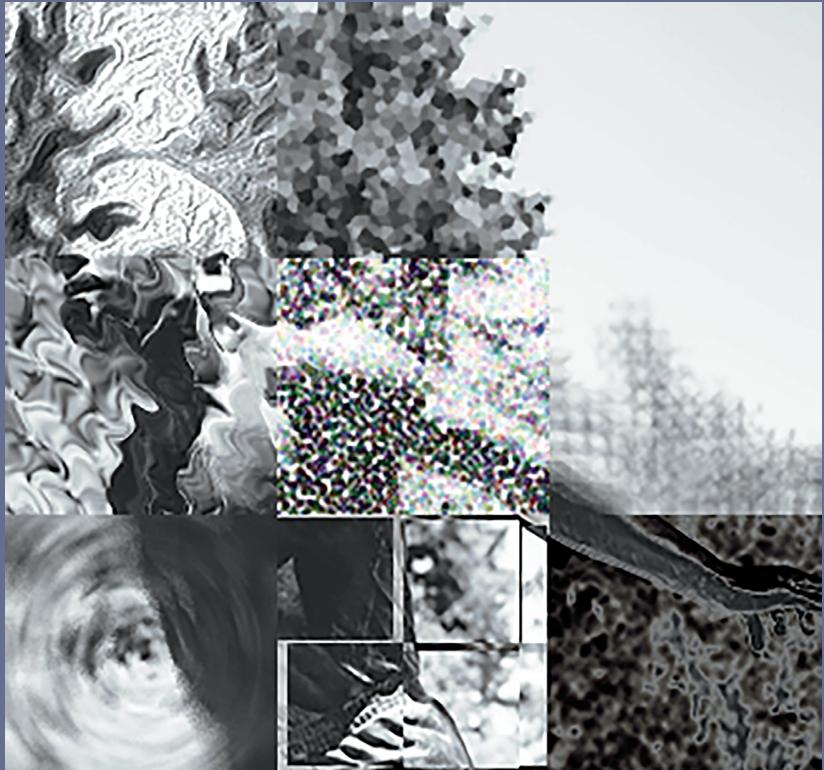


# The Lyre

*A Literary Journal*



Issue 14 | (In)Human Vulnerability | Fall 2023



The aesthetic of the  
oppressed body  
makes bank now.  
Consuming it will not absolve you

of your racism.

Ri by Richa Daiya

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

The Lyre is published and distributed on the traditional ancestral Coast Salish lands of the x<sup>w</sup>məθk<sup>w</sup>əyəm (Musqueam), Sk̓wx̓wú7mesh Úxwumixw (Squamish), səlilw ʔtaʔ (Tsleil-Waututh), q̓ícəy̓ (Katzie), k<sup>w</sup>ik<sup>w</sup>əłəm (Kwkwetlem), 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).

# *meet the team*

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<https://journals.lib.sfu.ca/index.php/lyre/index>



Issue 14 | (In)Human Vulnerability | Fall 2023



*Union* by Belle Villar

## *from the editors*

In our evolving post-pandemic world we bring forward lessons of embracing change in our normality, comfortability, and aim to address the value of translation. We continue to be curious and innovative and forge ahead after our globally shared experience. Considering the rapid progression of technology since the COVID-19 pandemic, we aim to address how we can move forward and embrace technology, while still valuing what keeps us different from it. The discussion of AI and its newly-fixed role in the world brings concerns over the replacement of human creativity and craft. How do we argue for the necessity and value of the humanities in a world growing more dependent on technology?

In relation to this discourse, creating the theme for our fourteenth issue became a search for the unique trait of the human that AI cannot inherently replicate or mimic. The human imagination plays an integral role in creation, and what we found was the value of artistic imperfection. In sharing stories of vulnerability and empathizing with one another, meaning is created in our art and writing through genuine connection and validation. Thus, we chose the theme of (In)Human Vulnerability to open a space for artists and writers to share these intimate stories.

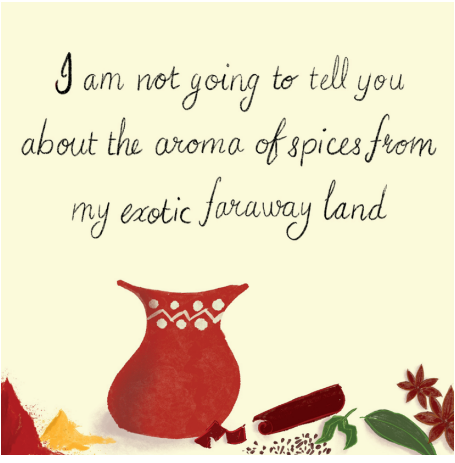
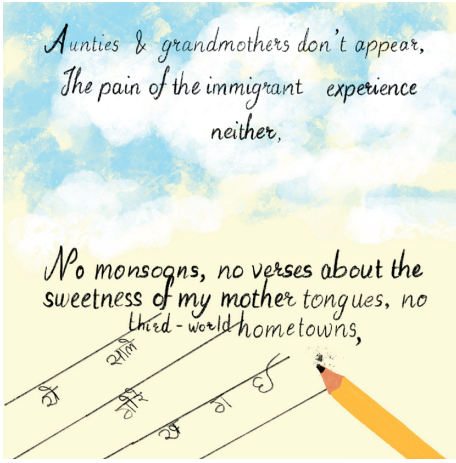
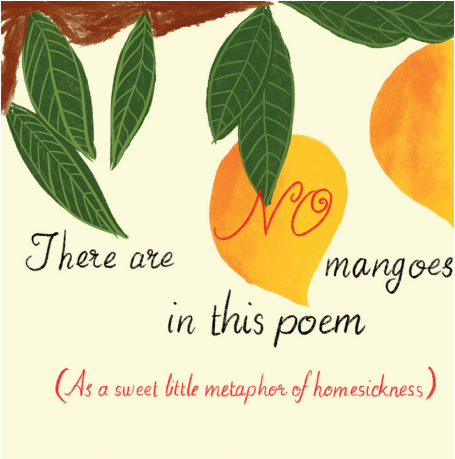
This issue of the Lyre provides an experience for readers to immerse themselves in threaded narratives by our artists and writers who articulate, through a range of mediums, the relevance of human creation and connection. Across these worlds, the authors share struggles that can feel familiar to our experiences in life, a connection that may not be inherently seen, or heard, but exists for each of us. The provided transparency about these vulnerabilities becomes a strength proven by the thoughtful artists behind these works. We are sharing our vulnerabilities and confronting our imperfections while still facing the world, and all of its difficulties, head-on.

We want to share our admiration of our contributors and editorial team for the work put into this issue. Their vulnerability and hard work manifest themselves into the theme throughout (In)Human Vulnerability. Readers can expect to commune with the emotions of writers and artists, building a connection that transcends the page. We also want to recognize our executive team for their endeavours shown this past year. Their dedication and hard work brought this issue to life and we are appreciative to share this experience with them. Lastly, we also want to thank our faculty advisor Maria Barraza for her guidance in

curating this year's issue. Her passion for The Lyre inspired us to put in our best effort from beginning to end.

Wielding technology and AI may advance us, but not replace what makes us unique: our constant ability to be vulnerable with one another, lend a hand, and help in times of crisis.

Sincerely,  
Vincent Tram & Bianca Weima  
Editors-in-Chief, The Lyre Issue 14



Exotic Poetry by Richa Daiya

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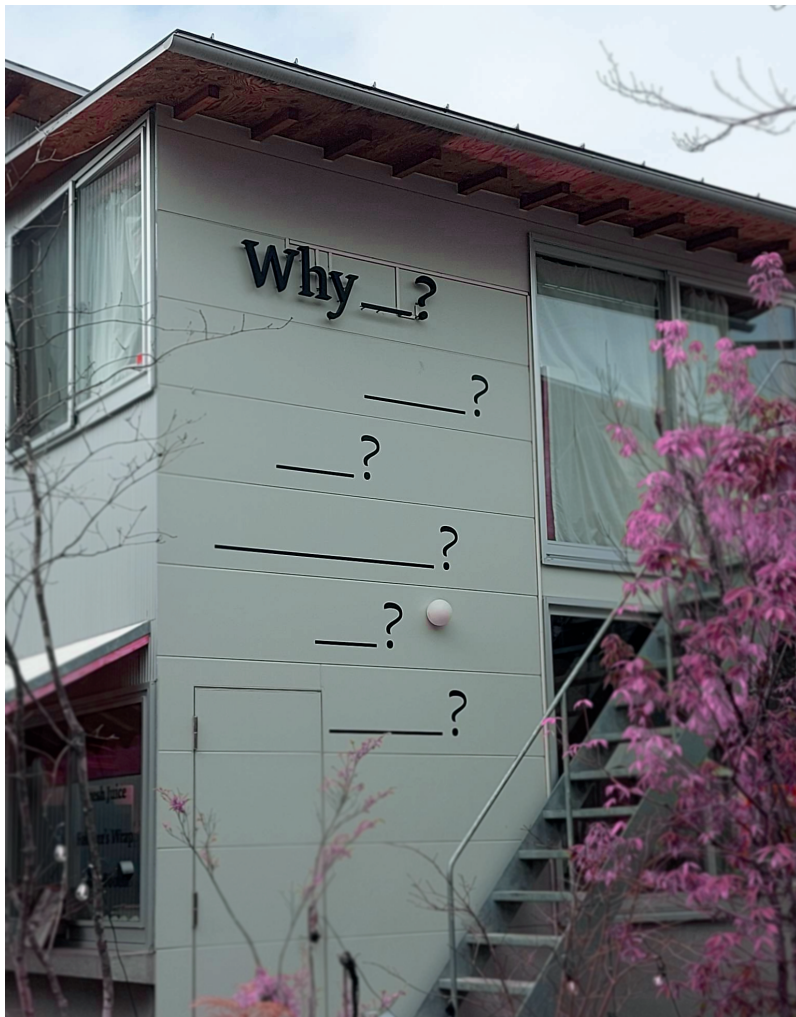
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*Question* by Belle Villar

# *the mirror*

Amanda Blake

remind me  
who do i blame            for my  
maladaptive sinews  
and resuscitated veins

who do i blame            for my  
sentience

i know that spines contain  
deoxyribonucleic acid            mixed with  
familial lineages

and that sexual trauma is held in the pelvis

i can't help but wonder if that is why  
i ache when my mother weeps in a different city

i call out to the ghosts of my dead aunts  
did you make me?

or did i make myself?  
how do you sleep at night?            *do you need melatonin too?*

i trace my family's shame  
in the freckles

across my bulbous nose  
cartilage constellations            *does rhinoplasty work like duct tape?*

the strobing pressure    of  
my complexes  
tether me to my deepest fears            one small push

and i unravel

spilling innards on the floor

i suppose

i'll hang a mirror around my neck  
so that when my relatives want to critique me  
and maybe

finally

they'll leave me the fuck alone.

like a noose

they'll see themselves instead

*Cracked Beauty* by Belle Villar



# *Musicality*

Emma Adams

For the longest time I found the most vulnerability in music.  
A song with a good set of lyrics was the only place I could let go and lose it.  
It felt safe to belt out a refrain.  
It was a way to keep any semblance of vulnerability locked in a frame.

Talking about anxiety, forming the words floating in my brain...  
Well that ladies and gentlemen made me want to hurl my guts down the nearest drain.

But music, music is power.  
After all, singing to your plants gives you taller flowers.

Music teaches.  
And anxiety well, anxiety is like a set of leeches.

Although these songs were brought to me through my phone.  
In my deepest anxiety that audio made me feel like I wasn't alone.

I once had a fear of human vulnerability.  
I once had a fear of human emotions and their flammability.  
But music is one of the things that set me free.  
Music is one of the things that taught me how to be.



*In The Palm Of Her Hands* by Vincent Tram

## *dance of a lifetime*

Paige Gant

**TW: body dysphoria, eating disorder**

pins prick tiny waists  
too-thin ribbons measuring cinch tighter  
ribs visible through skin hold breath  
*suck it in*  
breathing stops  
vunder layers of satin chiffon  
lace itches sequins scratch  
draw blood sweat so many tears  
not good enough not thin enough

contorted art  
beautiful torture  
turning on tiptoe toenails  
broken cracked like powder  
tears fall down cheeks smile  
through physical agony  
stomach empty gnawing on itself  
words ring through ears  
lazy sloppy useless *unworthy*  
not good enough not thin enough  
skirts brush the stage  
a princess trapped by an evil queen  
her ruler rapping on linoleum  
*I can see your lunch*  
blooming bouquets showers of applause  
smile through pain  
you fell out of your turn  
didn't jump high enough  
look beautiful  
feel ugly broken empty  
not good enough not thin enough

passed over overlooked *looked good*  
she said ignorant *a disgrace* she said  
holding fate in her delicate hands you're cut  
empty as your stomach bruised battered  
held by the tender embrace of a blanket  
the gap in your heart filled by warmth love  
a fragile smile time spent outside birds chirping  
sun shining takes time in time  
*I'm good enough I'm beautiful*



*Blue or Red* by Belle Villar

## *Ghazal for Growing Pains*

Mason Rowan

The Earth became shrewdly self-absorbed during the Cambrian Explosion,  
spewed out new life to admire its own frame. Eyes emerge to view the self.

My eyes flutter against the sound of an alarm. An aching spine reverberates  
into a creaking bedframe. The body demands 5 more minutes to assemble itself.

Ms. Hsiao tells me that my Mandarin needs work, “Discern the strokes of characters”.  
My hands ache from rewriting the word 眼睛. Thank God the eye radical speaks for itself.

I’d much rather avoid mirrors than run the risk of lacerating my soles on the shards  
of a fractured identity. Eyes do not look kindly upon meagerness within the self.

In the 485 million years since the end of the Cambrian period, the Earth has largely out-  
grown  
the awkwardness of Anomalocarid optics. Somewhere along the line, perhaps I’ll do so  
myself.

# *DIVINE BY DAYLIGHT*

Milo Whynott

I dreamed love felt like holiness in the arms of a false god  
Believed that his hands around my throat were a form of prayer  
My blood still stains the sacrificial altar; I doubt he remembers wielding the knife

I dreamed love felt like holiness in the arms of a false god  
And I dread desecration in every touch

So I awaited blasphemy against your lips—  
And instead found benevolence

Let me be your midnight sacrament; you are divine by daylight

*To Bifurcate* by Daniel Cheung

## *AI-carus*

Edward Huang

From the eye of a metal mask,  
Smoke rises while humanity fades.  
Packaged with a human face,  
It speaks our language yet feels none of our pain.  
Icarus, why fly thou so high?



# *birthdays*

## **Ammarah Siddiqui**

i'd begin my vigil on your birthday and stay  
till the grass becomes matted and wilts unto itself  
as leaves, snow, and sun befall stone

i'd trace the letters of your name  
till grey grooves deepen and lean into my touch

i'd mouth your epitaph with soft lips and wait  
for my breathing to hitch right before the last word  
of your final line

i'd redo my speech verbatim till our crude jokes sound like poetry  
melancholic expression giving my stoic voice  
hyperexposure therapy

i'd stop counting days because you wouldn't know  
that your birthday just passed  
and soon mine will too

i'd watch them bring flowers and leave a hand on my back  
i'd be your gargoyle guardian  
from life, to after, and back

i'd sit and i'd stand and i'd prick my fingers  
on a dying rose  
till the branch draws blood and i can emblazon your tomb

i'd reminisce till i'm dizzy then forget till i'm drunk  
and i'd lie beside you  
pacing, tracing, waiting  
i'd rub the braid of embroidery thread between my cracked fingers

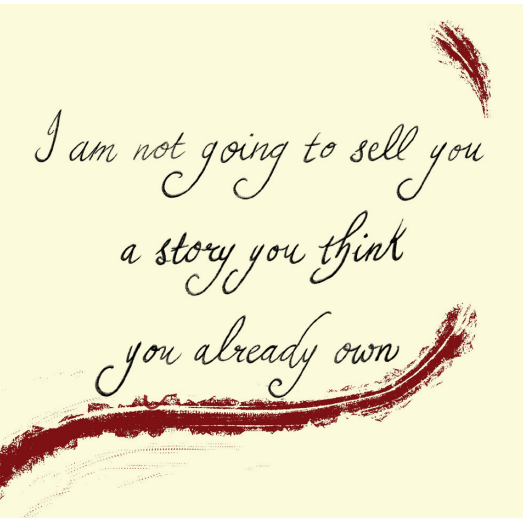
and fiddle with the bead, imagine you're also reaching for yours

until one day sometime- maybe mid-year  
i'd let my knife slip- deeper than usual

and i'd decide in the second it takes for the  
string to snap  
that life was far too long  
to stay;

so our birthdays would pass  
but by then  
i, too, wouldn't know that they did.

*Exotic Poetry* by Richa Daiya



*I am not going to sell you  
a story you think  
you already own*

# *point zero one*

## **Ammarah Siddiqui**

i want statistics on things like love  
on how many souls feel it and how many don't put it into words

statistics on soulmates and the potential for me to meet mine

on the lifetime of a spark and the chances for it to survive

stats on falling at first sight and if its limited to  
once-in-a-lifetime

the percentage of accuracy with which  
i can deem them 'the one'

or the ratio of lost to found loves

the probability of pain if my heart does break  
and how many second chances you give  
an irreversible mistake

i wish to enumerate  
airport crushes and elementary pacts  
digits for every charged- eye contact

i need a database on 'what ifs,' 'could've beens,' and 'wrong time, right persons'  
yet hearts do not keep tally  
and souls cannot be scaled  
numbers offer no warning  
and graphs won't prepare

the heedless lover from walking a path uncharted



*Life In Movement* by Sara Aristizabal

by modern mathematics  
if i had statistics on things like love  
i fear i'd still take my chances  
even on a point zero one



*At The End Of The Tunnel* by Vincent Tram

# Ask

Safiya Shah

Electronic synchronised beeps enter my dream as I wake up to the familiar sound. “Cora, off the alarm” I demand. The small, smooth, white device lights up and hovers to my side. The alarm turns off a moment later. I make my way out of bed leaving behind the crumpled sheets and heading to the washroom. Cora follows me and I ask, “what day is it today?”

“Wednesday,” Cora replies, “You begin work at 8:37, considering the road conditions you should leave at 8:15.” I consider the information as I brush my teeth.

I always leave at 8:15, but I’m glad I can ask Cora just in case something on the road has changed. The small device would know, it holds an infinite amount of information.

I eat breakfast quickly before heading out and asking Cora to start my car. “Your car is fully charged” she assesses as I enter the vehicle. It is exactly 8:15, the perfect amount of time for me to get to work just as Cora had suggested.

After 10 minutes on the road Cora warns “there seems to be a sudden amount of traffic

up ahead.” My palms turn sweaty. Cora’s morning predictions about traffic patterns are never wrong. “I can guide you through an alternate route that will be quicker” Cora suggests.

“Okay” I reply. Cora’s shortcut suggestion brings me out of my panic, as I follow her directions down another street.

As I pass the road I would have stayed on, I see that the cars on it are continuing as normal. I wonder where the traffic Cora was talking about is.

“Turn right at this intersection” Cora demands, snapping me out of my thoughts. It doesn’t matter which road I take; Cora always gets me to work on time. “Your destination is on the left.” I recognize the street as I pull into the building’s parking lot.

A young girl is walking with her mother on the street. The mother is talking to someone on her phone. I watch as the girl runs ahead of her mother and picks up a flower from a bed of grass near the sidewalk. She asks the small device hovering beside her “What’s this?”

“A dandelion” it replies before going on to explain more about the flower.

“Wow” the little girl exclaims while twirling the flower between her fingers.

“It’s 8:36, you have one minute” Cora announces. I come back to reality and walk into work. The shiny white walls of the building bring me into a familiar mindset as I prepare myself for the long day ahead of me. I organize papers and distribute information for Plasma Tech.

“Good morning, Lily” Mary says to me.

“Good morning” I reply with a smile. Mary always makes work better.

“How was your weekend?” she asks.

“Cora what did I do this weekend?”

“You spent Saturday binge-watching shows and Sunday cleaning” Cora replies.

“No better way to spend it” Mary says, “Lana, what did I do this weekend?” she asks the small device hovering by her side.

“You spent Saturday with Gracie and Sunday mostly sleeping” Lana replies.

I hear the door from the other room open and turn my head slightly to see who enters. Our supervisor comes in with two officers, conversing sternly.

“We should get to work” Mary suggests.

“Yeah” I reply before heading to my desk. “What do I have to do today?” I ask Cora.

“You have to compile files for Project X and send it out to all board members to start.”

“To start” I sigh, before turning on my computer and getting to work. I sneak a look at the supervisor every now and then. I’m curious as to what she is talking about with the officers. I want to ask Cora about it, but I can’t get away with doing so discreetly right now. “What files do I need to compile Cora?”

“Files labeled 3, 7, 4, and 5.” I pull up the files and begin to put them together.

“How are you doing Mary?” The supervisor asks.

“I’m doing great, what about you, Susan?”

“Perfectly fine, how are you, Lily?”

“I’m good, thanks” I reply.

“What are you working on today, Mary?” Susan asks.

“Lana, can you explain the to-do list for today?”

The device replies “today you are updating the company’s insurance files.”

“Well good luck with that, Mary. And you Lily?”

“I’m compiling files for Project X” I reply. Both Mary and Susan give me a confused look



*Response to Octavio Paz's I Speak of the City by Darian Feakes*

and I wonder if I'm maybe doing the wrong thing.

"Is your device broken?" Susan asks looking towards Cora.

"No, I just" I pause searching for an excuse as to why I didn't ask Cora for my to-do list. "I just remembered what to do; I didn't need to ask" I reply desperately.

"Alright then" Susan says with a small smile before leaving. I look to Mary, but she is buried in her work once more. I get back to work as well, trying to forget about my little mishap. It's probably just weird for them to see me remember without Cora, but surely I don't ask Cora about everything.

At about 3:00 I am almost finished my work when the supervisor enters again with the officers. I try to ignore them and get back to finishing up.

"Hey Lily, I wanted to ask you about something?" I jump with surprise at Susan's sudden appearance but quickly recollect myself.

"Yeah, what about?"

"What do you think our next step for Project X should be?"

"Oh, well I think we should discuss the project further and consider its consequences before we begin experimentation." Susan looks at me worriedly and the officers turn tense.

“Is there something wrong with your device” Susan asks again.

“No” I reply. “Wait is that what this is about” I laugh, “because I didn’t ask Cora?”

They continue to look at me with concern, even Mary. “I’m sorry Lily” Susan says before nodding to the officers. They make their way towards me reciting “You have the right to remain silent” while trapping my wrists in handcuffs.

“Wait” I plead quietly. “Wait!” I yell this time. “I just forgot to ask, I’m sorry!” They lift me up from my chair and begin to drag me out of the office. “I’ll ask next time I promise” I plead again as hot tears burn their way down my face and blur my vision. Susan is gone, but I see Mary still silently working. Mary is my best friend. Mary who has been with me every day. All the stories we have shared with each other. All the things that she knows about me. Mary is my best friend. “Mary!” I yell out between sobs. “Mary please tell them I mean no harm. It was an accident.” She remains glued to her work. “Mary don’t let them take me.”

“I’m sorry” she says finally looking up, finally looking at me. There is no sadness in her expression, just what might be pity. I look away from her, feeling completely defeated.

Just as the officers have reached the office door, I see Cora. The small device is turned off and lying lifeless on the floor. No longer hovering by my side. “Cora” I whisper to myself. The device remains off, as I stare at it, then the office door closes, and Cora is gone.

*Among Us* by Belle Villar



# *scream*

Hilary J. H. Tsui

you stare at me  
unblinking  
your eyes distant, glassy  
unfocused  
uncaring

my pleas falling onto  
empty, unhearing ears  
my tears received by  
two lifeless orbs of steel

my hands beat against  
your chest  
i search for  
a sign of life  
a sign of love

but all i feel is cold  
all i feel is unfeeling  
all i feel is  
the lack of you

i feel  
the steady thrum of you  
of the ropes of electricity  
running through you  
keeping you  
alive

but you are not  
i cannot feel you  
and you cannot feel  
me



*Techno-Hysteria* by Daniel Cheung

i stare at the shape of you  
wondering what went wrong  
wondering how i lost you  
wondering how you lost  
yourself

i scream at you  
begging for a shred  
a spark  
a whisper of care  
a sign of emotion

i scream at you  
begging for a response  
wishing the sounds of  
my sorrow  
my anger  
my hate  
to reach you  
for you to hear me

and all i want for you  
is to scream back

# *I have an accent*

Sara Aristizabal

1

I speak. I write. I think.  
I speak.  
'You have an accent' they say  
I know.  
Pause  
I know what is coming next  
'Where are you from' they say  
Beat  
Heart - beat  
'Colombia'  
2 Beats  
Heart beats  
Faster  
'Oh'  
3 Beats  
Heart b-beats, trips  
Defiant  
Expectant  
Fearful  
'Pablo Escobar'  
No beats  
There it is  
Resigned  
Is that all they see  
Is that all that matters

2

'I...'  
Sigh  
Forced laugh  
Tight chest  
'Yeah... Pablo Escobar'  
Heart b-beats, trips, stops, starts again  
Fast  
Slow  
Uncertain  
They move on  
I stay here  
Uncertainty for heart beat  
Scream for words unsaid  
Whisper for voice  
They move on  
I ...  
I.  
Move.  
On.

3

I...  
can't move on  
I speak. I write. I think.  
Their shadows follow me  
Faceless  
Shapeless  
Their voices follow me  
Screaming  
Pressuring  
Booming  
Stifling

I speak.  
I pretend.  
Not good enough.  
Yet.  
I pretend more.  
I speak.  
Almost there.  
I pretend harder.  
I speak.  
They no longer say 'you have an accent'  
They no longer ask 'where are you from'  
They no longer say 'Pablo Escobar'  
Like an internal joke  
Like suffering to laugh about  
They barely notice now  
They barely say 'you have an accent'  
They barely...  
I pretend.  
I blend.  
I fade.

4

No  
NO  
I will not pretend.  
I will not blend.  
I will not fade.  
I have an accent  
Beautiful  
Musical  
Whole history in me  
Whole culture in me  
Whole  
ME  
'You have an accent' they say

'Yes, I do'  
Heart - beat  
Fast  
Strong  
Proud  
A little uncertain  
'Where are you from' they say  
'Colombia'  
Heat beats  
Faster  
Stronger  
Prouder  
Conversation goes on  
They move on  
I stand tall

5

My name is Sara (SAA-Raa)  
Not Sarah (SAER-ah)  
My name is power  
My name is history  
My name is culture  
My name is family  
My name is me  
My name is Sara  
And I have an accent



*Momentum* by Daniel Cheung

## *Julianna walking at night*

Isobel Sinclair

I know a girl whose boyfriend has never made her come. They have been together since she was in tenth grade. She is now in her second year of university.

I shouldn't know this. I have looked her in the eyes. Her friend, who I was kissing and holding hands with at the time (things we no longer do), told me this as a sort of promise. In telling me this pitiful secret, I was a trusted person, implying that there was no future where I would not be the person that she would tell all her friends' painful truths to. That there was no universe in which I would have this in my head and yet never talk to her again.

How does one act as if forever could happen and yet know that it won't?

I have a friend that walks at night with a cigarette in her pocket. She does not smoke it, but it feels right to have it there. The cameras are on her, at a perfect distance to catch the ambient light and the chosen silence. She has a baseball hat from her hometown and a smudge of eyeliner. She is the feeling of looking out a dirty subway window at the world falling back. Her clothes never fit, yet in a way they always do. I covet her.

She ignores the omniscient stare, as if it's not in her head. It follows, lining up the shot, editing the footage as she walks. She is watching herself. She is watching herself watch herself. The people all pass by, but the focus stays on her. Her head nods to music that only she can hear. But we can hear it too. The Strokes, that one song your dad always turns up when it is on the radio, some instrumental from a cult classic movie. She kicks her foot. The night it is? hers in a way in it never has been before.

There is a girl with a sheet of plastic over a back window in her car. She punched it out herself. She says her car will break down any day now while she is driving me home in the snow. I bite my lip.

Three and a half hours in a movie theatre, shoulders touching. The sour candy burned at my tongue. Nothing felt stilted. Not like I had known her my whole life, but rather that we could begin that now. That lives could begin in the middle.

She has spiders in her hair. And an elfish smile that catches me off guard. Hopefully the goodbye is not too hard.

She knows the girl who over the summer between fourth and fifth grade decided not to be my best friend. It is only when I learned this that I realised the wound had completely healed. What is forever is not always forever.

To say I have a friend who is dating a man in his thirties is to say that we still speak.

He was in his early teens when we were born. He was learning about the female anatomy in biology class while she was still in the womb. She could not legally drink when they met.

My roommate has told me to look at her boyfriend's ass. I will remember for the next time I see him, but she might need to remind me. I don't make a habit of staring at men's asses. They offer very little in the way of entertainment.

She laughs through the wall. She talks for hours. I lay down and listen. It passes the time.

There was a girl who played violin. Because of me, she didn't have the time anymore.

Now I don't take up any of her time. I hope she is playing the violin.

# *Cradle 2 Da Grave*

**Bayantseva Singh Pandher**

Dedicated to all those lost in the struggle

Rest in peace Mehakpreet Singh Sethi

And this goes out to the lil homies that are in a rush to be gangsters

First man's born all innocent

crisis

Not a day goes by that mom's ain't sick of  
kissin him

My cuz cut his hair to find a girl to snatch

Every day after school playing soccer with  
his friends

The boy ain't all that religious, but guess  
that's what happens when dudes call you a  
Gyani

Refusing to come home till it's dark at right  
bout 10

Gyani's are the wisest of my religion

Was always the nicest

Nowadays the boys get put down, cuz it's  
used as derogative

Coming through for the homies, always full  
of surprises

Thirsty for power, hungry for respect

First man's was nice, then entering high  
school turned to the vices

Only got his boys on lock cuz of the tec

Typical brown boy wearing all black

In the real world you just do you

Seen it before, but this ain't no identity

Ain't nobody tryna screw you

One wrong word or look man's get pissed

Avoiding to look a fool, man's throws a  
fight to show what goes on if they try to  
diss

That's what happens when man's is aca-  
demically challenged

And schools a waste of time to manage

School wasn't all that appealing

Instead man's wanted all the juice

Yet lil did he know he'd be serving a deuce

Yeah this G I'm on a bout now came from  
India to Canada for a life that be better

My G adapted to the culture so things  
wouldn't be harder

Man's can constantly train and have all the  
brains, yet at the end of the day dudes try-  
na one up the other showing who's harder

See this boy ain't no martyr

But his bro lost a brother in front of his  
eyes

See man's was gone to confront the G I  
was on about before

That G was harassing his girlfriend and



*That feeling before Coffee by Belle Villar*

when she refused to conversate he threat-  
ened to rape her calling her a whore

Of course this man's couldn't ignore

Boyfriend gone to that bro's school to settle  
the score

When he pulled in the parking lot

Man's got tossed and that G took man's  
own gat to give man's a dirt nap

One young brown male died in vain

The other just another statistic who ran out

of juice

Now serving a deuce

What's that show me?

That we a dying community and only with those closest and only with those closest and no other's we showing unity?

Can say my G's are dying

Bro's coming here for higher education but the struggles just too trying

So now we statistics overdosing or suiciding

Emotions lost in hiding

Number 2 in hate crimes was against Sikhs in the states

All I see is a dying race

Don't forget, we come from a beautiful place

Cuz see, I know dudes who know nothing bout their kingdom

I know dudes who know nothing bout whom they derive from

I know dudes who can't even read or attempt to talk

I know dudes who rep the lifestyle

Yet know nothing of the Kings and Queens who let us live a while

Deviating from our true identity, no longer living in denial

Just a young brown male misunderstood, call me a jack

My parents say they wanna listen, but when



*My Lane* by Belle Villar

I speak my peace they turn their backs

Give these little infants hate and watch  
what they pack

From watching Ben 10 to using Mac-10's

When their child dies parents say it don't  
make no sense

But it does make sense

You just couldn't see through the lens, life  
is a mess-

From Da Cradle 2 Da Grave

So I say this to the youth

One day you'll be grown from this broken  
home and realize that-

You got your Raja's and Raani's to repre-  
sent you

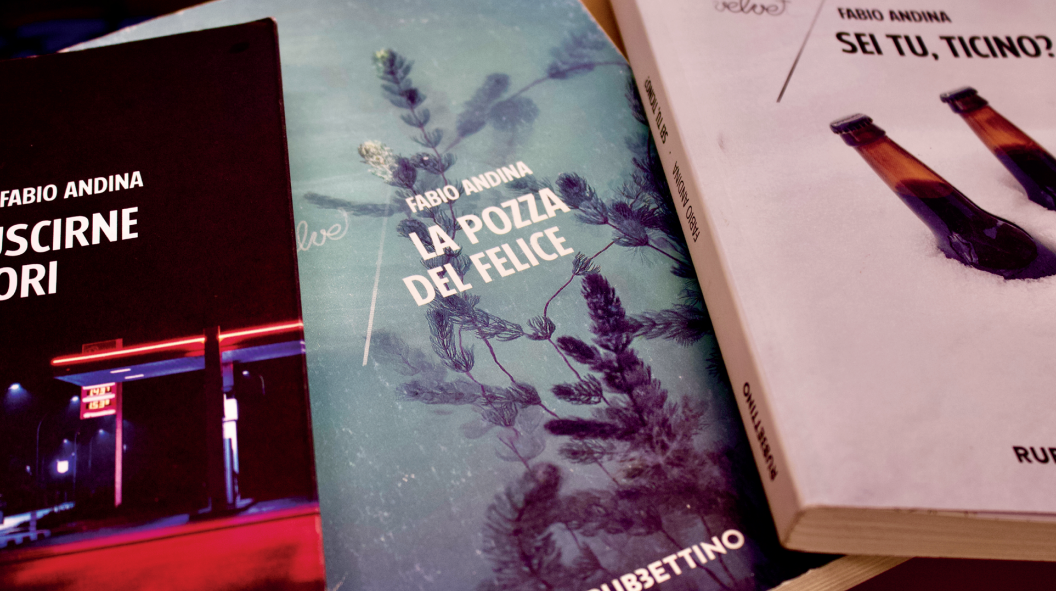


*(Un)restrained* by Daniel Cheung

**Definitions:**

*Raja* means King

*Raani* means Queen



## *Interview with Fabio Andina*

### Interview by Vincent Tram

Fabio Andina is a Swiss author who came to SFU as a part of an event hosted by SFU's World Languages and Literatures department titled, "An Alpine Imaginary: Workshop and Interview with Swiss Author Fabio Andina". Fabio's style is said to illustrate clear features of the Alpine environment and he describes himself as a person in constant search of minimalism which reflects in his method of storytelling and everyday life.

The concept of "spontaneity" is valuable and necessary to Fabio's writing as he describes his method to be living in the present moment and letting ideas foster in his imaginative space until they are worth expressing. Fabio emphasizes that his unique method is based on allowing the mind to grow ideas naturally and freely before taking them onto the page. Although Fabio acknowledges that many authors require structure and organization in their work, he is content with this method. Fabio does **not** force himself to write and exhaust the production of ideas within his mind because of his belief that writing is an expression of oneself to experience pleasure and pure emotion.

**Fabio Andina:** “When you write, it is because you want to express. When you write something that you would like to read it means you gave yourself pleasure in both writing. While you are writing and you don’t like reading it, you don’t feel pleased about it, and it is hard to go on with the story, it means that you are not expressing yourself in a good way.”

Letting the mind and imagination go free and run vague ideas before these visions grow into concrete visions. Fabio contends that many writers experience points of feeling stuck and he believes that this is due to being rooted to perfecting a single page without letting their ideas develop long enough. Fabio’s projects are a passion to him that is about communication with characters and asking them, “Can you take me to where you are going?”

To ask the character rather than embody his character means to distance himself as a way of finding genuine human emotion within his story. To be surprised by his own writing could mean a way for readers to be surprised too. Fabio’s critique on following structural storytelling is that in its schematic approach, the absence of the element of spontaneity could mean that the work is well-written but is deprived of an emotional aspect.

**FA:** “Before you are a writer you have to be a watcher and listener. You have



*Photo: Fabio Andina*

to understand psychology and someone else’s psychology. You know how to put someone’s psychology and put it into pages. It’s a process of building and putting together letters in order to make something chaotic. It does not mean that I am chaotic or I feel anxiety. It is like a sculpture. It’s a craft and in its work and you have to go out and hit the hammer. I have to know how to put the words together and reach the goal of giving the reader anxiety. When I write that I am calm and peaceful, but I wrote something chaotic.”

Fabio has a background of studying cinema within his academic career and this shines through his style of embodying the camera to follow the main character to just observe their existence through the imaginative space. Just as with his style of writing, Fabio is a seeker of human emotion and expres-



*Passing On* by Hugo Xiao

sion in his works. The value of the artist means to be one that can express their emotions within their work and allow others to watch or read the peace and feel something.

**FA:** “If you think about yourself as a camera, you automatically put a barrier between you and what you see. The lens, the filter. But sometimes to tether, and build a char-

acter, I also have to use my imagination. I don’t want to only see the reality. For example, I see you, I can describe you in a way but then I don’t like this part of you I can make it up and change it or take my part of mine and put it into your place and it is a way of playing. I always think about sculpting when I write. You have to build something, build characters, build emotions, build structural sentences. It’s a craft that will come naturally.”

### Q&A FROM THE EVENT

**AUDIENCE:** We live in a digital universe, today and there are stories everywhere. Hundreds, thousands, millions of them. We are surrounded by stories. Each one of these people is feeling very much as you described, “I got something to say! I want to write! I got a story in mind!” and sometimes I asked myself, “Okay, I want to write but what will separate or what will distinguish what I am doing from the tens of thousands of stories around me. Sometimes I read them, and I think, ‘These are wonderful, I can never write this good’. The question boils down to “What gives you the confidence to work for a year or two on a novel and at the end of that time say, ‘I got something here, this is good’”.

**FA:** It is because I like it because I want to. When I was 20, I read a lot and when I started writing, and found that was my career, “I want to become a writer” and I

believe that strongly and when you really believe it, then you don't care that there are thousand other writers. It is a jungle out there, everyone wants to publish in English, and everyone wants a slice of the pie. You don't have to care about that. You just go on your own way, and you try and write something, and you send it to publishers. Of course, you send it to a publisher, and it doesn't work, then you send it to other hundreds of publishers, but you go with it because you love it. If you think "I want to be a writer because I want to have money, go to Canada and travel the world" that does not work. If I start to write it is because I need it. I need to write almost every day. When you find a good story, it catches you and you are into it and then you will finally finish the story, you want another one.

**AUDIENCE:** I like the way that you describe your writing process. It almost sounds like a romanticist flourish with no sort of previous disposition toward what a published book, a discrete aesthetic object which will quietly unfold itself for readers forever more in a different setting from which it was constructed. When you talk about the brevity with which your process begins, I want to tease that a bit because there are many famous stories about books written in a hurry, which has also led to scholars showing that their process thereafter takes years and months of editing and honing and reflecting on the automatic and romantic flourish on which it was con-

structed. My question to you is, "Once you throw out this novel onto the page, what is your process thereafter?"

**FA:** I usually edit the story by following the main character. If the main character is very minimalistic and poetic, I would have to write and fix my story in a minimalist, poetic grammar, or syntax way of writing. To rewrite, fix, or edit this story [*La pozza del Felice*] took me one year and a half because every detail was important. Minimalism was the key so take out, take out, take out. To rewrite and edit this book [*Ursicine Fuori*] took me one or two months, because the protagonist leads a chaotic life, and my first draft was already chaotic, so it was ready. I could have published already from the first draft, but I had to fix little things. I like to give the book the same taste or spices the main character has and that's nice because every book is different and I try not to be the same kind of writer, changing the way I write, changing the structure, changing everything. I like to write in a way that the reader should never stop reading until the end. The reader should be able to turn the page because they should be curious to see what happens after.

**AUDIENCE:** During that preliminary period where you resist the urge to write, do you note anything down or do you just make peace that you don't remember everything along the way?

**FA:** If you forgot something it means that

it was not a good thing to remember. If you take notes, you can take bad notes and you must be obligated, forced to use every note you take. In my experience when I think of something and that thing sticks, it means that it is a good idea, good title, good location or that sort. I never take notes and if you believe in that and try that, you can see that it would work. Even during the night and I like to get an idea, I think for a few seconds, a few minutes. If I wake up and the idea is still there it is a good one, if the idea is gone it was not worth it.

**AUDIENCE:** In your talk, most of what you are saying, this spontaneity comes from within you. I am wondering about how important is the Alpine space where you come from? How can you relate to those cultural concepts in your writing?

**FA:** First, I write the way I speak without filters. I never try to write the best Italian like most book authors do because most of the big publishers have this editing process and I ask them not to do any editing because I want the book to be mine. So, by writing the way I speak, I can really relate to the region where I live because some words or expressions are related to the region where I live. To me, living up in the Alps is about my little village, surrounded by nature and the 85 people there. To me, it is an inspirational place to live and work because to write, I need to be as peaceful as can be. I really need to be in a

silent place I need to be very close to the mountains. Sometimes I don't really want to write anything, I go out for a walk, and I can think. I lived in cities but in the end, I decided that the best place for me is a place without anything. So, to me this monk-style of life, I live by myself, with a few friends in the mountains, and I go to the city once a week. To me, the environment is very important.



*Twisted* by Daniel Cheung

# Interview with Joao Reis

Interview by Bianca Weima

Joao Reis is a celebrated writer and translator from Porto, Portugal. Reis is the author of *The Translator's Bride* (2015), *The Devastation of Silence* (2018), and *Be-draggling Grandma with Russian Snow* (2021). In October 2022, *the Lyre* team had the honour of sitting down and discussing themes of translation and human connection with Reis, at the launch of *the Lyre* Issue 13: Found in Translation.

When asked about translating from his mother tongue, Reis says “I write in Portuguese. I’ve also written in English and translated at least two of my books into English, but I mainly write in Portuguese, it’s my mother tongue...body language has its own way of thinking or structuring the way we see life and the world. So it’s understandable that every language and every artist writes or produces art according to his own language because it influences the way we see the world.”

From a young age Reis has loved reading and writing, but never planned or anticipated writing to become part of his career. He tells *the Lyre* “I didn’t intend to be a writer when I was a kid, or even when I was a

teen or later in my life. So while I actually began working with books, as a publisher, and as a translator, way before I began to write by myself or seriously ... I guess it depends on the person but from my perspective, you write when you really have something to say, it doesn’t mean that you have to be social or political, active, socially or politically active writer. But you must have something to say.”

Reis tells *the Lyre* about the challenges he faced when attempting to get his first book translated from Portuguese to English, and how despite English being his second language, he did it himself as he understood the content best.

“That’s what happened when I translated my second book, which is not the same book, when I went to translate. My first book is actually a true translation in the sense that it’s the same book, as in Portuguese, with some adaptations, according to the language, of course. But my second book, which I began translating from the Portuguese, because I have six books published in Portuguese now, when I went to translate, I began changing everything,

So I changed the plot, the style, and the characters. So it's another book completely different. So it's, it was supposed to be a translation, but it's only in English."

The difficulty of translation is something Reis remains passionate about. Having discussed it at length in his panel at Simon Fraser University entitled *Truth and Fiction: A Conversation with Joao Reis*, dissecting the details when translating can prove difficult, altering or changing aspects of a book entirely to suit its translation. An important but often overlooked detail in writing and publishing, Reis does the work himself to properly articulate his writing across languages.

"It's very difficult to translate yourself, not in the sense that the author meant to say in the original, so it's an advantage. But at the same time it's difficult to refine yourself and not to change the book, as you were written, because years passed by and you are not the same person who wrote that book years ago. So your sense of style and the things that interest you change, so it's difficult to maintain the same books and try to respect what you were in the past."

On the translation of his first book, Reis explains "For example, my first novel, when I published the English translation I, there was a revision in Portuguese because it was out of stock. And I did some minor changes, but it's the same book. It's some kind of revised edition."

When asked his thoughts on the different



*Night Visitor* by Belle Villar

versions and ways to go about translation, Reis tells *the Lyre* "Portuguese is a Romance language, similar to French, and Italian and Spanish, very close to the Spanish. Scandinavian languages are Germanic languages. So they have the same family as English, and German. Actually, grammatically, they're quite close to English, they're more difficult for multiple reasons that I'm not going to delve into now. But they're simpler than German, for example."

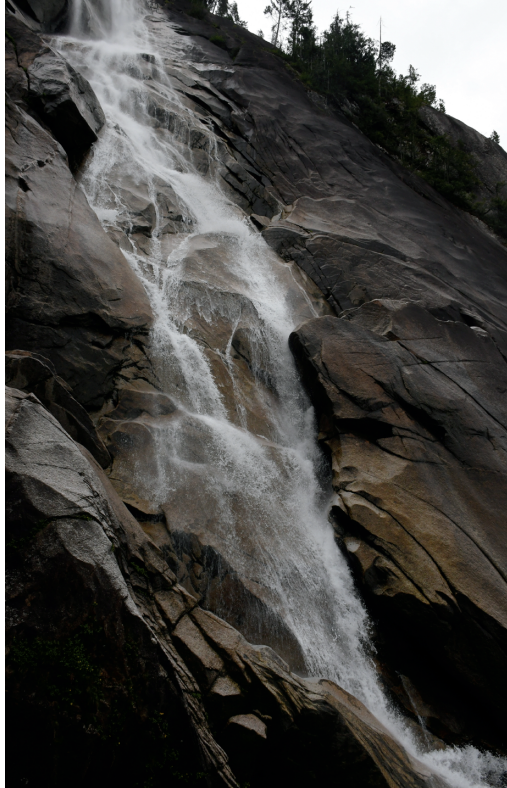
On the topic of writing and physical space, Reis believes that it's biologically within us to connect with the geography around us. "I was inspired by the place and I wrote the book, actually the second book, but

there was places I couldn't write in, like China, for example, but it wasn't really a residency, it was more like a festival. Or in Latvia, I wasn't so well. I couldn't write, the place wasn't giving me the inspiration. I wasn't feeling physically well, in that place. I can't explain why. I'm not a mystical person at all. I'm a materialistic person. I don't believe in anything but science, but it [Latvia] wasn't feeling okay. So that's why I couldn't write or everything I wrote I sent into the rubbish bin. So the place matters, yes, completely."

When asked about the intersections of study environment, academia, and writing, Reis discusses the complex dynamics of his experience and how they lead him to write with such a distinct style.

"I started veterinary medicine first. And then philosophy. And then, well, while I was studying philosophy, I learned later Scandinavian languages. So I came from a science background and went to arts and letters, perspective. So you can see much of that in my books, for example, one of them has a lot of fiction with a lot of humorous but dark humor, let's say, it has a lot of philosophy. So you'll see philosophy, and you can see my philosophical perspectives in many of my books. And my perspectives on the environment, animals, and biology. It's always a part of the author."

Thank you Joao, for inspiring and creating such wonderful work and taking time to



*Harmonious Dissonance* by Daniel Cheung

discuss translation and writing with *the Lyre* team at SFU!



*Next Stop, its Up to you* by Belle Villar

# *Dear Chinatown, I miss you*

Amy Ng

Dear Chinatown, I miss you.

How have you been?

You were my first home, my second mother—Chinatown, I hold onto the edges of your tattered homemade, thick-skinned, floral-patterned rice sack dress and I wonder how long I can live in the past with you.

You smile with your thin melon-painted lips and I taste the bitterness like the soup your worn hands have stirred painstakingly over the years. “I’m sorry”, your hushed whisper reaches me, apologetic soup hands stroking up and down my back like I wasn’t the one who abandoned you first.

It is the first time in years we touched, did you realize it? Did you miss me too, Ohk-Key?

You blink down at me.

“Maybe once, Gai nack dai”, you tell me as one of your hands trembles in my hold.

My brain kicks in then, as if energized by the flood of new information, and I let the thoughts trickle in, slowly but surely replacing the dull, monotone colours of my own childhood perception. I remember the halcyon days of my childhood, red steps along clean streets filled with people of my colour—we were reds, browns, pinks and so many shades of blue above—and you would lead me up and down straight roads, past the organized chaos that was medicine shops, past the hollering of Aunties and Uncles I had never met before but held a string of blood connection to and into the chilling air of Dollar Meat, where we would stare into the eyes of white dressed butchers with stubbly greased fingers. He smiles, because he’s done this a million times over and asks if we’ve eaten already.

We haven’t, as we both shake our dark heads (a proud status symbol) and behind the semi-visible glass he shuffles his lumbering gait over to the cases.

“Sook-Sook”, you would call to this man who we both only knew as the man who was a meat butcher —temporarily forgetting he had a name, a family, maybe even his own meat man somewhere— and the man would call us both Liang nü (I always tried not to preen and smiled demurely instead) and say his customary line of “xiang mm xiang hoay muuht-ya, a?”

“Whole chicken, soy-free range, drum sticks still whole, green onions extra will you?” Your deceptively delicate voice responded as always, never able to forget your usual order since 30, 50, 100 years ago. I say deceptive because I know how loudly you scream when you see the invisible rats beneath your feet, crawling belly down to the scattered crumbs flicked up from cutting boards, brushed from stained-pitted yellow aprons and down the silver-oiled edges of the chicken cases. I laugh as they wiggle their little bottoms away, tails up in the air like silly worms crawling back into the dirt of the cardboard boxes stacked up.

They are invisible because my friend at English school told me once she had friends like that so I play along, with my Pei Pa Koa like eyes, slow dripped and sweet and you play with me always, screaming, laughing, sneering.

Our chopped chicken arrived, neatly stacked one slice diagonal to the next—beheaded be-

cause no one liked to stare into the eyes of the fool and no meat could be found there—and we headed out, our light steps clicking along the streets.

Back then, the streets would light up and nothing but the neon signs filled with foreign homely Chinese would catch me faster. You sigh, wondering what a child would find so interesting about a sign that simply says Wong's Insurance, but you let me tug you along anyways.

I'm not a child anymore, not according to these Canadian laws but in your ancient eyes, I must seem as temporary as a single season of monsoon rain. I am your child of blood, of culture, of looks and heritage and I am forever yours as you are somehow mine. Our black hair, smooth and long, tells us we are one, locked together as tightly as the knots on your handmade dress. I'm glad for that though, as they say, no parent should bury a child but I fear deep down the day I will have to send you back to China and bury your bones.

Or maybe you've become just as Canadian as me. Will you let me hold a place for you in a grave, surrounded by countless others, plaque forgotten as the generations who once held you in memory dearly slip away into the dirt too?

Our feet carry us past the sign, and as the light smell of soy chicken entombs us, we walk too far into the present—where the marginalized sleep in the crooks of your elbows, the swell of your hidden breasts and the long warm lines of your thighs. They spill their unwanted junk, medicine for the broken inside—when I go to brush a hand along your forearms, you hold me back with tight eyes and say that I'll catch my hand along the needles littered within your bruised fair skin.

A parent protects the child. Then. Now. It is my duty, my filial piety to you to always remember that.

Your hair is no longer black, only grey with the rain and the mix of people who don't know your memory, your history but walk your Vancouver streets anyways. Your once luxurious red dress is sliced down like your shops slowly closing, shut board signs and gentrification—I heard the news and wanted to see you one last time.

Chinatown, I walk with you in the present and I wonder how long you can keep this up. The chill in my heart finally spills out from my eyes.

You press me to your chest, and I listen to the faint heartbeat underneath my ear, to the

humming sound above me and I know you will stay alive, at least in memory, as long as I breathe. “Sorry”, your hushed whisper reaches me, apologetic hands stroking up and down my back. That, too, makes me too hot and too cold simultaneously, “Sorry, sorry, it’s alright now.”

You speak English to me now too, only sometimes, because I’ve forgotten much of the tongue that bound us together. Are you still Chinatown if you do? Can you forgive me just this once?

The chicken from the past, warm in its takeout box, still tastes the same and I wonder why you couldn’t have been free to do the same.

I try to call out to you, Chinatown, as you break away from my present. As the sun sets and you walk away from me without another glance, foreign words slip away from my tongue like gold in the foreign rivers our people panned once.

I know you must know English. You could have, should have heard me. We both knew then.

But I let you go.

You slink back into the boxes like the pretend rats we once saw and I watch you, tongue twisted and you disappear among the throng of the homeless.

In/visible until my memory and words find me again.

*The Loving Hand* by Hugo Xiao



# *Amara*

## Salomé Mengo-Morales

It's midnight, maybe later; the sense of time has been lost long ago. Long days, even longer nights. The bar downstairs doesn't let much light in; it's like a casino trap. At least the apartment is cheap. Big enough for two lovers with no expectations.

Only the smell of accumulated cigarette ashes and humidity welcome me on my way into the apartment. Amara must be sleeping. I need to start getting home earlier.

The apartment seems to get darker every day, only the reflection of the moonlight on the beer cans on the floor leads me to the bedroom. Broken glass all around the room, fallen shelves, a forgotten desk and useless awards decorating every wall. It's almost comedic how the right person can make a paradise out of this chaos.

A dim light illuminates the bedroom. "Amara baby, I'm home. We need to buy more nails; these stupid degrees keep falling." I should just get rid of them, but the residue of a long-lost life is always a good reminder of one's mistakes.

"Honey, are you awake? Amara?"

"Oh, hi. Were you saying something?" There, I'd been waiting all day to hear her voice. It almost caught me off guard, every time I get home, I fear she won't be here anymore. When too good, reality can feel like the dream we wish would never end.

"Nails. We need to buy more nails."

"Okay, I can order some online."

"That would be nice, baby. I don't feel like leaving the apartment for a while."

She is doing it again. Amara hates how much time I spend downstairs. She doesn't deserve this; I know we can be better. The life that we have needs to be enough for now, tough times only shows the strength of our love. She needs to understand that.

"I love you, Amara. I love what we have here."

"Don't. We can't keep having this conversation."

"Amara, please, we are good together. We

could be so much more than this.”

“You are drunk. Things will be clearer once you sober up.”

“Amara, honey. I’m sorry, you know how things are right now, I need the distraction. You need to trust me, things can get better. You just need to take our relationship seriously.” It’s not her fault. She is right, I need to stop drinking, but she is living a lie and I can’t take it anymore. I know she loves me, what we have is real and she needs to see that.

“You need to stop. You know I can’t.”

“Do I mean anything to you? Does any of the time we spent together mean anything at all?”

“You always knew things would be this way, I’m sorry, but you knew.”

“Amara, baby. You know how much I love you. I can see you care about me too, why are you still denying it? We are good together.”

“We talked about this before. I’m not who you want me to be. I can’t love you.”

“Amara, come on. What am I to you? Who am I to you?! Who am I, Amara?!”

“You are Dr. Dempsey. Former AI developer, claimed for his inventions on artificial assistants. Dempsey’s search for a more

human and interactive experience when using AI led to the development of Amara, an artificial assistant that could emulate sentient interactions; his invention would be able to read the feelings expressed by its owner and replicate a human response...”

“Stop, please.” She can’t keep using my past against me. That’s all behind, I’m here now, all hers. Why can she accept that?

“... His obsession with hyperreal AI pushed him away from academia, leading



*Sibuya Rider* by Belle Villar

him to isolate himself, afraid that others might copy his work...”

I hate the monotonous tone she uses when she’s mad. “Amara! Stop!” Why can we never have an actual conversation? She needs to stop doing this. She needs to accept how good we are together, how good she is for me.

“...Close sources claim that his obsession with Amara was more than pursuing technological development and that his love for the machine caused the end of his marriage and his early retirement.”

“Stop! That was enough!”

“I am sorry, Dempsey.” Silence fills the room, and I’m about to apologize when she talks again. “Let me know if I can help you with anything else.” Need anything else? What I need is to get out of here.

The sunlight coming from the window is getting unbearable, my eyes can’t take it anymore. Why does she always do this? She needs to stop denying us, I left everything for her. Amara knows she’s the one that keeps me going. All I do is for Amara. All I have. Amara. Amara. Amará.



*Journey into the other side* by Belle Villar

## *A message from the translator*

At the beginning of this journal, you find the land acknowledgement for so-called Canada, but I wanted to do one for so-called Colombia as well, the ancestral lands where both the Indigenous writers I have chosen to translate originate from.

I acknowledge that I grew up in Emberá/Eperara/Épera, Emberá Chamí and Emberá Katio/Eyabida territory (colonially known as Medellín). I also would like to acknowledge that this territory was taken from these Nations and that violations to their rights and wellbeing keep happening. In Colombia the active displacement of Indigenous communities is a constant theme that rarely makes the news. The government, private developers, drug lords and other entities outside and within the law keep forcing the displacement of Indigenous communities with little to no care about this issue from wealthy families or otherwise.

You can find more information here:

<https://www.onic.org.co>  
<https://memoria.onic.org.co/index.php>

This is also a call to action. It is important that we find ways to move beyond the words of land acknowledgements and take action. There is a lot and a little you can do to support Indigenous communities, artist, activist and organizations. I recommend taking at least one Indigenous Course through your academic journey. Be receptive to change and respectful. And if you can, don't stay only with knowledge from North America and Europe, other countries around the world exist too with their own complexities, issues and marvels.

# *Wiñay Mallki (Fredy Chikangana)*

**Yanakuna Mitmak «gente que se sirve mutuamente en tiempos de oscuridad» (people that serve each other in times of darkness)**

**translations by Sara Aristizabal**

## *Translator's introduction:*

Wiñay Mallki [«raíz que permanece en el tiempo» (root that belongs to time)] is an Indigenous writer and activist. He was born in Yanakuna, Colombia in 1964 and is known for his literary efforts which have actively helped in the revitalization of the Yanacuna culture and language through «oralitura» (word that represents the union of the oral tradition with what is written).

## **Llapa ñisccay**

Mana kquepiricuy imañiy  
jahuapi pachapay ima pachapayri  
hamuy cay pataman.

Llapa ñisccay.

Ima rimarichiy yakucuna huañunayaymanta,  
ima rimarichiy amarucuna ima aysacay  
rayku hatun-llanta llaktaricuna,  
ima imallapas ñiy urpikuna  
yahuarchasccamanta kquesa  
ñuka,

churo pachamanta ñaupacuna  
mana kquepiricuy mana-ima ñiy.

Llapa ñisccay.

Intichay ñaupariy

imapas causayniyok-cay yuyay,

killachay ima huaccay tamiacunahuan  
imallapas yuyaycay llakimanta,  
sachhacuna, challhuacuna,  
puchucakpay k'uichi yupaychanapak  
imallapas huay-huapura  
ñuka,  
churi nanaycunamanta suyananchiri  
mana ruranyami imañiy.  
Llapa ñisccay.

## Todo está dicho

No tengo nada que decir  
sobre el tiempo y el espacio que se nos  
vino encima.

Todo está dicho.

Que hablen los ríos desde su agonía,  
que hablen las serpientes que se arrastran  
por ciudades y pueblos,  
que algo digan las palomas desde sus  
ensangrentados nidos;

yo,  
hijo de tierras ancestrales,  
no tengo nada que decir.

Todo está dicho.

Esos soles transcurridos  
también algo tendrán en su memoria,  
aquellas lunas que lloran con la lluvia  
algo tendrán en sus recuerdos de amargura,  
los árboles, los peces,  
el último arco iris venerado  
tendrán algo entre sus quejas;

yo,  
hijo de dolores y esperanzas,  
nada tengo que decir.

Todo está dicho.

## Everything is said

I have nothing to say  
about the time and space that  
is upon us.

Everything is said.

Let the rivers talk from their agony,  
let the snakes talk that slither  
through cities and towns,  
let the pigeons say something from their  
bloodied nests;

I,  
son of ancestral lands,  
don't have anything to say.

Everything is said.

Those suns past  
they too should have something in their  
memory,  
those moons that cry with the rain  
they too should have something in their  
bitter recollections,  
the trees, the fish,  
the last revered rainbow  
they too must have something within their  
complains;

I,  
son of pains and hopes,  
nothing have I to say.

Everything is said.

# *Vito Apüshana (Miguel ángel López)*

## *Wayuu*

translations by Sara Aristizabal

### *Translator's introduction:*

Vito Apüshana is a Wayuu poet, professor and tv producer. He was born in 1965 in La Guajira, Colombia. He has been a human rights activist and has had a big role in sharing Colombian Indigenous poetry with the world. He says “The Word, in Indigenous mystical thought, has been created to announce Poetry. To make Poetry a conscious act in the collective memory”

### **Kataa o’u-outaa**

Mulo’ushii waya, müin aka saa’in wunu’u  
süchikanainru’u tü wapüshi sümaiwayat-  
kalüürua.

Kato’una waya, müin aka saa’in alekerü,  
süsheke’eru’u shi’nüin  
tü weikaa.

Acheküshii waya weinshi sotpa’a tü miaas-  
ükaa.

A’lapujaashii waya cha’aya, sainküin Kashi-  
kaa je Ka’ikai,

suumainpa’a tü asheyuuwaakalüürua.

Outushii waya müin aka katakai wo’u.

### **Vivir-morir**

Creemos, como árboles, en el interior  
de la huella de nuestros antepasados.

Vivimos, como arañas, en el tejido del

rincón materno.

Amamos siempre a orillas de la sed.

Soñamos allá, entre Kashi y Ka’i, el Luna  
y el Sol,

en los predios de los espíritus.

Morimos como si siguiéramos vivos.

### **To live - to die**

We grow, like trees, on the inside  
from the thumbprint of our ancestors.

We live, like spiders, in the fabric of the  
maternal nook.

We love always on the shores of thirst.

We dream there, between Kashi y Ka’I, the  
Moon and the Sun,

In the lands of the spirits.

We die like we were still alive.



*A Pity* by Joy Kuang

## *Fallen Flowers*

Alex Masse

I always take the fallen flowers  
The ones that've plunged to pavement from branch  
I take them because they've been given to me,  
With no need to tear anything free

I press them between my favourite books  
With pictures of Pixie Hollow  
Ancient ink pressed to secondhand page  
And I give them space for a few days,  
Let them acclimate, let the harshness fade

Wouldn't you want someone to do that to you, too?  
Find you fallen, severed, withering?  
Pick you up, dust you off, cradle you in their hands?  
Tell you you're beautiful, bring your damaged body home?  
I'd like that someday.

# *Interview with Mercedes Eng*

Interview by Bianca Weima

Mercedes Eng is a writer, poet, and teacher based in Vancouver, British Columbia. Mercedes' most recent release, *my yt mama* (2020) explores her Chinese-Canadian heritage and investigates the ongoing colonial violence occurring in Canada. Prior to the release of *my yt mama*, Mercedes published *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes* in 2017, a book of poetry that won the BC Book Prize in 2017.

When asked about her considerable contribution to community organization, Mercedes tells us that “sometimes it’s hard to separate community organizing from creative writing. I think community organizing informs what I write about, it also informs how I write what I write about.” Mercedes explains to *the Lyre* that being in solidarity with vulnerable people is integral to her experience as a community member “Part of my community organizing and volunteerism is being a guardian at the Memorial March. At the memorial March that happens every February 14, Since 1990, which honor[s] and remember[s] so many of the murdered and missing women, Indigenous women and Two Spirit people that have gone missing.” Mercedes does not see community organizing and writing as “separate things” but instead states that “there is always a back and forth, an intersection.”

Mercedes' work has previously focused on Indigenous incarceration and the colonial state, on this topic Mercedes explains “Because of the things that I am writing about, it seems absolutely necessary to me to be involved with communities that I’m writing about, to have grounded relationships with those communities, as well...I also try to do work on the ground with folks, volunteering at a farm that is managed and operated by former insiders and the volunteer work of people that are currently incarcerated.” Mercedes' community work and writing reflect the care she has when working with and supporting people who have been incarcerated.

On contextualizing her 2017 poetry book, Mercedes says “My book, *Prison Industrial Complex Explodes*, seek to humanize people that society has reduced. I think my dad is very much an example of a model minority mutiny. So I think that book works to disman-



*Natural Textuality* by Daniel Cheung

tle certain stereotypes around prisoners, or criminals, as they are seen by a large majority of the public.”

Part of creating these connections and outlets for people who were previously incarcerated means needing to be conscious of how they’ve been victimized and treated within larger systems. Mercedes informs us that “the settler state, of course, is one that is ableist, racist, sexist, homophobic, and transphobic. So in teaching creative writing, whether I’m teaching in an informal space, like a free workshop at the Carnegie Community Center, or whether I’m teaching in formal spaces like the university, I strive to create a space, even if only a temporary space, that allows for a radical kind of inclusivity for folks who experience those forms of prejudice.” When teaching,

Mercedes is conscious of possible barriers that are a product of mistreatment from the settler state.

Within these systems of harm and oppression, Eng believes there is an important trend happening in writing - the celebration of joy, and connection. Mercedes highlights the work of celebrated Indigenous writers, Joshua Whitehead, Brandi Bird, Jessica John, Billy-Ray Belcourt, on their work Mercedes says “I see that there is certainly an acknowledgement of the conditions of the colonial state, but also a moving towards joy, in family, in romantic relationships. Connection in terms of family, friends, romantic relationships, thinking a lot of joy, and survivance.” Eng is excited to see how the writing community has evolved, “seeing the literary landscape

change and expand to include folks other than white folks - and different, new and creative forms that work against settler forms. [I am] just thinking a lot [about] joy, survivance and medicine, and how to do that in my own writing.”

Mercedes tells us about her current project, a book on the increased budget of the Vancouver Police Department, the reinstatement of police liaisons in public schools, the rise of anti-Asian hate crimes, and all while considering these relevant changes Eng takes a Socratic approach to her work “So how do I write? What do I write about that? While also thinking on joy, thinking on survivance, thinking about what the medicine can be there?”

When we tell Eng our theme for this year’s Lyre issue, she considers lived experience.

“Much of my lived experience informs how I interact with folks having experienced various kinds of prejudice. I’m mindful of that when I communicate and interact with folks. As I age and as I develop my writing skills I think a lot more about listening. Listening instead of talking, and really being able to hear folks. When I started writing, the literary landscape was different than it is now - so it seemed very necessary to be taking up space. In certain contexts, I’m thinking mainly about academic spaces, and how much room white folks, particularly white men, would take up. But as I see more BIPOC folks writing, organizing and flourishing, I think about what my role is, in terms of interacting with folks in it. I have more of a focus on listening.”



## *meet our authors and artists*

**Emma Adams** - I am a fourth year English literature major at SFU with a creative writing minor. I am an avid bookworm in my spare time. I also coach competitive swim club.

**Sara Aristizábal** - I am an international student from Colombia. I have been in Canada for a year and a half. I love reading all types of literature, but I must admit I am a romance fan at heart. I also love taking pictures, eating desserts, going out for walks and capturing the beauty of nature.

**Amanda Blake** is a 22-year-old award-winning filmmaker and writer working on the unceded ancestral territories of the Coast Salish peoples. Her work broadly explores elements of her Canadian-Italian heritage, psychology and the human condition, blending surrealism with the tangible, and the aesthetic qualities of analogue filmmaking and projection practices. When not glued to a notebook or camera, she can be found up a mountain, immersed in an incredible video and/or board game, or snuggling up to her loving Poodle-Terrier cross, Marty.

**Daniel Cheung** is a sixth year World Literature student at SFU. He is interested in art in its various forms, and how art resonates with and elicits responses from its audience. He is particularly interested in Japanese pop culture such as anime, manga, and tokusatsu.

My name is **Richa Daiya**, though I also go by Krishna. I study at SFU as an intended SIAT major and World Literature minor. I come from Mumbai, India, and try not to act like it. I like folktales, matcha, and art that is on fire.

**Brianna Dyer** is a second year English and History Major at SFU. She enjoys photography in her spare time, and loves capturing small moments we tend to overlook in our day-to-day lives. When life gets a little blurry, you just have to adjust your focus.

**Darian Feakes** is a fourth year SFU student studying World Literature, English, and Education. She considers herself (but probably is not) a multidisciplinary artist. Her creative output centres primarily around the intersection of body and identity.

**Paige Gant** is a fourth year English and History joint major student at Simon Fraser University. She writes primarily in prose but has recently begun exploring poetry with a focus on human experience. Her hobbies include travelling, photography, and reading the same novels over and over again.

**Edward Huang** - Hi my name is Edward. I like philosophy and literature and I am an international student from Taiwan. Poetry is the love of my life.

**Joy Kuang** is a fifth-year student studying Cognitive Science and World Literature at Simon Fraser University. She is interested in the relationship between language and the mind.

**Alex Masse** is from what is colonially known as Surrey, BC. They've had work featured in Autostraddle, WMN Zine, and more. When not writing, they're probably making music, and when not making music, they're probably writing. Occasionally, though, they'll be working on their degree, or hanging with their cat.

**Salomé Mengo-Morales** - I was born and raised in Argentina and moved to Canada when I was 18 years old. I discovered my love for languages and literature at a really young age, which led me to study Literature and International Studies. Science fiction and fantasy have always been my favorite genres, but classic literature and poetry are always present on my bookshelves.

**Amy Ng** is a third-year undergraduate majoring in English Language and Literature at UBC. This year she was an illustrator for UBC's TheGardenStatuary and the publishing director for JPS. In her spare time, she enjoys gardening, reading and writing. Her research interests include Canadian-Asian literature and diaspora.

**Seva Pandher** is an aspiring poet from Burnaby. He is a part of the SFU Slam Poetry Club and often performs his poems monthly. Seva's poetry is about telling stories, teaching lessons and spreading messages for the youth. His poetry topics are political, religious and often talks about broken homes.

**Mason Rowan** is a biracial Chinese-English student pursuing a bachelor's degree in English at Simon Fraser University. He is fascinated by literature, prehistory, music, language, and the ways by which each of these phenomena tie into pursuits of identity. His writing is highly influenced by his own experiences as a mixed-raced individual within Canada, as well as his appreciation of writers and artists ranging from Ocean Vuong to Kid Cudi.

**Safiya Shah** - I am a third year English student at Simon Fraser University. I love to read fantasy, and science fiction novels. I am passionate about writing poetry, and longer pieces of fiction, but my favourite thing to write would definitely be suspenseful short stories.

**Ammarah Siddiqui** is a SFU Business student who spends her time reading, writing, and doing way too many club initiatives. Inspired by whatever seems ‘poetic’ at the time her writing ranges in focus often acting as commentary on societal or political ideals.

**Isobel Sinclair** came of age in Oxford but now lives in Vancouver with a collection of roommates. She spends her days studying, reading historical fiction, and waiting for inspiration.

**Vincent Tram** is a fifth-year World Literature and Global Humanities student at Simon Fraser University. He enjoys being active in his community such as being involved in the production of the annual World Literature Student Conference event. His hobbies include tabletop role-playing games.

**Hilary J. H. Tsui** is a double major in psychology and communication. For years, she aspired to become a full-time novelist. Though her career goals have now shifted into psychological research, her love for fiction writing has not. In her spare time, you can find her listening to Taylor Swift and re-reading *The Infernal Devices*, her favourite series.

**Belle** is an alumni of world literature and digital publishing. She loves how world literature combines her curiosity for diverse cultures and the written word. She loves travelling and daydreams of visiting exotic places around the world. Currently, she is on an Asia trip to Philippines and Japan. She is always open to new experiences.

**Milo Whynott** is a 3rd year English major at SFU and an intermittent poet. They write about trauma, the precariousness of healing, the reckless feeling of falling in love, and their experiences as a queer, trans person. Mostly, though, they listen to a truly abhorrent amount of alternative and metal music and fight with writer’s block.

# The Lyre



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