

Albert Moritz	<b>5</b>
Ephraim Dimanche	<b>6</b>
Tara Abrahams	<b>8</b>
Jeannine Pitas	<b>9</b>
Jordan Weir	<b>10</b>
Ariel Martz Oberlander	<b>12</b>
Andrew McEwan	<b>14</b>
Julian Butterfield	<b>18</b>
Mike Cavuto	<b>19</b>
Christopher Greer	<b>20</b>
Sara Peters	<b>22</b>
Clark Thomson	<b>23</b>
Bruce Meyer	<b>24</b>
Jeff Dupuis	<b>26</b>
Yiwei Hu	<b>32</b>
Spencer Gordon	<b>33</b>
Fan Wu	<b>36</b>
rob mclennan	<b>37</b>
Catriona Spaven-Donn	<b>40</b>





## **Editors in Chief**

Adam Zachary  
Miguel Gamboa

## **Design Editor**

Camille Pylypczak

## **Editorial Board**

Taylor Ableman  
Miranda Alksnis  
Grace Bannerman  
Toula Nikas  
Lauren Sutherland  
Ella Wilhelm

Acta Victoriana  
150 Charles St W, rm. 151  
Toronto Ontario M5S1K9

Acta Victoriana, est. 1878, is the  
literary journal of Victoria University  
in the University of Toronto.

We are published with funding from  
the Victoria University Students'  
Administrative Council and printed  
at Coach House Press, Toronto.

Acta Victoriana CXXXVIII II  
will be released in April 2013.  
Submissions may be directed to  
[actavic@yahoo.ca](mailto:actavic@yahoo.ca) until January 31.



In volunteering our service to this journal, we vow to serve its threefold purpose: to further an artistic record of life at Victoria; to provide a first step in paths of future great creators; and to exhibit established writers' work that might inspire colleagues in their formative exploration. This season we have performed these duties to the best of our ability.

Our other great challenge is in bearing the weight of one hundred and thirty eight years of literary heritage. It has been a humbling labor to both honor our past and shape our future with this book. Working toward its production has been the most valuable experience of my university career, and I look forward to repeating it in the spring.

Adam Zachary

Our return to a two-issue volume is a natural progression from our successes in the past few years. This January issue is a testament to the diversity of our publication. We feature local writers; professors; former editors of our journal; Victoria alumni; and current members of the college. Their words in this journal live up to our longstanding literary tradition and we are proud to publish them.

I must express gratitude to our hard-working editorial board, whose efforts have far exceeded my expectations; and to my fellow Victorians, for your continued readership and literary talent. Enjoy. See you in April.

Miguel Gamboa





Mithila Rajavel





## **The Childlike**

Albert Moritz

I did not study hard in any book,  
leaves of living bark or leaves of pulp.  
I'm still the whelp of god, running  
freely by trees and houses like a brook,

the brook within the bark and in the veins  
of the leaves, the brook crushed,  
crucified and buried in your pages.  
Fluid and failed, I play now in my pains.



## Shaped

Ephraim Dimanche

I met Shaped in a breeze. Our scarves, all the branches of trees, were up in the wind. Through the knit and the rustle I made out a face. I smiled, he smiled. We stopped.

— Hi

— Hi

He lived above a store in a basement main-floor studio. Shaped had a mess. There was something everywhere. His stuff was the sink and the sofa. A bed of faded magazines, a coupon lamp. He put gnocchi and walnuts in a pan with no liquid, brought heat direct to the food. When we ate, the burnt pasta and nuts blackened our mouths so when we kissed we smudged, a pen that is sucked on exploding.

My jeans got lost when they got taken off. Thrown with caring uncaring to show everything but my body was a distraction to be flung, cast out, balled and hurled with the energy of a sophomore celebrity. They sunk into Shaped's stuff. I wore a pair of his out.

Shaped came from the middle. I imagined he came out of an impact crater, the last undecayed tip of a meteor which had stuck out of the atmosphere when it first crashed to earth, saying, start over. His only nuisance was his hands, which shook. Pointed face and round cock, thin frame with hair all the way down, perfect. But his hands couldn't hold a thing without changing what that thing was. Still things moved and ladybugs curved unfamiliar lines through his palm.

In the winter we went to a mountain. The lanes winnowing from four to one and then half in gravel. The wild was a less efficient city. The trees didn't house all the creatures they could, and no creature protested when a fly in a web was forgotten by the spider who'd built a second home on silk credit. We camped at the base before the angle. Fucked for the first time in snow. Numb nothing felt. The next day at the summit he didn't stop, just started back down. I looked out on the expanse, an idiot.

There wasn't an occupation for either of us. We worked in restaurants but didn't pretend. Some servers said the good hire came from the most tips or good reviews, working for decent people, free liquor. Shaped made the food on a plate look nice before it was carried from kitchen to table. Lesser cooks would fold vegetables and starches onto oversized plates, then came the meat, cooked the right color inside. Shaped arranged it all; placed garnish, dolloped sauce. One night the figure he'd trace with parsley would be baroque architecture, climbing the height of whipped potatoes in delicate peaks; the next, he'd pour jus for steak and it would splash like a water slide. I was a bartender when money was tight and a dishwasher when we could afford it. I didn't like giving people drinks. I liked wrinkled fingers. At home, Shaped held them and shook their smoothness back.

Age crept our way. We stood still, dancing with routine and function. Rent went up, friends were lost and renewed. I bought him a coat. He screwed around and then stopped when his hair thinned. He wasn't a space rock anymore. I gave up thinking that he had ever been anything more than inert. I grew around his listlessness. Ate Chinese food out of Greek take out boxes to supplement the little left over rice. Music no longer was how we showed each other how we saw the world; we settled on seeing the world vaguely, together, watching series on television. Adjusting our excitement from the thrill of a weirdly placed minor chord to a favorite character getting stabbed in the back. It was so much harder this way.

I was going to go back to school, get more smarts to make more meaning, but then sickness came; a cheaper means for meaning, still welcome. His cancer or mine. Too many cigarettes, wifi waves, and water bottles for too many years. In his hospital bed, in mine, we could give everything the curve of life. This jello was that wiggle, he was the space rock again and I asked him to take off his shirt to trace that line of hair, remembering when there hadn't been a belly but loving the fat. Then I hated him.



## Gabriel

Tara Abrahams

listen to cicada-song recordings –  
somewhere, an angel, reclining,  
in heavenly heat, pining,  
is masturbating softly to this sound.

here, me, on the ground, hearing  
the ephemeral groans of a god  
fucking starself to the tune  
of something that lives

for only two weeks.  
it is 2am, and in the dim  
dusk light of dawn,  
the cicadas hum.

cassette spins, windowsill-bound,  
clicking like teeth, catching  
sound between invisible fingers.  
somewhere, I think,

you are masturbating softly  
to the last voicemail I left you,  
voice shakily saying,  
I'll pray for me too.





## Transatlantic

Jeannine Pitas

Running away  
to where the seasons  
are backwards

I fly from full-leafed oaks  
to bare branches in a day

I reach  
for a kerosene stove in July  
put on my scarf and camel-haired coat  
and walk the abandoned  
winter beaches

the ship  
forced out of the bottle  
sails to the ends  
of the earth to escape

but the entire Atlantic  
pours itself back  
into that tiny glass  
where I see you,  
summer reflected

your hands  
tremble as you pick raspberries  
from your mother's garden

your head aches  
as you walk along the River Cam  
and wonder where  
your ideas have gone

both our brains, it seems  
turn back to water  
neither of us dares  
to ask why

the Atlantic fits in a bottle  
and we spill  
its blue, blue waves

over the stone  
cold floor



## Cottagers

Jordan Weir

She was my only friend in high school. She lived far away so every time we met it was something important. We knew that when we saw each other it would be a new memory, a blip in the flatline of our dead school days. We drew closer to each other as we drew away from those around us. We walked through halls in disbelief. Our lives were elsewhere; in our heads. All the other eyes grew black, fading into nothing. The only reason I got by – four years of getting by – was because of the times where I could retreat into safe company. Once a month (maybe less) I saw someone that I knew, and who knew me.

It was best in the summers, or stray weekends, when we went up north. I liked spending time with her family. They were old earthen souls who smoked pot and had stories. They all smelled of leaves and organic soap. They were soft spoken and it calmed me down. Everything they said was important, in the same way as a red wheelbarrow. I liked hearing her brothers sing and strum Neil Young songs by the fire. It's still one of the few things that can get me silent. The fire is important in keeping people together. It's where you talk about the things that let people in. The fire was their center.

I can't describe the freshness they had about them. Eyes that sparkled like the big northern stars, strong farmer's hands, flannel and pine and sawdust. Nothing about them was angry. They had been through many hells and still they smiled. They were always grateful. Some families have a sticky haze about them from all the badness they've held onto for years. Even little things – a root canal, a time when a voice was raised, insurance payments – make people sticky. But they were fresh and smooth as if nothing could touch them. Everything in their lives came through their eyes in twinkling fragments. They made me feel I was a part of them. I made home in their blue and red cottage that sat in the forest, peering through lanky birches to still waters. We would play board games in the dining room by candlelight and eat candy from brown paper bags. We talked deep into the



night as we lay on the roof with blankets. We remembered our childhoods. I would describe what life had been like for me, and she'd describe what it had been like for her. I would talk for a long time. It always seemed I'd never be able to tell it all, all that she had to know. A soft and easy silence would fall over us and eventually we'd sleep, breathing in the smells of grass and wood smoke and green tea.

One summer she was away and I didn't visit the cottage. I said I will go up next year, and the next, but something always came up. After a while there too many next years passed by and I never went back.

I still see her sometimes. I visit her at the farm she owns. She is excited about her new polytunnel. She cherishes the peas most of all. I ask her about the cottage and she says it's all the same. She didn't have to tell me. It was always there and I knew it always would be, just like the people who lived in it; welcoming and colourful, standing in humble presence among the trees, weathered but fresh, resilient. It can never be touched. How could it be? There are too many lives held within the log walls.





## OK

Ariel Martz-Oberlander

I have grown tired of myself, and noticed  
how in photos I no longer smile  
but hold my face with every muscle.  
all my atoms replaced by train tracks  
and the approach of a faraway train that never reaches me.

I thought I was ok but  
then I started walking around cracks in pavement.  
I can see signs of myself  
in slices –  
my hair no longer curls,  
bugs have come and bitten my skin  
on the left side of my body  
where my heart has lowered its force field.

I thought I was graceful.

Oh god I thought my fingers were long and thin.



My mother gave me a trust fund of letters,  
double barreled last name like a  
smoking feminist gun.

everything is cluttered inside my head  
and now like the letters  
I am a hoarder of thoughts.

having these things I am fat  
with thoughts.  
I am thinking of using the gun.  
I don't know what to do  
with a gun of letters.



## ***selections from Of Matter Diverse and Confused***

Andrew McEwan

Vain Cures. *Subsect. 2.*

Balance passions and answers. For a body is like a clock,  
if one wheel is amiss, all the rest are disordered. The whole  
fabric suffers.

Express doubt that politicians speak pure forms. Now only  
signifies those born to misaffected parents. Points to effects  
of imagination, and other maladies.

Awareness of a system acting upon the body, weighing  
it down. On the other hand, an image to become acquainted with  
as *firm ground*.

Bodily materials are either simple or mixed, vary according  
to place. I'm devoted to a small room, and a closed curtain.  
Adjust an eyewitness.

He is happy that he can perform properly. Vain cures, no purpose.  
Cause for punishment. Extricate from a labyrinth of doubts  
and errors.

Victory was uncertain, acknowledging all our offenses. The conceit  
alone troubles the craft of solitary living. We may never be  
relieved of our diseases.





Cannot Face. *Subsect. 3.*

Affected atmospheres fog mirrored limbs. Movements figured as *dawning* disallow rhetorical questions held as belief. Likewise unapt objects.

I am no longer happy, but outside. Ascribe famous transformations to the imagination: absurd, false, and violent. Public good privileges the rest.

In this catalogue, you, my inseparable companion, epitome, symptom, and chief cause. Tired with waking, and now slumbering to continual task.

When she walked through the aisles she noticed herself in the convex security mirror, distorted. Poets and papists may go together for fabulous tales. Let them be deluded.

The fault of the form, a whole temperature. The body reckons these signs. As hounds run away to a false train, never perceiving themselves to be at fault.

People who speak strange languages likely fear death. They that are all glass suffer no companionship. Infinite dangers trouble business beforehand.

Afraid to speak aloud in question. Not capable, docile. The fear of being hanged. Sound in an instant. Hypochondriacs reclaim themselves in sickness.



Personal Account. *Subsect. 4.*

That makes me very relieved. I used to blame myself for being lazy. The event of being reasserts itself in the question. Saying the same for years.

I went with what they said because it sounded universal. Of animal spirits following predictable motions. Parties remote move our limbs from their place.

Unprepared for. Fantasies coerce the patients to walk on planks set high, and from such height as to describe the ground below, the wind against a body.

Put effort into feeling like yourself. Stare at the wall and bad thoughts. Dwell between confines of sense and reason. Love melancholy, the first. Built calamities.

We have nothing to talk about. You require a particular treatment for your needs. Just below the surface. Now explain this vacancy to your pharmacist.



Immedicable Minds. *Subsect. 7.*

Amazed and ashamed, I'm almost afraid to relate. Feeding  
hungry eyes on that spectacle. Such feats are often done  
to frighten children.

All succeeding ages will subscribe. Notwithstanding they know  
such miseries. They suffer themselves. Hunger is not ambitious.  
Wasted with heaviness.

The latest scandal came closest to the truth. The counterfeit  
voices of all birds. Words and sentences repeated as prophesy  
though the brain alone is troubled.

A non-response spoken aloud by the narrator. As an oar  
in water refracted seems bigger, bended double. He saw  
two suns.

I may wish, but not enjoy. To answer your question: you are bored  
and boredom can lead to depression. The brittle world floating on  
the sea.

The survivor of ellipsis apes peculiar symptoms. An inventor  
or an artist rather than an embroiderer. Fabric wrapped tight  
against limbs to restrict gestures.





## **swimmer**

Julian Butterfield

am here whenever you

and your eyes

like a shoal of fish

turn on me



## **Gone to Tofino; or, Revelations of Divine Love**

Michael Cavuto

over the bridge  
to Tofino littered with  
the less fortunate  
and you envious  
of all they know that  
we never will:

gone, gone  
Julian, to the woods  
and sea where  
you live off the  
bourgeoisie

an ascetic prince  
a recovering junky  
fled from your bed in  
the ruffles of my beard

the only monk of indulgence  
you danced a waltz  
with God  
too true to his faults  
which you whispered  
to me in a lullaby

and now, alone  
among your three mistresses  
secret sibyls even  
to you, over  
whose peaks the sun  
breaks like the crest  
of your red toque

solely your voice  
slipping into silence



## Run

Christopher Greer

"It's all right with me if we don't, you know," said Wayne, picking up a ball of lint from the sheets and rolling it between his fingers.

"I know, but I don't think it's such a bad thing. We could not do it, if we wanted; it's just, right now, I really need it."

"Yeah?"

"Yeah, I do," said Annie, leaning only slightly toward the window by the bed and exhaling smoke through the screen.

"I'm not even sure I could," said Wayne, noticing Annie watching him rolling the ball of lint and flicking it to the floor. "I've had a hard day with the car breaking down and all. David was out of town with his tow truck – someplace up the highway. I didn't feel like waiting, so I walked home. I must have walked three miles. I'm just so exhausted from it all."

"I'll make it easy for you," said Annie, tapping her cigarette on the edge of an old Altoids tin on the windowsill, watching the orange in the ashes pulse with the wind from outside. "What were you doing in the hills anyways?"

"I didn't go to work today. I hadn't been up there in a while and I wasn't working so I went for a drive."

"Seems an odd thing for you to do."

"I don't know."

That morning as he was driving, Wayne hit a deer. Annie didn't know. He knew that if he told her about it she would make him feel guilty. She grew up on a farm and thought of herself as having some sort of affinity with nature. It wasn't his fault anyways. The deer had come from nowhere, leaping over a wire fence bordering the trees on his right. There had not been enough time for him to even turn the wheel.

"Come on," Annie said, extinguishing her cigarette in the Altoids tin and extending her hand toward Wayne. "It won't take long."





“I don’t know,” he said, looking over her shoulder to the hills at the edge of the valley.

“Don’t make me beg, Wayne. I’m your wife, for God’s sake.”

He turned away and got up off the bed, putting a record on and making to leave the bedroom. “Listen to the music for a minute,” he said. “I’ll be right back.”

Wayne walked down the dark hallway to the kitchen, rummaging through a drawer for his brandy and cursing quietly under his breath, trying, but failing, to stop the bottles from touching for fear that Annie would hear the sound.

After he hit the deer, Wayne got out of the car to find that it was still breathing and three of its legs were broken. Panicking, he took off his shirt. He tied it around a thigh of the deer while making soft, comforting sounds. As he tied the knot the deer stared past him, its mouth foaming and breath shuddering in time with the engine of his still-running car.

Once he had the shirt around the thigh he began to drag the deer (which tried, only for a second, to fight) to the ditch, depositing it there in the pussy willows before walking back to his car and driving home.

In the kitchen Wayne drank brandy from a glass and remembered the way the fur of the deer had clung to the grill of his car as he sprayed it with the garden hose.

“Wayne,” called Annie tentatively from the bedroom, which was full of violin sounds, “Are you coming?”

“In a minute,” he replied, finishing his brandy and grabbing the big knife from the cutlery drawer.

“Wayne?” Annie called again. This time he did not answer, putting on his jacket instead and, with the knife in his pocket, walking to the car.



## Squeeze

Sara Peters

I need to tell you a story but I can't quite yet because first I need to tell you about my Aunt Maureen, my scribble-nosed aunt, and how last weekend she told Mum I was queer and how Mum's jaw went so clenched and her face went screwy and she told her in a marmalade voice get out Maureen get out you are not welcome here again, but Maureen cackle-laughed and said Mum was queer too and it must run in the family and before she got in the car she huffpuffed to Mum which they thought I didn't hear, only I have a musicians ear, and Aunt Maureen said Mum should have me checked out, which made me think of grocery stores, but it made Mum think of something foul because Mum almost exploded into a thousand tiny pieces like confetti or shredded cheese and she clomplomplomplomplomped right into her room and I felt a tug, like a dental floss tug, like I should go right on in and say hello it's me I'm okay no checking needed not here no Mum just laugh it off just laugh, will ya Mum, but my feet couldn't move anywhere near that door, that room, that Mum, so I crawled inside my box and palmed the avocado pit Mum gave me last spring and kissed it four times (four is a lucky number) and squeezed it white knuckle tight, and there was me and the pit, me and the pit, and I hummed and squeezed and hummed and squeezed and somewhere between the humming and the squeezing, somewhere in there, I fell asleep. I thought that was the end of that, but here I am in the waiting room.



## **Translucent, after A. Van Jordan's 'Afterglow'**

Clark Thomson

trans·lu·cent adj. 1. The clarity esp. in the eastern sky before sunrise: as in the look of pale sun shot through the translucent, early morning atmosphere. 2. The lack of individual color or the borrowing of another's, as of sweet fried onions or derivative thought, and sometimes regarded as a type of mental simplicity: These forgotten, these passed over thoughts / These pages left battered and scorned, / These edges turned up and bent like questioning, accusing fingers, / These moments, these daunting seconds, / These weary words, / These secondhand images, / These stolen circumstances, / These old words, these borrowed phrases / Used to force thoughts not mine, / used to paint and, with his colors, illustrate / And now I, hushed, / begin / With the giving of words not mine to give.



## Seven Magpies

Bruce Meyer

When I lived in England  
and my train stopped at country stations  
there was always the feeling  
that someone beneath a farm field  
was staring back at me –

someone buried and forgotten,  
a village no longer extant,  
house and church and graveyard  
cobbler and carter, their wives and children  
and children's children  
all memory palimpsest  
as apples fallen where the tree stood

and if I disembarked and walked out  
in Wellies through the brown-black earth  
I might be sucked under by history.





I don't get that feeling when a train  
stops at a rural platform here  
surrounded by the pungent smell  
of green onions pickled and ploughed under  
with the aroma of work and sweat still vital  
after a season in the Ontario sun;

that if I put my ear to the ground  
no one is calling out in agony  
as their flesh falls beneath the plague  
and the autumn wind consumes them  
with hunger and hoarfrost and namelessness

for among the deep tangle of weed roots  
and the worm eager to please as best he can  
all I hear is the silence of former trees  
gently giving up their leaves to autumn light  
and waiting for someone to remember they were here.



## Browndawg

Jeff Dupuis

Joanie and I were going through what you might call a rough patch after the procedure, which turned out to be the calm before a severe shit-storm. ‘My body, my call’ had been her mantra. Very unilateral, how completely American of her. We strung together awkward silences for about a week and a half, then she went down to Kansas City, the one in Missouri, not Kansas, for a bachelorette party for a girlfriend from high school. I was happy to have some time alone to gather my thoughts.

Browndawg lived above a pool hall in a smoky apartment where the shades were always down and the living room was always lit blue by the glow of the TV screen. Brown had been diagnosed with schizophrenia and was given a cheque by the government once a month. It wasn’t enough to really live off but it paid his rent, bought him cigarettes, and would feed him if he only ate two cans of tuna a day. He sold drugs to supplement his mental health benefit, and I scored weed off him twice a month. He also pedaled magic mushrooms, and sometimes got his hands on LSD or ecstasy.

He opened the door wide and stepped back and I saw a dog standing in the middle of the living room. The white fur around its mouth and on its skinny legs made it look like a ghost in the dark apartment. I stood still and let the dog have a good look at me. It growled a while without showing teeth, then came closer. In the light coming through the open door it looked like a coyote. It cocked its head up toward my face but didn’t look directly in my eyes, just in their direction. The silvery clouds in otherwise dark eyes told me the dog was mostly blind. It took another step forward, sniffing my hands, then burying its dry desert-cracked nose into the crotch of my jeans, leaving it there and taking deep breaths.

“He likes your balls best,” Browndawg said.

“Whose fucking dog is this?”

“It’s my fucking dog.”

“Bullshit. This dog’s gonna keel over any second now. He looks like he’s pushing thirty, that’s like two hundred in dog years.”



“He better not fucking keel over, he’s my grandma’s dog. She can’t take care of him no more.”

Browndawg never seemed sick to me, I mean like, mentally ill. He could be abrasive, he was a bit of a dick, sure, but he never seemed like he had real issues. That said, I don’t know why no one else in the family could take the dog and they left him in the care of a schizophrenic drug dealer. Maybe the dog was good for Brown, giving him some responsibility and shit. He was a friendly dog. Once I got settled into one of the two deep craters on Brown’s couch, the dog rested his head on my leg; eyes scanning around my face, circling like flies, never really landing on it.

“You like dogs?”

“Love them,” I said, patting the grey-brown fur of the dog’s head.

“Would you like to take him home?”

“Uh, I’d love to, Browner, but – Joanie’s allergic, and – ”

“Just kidding, dickhead, I’m not giving him up. He’s my guard dog, my protection. Can’t be too careful in this business.”

Browndawg sold small quantities of drugs, pot mostly, to buddies he went to high school with, or guys he met when he was a dishwasher at the Shamrock Burger. His life was not like *Breaking Bad* or *The Wire*, which was good because that dog couldn’t protect him from shit.

“What time is it?” Brown asked.

“Five o’ clock.”

“Dinner time.”

I could see Brown in the kitchen, opening a can of dog food and spooning it out into a plastic dish. He rinsed the spoon under the tap for a few seconds then opened the fridge, unscrewed the lid off a jar of Cheez Whiz, then spooned some of it onto the dog food.

“I’m not supposed to feed him anything other than his canned food, but he deserves a treat, you know? And the Cheez Whiz adds – ”

“Personality?”



He didn't seem to get the joke. By then the dog, hearing the sound of the can opener and following the scent of the dog food, was in the kitchen, standing on the curling vinyl flooring, looking up at Brown. He wheezed a little. There were bald patches on his tail that looked like a rat's.

"You good, buddy?" Browner said.

"Yeah, I'm fine."

"I'm not talking to you," he said.

There were car horns and shouting on the street outside. Then it was quiet, save for the sounds of 'Buddy,' licking his bowl across the tile floor. The dog moved his dish as far across the kitchen as it would go, pinning it in the corner between the wall and the oven. He then descended onto the bowl, his front limbs bending around it, burying his face in the dish. Browner came out of the kitchen and handed me my usual baggie of weed and I pulled out my wallet and peeled out the usual wad of bills.

"What's the 'shrooms situation like these days?" I asked.

"Stellar," he said.

"Can I grab twenty bucks' worth off you?"

He walked down a narrow hallway, past the bathroom on the left, to the door at the end leading to his bedroom. He closed the door and I could hear drawers opening. Looking around the room I was in, I was struck by his TV, which was pretty damn huge. It was a big screen TV, but it wasn't LCD or plasma, it was one of the old ones that were almost as deep as they were wide, a cathode tube inside as long as my arm. On the TV stand, beneath the behemoth itself, was a collection of video game consoles, none more recent than the Playstation 2. The red light of the Nintendo 64 was on, and a cartridge for the game Goldeneye stuck out of the machine.

Buddy struggled back up to his feet. The yellowish light of the kitchen was on and it reflected off a puddle that had formed around the dog's ass as it had laid down to eat. I leaned pretty far forward to pull myself out of the sunken couch and stepped into the kitchen. Kneeling down toward the puddle, I took a few short breaths. It didn't smell like piss, or anything for that matter. Buddy turned and looked toward me. He didn't have the guilty look dogs get when they've pissed in the house, where they hang their head low or try wagging their tails in an attempt to calm you with cuteness. His expression seemed like one of curiosity, like I was the one with the problem. On the counter was a cardboard box filled with syringes and a vial of a cloudy liquid. There was a roll of paper towels on top of the fridge. I plucked several sheets and began to wipe up the mess. Buddy just stood there, looking at me, wagging his tail tentatively.

"It's okay, Buddy, it's cool," I said. The bunched up paper towel in my hand turned yellow as it absorbed Buddy's ass liquid.



“What the fuck are you doing?” Browndawg asked me, standing in the doorway to the kitchen.

“There was some kind of puddle here, I was just wiping it up.”

“Don’t,” he said, stepping past me and opening the cupboard beneath the sink, gesturing for me to throw the paper towel in the garbage.

“The cleaning lady takes care of that.”

“You don’t really have a cleaning lady?”

“Here.”

He handed me one of the larger Ziploc bags that you can put an entire turkey leg in after Thanksgiving. It was mostly empty but for a line of pale dust and some mushroom caps along the bottom. I was afraid he’d only have stems, the dregs of the mushroom. You can’t be sure what you’re getting from a guy like Brown if you don’t ask in advance. Once I bought LSD from him that he found in a G.I. Joe lunch tin that he had since he was a kid. I took three tabs of it, sat down to watch *A Clockwork Orange*, and the only thing that happened was I saw a bolt of electricity run horizontally, from right to left, like blue, glowing Arabic, directly in front of my eyes.

There are many ways to enjoy eating mushrooms. On their own they taste shitty, although I know a guy who thinks that you cheapen the experience eating them any other way. I’ve had them mixed into chocolate, on pizza, ground up and mixed with orange juice. That night getting off the subway on the way home from Brown’s, I stopped by the Valu-Mart and bought a bag of organic blue corn tortillas and some mild salsa. Grinding up the shrooms into a bowl, I poured the salsa over top and used a nacho chip to stir it up. Sitting with the bowl in my lap and the bag of chips beside me, I pressed play on my DVD player, where disc one of the Immortal Edition of *Highlander* was already resting in the tray.

I realized it was Friday, which was when the fat lady who lived above me tended to call over male escorts, drink several bottles of wine which I’d later find in the recycling bin, and have loud thumping sex that would spill through the vents. I heard her come home, then a man came in ten minutes later, introducing himself to her. That was just about the point in the movie where Sean Connery gets his head cut off, so I decided to take a walk.

Joanie called the morning after the bachelorette party. She had decided she was going to stay in Kansas City a few days more and see her folks. She sounded happy. She told me she loved me, and I told her to take all the time she needed that I was waiting for her and I loved her. She didn’t call for another four days.

Browndawg called, however, three days after I'd bought my usual amount of weed and my special order of magic mushrooms. When I saw his name on the caller ID I thought it was a mistake, like he was looking for the name either before or after mine on his contact list. He didn't usually call me, we didn't really socialize anymore. His voice was shaky, like he had taken too much ephedrine.

"Dude, it's my fucking dog," he said.

"Don't you mean your grandma's dog?"

"Fuck you, Buddy's my dog."

"Okay, what about him?"

"He's gotta be put down."

"That sucks, bro. I'm sorry to hear that."

In the silence that followed, I walked over to my fridge and searched for anything that I could just pull out and eat. I had no idea why Browner was calling me. There was a stale croissant in a plastic bag at the back of the fridge, top shelf, which I took out and started to eat.

"Buddy's gotta be put down, man."

"That sucks, bro," I repeated.

"I don't know if I can do that, man, I've never lost anyone before."

"When do you have to take him in?" I asked.

"Tomorrow, two o'clock."

"Want me to come with you?"

"Fuck, man. No. No way."

Browndawg's older sister drove us to the veterinary clinic. Buddy was blissfully unaware of his destination, or his fate, until Browndawg broke down crying in the back seat and the dog sniffed and his face and licked the tears off his cheeks. Erin waited in the car while Brown and I went in. Buddy stopped in the doorway. His tail stiffened and he raised his head, sniffing intently. The walls of the waiting room were pastel blue. They had ads for heartworm medication and a poster with a map of the world that showed where all the different dog breeds came from.

Browndawg is the skinniest guy I know. Shirtless, he looks like the Jewish prisoners you see in black and white photos from Buchenwald or Dachau. I didn't even wait to see if he'd try to lift Buddy onto the cold stainless steel table in the back room, just scooped Buddy up in my arms and laid him down on his side. He struggled to get to his feet, his long ragged claws scratched on the metal surface. Browndawg patted his head and told him to lay down. The vet, a young woman with short brown hair and glasses, injected him with a syringe two-thirds full of a liquid the colour of olive oil. Both Browndawg and I stroked his fur lengthwise as Buddy's breathing slowed, his eyelids grew heavier and heavier.

“I’ll give you guys a minute,” the vet said.

There had been a moment when the vet came over with the needle in her hand when I thought Browndawg might wrestle it from her. He stared down at the needle without blinking and clouds of red came over his cheeks. I’d like to think Buddy knew it was coming. He had diabetes, that’s why he was blind, why he leaked fluid out of his ass, and why he needed injections every day. Maybe dogs know when their time is up, like they know when an earthquake is about to happen or their owner is about to come home.

“It’s like Jesus just finds your weak spot and squeezes, man,” Browndawg said.

“Let’s go smoke a joint,” I offered.

“You’re a pretty fucking sick fuck,” he said. “You couldn’t have dragged me down here, if Buddy wasn’t my dog. You, you volunteered.”

We waited for the vet to bring the ashes, but it turned out we’d have to come back the next day to pick them up. The lady vet insisted she had told Browndawg that, but he just shook his head.

Erin looked like she’d been crying when we got back in the car. A rock station was playing and the set list seemed to consist of the same songs they played when I used to listen to that station back in high school. Browndawg sat in the passenger’s seat, staring forward through the windshield, at the big storefront window of the vet’s office.

“I’m sorry I couldn’t go in with you, Pete,” Erin said to her brother.

“Let’s stop by Convenience Plus,” Browndawg said. “I need cigarettes.”



## **parse this: HELLOVER**

Yiwei Hu

hello lover  
hello / over  
he'll love her  
over &  
over  
hello O my  
hello love

hell lover  
hell it's over  
hello other lover  
over / to you





## TekSavvy

Spencer Gordon

I am convinced I must be  
come a terrorist if these  
just make sense.

I sat & listened to 40 minutes of radio pop & white noise trying

All I want is the Internet to move w/ me wherever I go

scheduling my Tweets at optimal intervals for maximal exposure  
in public.

I learned nothing but was convinced  
of radicalizing the xperience to make sense if anything  
is to make sense  
into the

apocalifornicating 2020s. & I was reminded every 22 seconds

“I could do this myself online,”  
but one voice, just one, could  
make it done for me so I wouldn’t have to  
Surrounded by agreements & contracts  
Have you read the Terms & Conditions?  
Convinced now by making myself flammable

to reach you inside the public. Let’s just go.

Sunday, October 13th is the Marineland protest bussing  
in from Toronto to Niagara Falls but nothing here, just a monitor.

I am convinced now of utility & terrified of  
my uselessness. All I possibly could say ☹  
I'm serious there's everything to be done about the state

the most complex entrenched totalizing

value. There is a baton in your hand leading to jail & ostracism for what  
your own cool sanity? or emancipation?

I sat for 40 minutes holding the cellphone away from my head like a  
criminal insane person who believes microwaves are actually murderers  
because I couldn't

endure one-ear-full of Walk Off the Earth & .fun & Paramore though  
two-ears-full would be okay we do it everyday & if you don't I feel you're  
better than  
me.

What can I possibly do to smash or break or help the hungry assholes

Unblock, Unfollow, Undo, Unlike, Unblock, Unsend, Unsent

every other line saying I had all the power in me myself  
I could do it all if I were to go online

I'd fucking miss the Internet though!  
I want to undo the last decade in a woops click & meet again  
w/ divine foreknowledge of our weakness & compromise  
& actually become terrorists & spread terror

log-in to continue this I

\*

do we gather ourselves together. What other goods  
could we each be doing right now instead of  
this? A series of questions interrogating your economics.



## fragmens I

Fan Wu

*a.*

we beg in an absence: when the mother's *slip* and the father's *shed* shiver a you as a dying blade of grass, wind-tossed when-tossed—the I, turned sideward, becomes Wittgenstein's ladder, ascension demanding that each step forgives the motion of ascension—as absence returns to nonsense you starve on the rooftop—what was never there realizes itself as what never has been there (warm belly churning itself away). You love a boy, or likelier you love your love for a boy, or likeliest still you have trained yourself to turn hatred to love, rain to soup, the thing to its imperfect opposite.

*b.*

the boy's a void:  
he cannot be  
but missed—

*c.*

from what is devoid the void gives form and figure—the boy, a god, ladles law to the bawdy raw of you *ladder-rider soup-supper pariah perched atop propriety*—love is an engraving, a passage wherein thought puts a hand over its own mouth and draws no silent speech, no wording whisper—only a lowing drawl into death. The boy you love thus is touched





## A manifesto on the poetics of C.

rob mclennan

1.

lived, a day

wrapped in absence of air,  
we stopped to offer, twigs

and light,  
wet pools of paper,

soft vehicles of travel,

some say the tributaries reach,  
reach up,

a taste for mindfulness  
and edge,

2.

what any bird  
would trust,

a shining resource

some things are brutal,  
incomplete,

are hard to speaking,  
speak,

length,  
a force of nature,

3.

an orchid bears one flower,  
bears,

an earthly house,

words: a hard taste,  
tempted,

mind the dedication,

slipped, a slip in,  
hidden,

5.

layering, a tendril  
, tidepool

deepest blue,

4.

the pace of silence,  
slowed to crawl,

could singe  
and shrivel,

a portrait made  
is not what's kept

parted, drawn

a laundry, white room  
, curly hair

brush: relentless

, counting strokes

6.

a bell, rings

long, and  
often questioned,

in full view,

your technicalities  
wrote out sentences,

corrected buttonholes,

the leathery strap,

a carcass heavy  
as a book,

7.

twinned, partitioned,  
morning-wide,

relatively small,  
and singled,

Pims, held point,

cotton shirts,  
and finished,  
estimations flutter,

natural,  
a paper cup,

8.

, the city well  
has run dry,

sparked  
from metaphor,

portrait of  
your dinner,

flared, a tempo,

not a statement,  
definition,

9.

past lives  
so frequently recalled,

present a field,

proposal of  
cupcakes,

curiously dismissed,

the sake of argument,

like one  
silk stocking,

, present

10.

who are you  
, really

littered resemblance,  
an emblem of

your swooning door,  
another birthday,

emotional worlds,  
the trickery of logic,

let who you are  
, come



## **Can You**

Catriona Spaven-Donn

Can you pull the syllables  
out of my mouth?  
Rounded, elongated;  
can you make me speak  
in sighs?  
With your hands,  
you draw sounds  
from my body.  
With your tongue,  
you block them.

Photograph by Catriona Spaven-Donn









**Tara Abrahams** is a Victoria student and an editor of Cacti Magazine. She tries to ignore the noxious nature of existence, and most effectively does this by writing about the noxious nature of existence.

**Julian Butterfield** is a Trinity student, an editor of the Trinity University Review, and a poet from Vancouver Island.

**Michael Cavuto** is a Trinity student, an editor of the Trinity University Review, and a poet from Philadelphia; 'Headquarters of the Devil' as Sun Ra once called it.

**Jeff Dupuis** is an alumnus of Victoria, where he was mentored by David Gilmour, Barbara Gowdy, and others. He freelances writing satire, articles, and reviews. His fiction has appeared in Valve and The Barnstormer.

**Spencer Gordon** is co-editor of the online literary journal The Puritan and of the micro-press Ferno House. He is the author of Cosmo (Coach House, 2012) and two poetry chapbooks, one of which was shortlisted for the 2012 bpNichol Chapbook Award.

**Christopher Greer** is a Trinity student of English literature. He works as a journalist for the University of Toronto Sustainability Office.

**Yiwei Hu** is a medical student at McMaster University. She is a 2013 recipient of an OAC Theatre Creators' Reserve. Her poetry has appeared in ARC, Branch, and TOK4.

**Andrew McEwan** is a Victoria alumnus and a former Acta Victoriana editor (vol.134). He is now a graduate student of literature at UBC and has published three chapbooks, including Input / Output (Cactus Press, 2010) and Repeater (BookThug, 2012).

**rob mclennan** runs above/ground press and Chaudiere Books, among others. He has written more than twenty books; received the John Newlove Poetry Award in 2010; and was long listed for the CBC Poetry Prize in 2012. He lives and writes in Ottawa.



**Bruce Meyer** is a Victoria alumnus and a former *Acta Victoriana* editor (vol.100). He is the inaugural Poet Laureate of Barrie, Ontario and has published 35 books, mostly of poetry.

**Ariel Martz-Oberlander** is a Victoria student of drama and literature. Her main sources of happiness are food and large bodies of water.

**Albert Moritz** has been recognized for his poetic talent with honours including a Guggenheim Fellowship, the 2009 Griffin Prize, and selection to the Princeton Series of Contemporary Poets. Born in rural Ohio, he now lives in Toronto and teaches literature and writing at Victoria.

**Sara Peters** is an student at University of Toronto Mississauga. Her work has appeared on the Life Rattle Radio Show and in the Totally Unknown Writers Festival anthology.

**Jeannine Pitas** is a Ph.D. candidate at the University of Toronto Centre for Comparative Literature, where she researches Latin American poetry. She is author of *Our Lady of the Snow Angels* (Lyricalmyrical, 2012).

**Catriona Spaven-Donn** is a Victoria student. Having moved from Scotland to Canada to Spain and back to Canada for her studies, she hopes to have many more opportunities for travel and the inspiration it brings.

**Clark Thomson** is a Victoria student from the east coast of the United States, a stone's throw from the sea. A quintessential jack of all trades, she works with poetry, prose, music, art, and photography.

**Jordan Weir** is a Victoria student from suburban Ontario. She receives her greatest illuminations while working as a grocery cashier.

**Fan Wu** is a Trinity student of comparative literature. He believes twice: in friendship as spirituality; in the demise of systemic thought.

Acta Victoriana, volume 138, issue 1.

This edition consists of 750 numbered copies printed at Coach House Press in January 2013. It was designed by Camille Pylypczak and published with funding from the Victoria University Students' Administrative Council.

Type is set in Benton Sans and Caslon 540.

 of 750

