

VOLUME 141 SPRING 2017

# acta victoriana





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VOLUME 141 SPRING 2017

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**Design**

Molly Kay

**Cover Image**

Emma Doerksen

*Acta Victoriana*

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# foreword

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It seems to be a unanimous feeling that the past couple of years have been more ruthless and bleak than any others in recent memory. Poetry and fiction, for us, have served both as an emotional escape and as a reminder to survey our surroundings through a critical lens. We include criticism here as an attempt to reengage in conversation between creator and curator: as we try to reconcile our preconceptions with a new and unexpected reality, we must question the emotional responses spurred by the art we consume and relinquish the prideful – though powerful – assumptions that are characteristic of a more honest world.

I hope that *Acta Victoriana 141* will encourage the lingering on tiny moments of beauty: the cradle of a palm, the arch of a faucet, or the feeling of wet cheeks. Though we are academics by trade, it is the enjoyment of art that ties this collection together. Perhaps, just for today, indulgence may be forgiven. Tomorrow, we will return to the fight, more gentle and more resilient.

– **fiona thompson**

Gathered here in this collection are some pieces in several forms that do not articulate a shared theme or tone. However, they are all conveyed by artists with the powerful authority to encode the sensationalism they experience and relate it in the terms of distinct contextualized detail. These are poems that are important to live in.

In the interlinks, between acts of creation, correspondence and criticism, I sense a great boon as radiative and rhetorically impactful as the encircling sunbeam. This is the same potency of literature – an honorific regard for the powerful use and misuses of language. While pausing here to parse these expressions, in the swirl of deliverance and decoding, we bind together and celebrate a well-met and generative conversation.

– **christian schoug**

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*"season which precedes the prime of youth,  
the season before the smooth pink folds of the  
flower  
have burst their gummy case,  
when the wings of the butterfly,  
though fully grown,  
are motionless"*

—Virginia Woolf, "Kew Gardens"

Still  
my body is held  
by climbing vines of  
liliputian significance.

By hands too hesitant  
to let go,  
but mostly to hold on  
past haircuts and sympathy.

I am too slippery  
to grip onto  
identity— ephemeral as  
flaking skin,

putrid as food in  
stomach pits.  
Rotting peaches left  
in the bottom of

green bins,  
forgotten pre vacation.  
Touch that binds  
brain to mouth

screwing shut  
opening slow.  
Rusting metal,  
newly orange as

decaying metal cages of  
forgotten dolls  
stuffed in attic dust,  
too pretty to be thrown away.

Stuck in place.



# june with you

lorina hoxha

---

SECOND-PLACE WINNER IN THE SPRING POETRY CONTEST

Early evening's  
copper gold gleam  
lines the curved back

and the blueberry's juice  
soaking delightfully  
in a palm's cradle.





# remembering

ella wilhelm

---

THIRD-PLACE WINNER IN THE SPRING POETRY CONTEST

the winter sky: flat monumental  
question  
duel site / dual sight

face: a negotiation  
where to place the oilwell that carves  
cavities into my entrails,  
how purple to bruise my shinbones –

your anachronism is the bridge  
under my waterbound fantasies  
the duct of my liquid extensions

we are all over the road

mithilia rajavel (opposite)

# the bad earth

paul grams

---

coruscate the girl I been  
laid atremble when pa smile  
here come tickle here come pinch

dark in camp we snuggle once  
breathing loam luff virginal  
watch pa hack up what he hunt  
man tonight been finish ax  
matter baby you hurt

cheeks so furrowed her tears lay clotted  
mama finally died I watched  
pompey's legions plowed then salted

lushly cultured fields of carthage  
earthlife good idea botched  
scarified my tickles ravaged

no im fine this lovelife whack  
cried dry sparkly as dirt

# la dolce vita

ingrid llambi

---

red girls  
sipping wine  
on a tuesday night

only one tongue in their mouths

tall crimson nails  
to touch themselves with  
later

a plastic rose  
on the table

# tidal

alan hill

---

For picnic entertainment  
she prodded her young son's sausage skin legs

served up sloppy slaps over paper plates  
juggled her self appointed duties of  
judge, jailor, enforcer.

It was a relief when she went to swim  
dived into the green eyes of the Pacific  
into the violence of current  
the cracking heads of ocean and river end.

to laugh in the weightlessness of her being  
navigate out across the estuary neck  
ride waves from tankers, speedboats

fold herself into the backdrop of insistent forest  
that wiggled down it crown of foliage  
over the thick thighs of mountaintops.  
If she had glanced back

she would have seen a rosary of minivans  
being rubbed smooth by fingers of evening light

family transportation squeezing in  
to pick up leftovers, dirty plates, the happy

her child that had yet to find his childhood.

# on motherhood

kathleen chen

---

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

“We went in to the same way we went out.”

“When Mama Shot the Wild Man in the Kitchen” by Ami Xherro, appearing in the most recent issue of *The Trinity Review*, opens with a declaration of consistency and predictability, but the unusual phrasing of this line already begins to trouble our impression of stability. We went in to what? The “to” creates tension: leaving us puzzled, and wrinkling the rhythm of the first line. The idea of leaving is repeated throughout the poem: mother “went out like a free hatless bird,” and after she shoots the wild man in the kitchen, “we went in there the same day we had gone out.” Despite the image of unrestricted movement conveyed by the bird simile, the family’s movements are physically contained: they circle back to the dead man in the kitchen, unable to escape the space. Even at the end of the poem, it seems that mother cannot really get out of the house: she “turned on the radio/it wasn’t often she went out dancing like that.”

The refrain of “dear dear dears” also creates an illusion of steadiness, but the repetition of these soothing words emphasizes the persistence of the discomfort. The parallelism between mother holding her children, and mother “[holding] down” the dead man, reveals the similarity between tenderness and violence. Mother’s “hand fell upon” the wild man – not to hit him, but to caress his cheek. The poem – and especially its title – understates the momentous impact of the shooting, through deceptively consistent structure and tone. It internalizes the shock, both psychologically and spatially, since the characters remain physically indoors; however, the last few lines of the poem are more explicit about the effect of the shooting on mother: “she spat back/dear dear dears,” with monosyllables underscoring her aggressiveness, and tells us to “pick up where you left off, good morning to the world!”, forcefully maintaining the pretense that her life has not changed.

Unusual and surprising images in the poem also indicate suppressed agitation. Mother’s hair “fell down like a clamp” and “clanked like a chain,” a depiction which is like the portrayal of the mother as “judge, jailor, enforcer” in “Tidal.” The vocabulary of violent objects is continued in the metaphor which compares the wild man’s funeral song to “the chorus of chainsaws and greek verse,” which the family sings “with sand down our throat.” In a similarly jarring auditory image, “they tooted the God horn/the devil put his finger on us,” suggesting that their appeal to religion is outward and performative, and thus, unsuccessful. “Tidal” presents a more traditional image of religious practice: “If she had glanced back, she would have seen a rosary of minivans/being rubbed smooth by evening light.” Though the ritual is still present, it is distant, and the mother chooses to turn her back on it.

These two poems reveal a more nuanced portrayal of motherhood and its underlying violence, and we hope that by reading them together, your understanding of them will change slightly from the way you went in.



**soft and hard, congregated** sadia awan



# arched faucet

matthew johnstone

---

The bulbs of water on your back  
fell from your steel,  
you lean faucet. You had time only  
to dry your hair  
then darted.

And you stayed naked under  
your dish-rag.  
Your stuck shirt  
gave shadows to each breast  
with shower-water.

You ran,  
so your mouth's spray  
whitened to air.  
Your throat choked  
on the rust  
of the ice-wind of near winter  
and sputtered.

When you arrived,  
your hair dropped streaks  
of water down your back.

# on passing through several fields

sophia jaworski

---

the sea draws back past the bark  
diluted tops go  
sour red  
red ennui  
throat red  
choke red  
the horn of the train makes a granite deer

that field is rippled raw by a comb  
that field is dead dry  
an old barn stands rinsed grey  
collapsing next tuesday

that field is between two overlapping spot lights  
can't take a hint  
costumes thrown on bashful ombres  
ochres even wrens won't touch

the cast's huddled by the plough  
and instead of lines  
the play is an accelerated act of perishing  
performed in yellow

what can I learn from these immolating forests  
who wear life half the year  
and the other half stand thin  
getting hits from the half-lives of atom bomb tests  
fugitively vital

no signs yet for maggot hotels  
muffled by the shadows  
pulled through the draining back of vision, tenable

golds slapped with precision  
for kingdom thinking  
outlawed by the old growth

there's a marsh  
there's the evening paint  
translucent solar phlegm loosened into gloss by the ends of branches  
and a pink distance  
that fields all wings and neck to Lake Ontario

cattle pelvis stretched skin pasteurized  
then a void cut by the shine of a dark river

the candy pink distance  
holds a thick seat of storm for the moon  
looming between the cushions

a soul screaming milk  
exceptionally  
along the suburb roofs

# this is yellow

malcom sanger

---

don't talk to  
me about  
blue

so  
the grape vine  
has climbed into the  
apple tree, its  
yellow leaves  
give it  
away

I said  
don't talk to  
me about  
blue

# maenad

marina nicholson

---

winecork skin stained purple  
children of excess handle each other with rough hands  
the dancing god shows us ecstasy in horror  
he feeds us peeled grapes and the blood of oxen  
and we set our teeth in the skin of his neck  
we have always been something more than human  
but now we are more than humanity  
bearing fruit baskets of men's severed heads  
and wearing their teeth like pearls

# inventory clerks

zinat lalani

---

We arranged ourselves around two tables, pulled together to accommodate all eight of us, famished after the nine hour stint of almost non-stop work. I was hemmed in at one table amongst three girls who had hung together throughout the assignment. They were all quite young. They tried to outdo each other with tales of rebelliousness against their parents and teachers, and bragged about having dropped out of school. They chewed gum, making clacking and smacking noises and forming bubbles, their eyes crossing as they watched the ballooning film blow out from their mouths and pop.

At the adjoining table, Ted's voice boomed above all others. He took large bites of his hamburger and declared, in his heavy, clanging accent, his dislike of the Blues. "Who wants to listen to a loud Negro blaring out a crummy old song?"

Joan and Karen who, together with Ted's wife, Elaine, shared the table with him, exclaimed at the language, and said that they loved the Blues. They argued the point with him, in an easy jovial manner until finally he rose and stretched himself. He moved over to where Karen sat, and placing a hand on the back of her chair, almost touching her shoulder, said, in a jokey kind of a way, "Well, Karen, have you eaten enough yet?"

Karen turned around and his hand brushed against her hair. Elaine, pale and flat-chested, grinned good-humouredly, but her eyes were wide open, watching.

"You know how big my appetite is," Karen replied with a slurpy sort of a laugh.

Ted, the only guy in the team, was our manager. He was tall and had metallic features, with flat eyes that gave you the impression that he didn't see you when he was looking at you. He drove us from store to store, the trip often lasting hours. On arrival, we hopped out of the van wearing shapeless blue smocks, and lumbered in, weighed down by the comptometers we carried, which we used to calculate the value of the stock. We grabbed a buggy each, placed the machine in its basket and breezed along the aisles, counting the merchandize and punching in the figures on our machines. Elaine, besides being Ted's wife, was also his assistant. She trained and supervised us and apportioned the work.

\*

Clapping his hands, Ted said, "Okay, gang, let's get going. It's five hours to Winnipeg, and we want to get there as early as we can, to leave us lots of time for our pub night." He had announced the promise of the pub outing when we'd embarked on our tour. It was to be a special treat, paid for by our employer, J.B. Inventory Experts, as a reward for hard work.

"It's years since we last had a pub night. We almost didn't make it then because



there was an awful storm,” Elaine said, slurring her words as though she was embarrassed by them. “Do you remember that, Ted? How we had to drive through a blizzard and you couldn’t see two feet ahead of you? No one thought we’d make it, but you got us there somehow.” She looked up at him, smiling, hopeful. He met her gaze for a passing moment, his lips stretching in a smirk, before he turned back to Karen.

“Have your party dress ready, Karen?” He asked, brushing a finger lightly against her cheek. Every eye turned towards Elaine, who smiled and tried to look as though she didn’t mind. We emerged from the restaurant into the hard bright light of winter, crossed the street and piled into the van. Elaine sat beside Ted. Karen, Joan and I took the middle row of seats, while in the very back sat the three school dropouts.

I felt woozy from lack of sleep, and my eyes stung from spending hours trying to read prices, many of them dimmed with age. We’d been on the road two gruelling weeks, and I was relieved that Winnipeg would be our last stop. Ted had warned me, when he’d interviewed me for the job, that we could be away anywhere between a week to three weeks at a time, travelling or working day or night, with the odd motel stop in between to catch a nights rest.

We sped through the snow covered prairies, dazzlingly bright, stretching to the horizon, intensifying the glare of the sun. The girls in the back switched on a radio and a loud, abrasive music played, flooding the van with its clamorous beat. Next to me, Joan had fallen asleep. Her head had lolled forward onto her chest so that her neck had disappeared inside rolls of chin fat. Her jaw was slack and her mouth was open. A faint sour odour seeped out of it. I stared into the blinding snow, the music hammering in my ears. Eventually, I fell into a stupefied sleep.

When I awoke, the music had stopped. We were entering the suburbs of Winnipeg and everyone had come to life, filling the van with a buzz of talk and laughter. Karen began to sing *This Land is Your Land*. Joan and I joined in and the gum chewing trio in the back picked up the refrain. The song grew louder, gathering steam, heads swaying rhythmically, the lines belted out with joyful gusto.

We arrived at a grimy old hotel and had a quick supper while our rooms were organized. I was to share a room with Karen and Joan. There was a flutter of preparations as we took turns to shower and get ready. Karen was transformed in her party clothes. She wore a fitted green dress that revealed the sensuous curves of her figure, previously hidden behind a baggy work outfit. The dress was a mini and exposed a pair of soft, plump thighs and tapering legs encased in smooth, silky pantyhose. Joan wore the same old pants and

shirt that she'd worn for the past two weeks. She'd changed her head band, though, to a beaded one with a black diamond pattern that contrasted with her blonde hair, and over her shirt, she'd put on a striped poncho with tassels that hung loosely around her bulky frame. I put on a fresh pair of pants and a jersey top with a mother of pearl pendant, clothes which I decided suited the occasion without being too dressy to be comfortable.

We went to the lobby where we were to gather with the rest of the party and found Ted and Elaine waiting. Elaine had put her hair up for the occasion, but it wandered in limp, untidy strands down her thin neck. Ted began to flirt with Karen more openly than before.

"Stop, Ted!" Karen laughed, moving away from him. She rolled her head coyly, and gathering up her long, blond, shimmery hair, tossed it to the front in a coquettish gesture. It fell in a rippling sheath over her breasts. Ted tried to kiss her.

"Oh, Ted. Stop! What will Elaine think?"

"I don't mind," squeaked Elaine. She was smiling, but there were tense creases around her eyes.

"Oh, she's a good sport. Why do you think I married her?" He said, putting a convivial arm around Elaine. Elaine's eyes shone, but the creases didn't relax.

When everyone was ready, we set off for the pub, driving along dark, dismal streets which had a bleak, hollowed out look. But inside the van a happy banter filled the gloom.

The pub was dimly lit and crowded. Loud talk mingled with blaring music. The air was thick with smoke and the smell of alcohol. Waiters scurried between tables.

We sat down noisily around a large round table, with much dragging and shuffling of chairs. Ted contrived to get a seat beside Karen and continued to flirt with her. Elaine sat opposite, her eyes fixed on the amorous pair. Her grimace had stiffened and the creases on her face had become more rigid so that she looked like a painted clown.

We ordered beers. Ted laughed, his eyes glittering like two bits of metal. Colour had risen to his hard, leathery complexion so that it resembled the hide of a ruddy cow. He called a waiter over to order a second round. Only the first two rounds were paid for by the company, but drink after drink was ordered around the table and all over the pub until the whole place was in a merry making frenzy. The music pressed on. The smoke thickened. The noise amplified and the revelry heightened.

Ted was kissing Karen. "Stop Ted," she said in between kisses, but she didn't pull away. Everyone was laughing. Elaine put her hand around her glass and raised the glass

as if to drink, but held it suspended in front of her. Her stare grew flinty. The laughter continued. Ted began to sing, swaying drunkenly, bending towards Karen. Suddenly, Elaine's glass flew across the table, striking Ted on his ear. It took him a few seconds to register the act, but Karen screamed, and looked around with startled eyes, her beautiful hair, drenched in beer, hanging limp, and a wet stain over her green dress displaying the outline of an erect nipple. Elaine's expression hadn't changed. She was still grinning, and her eyes had remained transfixed on the pair.

# a love letter for annie dillard

emily powers

---

Brass jazz.  
Thick and gutted.  
A dried up one night stand in Baton Rouge.  
Well Annie, you were right.  
I made it to New Orleans  
and the music wasn't loud enough.  
\* \* \*



nazanin zarepour



# hope and hopelessness

leyland rochester

---

A CRITICAL COMMENTARY

You've been there before: young and reckless; optimistic and yearning for something better; excited about the future and ignorant to those voices of negation that warn you against your own guideless ambitions. You're the master of your fate, captain of your soul, right? Why, then, do our dreams sometimes fail to become reality? We get to where we wanted to go, but what we thought we'd find isn't there — or if it is, it's never perfectly what we envision. "A Love Letter for Annie Dillard" by Emily Powers speaks to this sense of perception never aligning with reality. Powers' poem also connects this to an important concept in American literature (and it is a very American poem, for the author herself is from California and for the invocations of major American symbols): the fall of the American Dream.

Scott Fitzgerald did it in *The Great Gatsby*, Willa Cather in *A Lost Lady*, Langston Hughes in "Harlem," and now Emily Powers takes her place in this long succession of authors to speak to the fall of hope, youth, and idealism in America. This minimalistic poem, sitting at a total of only six lines, is the story of a young girl seeking that beautiful sensuality of the American spirit, but never truly finding it. There is that iconic symbol of American music culture, the "Brass jazz" that New Orleans embodies, but it is "Thick and gutted", conveying a sense that something is missing in what should be this beautiful music. Then we have sexual desires unfulfilled in the speaker's "dried up one night stand in Baton Rouge," the city of Baton Rouge being used to portray the decay of American ideals. Powers herself, in my interview with her, described the city as a "shithole."

But what really speaks to this destruction of the American spirit, and what Powers does with such elegance, is the invocation of another icon in American literature who also addresses similar themes, Annie Dillard, to whom the poem directly corresponds with. Powers brings in Annie in such an ironic way that I imagine the speaker setting down her drink in this dingy jazz bar, or turning away from her slumbering lover after a night of subpar sex and sighing as she says, "Well Annie, you were right. / I made it to New Orleans / and the music wasn't loud enough". These poignant closing lines reference the ending of Annie Dillard's book *An American Childhood*, wherein Annie's own father wonders to himself, "In New Orleans—if you could get to New Orleans—will the music be loud enough?"

Clearly not.

But wouldn't it be nice if the music was loud enough? Or that lover in Baton Rouge replied to your 3am text? Or that jazz bar was filled with the cigarette smoke, dirty martinis, and golden saxophone notes you pictured when you read about it back in your hometown? But, as Powers and the American literary canon tell us, it's never that simple. Thus, her ironic love letter demonstrates Powers' warning to the reader: it's better to accept things for what they are than romanticize what could have been.

# apollo, 18

james lee lord parker

---

Niagara Falls harbours the same cosmic importance  
as half-price wings at St. Louis every Tuesday:  
consistency.

Eighteen marked the year of dented cars  
and full sprint, whether it mean finding home  
or anything but.

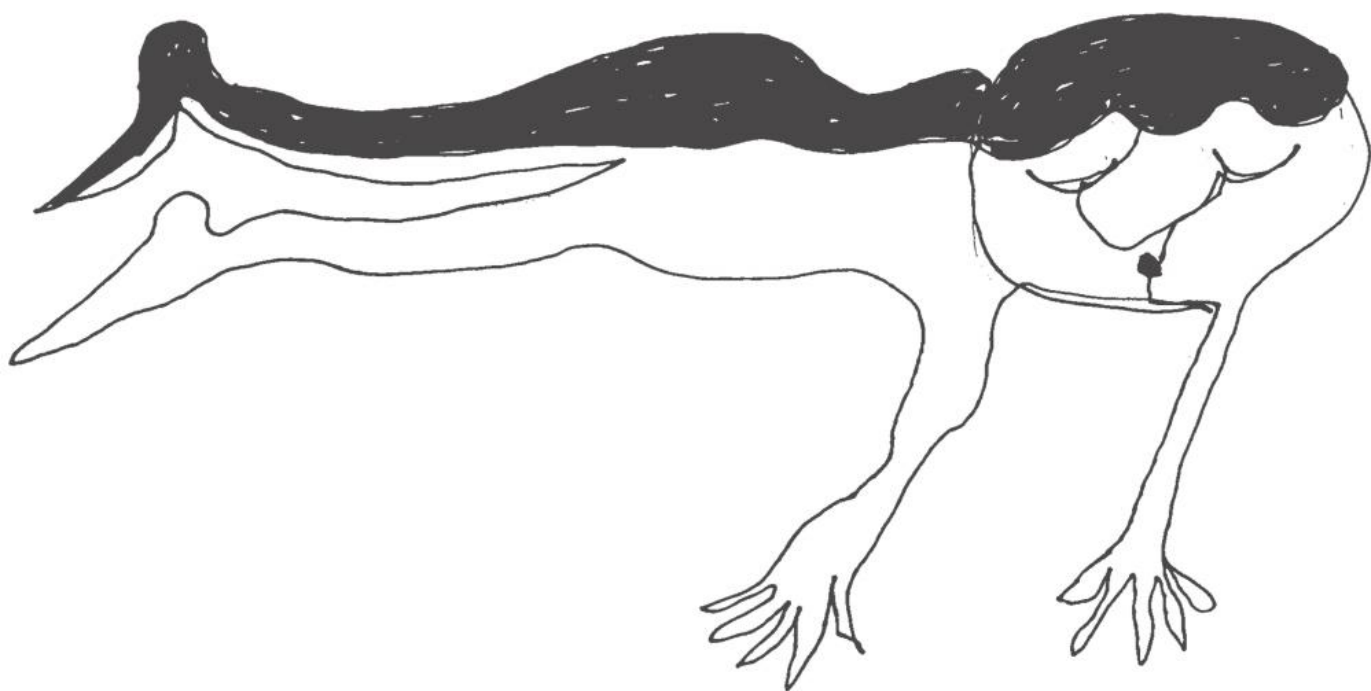
You found the similarities between women  
and laurels, painted hyacinth flowers  
with the blood of a man who left you before  
he had finished loving you, found God  
when you stared down at the blue expanse,  
but it was the sun that stared back.

Years later, when your pupils will have shrunk  
and you can afford the same suits  
your father once wore, you'll remember  
the drunken nights you spent together  
sharing songs and stories—

How was it out there?  
Big.

**adrift 2** allen forrest (opposite)





FF

# the hajj pilgrim

bänoo zan

---

Khoda<sup>1</sup>,

They say  
you are a man—  
in tavaaf<sup>2</sup>—

on the day of 'Arafah<sup>3</sup>  
stoning the Shaytan<sup>4</sup>

They say  
you are a woman—

covering your breasts  
from the na-mahram<sup>5</sup>—

your long hair in hijab

They say  
you are angry

never drink or dance  
never smile

But I've seen you  
with Mohammad

chaste and naked

You love like a man—  
give up everything  
for a kiss

---

<sup>1</sup> God

<sup>2</sup> Muslim ritual of circling round Kaaba during the Hajj pilgrimage

<sup>3</sup> A Muslim Holy Day

<sup>4</sup> Satan

<sup>5</sup> Any man not related to a Muslim women in whose presence she needs to cover

You love like a woman—  
want everything  
I heard  
you are converting  
from you

to the lover  
you are

Wash blood  
off bombs and believers

Mourn the loss of sweat  
in the ritual of need

Shave your head  
Cut your nails  
Wrap yourself in ihram

and join the humble crowd  
that dies  
for a visit

# the ceremony of picking dirt out from under my nails

victoria butler

---

Intimacy could be  
the mysteries stuck to my fingertips, the ones  
that conceal themselves beneath soft,  
crescent moon shells.

It could be the letter on my neck,  
the metal tribute that keeps me  
company when my heart won't  
settle.

It could be the way  
my brain is always burning  
with yours. It could be the  
sick in my stomach. The  
smell of latex. The fear  
of myself.

Intimacy could be  
my wet cheeks. It could be  
my voice, hoarse from  
begging my mind  
for a revolution.



**saint of sonics** victoria butler

# in conversation

eleanor lazarova

---

WITH MALCOLM WOODLAND

*Professor Malcolm Woodland is currently an Associate Professor at the University of Toronto, St. George. He teaches a number of poetry classes at U of T, including the popular ENG201Y class "Reading Poetry". Acta Victoriana had the pleasure of asking him a few questions about poetry, and his position as a Professor of poetry. We thank him for his time and delicate insights.*

## **What is your educational background?**

Before attending university, I studied music (piano, accompaniment, composition, pedagogy) at the Victoria Conservatory of Music and Camosun College. I did my B.A. in English at the University of Victoria, and my M.A. and Ph.D. at U of T; my dissertation supervisor was Eleanor Cook.

## **Can you tell me a bit about your research interests?**

I have been working for some time on "the sublime" in contemporary poetry, particularly in the poetry of A. R. Ammons.

## **What drew you to specialize in poetry/poetry criticism?**

In my first year at university, I fell in love with Wallace Stevens. It was a strange experience: I don't think I understood a word of his poetry, yet I was deeply moved by it. I just had to keep working on it. And becoming hooked on Stevens meant becoming hooked on a lot of poetry.

**In your class "Reading Poetry" (ENG201Y), the focus was to use T.S. Eliot's phrase, "form [gives] impetus to the content," or the art of prosody. Do you think there is still a contemporary urge to disregard prosody, stemming from some of the modernists' indifference to meter? Do poets now have a new notion of the relationship between form and content?**

Well, it's not quite accurate to say that the modernists were "indifferent" to meter. They certainly were not indifferent to rhythm. Most of them felt that strict adherence to the norms of, say, formal iambic verse was no longer necessary, or even inadvisable. Yet in free verse, the poet chooses where to end the line, thinks about the relationships between syntactic units and verse units, about the arrangement of stressed and unstressed syllables, about the pace at which the lines move, and so on and so on. Since the 20th century, these elements have been treated more flexibly than before, but not with indifference. Many poets have, in fact, added new elements to the form lexicon of poetry, so that a wide range, for example, of new spatial arrangements on the page disrupt our normal ways of reading (from left to right, from top to bottom) and become part of how the poem makes its effects. Perhaps a new sense of the relationship between



form and content emerges from the Dada movement of the early 20th century, since the use of aleatory compositional methods obviously questions the idea of purposive or significant form; it questions some very fundamental ideas about what art “is.” Yet the use of aleatory methods is still a choice, and the fact that such a poem’s form and content are governed by chance is in itself significant. It might remind us, too, that chance and improvisation play a role even in the creation of poems that use the strictest forms. As Paul Muldoon puts it, “there’s many a slip / twixt what one supposedly determines / and the al-al-al-al-aleatory”; poets may find it difficult to discern whether they “sit and play, or are played by, [their] toccatas, / stately at the clavi-chord.”

**In class, you once mentioned Wallace Stevens saying that “the poem has to resist the intelligence almost successfully”. Do you think the often obscure nature of poetry makes it difficult to teach, considering that studying poetry sometimes involves forgoing the rational impulse?**

I think just about everything about teaching is difficult. But in some ways I feel I have a certain advantage when teaching poetry. First, I feel much more at home with poetry than with prose fiction. For whatever reason, I seem to find it easier to grasp poetic structures than narrative structures, and I find it easier to talk about them. I also find that many students who take poetry classes are there because they have a very strong interest in poetry, are poets themselves, and are not afraid of the difficulties that some poets present. This seems to be the case particularly in classes on modernist and contemporary poetry: you have to be keen already and bit fearless to study this stuff.

**What are some contemporary poets you feel are the best, or maybe some that have been overlooked?**

Oh my... this list could get rather long. I don’t know about who’s best, but I can tell you a few who have made a strong impression, some for many years, some more recently. John Ashbery, Paul Muldoon, Ann Carson, Derek Walcott, A. F. Moritz, John Koethe, Dionne Brand. That’s just a few, a very few.

**What poems did you read earlier in life that have stayed with you?**

My earliest poetic memories are of folk songs my grandmother used to sing to me: “I Had a Little Nut Tree,” “The Ash Grove,” “Early One Morning.” From books: “Green Eggs and Ham.”

# contributors

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**Alan Hill** is the Poet Laureate of the City of New Westminster in British Columbia. His work has appeared in over forty literary magazines in Canada, USA and the UK; including Canadian Literature, Event, Antigonish Review, CV2, Cascadia Review, Denver Review, Switchback, Impressment Gang, Vancouver Review, Word Works (Federation of BC Writers), Sub-terrain, Poetry is Dead, Windsor Review (upcoming) and many others. He also had poetry in the 2007 'Rocksalt' Anthology – the first BC wide anthology of BC poets for thirty years.

**Allen Forrest** has created cover art and illustrations for literary publications and books, the winner of the Leslie Jacoby Honor for Art at San Jose State University's Reed Magazine and his Bel Red painting series is part of the Bellevue College Foundation's permanent art collection. Forrest's expressive drawing and painting style is a mix of avant-garde expressionism and post-Impressionist elements, creating emotion on canvas.

**Bānoo Zan** has over 120 published poems and three books, two of which were released after she landed in Canada—*Songs of Exile* (2016) and *Letters to My Father* (2017). She founded Shab-e She'r (Poetry Night), Toronto's most diverse poetry reading and open mic series, in 2012. Twitter: @BanooZan

**Ella Wilhelm** is a broody hen & a former editor of *Acta Victoriana*.

**Emily Powers** is a second-year English and film studies student from Los Angeles, California. When not writing, she spends most of her free time costume designing and trying to come to terms with the ending of *The Sun Also Rises*.

**Emma Doerksen** is a fourth year cinema studies student and is the editor-in-chief and co-founder of Cinema Six magazine. Emma also enjoys painting, photography, filmmaking, hiking, and queer theory.

**Ingrid Llambi** is a third-year student at the University of Toronto studying English, Cinema Studies, and Creative Expression & Society. Her poetry and short fiction have been published by Scholastic and Early Harvest Magazine, among others, and she recently released *Slut*, her first chapbook. Aside from writing, she lives for horror films, experimental art, and roses.

**James Lord Parker** is a Toronto-based writer and the bassist of *Illvsionia*. His poetry has appeared in *Sewer Lid*, *Scarborough Fair*, *SickNotWeak*, *Poetry Breakfast*, *Paragon*, and other journals. While working on his book of poetry, James spends his time drinking copious amounts of coffee and finding new uses for his English degree from U of T.

**Lorina Hoxha** is in her third year at the University of Toronto, studying Political Science and Philosophy. She is the co-editor of the *Trinity Review 129*.

**Maia Kachan** likes to think a lot, practices making latte art, and writes angsty poems about girls. She studies English and equity studies at Victoria College. Her first collection, *On Growing Old*, is being released in May 2017 by Grey Borders Books.

**Malcolm Sanger** is studying anthropology and film at the University of Toronto.

**Marina Nicholson** is a second year student of English and Art History at the University of Toronto.

**Matthew Johnstone** is a third-year undergraduate student at U of T working on a Specialist degree in Socio-Cultural Anthropology. He invests most of his spare time in poetry workshops and open-mic poetry events.

"My name is **Mithila Rajavel** and I am 24 years old. I am a University of Toronto Alumni having received my Honours Bachelor of Arts majoring in English and Women and Gender Studies in 2015. I am currently completing my Bachelor of Education at York University. I have always had a passion for the arts and hope to foster the passion in my future students!"

"I am 19 years old and a political science and near and middle eastern civilizations student at the University of Toronto. I have a strong interest in expressing the essence of femininity through my photographs--in which my subjects feel freedom in their own womanhood." – **Nazanin Zarepour**

"I set out fifty years ago to be a famous writer, never got close, and spent 30 years teaching in the Detroit Public Schools – which crumbling organization kicked me out in September 2012. I kept writing in the basement all these years; I have binders full of poems." – **Paul Grams**

**Sadia Awan** is a photographer, a potential writer, and an inTrEPID explorer situated in this urban jungle we call Toronto. She likes to photograph inopportune moments, since they prove to be the most challenging to capture.

**Sophia Jaworski** is a west coast tidal pool traipsing Toronto bike lanes. Her poetry has appeared in *STEPS* magazine, and 'Read This, Damnit'.

**Victoria Butler** is a certified Mom friend who hails from Barrie, Ontario, where she is the Editor-in-Chief of *The Northern Appeal*. She spends her time watching videos of cats and thinking she should be writing instead.

"This story was inspired by an experience I had working as an inventory clerk in the seventies shortly after migrating from Canada to Kenya. I have since had a career in social work and began writing when I retired from it. I am currently working on a novel." – **Zinat Lalani**



