The background of the page features a collection of blue line-art ginkgo leaves scattered across the surface. A faint, light blue world map is also visible, serving as a subtle backdrop for the text.

*how can we change the dialogue  
on sexual violence?*

subverting silence  
*acam dialogues student zine 2017*

Hello,

This zine was created for the 2017 ACAM Dialogues symposium, “Subverting Silence: How can we change the dialogue on sexual violence?”

Many questions come up through our symposium. One of them is: What does “subversion” and “silence” mean in the context of Asian Canadian communities?

Additionally: What does it mean to take collective action against sexual and other forms of violence? What does this look like, within a survivor-centric context that centers Asian people of colour—along with the colonial and gendered violence that takes place on the unceded, traditional, ancestral homelands of the Musqueam First Nation where UBC sits?

The pieces gathered in these pages are student reflections on such topics, explored through a year of monthly dialogues on sexual violence as it affects Asian Canadian communities.

As you make your way through this zine, we invite you to honour these reflections from the artists and writers who have shared their work here. We also invite you to honour your own reflections on the organizing themes of the ACAM Dialogues symposium.

We hope that through the symposium and this zine, you will be able to look towards each other and yourselves, in order to make connections and move through these questions with care.

—Rachel and Amanda  
acam zine organizers

*questions and comments can be sent to:*  
*acamzine@gmail.com*

*special thanks to st. john's college ubc for providing printers for this project.*



### *Too Full*

It's taken a while  
(well it's taking a while)  
For me to tell myself who I am—  
What I carry into each space,  
Who I am in each place.

Sometimes I feel that I harbor  
So (too) many selves  
Inside one me.

In my mind I imagine what it would be like  
if these selves were split apart from me.  
I see my Filipino born and raised self,  
Strolling alongside my Westernized self on the street,  
Beside the self that is debating whether she is Asian,  
To the left of the self that is confused over her sexuality,  
In front of the self that embodies her femininity,  
While the person harboring all of these,  
Like the outer shell of a Russian doll,  
Is feeling way too full with the 3+ cups of rice that she just ate.

Too full, she says,  
Patting her stomach,  
And frowning at the screen,  
Lying down on her bed,  
the only place where she is just her.  
Or at least, for now, it's the place where no one cares who she is.

—Phebe

ACAM Dialogues seeks to engage multiple communities, including, first and foremost, students, as well as staff, faculty, and particularly Asian Canadian community members. We especially support ongoing dialogue happening between students, staff, faculty, and community members around the topic of sexual violence in Asian communities. As part of the work of ACAM Dialogues, we are publishing an open letter that was written by a student to Madeleine Thien in recognition of both of them for advancing dialogue. Both have been open to sharing and having difficult conversations within and across diverse communities. We honour their strength, work, and vulnerability in writing and sharing their letters to the public, and hope that those who share space with us will reflect on this piece.

While this letter has already been circulated through various channels and there have been developments since then, we feel it is important to continue sharing this letter widely in order to emphasize the student's important contributions in the broader contexts of intra- and inter-community dialogue around gender and sexual violence. Given the diversity of our audience, we recognize student efforts are part of a broader effort to tackle gender and sexual violence within and beyond Asian communities—which is the very purpose of ACAM Dialogues in the first place. As our main objectives are experience sharing, analysis building, community building, and action implementation, we feel that this letter speaks to all that we strive to do.

At this symposium we ask, What do “subversion” and “silence” mean through Asian Canadian contexts, and how we can take collective action as students, staff, and faculty to change the conversation on sexual violence at UBC and beyond? One thing we have learned from organizing these events this past year is that silence exists only when dialogue is legitimized. “Silent” students that speak beyond the confines of the university (in the aftermath of events, in private Facebook conversations, and in stories they share with each other and with us) prove that silence is institutionalized. This letter and zine show how students have always subverted silence in creative and meaningful ways, to spark conversations and actions that will continue long after the ACAM Dialogues project ends.

—ACAM Dialogues symposium planning committee



## *A Response to Madeleine Thien's Globe and Mail Statement*

*The author is grateful for all those who helped in the writing of the letter, including those who bore witness to its emotions and gave feedback during the process of its writing.*

Dear Madeleine Thien,

Congratulations on your Governor General's Literary Award for fiction for your novel *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*. As a reader and admirer of your work, I have several of your books on my bookshelf. I look forward to reading *Do Not Say We Have Nothing*, especially as the novel tackles generations of Chinese history which I have long yearned to read and see represented. As a grandchild and offspring of those who went through the Cultural Revolution and the 1989 Tiananmen Square protests, I hold the stories you illuminate in extraordinary regard.

Many people in Asian Canadian literary communities are so excited about your GG win. I am as well. But reading your statement as linked in the Globe and Mail article on the Steven Galloway situation was a huge punch in the gut. As someone who has been and continues to aim to be outspoken about justice for survivors of patriarchal violence, I felt my heart drop as I read your words.

To be clear I completely support you in having your name removed from all things related to UBC. Reading the Globe and Mail article shed another layer of (unsurprising) light on the continued failures of accountability, consistency, and transparency in dealing with issues relating to professor misconduct, sexual violence, and other forms of violence on the part of the university. I would want to remove my name too. I also want to honour your vulnerability in sharing your experience of sexual assault in your letter. That takes immense courage. But to be completely honest, I find it difficult to honour how you deploy survivorship in your letter to bolster your defence and thus invalidate the testimony of the complainants of this situation.

When I read the Globe and Mail article it was a shock. Not being involved in the situation, I hadn't known about all the dynamics, figures, and complexities of the situation. Most of all I hadn't realized the extent to which UBC has botched up the whole thing. It was a despicable process. I understand why you'd be concerned for your friend Steven Galloway. However, I am hearing that a central point of your statement is your defence of him. From a feminist, anti-violence perspective, this defence is deeply wounding.

I have worked (without pay) in anti-violence movements for a few years now. Indeed I would say this work began when I was 15 in the wealthy but ill-resourced suburbs of the Lower Mainland, unceded Coast Salish territories (Lucia Lorenzi's timely tweets remind me exactly how systematic lack of resources were and continue to be). I will never be given full credit for this work on a resume, and perhaps that's for the better. The point is, patriarchy and white supremacy want us to defend him. The point is, defending him hurts people he's harmed. I have heard that in your statement you reveal confidential information and that you have not checked in with the complainants. That hurts to hear. As a reader of your work I hope that you will consider the enormous power you hold as an internationally-recognized author when making such statements.

I cannot imagine being a woman of colour in the literary world, especially writing on issues that you have covered, thrown under an enormous international spotlight. I recognize that with your enormous power there is also vulnerability. And it is for similar reasons that I want to reach out as a fellow Chinese Canadian woman writer, as a fellow human being impacted by these issues, and as a current student at UBC. While I am not in the Creative Writing Department, these issues will continue to affect me long after the last comments on twitter about this situation have been sent. Long after we have distanced ourselves from UBC as an institution, these issues will impact us. I address this letter to you, but I also write it for everyone else for whom these issues will continue to have lasting impact.





Let's be clear about those chiefly impacted by a patriarchal world which UBC has created since 1915. Let's be clear that, while Galloway's mental health is not negligible, centring his at the expense of those he has harmed favours patriarchy. The courts have not favoured Black, Indigenous women, Muslim women, queer and trans women, sex workers, and so on in this country. We see this over and over again.

And UBC continues to perpetuate this colonial system as we have seen in the handling of this and other cases. It is, as you say, a dystopian state. It is only because of the leadership of those like Dr. Lucia Lorenzi, Dr. Sarah Hunt and Dr. Natalie Clark (and countless others who both do or don't have Dr. in front of their names) that broader analysis of dealing with sexual violence on campus is even on the table. It is only because of tireless, voluntary student activism and unpaid survivor labour that institutional change is even beginning to happen. It is the administration's fault that the broader university community has not been given a clear and comprehensive direction on how the University will continue to handle breaches of trust and power imbalances. And it is the fault of the Canadian court system and the RCMP on campus that reporting rates are as low as they are.

But rape culture and patriarchy are systemic issues we all have a responsibility to fight. Those who protect men who hurt women are not helping to end the toxic culture we are part of. We are not perfect. We are creatures of our violent pasts, of the violent histories we inherit. We need to more than disavow these histories. We must act against them in our everyday life, however difficult, as creatures of habit and tradition and need for family, that is.

I do not expect you to hear my words right away. I do not expect an immediate response. I hope only that one day these words are honoured as valid, and that they can provide safety for all those who choose to speak out in a public realm about sexual violence. Silence keeps so many of us safe. But that is insofar as those dying in the iron house are safe from the knowledge of their deaths. That is an illusory silence of a suffocating world. In speaking out there is hope yet for destroying that iron house.

Let's write to cast a wider net of safety for all survivors. Let's act in favour of that safety. Let's destroy that iron house suffocating all of us.

Going to the police, as you advise, is usually not an option. Sexual violence exists on a spectrum and the Canadian legal system has not been reliable in holding perpetrators (of all kinds of violence) accountable. More often than not, reporting to the police involves a stranger, a white man, interrogating your memory and the contents of your everyday life, probing for each detail, sizing them up under a broken microscope. Let us not give more authority to that white man, the police figure putting our lives under a broken microscope. When they call to reveal he has dismissed your case ("he said she said," as it were), does it suddenly mean you are not a survivor any longer? When so many cases are dropped or not reported, does it suddenly mean rape culture isn't real?

The law fails, in the People's Republic of China and in settler colonial Canada. The law hurts, on both sides of the Pacific. UBC has failed so many of us, but terminating Steven Galloway is a step in the right direction. Again, this is not to validate the horrendous process in which the situation was handled. I cannot imagine the grief you experienced in bearing witness to your friend's deteriorating mental health. But do honour those of us who cannot share that grief for him. Do honour all those who cannot speak of their own, publicly, who have given up writing and chances at national awards for the possibility of a safer Creative Writing Department. Do honour the words of readers and fellow writers like myself, who wish for better.

I hope most of all safety for you and well wishes for your career. I hope that one day we could meet as peers and not strangers embroiled in these difficult but necessary conversations.

Speaking as,

A Daughter of Tiananmen, Grandchild of the Cultural Revolution, UBC student, and concerned reader

*Responses can be forwarded to [lettertomadeleinethien@gmail.com](mailto:lettertomadeleinethien@gmail.com)*







*Was Doodling After Work, And Then I Got Pissed Because Of White Supremacy And Rape Culture. Digital. ACAM Dialogues. Mei. 2017.*

### **About this work:**

people on the internet will explain why Cyberpunk is Orientalist better than me. ..and I really don't feel like writing another academic discourse/ artist statement using the english language of Colonialism.

\*走开:simplified chinese for telling someone to leave and gtfo.

**Mei** (They/Them),is a queer east asian immigrant to this land. They make comics and illustrations. To find out more about their work and prints for sale follow them on Instagram @mmay\_illustration

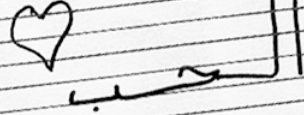
黃色是她沈默的顏色    Yellow is the color of her silence  
 小心翼翼地握住它    Hold it carefully  
     或捏緊它    Or squeeze it  
     或擁抱它    Or embrace it  
     或扔掉它    Or throw it  
     或摧毀它    Or destroy it  
 你的羽毛可以不是粉紅的    Your feather doesn't have to be pink

—Jane Jingyi Wu



how do we DISAVOW the femini-  
 zation of Asian masculinity w/o  
 naturalizing the idea that femi-  
 ninity is necessarily inferior?  
 Reclaiming Asian male sexua-  
 lity w/o reproducing patriar-  
 chal devaluation of fem.

You deserve compassion. ♡  
 You deserve hope. ♡ ♡  
 You deserve happiness.  
 It's difficult, but love  
 yourself first. Then, you  
 can begin to reclaim your body.

  
 is all you need.

How do we complicate the  
 notions of our Asian identity  
 for a broader audience?  
~~How do we complicate~~  
 Our (multiple) identities  
 and sexualities are fluid,  
 constantly changing based on  
 context + circumstance.



## *Ginkgo flowers*



Today I bought a card of ginkgo flowers at the artists stall.  
They told me that these flowers  
Survive  
In the harshest of conditions,  
Beautiful, simple,  
Strong.  
Sadly the hands that drew these beautiful flowers did not sign a  
name on the card,  
But I have felt—I feel in it a need to survive.  
And it makes me feel like I can survive too.

I've learned that survival can be beautiful,  
But that often it is  
Back breaking  
Tear-filled  
A fight.  
I've learned that survival is an ongoing journey,  
Which I have seen only in glimpses through the stories of others,  
Like the card of ginkgo flowers,  
Drawn by the hands of a person who wants to survive.

I do think survival is beautiful,  
In the moments when you  
Step back  
And realize that you're still standing.  
But, in the moments when you  
Fall  
It's difficult to remember that you are still whole.

For the stories of survival, fighting, endurance,  
That I have had the chance to hear through these dialogues,  
Please know,  
You are still standing,  
Beautiful,  
Strong,  
Like ginkgo flowers drawn by the hands of a person that wants to  
survive.  
And like these flowers,  
You will continue to survive,  
Even when it doesn't feel that way.

Thank you for your stories and your courage.

*notes*

—Phebe

