



# The Warren

UNDERGRADUATE REVIEW



HUGHES  
MCMILLIN  
GRUTTER  
VAN EEGHAN  
UNRAU  
UNDERWOOD  
HYDER  
ZOUBOULES

AN INTERDISCIPLINARY CREATIVE JOURNAL

SPRING 2013



# The Warren

UNDERGRADUATE REVIEW



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*The Warren Undergraduate Review* is an annual publication lovingly compiled by undergraduates at the University of Victoria. Submissions must be made electronically at <http://thewarren.uvic.ca>.

All submissions are processed by an executive editor and then blind-read by the editors. With some exceptions, the work approved by the editors is printed in the journal. If you don't think the journal is good enough, it's your own fault for not getting involved.

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# From the Editors

We call ourselves editors. It's a curious and self-defeating title to hazard: "Look, there goes one of those snooty aesthetes terrorizing everything with their little red pen!" The image of the editor as someone who paints the world red with critique seizes on an uncomfortable truth, but it's deaf to its own underlying pulse. Vital signs may be felt at the root of *edit*, which means no more or no less than to make things public.

That is what we do. And these inky vellum things that we make public are social things: they announce themselves to the world as sites of congregation. We are all of us editors—including you, dear reader—animating and sustaining a public sphere through these vibrant social things.

This year, we witnessed the rise and fall of some key cultural institutions in Victoria. As it turns out, the public sphere is not blessed with the security of four walls and a door. It's tenuous and intangible. In a word, we have to be militant about staking our claim in public space.

We can't create worlds. We're not wizards (sorry). But we can cultivate our own "here," around which our bodies and thoughts can orbit and occasionally collide and whiz off into myriad lines of flight. That is a precious thing. And you can't bring all that to life with just a little red pen.

Thank you to all who made this possible. And thank you to the whole team for being so bloody gallant and patient and beautiful.

**Patrick Close**, *Editor-in-Chief*

This isn't *The Paris Review*. But what you're holding is a pretty fine selection of the work undergraduates are capable of. As editors, we're proud. Writers and critics like David Foster Wallace, Ian McEwan, and Cormac McCarthy cut their teeth doing what they're known for at university. No one on our editorial team is a prophet, but, it's nice to think that *The Warren Undergraduate Review* could be one of the first publications that featured the work of that someone you'll someday read about.

There's no reason it shouldn't be. The work in this issue of *The Warren* is a testament to the power of language, intellect, and vision. I hope you enjoy it. And I hope that—just maybe—something within the pages of this thin spine causes you to think or feel in a way you haven't quite before.

**Geoffrey Line**, *Vice Editor-in-Chief*

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# Bethany Hughes

## *Making Animals of Each Other*

They intended to learn the consequences of each other's movements, where if Aurelia kneeled on all fours, Sawyer would have no choice but to get the bridle. Controlling how these instruments could be used willingly on each other as opposed to the past. She pulled her tights down in front of the mirror: his nails left a gash halving her body from the s of her hips around a dimpled plum. He inherited the same rough hands as his Iroquois grandfather when he plaited his thick hair into a long black braid. His new bedroom reminded her of being in a hotel. The crown moulding splashed filigree in Victorian style, sculpting an arch above his doorway. Only one tasseled lamp trampled in the middle of the floor. He climbed through the window annex separating his living quarters from the metal shop. The stained glass terrariums he welded in his free time hung like icicles from the ceiling ventilation. She was known to water his cactus unnecessarily if left alone and rummage through his toolkit of pincers and picks. Every time he passed by her discarded third and fourth place ribbons pinned on a clothesline between the annex, he would have to pinch the colourful silk with magnesium flavoured hands. For good luck, or by habit, he wanted her poised ass up when he returned. She would never mind his stains and rather enjoyed grooming his soiled cuticles with her tongue. They could lie there in his single bed, unleashing memories, sometimes about what they used to do to their friends when they were kids.

“So we used to play secretary in her basement, write secret notes on the typewriter and my name would always be Cherry Dennis. We both wanted to marry Ty Pennington. I don't know how it started, but one of us would crawl into this cabinet under her dad's desk. Pretty spacious in there—they didn't have a computer monitor—but your legs would hang out with the door open. She'd inspect me, not saying much. Until the day Mr. Vanderhout demanded we unlock the door to his study. You wonder if parents wouldn't be so cruel if they had a sense about these things.

“In middle school, Lydia Vanderhout, four other girls, and I watched each other cum on pool jets, bath faucets, and the bidet in my parents' bathroom. We decided to let one girl lie down so the rest would have an area to focus on. Katie Rousseau was first and I got to suck her tits. I wanted to keep going once we were into the hot tub sessions, but then we started getting boyfriends and practicing on each other became weird, you know? Just wasn't the same. One minute I'm kissing Jessica Halloway up in her bedroom, then she's saying we should watch *The O.C.* instead.

“I always saw Jessica at church on Christmas Eve. She had long fingernails that flipped through hymns, but I wasn't paying attention to the words. How are you supposed to suppress your carnal desire? Maybe I wanted to unzip her Sunday best with my teeth, but she probably already knew that.

“Some guy told me I was desensitized once. Tragic stimulation from my formative psychosexual years.” True, she could drink boiling water immediately after pouring, and she did have a habit of glazing over when people talked to her. Appeared naïve but sang Christian rock ballads in the shower as a prelude to touching herself. Belonged to a different realm of nymphomania than most. With Sawyer as her symmetry, the pair liked to expose each other or else risk becoming numbed savages.

The moment she felt the leather keeper of her riding crop making contact with her spine, he silenced her. In the year she'd known him, he'd forgiven shame for sadomasochism and could now confess the discretions that defined his bisexuality: “I thought all the boys my age were doing it. We would sneak into the forest at recess. Had a kind of clubhouse out there. We would line up with our pants down and Robert Luehmann would lift up our little pricks and decide if we could go inside the teepee. Everyone denied that happening once we were in high school. I had to pretend I'd never put Kevin Chartrand's balls in my mouth when we'd shower for lacrosse. But he wouldn't look at me once we got Adam's apples and neither would the rest of them.”

They walked past a barricaded stamp shop on Arkell Street that burned down while they were making animals of each other a block away. Bookshelves like broken-sprung diving boards, sinking into a calamity of charred brick. “I wanna loot the debris,” she squealed with enticing intonation. Naturally, he hoisted her onto his shoulders and slipped a finger under her skirt when she hovered over the barbed wire.

He left her bruises and bite-marks galore. She wore strategically holey tights and let him shred the inseam. After he was through with her, she only had measly Lycra stockings that wouldn't stay up. While she smoked a cigarette in their lair, pungent with stale sweat, he rode his bike to the Giant Tiger to buy her a new pair of nylons to go home in. He didn't want her to feel disposable but she begged him, with every detached kiss to treat her like a real tart.

They tried to make gasoline bubbles over a candle: melted the plastic wands into windmills. Placed a tab of acid on each other's tongues; saw third eyes sprout from foreheads. On recycling day they roamed the streets of Hamilton, collecting enough milk cartons to build an igloo. They argued methods of stacking until she let him dominate the grunt work. When the dome took form, he peddled divots of snow and secured five upright flashlights inside. Their cardboard abode ignited the sky above an empty field with multi-coloured nutritional facts. A refurbished Aurora Borealis was enough to make her smile.

They weren't restrictive. Often they would go out to the bar and completely separate, find the same sex to meet in the bathroom. Betrayal was part of their ache of attraction before they came back together.

She could have been the Provisional Junior Champion from the Southwestern Equine Division. Excelled in the Jumper course because she was risky and could make the tightest turns to race the time. He keeps a picture of her pegged on the clothesline: sporting rigid

posture, exalting over a turquoise Liverpool. Legs hiked up Lazuli's barrel chest, reins with a stiff loop under three fingers around the pinky.

He was her farrier. She liked his fingers lubricated with grease from being in the shop. Where he would hack away, making horseshoes, and drive his pickup out to the boons to fit them onto Lulu's hooves. He wouldn't even wash his hands after forging six nails to fit and hammering on the hot diamond shoe. He'd ease Lulu's leg out of his knee-grip and slap the mare on her hind. Then come toward Aurelia, spin her against the wall and dissect her body from head to heel. His touch inflicted her with a ringing-in-the-ears feeling, which she took as an indicator of being in love.

Weeks later, Aurelia discovered that Lulu had developed an abscess on her back left foot. "The nail is pressing against the laminae, the sensitive part of the hoof. She's gone lame, I'm afraid," the vet diagnosed, stroking the horse's crimson coat. A chill came in through the slatted barn window but the light glazed Lazuli's thoroughbred physique, outlining a current of veins along her neck. At the same time, Aurelia tried to count the weeks since her last period.

"How could you be so careless, aren't you supposed to be trained for this?" She slapped Sawyer across the face and left a scalding handprint on his cheek. Only took a few seconds to maneuver her to the stall by her wrists, spank her, and put her in her place.

They used to smoke a joint behind the trailer every time he came to replace a shoe. In the summer they dazed away into the cornfields and everything was simpler. Only her honeycomb hair conflicted the wind. The same unruliness as his Palomino's tail cantering to catch up. Watching her change seat, hips jiving with the animal, bowing through sycamore trees, gave him enough tortured pleasure to nourish a lifetime of chimeras.

First they gave each other henna tattoos. She straddled his back and painted a twisted arbutus in several dots with calligraphic bark. He stroked a sunflower on the inside of her elbow. Ended up looking tribal the way he smeared petals. Then they dipped their thumbs into a well of India ink and imprinted signatures on each other's inner thighs. One day he pulled out a safety pin and they gave each other horseshoe stick n' pokes on the back of their necks. She drew the outline she wanted on a *National Geographic* crossword puzzle. Winced out clues like "potato pancake, five down" while he concentrated on her unblemished nape and tried not to fuck up. "How many times do you think you've stabbed me by now?" she asked as he swayed the needle through candle flame. "At least a thousand," he replied, delighting in the shivers, the flinches when he sewed ash just below her cerebellum. This rite of passage gave him power to singe every nerve he flickered over while she grappled impossibly for "what a tetrapod's leg evolved from, fourteen across." Marking their remnants of lovemaking to a permanent dwelling on skin. Beyond daydreaming, intangible fixation, they wanted to exist under each other's human membranes. On the night of a blizzard that delayed Windsor Provincials—a competition she could no longer compete in because of his insensitivity—she spread her legs and bent over his kiln. Demanding he brand her with a Trillium insignia.

The same one he burned into Lazuli the first day they met. When the mare reared and bucked and sent Aurelia crashing into the stall's corner. Sawyer raced her to the hospital and didn't know why she was laughing with two fractured ribs. She thought he was gentle for taking care of her. He thought she was fragile enough to be broken in by a few kicks.

“So I have this fantasy of you strapping a bridle around my face. Buckling the notches as tight as they go. You could hold the reins from behind—I'd even give you my crop. You would have to slot the bit into my mouth, very carefully. The metal would probably feel cold,” she whispered and involuntarily shuddered her tongue between her teeth.

They both withheld a repulsion to gags. She from waking up delirious to a Rohypnol kidnap, and the neighbour saying, “You better run along home now.” This came accompanied with a lifelong prejudice for men in the Navy. His disgust lingered from when his uncle said goodnight.

“What made you want to be a farrier?”

“I guess I like working with my hands.”

She knew this was true by the lacerations he would leave whipped on her skin and the way his grip forged lava through her arteries. She hoped the casualties he struck would scar safely.

# Makenzie Zouboules

## *Latham Island*

Is it because of the view, uncultivated patches  
of cranberry bushes and quartz veins rippling down to meet  
the Great Slave Lake? Is it because of the waves' frigid breaths,  
enveloping willows by the shore with rime in late September?

No, it is because of the way arctic wind carries  
sound on its back, uncomplaining. Because the moss clutching  
the rock face can absorb only water, not fallible words  
or human abstractions. Because the only prodding  
is done by barbed coniferous branches, piercing the sky  
with their spiny needles.

Because the lowly lichen does not care should you  
accidentally step on its long green toes. Not even if  
you stomp them on purpose.  
It is because a towering heap of Volcanic Granite,  
Breccia, Course-Grained Gabbro, Dacite  
speaks solely through mineral deposits and prospects,  
does not understand joy  
or sorrow.

Here you may yell as loud as you want.  
The hilltop has no ears.



*The Shifty Shadow* (6.5' x 5') by Bronwyn McMillin



*Four Weeks Burning (6.5' x 5')* by Bronwyn McMillin

# Bronwyn McMillin

## *On Painting: An Interview Conducted by Emma Palm*

*Although Bronwyn McMillin began painting with acrylics and watercolours, she made the switch to oils two years ago. Oil paints now dominate her art practice, but she also works with sculpture and returns to watercolours every once in a while.*

WARREN: What attracted you to oil painting?

MCMILLIN: I just really love the way the paint works. More than any other kind of paint, the colours are really intense and have a lot of depth. The mixing qualities are way more vibrant than anything else. The depth of the physical paint goes beyond any other kind of paint—it doesn't just sit on the surface of stuff, it creates more of a space in the colour and the image.

More than any other medium in art school, oil painting has such a significant history, with all this baggage loaded into it. This can be difficult, but it's also interesting to work with something that's been around forever and hasn't really changed a ton. It's pretty exciting.

WARREN: I know that some people who see your paintings for the first time are surprised that they're oil. You use the paint in this way that gives it a lot of translucency or transparency, and you often incorporate a lot of negative space into your work. Is that your way of engaging with or breaking away from the more traditional history of oil painting?

MCMILLIN: Yeah, you could say that and it wouldn't be untruthful. It didn't start that way though. The reason I paint like that, from a purely technical standpoint, is that I learned to paint using watercolours. I've never been formally trained in oil painting, so I translated a lot of the paint handling that I learned from watercolours into my current painting technique. Now that I've been using oils for a little while and I'm more familiar with how they work, I've chosen to hang onto that method because it creates a different conversation with the material. It's engaging with oil painting's history in that it is oil paint but it also speaks about other ways of working.

Transparency is one of the most interesting parts of imagery. The way that you can work with light and suggestion by using it as a technique really appeals to me, so I've always been drawn to it in every genre I've worked in.

WARREN: Even in your sculptures?

MCMILLIN: Yeah. Transparency on every level. Physically—in the traditional way you would think of it in a painting or a photograph that has see-through parts—but also transparency as a concept or a way of approaching objects—a space within another space, or something that transcends the present-ness of an object. Something more ephemeral, in a way, which the transparency suggests.

I'm always trying to work around those spaces you can recognize but you can't really know. I think transparency is a good way of evoking that feeling of recognizing something but not really knowing everything about it.

WARREN: I like that bridge between the medium you've chosen and the concept or content in your work. Do you decide what you'll paint ahead of time?

MCMILLIN: I do choose an image to work from—either a physical image, a bunch of images that I put together, or a specific memory. In the case of *The Shifty Shadow* and *Four Weeks Burning*, I chose a specific memory to work from. But what I really love about painting is that you start with an idea or an image or something solid, but because of the process, you'll never get what you expected. That's what this whole conversation around the history of painting is about. There's this dualistic experience of the image in the world—the experience that inspires the painting—but there's also the reality of the paint as a physical thing. The painting is something between object and image. When you paint figuratively or narratively, like I do, it's interesting to try to keep both those ideas in your mind. Making images that both address the physicality of paint and create a world is really difficult, but I think it can bring something unique and exciting to painting.

WARREN: You acknowledged before that oil painting has one of the richest or longest histories as an art medium. I'm curious about how you approach such contemporary memories and narratives through this old tradition. What is it like to channel your present-day experiences through this very old medium?

MCMILLIN: I don't know if I have a good answer for that. If I'm being honest, I don't think about that that much because painting for me is totally personal. It's afterward, when the painting comes into the world, that you can't avoid it being connected to its historical context. For example, the paintings you're printing—those are from my memories.

WARREN: Do you want to talk any more about the content in those pieces, or would you rather leave it up to interpretation?

MCMILLIN: I think mystery is one of the most important things to me, at least in art, or anything in life, really. Mystery is a beautiful thing, so it's important to keep some of that for myself regarding my paintings. My process for both of those paintings was to locate a memory attached to a specific time and place and try to bring it to life, not using the specific picture memory in my mind, but using imagery I've located in the world to illustrate that picture memory. I wanted to address or tap into the way that memory, for us all, comes from this source of emotion that we can cling to but not recognize. So when you see an image of something really specific—which I hope these images are—you can tell they're really specific to a single person, yet you get a feeling from them that you can bring into your own life or context or memories.

I think the technique of those paintings is really important too. They're dramatic, and the colours are definitely amplified and made into this pseudo-magical realm. I think that's successful in communicating the construction of the image. Those paintings don't replicate a snapshot of the world, which so many paintings do. I think that's impossible. Painting has to transcend that reality to be interesting.

WARREN: Do you look at painting as a labour or trade or craft that can sustain you after school? Is that something that you want to pursue as a livelihood?

MCMILLIN: Well, that's a tricky question. Reality and dream-world are different for sure. I mean I'm not going to say that I want to be a painter because when people proclaim that they're going to be this one specific site of art I find that to be a little constructed. I think it's more accurate to say I want to be an artist, whatever that means. I think that is more in keeping with a practice that happens to be painting at the moment, but which fundamentally is a process of being aware of the world, reacting to it, and creating things from those reactions. That's what I want to do.

# Nadia Grutter

## *Falling*

You fell.

Maybe you fell as a child chasing the checkered soccer ball or catching your slipper on the first basement stair. Maybe you fell as an adult from a cab onto the sidewalk, when the midday businessmen stared from restaurant patios. Maybe in your hurry to pick up the kids you didn't notice the milk spill in Aisle Seven.

At first, you don't notice the pain. People ask you, tell you, that it looks bad. That you must be in so much pain! Is there anything they can do? You say no, they forget their offer, even though they make a mental note not to. You forget too, to a certain degree.

After some time, maybe two weeks or maybe two decades, you throw yourself awake at three a.m. from the hurt. It pulses, down and up your leg, into your other leg, into your organs, razors up your spine and sits on your shoulders. Isn't this just a knee injury? Just a knee injury?

You curse after three straight-legged minutes in the shower and cuss when you bend yourself into your car before work. Colleagues are suddenly friends and recommend, with eyebrows pulled up, that you should go home. Trust me, it's okay, go.

Your bed welcomes self-pity. Nothing could be worse. You ignore your little sister's knocks at the door. You haven't called in a few days. You cry in front of the mirror. This is me crying, you think. Look at yourself, you think. Look at the puffy red and the purple circles. Work says take your time, take it easy. We're fine over here.

You see an expert. He looks at his clipboard when he asks about the problem. It hurts, I guess? You feel less compelled to complain; the man in the waiting room paged through *Reader's Digest* with his prosthetic leg crossed over the real one. He deals, you think. Get it together. The doctor taps you here and there, jams his thumb into the space under your kneecap. You squirm. The medical paper under you crunches. There it is, the doctor smiles. We found it.

He prescribes stretches, pills. Pills to help you sleep, pills to take the pain away, pills pills pills. He suggests another expert, who deals better with cases like yours. You thank him and he nods.

The pills work, you guess? When you run out, you buy more, but the cheaper generic brand. You give up on the stretches. You go back to work. You don't book an appointment with the other expert. You call your sister back. She says you sound... different.

You lose weight. Until you put it back on when you can't afford the pills anymore. You try the stretches again. You walk. After some time, maybe two weeks or two decades, it starts to feel better and becomes a mere inconvenience. You get used to the ache.

You take the elevator, avoid triggers that could spark a flare up. But you never really know. No one really knows. Your friend says the drugs never worked for her, either. At least there is that.

# Dana Underwood

## *Nelson*

At home, I can keep my eyes closed  
and find my way solely  
by the degree of the tilt of the ground  
under my feet: Baker to Uphill, Rosemont, or Fairview.  
I can open my ear to the sky and orient myself  
by the echo of amphitheatre summit peaks.  
And instead of street names,  
you could describe to me the lean of the trees  
on the way, and I'd find you.  
Lick a finger to the wind  
feeling for hoof beats and claw paws;  
I know we're safe here.

# Kaelan Unrau

*palabras*

and word itself  
is an infanticide.  
a self-defeating thought  
both itself and its successor.

that which shapes the lips  
into a crowning question  
and yet with a simple sound  
is stilled.

and in spain  
half-forgot beneath a tangle  
of perplexing semantics  
is a gate left gap-wide  
onto that savage plain  
of an a, and an a, and an a, and

# Kaelan Unrau

## *On Poetry:*

### *An Interview Conducted by Patrick Grace*

WARREN: One of the first things that grabbed my attention was your poetry's philosophical, almost nonchalant tone toward life and language. How does philosophy influence your creative process?

UNRAU: I've always been interested in how the world works and, in particular, how we interact with the world. So I guess I tend to be somewhat philosophical in my writing. But I don't think that's uncommon in poetry. I mean, Wordsworth was a diehard Platonist, and that manifests itself pretty clearly in his work. Yeats was also an extremely philosophical poet. The list can go on and on. Philosophy seeks to reveal the inner workings of existence, and so does poetry. Only the latter is more comfortable with unanswered questions, with mystery. So yes, philosophy does influence my poetry. But at the same time, poetry has also had a profound effect on my philosophy.

WARREN: As budding writers, we're always told to favour concrete imagery over abstraction; and yet, your poetry embraces abstract language. What do you think about focusing on language over imagery, and how it led to the creation of your poem, "palabras"?

UNRAU: I never understood this fear of abstraction. Maybe it applies better to fiction. Then again, Thomas Mann wrote some of the most abstract prose you'll ever find and people seem to think he's a pretty big deal, so I don't know. And for that matter, what do you mean by abstract language? Isn't all language necessarily abstract? Isn't that just what language means? I think that my poem is less abstract than most insofar as it concerns itself primarily with the immediate and unmitigated objects of language, or the words themselves. This perhaps explains my linguistic focus: as I see it, poetry is the perfect medium in which to explore language, to really play with it.

WARREN: There's an infinity that exists in some of your poems, a strange timelessness juxtaposed by a feeling of being hurtled toward one's demise. What inspired you to write this poem in particular? Can you name any other writers whose work inspires you with this same sense of timelessness?

UNRAU: First off, I like the word infinity far better than timelessness. An author who magnificently captures a sense of the infinite—as paradoxical as that sounds—is Wallace Stevens. His poem "An Ordinary Evening in New Haven" is just wild. Yet I am more immediately inspired by the poetry of Borges, not that I enjoy reading Borges any more than I enjoy reading Stevens. Truth be told, the only thing holding my poetry back from being a crude imitation of Borges is simply that I lack the writing chops. That and the fact I can't write poetry in Spanish.



*Portraits by Annah van Eeghan*



*Portraits* by Annah van Eeghan

# Jamaal Hyder

## *On Wittgenstein and Philosophy: An Interview Conducted by Jeremy Scott*

WARREN: So, who is Jamaal Hyder?

HYDER: Well, you know, what a terrible question to ask a philosopher, right? [laughs]

WARREN: In the beginning of *Tractatus Logico-Philosophicus*, Wittgenstein identifies this problem that we have, claiming to have solved it.

HYDER: I think the thing with *The Tractatus* is not that there was a problem that he solved, but that he wanted to claim that he had solved all philosophical problems. The thing that Wittgenstein says about his project in *The Tractatus* is to investigate and establish what the limits of language are. I guess that he thought a lot of the problems of philosophy result from confusion about what language can actually do. So, he builds a model of how language works, particularly how it works in relation to the world, you know, kind of—I guess *The Tractatus* is largely about how language operates to make pictures of the world so that we can then communicate, represent, and work with facts about the world.

So in setting up that system, he manages to build ... well, he manages to show exactly what can and can't be done with language. Once he does that, he starts pointing out that a lot of classical philosophical problems just can't be talked about at all, right? They're beyond the limits of language. So that's why, famously, *The Tractatus* is composed of seven main propositions and then sub-propositions based on those main seven. The first one is, of course, "the world is all that is the case." The last proposition is "whereof we cannot speak, we must remain silent." I mean, those two major propositions kind of bookend the whole project in terms of pointing out that the project is about the whole world, which is to say the whole reality and the whole of what you can talk about with language. Then anything that is beyond that scope isn't really something that's a suitable subject for philosophical analysis.

WARREN: It seems that he's embraced very much a sort of Kantian idea of limitations on what we can talk about in terms of metaphysical problems. Do you think that Wittgenstein goes as far as Kant does?

HYDER: I don't think you're the first to notice and try and make the comparison between Wittgenstein and Kant. In terms of the early project, you know, in terms of *The Tractatus*, Wittgenstein wasn't nearly as hostile to metaphysics in those days. He becomes much more hostile to metaphysics in his later work, *Philosophical Investigations*. In many ways, you can read *The Tractatus* as a work on metaphysics because as much as it is about the structure of language, it's also about how the structure of language mirrors and is connected with reality, which is to say full-blown metaphysical reality.

I think one of the things about Wittgenstein is that he thought a lot more. I think he thought that, in more cases, our language can actually effectively model reality, whereas the line that Kant draws is very hard in terms of what you can know *a priori* and what you can know about the outer world. In Kant's system, the external world is nearly cut off to us. I don't think that's the case in *The Tractatus*.

WARREN: Do you see limits in language's ability to express ethical concepts?

HYDER: I know that Wittgenstein did not write very explicitly about ethics. It wasn't one of his major concerns. I guess Wittgenstein's major document about ethics is a lecture that he gave for the Cambridge Heretic Society, which was one of these intellectual societies out of Cambridge that hosted colloquium-style talks. In that talk, Wittgenstein is very hostile to ethics and the potential for ethics to be real or spoken about meaningfully. It's been a while since I've looked at that particular piece of work, but I can remember he says something along the lines of "if you imagine a big book of facts and in that big book of facts is written every fact about every existing thing, you will not find within that book one ethical proposition." That was his basic stance.

Whether I agree with him about that or not, I don't know. Certainly many smart people have pointed out that it is very difficult to establish what an ethical proposition could be referring to. I think that's fodder for much of modern meta-ethics. I mean, people are still grappling with those very issues.

WARREN: He does seem to double back on that in his lectures when he's talking about aesthetics, though, when he says we can say that things possess beauty. And with that comment, it seems he is saying that a lot of the articulation is in tones of disapproval or approval.

HYDER: Yeah, there are a couple of ways in which that kind of a statement can be read. On the one hand, you have emotivist views about ethical propositions. These views say that when we say something is good or, indeed, if you make an aesthetic proposition like saying something is beautiful, you're not making a factual proposition, but rather emoting an attitude that you have, right? It seems to accord with what you're saying about Wittgenstein saying that it has a lot to do with us expressing our attitudes when we talk about beauty or that kind of thing.

I guess the other way to read something like that, you know, along the lines of *Philosophical Investigations*, [would be to] establish [that if] something is beautiful, it has some sort of use in our language [that is] meaningful to us. Whether it's strictly a true, false, attributable proposition or not, we can talk about beauty insofar as it is useful to us to do so.

That brings me around to another one of the major doctrines that comes out of *Philosophical Investigations*. Wittgenstein roughly held the view that the meaning of a word is its use in a language. So it gives an interesting avenue for having investigated meaning because you don't go to objects themselves to discover meaning. We don't go around and hang labels on things and then that's the name of the thing. Rather, the way you investigate the meaning of a word is to look at language users and see how they use the word and then, automatically, through that kind of an investigation, you can determine the meaning of the word.

WARREN: It's interesting that you bring up language acquisition as a sort of investigation. Can this theory exist alongside contemporary linguistic theories, such as Chomsky's?

HYDER: These days, I certainly agree that at the very least, as human beings, we're constituted in some kind of way that gives us a basic framework for acquiring language. Whether it's as robust as the kind of deep grammatical structures that Chomsky has proposed or if it's something even more rudimentary than that, I don't know. I especially don't know enough empirical science to have the answer.

One of the other philosophers that I like quite a bit is Thomas Reid. His view on language and language acquisition was that there is both natural and artificial language. Natural language consists in those signs that we can understand on the basis of our constitution alone. So these are going to include things like the fact that we know without learning that an angry face is an angry face, and that's the kind of thing that is testable across cultures and well established. Recognition of facial emotive states is very automatic and not based on any kind of language training at all. Similarly, babies crying as a sign of distress is another one of these kinds of natural signs that doesn't need any antecedent training in order to grasp it.

Thomas Reid points out that artificial signs are signs whose meaning we establish by agreement. So as cultural groups or societies, we make agreements about the meaning of a sign, like the written word or something, because clearly letters don't come with their meaning built in, you know. We have to make agreements about that stuff. But, what Reid points out is that we make those agreements by using language. So if you don't hold that we have some natural capacity for a rudimentary set of signs, you're going to have a real hard time telling any kind of an origin story about how we build up these agreements.

So, I think that's quite right. I think we have to have some kind of rudimentary capacity for communicating with signs just in virtue of the fact that we do have these very complicated, very detailed languages that operate on the basis of agreement. I think they've got to be founded in some kind of natural sign basis.

WARREN: One of the things that kept popping up at me when I was researching Wittgenstein for this interview is this quote "If a lion could talk, we wouldn't be able to understand it." We do understand that these rudimentary, natural languages of expressions are almost cross-species. Do you think that he would sort of come around to that?

HYDER: "If a lion could speak" is a very famous quote, and I think he said it in a classroom or while giving a lecture or something. I'd have to look it up, but it was something he said in person, not something that he wrote. I think the rest the quote goes, "If a lion could speak we couldn't understand it because what do we know about the life of a lion?" On the one hand, I think his point is that a lion is so foreign to us and that language is so dependent on how we live, that it would be very difficult to learn Lion. A lion is like an alien creature to a human being. We know so little about what living the life of a lion is like that understanding a lion's speech might be blocked off from us.

WARREN: It's essentially like aliens coming down from Mars, or some kind of amoeba, if we're to extend the metaphors slightly.

HYDER: That's right. Well, you know, when we talk about aliens coming down from Mars, cinematically, we depict aliens with a kind of human-like form and some kind of life that resembles ours.

WARREN: Little green men is the classic image.

HYDER: Yeah, little green men are kind of your trump version of that. But, if we really think about aliens and how they could potentially be if they were language users, we might not even know it, right? Their way of speaking could be so far from ours and tied to such a different kind of life that we could never get to a place where we could translate back and forth.

Now, mind you, I've always thought Wittgenstein could be entirely wrong about that lion thing, and the biography of Wittgenstein suggests that he had a terrible time even understanding other human beings himself. He was a notoriously difficult man. So maybe what he really should have said is, "If a lion could speak I could never understand him."

# Contributors

**Nadia Grutter** is a ridiculous person with illegible handwriting and a legitimate addiction to Adam's Natural Crunchy Peanut Butter. She is a fourth-year political science and writing student.

**Bethany Hughes** is completing a double major in visual arts and creative writing from the University of Victoria.

**Jamaal Hyder** is a fifth-year honours philosophy student.

**Bronwyn McMillin** is a visual artist interested in issues of memory, perception, representation, and the space of intersection between psychological and physical space. She was born and raised in Victoria, BC, and is currently completing her last semester of a visual arts and women's studies degree.

**Dana Underwood** is from Nelson in the Kootenays of British Columbia. She is a fourth-year English major.

**Kaelan Unrau** is a complex system of flesh, blood and bone, who enjoys poetry and long walks on the beach.

**Annah van Eeghan** is a Victoria-based photographer. She takes a lot of photos of her friends.

**Makenzie Zouboules** is a Yellowknife Original. She is majoring in creative writing and political science. She's worked in a variety of jobs that combine these two passions, including as a legal assistant's assistant and as a facilitator of a theater-based sexual health workshop. Once, she played a male lion with a prominent facial disfigurement, which has inspired her to write more complex characters for women.



*In Memoriam of Mark Mitchel, Emily Morin, and Georgia Klap.*