Verso: A Journal of Undergraduate Literary Criticism ©2009

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Strike that, reverse it.
-Willy Wonka

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In many ways, an undergraduate degree is always, from the outset, in a position of failure. It is something that only has any meaning in relation to what it isn't: "Inder' graduate school or 'under' the prospect of graduating at all, the unifying principle of the experience is always its own ending—something that it can achieve only when it isn't being experienced any longer. As a result, as undergraduate students we sometimes have the tendency to see our time here as an extended rehearsal, investing a great deal in what all of this is leading to-

sounda like the With Verso, we propose this: "Strike that, reverse it."

We deserve to take ourselves seriously in what it is we do. I don't

mean that we should think of ourselves as infant intellectuals and wunderkind, gloating over the glossy, glossy future illuminated by our GPAs. I mean that we ought to take ourselves seriously insofar as this—this failed, errant, incomplete work that we do—is our occupation, and it is an occupation that we live through right now, not in some vague future that we are always working towards. Taking ourselves seriously would mean only teinvesting ourselves in the present, getting serious about the playfulness that

our failure to have reached maturity affords.

When else in our lives are we going to have access to such a rich intellectual space and yet so few demands dictating what we do in that space? When else are we going to have the opportunity for

(please never ask shetoriocal questions - only Adom Mille can pull that off.)

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our errors and failures to be productive rather than consequential? With this in mind, I think that we should start thinking about how our work can be excellent on its own terms. Rather than pretending to be knowledgeable, experienced, and accrethe freedom to engage in reading and writing that fails to be these things; we can, and should, be producing work that is experimental and imaginative, playful and audacious. And, in the spirit of taking our lack of seriousness seriously, we ought to be taking this

work out of a vacuum and sharing it with one another.

Rind of our of word, The seven essays that we have collected in this inaugural publication of Verso represent this breed of excellent undergraduate academia from students in Dalhousie University's English programs. We are sharing these papers with you not only because they are well-written and well-argued (which they are), but also, and even more so, because they are smart and playful, because they take Hims how risks with difficult and discursive subjects, because they approach I wad with a different or unique or unexpected angle.

The name Verso is meant to speak to this idea of failure—of the possibility for it to be an active, engaged, important activity or stance. It is about coming at something from a different direction—perhaps even the wrong one—and finding value in that misdirection. Visually, I wanted this book to look like a mistake. Something a little bit confusing, conflating the beginning and the end, the points of opening and closure.

(How was I planning to end thus again?)

Zavi Showler
Editor-in-Chief

(more personal!)

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ADAM MILLER is, by his own admission, an unabashed romantic, and that comes with some stigma in contemporary culture. He is another one of those dilettantes, an English Honours student, and he spends his spare time in private shame... or, rather, reading – namely Cormac McCarthy.

PETER SALTSMAN is in his final year of a Combined Honours degree in English and Contemporary Studies. In his first year, someone once referred to him as "the Jack Kerouac of literary criticism." He has spent the subsequent three years trying to figure out what that meant and whether or not it was an insult.

ANDY VERBOOM is graduating this year with his Honours BA in English. He is academically and creatively interested in world and post-colonial literatures, contemporary poetry, gender studies, trauma, and memory. Next year, he'll be pursuing these interests at the graduate level at the University of Alberta.

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