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Temperature in Toronto at time of writing: -13 ° C; in Antarctica: 17 ° C.

Winter in Toronto almost invariably bears the epithet 'brutal'. By it, we are shorn; our flesh is borne, stripped of the erotics of derobing, in the manner of one whose sheer garment has been torn. In this nudity which is shown through swollen swaddling, we sheathe ourselves in word. Desolate, without solace, sans soleil, the branches of the trees relieved of their leaves are not left like lowing souls glowing in their unleashed flesh, but bespeak braying soil burying wailing wood and devouring vain veils' veins. Of our winter, we say we survived. When we let fall the words with which we warm and cover ourselves it is with ambivalence – are we sowing for reaping, or inhuming what we have already reaped? As much as the 'death of nature' is expounded upon with a feigned radicality, we get the feeling that, if recourse to something natural or right is no longer justifiable, there is at least something unjust at work in such unprecedented extremes – whether it be between polar opposites of weather, or of wages, for which our graduate students recently ended their strike of close to a month.

Officially, this is the Spring issue of our journal. One will not fail to notice, however, the unforgeable signature of hospitality's recession in the works which follow. If this be a field sown, may the shoots soon spring; if a graveyard, with enough hope, soon, a corpus resurrected.

This year we held the first ever Victoria College Poetry Competition; our hope was, Victoria being the de facto literary college of U. of T., to showcase the best of Victoria, hence the best of U. of T., hence some of the best rising poets in Canada. The journal opens with our top three picks.

In Fealty to Flower, Fruit, and Fairness,

Taylor Ableman & Miranda Alksnis



"Ice Storm" by Martina Bellisario



FIRST-PLACE WINNER of the
VICTORIA COLLEGE POETRY CONTEST

Assumed Dead in Atibiti

Dominique Béchard

We searched for you all night. Our flashlights
were the nicotine fingers that prodded
the paunch of the timberland, its surprise
of waterholes and haphazard open spaces.

This time last week, the outline of your body
slid along a cadmium dawn, the crux of perception
coupling the Heavens and Harricana. It is absurd
to assume we are fastened here.

We delved through the armoires of Amos,
rifled through drawers in Val D'Or, for a soupçon
of you. Dug up antecedents, everything
that precedes and presupposes you.

We imagined every mangled hunk of driftwood
by the river was you. Inhaled a tight arctic heart, hoarded
the boughs for our own unassailable nests,
extensive and easy to pinpoint in the tousled spew of trees.

We fancied every discarded cigarette stub
was once chiseled by your lips, became
your tombstone, as you flicked it leeward. In this
northern squall, you could be anywhere by now.



SECOND-PLACE WINNER of the
VICTORIA COLLEGE POETRY CONTEST

Skinless (or, Tzumtzim)

Michelle Speyer

Slip my skin off and run
your hands along my unbroken bones,
profane cartilage, the buoyant vessels of my blood;

I want to know the ambrosial pressure
of how your palm would stake my windpipe,
cup my voice box, stroke spongy tangy tongue

ripe with stories of small scarred buds
waiting for you to pick
them one by one

and polish them
on your shirttails
like tender tart McIntosh apples, fresh from the orchard.

You'll notice, they bruise
easily. Contract, and even sacred vessels burst. Seeds
shatter, exile sparks, grind to dust. So I hope you will seek distraction

in the balagan of rushing nectars, northward southward tides,
blood and breath drumming timpani in the whorl of an ear,
my bared mossless valleys, your glassy candelabra tunnels,
deep inland lakes shuddering



with koi — the ceramic
hard tissues, a buried in-

verse glacial mountain range, you don't need
to touch. Unless of course you can't
resist the crags. Remnants. Strange

things pull at us. Let us bathe
in the good emanations streaming
bright and blue through our windows, open like mouths,

and into this our golden green pades.
Dress me again in familiar
parings, reconsecrated

with your breath.



THIRD-PLACE WINNER of the
VICTORIA COLLEGE POETRY CONTEST

When Did You Know

Nika Gofshtein

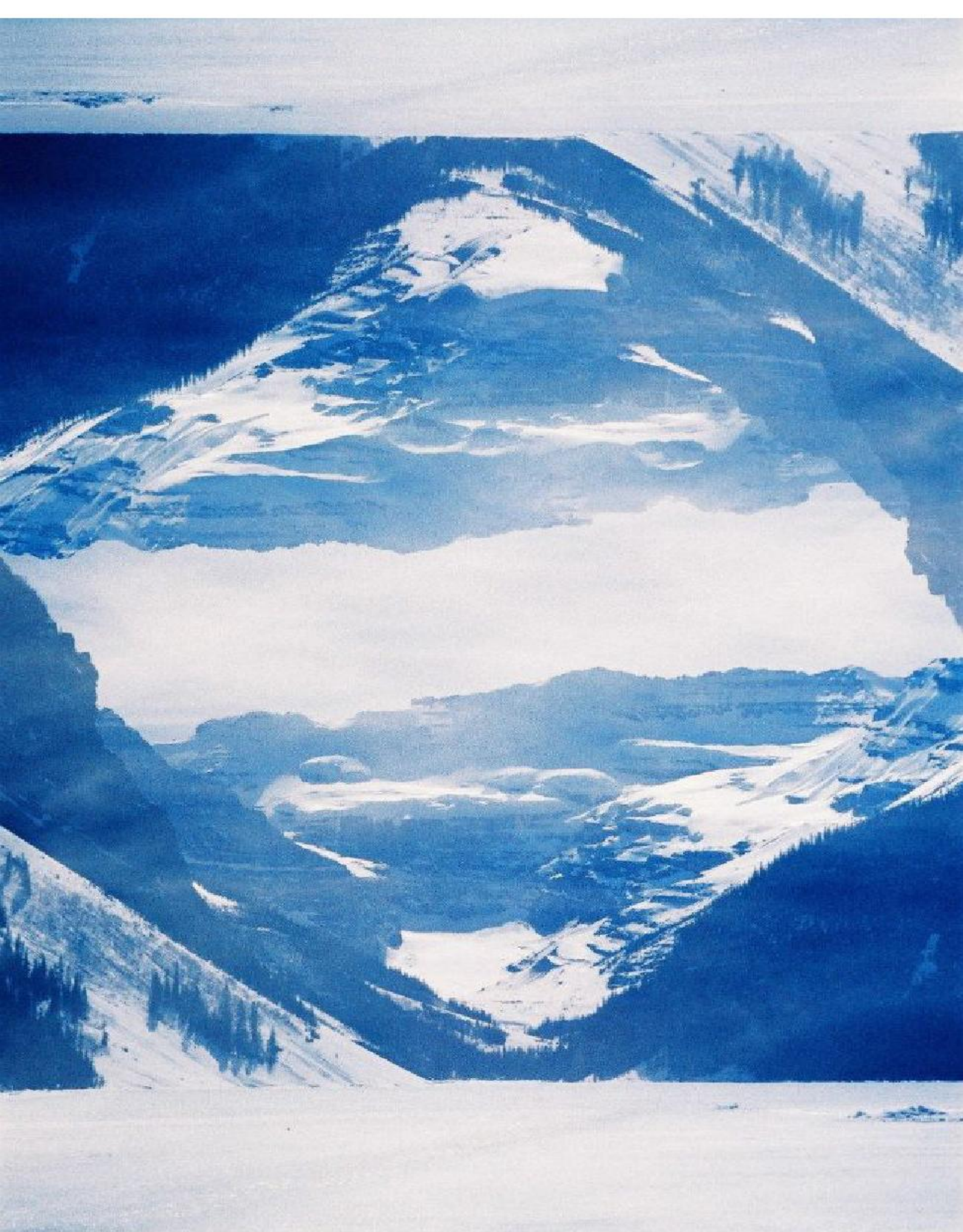
I. or II.

Who taught you your kisses, your free fingers but not mind? What did they do to you that brought you here? When did you know you had to leave, and was it the bomb the bomb the bomb the bomb or was it her face, satisfied with somebody else? Where did you call home if not the mountains where the jackals and their mirth lured the laughing dove that once lived on your windowsill? You said you were in love. How far did you think you would have to fly before you found it again? Why did you come here, to the jackal's mouth?

I. or II.

I saw you at the summit of Damāvand at sunrise; your arms were not outstretched, not flung out to form your silhouette into a cross. Instead, your arms were wrapped around your ribcage, and I thought your fingers tangled in your bones. Your face, though, your face was angled to the sun, to the struggling spring leaves of light that was morning. I listened to you scream.

I listened to the mountains answer.



"Lake Louise" by Daniel Lockheart



Sophie's blues (a letter)
from *the Sophie poems*

Michael Cavuto

cokesick a slow
two days:

Blue. Her hands were
blue, here eyes were
too, then, blue—
her lips, and her

A patience which, with
Sophie

sick, makes room for what I
notice

so undesirable
the wound—

*But in the mirror, I
have nothing left
to give you, just the
smell of me
 , my cunt on your
skin
having already,
instead,
taken in everything
that you've offered me*



yellow

Ariel Martz-Oberlander

something is creeping from the edges of the leaves to their centres and the same is happening to my hands and feet it's the betrayal of fall that is turning my limbs yellow a colour that cannot stand still but must infect others and a new season that's never happened and a self I've never met and there's a band playing music that leaks through the windows and if she was here she'd say how lovely that we have a soundtrack isn't the music like we are being expected and she sees the leaves as they are when to me they are flags smoldering from the edges in, the flags of my country oxidizing and vanishing I am homeless but she picks up a leaf and places it on her kitchen table and says let's look at it and we sit in silence and a hundred years pass and I watch it disappear and she stays still

and I sit

and go nowhere and predict many horrible things

and see nothing and nothing comes true and it's just 10am



I Found My Mother's Body Floating
Face Down in The Yellow River

Fan Wu

chalk-white as birthright you heft her meat weighted by dirty water, this thirsty burden bound to the dutiful son slicing through the tides with his unruly body barely creasing the wide and errant waves, the slop of coerced devotion hanging from his skin to make it sag, sore-armed and sunken-mouthed as the heavy drift of inheritance refuses the rites of gravity the spirit lifts, the good-enough child slides the thin film of what feels like disappointment from her vacant breasts moon-flooded and white jasmine at its bloom, the woman's body at the moment of meeting land turns to miasma to choke the folds that make up family, to close the writhing that gave us birth

it's hygiene, you get clean, even blood bonds unloose in typhoon weather so to sip and sup of the mother again, as you have eaten without restraint all the length of your life, mad cannibal, pond spawn, sly parasite on the side of the dying, mother-glutton with no shame to show for it, that you could not pull your ring of teeth from her bleeding teat was no matter of wanting, no matter how you willed it

you drink the river there where it describes a uterine line, you drink the river where it curves its black silt spilled in the muddy banks, you drink the river where it gives up mother's marrow white as royal jade, white as an urge for roaming you could never own, white as the blind river running at the close of day.





A Flight-From in the Form of a Plunging Into

Safee Ali

I.

re-born again just yesterday
and already tonight the sun began to fall
so I went outside and lied
down face-up open-mouth

and a trillion atom-wide needles of light
crept on spider legs down my throat
warming white-blood and bone
and at last a glow spread in my belly banishing
finally that sand-paper-like
Wretchedness, Anxiety of Being

and before I knew it the gaping sky was on fire
and all the nerve-endings in my body were burnt away
and in that moment that my essence lingered
amid its own ashes

I realized I was happiest

aeons ago when I was in the gut of that eviscerated star
when I was in nuclear flux
the light burning through empty space faster
than anything ever was.



II.

“The Wheel turns on its axle, grinding and grinding, you feel like you’re grinding against existence, each eroding revolution ripping you up from the inside out, and I swear to you that you’ll never be Happy but if you align yourself you can at least just be”

Amor fati ad infinitum.



A Walk with Miguel

Steven Pelcman

Miguel tells us
that what is buried here
stays here,
under the Portuguese sun
as he fans himself
with the straw hat

he swings by his side,
and that when we see
petals fall and the last bees
hover as awkward heads
of raw-green skin
suddenly appear

that that is when
apples bud and dangle
like unwanted words
and then blossom
tilting this way and that.
This he tells us

means that spring has arrived
as the newborn sunlight
leans against the slope
above a small stream
flowing through the valley
where cork oak trees



in open woodlands
are warm to the touch
in the sheer wind passing
as nearby sheep graze
and Iberian pigs
thrive on the fallen acorns.

Miguel's hobbled walk
is steady like an old horse
put out to pasture
and against the blinding sunlight
he is more scarecrow than man
but we keep up

stride for stride
past the slanted hillside-
fincas and eucalyptus ready
for the harvest
and the olives
recently picked;

the marks of nets
dried in the ground
where the shaken olives
had fallen and are kept
beside the stone walls
in barrels.



Miguel says it is better
to be here now
rather than in the dry heat
of summer when crickets
sing and the vines
are weighed down by fruit

and when buses full of tourists
roam the old mosaic floors
entombed in foundations
lived over for thousands of years
he says, antiquity like all else
is best kept in the dark.

He is an old man
who is careful with his smile
and as careful at picking bones
from sardines and tipping
his hat to old women passing
on their way to market.

He has lived here forever
he says as do
his ten grandchildren
he reminds us
when he extends his hand
for the coins and dollars



we lay flat on his tanned palm
and as we head back
to the parked car beside the café
with a shiny apple and green olives
still full of grass we had taken
from the fields,

Miguel is approaching another couple
talking aloud of Roman ruins,
of hillsides full of olives and sheep,
of acorns and the smell of spring,
of how an old man with ten grandchildren
knows the secrets of old Rome.



"Blockage, Cinque Terre" by Tobias-René Wilczek



Adam Zachary

hair one big knot

yr hand caught in

doveblue predawn light



Adam Zachary

in sleep
 my head
rode the wave
 of yr breath
all
 the way
 to shore



Lick Wounds

William Wright Harris

How beautiful birds are as they crash
Into windows.
Their feathers streaked

With quiet snow spots and lees of foliage, now
Crimson and still—
Beaks no longer hungry.

There are yogis with such immense
Control over their bodies they can draw in water
Through their genitals.

Vishnu enters through a doorway,
Throws a lily to you.
Your hirsute tongue flickers in my mouth

Like a finch in a cage, eyes
In the shape of beetle wings,
I am lost in the silent whorl

Of your fingerprints.
All poets have lick wounds
over our chests,

Where we keep our hearts and remember
How beautiful the birds are, crashing
Into windows.



First Night in the Intensive Care Unit after Heart Surgery at 32

Paul-Henri Campbell

It's not the first instance of insomnia, of course,
and however well our bodies have befriended scalpels
since our shovels etched lines into cloy sands at the Bay,

we lay here broken like a beached creature beneath
glaring lamps in a hazy cocoon of bleeping, tubes,
and voices (no whispering here) without reprieve.

Mothers, your sons have gone to battlefields
unknown to your gardens. And as they look
upon you now, your flowers are all but names.

So please stop weeping. Instead, let your eyes
mildly gaze across our bodies, for on the beach
the frothy surf has put our castles to ruin

and up where patches of dry sticky reed spring
upon the dunes, our shovels wait in red buckets
for the next low tide while the flood is rolling in.



On Motion

Lauren Peat

In one unsalted step I fell into difference,
squirmed under strangers' sympathies
and second glances. Hauling Aristotle's
prescriptions for a better life, I stumbled

upon pain, an ankle bulbous and plum-
coloured, ripening in strains of summer
peach. Now I hobble across my city
in search of legs, exchange money

for mobility, swing across the impossible
distance to the bus-stop—I toast my crutch
to an old lady's cane; a woman nibbles
a cheese sandwich and eyes me nervously.

Photographed from all angles, I grow over-
exposed under white light; the doctor pinches
my flesh and I procure pills and a moon-boot
to outfit my bloated foot-bones;



I take small steps, not giant leaps across
craterous floors. Though otherwise intact,
I am offered limbs, frostbitten fingers.
At home I sit solitary, sip tea and monitor

my contusions—leg gauzed and stiffening
under ice, I watch my window pile with white,
hear crushed foot-steps on pavement outside.
Nature is but motion, Aristotle tells me;

if the leg cannot fulfill its work, it is no part.
I humble myself, inch socks over toes—
every movement takes time, I am told. Straining
my muscles, I try a life of motion in the mind.



On Repeat

David Morgan O'Connor

Yes, the signs are everywhere
that tilted shoeshine's cap
that wormed apple, the red purse
hung from the bamboo tree.

Are they warning?
Don't piss here.
Your chain needs oil.
Always squeeze your fruit.

Three monkeys run a wire
a generator shifts gear
a mask-puffing dentist's sigh
a tear on a dry leaf over a wet bench.

I used to know when storms came
which snow would fall for how long
when landlords would knock and
how large the checks should be.

Wiser, the signs, I memorized
are no longer bona fide;
shifted, invalid.

So either I have just plain forgotten
to read correctly or have become
an incredibly stupid pop song.



Delinicon: Tourist Sites
(Pigeons, Coffee Cup, Rock, Amoeba, History)

Miles Forrester

Align, align, inversion, alterity

-Stonehenge speaks softly to vacationing families.
The winch of presence renders a sequence
a series of geographical miasmic hushed-obsequies:
The Mariana Trench inverts a beacon diluted
to Mars: Olympus Mons & the xenodiluvian
pseudopod shells that rest there,
xenodiluvian rust riveted rovers
who roll there, and the Smithsonian security guards
who are quietly irradiated.

-Beautiful-poisonous-mythical rocks.-

“This geode’s crust’s a spiral like a clock or God’s John Hancock.”

A flock of pigeons circling a sinking picture card Venice
mimicking: the slow cycle of a distracted coffee spoon,
the liquid radius of a porcelain cup,
& the picture of the Pompeii Priapus upon it
(revealing not a line, but a sweeping biological curve.)

Alter, invert, gyrate, align,



Love Dream

Geoff Baillie

The exchange of the Tom Thomson print is the precise moment where the mythology begins. The painting of the birch trees and a shadow on a lake. My parents cut the trees into a dining room table where they invited the neighbours for beer and conversations. They talked about Trudeau and Clark in the federal election and they drank their beers to reach the bottoms of their glasses where the dandelions were ground. The male register of voices were the hollow parts of birch trees, with a dull deep resonance and an occasional deeper thud. The female register were the breaking sounds of twigs beneath running shoes. My sister and I hid beneath the dining room table, like the hollow parts of birch trees that await her and I in eternity, and she told me its the seeds of what we will become that are sewn in what we are, but that meant nothing to me. I shut my eyes and counted.

Now that I'm the same age as they were
then, I drink my own beers at bars abroad and
try to reach the bottoms of my glasses where
the dandelions are ground. Dandelions that
call forth the demands of courage and make my
words sincere. It's the notion that when we are
young there are too many gifts to be wasted,
that makes me so mindful of the rising sun,
so weary of the embassies of flowers
that grow around migrant hearts when migrant hearts
hold still for too long. So I drink until the
unsuspecting moment when those seeds arouse
the rendering of the past that meets the demands
of present courage most perfectly, moments
that had done nothing for me until the day
that they undo me at once and completely.



Piston

Julian Moran

There is cacophony in his legs when the balls of his feet squeeze against his sneakers and wrench the soles back and into the air to surge and pummel the ground again. His blood is running against the inside of his skin. His breath heaves and aches are beginning to pool under his kneecaps and at the dips in his shoulder blades. His arms swing and his fingers which are fat with the upwelling of sweat hang loose and bounce with the rhythm of his wrists. The thud of each stride sinks into the synthetic surface of the track. It is October.

He stops his watch and slows to a jog and then a walk. His name is Lou and he is thin and his hair is blown back and sticking up from the wind of the run. Leaves are tumbling in eddies through the gaps in the wrought-iron fencing around the track. He is still panting and a white film of dead skin and saliva has collected at the rims of his lips. He digs it off with his finger nail and it is not until he has walked another lap and a half that his breathing and his heart have slowed.

His head is heavy on his neck and his eyes are glazed and unfocused. He walks to the long and squat fitness centre with the overhang roof that shelters some of the sport stands. As he moves he stirs knots in his thighs. He stops at the track fence and with both hands pushes his weight against it and steps one leg back to plant his heel on the ground and stretch. He watches two women and one man who are young like he is come out from the fitness centre and pass him. When they get to the track they are still walking shoulder to shoulder and the other runners have to skirt around them. All three of them smile and talk and sometimes laugh doubling over with a harsh spasm that rattles the autumn air.

The man in the group has his hair pushed back in a mullet. His jaw and his shoulders are wide and his calves ripple with his gait. One of the women has a soft face and soft lips and her hair is tied in a ponytail. She wears pants that are tight against her and she swings barely in her step. The other woman is stout. Lou checks the time on his watch and goes inside.



A hand fires up down up down its impact reverberates across his flesh. He is thrown against the ground and his head snaps back and curled toes whip against him and he crumples. This is a memory. A body comes down on him its knees firm against his sides and its elbows lock and hands curl around his throat and press. Eyes that are opaque stare into his and judge for the verge of asphyxiation when the hands must release. Every vertebra presses against the matted carpet beneath him. I am the carpet, he thinks. Please. I am the carpet.

It is a full four days until he sees the man and the two women again. They jog slowly around the track and again they are abreast. The man is on the outside and Lou takes care not to touch him when he passes them. When he finishes the run he goes to the change room to wait for the man. He takes off his shoes and socks to feel the bottoms of his feet. Where his feet rub the corners of his sneakers there is a hard hide where blisters have popped and caved and heaped on themselves as though it were a crucible.

When the man comes in Lou puts his socks and shoes back on. As the man is opening his locker Lou walks to him and taps him on the shoulder.

Hey, he says. You and your friends were obstructing the track today.

The man looks at him but says nothing.

Next time you need to run in single file, says Lou. Please be more considerate.

The man laughs at him. Everyone's got plenty of space, he says. Now go back to your locker.

Lou falters and turns around. He walks back to his locker and changes and leaves the fitness centre. On his way home he thinks it is the fingers of his abuser, who is long dead, that stretch through his face to contort it and boil his blood.



When he sees them at the track once more and passes them at the bend Lou leans in to clip the man's elbow. At the fringes of his field of view he sees the man's head swivel to look at the back of his head. Every three or so laps he passes them and every time he knocks elbows with the other man. Sometimes Lou staggers his stride to make it seem like an accident if only to add to the insult. Once he hears the man mutter something to the two women.

The fifth time he hits him the man stops and shouts Hey what the fuck. What is your problem, one of the women calls after him.

Lou does not stop. His gaze remains fixated on the migrating stretch of track immediately in front of him. His hands are balled and his arms pump. He is running on his toes. A frantic pulse overtakes him and a throb breaks out in his thorax. He almost sprints around the next bend and sees they have stopped and are waiting for him.

The man moves in to block him and says Hit me again I fucking dare you. He throws out his arm and when Lou runs through it the man grabs him by the collar and presses his fingertips into Lou's cheeks. He throws him down the track and Lou stumbles and falls face down.

As he gets up the man says Six times you hit me like that. Man the fuck up. The two women look at him and the stout one says Fucking pathetic.



Bios

Safee Ali is finally graduating; no longer will you be subject to his existential poetry in undergraduate journals and his penetrating gaze in the fishbowl at the E.J. Pratt Library. He would like to sardonically thank the Kafkaesque administration of the institution, and sincerely thank the pedagogues that made his education worthwhile along with the custodial staff that facilitated it.

Geoff Baillie is a third year undergraduate at Victoria College. He once appeared on the game show *Cash Cab* but did not win any cash.

Domnique Béchard is a fourth-year student at Victoria College. Her work is published or forthcoming in *Diaspora Dialogues*, *Steel Chisel*, and the *Trinity Review CXXVII*. She will be pursuing an M.F.A. in poetry this fall.

Paul-Henri Campbell was born in 1982 in Boston. He grew up bilingually in Massachusetts and Bavaria. Writing in English and German, he is the author of three volumes of poetry. He is also the Managing Editor of *DAS GEDICHT Chapbook*. *GERMAN POETRY NOW*, which presents poetry from German-speaking countries in English translation. His current book is entitled *space race. gedichte* (Allitera Verlag, Munich).

Michael Cavuto is a Philadelphia poet currently living in Toronto. He previously edited the *Trinity Review 126*, and currently runs a reading series and edits the *Slow Poetry in America Newsletter* with Hoa Nguyen and Dale Smith.

Miles Forrester is a conceptual artist and writer located in Toronto. He is a graduate of York University with a double major in Visual Art and Creative Writing. His practice combines performance, video, sound, text, and installation. He has been published in *The Passive Collective* and *Acta Victoriana*.



Nika Gofshtein is a second-year undergraduate, majoring in Literature & Critical Theory and minoring in Creative Expression & Society and English. Not surprisingly, she really, really loves words.

William Wright Harris attained his B.A. in English from the University of Tennessee and is currently a graduate student in DePaul University's M.A. in Writing and Publishing program. His poetry has appeared in fifteen countries in such publications as *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *The Cannon's Mouth*, *Ascent Aspirations*, and *Write On!!!*.

Ariel Martz-Oberlander is a fourth-year drama performance student and a leader of the campus fossil fuel divestment campaign. She was most recently published in *Canto Magazine*, *Shorthand* and *Nest Magazine*. Sometimes she wishes that she never felt full so she could eat more, or that she was a tree.

Julian Moran is a neuroscience specialist at Victoria College. He is an amateur film photographer and has a pet shamrock named Catsby.

David Morgan O'Connor is from a small village on Lake Huron and now keeps home in Rio de Janeiro, where a first novel progresses. Writing has been published in: *The Write Practice*, *Collective Exiles*, *Bohemia Journal*, *BlueStem*, *The Story Shack*, *The Literary Yard*, *Fiction Magazine*, *StrayLight Magazine*, *Electric Windmill Press*, *The New Quarterly* and *The Guardian*.

Lauren Peat is a Victoria student of literature and philosophy. She is the assistant editor-in-chief of IDIOM, the university's English undergraduate academic journal.



Stephen Pelcman has spent the last fifteen years residing in Germany where he teaches in academia and is a language communications trainer and consultant. His poetry and short stories have been published in a number of magazines including: *The Windsor Review*, *The Innisfree Poetry Journal*, *Fourth River*, *River Oak Review*, *Poetry Salzburg Review*, *Tulane Review*, *The Baltimore Review*, *The Warwick Review*, *The Greensboro Review*, and many others. He was nominated for the 2012 Pushcart Prize.

Michelle Speyer studies English literature, media, and writing at the University of Toronto. Her work has been published in *Acta Victoriana*, *Echolocation*, and *Humanitas*. She recently spent time giving art therapy workshops to children with post-traumatic stress in Sderot, Israel and volunteering with communities in the Galilee.

Fan Wu he do he does they wooed he was sixth disc of the sun and what comes of it but no fire and nothing spared no liar's tongue to turn the narrowing gyre sick of sense and one arse aloft to blot out the sky.

Adam Zachary is a writer, musician, photographer, editor of the *Hart House Review*, and a former editor of *Acta Victoriana* (vol. 138).



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of 500

