

**VERSO: A Journal of Undergraduate Literary Criticism
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My words in her head: cold polished stones sinking
through a quagmire.

- James Joyce, *Glacomo Joyce*

Editor's Note

Verso speaks to the act of reading. As I turn the first page I am presented with verso; the words carry my eyes from left to right, then downwards, then over to the reverse of the page and on to the next. The steady turning of pages gives rise to a feeling of forward motion without me physically moving. Sometimes we forget this strange quality of reading, allowing us to sink into a story. As undergraduate students of literature, we turn pages as regularly as we can, labouring through the great stories and poems as they are assigned to us. Literary works pull us into their unfamiliar worlds again and again. Once we reach the final page, we are promptly asked for our thoughts. Sometimes our answers are as vague as the question; our interpretations lie flat as we slide our single-sided papers into submission boxes to be graded. But there are also occasions when we read something that lets us think imaginatively and, in turn, write imaginatively.

Perhaps what we love about studying literature is that it leaves room for possibility. We find specific meaning in a text that contains a multitude of meanings; we dare to make a convincing argument when we ourselves are not entirely convinced. Like every good pun, every good story is two-sided and is best appreciated when the two sides are allowed to play freely with each other. This is why we exchange our interpretations: this is why we, the editors of *Verso*, believe that we ought to share our work with one another.

The seven essays you will read in this journal are meant to demonstrate the academic diversity nurtured within the Dalhousie English department's array of programs. They have been chosen for their excellence as well as their creative sense of play. In each you will find a well-written and convincing argument that innovatively engages with a literary text. These authors take the risk of tackling complicated and difficult subjects and, as a result, find new ways of contributing to ongoing critical discussions.

A friend recently asked me: why write fiction? We as English students dedicate our education to reading and interpreting poetry and prose. Surely we should have reasons for why it is important. But I have not found the answer yet. My instinct is simply to read more.

Cynthia Spring
Editor-in-Chief

Contributors

Natalie Childs is completing her fourth year of a Combined Honours degree in English and Contemporary Studies. After graduating, she plans to complete her MA in the Cultural Studies and Critical Theory program at McMaster University. Her paper was written for Dr. Greenfield's seminar "New York in Fiction and Poetry."

Paige Sisley is a fourth year English student who especially enjoys contemporary, feminist and world literature. She also pursues her own creative endeavors, writing, doodling and taking pictures in her spare time. This paper was written for the South African Literature Post-2000 seminar she took with Dr. Travis Mason.

Kala Hirtle will be graduating in October with an Honours BA in English. She wrote this paper for Dr. Lyn Bennett's seminar class "Literature of the English Revolution." Kala is interested in medical humanities and how they enter literature. Next year, she will be pursuing these interests at the graduate level at Dalhousie University.

Peter Chiykowski is graduating from Dalhousie with a Combined Honours in English and Creative Writing. He's an excitable medievalist, an avid creative writer; and a lover of things literary. In addition to his short stories, he writes two online comics with (occasionally) literary themes: *Little Worlds* and *Rock, Paper; Cynic*. He looks forward to continuing his studies at Dalhousie in the English MA program

Melinda Robb is a fourth-year English and Contemporary Studies student. She wrote "The Writer's Atonement" for Dr. Brittan's class "British Literature of the Later 20th Century." After a year off, she hopes to continue her studies at the graduate level.

Emily Corrie is in her fourth year of an Honours degree in English Literature and can't wait to escape back to British Columbia after having discovered that the rumours about the east coast's atrocious climate are true. She plans to attend graduate school in 2011 on the west coast. Emily is the most inspired by postmodern fiction, French cinema, and walking up mountains in beautiful un-peopled places.

Ella Bedard is a fourth year student working towards a Combined Honours degree in Contemporary Studies and History. However, she probably should have been an English student, since literature is what she finds most thrilling. Ella was introduced to the 'complicated simplicity' of Gertrude Stein in Dr. Diepeveen's 20th Century Poetry class. To her great surprise, Ella adores modernist literature, especially the work of Ralph Ellison. In regard to her future plans: well, it's still up in the air.