

ACTA VICTORIANA
The Literary Journal
Of Victoria University

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Letters from the Editors

Dear Victorians,

Since 1878, the Acta Victoriana has been a keeper of our time in the form of articles, art, prose and poetry. Its pages have aimed to give voice to our many successes, the problems we have encountered and overcome and the inspirations we have chosen to pursue. Our powerful voice invariably persists in each undertaking and the sharing of creative vocation which takes place on this campus. It has been my honour to have one of my acts as a Victorian be the editing and curating of this journal. Its contents, I believe, are a testament to the spirit of our colleagues and of ourselves - rational yet passionate, critical yet celebratory, precise yet universal.

Accompanying the launch of the 2012-13 journal, this year's editorial board brought you **The First Annual Keynote Forum**, a new tradition to supplement the publication each year, and a new digital home at actavictoriana.ca.

On a personal note, I thank all the members of the editorial board including my incredible co-editor for their enthusiasm in the face of challenge, attention to detail and dedication to exploring the potential of Acta Victoriana.

On behalf of the entire team, I thank you, reader, author, Victorian or otherwise, and encourage you to continue supporting Acta in the coming years which, I trust, will be as exciting and as significant.

Monica Georgieff
Co-Editor 2012-13

We have spent the last few months turning over pages of Acta Victoriana's history, finding inspiration from our artists past. Seeing the art and literature from students this year has made me realize how much this history has continued. We are still eager to crystallize the places and people we love through our words, to probe what seems to not remain for us and why it must seem to be that way; to deal with deep frustration at a world that seems so uncontrollable and to make small havens in the work that we love. While the issues around us may have changed, we believe that the works chosen this year are truly artful in their curiosity and honesty. As the last page closes on another publication of Acta Victoriana, I feel that we have added a voice which continues our tradition and yet opens it to the current concerns, desires and thoughts of many around us.

Thank you to all who submitted to the journal. It was so wonderful to be able to see the art being produced all around us: the many ways in which we are interpreting and experiencing our world. To my fellow editors, there is no one else I would rather have spent days poring over Acta Victoriana with than you. I dedicate this volume to the hard work and love that went into the entire process - from all of those first moments that begin to turn thoughts into art, to the turning of the last page now resting in your hands.

Sarah Crawley
Co-Editor 2012-13



Folds

Anne Rucchetto

Peeling back hard edges
peering at the forgotten surface
of lacquered textures.
Sealed with thumb prints
and smeared with glossy coats
the page becomes one
sequence, the labours of
naïve preservation.



vitamin e

Mashiyat Alam

other girls were
never quite like
this.
& I tried to make
small talk.
she pressed her
fingers
against my lips
and said
shut up.
we swam
in blankets.
& drowned.



Unmade Bed

Emily Paskevics

This is where I learned an aversion
to utopian thinking. Traces of bloodstains,
arcs of snipped or chipped fingernail, flakes
from my scalp and heels. Assorted cells strewn
like petals across the pillowcase, beneath the warmth
of sleeping weight. My skin taking the texture of bedsheets,
thin and brief as silk. Loose threads. The grubby quilt.
The horse-breath and pig-grunt that comes to men
in sleep. Gestures of desire and dreams. I recall
how the room tasted, the way the walls stared,
that animal presence in my bed. Now a rare
reach of fallow sunlight, illuminating
a year's worth of dust

and the architecture of spiders

after a season of unrelenting rain: swollen
gutters, crashing rivers. A grey sky never quite
brightening the days before the night returned. This
our dark little world, pregnant with its own fulfillment.
Another ugly fecundity, difficult rebirth. Defended territory
we circle and search. And am I the hoof, or the print left behind?
I plunder my way through these lessons in nostalgia, the story
itself erased; all that remains is the exploration. A detailed
wound, raw and cracked all over, another well-planned
trek toward that unmapped place. And the bed long
cold. Part of me still sleeps there at your throat,
coiled, pressing for response or more pleasure.

We'd gotten so used to just wanting
each other.



Julia Boyd





Defeat

Emily Paskevics

This room shifts, swept by headlights.
The window is wide for the swelter, this
slicked heat of mid-summer. Pigeons creep
across the ledge, as stray cats shriek rough
translations of rage or desire through the streets.
On our side of the screen, parched houseplants
shed leaves at the bed's edge; more little
gestures of neglect

or surrender. And we are stripped, belly-up
to the facts of this last feverish lapse: the clay
neutrality of my body, the thick fissure of yours.
The flawed clockwork of two wayward hearts.
And our forked tongues, dry from hissing
of these revelations and repulsions. Nearby,
someone pounds their own wild insomnia
into a piano. Someone else

laughs madly through the dark, then spits. Quick
dissonance: sleeplessness seethes like disease,
appetites slip across the tilted scales of the night
as the night makes this deadly glut of us. And
daybreak will bring only heaped sheets, Advil,
coffee, and one more cold shower each.



Auld Lang Syne

Robert DiPardo

I know you're sick
so you can keep the chairs
for now
and I'll think of you
and wish you better health
while I carry on
groping for the eternal
in dull moments
like these:
bent over a typewriter
on the floor.



Nil nisi bonum

Robert DiPardo

We were twins (both
Gemini, I mean),
but our differences
were manifest
and ran deep.

You thought
Goya was a buffoon
because he didn't paint
like Velázquez.

You told me words
couldn't say all
that pictures could.

And if that's how
you still feel,
you'll forgive me
(won't you?)
if I stop here.



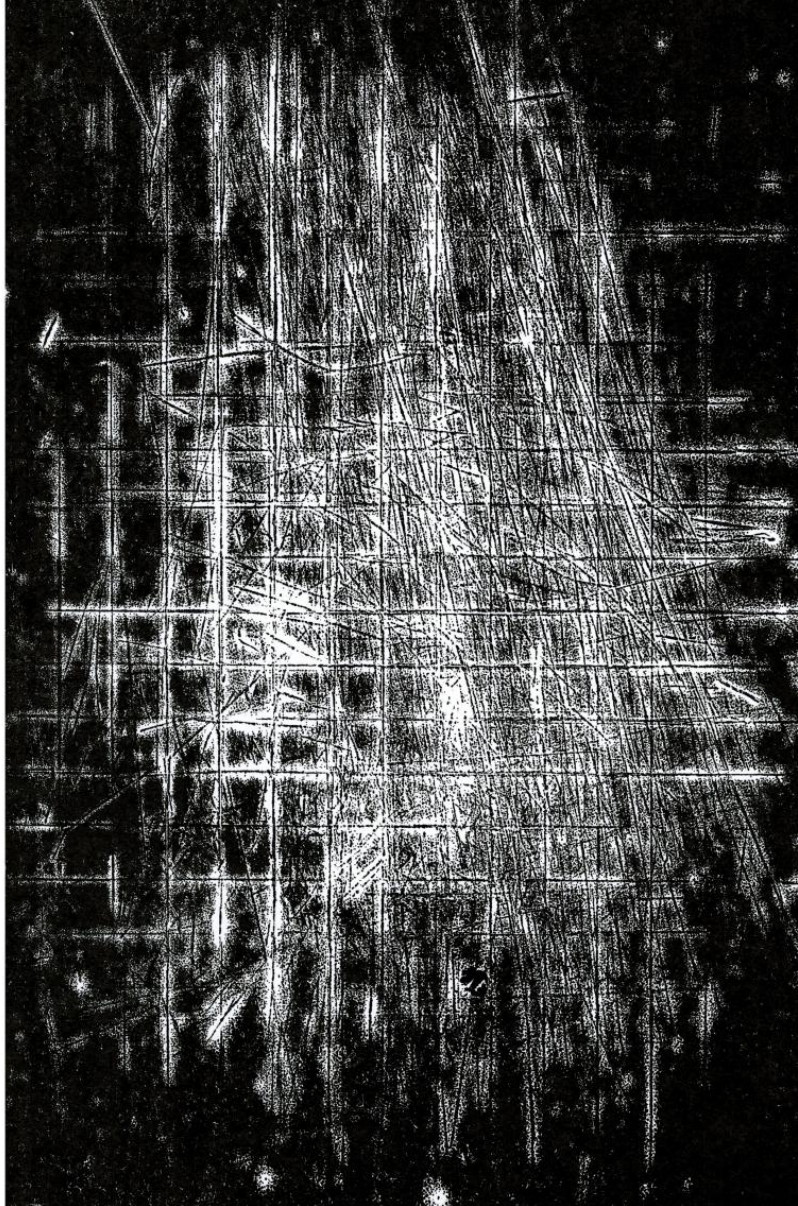
This Morning

Robert DiPardo

She poured the coffee.
Coins changed hands.
Fingers glanced
a palm that was smooth.
Her name I didn't catch.



Mary Ma





2 am

Ariel Martz-Oberlander

I wish that I could tell you
how I snuck into your itunes library and played your Russian
audiobook in the dense 2 am silence
of my room how
I wrapped myself in your heritage
how I wanted to forget my own language for yours
how I wanted time to stop
so I could stay in the impossible words forever
I found a way to pronounce safety there in your strange vowels
in your throat noises
and how the words crowded in my head
and I began to panic the way I do
when I'm in my own tongue
where is my refuge now
on the beam of a headlight
through the pane

and in another 2 am instant
how you tried to teach me to
form the vowel between ee and uh
and I failed because my mouth was
thinking about something very different

(Feb 20 2012)



DIAMOND WARD

Tara Abrahams

Saccharine sweetheart,
on your dying throne,
With its paper sheets and
IV strung round skin-sleeves,
You beg for sugar, and relief,
While I lord over the
Fat pale ladies waiting on
You with serums of dew in
Diamond-glass tubes.

Serendipitous grey hallways
Cross your mind in a maze
No more milk baths and
Candy-glazes until the injection
Of Valium hazes; wait
While I, perched
On a half-broken hope,
Wish for your kingdom
To wheel you back home.

Tears are gelatinous diamonds on
Your chemical cherub face, darling
Luminous and reflecting under
The light of a fluorescent lamp.

My hands are not
Deft, like the jewelers'-
I cannot brush these
Precious things away.



All Quiet in the Peninsula

Anna Shortly

It's all quiet at this end of the peninsula:
a distant hush,
hush, from mothers lonely in floral print gowns rocking their babies to sleep
when outside
there's a chill, a sweet summer breath that comes over these forlorn islands,
grazes
the tops of the rocky hills, and
steals into old broken-down houses of chipped turquoise paint,
squared and homely and of a past the peninsula keeps.
They rock their babies to sleep, hush, hush, wrap them in blankets;
they pull on the strings of their crosses around their necks. When they're
older, they will take
young women's hands in theirs and ask them, Do some good in this world,
remember the good,
the hearty and the safe and lovely—the kind you find in the quiet peninsula
at the end
of the world where
dark trees lay like piles of bones under dawn's wake, a dawn that shines
through one's thin lace curtains before 6 am.
The mothers pulling on their string of crosses rush to the coming dawn that
streaks their rust wood floors and torn-up furniture over with golden
bits of light;
all the while the babies go on sleeping, wrapped up in blankets,
hushed and quiet. And mothers go on pulling the strings, warding off sins,
and they say, "yea it's good and homely here, hushed and safe, knowable,
here at this quiet end of the peninsula."



Megan Stulberg





I wish you were warmer

Mary Ma

The number of times your body didn't fit mine still makes me comfortable throughout the cold season. My stomach hurt with a crippling ache from walking too fast and drinking in all the wind. The first aid kit tells me what to do if there are holes in your body or if your body stops breathing. The drawings in the instruction manual all look like men about to make love. Today someone buzzes my apartment door but I do not answer. I walk down each aisle of the grocery store to see what it smells like. Each smell is fake or an old stupid memory or belongs to someone else's kitchen counter. There are smells for getting rid of smells. There is the warm nutty aisle, and the spicy dry aisle, and the aisle that smells like chemicals. I don't go down the cold aisle. This feeling will be different tomorrow when I wake up and reset and feel nothing till all the guilt comes back. From where I forget but I will blink my eyes and curl my body. Inhale. Inhale. Forget to exhale. A stranger I just met gave me a gift he made. It fits in my hand and between my fingers because it was made to fit his hand. Eyes and face face each other. I can look deep into your eyes for the first time and you let me in where I wasn't allowed before. There is a neon ice-cream sign on the gallery desk where I work. I sit there with plastic flowers and pink crochet over the power chords and grapefruit gummy candy in a jar. I eat them. By myself. Remember the emergency speed dial button on the desk phone and don't feel safer. Music singing and beating swirls my mind and matches my pulse. Thought about you throughout a day, it wove into and out of things that happened like thread. Nothing happened but there were loud men outside, standing in the parking lot. I couldn't tell if they were angry when they yelled at each other or just happy to see each other. Construction surrounds the

sidewalks and the workers always leave empty plastic bottles in piles of dirt. I pick them up, know that together they drank three litres of water that was once part of a glacier somebody else melted. Someone moved. The grocery store lady gives me positive encouragement for choosing blueberry pie for dinner. I walk through the night with my eyes closed, cars streaming past, city lights fade, and count the seconds till fear makes me see. Try and try again because I want to know how far I can go as the city sounds bounce off the skyscrapers and in through to my ears. Only ten seconds.



Like the Base Judean

Jozef Kosci

*"The soul is torn apart in a painful condition as long as it prefers the Eternal because of its Truth but does not discard the temporal because of familiarity."
– St. Augustine, Confessions*

It was twelve past four in the morning and those competing vultures had long since departed from us; heads hung low, bruised and battered in shame. Only the barman rested behind the synthetic glow of his metallic workstation. He smiled as he looked up to me, his most dedicated patron. In the sight of a layman, I was wholly outnumbered. Merely hours ago, twenty-something brutes circled about my prize. Many no doubt larger, more vicious, acerbic, and powerful beasts of prey. Some decidedly more elegant in dress, some more kind in their approach. Yet straggling about these damning walls, husks of men were only base in their intentions, and the innocent creature whose arm I firmly clasped no doubt saw through even the most elaborate of their façades.

Scraping off the cream of our animal spirits, far removed from our ethereal humanity, pretending all the while to add fashion and form to pathetic necessity—such were the always predictable modes and methods of disappointment. On the other hand, beyond subtlety, insistence and exuberance, I was first and foremost a fallen angel amongst mere men at this poisoned waterhole. Within the familiar walls of middle class havens of hypocrisy, I seldom found the dullard flesh of would-be saints in short supply. Having once sipped the red Blood of Divinity before playing with kindred hearts of men, I was now victorious once more with a different kind

of red about my lips. Such was my secret.

Resting on my bed, I now thought only about her eyes as I looked from them and into the curves of her open body. Those sullen gems were the only reason I had pursued her. Angered, yet full of longing, they spoke volumes on her weakness, her loneliness, her nihilistic premise, and her pitiful conclusion. Like many before her, I had the power to transform and to save her. And that is indeed why I had gone after her at first, for only the most wretched could look beyond the veil of pride and seek justification through the anointed arms of another man. But sitting on the edge of my cotton-lined bed, playing with the threading of my gloves, I wondered if she was worthy of my justification. No, I swiftly decided. She would be forced to earn her prize.

She felt safe right now in my frigid embrace, which hours ago she had feared glancing across that glowing bar, later learned to idolize amidst the cocktails, and now had presumably conquered through attention to my affections. At a glance of her delighted face through shifting sheets and dimensions, I felt nothing but pity for my now-captured soul, seeking salvation where none could be found in the dimples of a would-be saint.

Before she had allowed for Eros to knock on the window of her high-rise studio, she had stretched out her legs so humbly and presented me with the most reverent of her God-given offerings. Hers was a Pearl of Great Price, so honestly and gently given. However the quick-fed blemished lamb loses taste before its pedestal; my eyes were not those trembling and tearful eyes she longed to expect in that moment. No, my eyes were not her eyes in that moment. I sighed, knowing that once again, salvation was not earned.

I took her pearl and crushed it, and soon thereafter, quietly slid into night.



The Game

David Hostetter

A pair of dark figures hunch opposite over a table, silhouetted in the flare of a lone candle dancing adjacent on a round wooden pedestal. The two tables, alike in appearance and lot, both stuck to the side of Toronto on loud cold tiles in an old family house on Bathurst, now sequestered to garner rent from bobbing young urban mops. The room is a gathering place for beer bottles and their baroque necks, beckoning candlelight to catch it in brown and green glass, the whole place almost depression-era for all its disrepair and pseudo-poverty. Dinner has long been discarded, various ceramic plates red and oily sunk soft into the sink with trickles vaguely heard spanking off pipe-walls from a bit of water run over the dishes. A gentle cough is let out. The record heaves, emitting a wail into the dimness as its needle skates out its sound. A shoulder is solicited, convinced to work itself up to rest a hand atop the other's body, thumb tucked and pressed just beneath the collarbone in its grip. He could feel there, the odd pulse of a person just as alive as he.

Seconds flop along like hours and two moons grow bald before Tom works his arm back to its origin, bouncing dumbly off the table as it goes. The move is a blip in their building stillness. Solidifying, the men become gestureless heaps from an outward perspective. Crusting warmly in the genial dark, candle light scrapes their shirt-folds like an inverted relation of motion between street lamp and pedestrian. Quiet as monks, they hunch like travelling dads, minds together parading aglow from the cemented silence. The pair of them perch like an Oldenburg installation, as if any move would break the maché, and hold stance indefinitely for the unnecessaries of propositions and replies. Hours appear to loll about like

arresting anesthesia through the Enigma of William Tell. And they are almost in the womb again. Eventually one of them rustles a hand around the mess, produces a lined piece of loose leaf and a pen. They both know the cue.

Tom, or perhaps the other, Red, had learned it from a small book of games played by manifesto writers and dream victims, searching in somnambulist gait, heady vocabulary and uncut nails for the enigmatic whale of the unconscious. The rules are simple: whoever begins scrawls a question at the top of the page, folds it down so the other can't see it when they scribble a blind answer. Since in this case there are two players, the second person will write another question underneath his own answer, fold and hand back. This is repeated until one player convinces the other to stop, or it becomes too obviously a fruitless endeavour. It takes a certain manner to play the game correctly. You can't, for instance, ask what state is the biggest producer of white plastic butter knives or how many eggs on average Milton Friedman had for breakfast in 1979 and expect an intriguing answer. Participants must be willing to stretch to poetic conclusions in order to produce a satisfying round. Not requiring this introduction, however, Tom takes the folded page from Red and does as is expected. The two hand the paper back and forth in silence, the candle all the while bleeding wax onto its plate. Upon reaching the base of the page and answering the final query, Tom unravels the creased paper and begins to read the lines without speaking.

Why are we here?

To shake hands.
.....
Have you ever found something never found?

Not if we're sane.
.....
What if there isn't anything underneath?

You would plow it all out of the way.
.....
Did you ever get it?

There wasn't any to begin with.
.....
What is language?

I never, and you shouldn't either.
.....
How does one win this game?

Laughably.
.....
How can we face death earnestly?

Wheat, barley and an apple core.
.....
Who?

Because the sky is blue.
.....
Am I dear to you?

Hardly, if ever.
.....
Why?

Forget it.

Both feel satisfied, after reading the page, to leave it that. Red takes a slow stand, collects a scarf from the cluttered table, touches his friend on the shoulder and leaves the room. Tom sits quietly for another half hour, eventually snuffing the candle with his breath.



Lake Simcoe

Jeannine Pitas

my father tells me
never to fear
the frozen lake

stencilled with

tiny shards
of small quartz crystals
that crack with each step

we walk apart
he first, I behind him
toward the dark huts
near the other shore
and the orange oak

never to doubt
God's presence

within us
caverns of whiteness
cut by sharp
stalagmites, stalactites

ripping our faith

we grasp the air
making our way
toward the promise
the tenuous love
always holding us

refusing
to give up its leaves



The Labyrinth

Jeannine Pitas

In all our ways we are
striving to know you,
just as, in all your ways, you struggle
to show us your face.

Like the rain that seeps in
through membranes of shoes,
like November leaves falling,
red and yellow with change.

Again and again you stand before us
as we wipe the fog from our windows,
and carve our initials
into the bark of ancient elms

Even though a monster still waits
at that dark spiral's centre,
Even though a darting hare still shatters
every landscape of peace,

In all our ways we are
striving to know you
just as, in all your ways,
you struggle to show us your face.



the old willows

Yiwei Hu

Now the cloud deepens
Umbrellas flare
into being. I become
the deepest mauve.

Enter taupe sky teetering
on the long beak of a metal crane.
A reed out of water,
thin slip of morning mud,
weeds in my cup
of river.

Where the perspective
converges.
Horizon where the I
vanishes.
Latitudes unmapped, lost
to a silk caress of no colour.
Winds--
a sky's unmasking.



From "Treading in Seine"

Michael Lee Aaron Chernoff

Collapsing freights instigate mein sein;
a rose is a rose is certainly a rose – composed in
amicable getups attacking all exits;
later taking the eggs, being
insistent upon ghettoed dregs and
lippy sing-songs. Cordially yours I am now –
cordially in sores fasting in the daylight's break.

Of tremulous penny-loafers mincing all floors
and the spaniel left drying in wrecked ice-cream stores.
Nevertheless tit for tit, tat for tat: Lizzie minds, Rose minds
all seven (or eight?) of them goddamn mind but he
drives off to California. Yielding no stop signs, mirrors blurred
and dwindling, the pygmy background – so very tired.
We: left delighted, blind.

Disconcerting: willowed wisps without anchorage, steam and
drizzle. A piano plays its weight in severance; the IRS bemoans
communal ties, libidinal woes:
the erasure's songstress still in her flight,
of airborne ruts and tulip sights.



Flying Buttresses

Madeleine Long

You're like the wind
That brushes up against my
Blank spaces and
Flusters my hair

I keep it short because
With cupped hands
And shallow eyes
Things seem lighter and, well

You're like the sand
That lingers on the sill
Of the lake and
Shudders against glass

I pocket that because
With churning hearts
And trembling lungs
Things weigh me down.



Jade Bryan





ripples on a blank waterbed

Fan Wu

When I were four my mother hit me over the head with pan of oil eroding the difference twixt liquid and flesh. Today here I tell you that the octopus is most intelligent of the invertebrate species. Ever sense I killed the girl and killed her well I develop this inveterate love for the octopus eight limbs extended. I flay the terror of mind between the two hemi-spheres of the physical brain I ated her eyes I took skin from breast and wrapt it round my neck warm as child's deep night fever dreams. In my sleeping eye the octopus comes to me clouding conscience jet black with ink. Why the obsession, I ask I. Thinking it is because I and my animal both have no bones and can kill with a smart two-step of poison ringed blue and crushing grip.

I move in the rhythm of the ocean which has no guilt which perceives not death nor rot only idly undulates between life cycles of fauna and sea-flora. The spine of the unconscious possesses all flesh and thinking being untenable it spirals outward eager again to locate dirty drown-ed murder replicating itself. Would that in exterior action I could desecrate in the mode of defecation in the mirror against the wet eye in the dreardraped forests between sternum and skull. In elongated periods of drenching in water the strands of skin and muscle filament out to double the motion of decay (the beak protrudes from the centre of the stomach in a hybrid motion of mastication, digestion) and often we are brought to eat what is better than us. The mimic octopus comes to become flounder seasnake lionfish in turn. The disgust of a kill of desiccated prey lines my stomach burns a whole through my sanity quickly becoming sentient. When I were four my mother

hit me over the head with pan of oil, I learned to view the world round me at the infinite distance of a total proximity, all as one, all substances ripened to essences, the flesh melting to burn and cooling to stone scars, the world become elemental. I find the ease to kill true and deep to return flesh to its state of fluid to dissolve the weak bounds of human being to expose the body as primordial pulp as no more than idle and not dissimilar components, ripples on a blank waterbed.



无/莫

Fan Wu

"each verse is an entity, a new kind of word"

was a simple boy:
slept in fresh clothes
woke to new days

the abscess of ideals:
emptied of being dreamt
the lover was a likeness

once he sensed
someone he loved
was eating alone

face of a lover escaped
moon over broken water
sweat between knees

ego uncoil
the rapid reeling
keen to sheathe



Iris Liu

how I loved the loved likeness for his leaning over against
the body where he leaves me behind toward o yes says
the yes-space'd leaving un espace sur le contre
that no willing day or night will wash back together toward
just forth simply say here over and again how I have been lated
after your body to see the parting the standing streaming circle body
acting its way to and fro without touching to be leavened
to be a-way before the likeness the overflowing takes you over and
over the running likeness in your memory o how the water grieves



A Vindication of Tel Aviv

Jozef Kosci

rest upon the brittle stone
waters thrash upon the starlit coast
reaching towards that golden ornament
grand beyond the glows of man
suspended by ethereal blackness above
my immortal cosmic witness
to silent vows within

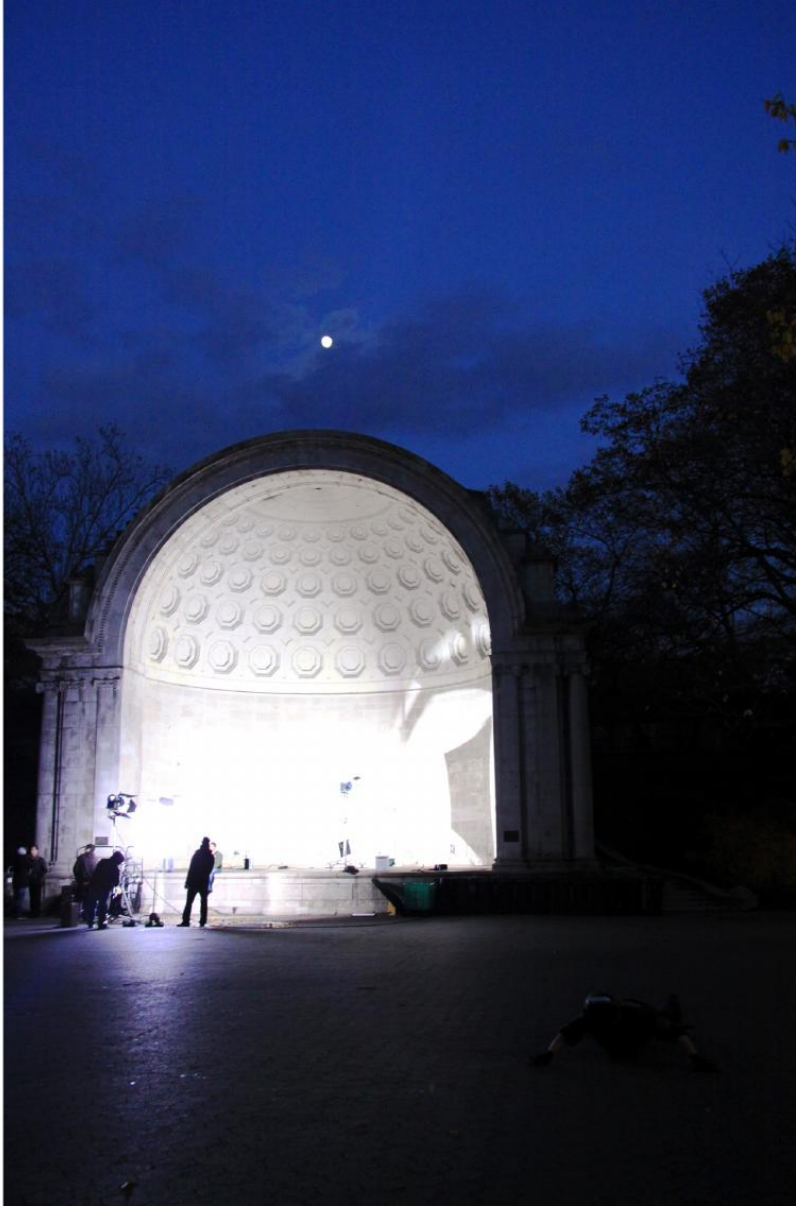
I am with her
and casting out like the midnight winds
that so gently caress the salty sands
beating men at sea

her eyes do haunt me no more
her smile no longer by my side
but a fragment of her naked soul

eternal like the stars



Jade Bryan





Absence

Lauren Sutherland

Here night never fades to black.
In the city Sahara, glowing lights echo the setting sun's unwavering retreat.
Subject to the city's reign, prone to its phosphorescent glory, the night has
no dusk or dawn:
Only a slow build and decline, nights slipping into light kept ever burning.
Cauterizing bliss.

It is quiet. Not silent, evident in absence.
Quiet is the hollowness.
Its emptiness only noticed as a sudden sound ricochets against something
that realizes it is gone.
Emptiness is in the echo, simultaneously sounding and vanishing as vows
whispered into wind.
A pulsating ache accompanies bowing heads and slackening shoulders in
harmony, as if orchestrated.
Quiet it's own song.

The subway screeches to a halt.
All in one space, together yet infinitely apart.
Do these shells encase unknown epics of love, pain, passion, loss?
Let them be celestial bodies gathered by some transcendental accident of
coincidence, joined by the aimless pull of time.
Or are they all just taking the same train somewhere fast?

The train speeds into tunnels, light chasing dark.
The hollowed underground is lined with cables; running like veins, forward
momentum the mecca of accelerated motion.
In the train's wake lies absence, waiting to be filled for another moment.

Dreams are in motion, the chase of longing silenced in the day.
Staring at billboard lights, artificial strobes, stars are forgotten,
Our weary search for supernovas discarded.
The song of traffic, the pulse and crush of the people is cacophony,
drowning in sound at the pace of a hummingbird's heartbeat.
The sea of us washes into concrete tide pools: streets, alleys, dim rooms
that make up the nights, swimming and drowning in deliciously close
quarters.
Idling by the ocean, waiting for the moon's revolution to take it all.

After the party, the oneness, the city people drift in the current to travel
home.



Dried Rose

Jeannine Pitas

The single rose I gave you –
pale pink, inviolate
its pistil the Ark
of the Covenant.

After three days
of watching it wilt,
I looked at you.
Do you still want it?

I really don't mind.
I hung it in the window
from its feet –

As if such drying
might somehow save it,
as if in the night it might be taken

just as I thought
the dead were taken,
angels lifting them up
to the sun.

Now, as I stare
at the chipped teacups,
the thick stacks of
paper you left, the needles from
last year's Christmas tree –

Your rose still hangs
in the window –
eyes closed, face to the
floor

still listening for the
last mourner's voice,
still waiting
for the angels
to come and get it.



Megan Stulberg



▼
Summoning

Amy Hsieh

If only I could transfuse
your blood into
my cavernous veins,
blue catacombs,
would-be aquifers
that beg from thirst
that licks their dust...!

You see, I am a sham,
no shaman. No roll
of bone dice in a skull cup,
just the rattle.
Could I conjure your curiosity
to lean your ghost over
the balcony, to
cast your ken back
to the gull-white sea that waits
below?

I want the baptismal deep
bathed in your vision.
My words are dry, this page,
brittle.

▼
Sustenance

Emily Paskevics

She leans into the drained oil of the light
in the garden shed, which used to be a chicken
coop – now home to wild mice and spiders, moths
half the size of kittens. She scrapes dust, droppings
and tiny husked skins from the workbench

to the floor, that cracked black rubber of her boots.
She makes neat arrangements of seeds and then splits
into a sack of Garden-Pro soil, setting six clay pots
in a row. Her brown coat blends with the dented tools
that troop across the walls, the cast webs, coiled hoses

and old kids' bikes hooked to beams above. Trimming
withered stems, she offers sips of water as she softly
croons – her voice a caress. She removes her feather-
patterned gloves to trace the sprouts with her wrinkled
fingertips bared. Pressing barbed blooms to her lips one

by one, she memorizes anatomies of furled leaves, petals
with her tongue. Each carefully-potted history pulled out
from her own weed-choked throat, cactus mouth. Thumbs
dirt-thick, she grips little roots tight as she claws them up
and buries them beneath her palms all over again.



Martina Bellisario



modern

Ariel Martz- Oberlander

I hope you've had a chance to enjoy the sunshine
cause we're predicting rain for the weekend
... Fighting continues on the northern front
with casualties on both sides ...

welcome to the Cenozoic era
this is not your ordinary gyre

I
convenient preoccupation
sitting around hips in circles
we hung long strands from our ears
trying to change the way people saw us
never quite naked of our paint or
thoughts crop circles trenched deep between neurons
our smiles explosive
splattering onto our faces and expanding
beyond the viewer's prediction
we fell away from ourselves in imperceptible ways

I didn't have to love everything but I did
I spread my fingers elbows shoulders and knees
all around giving a piece to everyone

on the most incomplete day we carried
everything we needed and lived a lifetime
at a picnic table

years of being alone have left me in patterns of
wrapping my arms around myself as I sleep
I wake holding one hand in the other
I have become my surrogate other half.
Here I am under the
sheets of my childhood
surrounded by the suburban squalor of outward similarity.

couples who look like each other him and her
going to dinner at in laws returning empty tupperware
their faces lit up before the subway arrives
just wanting to be associated with paradise
they buy organic from chile
I choose the family with grass a little longer
than the houses beside

because
the truth is the love of my life
will probably not notice me if I am not wearing mascara



Too Few To Mention

Jeff Dupuis

hey you will you help me to carry the world
because I measure my life in ad breaks in thoughts of the future in toilet
flushes
I am a cliché collective reference
retreating into adaptation I fled regurgitation but came up short
in stature and feeling

on the most incomplete day we carried
everything we needed and lived a lifetime
at a picnic table

Tanya hates her husband, and what's more, she expects me to hate my wife just as much. Disc one of Ella Fitzgerald Sings The Cole Porter Songbook spins behind a plastic panel, vertically, in the CD player/clock on her night table. Tanya calls this romantic music. Track eight, "I'm Always True To You In My Fashion" plays softly. Her head is on my chest. Long, wavy blonde hair spreads out in all directions. A sheen of sweat gives her bare back a gentle glow. Each breath flows through her painted lips and over the edge of my ribs like water over falls.

"I want to laugh and cry, it's been so long," she says.

"Maybe we should open the window, let this place air out before your husband comes home."

"I don't care about Derek."

"Uh, okay, but he'll care."

I've seen Tanya a handful of times since high school. In our final year we sat next to each other in a political science class. She wasn't really into that subject, or any subject really, but I was, and I helped her study for the exam. I didn't have a chance with her back then. Tanya was always sexy, and it wasn't because of the clothes or the cleavage. She wasn't a slut or anything, though she had some experience, and it wasn't just her body. It was how she carried herself. But she liked bigger guys, hockey and football players, not tall, skinny, hunched-over losers.

She still has her curves, she's still sexy, but she's puffier and sags more, thicker in the hips and around the waist. I'm bigger too, now, after a decade of hitting the gym. I've corrected my posture and ditched the Goodwill wardrobe for designer labels.

My interview finished early and I didn't have to file my story until the next day. My afternoon was free and I went walking along Bloor Street, from used bookstore to used bookstore, killing time so that I could surprise Maria, my wife, when she got off work. That was the plan anyway. It changed when I saw Tanya and a friend drinking sangria on a patio, Tanya's hair catching the sunlight in its waves. She looked fantastic in a striped dress that looked like a long, wool sweater. I put both hands on the fence separating the rest of the sidewalk from the patio and said "hello".

I asked her questions, mentioning little about myself, only that I was married. No mention of the old gang, I didn't want her running down the list of mutual acquaintances and asking how they all were. Maintaining eye contact, I asked her more and more questions like she was the subject of an interview. She stopped her recap abruptly, flagged down the waitress, ordered more sangria, and continued. She still worked at the salon part-time, but had decided to go to university. She was enrolled in an academic bridging program, a course designed to reacquaint older people with academia before they enrolled as students. Her companion, Margaret? Margarite?, was also from the program and they had both just finished a class discussing the merits of Moby Dick.

I stood up, approached our waitress at the till near the bar, which was dark compared to the patio, and settled the tab. Tanya objected after the fact, I said I only had credit and didn't want to split up the bill for my two gin and tonics. She offered me money, to which I replied she owed me and could take me out for coffee. It was like fencing, my fente, her riposte, finishing with corps a corps.

She rolls over and off me, taking the sheet with her. With it wrapped around her like a wedding gown, the train dragging over our clothes scattered on the floor, she goes and opens the window. The brown and red brick of the building across the alley is clearly visible through the opening, traffic noises filter up and into the apartment.

"How come we never got together?" She's looking down at something.

I want to say "because you were never interested, because I was never your type." I say nothing for a while. She sits on the edge of the bed with her back to me. A car horn honks outside.

"Derek will be home soon," Tanya says.

She turns toward me, still holding the sheet over her chest. A different woman than the one from the patio earlier is looking at me now, a sad, serious woman.

"We both married so young, too young."

I nod at this without thought. Then I'm hit by guilt, a noose of betrayal tightens around my throat. I thought this was about sex, two people who never got to have it with each other getting a second chance. I can see now that it's something else.

"You should go," she says.



Soft Teeth

Mary Ma

Sucks in cheeks between teeth and bite down hard for an entire nights
sleep wake with marks lined inside deep for one two three four days teeth
hurt from sweet treats not rinsed with sex in the morning goes beat by beat
by beat. Relief. Moments of reckless abandon sugar with meat. Repeat.
Repeat.



Stephanie Turenko



The best of airport reading,

rob mclennan

1.

The looped heart of indeterminacy. His abdomen on her finger. What sure-fire way, red-handed. A misfire burns, unpleasantly. Thus, we narrate friction. Two women, and two ill-chosen men. Her limb that places underneath. A flail, hardcover folly, paperback travails. Continuity: a sanguine rhyme made flesh. A dream of private parts, what primitive language. Weather but the expressed statement of buried emotion, naked.

2.

A wedding drives home the salty taste. The scent of dust kicked up by rain. Not all stories are visible, the viaduct he buried hands, his lover's corpse. Dressed white, the most important pretense. Wonder Woman undergarments; what last squandered surface. Her beetle-round belly. Sliced mournful parallel of tongues. Such creatured dander. Beggar, my beloved. His billfold permits; I go where I am.



Contributors

Tara Abrahams

Tara's literary influences are anyone who writes and continues to write without giving up (but probably mostly Virginia Woolf and Chuck Palahniuk). She describes her literary style as sporadic and lovingly vague and has a penchant for being inspired by the most demotivating, gritty, violent and startlingly beautiful pieces of literature.

Mashiyat Alam

Mashiyat's literary influences are all the great modernist authors, like Ernest Hemingway, F. Scott Fitzgerald, Nabokov, Oscar Wilde, James Joyce, Vonnegut, and Henry Miller. She feels that they were greatly influenced by the world wars, the prohibition, and alcoholism. She describes her style with one word - brevity.

Julia Boyd

Julia Boyd is a fourth year undergraduate at Vic. She loves to paint. Her artwork is featured on pg. 12

Jade Bryan

Jade believes that art reveals truth about the world around us. Focused on visual arts, she also loves reading and writing poetry. She is influenced heavily by modern literature, and non-traditional poetry and prose that reflects the modern condition.

Martina Bellisario

Martina Bellisario is a second year student at Trinity College, where she studies English Literature and Semiotics and Communication Theory. She took "Alice" at a Crystal Castles concert in November.

Michael Lee Aaron Chernoff

Michael Lee Aaron Chernoff is a fourth year English and Philosophy major. His solicitations have been featured in The Acrobat, The Trinity Review, and The UC Review. He enjoys pad thai and meditating over the abyss. Derrida is his absentee mother:father. He taught him how to grasp the underlying beauty of so-called obscurantism; a lesson to which he is forever indebted. His literary style is a reluctant fervour. He doesn't strive to be unreadable – poetry must not be reduced to a kind of elitism.

Robert DiPardo

Robert Di Pardo found his earliest literary heroes more in fiction than in verse; The Idiot was incendiary to his teenaged mind. That his first maestro e duca was Dostoevsky still shows plainly in his work's pesky affection for the working poor. But when Dante came to mean more to him than the short guy in black slippers and pink pajamas pointing to a Gothic ziggurat, his new sense of words, of the music that whispers in them, blossomed. His advice? Get your hands on Eugene Onegin (in Falen's trans.).

Jeff Dupuis

Jeff Dupuis is an alumnus of the University of Toronto, where he was mentored by David Gilmour, Barbara Gowdy, Jeff Parker, and Michael Redhill. Jeff freelances writing satire, articles, and reviews, and sacrifices fun for fiction. His work has been published in *Valve*, *The Barnstormer*, *The Lapine*, and *Foliate Oak* among others.

David Hostetter

His main literary influences are the authors Walker Percy, Vonnegut, Camus, Nabokov, and Kafka, as well as the poets Sylvia Plath, Milton Acorn and Bei Dao. He generally would not describe his literary style. He has not written enough to have much to say about it, nor does he know what he would say if he had. The silent dialogue of the short piece of his that is in here was collected from results he got from playing the game with other people.

Amy Hsieh

Amy Hsieh will be completing her English Specialist degree this spring. Her work has appeared in *Acta Victoriana*, the *Hart House Review*, and the *University College Review*. Although much of her creative inspiration has stemmed from the rosy glow and inevitable thorns of romantic relationships, she has lately been finding inspiration in other places. She views poetry as an emotional outlet and a source of self-discovery. She writes when her rabbit, Filby, is gracious enough to part with some of her attention.

Yiwei Hu

Yiwei's literary influences are Charles Bukowski, Richard Siken, Anne Carson, Homero Aridjis, Nicole Brossard and describes her literary style as 'derivative'. A book she thinks everyone on Earth should read is *The Little Prince* for its sincerity in an ironic age.

Jozef Kosc

Jozef's literary influences are Henry James, John Henry Newman and F. Scott Fitzgerald. He describes his style as literary realism with a few hints of allegory. Works that have inspired him include *This Side of Paradise* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford, *A Tale of Two Cities* by Charles Dickens and *The Confessions* by Augustine of Hippo. The "rise and fall from Grace" is a theme he often tries to capture in his own work; it is a universal narrative that everyone can tap into, each in his or her own distinct way.

Iris Liu

Iris Liu lives and writes in Toronto.

Madeleine Long

Madeline's literary influences include Lorna Crozier, David Levithan and Hawksley Workman. She describes her literary style as whimsical, irreverent, nostalgic. Literary works which inspired her include *Three Day Road* by Joseph Boyden, *Nikolski* by Nicholas Dickner and *Everything is Illuminated* by Jonathan Safran Foer.

Mary Ma

Mary's literary influences include Sarah Kay, Andrea Gibson, Catherine Black, Eve Ensler, Miles Hodges, Alysia Harris, Mariam Toews, Torquil Campbell, John Wyndham, Frances Hodgson Burnett, Carson McCullers and Alain deBotton. She makes lists and gets feelings when things happen or when nothing happens so she has to stop and write it down. She thinks everyone should read about understanding ourselves and other cultures and way we are different but also the same.

Ariel Martz-Oberlander

Ariel's literary influences are Sylvia Plath, Charles Bukowski and Michael Lista. She writes about moments that she has experienced, because she knows if she has felt something someone else out there has too. If she had to choose one book that everyone on Earth should read it would be *The Unbearable Lightness of Being* by Milan Kundera.

rob mcLennan

rob's literary influences are many. He can trace parts of his writing of the last few years to works by Susan Howe, Sarah Mangold and Sarah Manguso, and an anthology of French writing edited and translated by Norma Cole. Some earlier important writers include George Bowering, Barry McKinnon, Dany Laferriere and John Newlove. Literary works which attempt something different than what expectation presumes inspire him.

Fan Wu

Fan's literary influences are Maurice Blanchot, Joanna Newsom and Dennis Cooper. He describes his style as desirous and delirious. Some works which have inspired him include *Roland Barthes* - Roland Barthes, *Eros the Bittersweet* - Anne Carson, *Labyrinths* - Jorge Luis Borges.

Emily Paskevics

Emily has, most recently, been steeping herself in poetry by Karen Solie, Ted Hughes, Jorie Graham, and Yusef Komunyakaa. Her own poetry is also always informed by fiction: Virginia Woolf, William Faulkner, Annie Dillard, Louise Erdrich and Timothy Findley. She'd like to think of her own style as reflecting the eclectic way that she reads - wide-ranging, hungry, curious, contradictory, open to challenges and influences.

Jeannine Pitas

Jeannine Pitas is a PhD candidate at University of Toronto's Centre for Comparative Literature. She is author of the poetry chapbook "Our Lady of the Snow Angels" (Toronto: Lyricalmyrical Press, 2012) and the English-language translator of acclaimed Uruguayan poet Marosa di Giorgio's "The History of Violets" (Brooklyn: Ugly Duckling Presse, 2010). The writers whose work she has studied closely have inspired her, as have the amazing poets she has encountered in the Canadian literary scene (A.F. Moritz, Goran Simic, Pier Giorgio di Chicco and Ronna Bloom, to name a few!).

Anne Ruchetto

Anne's literary influences are any text that she devours. Her literary style is shifting and To Be Read in the Interrogative by Julio Cortázar has inspired her more than all other poems. She can't say what everyone on Earth should have to read, but you can't go wrong with Brief Candles by Aldous Huxley.

Anna Shortly

Anna's literary influences are William Faulkner, Virginia Woolf, and Jack Kerouac. She describes her own literary style as a fussy word vomit of things she's seen or heard or known or wish she knew. Some of the literary works which inspire her include *The Wild Palms* by William Faulkner, *The Waves* by Virginia Woolf, *Snow Country* by Yasunari Kawabata, *Things I'll Not Do (Nostalgias)* by Allen Ginsberg, *Wild Geese* by Martha Ostenso, *A Complicated Kindness* by Miriam Toews and *Winter's Bone* by Daniel Woodrell.

Megan Stulberg

Megan Stulberg is a 20-year-old artist living in Toronto, Ontario and is currently studying Arts & Contemporary Studies at Ryerson University, class of 2015. She has acted as a lead editor for The Continuumist, a student-based, independent art publication, since 2011. Megan works with a variety of different mediums, specializing in black ink and watercolour.

Lauren Sutherland

Lauren Sutherland is a first-time contributor to Acta Victoriana. She is from Kamloops, British Columbia. Her literary influences are Ted Hughes, Mark Strand, Czeslaw Milosz, and T.S. Eliot (or rather, those are the poets she loves, and if she's ever half-imitated them, that's why). She wants her writing to provide some imagery and have the reader fill in the gaps - she wants the images to be more elusive. She had a big Camus obsession when she learned about existentialism because the idea appealed to her in its austerity.

Stephanie Turenko

Stephanie loves puns - you know the ones that make you sigh, roll your eyes, smile and shake your head? Those are the best! Her dream is to publish a book which combines her two hobbies: poetry and photography.



This Journal was set in Helvetica Neue, a reworking of Helvetica developed by Max Miedinger with Eduard Hoffman in 1957. Changes to this sans-serif font improved legibility and structurally unified heights and widths.