and emotions, because your body will tell you if the solution is good.

*Editors’ note: This transcription has been edited for clarity and length.*



*untitled* (top and bottom)  
by Shenella Silva

# *Happy Little Verses*

**Helen Han Wei Luo**

the tickling of ukulele strings pops through  
its ripe, juicy chords, bursting  
notes like sun-kissed mango  
skin, sizzle, splat, the sugary tang  
beckoning the bucktoothed  
squirrel's bucktoothed nibble, the hairs  
on his tail fluttering,  
leggiero on the ukulele tunes. Follow me into  
these happy little verses,

since the wild onions  
against our window have bloomed.  
Pungent and purple, like constellations of feathery  
kissing against warm skin - I think I must  
furl like lambswool around winter's  
cocooning burp. Mount the slow spiraling trail  
of the tangerine peel, scalloping the fragrant terrain  
with ten tiny toes. Waddle, waddle,  
a gust of sunshine could tip  
you over my hot-air balloon, soaring across  
the polka-dotted, scribbly sky, over fields of  
sheep and horses and wild onion blooms.

At night the housecat curls beneath the window,  
lapping at the milky moonlight dripping  
down the blinds. The golden-crisp apples  
of your cheeks puff and puff,  
and I move softly. Feel the brush  
of each stray figment  
snuggle into place.

# *Heart\_Emoji*

## Winona Young

“have\_you\_checked\_my\_other\_Spotify\_playlist\_titles?\_one’s\_based\_off\_our\_old\_inside\_jokes\_remember?????”

is a name I’m brainstorming for one of my music playlists about an ex of mine.

If I was less of a coward,

I would post it on my public Instagram Story asking —

Do you know what an autoclave is?

Autoclaves are massive machines that sterilize things through hot steam.

The OED says the process of steam sterilization takes its time. It is not sentimental. Autoclaves are resolute. Although autoclaves are not toxic, autoclaves can “effectively destroy” any bacteria, fungi, viruses, but mostly — all signs of life.

I am sad our relationship ended via text, sad face emoticon. All pixels, no physical touch, all aching and yearning.

I hate how I cannot haunt the hallways of our university

And be a bitch (derogatory) in your face as I hover around you in the AQ in-between classes.

I cannot believe that I still think of you.

Is it a bitch-move that I wish you still think of me, regret how you ignored me, look at my fine and dandy selfies on my Instagram Story with lots of silly filters.

If so, would you rue (verb) your existence without me?

Is it a bitch move to say your heart is an autoclave?  
May I be angry? May I spit at the phone screen and be disgusted with how  
distant you are from me? Can you please like me in a way I understand?

[myusernamehere: \_\_\_\_\_ reacted (emoji) to your Instagram Story]

(I'M SORRY! CURRENTLY, I AM TOASTED! I JUST NEED  
TO DO SOME BREATHING EXERCISES AND PRACTICE  
MINDFULNESS TECHNIQUES.)

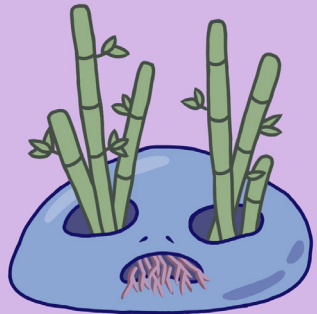
[\_\_\_\_\_ started a video chat]  
[myusername: joined]

Hey girl — yeah, I'm fine. Ah, yes yes, your video is showing and I can see you  
and your cat and your boyfriend clearly. May I read you this poem I'm writing?  
“have\_you\_checked...”

Is this what healing is? LOL.

I haven't felt a rush like this since I was in high school theatre.

*bamboo buffoon*  
by Kitty Cheung



# *Daffodil*

Mina Han

He remembers the first time he saw her as if it were just a blink ago. Sometimes he tries to see it all again by blinking once more, pretending the flashes of darkness are her long dark hair whipping in the wind and hitting him in the face. It never works. There's never a continuation. She should be turning around by now, with her eyes wide in both embarrassment and amusement as she holds her sunhat down with one hand and covers her open mouth with the other. He should be nervously laughing it off and offering a witty remark. Her eyes should be narrowing. He should be babbling. She should be tilting her head. He should be scratching the back of his own. The corner of her lip should be edging up and his should be doing the same.

He rolled over in his bed, flinging his arms out like a starfish. The stucco ceiling looked so much like her skin. The sunlight cast a glow faintly tinted with her favourite dress.

He sighed.

How many months will it be until they can see each other again? Face-to-face? Life is feeling more and more like a book every day. Or would it be a television series? He flipped onto his side. No, it isn't a book or a television series, it's just a slideshow of pictures on loop. Nothing is changing—except for the worse.

“How very optimistic of you,” she would say, raising her eyebrows in that one unreproducible way. “I sure wonder why you remind me of a blobfish out of water.”

He's pathetic. She was consuming every thought of his to the point where he was practically practicing tulpamancy. Something must be done before he rots like this. He brainstormed for a bit before grabbing his phone.

“Hey,” he typed, “*are you up yet?*”

A few seconds passed, and then his phone buzzed.

“*no I’m sleeping*”

He grinned.

“*You’re not allowed out of the house, right?*”

“*unfortunately*”

The three dots did the usual dance that accompanied almost every message of hers, and he watched it like a polite spectator. She was the kind of person who would take multiple messages to complete one thought. It was quite annoying, but kept him hanging on her every word nonetheless. Perhaps it’s some sort of psychological thing that tricks one’s mind into thinking conversations are far more interesting than they really are?

“*actually, fortunately.*”

“*if I went out I’d end up carrying the virus home*”

“*really not good*”

“*my dad is on high blood pressure meds*”

“*and according to something he read*”

“*they increase the possibility of severe complications if he catches it*”

“*oh and he’s obese so*”

They messaged for a long while before he remembered his exciting idea, which he promptly shared with her. She screamed in caps lock. It was safe to say that she was willing to take part.

About thirty minutes later, he was halfway up the hill to her neighbourhood. If only he started doing this sooner! He could have seen her every day while fooling himself into exercising! And the more he did it, the easier it would get, which would lessen the amount of time it would take for him to get to her the next time, and the next time, and the next...

Just as discussed, she was waiting for him by the kitchen window, with the mesh and the glass pushed aside. Her hair was riddled with strange bumps. He smiled to himself. She must have slept well.

He walked into the front yard and picked up one of the garden chairs, carrying it over to the window. It was a lot harder than expected. She watched his struggle in amusement, sipping her tea like a smug noble watching a commoner work while in town.

When the chair was finally close enough to the window, he rested his elbow on it and struck a smarmy pose.

“So,” he said, wiggling his eyebrows and making the stupidest expression he could, “you come here often?”

She broke into laughter, her upper body leaning over the ledge. He loved her laugh. It sounded like the bray of a donkey, and her eyes would disappear into her face like a chocolate chip sinking into a rising cookie. Not that he'd know—he seldom baked. But if she were a cookie, her face would engulf that chocolate chip. That's how she is.

They talked about this, about that, about everything. She had passed him a mug of tea, but he barely made any progress with it before it turned cold. When he wasn't talking, he was listening, and he was so absorbed by her stories that he forgot about the mug warming his hands. There was never a quiet moment, and the conversation moved like an exciting game of tennis. It was different from their conversations over text, but he enjoyed them both. Maybe separating a sentence into multiple messages isn't a psychological trick? Or

perhaps it could be, but doesn't make a difference when one is interested in a person as a whole?

When it came time to say goodbye, she blew kisses and hugged the air. They can't touch, but just seeing each other's faces in person was enough.

Her face. How he loved her face. Her cheeks were full and rosy like ripe fruit. Her red-spotted forehead was always shrinking and expanding, moving this way and that with her expressive eyebrows. Her black eyes gleamed with intelligence. The line of her lips would go down, then up, then down, up, then down again before ending on an up. There was a mole at the very corner, which she was quite proud of. Apparently, it signified luck to food and drink.

He thought of the face as he walked down the hill. It can't belong to a book or a television series, nor is it just a feature in a slideshow of pictures. No, her face was always changing, and it was real. It was so real.

He looked up at the sky and smiled to himself.

Boy, is he glad that she's real.



# *Seeking the Crowd*

translated from the Japanese by Belle Villar

## *Translator's Introduction*

“Gunshû no naka wo motomete aruku” (Seeking the Crowd) explores feelings of displacement and wanting to escape to a metropolis. During the time Hagiwara Sakutaro (1886-1942) was writing, Japan was progressing and having more modern cities. The poem envisions a metropolis that is crowded, full of life and a speaker who desires to be part of it. In a way, Sakutaro imagines this metropolis, so that he can escape his loneliness and feel alive, yet this is happening in his imagination. The speaker is only thinking of seeking the crowd, not actually pursuing it. Hagiwara uses the metaphors of crowds and shadows to embody the emotions of desire and longing, which I kept in my translation. Within this poem, there is the theme of disconnection, while attempting to connect. And just like Hagiwara, it is easy nowadays to feel the pressure of isolation under quarantine and to have a longing to go outside to connect with others. Simply put, through the medium of poetry Hagiwara was able to express his thoughts of loneliness. Therefore, the translation of his poem can bring to its readers a feeling of solidarity, that we are not alone. For this reason, we can escape by reading poetry and even momentarily feel connected.

## Seeking the Crowd

I always desire the city  
I desire to belong in the lively crowd of the city

Crowds are like a wave of vast emotion  
Crowds of people are yearning passion that is ever moving, ever inspiring  
Oh, somber twilight hour of spring  
Among the shadows between the skyscrapers and skyscrapers, I desire the  
movement of the lively city  
How fun it would be to be enveloped in the lively crowd  
Look, how the crowd flows  
Overlapping waves one on top of the other  
The waves make countless shadows that waver and spread

Among the shadows individual worries and sadness disappear  
Oh, how peaceful my mind is as I walk in this street  
Oh, these joyful shadows, loving and indifferent  
Swept away by the joyful waves, I am moved  
Dusk on a melancholy spring day  
The lively crowd swimming from building to building  
Where are they going, and why?  
Enfolding my overwhelming sorrows, one huge earthly shadow  
Oh, I desire to flow within the wave  
Wherever, Wherever  
The waves grow dim at the horizon  
All flowing in one, just one direction

## 群集の中を求めて歩く

私はいつも都會をもとめる  
都會のにぎやかな群集の中に居ることをもとめる

群集はおほきな感情をもつた浪のやうなものだ  
どこへでも流れてゆくひとつのさかんな意志と愛欲とのぐるうぷだ  
ああ ものがなしき春のたそがれどき  
都會の入り混みたる建築と建築との日影をもとめ  
おほきな群集の中にもまれてゆくのはどんなに楽しいことか  
みよこの群集のながれてゆくありさまを  
ひとつの浪はひとつの浪の上にかさなり  
浪はかざりなき日影をつくり 日影はゆるぎつつひろがりすすむ  
人のひとりひとりにもつ憂いと悲しみと みなその日影に消えてあと  
かたもない  
ああ なんといふやすらかな心で 私はこの道をも歩いて行くことか  
ああ このおほいなる愛と無心のたのしき日影  
たのしき浪のあなたにつれられて行く心もちは涙ぐましくなるやうだ。  
うらがなしい春の日のたそがれどき  
このひとびとの群は 建築と建築との軒をおよいで  
どこへどうしてながれ行かうとするのか  
私のかなしい憂鬱をつつんである ひとつのおほきな地上の日影  
ただよふ無心の浪のながれ  
ああ どこまでも どこまでも この群集の浪の中をもまれて行きたい  
浪の行方は地平にけむる  
ひとつの ただひとつの「方角」ばかりさしてながれ行かうよ。



*untitled*  
by Shenella Silva

# *Inherently*

Clarence Ndabahwerize

Only now inherently yours,  
But not at the beginning,  
You forget that,  
Sweep it under the carpet,  
And saunter off whistling.  
Our homes, our lands, your treaties.  
You walked in,  
Told us about you,  
Your God,  
Your cultures,  
Your lands,  
Your kings and queens,  
Princes and princesses.  
Then you decided to stay,  
Because you could.  
Would we ever have said no?  
What if we would have let you?  
Provided you listened to us.  
But nevertheless it became yours,  
Not ours,  
And you forgot,  
Sometimes you fought,  
Other times you took,  
Some days you stared,  
Other days you laughed,  
Then there were the days you scoffed.  
Still apparently yours,  
And not inherently ours,



*Absence 3* by Sun Woo Baik

Cleverly but not so surely,  
For now, but not forevermore.  
And now we watch as that fear spreads through you,  
The same fear we had,  
Watching our cultures change,  
Our lands look demographically different.  
We see your fear misplaced,  
Driven by anger,  
A fear of the unknown,  
Because it is new to you,  
Unexpected.  
You never would have known that this is what it felt like,  
Even though it's not the same,  
Because they don't have the same power as yours,  
That obscene default power,  
Unexplained by nature,  
Only hampered by the fiery yellow sphere in the sky,  
Bestowed upon so called fairness,  
The power to rewrite everything in their favour,  
Possibly now and forevermore.  
We say,  
You will be okay,  
As our children will,  
As your children will,  
And their children,  
On the day we will all finally be okay,  
On the day of acknowledgement,  
And reconciliation.

# *There is a World Within Me*

**Alyssa Victorino**

Echoes of a life I once knew crawl with me to sleep.  
An unforeseen storm of fate settled on my lap,  
imbued with solitude and effusive prayer.

Give in to its roar—you cannot fight what is already here.  
Sometimes, when all you can do is listen,  
you can hear the sun call out for the moon  
to make sure it has enough light to give.  
You can feel the seasons change.

Inside the tidal waves of the worst this world has to offer,  
all we have are the quiet moments we carry with us in our palms.  
It is easy to feel small. It is easy to forget why we are here.  
It is the lies we nurture that leave us imprisoned when we are free.

There is a world within me, riddled with jungle vines and sunlight.  
There, I rest and look to where the sea meets the sky—so ready  
to give itself to the horizon.

There, I run, but not away from anything.  
I run towards everything before me,  
and embrace the impermanence of it all.

*bodies blooming bountiful* by Kitty Cheung





# *Pillow*

**Nimra Askari**

The quarantine guaranteed  
How my mind is free  
I have so much time to reflect  
To reminisce  
To feel some sort of glee

I reflect on the ways we lived our lives  
I tap into the emotions or at least try  
The three hallways we would reside  
The laughs and the cries  
The family dinners with no fights  
The picnics with the flies  
I miss seeing the world  
Without fear of ending someone else's  
I want my people back  
I can't help it

I squeeze my pillow  
And wrap my arms tightly  
To feel something

I want to feel attached  
So I dig into the past  
But once I write these lines  
I know digging won't surpass

The past no longer serves me  
And I struggle to accept it  
When the world is back to 'normal'  
It would kill me to forget this



Because in those past moments  
I was in a fantasy  
Too invested in the world  
Too attached to light

I didn't realize  
The temporal view of this vice

How at the end of the day  
It's only you who'll suffice

Socially  
the distance was needed  
For you to understand  
What you needed

And I needed the real me

The quarantine guaranteed  
How my mind is free

How instead of squeezing my pillow  
I could wrap my arms around me.

## *meet our authors and artists*

**Alex Masse** is a neurodivergent lesbian writer and musician living in what's colonially known as Surrey, BC. They write poetry, prose, plays, and more, as the written word is their dear friend and an invaluable tool of expression. When not creating, they're likely reading or out picking flowers.

**Alyssa Victorino** is a Psychology major who is also completing a Minor in Sociology and a Certificate in Social Justice. She has had a natural inclination towards writing and photography since she was a child and continues to pursue both as they help her to navigate her identity and the world around her.

**Amy Groves** is currently pursuing a major in History and a minor in World Literature at SFU. Her preferred artistic mediums are mixed media, textiles, and words.

**Belle Villar** is a fourth year World literature major and minor in Print & Digital Publishing. As a world literature major, she loves how this major combines her love for travelling and the written word. Lately she has been learning Japanese. She is passionate about travelling, and daydreams of visiting exotic places around the world.

**Clarence Ndabahwerize** is an International Studies major at SFU. He believes that the arts are an essential part of human progress, and that every human owes their existence and wellbeing to some form of art.

**Daniel Truong** is a fourth year World Literature student at SFU. He is interested in art in various forms, and the cultural backdrop from which the works of art derive from. He is particularly interested in Japanese pop culture such as anime, manga, and tokusatsu.

**Elise Volkman** is a graduate of Simon Fraser University's The Writer's Studio. Her short stories have been short-listed three times in the weekly Reedsy Prompts contest. Elise lives and climbs in British Columbia with her husband and a dozen half-baked fantasy novel ideas.

**Emma Best** is a very tired SFU student pursuing a major in English and a double minor in Publishing and Film Studies. She enjoys thinking about writing much more than doing it. She does not enjoy talking about herself.

**Francesca Drake** is an English major at Simon Fraser University studying to become a secondary school teacher. She enjoys finishing essays, watching good and bad television, dogs, and pickleball. She believes that spring is undeniably the best season.

**Helen Han Wei Luo** is an emerging Chinese-Canadian writer and philosophy student in Vancouver. Her long form work has previously been longlisted for the CBC Literary Prizes in both the short story and non-fiction contests, and her poetry has appeared literary magazines such as Plenitude Magazine and PRISM International

**Isabella Wang** is the author of two poetry collections, *On Forgetting a Language* (Baseline Press 2019) and *Pebble Swing* (Nightwood Editions 2021). Her poetry and prose have appeared in three anthologies and over thirty literary journals, including *The Fiddlehead*, *Prism International*, and *The New Quarterly*. She is pursuing a double-major in English and World Literature at SFU, and is an Editor with *Room* magazine.

**Jade Cameron** is a perpetual student of International Studies and Sociology at SFU. Their work has been seen in the *Lyre*, the *Liar*, and *Boulevard* magazine.

**Joy Kuang** is a third-year student studying Cognitive Science and World Literature at Simon Fraser University. She is interested in language, including the different ways of studying it and their implications. Unless it is a numerical language, in which case they will be admired from afar.

**Kitty Cheung** (she/她) is a multi-disciplinary artist and writer living on unceded Coast Salish lands. She studies Interactive Arts and Technology with a minor in World Literature at SFU. Kitty enjoys Zebra pens, audiobooks, and digital drag shows that help quell her quarantine insanity.

**Leila Bonner** is an SFU graduate who studied International Studies and Political Science. A lover of the creative process, she feels blessed to be published alongside the work of so many talented artists. If you're looking for her, she's probably at a local coffee shop or a concert somewhere.

**Mina Han** is a World Literature undergraduate student at SFU. She is fascinated by the concept of love and might just be a hopeless romantic. Mina has a wide array of interests, including skateboarding, rollerskating, theatre, math, and sewing. She hopes to become better at Mandarin.

**Nimra Askari:** As a student exploring my interests at SFU, I write in my free time to release my creative ideas and to keep me sane. Writing poetry gives me a sense of purpose and I hope that one person feels less alone by reading and connecting to the lines of my poems.

**Parham Elmi** is a SFU BPK graduate who found his passion for poetry at the W.A.C Bennett Library. He enjoys using poetry as a medium to convey life lessons, challenges, and realizations that he has had. For more of his work follow him on instagram @parhampoeetry

**Scotland Galloway** is an undergraduate student at Simon Fraser University, studying Human Geography. He lives with his partner, cat and dog in Vancouver. Whenever possible, he writes poetry around the city.

**Shenella Silva:** “I am an English major who is very passionate about learning more about photography. I like to explore different types of photographic styles as I believe in the importance of the ability of an image to leave its mark, and convey/paint a story – sometimes, even better than words can.”

**Sun Woo Baik** is a recent SFU English and Publishing grad. He is mostly glad to be done with school, but also has a healthy dose of angst about the “real world” that comes after (or so they say). His favourite thing to do is walk around his neighbourhood taking photos.

**Winona Young** is a junior communications professional and writer currently based in Coast Salish lands. Young so far has over 5 years experience in journalism and creative writing. Her current works in progress include: collaborative theatre, writing plays, local radio, social media design, data analysis, and skateboarding.

**Victor Yin** is studying human geography, and is passionate about rock climbing, art, the outdoors, and baking banana bread.



*UNIVERSE.EXO* by Winona Young





WHEN ARE  
YOU  
GOING TO  
STOP PUNISHING  
YOURSELF  
FOR ~~THESE~~  
THINGS  
YOU CANNOT  
CONTROL???

The  
Lyre



[journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/lyre/index](http://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/lyre/index)