

VERSO

An Undergraduate
Journal of
Literary Criticism

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The publication of this journal would not have been possible without the support of the Dalhousie University Department of English, the Dalhousie Undergraduate English Society, and the Dalhousie Arts and Social Sciences Society.

Dalhousie University, Halifax, Nova Scotia - 2014

"Education is a great shield against experience. It offers so much, ready-made and from all the best shops, that there's a temptation to miss your own life in pursuing the lives of your betters."

Robertson Davies, *World of Wonders*

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Metamemoir in Wayne Johnston's *Baltimore's
Mansion*

EDITOR'S NOTE

verso, n1: "The back of a leaf in a manuscript or printed book; the side presented to the eye when the leaf has been turned over." (*OED*)

T

he title of this journal is a fitting one. It is student-run collaborations like *Verso* which form the under-celebrated "verso" of the undergraduate experience.

The "recto," is the process of essay writing that ends with the instructor's receipt of a paper; but this model is flawed and incomplete. One should not spend hours upon hours on a piece of work just to have it die in the corner of a mouse-infested office in the McCain building. What's the point of getting comments from the instructor if there is no next step?

Handing a paper in should be just the beginning of a larger process. *Verso* allows students' essays to be read, shared, and edited by their peers, friends, and family members. Thanks to *Verso*, a piece of work can become something one can put on a shelf, instead of a long-forgotten Word file on a laptop

somewhere. Submitting an essay, whether it be accepted or not, provides a healthy reminder of all the hard work one puts into an essay.

Students who participate in projects outside of the classroom – for the sake of their own educational betterment – have the chance of escaping the problem put forward by Robertson Davies in the quotation I’ve selected as the epigraph for this year’s journal.

It is for this reason that I am so happy to have been a part of the creation of *Verso* this year. I would encourage anyone and everyone to get involved with projects like this one, to fulfill the important “verso” of one’s education.

Emma Skagen
Editor in Chief

CONTRIBUTORS

JESSE ABELL is a fourth year Combined Honours History and English student. She reads a lot of Michael Ondaatje, and is currently struggling to write a History thesis on “Ladies’ Columns” in the colonial Ghanaian press. Lately, she has been returning to Joan Didion’s *Slouching Through Bethlehem* for lessons on how to live real life after graduation.

DANIEL BERGMAN is a fourth-year English and Political Science student at Dalhousie with a special interest in all things Shakespearean. He especially loves *Othello*, a tragedy that continues to reward theoretical examination from a variety of literary and philosophical angles. Upon graduation this spring, he harbours the modest hope of finding steady employment – whether in a coffee shop or beyond. When he is not busy agonizing over the wording of his essays or otherwise staring into the abyss, Daniel can be found playing guitar at open mic nights across the city and posting pictures of his border collie online.

ROISIN BOYLE is an English major from Halifax in her third year at Dalhousie University. In her first year, she completed the

Foundation Year Programme at the University of King's College. She then spent a year studying engineering. After lamenting that math was devouring her reading and writing time, she switched back to arts. She has a special interest in the Middle Ages, as well as in science fiction. She is leaning towards getting her master's degree, and perhaps teaching in some capacity when she graduates.

DEVON COUTTS is a third-year student at Dalhousie University, currently working towards a combined honours degree in Contemporary Studies and English. As for the future, graduate school in any combination of the aforementioned subjects has been contemplated. If pressed to answer what takes place in the off hours between analyzing great literature, stumbling through philosophy, and wrangling wild thoughts into that thing we call an essay, Devon would be decidedly vague on the matter. Because what more than thoughts can be effectively wrangled? Certainly not dragons. Ahem. Everybody knows that.

SAMANTHA ELMSLEY is a fourth-year English and Early Modern Studies student at the University of King's College. Her love of literature began with the *Animal Ark* series, and her love of writing originated with her first scrawl ("Lauren is a meanie") in her ongoing diary. When not reading a Thomas King novel,

she can be found reading something else in the library, opinionating at the Dalhousie *Gazette* office, or swimming laps at the Dalplex.

ROBIN FRASER is a third-year English and History of Science student from Halifax, Nova Scotia. She has been writing creatively since childhood and as of late has taken an avid interest in critical and academic writing. Specific interests include point of view, perception, and expression in both prose and poetry.

MATT GILLIS is a fourth-year Combined Honours student with majors in English and Early Modern Studies. He has published essays on monstrosity in *Verso* and *Babel* and has also lectured on the topic at a handful of conferences, including the third annual Dalhousie Arts and Social Sciences Society Conference and the 33rd annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference, among others. He hopes to continue his research at a graduate level this coming fall—that is, assuming the monsters don't get him first. Matt's current research explores the theme of monstrosity as it relates to a handful of Old English nominal compounds in the literary epic, *Beowulf*.

RACHAEL HENCHER is a fourth-year student in the process of completing her combined

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ANDREA KOWALSKI moved from Ottawa, Ontario to Halifax to attend university. She is in her second year of study of a double major in English and Political Science at Dalhousie University. Outside of her studies Andrea plays rugby for the Dalhousie women's team, pursues her interests in visual and literary art, as well as feeding her increasingly time-consuming documentary addiction. "How to Create Inhumanity" is her first, of what she hopes to be more, published works.

JACOB SANDLER is a fourth year student in his final year of an honours degree in English and Canadian Studies. He is interested in poetry and poetics, Canadian literature, and modes of individual and collective identity. Currently Jacob is a co-President of the Dalhousie Undergraduate English Society, and co-chair of the organizational committee for

the 2014 Annual Atlantic Undergraduate English Conference.

BRYNN STAPLES is a third-year student at the University of King's College, pursuing a combined honours degree in English and Early Modern Studies. In her free time, she likes making elaborate sandwiches, playing hockey, and running marathons of procrastination. While she enjoys literature and philosophy, writing essays usually makes her ask difficult questions like: *What is the meaning of life? What should I have for dinner?*, and *Why didn't I go to art school?* She may yet end up there.

GRACE SZUCS is a fourth-year English student who, after graduation, plans to leave the confines of Dalhousie's book-cave and focus her attention outside of her own mind for a while. She'd just like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all of the professors "on the ground" at Dalhousie and King's who work to humanize the experience of university, a place that can often feel highly institutionalized. You have given her the tools to be proudly and happily independent among the masses. Thank you.

DANNY TETLOCK is a transfer student from British Columbia, majoring doubly in English and Creative Writing, and hoping to complete said degree sometime before he is old, grey,

and yelling at neighbourhood kids from his front stoop. He also hopes this ever more elusive Bachelor's degree will indeed make him a most eligible bachelor someday. For this essay, he wishes to thank *you* for reading it, his Pulp Fiction professor Dr. Kathy Cawsey for assigning both great and pulpy works, and his T.A. Kala Hirtle for tolerating his penchant for unnecessary verbosity (e.g., everything you read just now).

WILLIAM TILLECZEK is a student in his final year at The University of King's College. He will graduate in May 2014 with a BA combined honours degree in Contemporary Studies and English, with a minor in Classics. He hopes to continue his education in an MA degree next fall.

REBECCA WORTZMAN is a fifth-year combined honours student majoring in English and Economics. She is a part-time Economics tutor at Dalhousie University and a volunteer at the Ecology Action Centre. In her studies, she primarily focuses in Modern and contemporary literature, international trade and finance, and environmental economics. She is most interesting in post-colonial discourses and national literatures. Her interest in these subjects prompted her to travel to Central America and South Africa, and to participate in a semester exchange to Perth,

Australia where she studied Australian literature.

