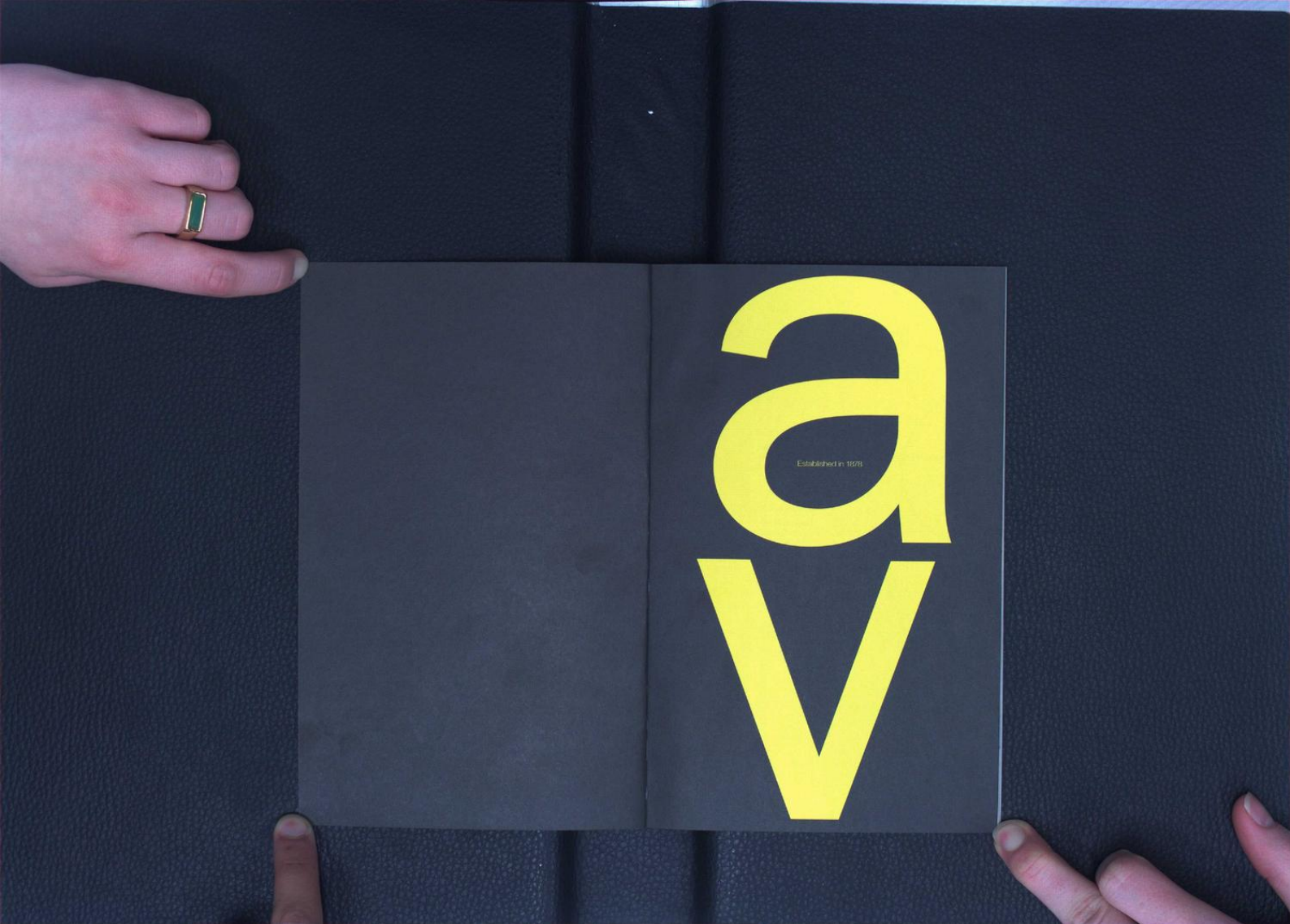


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Acta Victoriana – The Literary Journal of Victoria University

v

2006 / 2007



Acta Victoriana

The literary journal of Victoria University in the University of Toronto

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contents

- 3 **Yellowstone** Daniel Shavin Otis
5 **an excerpt from skipping** Jim F. Johnstone
7 **Cause and Effect** Sonia Ramundi
9 **our relationship as captured by surveillance cameras** Patrick McGuire
11 **Pacaya** Katherine Mitchell
13 **anarrit** caroline x. beach
17 **DANCERS OF THE NIGHT** Daniel Shavin Otis
19 **Untitled** Joseph MacKinnon
21 **Holding Pattern** James Marchmont
23 **Dawn in Donegal Town** Eric McDonald
25 **Gestures / Glimpses** L. Shane
27 **For Stella** Zachary C. Irving
33 **"All I did was sit in a room for 8 freakin hours and with nothing to do except watch meet the fuckers over and over and over and over"** Michael DeForge

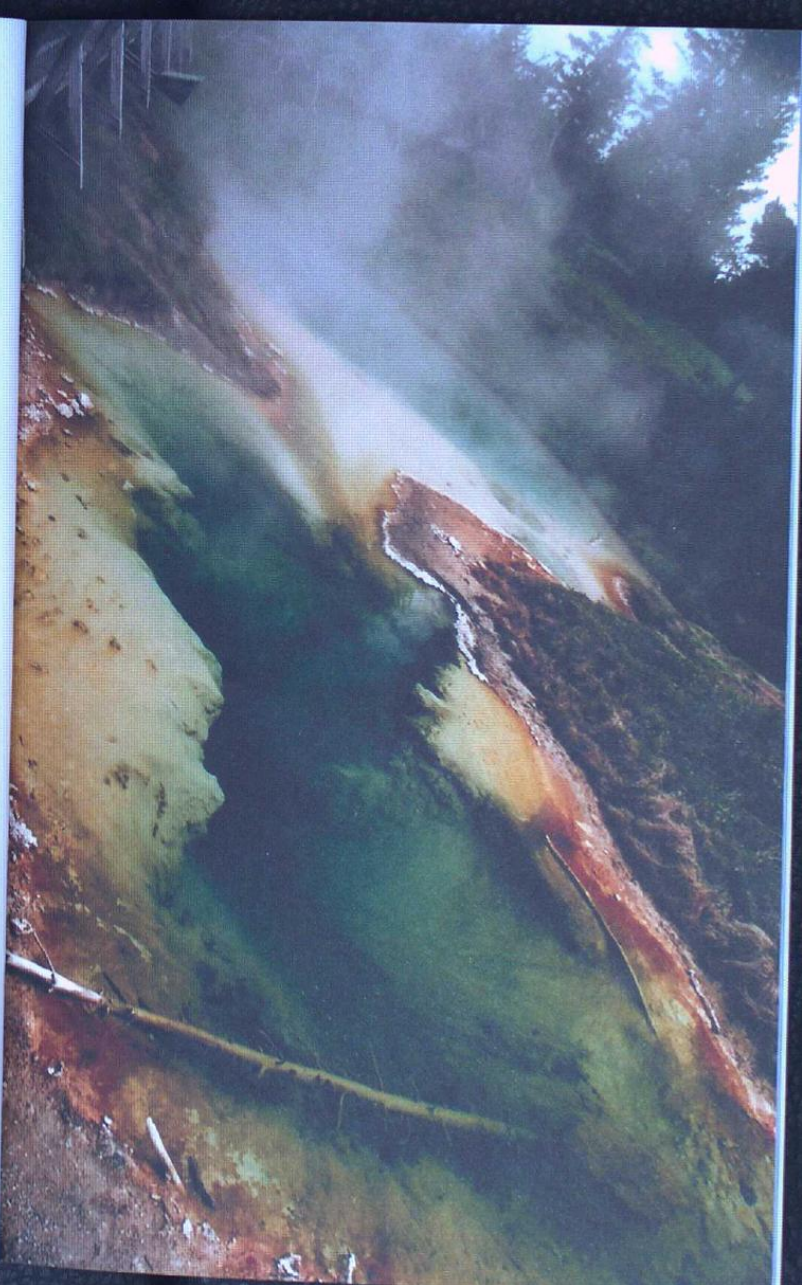
Foreword

Alongside the compilation of works for *Acta Victoriana* there flows a hidden process, the de- and re-humanization of the board of editors: first the total system crash, the momentary loss of consciousness as hope dives and vision blurs; second, the slow recovery of heart and head as the sorting pile gets smaller; finally, the extrication of the editor from the works, and the transformation of an idea into the object you hold in your hands.

This is the product of eight people and countless hours spent trying to negotiate the divide between the concerns of quality and the realities of quantity, the theoretical and the material, in order to present these authors and artists in a manner that satisfies and does not satiate. Thank you to the board for their generosity and patience, and thank you to the students of Victoria University for making its demonstration possible.

Terese Saplys
Editor 2006-2007

Yellowstone
Daniel Shawn Otis



an excerpt from *skipping*

Jim F. Johnstone

*

my brother & i surge into flame,
the reflection of fall leaves
transposed on our bodies,
melting in the lake water.

the bonfire behind us
dances in an old copper barrel,
flicks out anxious tongues,
popping & detonating
flat rocks & beer bottles on the beach.

reaching down i can feel the weight
of last year's glowing beacon
as i pick up a cracked rock,
a flat yellow eye

& skip it out off the glass,
a burning distortion
jumping three times
before vanishing in the doubled trees.

another summer beneath the currents
silver with electricity.

Cause and Effect
Sonia Ramundi



our relationship as captured by surveillance cameras

Patrick McGuire

i.

in the elevator of your mother's apartment building
three weeks into april you are holding flowers
groceries two newspapers and medication. a woman
going up to the nineteenth floor stands in front of us
wearing a musty grey flowerpatterned mu-mu and
she's sweating. we both make jokes, in our heads,
and i shift right to avoid dropping the awkwardly rectangular
box of hardcover books about british royalty
& various instruction manuals for home electronics.

ii.

beside a blank office tower in a financial district
where long black luxury cars creep around
daylight corners with that panther swagger.
i'm not thinking about high rise crimes,
board room extortion or fire blowing out a steel frame.
it was raining & we left the crowd next door, arguing while
grey sheets of water fell diagonally through
helicopters and seagulls. drunk and working out
our duplicitous love with your nervous cigarette
burning lines into the air, nicotine cloud sticking
to august smog.

iii.

during a stopover in chicago,
exploring bright white retail caves
paved with familiarity. i bring you a magazine & orange juice
while you sit half-awake on a long blue airport bench.
layers of a crowd made palimpsest burying our close-up.
you drink slow, and re-read our luggage tags and
flip through still fashion ads. in a building wrapped in wires,
airborne signals and blinking red lights we barely communicate.
discoverers of uncharted distance, and bored by travel.

Pacaya
Katherine Mitchell



ararat

caroline x. aksich

i. genesis

the flood came earlier than the weathermen
expected; the prophets predicted it first.
the maintenance man left

a note under a scrap heap of once-used
baking trays and rotting pots to stress the fact
that there was a mouse problem and

the kitchen which could only comfortably fit
one person, the kitchen with the window stubbornly ajar
in february, was a communal, capital c, place.

ii. exodus

our generation: drunk on lethargy, like noah
after he planted his vineyards,
collapsed back onto appropriated lands.

and, with a crooked smile, noah manoeuvred his penis
with sticky fingers, like a three year old in a bath tub;
while staring into a once indigo sky.

iii. leviticus

the rainbow wasn't legally enforceable—
just an indescent half-circle with a paler sibling inside it;
and a promise that there would never be another

flood, a flood,
a bloody
flood!

iv. numbers

the note, now decorated in grease spots and water stains,
still sits on the cluttered counter— three weeks have passed.
and i, stupidly empathetic, grow weak

as its every single word pulls at my eyes

like hooks. i turn on the water, twist the tap as far to
the left as it will let me, and finally throw a dollop of
soap over drowning dishes. ashes to ashes, and all that.

v. deuteronomy

i should have watched, i knew that there was a clog;
instead i hid my shame under an unwashed blanket and began
the mechanic motions of bringing myself to climax.

closer, closer, the water began to trickle, pant
pant, over the side of the sink, oh, oh, and started
kissing the floor, oh, yes, yes, until the floor drowned, ahhh

enjoying the smell of my moisture, i close my eyes
and lean back into a sorry excuse for a pillow, and fall
into sleep listening to a murder's cawing gossip.

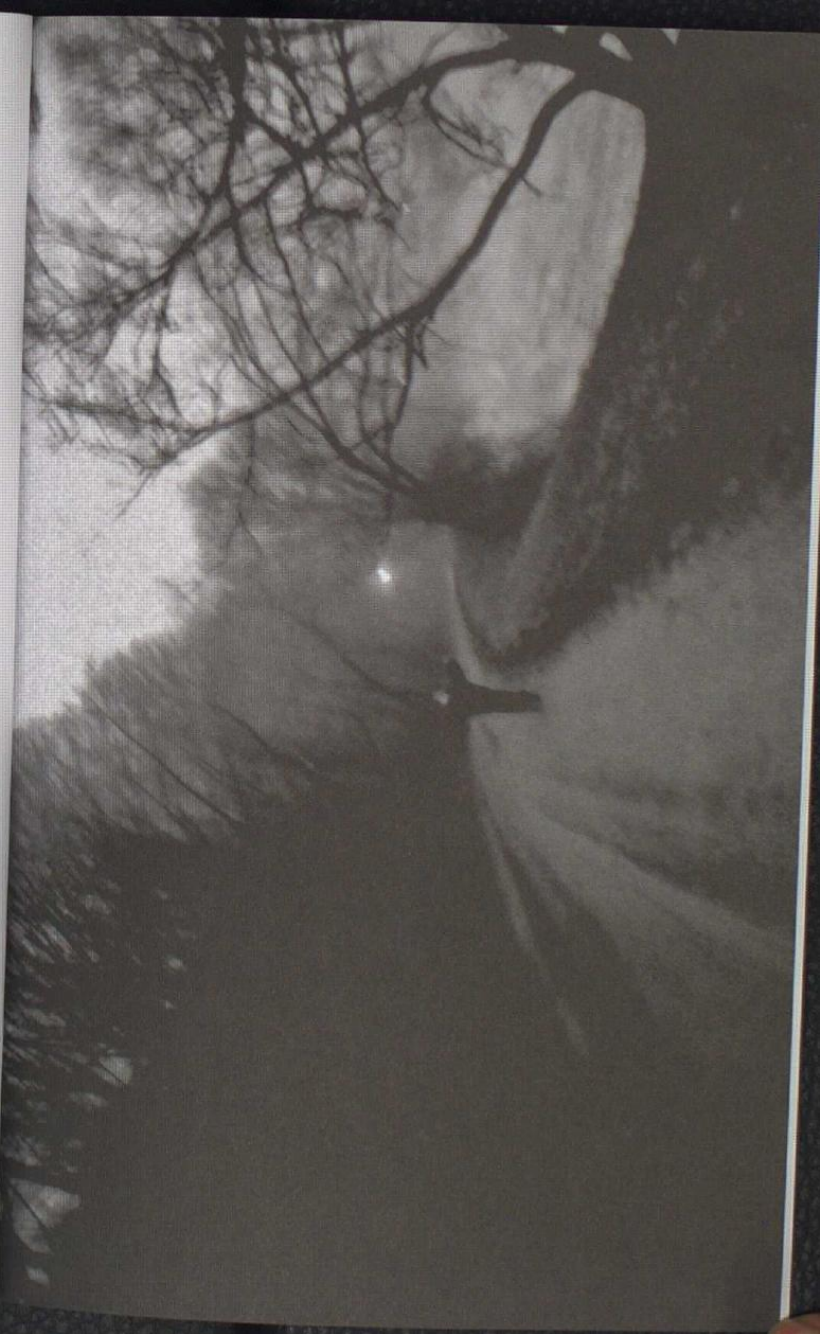
vi. the book of malachi

it wasn't the dove who found the olive leaf,
they got it wrong, it was the raven. o, fuck—
the water.

DANCERS OF THE NIGHT
Daniel Shawn Otis

political assholes
with nipple tassels
dance into the night.
hide your children
and your virgins
for they are quite the fright.
dancing vulgars,
prancing bulgars,
this is not quite right.
I really tire
of you, liars,
you dancers of the night.

Untitled
Joseph MacKinnon



Holding Pattem

James Marchmont

those little fishbites between lips &
tarry-coursing breaths misdirected into eachother's lungs
enter inspiring, uplifting, another rush

anticipating another push, the together pressure of our chests pressed
pulls another breath from your body to mine & graceful gasp –
grasping the sides of such unpainted face, mash noses together, we kiss
and kiss and bury the burden by kissing

it's almost now buried,
and I forget what it was I was forgetting,
turning over to another soft collision with you

so tarry another time, again delay,
and once more revel in our languid display.
before we face the tumbling transition of parting
we may lay renewed, again restarting,
absent from the overdue, unavoidable day.

Dawn in Donegal Town
Eric McDonald

My feet brought me here;
to the water's edge,
to the dying spume of the far-off sea.
Light rising over the bay,
lazy sway of a folded pine,
and the rumble crumble of gravel underfoot
as I struggle forward for a better view.

Dún na nGall, fort of the foreigner.
I too am a visitor here but cannot help
thinking that this instant will stay with me –

The receding tide sweeping the littoral floor;
water slipping off seaweed,
drops of dew over waxy leaves;
and the gulls fighting the briney spray
so that they too can watch night turn to day,
black turn to blue.

Gestures / Glimpses

L. Shane

I've been wanting to tell you about the pleasure I take in watching a girl who stands at her window smoking at the same time every morning. She appears around eight o'clock and pushes out the bottom of her window; she wears a small white towel wrapped around her hips or y-front underpants, also white; sometimes she stands back from the window which gives her the texture of an apparition, but most often she is close to the glass standing off to one side; she does not move, apart from the occasional slow movements when she draws her hand up the middle of her body bringing the cigarette to her lips; her other arm hangs long and free at her side. Some mornings she is so tired she barely moves the hand holding her cigarette and she relies heavily on the window frame and her forehead (rolling to one side, and then the other) on the glass to keep her propped up. When she wants to move away from the window, she drops her head into her chest allowing her spine to follow and then pushes off the window frame with her shoulder; she then shifts her position, this time bringing her arm up to the glass, pressing her forehead into the crook of her elbow; it is not that she is resting or trying to wake up; one can see she is diving for thoughts, which leaves her with bloodshot and coffee-stained eyes. Sometimes she just stares intensely out the window at the street or the garden and then, brusquely, straightens up, turns, and sits down at her desk where she might read? I don't know. I only see her intense stare, her naked elbow and shoulder; I wonder what she longs for, what pearls of thought she found in the fold of her arm. At night her presence is announced by the orange glow of her cigarette rising from waist to mouth becoming more intense as she takes a drag; the blue light emitted from a computer screen in the background outlines the terrible curve of her breast. She moved two days ago; so this morning, I write you instead.

For Stella

Zachary C. Irving

I

Soft as wrinkles
skin falls off her smile
or frown. With age, lines
of worry and sentience sharpen
in her irises as resistance to them
fades.

Flakes of skin come off
to become part of our breath in exchange
for oxidants that join her cells to begin the
formal process.

Decomposition starts while she still walks,
time slowing (or maybe just her legs)
and as she joins the air she can only hope,
as flecks of her body shake loose
in so many steps,
she will remain in one of those flecks
long enough to know what it is
to be a speck of dust
illuminated by the sun
(the only body
ever to give
a body
to light).

II

When we die, blood pressure pulls away
and with it the living depth to our skin
no longer any liquid to fill
the collapsing vacuum that hides from us
how close our skin is to bone. That and muscles give up
leaving us not just straight faced but expressionless,
our 'faces' not faces

but collections of skin, lip, sinew, sunken eyes and cold.

Hair is the only feature that doesn't betray us.

Hair was dead when it pushed through our scalp, so it doesn't beg the extra attention of blood.

III

'Turtled' describes what the jaw does. Without muscle, there is nothing to stop the bottom jaw from falling naturally toward the neck when we lay on our backs. Bottom teeth pull away from top and, covered by lips, give us the toothless and sunken jaw of a turtle.

Turtled also in that the bottom jaw seems to pull into a soft, sweater-like shell of skin.

So we don't see this, the mortician shuts our mouths forever with a barbed wire web, stitching our jaws together by our gums.

IV

Every other cavity shut off
the nostrils become the only exit or entrance for air.

The smallness of this door
and the lack of any moving force
means that the progress through the body of a breath is more than
deathly slow.

So I say, out of respect for the hyperstagnated air
and the flesh that has to hold
all this stagnation on top of its own,
that we drill a hole into each lung and run two tubes up to the surface
so that they can smell their flowers and feel
the life of our breath as we try to speak to them with a new

version of tin cans and string. Hoping, as their ears decay
and fall further into their skull, they will begin to hear
inside out.

And every time it rains, they will experience
the gentle release of drowning.

VI

In a spectacle of flame
through a peep hole
Stella is converted
into a form
where a pinch of her
can be thrown into the wind,
to catch the sun
better than she could have ever wished to
alive.

And where she is small enough
to fit into the coffin with her mother
who died in childbirth
when Stella was only two,
and was buried with the newborn
on her lap.

VII

She asked to be buried
with her mother.

I mourn that we did not raise the dead
and place Stella in that coffin
in the hopes that her urn would tip

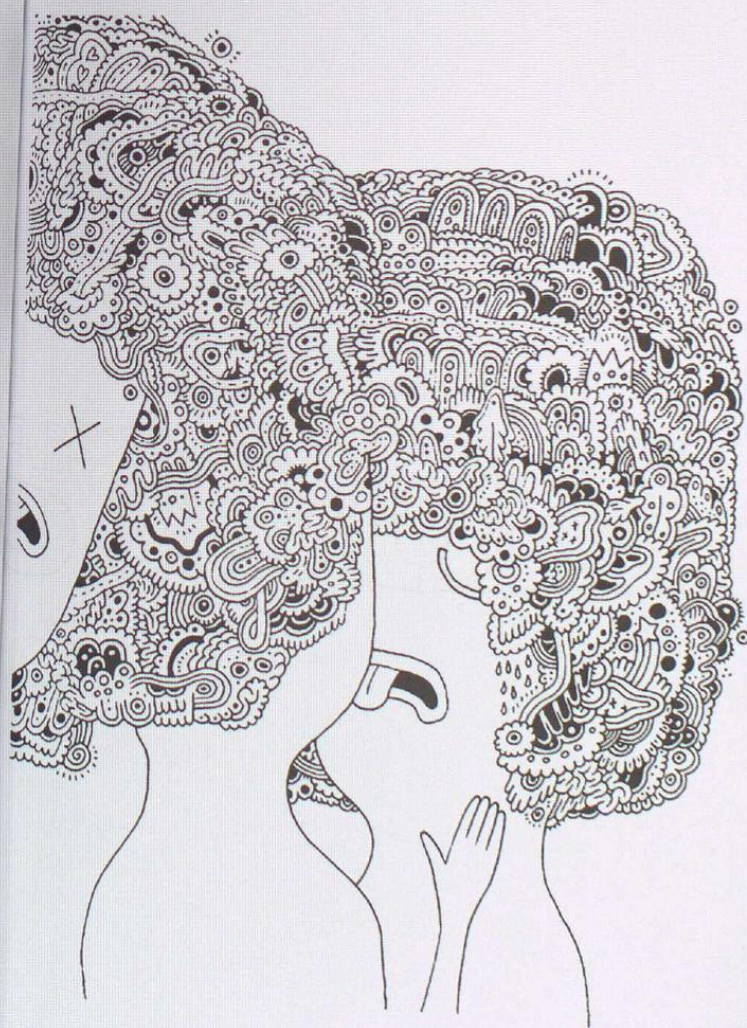
and scatter her ashes across her mother's
breast.

Instead she lies in her mother's plot
alone from the wet earth
in a marble urn.

But hope remains
that roots and the persistence
of sediment and gravity
will crack the stone
and an earth worm
will at the same time eat a bit of
Stella's mother and her
so that when it shits her out
she will begin to be released.

"All i did was sit in a room for 8 freakin hours and with nothing to do except watch meet the fockers over and over and over and over"

Michael DeForge



biographies

caroline x. aksich doesn't like monoculture agriculture stop she does like telegrams, the sheer persistence of water hyacinth, third person autobiographical narratives & speech patterns stop she is also messy, shaves irregularly & snores stop this is caroline's second appearance in acta stop

Michael DeForge is a Toronto-based student and illustrator. His work can be seen at www.kingtrash.com.

Zachary C. Irving is a UofT, Chancellor's and Queen Elizabeth II Scholar and president of the T.C.L.I. As a poet, he is the co-founder of an independent poetry group at UofT and recipient of the 2003 M.F. Bonneycastle Award. He has had the privilege of workshoping with John Reibetanz.

Jim F. Johnstone is the editor of *Misunderstandings Magazine*. He was awarded the 2005-2006 E. J. Pratt Medal and Prize in Poetry and has recently appeared in periodicals such as *Canadian Literature*, *Contemporary Verse 2*, *Descant*, and *The Malabar Review*. His chapbook, *siamese poems*, is available from Surly Editions (2006).

Joseph MacKinnon was born in Calgary, Alberta and moved to Toronto in 2000. He is currently in his first year at Saint Michael's College. He is an amateur photographer, a cartoonist and an independent music aficionado. His main influences are Ansel Adams and G.K. Chesterton.

James Marchment, cui dentes uel silicem comesse possunt, acris solet incitare morsus.

Eric McDonald is a librarian, Victoria College alumnus (011) and former editor of *Acta Victoriana* (2001). County Galway, Brittany, and New England figure among his favourite places in the world. He considers the latter two his homes away from home.

Patrick McGuire edits *The W/a* and runs www.surgeryiseasy.com. His writing has appeared in *lichen* and *Acta Victoriana*.

Katherine Mitchell is a fourth year student specializing in social and cultural anthropology. She hasn't figured out humanity yet, but there is still time.

Daniel Shawn Otis is a LIAR (but all poets are...they all conspire, in desperation they venture for dark places between thighs. Their real Art—masking the lies in airy and passionate poetic disguise—is always desire) frighteningly/exhilaratingly near the completion of his undergraduate degree in political science and philosophy.

Sonia Ramundi is completing her fourth year at St. Michael's College with a double major in architecture and fine art history and a minor in visual studies. Her interest lies in exploiting the potential of various materials to create sculptural forms. This past year Sonia was a participant in *7a*11d*.

L. Shane has produced an array of work during a significantly long stint as an MA student, though most of it has not pertained to academia in any way. Residing in Toronto in a blue apartment with little to no furniture, Shane is currently bent on mastering handstands.

Francesco Valente-Gorjup is a fourth year architecture student at the University of Toronto and a freelance graphic designer. For previous work, please visit www.gvfdesign.ca.

!

caroline x. aksich

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