

VERSO: An Undergraduate Journal of Literary Criticism ©2012

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Picasso, Pablo, Spanish, 1881-1973

Woman with a Book, 1932

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“A good essay must have this permanent quality about it; it must draw its curtain round us, but it must be a curtain that shuts us in, not out.” - Virginia Woolf

Editor's Note

This year marks the two-hundredth anniversary of the birth of one of the most canonical writers of English literature: Charles Dickens. And though this tidbit of information is on the lips of anyone who knows anything about literature, please allow me a moment to share one of Dickens's rarer quotations, describing his 1842 visit to Halifax. As recounted by *The Globe and Mail*, upon visiting the city's House of Assembly the author proclaimed that it "was like looking at Westminster through the wrong end of a telescope". While Halifax has obviously changed a great deal, it is the image which the writer invokes, of looking backwards at something traditional and established, on which I wish to focus.

Our further distance from the nineteenth century brings to light one of the most complex questions in the study of literature: how does one define a "classic". Pablo Picasso, whose modernist painting serves as *Verso's* cover this year, dealt with the same question, arguing that "art is not the application of a canon of beauty but what the instinct and the brain can conceive beyond any canon". Many of our essayists have embodied Picasso's ideology, selecting some of the most canonical works and periods of literature, and reframing their discourse with new and more contemporary modes. Yet the definition of contemporary is in itself problematic. We now live in the "post-postmodern" era: modernists like Picasso are from a different century, and the Canadian culture wars were the products of our parents' undergraduate university experiences.

All of which begs the question: how will history perceive the academic discourses which we ourselves are sharing, both in and out of the classroom? An obvious one is the digital revolution, which *Verso*, like many other publications, has embraced: 2012 includes the launching of *Verso's* first online journal. Yet digitization is in itself the merging of histories, using contemporary tools and older texts. As we develop our discourse it will always remain important to both utilize our foundations, and to continue reassessing, reinterpreting, and reviewing the world with fresh eyes.

Naomi Cooperman
Editor-in-Chief

Contributors

Frances Dorenbaum is completing her fourth year of a Combined Honours in English and Spanish. She enjoys reading Renaissance texts including those of William Shakespeare and John Donne. As well, she likes early 20th century American literature, especially the poetry of Edna St. Vincent Millay and Emily Dickinson. She has published photos in *The Philistine*, is one of the copy-editors of *Fathom*, and is an arts contributor for *The Gazette* and *The Watch*.

Matt Gillis is a Combined Honours student working toward majors in English and Early Modern Studies. His love for all things Joseph Conrad led him to study British Literature, where he encountered *Beowulf*, *Paradise Lost*, and other influential works in the English Canon. Matt has also taken Dalhousie's Tolkien course, "Tolkien: Fantasy and Medievalism," a class that explores Tolkien's academic writings and his inspiration for crafting *The Lord of the Rings*.

Rebecca Hazell is a King's student completing her fourth year in the English Honours programme. She will be returning to Toronto after graduation with the intention of narrowing her great interest in literature and applying to master's programs. This narrowing of interest may include representations of the city in English literature, such as Dickens's London, Joyce's Dublin, Hemingway's Paris, or Whitman's New York. Travel, for research purposes, may also be incorporated into her year off.

Kathleen M. Higgins is a native of Nova Scotia who has recently completed the very last class for her Combined Honours English and Sociology Degree at Dalhousie; she will graduate this spring. This paper, written for a Fairy Tales seminar class, is one of the results of her attempt to, in her final year of study, write just one paper that didn't somehow incorporate gender studies or theory. This little experiment was predictably (and perfectly happily) unsuccessful.

Esmé Hogeveen is a third-year student from Ontario, who likes reading books, creative writing, and skating on the oval. She really enjoyed the research process of writing this essay, especially being able to use art history as a means of interpreting 20th century poetry.

Julie Ireland is in her final year of her degree, English honours. After graduating she will be pursuing her interest in health and wellness by taking preparatory classes for the Canadian College of Naturopathic Medicine. Aside from her interest in health, Julie finds Japanese poetry and film very fascinating. She also likes zebras and ginger, and dislikes writing in the third-person, but does it for the sake of consistency.

Brittany Kraus is currently a 3rd year English Honours student at the University of King's College. She has won prizes in both the Dalhousie English Department's Varma and Valentine's Day Sonnet Competitions, and was also published in the 2011 print version of Verso. She prefers cats to dogs, red wine to white, and has a genuine affinity for the winter months. She also holds a diploma in Music Performance from Grant MacEwan University.

Siobhan O'Beirne is a fourth-year English and Contemporary Studies student at King's. Siobhan is looking forward to graduation and all of the unknowns that come along with it. She is taking a year off school to prepare for a graduate program in Publishing. Surprisingly, Siobhan was better at reading and writing in Spanish than in English until the 8th grade.

Adrien Robertson is a senior undergraduate student whose interests are primarily in theory, hypermedia and narrative, and Canadian literature. He intends to continue studying and writing about the development of new media narratives in graduate school and pass off his video game addiction as valid research.

Liz Stanton is finishing her English Honours degree at Dalhousie this term, but plans to continue asking pesky questions about gender and literature at graduate school in the fall. She hopes to work her favourite joke into an essay someday, but until then, how many feminists does it take to replace a light bulb? That's not funny.

Anna Wedlock: "I grew up in a town of 1700 people: seven churches, no traffic lights. I read too much and talked too little; grew my hair to my waist, wore dresses to the floor. I wanted to be Harriet the Spy, Gertrude Stein, Martha Graham. I still read more than I speak, drink coffee too much and smile too little. I'm not Gertrude or Harriet or Martha; but I'm becoming someone named Anna."

Sarah Wilson is a fourth-year undergraduate at Dalhousie and King's, working towards a Combined Honours in Social Anthropology and English. She has always loved reading and writing and has really enjoyed continuing to do so in university, particularly looking at poststructuralist writing and philosophy. After graduation in May, Sarah will be taking a year off to work and travel through Canada and Europe before applying to grad school.