



EXILE  
Fall 2005

# EXILE

**Denison University's Literary  
and Art Magazine**

**49th Year  
Fall Issue**

You of the finer sense,  
 Broken against false knowledge,  
 You who can know at first hand,  
 Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Take thought:  
 I have weathered the storm,  
 I have beaten out my exile.

-Ezra Pound

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### For Borges

Two paths diverged in a garden  
and you killed somebody for it.  
Time forks perpetually  
toward innumerable futures,  
but they're all dead-ends somewhere.  
Tilting, slippery planes slide across  
a patch of lotuses floating  
toward innumerable futures.  
Everything happens to a man  
precisely, precisely now;  
the sway of a hydrangea  
and the bow of a banzai  
are inconsequential precisely,  
precisely because they are now  
outside his plane of reality.  
Centuries of centuries, and only  
in the present do things happen,  
while a tilting, slippery lotus  
floats on a plane of undulating glass  
free of imperfections or stains,  
save the coral hydrangea's twin.  
The garden whose Ivory Labyrinth  
is speckled with rouge orchids  
and blushing chrysanthemums  
bleeds infinite passages  
for a man to walk; breeds  
innumerable futures where  
decisions might be made in  
their respective presents.  
Two paths diverged in a garden  
and somebody killed you for it.

*Ian Conwell, '07*



*"Arboreal Camouflage" Mark Williams, '06*

## Petunia

When we thought in whens,  
ifs and hows, I knew  
that far away  
would undo us.

Possibility clings  
to doubt. They are  
twin sisters, children in their bereavement;  
their obsession, the future,  
uniting them forever.

What is the past  
but a season gone, a sadness? It looms  
bigger than our lives. The present  
is always early, which future becomes  
so softly we don't notice until  
we're in the moment we feared.

The flowers by the windowsill  
fall to frost. Tending them no longer  
makes me happy. I try to cook, I make up  
dances, I nap. Their deaths  
echo, but I refuse them, I will not hear  
their slight sounds. Every window  
that I close out of idleness reminds  
me of what I have ignored.

Each morning  
I wake with pillow marks on my cheek, branded  
by sleep, dreams I cannot remember.  
They are but echoes, petunias  
dying in the frost, their fluted shapes  
foreign and blank, the funnels endless

silhouettes of the impossible future, they  
round back on themselves. In  
the end, we could never be as we were.  
We went back to the beginning.

*Sarah Bishop, '06*



*"Strength" Michael Queen, '07*

The night is darkening in Barrio Triana, where the river sweeps through uneven, cobbled streets, and the stores have just recently flipped on their lights after the day's siesta. We are walking down the street—this frustratingly athletic Swedish girl and I. She arrived this afternoon, and when I walked into my hostel after dinner, I found her sitting on the bed with half a bottle of sangria in her hand. She had told me she was bored and asked my name in perfect English. Her voice, though quiet, had a rough edge, sounded like someone who was going to make things go her way, and I imagined her composed of lines and angles rather than curves. Alissa, I'd told her, adding an 'eh' and hoping that my accent sounded Canadian. My reception as an American in Spain so far had been less than affectionate. She laughed. The Mediterranean air was thick and warm, squeezing me tightly, anxious for tonight. I'd suggested we find a dance club.

"So, how long have you been in Spain?" I ask my newfound companion once we're outside. Her response is barely audible above the chords of the guitar music on the street.

"A few days. I was in Barcelona first. And Madrid. I like it here. You can see the stars better."

There is nothing for me to do but nod my head. The stars were beginning to shine, and I survey the pedestrians in the silvery light. There are many people out, we pass them as we walk. It's one of the things I adore about Europe. A few clusters of women make their way down the sidewalks, dressed in short skirts and stilettos, practicing elegant hand movements I imagine to be flamenco. Mainly, though, a proliferation of men fills the streets with their tall, dark frames. Their gazes settle indiscriminately on us as we push through the crowds. Sometimes they even turn their heads to watch in reverse as they pass. On the sidewalk waiting to cross the street, I hold in my stomach and straighten, almost before I am aware of doing so. I shouldn't. The devastating Spanish male, the womanizer, is a myth. I'm imagining it. If I'm under observation, it's probably because I lack a continental flair. My companion doesn't seem bothered.

The Triana night clubs reverberate with the ebullient beats of sevillanas dance music. Not quiet, but rhythmic, the street is its own ecosystem—self sustained and only vaguely aware of anything beyond music and footwork. The smells of mussels and wine drifting from the tapas bars tempt me, but the too-rapid melodic lilt of conversation drifting out into the night remind me that I don't belong. A group of natives is gathered in a large circle on the corner, clapping rambunctiously to the rhythm leaking out from the club. There was something raw in their movements, not unskilled, but jarring in their passion. Whether because of the distance between us or not I wasn't sure, but I couldn't shake the feeling that I could never match that elegance.

"I don't really want to dance." I admit.

"Why'd you suggest it then?"

I shrug. "Who comes to Spain without seeing Flamenco?"

"Yes." She says. The impersonality of her conversation delights me. From anyone else, I probably would have considered it annoying, but it seems right coming from her. Her accent conjures for me images of chalets tucked up in the mountains and makes her one word answers seem cozy.

"I want to see the real thing though. I want my money's worth."

"How about the one they're in front of?" I suggest, pointing.

"Let's go." She smiles.

We discover that it is more a bar than a club. It seems to be carved into the stone of the building. The room is mostly dark, a cloak that embraces the clientele in rollicking anticipation. It's like caffeine, providing a jolt after the languid passing of the day. A few guitarists play smugly in the corner. The customers frequent the dance floor almost in rounds, as if they are carried along by convection currents—sending them in frenzied circles from the bar to the dance floor and back. Sevillanas is a live wire, a spark that invigorates all the Sevillanos from two years old to eighty. I watch them dancing, hoping to get some idea of the steps, but it's no use. The dance is complicated; Seville natives learn it when they are young. I figure it's just as well.

"Want a drink first?" I ask. I remember the bottle of sangria Helena had been holding when I walked into the hostel. I took the grin on her face as an affirmative.

The bar is on the far end of the room, swarming with patrons holding drinks. We thread through the dance floor, squeezing through the mass of bodies, cautious of wandering hands as bodies pressed together. The crowd at the bar is loud and happy, everyone drunk or nearly there. They smile the invincible smiles of saturated drunks.

I don't want anything fancy, just a beer. I like the Spanish word for beer. Cerveza. It's one of the few that I know.

The bartender is young, the epitome of all the rumors about Spanish men that I'd giggle about with my girlfriends. He looks me up and down before fixing a bored look on his face. I wait a moment for him to say something, shuffle my feet awkwardly when he doesn't. The floor is gritty with tracked-in sand, and I'm somewhat calmed by the scratch.

He smirks when I voice my order, and executes an about-face to face the coolers. I barely hear him mutter gringa under his breath as the cooler door squeaks open. Sighing, he pours a Cruzcampo, the local beer. It has a sweet taste unmatched by America's Budweiser or Miller. I drink it slowly and watch the dancers court each other on the dance floor.

There is a slight lull in the music before a new piece begins; the guitar cries its first vigorous notes. This rhythm is different—more insistent, simultaneously drawing you to its passion and repelling with its violence. The movements are sensual, rapid. Too much so. My heart beats in unison with the stomps on the floor, erratic and pounding. The pair in the center of the floor are arresting. There are a few nods in their direction, and the other couples on the floor move slightly to give them space, hardly paying them any attention. "Olé guapo!" I hear someone say, hurriedly. I barely notice the people sitting around me continuing their conversations and finishing their beers. The music has picked up now, each beat even more jarring.

I watch the couple as they begin to take control of their space on the floor. I watch attentively, mesmerized by the swishing of skirts as the couple spins around each other. A pale green haze floods my vision. A flash of arm breaks through my concentration, leaving a fleshy streak through the haze like a jet trail. The male dancer, aggressively serene, reminds me of a bull fighter raising a flag victoriously. He peers coolly down at the supple body now prostrate on the floor. I can't tear my eyes away.

Hearing the whistle of air exhaling through teeth, I try to see Helena sitting to my right. Her lips are upturned at the corners. "That was weird" she whispers. The crowd slowly filters back to fill up the dance floor again. I wonder how it is that they step right back onto the floor with such nonchalance.

"Yeah. I don't think I could dance like that."

"I think it'd be fun. Did you see the power? It was sexy." She sipped her drink.

"I thought it was scary."

"A little. But that's the problem with people. Why is scary bad? It's just a different viewpoint. I like different. It's why I travel." She shrugs and taps her feet to the music, surveying the crowd. The guitar is light and airy, and the dance floor is jam-packed again.

"But, it looked like he wouldn't care if he hurt her." A stream of Spanish directed towards Helena interrupts my question. A trendy young man shaking his hips to the music has grabbed her hand and coerces her to abandon her stool. She looks at me.

"Maybe. But she chose to dance with him. I'm going to dance. Want to come?"

"No thanks. I've had enough for the night. I think I'm going to go back now. Have fun." The bar suddenly seemed too small, too warm, too green.

Outside, I breathe deeply the scents of the desert, the dry, imperturbable earthiness of the ground beneath my feet. The stars in the sky twinkle brightly, pinpoints of light that remind me of what it's like to look up at the world around you as you recover from passing out. I don't know winter constellations well, but I begin to pick out a few as the haze of swishing skirts lifts from my memory. Near Polaris shines the first constellation I learned as a child.

We stood at the edge of the lake, just staring up at the sky. Jonathan and I had been going out for about three weeks, and I liked to spend time with him. Even time I didn't have, though tonight I had plenty of time. There wasn't much to do in December, and we were relishing the sudden existence of Christmas Break. Sometimes people would come to ice skate on the lake and leave little sayings carved into the ice—everything from sports cheers to twelve-year-old's profession's of love. But we weren't looking for them, and even if we were, we couldn't see them now.

"I like that one." I pointed to a group of stars to the left, just above the tree line on the opposite shore. The five points of light were elegantly, if roughly arranged into a W shape. I understood why it had become part of the Perseus myth. I could see royalty lounging on a sedan, one arm lazily perched in the air as she called to someone. I liked her.

"Why that one?"

"She's a queen. My dad told me."

"It's just a couple of triangles. You could make it anywhere in the sky." He swiveled his torso to the right, and scanned the sky. I watched him, his nubile body writhing slightly with the twist, contours highlighted gently in the moonlight. My eyes followed them slowly up to his pointing arm, to where he traced five stars in a W shape.

"You shouldn't listen to everything your father says."

"But the proportions aren't right. And who says I should listen to you?" I stuck my tongue out. "So?"

"They have to be just so. Otherwise you can't see her. Not really. They wouldn't have named her if she was just any old group of stars." My recently studied geometry was coming back to me. "See, one of them is a right triangle, the other is equilateral."

"There's no real difference." We looked at each other for a few moments. The December night serenaded us with no crickets, and I suddenly felt the cold. I shivered. He put his arm around my shoulders and pulled me close.

"You know, we're lucky to live in the north."

"No we're not. I hate the cold."

"But we can say that we can walk on water."

He began to walk slowly towards the lake. It was frozen completely over, bumpy and slightly grayish where it showed through the snow.

"That's true." I laughed.

The ice was slippery, and I was afraid that I would fall in a heap and break my kneecap. I held tightly to Jonathan's hand as we traipsed across the ice. My gloves were in my pockets, but I didn't want to use them, despite the cold. His hands were smooth, and oddly soft, curving strongly around my palm.

We got further and further out onto the ice, picking up speed as we got father away from the shore. Soon we were running, and I felt like I could be like a pixie in *Fantasia*, scraping lines of fractals into the surface. Though the night was mostly silent, the static chords of some radio show began to reach us. We stopped for a moment. In most directions there was nothing to see. The shore was behind us, and to the sides the lake stretched out as far as we could see. But as we made our way out into the middle, we stumbled across more and more ice fishing holes and the occasional shanty. I looked at Jonathan. His lips upturned into either a smile or smirk. I wasn't sure which, but they had a nice shape, I thought. Instead of being by my side, he moved to stand in front of me, one hand still holding mine, the other on my waist. I tugged his hand in the direction of the noise, and looked down, smiling at my booted feet. They were beginning to feel the cold.

His fingers pressed deeply into the flesh of my waist for a moment, before lifting slowly. The music was coming from our left, from a shanty about thirty feet away.

"Somebody's still fishing? It's late." I put my hands on my hips.

"Let's see what they're up to. Maybe it's something sexy." He laughed, and began to run toward the small building. I followed, yelling at him to wait for me.

Through the window he must have seen us running, because as we reached the door, a balding, middle-aged man stepped out to greet us.

"What're you kids up to tonight? Ain't it gettin near bed time?" I stopped in my tracks and stared at him. He wasn't as bundled up as I would have been if I were going to spend my entire night out on the ice. I'd wear at least twelve layers.

"We're just checking out the stars. The sky is really pretty tonight." I jerked my head quickly upwards.

“Guess that’s so. Don’t know much about it myself.” He squinted up at the sky. “Sure is cold out here. How long have you been out? You should come inside.” He invited us in almost in one breath and darted back through the doorway, gesturing for us to follow. I shrugged and went in.

A small heater chugged away inside, and around a circle in the ice sat a few camping stools, a cooler, and a deck of cards dealt into a hand of solitaire on a card table. He sat down by the cooler, and kicked on of the chairs with his foot. “Been using it as a footstool, but you can sit in it if you don’t mind.”

“Have you caught anything?” Jonathan asked.

“Nope. I’m kind of out like you guys. Enjoying the view.” He gestured towards the fishing hole. Though dark outside, the light from the shanty passed through the ice and into the water. Where we looked into it, it seemed perfectly clear. The fish swam back and forth underneath us, oblivious to our presence.

“You can sneak up on ‘em like this. They don’t know you’re here. It’s the way to do everything. If you can figure out the right angle, you can control anything. Remember that, kid.” He opened the beer he’d just removed from the cooler and tipped it towards Jonathan, who sat up straight and smiled broadly.

“I’ll remember that. Can I have one?” He asked the question brightly, with an eager voice. He loved to break rules. Once, he had worn a dress to school just to make our Algebra teacher mad.

“Sure, kid.” The older man handed Jonathan a Budweiser from the cooler. “This your woman? I got some water if she’d rather. I’ve never known a girl to like beer.”

“Hey Jonathan, let’s go back. It’s getting late.” I wanted to go all of a sudden. Our new-found fisherman struck me as ridiculous. I’d never drunk beer, but I liked its yeasty smell. Whenever my father had a bottle, I’d always get to smell it before he even took his first sip.

Jonathan returned the beer, and we headed out, slowly crossing the ice again. We talked a little; about how cool it was to see through even deep water, about what we wanted for Christmas, but it was mostly a silent walk. At the shore we found ourselves in the snow again, and as I watched Jonathan walk decisively to the right, I dipped my fingers into the snow, packed a tight snowball, and threw it at his receding figure. He turned and came back, eyes glinting. Very deliberately, he packed his own snowball, raised his arm as if ready to pitch, and walked flush up to me. With small laugh, he jerked his wrist. It hit me right on the lips.

The Spanish night isn’t very cold, but I shiver anyway. The air has a distinctly fishy smell, so I guess I am near the river. The Guadaquivir nourishes Sevilla, bringing water up from the Atlantic—from the straights of Gibraltar and the mystiques of Morocco—to quench the desert heat. Traditions fight here; the churrerías stalls sell the traditionally Spanish churros and European coffee, tapas bars sell bite-sized morsels to bar hopping Spaniards at night, cafés offer coca-cola to tourists who want bottled America, and the Middle Eastern smells of falafel and ayran drift down the street from other eateries. Sevilla could be the world’s biggest melting pot.

The pedestrians on the street are throwing looks my way again. I wonder what it is that they see

when they see me. In ways I’d like to think they are looking because I’m attractive, but I doubt that’s the reason. I have a few extra pounds hanging around. Besides the extra flesh, which is not in itself unappealing, I figure that there must be another reason I attract attention. All I have to do is wear jeans while I walk down the street, and I’m bound hear at least one ‘fuck you’. The Spanish seem to be fluent in English swear words. And there is nothing sexy in ‘fuck you.’

The men on the motorbikes are the worst. They can flee the scene quickly, so nothing stops them from making catcalls. I cross the street quickly and dart into the maze of side streets near the river. I like the slightly dingy façade and emanating garlic smell of a small teteria right on the banks. I duck inside, where I can escape the crowded roadways. Mirrors line the walls, revealing a smattering of subdued patrons, some rolling their own cigarettes, others sipping drinks quietly. A smoky haze fills the room that originates from groups of men sharing hookahs. Their heads swivel towards the door as I cross the threshold. I settle onto one of the tables, very aware suddenly that I am the only woman in the room. The menu is on the table, and I study it as though it is written in ancient Greek.

The olive complexion and dark locks of the man behind the counter speak to his ancestry. I wonder where he’s from. Morocco would make sense, and it’s possible that he’s Spanish, but I hope it’s Jordan. I’ve heard good things about Jordan. But what if he’s from another area of the Middle East? All sorts of governmental rhetoric bounces through my head. Outsiders are dangerous.

The door swings open and he smiles broadly and nods in the newcomer’s direction. This newcomer stands there, just inside the door, with an odd grin on his face, and feeling in his jacket pocket for something. He withdraws a slim package and rips it open before striding forcefully to the bar. Pulling one slim, wiry cigarette from the box, extends it towards the bartender. After waiting to make sure he takes it, the newcomer mutters something that sounds like phosphorus, and I am reminded of high school chemistry labs. I shiver. I splashed hydrochloric acid on my tongue once, and lost my taste for the subject ever after.

The man behind the counter looks at me as he gropes under the counter for something, presumably for whatever the new man asked for. His lips are pursed and his eyes are sharply focused, eyebrows knit into a line so immobile it looks almost sewn onto his face. I almost laugh when he lights the match and places it to the end of the cigarette, dragging on it slowly. He saunters over having finished his cigarette, notepad in hand, and says something quickly in Spanish. He’s asking my order, I’m sure, yet I wish I knew. I think of the cards I have tucked in my purse with essential Spanish phrases written in perfectly academic language. His pencil is poised impatiently over the notepad, and my trick fails me. I point to falafel and Anis tea, managing a por favor after each point. Someone told me that anise is a Christmas tradition in Spain and I want to try it. I try to smile sweetly, but am distracted by a crease in his forehead. Or maybe it was a wisp of smoke. I am trying to decide when he nods with a quick grin. Maybe I made a good choice. My breath—I didn’t even know I’d been holding it—escapes in a long, low breath. Watching the waiter walk back to the kitchen, I feel bad for him.

The falafel is pretty much what I expect, but the tea is something entirely new. It comes in an elegant metal teapot whose sheen and sinuous contours cause me to imagine an ancient desert queen in an elaborate meditative ritual. The air feels astringent somehow, and I’m not certain if it’s from the tea or the stares the men are still giving me.



Indolence is painted over the faces of the men in the café. As they exhale the lightly scented shisha smoke, their eyes roll lazily. I feel that I'm on display. With each bite, I worry more about doing things properly. Take small bites, chew with my mouth closed. Head up, shoulders back. The tea is good, sweet, but I don't finish it. The room is beginning to remind me of the harem jokes that my friends and I tell each other when we go out. This is a different situation, but I feel somehow out of place. Worse, I feel as though I owe these men, men I don't even know, something.

I look in one of the mirrors, but I don't recognize the person I see. My eyes are wide like a rabbit's, and I can see an eagerness in their depths that I never noticed before. I am trying too hard, and it is working against me. The carefulness in my manner had transmuted into something calculated and mechanical. I see their expectations fulfilled; I look desperate.

I quit the shop and leave the mirrors behind. It is a little after eleven. My hostel is just a short distance away, and I follow the dust-dimmed street lights through the narrow alleyways that snake away from the main street. The concierge nods to me as I fly up the stairs. The click of the lock behind me is relieving.

I peel off my clothes and slip into the bathroom. The marble floor cools my bare feet. The world feels wide, stark, and cold. I don't know what to do. The water is warm; it runs over my face and I am glad. As it courses over me, it washes away the desert dust. But it washes more than that. It washes away the arrogant American, the slut, the looks that people on the street have managed to plaster to me. It's funny how memory can become almost palpable. I am not melodramatic; I know nothing terrible has happened. But the insinuations were enough. In the shower, I am stripped down to my bare self, just a girl, alone in a foreign country. And I realize that I am not in a melting pot. My roommate comes in just before the sun rises, laughing and smelling of rum.

*Sarah Clapp, '06*



*"Untitled" Jon Efe, '07*

### The Girl in Woods Pond

She sweeps by with a long hand  
in the thick of her coyote red hair  
that burns her ashen tan  
and crisps her freckled shoulders.  
She is always in the pond,  
a white orb in the dusky water.  
When her body's dry, her wiggling toes  
keep in wet contact  
with the smooth dock  
while she counts the planks she rests on:  
three through ten.  
She watches the sunset  
on the opposite shore—  
a slow drooping eyelid of a shadow  
creeping lower over the trees.  
She drops a hand in the water  
and rubs glitter from her eyelids,  
hand to water again.  
Her open eyes see the shiny flecks resting  
on the surface with reflected stars,  
where she can grab them by the handful.

*Jess Haberman, '06*



*"Untitled" Jon Efe, '07*

## The Problem I Have With Feminism

A song is still a song  
even if it has no lyrics  
I tell you, soft, in the car.

Through the windshield  
firemen tiptoe,  
avoiding tulips planted  
around a hydrant  
and I think  
about how I want to write  
I love you  
on your hands  
while you sleep.

You will wake up  
to the humming of a mystery,  
and wonder while you shower  
if you are your own  
secret admirer,  
if your palms sweat  
love letters, if you gave  
yourself an erection.

I tell you  
to forget about feminism.  
I say it's for fucktards  
and politicians. I say  
objectify me while I paste  
a human rights sticker on my car.

We drive past the burning  
house and the tender men  
worrying about their hoses  
crushing shrubbery.  
Subtlety is passé, I whine,

I want to be raped  
by a shy computer repairman.  
I want boys dressed in  
women's clothing, pecks peeking  
out of lace like confused  
turtles. I say,

I want you to kiss me in this  
car, your stupid face  
obscuring the road dangerously.  
You look into your lap,  
staring at folded hands,  
and I silently hate you  
from the driver's seat.

*Kate Berta, '08*

## Needles In My Eyes

I don't think anyone really saw it coming. I know I didn't. It's ironic to think that now. The first time I told someone "I didn't see it coming," they chuckled. It probably wasn't a conscious thing, but wouldn't you laugh if a blind man said he didn't see something coming? Maybe not. Well, I wasn't blind before it happened, so I would have at least had a chance to see it coming, anyway. Not that you can see a thing like blindness coming, though. What a silly thing to think. After thirty-some years of sight, you really don't expect to just wake up one morning and not be able to see.

A year ago today, I woke up blind. I didn't know I was blind, I just couldn't see. It seemed like a perfectly reasonable thing to me, and I'm usually a pretty complacent guy. At first, I thought maybe there had been a problem in the night and the goo that pools in the corners of your eyes had just gotten a little overzealous. When I went to wipe it away with my fingers, though, the problem remained. Maybe I had an allergic reaction to something, I thought, and my mind turned to my two dogs. I'd never had a problem with animal fur before, but you never know.

I reached over to feel for my wife in the other side of the bed, but I was alone. When I finally sat up, I noticed that I wasn't completely blind, or what I thought was completely blind. I could vaguely see some light coming in through a window across the room, and some of the more pronounced objects around looked like dim shadows. Using the window as a reference, I made my way to the bathroom across the hall, managing not to mangle my toes on the obstacles strewn about the floor. I placed my hands on the cool formica surface of the sink and reached to turn on the cold water. I splashed my face several times before looking in the mirror, but all I could make out was the faded light coming from the window reflecting off the glass. I still wasn't upset yet. There's a perfectly logical explanation for this, I kept telling myself, and as it turns out, there was. I just hadn't wanted to hear it in the form of a diagnosis from an ophthalmologist.

Eventually I called down to my wife, and it was at this point that I had finally begun to panic. When she came up from cooking breakfast and found me rubbing frantically at my eyes over the sink, she must have suspected something was going on, and I could just see the concerned expression on her face. Except I couldn't. At this thought, I broke down.

"What's wrong, hon?"

"I can't see."

"What do you mean you can't see?"

"I can't see. I woke up this morning and I couldn't see a thing." I was still crying.

"What should we do?"

"I dunno, call 911?" My wife agreed, and went downstairs to the phone. Meanwhile, I continued the frenzied assault on my eyes. I splashed my face with hot water, cold water, lukewarm water, and everything in between, but each time I looked up to where I remembered the mirror had been, it only seemed a little darker. Erin came up holding the cordless phone.

"911 redirected me to the Center for Disease Control, they think it's possible that you got some sort of chemical in your eyes and they want to make sure you take some precautionary measures."

"I've been flushing my eyes out for half an hour, it would have cleared up by now." I had no idea how long you were supposed to rinse if you got chemicals in your eyes, but how long could it be? "Besides, how would I have gotten chemicals in my eyes?"

Erin was busy talking to the CDC receptionist. I could almost hear her nodding, acknowledging all the steps I would have to take, and I began to think about how I would never see my wife nodding again, or how I would never see my dogs' tails wag again, or how I would never see my own toes beyond my slightly bulging stomach. I would never see my wife's face again. I began to cry again, but I

was still rinsing, so I didn't think Erin noticed. I felt her put her hand on my bare shoulder, and I knew she had.

"They say to keep rinsing it, and wait a bit. After about an hour, he told me to take you to a specialist. You'll be fine, hon."

I continued rinsing, but I had given up hope long before I finally turned the water off. My wife had gone back down to finish breakfast, so I stumbled back into the bedroom, now mostly dark despite the daylight shining in, and sat down on the bed.

My wife came up again a few minutes later and said she had found an ophthalmologist who could take a look at me that afternoon. I made some smart comment about regretting my inability to look back. When we finally arrived, the doctor did some preliminary tests, which involved a culture of cells from my eyes, and said she'd get back to us that evening. I didn't eat anything that first day, and when it was finally time for dinner, I was famished. Erin and I had just sat down when the phone rang. I heard Erin set down her fork and walk over to where I remember the phone hanging.

"Hello?" (pause.) "Yes, this is his wife." (longer pause.) "I see." (longer pause.) "I see. Thank you." (click.) (step.) (sob.) (step.)

I felt my wife put her arms around me, and she settled her head into the space between my neck and right shoulder. I had thought I had done all my crying that morning, but I felt my stomach turn over again, and I began to cry silently. Neither of us ate dinner.

I spent the next week trying to adjust to my new "disability." I was now legally handicapped, and the United States government is all too accommodating to its debilitated citizens. When Erin called to ask about seeing-eye dog programs and red-tipped canes, she said the workers were "so friendly." I told her they'd have to be to deal with all the kind of people that must go through the programs.

Before I started my first training session with a dog, though, I backed out. I thought, despite the trainer's assurances to the contrary, that there would be trouble with my two black labs.

"These dogs are trained to ignore all external stimuli save the commands of their masters." The way he said it made him sound like he had practiced the lines thousands of times before I called, and that he was especially proud of his use of the word "stimuli."

"That may very well be the case," I told him over the phone, "but you don't know my dogs. They're young black labs, both male, and bringing a female dog into the house is completely out of the question." I didn't understand how they could simply overlook the fact that I had two young and extremely horny dogs running around my house.

"Very well, sir. I understand. Goodbye."

I hung up the phone and asked the microwave if she was going to make me get one of those stupid white and red canes. Erin turned me away from the appliance and said that if I was going to be stubborn about it, then no, she wouldn't make me get a cane. What I later found out that meant was that I would have to be accompanied by someone at all times if I ever left the house.

The prospect of never being out of the house alone really didn't bother me. As a thirty-something year old married man, there were very few social expectations of me. Sure, I had enjoyed going to a baseball game or bar every now and then with the guys, but I didn't drink much, and I had begun to lose my taste for sports before I had lost my sight anyway. What I was really going to miss was reading and writing. I made my living writing about things, things that I could taste and touch and smell and hear and see. The only problem was, I could no longer be inspired to write a poem about the way my wife would sit a certain way when she read, and I could no longer be inspired to write a short sketch about the way my dogs bounded after rodents across our backyard. Sure, I could draw from the memory of the way my wife would curl up, or from the memory of the two black blurs streaking back

and forth, but there would be no new images from this point on, or else I would simply have to make things up.

This is what I thought about every night before I went to bed. Making love to my wife was difficult, to be sure, but no less incredible than it was when I could see. Rather, it was the form of my wife that I missed. I missed all the curves, and the muscles, and the striking facial features that I so loved. Most of all I missed the smile that had won me over. I made up for this by learning to hear her smile, though.

One day, about two months into my blindness, Erin and I were talking about something relatively serious. I forget what exactly it was, probably relating to our financial situation. By this time, I had pretty much accepted my blindness for what it was, and I was focusing on my other senses, paying special attention to sounds. Specifically, I had been paying attention to the sound of Erin's voice. The nuances of a person's voice are incredible when you listen carefully, and someone's voice sounds ever so slightly different with various facial expressions. Anyway, we were talking about money or whatever, and I made some stupid wisecrack about how sad I was that I'd never again have the privilege of seeing our handsome financial advisor, John. This made Erin giggle hysterically, because John was, well, quite the unfortunate looking young man. Twenty three years old, and the man still had a face-full of pimples.

This was the first time that I really noticed, but for ten minutes or so after the comment, Erin must have had the biggest grin plastered on her face. The way her lips curled up in the smile must have affected the way she spoke, because I noticed a brighter tone in her voice, and it sounded like she was always on the verge of laughter again.

In this way, I was able to begin writing again. I wrote about sounds that triggered visual memories for me, and about smells that took me back to a certain place and time in my life. I spent the majority of this first year of my blindness adjusting my writing style to one less focused on visual details and more sensory-intensive. After about 6 months or so of darkness, I had finally gotten to where I wanted to be as a blind writer, and sight was less heavily emphasized in my work. I even began a dialogue with my agent, who, as I was pleased to hear, had not lost hope for my writing career.

On one particularly lovely-smelling autumn day, about 8 months into my blindness, I had just finished speaking to an editor at a local publishing company about sending them some work when I heard my wife came outside.

"I found something interesting in the paper today, Chris, I think you should listen to this." I heard stiff paper rustling a few feet from where I was sitting on the porch, as my wife shuffled through to find the article. She began to read: "Unorthodox surgeon sparks debate between candidates for Mayor..."

As my wife read the article to me, most of which was about the upcoming city elections, I began to understand where she was leading. The 'controversial surgeon' the headline referred to was the eye-doctor-turned-miracle-worker that had set up a practice in town a few years back. This guy had been a very popular optometrist in a town not far from ours before he had gone back to med school to become a surgeon. After he graduated, he came to our town and put in a proposal to the city to start a practice for major eye surgery and vision correction. This guy, Doctor Howard, had all the right certifications, so the city accepted the proposal with no qualms. Recently, however, some investigators for a local news channel had uncovered some "shady dealings" at the practice, and Dr. Howard had come under fire for employing not-yet-approved legal procedures. My wife finished the article, and I can only assume she was looking at me and waiting.

"It had never occurred to me when I first heard those allegations that the unapproved procedures might be able to lessen or even eliminate blindness." Erin said to me, and I had been

thinking the very same thing.

"Do you think we should give him a call?"

"How would we find him?" My wife asked. "It said in the article that after the investigations began he had to temporarily close the practice."

I was about to say something about looking him up on the internet, but my wife spoke first. "Even if we do find him, would you be willing to go through with what is most likely a dangerous and painful procedure that probably won't even work?"

I had never heard my wife speak so bluntly before. "I'd have to think about it, but whether I plan to go through with it or not, I'd like to speak with this Dr. Howard."

After the article in the paper that day, there was almost no media coverage of the doctor's situation. My wife did some investigating of her own over the next week, and eventually discovered a home address and phone number listing for the town where he had originally lived and practiced. I called the next day and spoke with Dr. Howard's wife, Krista. She was hesitant to tell me anything about her husband's situation, but she told me that he would be back by dinner time, and if I still wanted to talk to him to call then. I thanked her, and promised I'd call back later.

When I finally called around 7 o'clock that evening, I was so nervous I was almost trembling. My wife and I had just finished dinner, and while she cleaned up and started the dishes, I sat at the table and held the phone.

"What do you think he'll say?" I had no idea what to expect from this man, and for all I knew he could have already been sued by every medical association that found out what he had been doing.

I heard Erin put the last of the dishes in the dishwasher, click the cover shut and turn the dial to some setting or another. She walked over to where I was sitting and put her hand on my shoulder. "I really don't know, Chris, but I'm sure he'll be very understanding, and we may even be able to set up an appointment for when he comes back into town to start up his practice again."

"You mean if he comes back into town to start up his practice again," I corrected her. "With the fall-off in coverage of his story lately, I think they may have wrapped him up and shipped him home for good."

"Hope for the best, prepare for the worst, hon."

I dialed the numbers on the cordless phone as my wife read them to me, and after three rings I heard a man's voice on the other end.

"Hello?" It was a deep voice, but it also sounded like an older man's voice. A man in his fifties or sixties, I guessed.

"Hi, is this Doctor Howard?"

"It is."

"Ah, yes, hi. My name is Chris Tomlinson and I was calling about the eye surgery practice you used to run here in Price Hill."

"What about it?"

"Well, you see, I'm blind, and I heard..."

"I'm sorry sir, but there's nothing I can do for you."

"What?"

"There's nothing I can do for you. My office was shut down last week and I was lucky the AMA didn't litigate. Besides, the operations I performed were on people who had only recently lost their sight, not people blind from birth."

"Oh, but you see, I only went blind about 8 months ago, which is why I was calling..."

He paused for a moment, perhaps thinking, but didn't change his mind. "I'm very sorry sir. There is nothing within the limitations of the law that I can do for you. Goodbye."

The phone clicked in my ear, and for a split second I was heartbroken. I hurriedly dialed the number again, but in my haste (and lack of sight) I had dialed the wrong number. I handed the phone to my wife, and she handed it back to me after a few moments of soft taps. After several rings, I heard that same deep voice.

"Please doctor, you don't understand, I'm a writer, I write poetry and stories and novels about all the beautiful things that I used to be able to see, you have no idea how debilitating this has been to my career!"

More silence followed, and I once again had hope. After a few seconds though, I still only heard silence, and I thought he had hung up. Suddenly: "How long did you say you've been blind?"

"About eight months, doctor." I was trying to contain my excitement, but obviously I had failed miserably.

"Don't get your hopes up, Mr. Tomlinson, but I will consider what you have asked. I would like to meet with you some time this month, but I need to meet you here at my home in Amberly, if you don't mind."

I eagerly agreed, and after he gave me directions to his house and set a date, I hung up the phone and gave my wife a tearful hug.

Erin and I met with Dr. Howard about a week and a half later. It was over a two-hour drive to get to his home in the neighboring town of Amberly, but we both felt it was worth it. When we finally neared his house, though, Erin mentioned to me that we weren't in the ritzy, upper-class part of town like she had expected, but rather a neighborhood that looked very much like the one she and I lived in. All the houses looked about the same, she said—pretty small—and when we pulled up to the address written on the slip of paper, it was a modest brick ranch with two very economic-looking cars in the driveway.

Erin got out of the drivers seat and helped me up the short walkway to their door. A woman that I assumed was Mrs. Howard opened the door and invited us to come sit in the living room. She introduced herself as Krista Howard, Doctor Howard's wife, and asked us if we wanted anything to drink. We both declined, but she brought us waters anyway. When Doctor Howard finally came in, I stood up and introduced myself and my wife, and held out my hand.

"Where's your dog?" Doctor Howard asked as he shook my hand. I explained that we left our dogs at home, and wondered to myself why he would ask such a question.

"No no, I meant where's your seeing-eye dog?" I must have turned beet red, and quietly told him that we had decided against getting one. Doctor Howard chuckled, and invited me to sit down again.

"Against my better judgment," he began, "I have invited you here to listen to your offer. Something about it interests me."

"Offer?" Erin asked. "We assumed you had set prices on your operations. We're willing to pay whatever that price may be."

"No offense, but you two have obviously never read anything about the way my procedures worked, did you?"

Both Erin and I admitted that we did not in fact know much about these procedures.

"Well, he explained, here's how it worked: every procedure that I did on blind people while my practice was still open took place within a month of the patient's loss of sight."

My stomach turned.

"However," he went on, "We have no records to show that the procedure couldn't still work after an extended period of time." He paused here, as if to let this sink in.

"What are you saying?" I asked.

"Well, I am prepared to make you an interesting, if dangerous, proposal. Since the time when you first called, I have been working on a new form of the old procedure I used to perform on recently blinded patients. If I am correct, this procedure will allow for a longer latency period for the blindness to take effect."

"And if you're wrong?"

"Well, I'm not sure about that yet." He said. "I haven't tried it." I heard him smile. "Would you be interested in being the guinea pig for such an operation?"

"Do I have to tell you now?"

"Oh no, of course not. However, if you are going to agree to such an endeavor, I will need to have enough time to prepare, and I would like to perform this operation as close to a year after the initial loss of sight as possible."

"How much time will you need?"

"I suspect it will require about two weeks' preparation."

"Well, I first went blind the morning of February nineteenth," I told him. "What's the date today?"

"It's October fourth," Mrs. Howard said.

"So I will need to know no later than February fifth."

"By then, will you have a better idea of what the risks will be for this procedure?" Erin asked.

"I'll call you in a month or so and tell you what I think the major risks of the operation are. Until then, I don't recommend making a decision."

Erin and I thanked the doctor profusely for his time, and made the long drive home in relative silence.

When Doctor Howard called a month later, he informed us that the risks would probably be no greater than a bit of nausea for a few weeks after the procedure and minor headaches every so often, but there was also the potential for unforeseen complications. After a few minutes' deliberation Erin and I accepted his offer. When we called to tell him we had accepted, Erin asked how much he would be charging for this operation, but Doctor Howard said that because it was experimental, he should be paying me for the exam. I told him that wouldn't be necessary, and agreed that it was a fair trade.

Christmas came and went that year, and the only one to get anything exciting were the dogs: some new chew toys and fresh pillow covers for their beds. I was a little sad that I didn't get to see all the nice decorations Erin had set out this year, but we were both nevertheless very excited about the upcoming operation. January and the first half of February passed very quickly, and here I am now, sitting once again in Doctor Howard's living room, holding Erin's hand in mine.

Dr. Howard walks into the room and tells me that he is ready to begin.

"Good luck, honey, I'm sure you'll be fine." Erin says to me as Doctor Howard leads me back to his operating room. As it turns out, the operating room is no more than his personal study, quite a spacious one, turned into a small medical facility. Doctor Howard explains to me that he will be feeding me nitrous oxide throughout the procedure, but that I can not, under any circumstances, be put under. He also explains to me exactly what the procedure entails, and all I remember from that explanation were the words "needle" and "eye" used in close proximity far too often.

"First," he explains, "after you've had about ten minutes' worth of the nitrous, I'll put one fluid in the side of your left eye, and another in the side of your right." He said all of this almost cheerfully. I took it as a sign that he was hopeful about its outcome, and not the actual jabbing of multiple syringes

into each eye.

As I lay back on the operating table, I begin to wonder whether or not I should be afraid of the needles. I never have liked them, but since I wouldn't be able to see them piercing the whites of my eyes, I figure that by then it'll be too late to be scared. Doctor Howard turns on the nitrous, and my fingers and toes eventually go numb.

Only a few moments later, Doctor Howard says "Here we go," and I feel something touching the outside of each of my eyes. Then a period of complete darkness. As I open my eyes, I still can't see anything, but then I notice a faint light at the top and bottom of my field of vision, and I feel something being slowly unwrapped from around the top of my head.

*Ian Conwell, '07*



*"Release with the Sun" Chih Ling Chou, '07*

## The Flight

In a trail of candles  
he was painted against the stars,  
largely because I placed him there,  
my high trailed love,  
like an airplane  
pressed to the lip of the sky.

I packed my bags two days  
ahead, excited to fly,  
to see him, to be in the air,  
so close, like the  
wobbled lines, red  
tipped black birds, to have someone

to look forward to. It  
takes lift-off, births me into worlds  
that esteem romance, pink post-its  
with love on them,  
trifles like gold  
bookmarks, journal bound in leaves,

“botanical miracle.”  
I wear the green of forests, black  
velvet coat from the thrift store,  
and when his tall  
father, sheepish,  
turns away his head at our kiss, know

we are true, the couple  
in the airport annoying tourists.  
And then there it is: the goodbye,  
flight follows then ends,  
landing, touching  
timid the earth as I touched his skin.

*Sarah Bishop, '06*



*“Mornings” David Savoie, '08*



## A Little Slice of Noir

I'm flying down the road so fast you'd think I was a goddamn comet. Somehow I've lost my way and ended up going south on Denman, a frigid ball of ice moving so fast I vaporize the water droplets that're falling around me. You can call me Rick, but you should keep that ice in mind: it'll give you a good idea of what to expect out of me.

A lot of people will tell you that I'm a hard man to get along with and I guess they're right. I've never really felt comfortable getting close to other people (my ex-wife can attest to that), but I figure that I'm just doing what needs to be done. The way I see it, it's not good for someone in my line of work to get too close to anyone; it just ends in a lot of trouble for everyone else and one of those headaches that floor me for about two days. I spend my days and nights working behind a shield so that everyone else can pretend that the city they live in is a safe place for their kids to grow up. But I've seen the ugly truth: any place grotesque enough to spawn the kinds of things that I've witnessed is officially in need of saving from itself.

If that last line sounds more poetic than the rest of what I have to tell you, you shouldn't get the wrong impression. I came up with that one during a long and boring shift and I've been practicing it ever since. I made the mistake of telling it to my partner once. He just shook his head and told me that that attitude would get me killed eventually. I laughed it off and told him that I didn't really mean it, but sometimes I wonder if he's right.

This sobering thought snaps me back into the present, and I have to swerve at the last minute to avoid some kid on a bike. Normally I'm pretty fair behind the wheel, but the slick pavement refuses me purchase. I spin across the road in a figure eight pattern, just like a figure skater, one that weighs two thousand pounds, has four feet, and who's still trying to master the basics of staying upright. My right wheels slam into the opposite curb with a thump, and the car and I both sigh in relief when we realize that the carousel has stopped. My exhalation ceases after a few seconds, but the car's continues: a busted tire.

I check the glove compartment in the futile hope that there's a forgotten patch in there, buried under old napkins and outdated maps. I mutter my displeasure once I realize that I'll have to brave the downpour to actually change the tire.

Just as I pop my trunk and get ready to make a dash for the jack and the spare, my senses are assaulted by the heavens. Accompanying a peal of thunder like an artillery barrage is a single bolt of

lightning which, like a razor to an artery, looses a new torrent upon the earth. All I can do is sigh and secure my hat and jacket as I dash for the replacement tire.

Forced to kneel in the roadside mud as I am, my mind begins to wander. As I see a piece of trash carried off into a storm drain by at least three inches of water I'm reminded of the biblical story of Noah. At the end of the story, that son of a bitch priest I'm forced to listen to every Sunday always emphasizes the rainbow and God's promise not to drown every last one of us again. There aren't any rainbows to be seen right now.

I finish the swap and jump back into the car just as the frigid water is starting to seep through my coat. If my ex were here she'd yell at me for getting the upholstery wet. It's a good thing she's not here. I've got enough to worry about right now without having to endure shrill lectures and jabs to the ribs to ensure my rapt attention. I'm in the biggest hurry of my entire life and I have the misfortune of a flat. Remembering the lesson of earlier, I try not to dive too deep into my own thoughts and stay focused on the road ahead of me. The intensity of the rain has only increased since that initial incision, with several others after it adding to the outpouring of the sky.

Reminding myself that I do not have the time to take another shot at the gold medal just now, I slow down and focus on what is ahead of me. I've been trying to avoid thinking about it for a while now, but I'm forced to confront it as I turn onto Beech Street: I need to find my daughter.

I got the call nearly half an hour ago, telling me that my daughter was in some van somewhere in the park. I'm not sure who called, and he didn't identify himself, but I have a pretty good idea of where he can be found. I've heard that a guy like him hangs out near the soccer fields, so that's where I'm headed first. I'm trying my damndest to focus on the road, but I can't help but picture Annie sitting in a puddle, huddled in the back of some filthy van. Just that is enough to set me off. When I get angry I don't run hot like most other people; I become a ball of ice. Remember the comet? I'm there again.

If this bastard had called Annie's mother, he might have gotten away with it. She would have tried to meet his demands, regardless of how outrageous they might have been. But he made the mistake of calling me instead of her. As I near ground zero I imagine the impact I'm going to have on him. I plan on making the comet that killed the dinosaurs look miniscule in comparison. I estimate a crater roughly the size of Rhode Island will form where his face used to be.

As I near the fields I spot a van that matches my mental image. Caring more for my daughter's immediate safety than if I've spooked him or not, I pull into the adjoining parking space with a screech

and vault out of the car door before the engine even has a chance to shut off completely. Filled with righteous purpose, I stride to the driver's window and pound. It rolls down to reveal a man behind its tint. He looks to be middle aged and energetic, not what I had envisioned at all. He smiles in a way that I can only describe as predatory and addresses me:

"Afternoon. Are you Annie's father?"

"Yes, I'm here to pick her up. I'm assuming my ex-wife already told you that Annie would be coming home with me after the game today?"

"Yes, yes, everything's okay. She explained that you had gotten someone else to watch the desk for you tonight. I don't know how you do it; I couldn't handle sitting behind the desk in some lobby all night." I just stare at him and grunt some vague answer as he turns back into the van and addresses what I can only make out as two shadowy figures through the tint. "C'mon, Annie. Your dad's here to get you." It's then that I see the sliding door move on its own, revealing the wonders that lay beyond it as if I were its Ali Baba. There, damp but warm, sits Annie. She looks to be enjoying herself as she watches a DVD with the coach's daughter. I decide that now is not the best time to assault the creep, so I get a handle on my rage and push it aside for the time being.

As she bounds out of the sliding door I realize that I've never been this happy or relieved to see anyone in my life before. All of my worst fears of fatherhood are put to rest like the apparitions that they are. Here is my daughter returned to me, safe and sound. I do my best to shield her from the rain with my own coat as we run back towards the car.

Once we're under way, she turns to me and asks, "What took you so long, daddy? The game was called as soon as the rain started."

"I'm sorry, sweetie, but I came as fast as I could. There was a little trouble with the tires, but I fixed it. So, tell me about the game. Who won?"

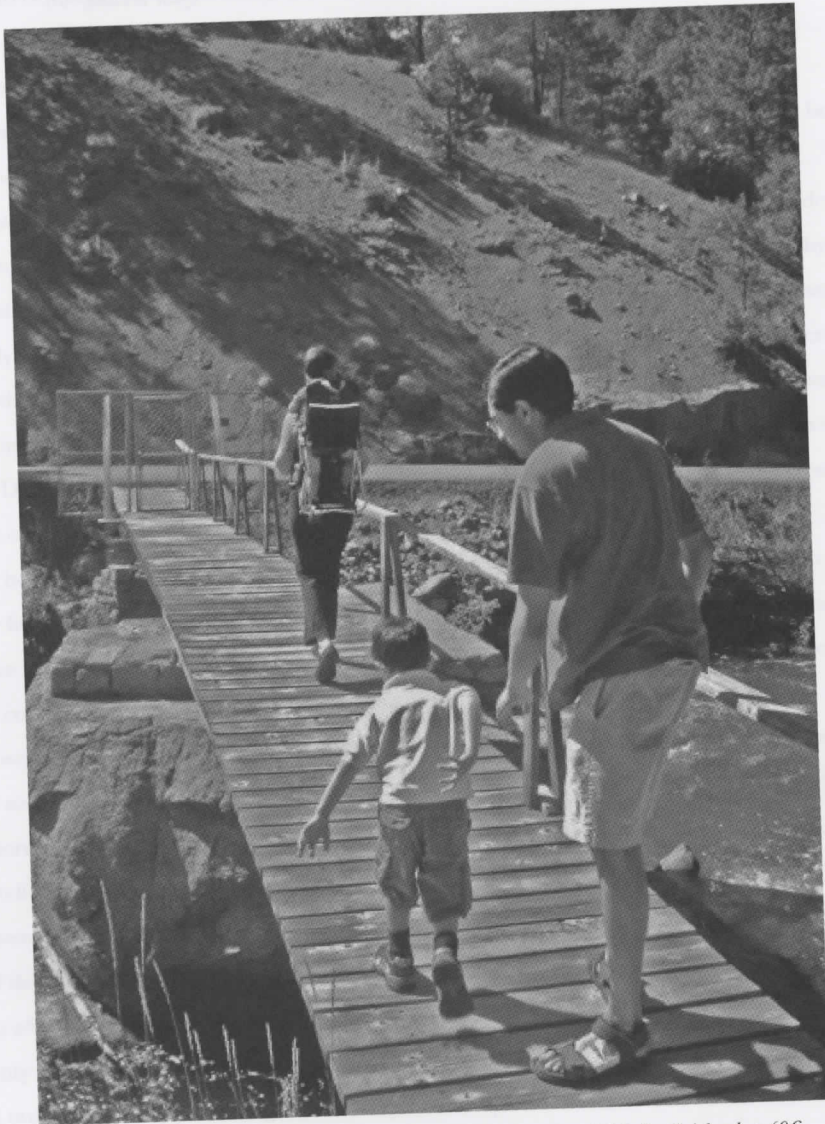
"We were down by two when they called it, so I guess that makes them the winners. Coach Brenner said that he felt bad about us getting cheated out of a game, so he said that he's taking us out for ice cream after the next game, no matter what."

I'm only vaguely aware that she keeps talking after admitting the loss. My brain collects all that she says and orders it for easy processing later, but my heart stops at 'winners.' The rotten scum that had the gall to call themselves my little Annie's opponents will regret what they did today. I'll hit them so hard that they'll bruise up every time that it rains outside. They should start feeling the fear now,

because I am a goddamn force of nature. I am a ball of ice screaming towards them at millions of miles an hour...

*Zach Walters, '06*





*"Cloud Crest" Medha Jaishankar, '06*

### **The Literary Guillotine**

She's a punk rocker dressed in all black, a short cut off t-shirt, and fishnet stockings. Her slender index finger cut from new sharp guitar strings searches into her wallet to get two quarters and matching pennies. She sticks the receipt in the new book and drives away in her 1987 Buick Le Sabre, quickly emerging with the California heat. She never reads it, and gladly returns it for 3.50, only half the original price. She needs the money to buy her favorite guitar picks, the ones with the white skull. She imagines holding them in her hands, it's what she lives for.

And I am none of those things, but I smile and think of Santa Cruz. I imagine going 70 while kissing the thick August humidity, as the horizon turns into a canvas painted with tropical fruits. I hold what was once hers, and we are somehow touching.

*Diamond Sankey, '06*

## Seaside Cologne

Break down that night  
into closely connected parts, interlocking  
smells, sights and sounds. Collect

his seaside cologne, his breath  
breezing over the top of my hair,  
the slowly rocking dance steps  
of adolescence, his arm  
embracing my waist, the nervous chatter  
clouding the room. Once separate,

save them all—each  
little layer in a memory, each  
black and white note in a song.

Stack the parts in suitcased rows,  
you can unpack them when you have time.

At great distances, music is muffled  
and distorted as we listen. Driving away,  
the radio station fades, music scatters.  
Here, it is quieter, fewer tones ring clearly  
across the distance. Pick up the conch  
and listen. Inside, it is just

your own pulse. It will lose  
its shape, this memory, the ropes holding  
it together will fray, its insides drifting  
apart. Doesn't matter, doesn't matter.  
You sift through the details like shells.

*Caitlyn Closser, '06*



*"Ponder" Michael Queen, '07*

The coolness of a terminal window behind my seat reaches through my hair to the scalp, easing a headache only recognized at the moment of its lightening. I close my eyes, but the shuffling bodies continue to imprint themselves upon the black screen of my lids.

My mother is dead. She abandoned when I was twelve. The plane docking at Gate C-17 will transport me to Las Vegas. I will wait and board another plane, Flight 218, to the West Coast, San Francisco. There, I will find a place to stay, get something to eat, until we meet. Maybe I'll sightsee, verify the Golden Gate's existence with my own eyes.

Erratic steps and the swift pulling of a wheeled carry-on, "Yes, yes Jimmy around 8:30 or so... You know I've missed you." Yes but does she know she has missed him. This voice flits passed, tripping over itself with each snipped syllable. Intended pleasure masked with business. She wanted to get off, trading the "I" for the ideal "you" beyond the glass. She didn't though, so she returns to point A, to Jimmy, B only phantom traces upon the skin.

Each one branching into or out of the terminal migrates from point A to B, but most will remain who they were at A, even return there. This is not travel. Underneath the skin, within the blood and organ goo dwells the central blot. The "I" embeds here, and like a cancer, mutates under the change in environment, body temperature, and state of mind which only comes from travel better named wandering. Because I am a conscious wanderer, will my process become navigation, and so, false?

I smile to myself, arching my eyebrows in amusement; the action pulls at the glass pressed hairs against the back of my head. Funny how that all connects, resulting in a twinge which reminds me of the headache. The previous rambling seems good enough to scribble down somewhere, maybe on the back of an America West ticket jacket, but I decide against it. I'm not one to do such things and what matters most now is simply keeping my lids down.

Maybe some would call me pretentious, maybe I am. But I'd rather be this than someone like the thirty-something almost in front of me with her partner for the ride, a furiously constructed boardroom PowerPoint.

Surveying the prospects, as I entered into the vicinity of the crowded Gate C-17, Hopkins International, she seemed harmless enough. Being a late Friday flight to Las Vegas most running on the Cleveland treadmill were trying to exchange its dirt for a new grime, a stain which may hurt more than help but enrich the run in the end. Good for them. But I wasn't looking to rest next to any of those for the time being, when I still had a choice in the matter. In the back, looking down at the translucent blue of a screen instead of the greys of the sky facing her, this woman with a taught ponytail seemed right. Single and stuck to her work, I thought she would remain to herself and notice me solely as an inconvenience as well. We could share that at least.

Heaving the strap of my overnight bag onto my already backpack heavy shoulder (I never travel

light), I passed by the lovers, a group of chattering elderly people already wearing pastels and socks below the knees of their bare legs, and a couple who somehow thought it would be a great idea to have their three children accompany them. Kids on a plane, almost as bad as snakes. They wriggle and rattle, and even if you're scared, phobic even, you're stuck being the patient and understanding passenger. The workaholic would be as annoyed as me, I thought, as I finally walked through the aisle beside her seat and glanced at her work. That's when I noticed the PowerPoint, quite an extensive one.

I chose a seat not directly in front of her; like many airports, the seats are not lined up directly across from another. Limited eye contact must indicate a secure design. Hurling my bags down on the neighboring seat, I stole one more look at her furrowed brow before slouching down. My own cuticles were rough in comparison to those which she followed with eyes only now noticeably spider legged with mascara. The results of a second coat. Maybe it's a job-determining convention this weekend, one too important for sleep. I bet that she would order a drink on board, maybe even two; I bet that it would be a chardonnay, too cautious for anything stronger.

A little blonde girl toddled in front of me, the legs of red Osh-Kosh overalls catching on the mottled seating area carpet. She giggled, running away from her mother who trailed behind her, cell phone pressed to her ear.

"No, no, no...not you Ted, hold on a second...Amanda, don't trail away from Mommy like that." The mother caught the girl's free hand (the other hand clasped a gummy baby pretzel) and proceeded to discuss flight information to Ted on the other end.

Catching sight of my smile, the toddler peeked beneath curls and grinned back. As the mother pulled her along, she slobbered around the pretzel held whole-fisted in her mouth.

Still shaking her head in agreement with Ted, the mother turned over her shoulder and mouthed a *Sorry about that* my way. I shook my head quickly in reply, attempting to demonstrate it was no big deal. And, it really wasn't.

Back at their seats, the little girl, Amanda now, turned backward and continued to gnaw on her pretzel, watching me. Her older brother, who had been coloring in an activity book, turned around to join her. He let his knobby arms dangle over the seatback, butt jutted out and head cocked against the back of the chair.

Now being the one under observation, I fiddled with my bags and thought it best to place my pack, where all my important information was kept, between my legs. Closing my eyes, I leaned back against the window glass, assuming my two analyzers would return to other amusements.

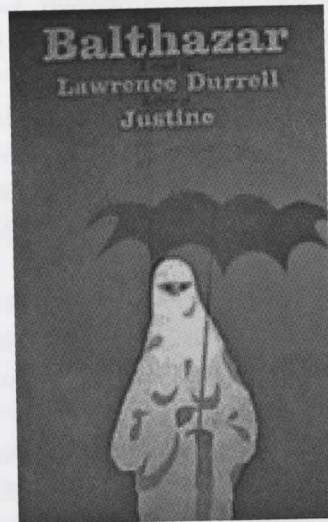
A newspaper rustles to my left, breaking the anticipatory silence of our nearing departure. A guy leaning against one faux marble column continues to rumple the classifieds of the Plain Dealer. He stares at the crumpled mass in his lap and bats it to the side with one calloused paw. It rolls on top of the remaining newspaper divisions, still neatly folded, beside him. He stares, almost like he's waiting for it to unfold again. This time there would be blue pen circles, similar to coffee mug stains, marking

possibilities for what to fill that space between the morning and evening news. Of course nothing happens.

But this guy plays it cool. He slides his over-sized shades, similar to ski-goggles for the American Olympic team, down from his temple to the knotted bridge of his nose. I wonder if his eyes are open or closed behind the frames.

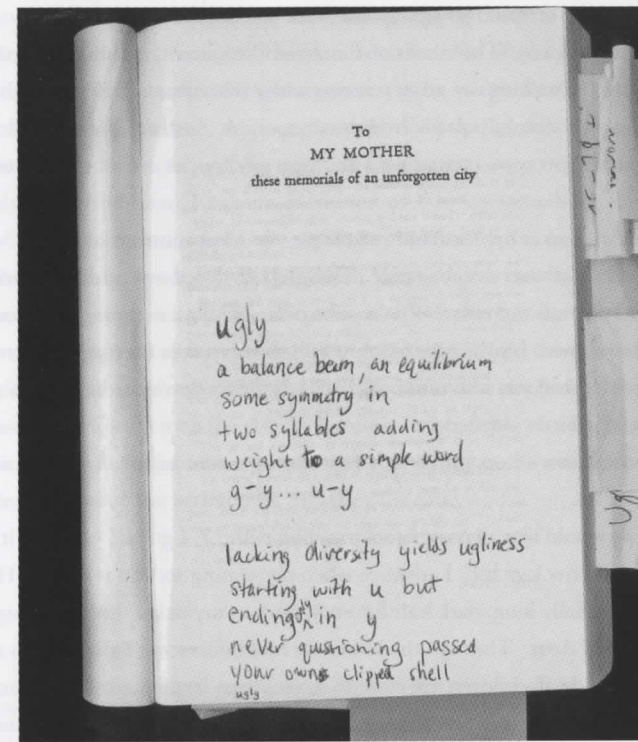
The workaholic in front lets out a slight cough, a sign that she can still make noise outside of her own head, and I know it is just wrong to stare anymore.

So, I retie a shoelace. I read over the name of my backpack, Eastpak, until direction and case mean nothing. Then, I open it. The tail of a half-eaten Quizno's sub from one of the food courts catches against the zipper. Pushing that aside, I reach down against the front canvas to the bottom. I find the tearing spine of a dry paperback and pinch. The second in a quartet, it is the one I am currently reading over. Not for class this time. Before placing it in my lap, I run my fingers against the long ridges in the spine, two stick out higher than the others. At one point, their past owner, my mother, had splayed them apart at those specific points. My fingers move from the spine to the cover, one I had stared at for some time already. A shrouded figure, who I believe to be female, completely solitary. Who holds an umbrella without any rain?



This time I note the wrinkles at the corners and faint lines creeping from the edges. The yellowed pages peek from the cover of the 1958 edition. Used even when she owned it.

I crack it open. Instead of reading on, I tread back to a portion skipped earlier. Inside, after the title page and below the dedication, her scrawled handwriting, mostly in blue throughout the pages, spreads out.



Quirky. I trace my fingers across the words. The parched pages of a wood pulp pressed, cut, and rolled before my time snag at the plump ridges of my fingerprints. That dusty print with grains you can see beneath pen scribbling. They really don't print pages like they used to.

They say things happen when you least expect them to, but in this case, "they," whoever they really are, were totally off the mark. When I found out about it, I was ready, at least expected it, since the moment she left. I was supposed to be at spring break right now; she would be the one to wait until I had actual time off. Fit it in and then get over it.

But I don't have time for this at the moment. Closing the book and turning my wrist over, I see it's 5:53 PM. Pulling my ticket out of the back cover of the book, I read my scheduled boarding again, the fifth time of the day—6:15PM.

"They" also tell you to arrive at the airport early, much earlier than necessary, because of increased national security. Of course, even with the pushy ordering and invasion of bodily privacy, I have yet to rush toward the gate in a panic. I end up sitting, waiting, running only in my head.

I remember my dinner. Eating always fills the void.

The doughy bread, soaked in cool teriyaki chicken and limp lettuce, slides down my throat. I

had specified un-toasted out of spite; go against the trademark, I always say.

I can't taste much anyway. The smells of the drive, the airport, and those surrounding me had saturated my nostrils. Pinching my nose, it seems wider than usual. If I had been the little girl Amanda, I would have picked it slyly and solved the discomfort. Instead, I keep swallowing the wads of pepper and spice, the nasal pressure increasing with every swallow, as my tongue closes against the roof of my mouth.

The newspaper guy takes my lead and snatches a vile of peanuts beside him. Only then I notice the lack of carry-on baggage. Twisting off the plastic seal, he (worker, gambler, loser) coaxes the salted peanuts out onto his palm, like pills. Without counting, he shovels them passed his teeth, chews, and swallows. It's the type of mouthful that expands the esophagus to the point of pain, when the compacted ball juts into other organs, as it pulses downward. Then it's all relief when it falls into the stomach. He looks satisfied.

Leaving the heel, I almost toss the remaining contents under my chair, flicked stealthily, instead of searching for a trashcan.

"At this time, we would like all passengers traveling with..." I guess I can take it with me.

My mouth dry and my legs stiff, I advance when my seating section is called. Handing the flight attendant with unusually long, dark hair for an attendant my ticket, I plod through the breathless corridor toward the sealed door. Through the stale heat and fluorescent light, I catch a waft of BO. Of all things on a plane ride, if children are close to snakes then fermented sweat is snake venom. And near to me, too. I resist the urge to scan those closest and remain to myself as one should.

Boarding the plane, the flight attendants greet me with a smile. Holding my bulky carry-ons behind, I half-smile back, gauging the size of the overhead compartments as I go. Limit—24x10x16, weight doesn't matter. I'm less careful with staying inside the aisle once I pass by first class.

"Please refrain from storing luggage for those who need to move to the back of the plane. Thank you." I sit down and buckle in, realizing she was talking to me. 13C, aisle seat. One of the pastel elderly people, a woman, stronger and taller than her friends, sits at the window. She half closes the blind and opens a Christmas edition of *Better Homes and Gardens*.

I never block off a window, except for sleep. And here, nobody peers in to the temporary inhabitants. Up in the air, one can deny the earth for a few hours and, at night, focus on the pinpoints of light filtering from above and the manmade below, an expanse of its own. But she doesn't. The suited man beside me, shifts in his seat as he folds up a newspaper, New York Times, and doesn't acknowledge the closing window. He probably refuses to read the local news.

Scanning the crowded seats, I am glad to see the little girl, mother, and brother three seats ahead. The others from the gate are nowhere in close range.

The heavily jacketed arm to my left brushes against the outside of my own bare skin. I surrender the armrest. Out of the corner of my eye, he reaches past cheap shoes to an expensive

briefcase. In his new position, the warm ray of the reading lamp reflects off the sweat of his balding head. Dust particles float amongst the light. He munches a handful of multi-colored Tums and notices my look. Mistaking my attention for genuine interest, he smiles. Beyond his glasses, one eye is noticeably greener than the other's blue. I cringe, remembering that I had once dreamed of falling in love with a two-toned man. So far, he was the only one I ever met.

After adjusting his watchband, he opens his mouth as if to say something. I smile back but grab the book in front of me. Each word is precious, a glue for my meandering gaze. I permit him to turn away and talk to the woman by the window. He goes to Vegas once a month, a reward for hard work and loneliness. She had never been. He has a nephew who lives there and works for Sherwin Williams. Her husband, now deceased, used to travel there a lot on business. Now, it was her turn.

Taxiing out of the gate, we bump backwards. Takeoffs and landings are exhilarating. After that thrill, everything becomes close. I turn the pages randomly in her book, settling on a passage that suits me. My mother sometimes had a lot to say, but most of the writing at the margins was redundant, a revamped, simplified version of the actual text. It passes the time.

\* \* \*

"He must try to deliver himself, go beyond—" That stale flavor of BO from the entryway entwines with my mental tongue, paralyzing it temporarily. Keeping my eyes upon the pages, I only think of a woman, catty-cornered to my aisle seat, who seems to be the exuding culprit. The smell is more irritating now, green. In such a small place, it's hard for the olfactory factory to avoid. The confined space has made me delirious. I picture little green globules, donning hardhats as each one leaves "home" (aka one of her two armpits/her crotch) on their way to my nose, my eyes, my brain.

Enough. Turbulence over, Captain Speaking had switched the seatbelt sign off already; I am free to investigate.

After tucking my book neatly inside the mesh holder below the stowed tray table, I lift the metal wing of my seatbelt off and slide the clasp out—the correct, calm procedure as indicated within the America West pamphlet which now rested behind *Balthazar's* scribbled pages.

The recycled air valve murmurs softly in my ear, as I stand up and breathe in the manufactured oxygen--gloriously refreshing. Two seats in front, a man whom I can only assume was an auctioneer at some point (flannel, gangly arms only witnessed as he pulled out a linen hanky serving as further proof, and cottonmouth spittle crusted to the corners of the mouth) uses the back of the mother of two's seat ahead of him to pull himself upward. He tucks his shirt into his pants and peers to the back. The bathrooms are unoccupied.

Quickly responding, I turn around and scope out my target. The stinky lady unclips a bag of Combos, unfolds each crease deliberately slow, and re-chip-clips the bag's side for easy retrieval and freshness. A ritual of sorts, the exterior order compensates for her body's lack of hygiene. Tucking her short black hair behind her ears, a childish box-cut, she clears all impediments away from the face. As she chooses one golden flavor explosion and begins to suck the middle contents loudly down, I remember some obscene joke about Chinese people.

My roommate knew a Japanese girl somehow, and she told me about how different Asian people, especially Japanese and Chinese, dislike each other. The Japanese girl said that Chinese people were dirty...how she would never eat their food because it was unsanitary. My roommate laughed, mimicking the Japanese girl's own telling, saying how they even recycled food, like pizza crusts, and made them appetizers. The Japanese pride themselves on cleanliness; even their food is art. My roommate would no longer eat Chinese food. She stopped going to Main Moon, and always left the room if I ate our old favorite, House Lo Mein.

Cutting off the auctioneer, I take four steps, reaching Chinese Lady. Walking passed, something hits me besides the smell--I have no way of knowing she is actually Chinese. I couldn't tell the difference if I tried.

Ashamed, I tuck my head down, only glancing randomly around at the other passengers. Most

remain preoccupied, but some analyze me, too. Meeting one man's look, as he averts attention away from his laptop, I focus my complete attention to the back of the plane.

The flight attendant, stewardess in her heyday, who smiled as I entered now arched a penciled eyebrow in my direction. "Just pull," she says and her sun-worn skin rubberbands back into a half smile. Squatting down in the tiny space, hovering over the seat, too worried to sit and too lazy to pull out a seat cover from my bag, I realize how often she repeats that phrase—"Just pull." Then, she thinks what illiterate morons we, the non-pullers, are. And then, she goes back a little later, maybe after we all file off, one by one, and the captain steamily spits it back into her ear between naked kisses. I am only temporarily amused with myself, as the blue water roars through the open valve, only a much louder decibel version of the air valve above my seat.

An alien face peers back at me from the mirror, jaundice underneath fluorescent light. Opening my mouth, I push out my tongue. It seems normal enough, although the frayed insides of my cheek flash as I tilt my head. After hearing the news, a phone call from my mother's sister, my distant aunt, all I could do was drive and chew gum. It was Big Red, the worst of all gums, metallic cinnamon gripping onto my teeth. I had bit down pretty hard. They say you bite your tongue or cheek because of an upset stomach.

Closing my mouth and turning off the faucet, I run my damp hands through my hair, hoping to ease the static electricity from the dry airplane. Now it looks greasy.

This time I push. But the flight attendant is at the head of the plane serving drinks again. Passing by the woman eating Combos, I don't even notice the smell. And, instead of four steps, it's five. I forgot to count the move into the seat.

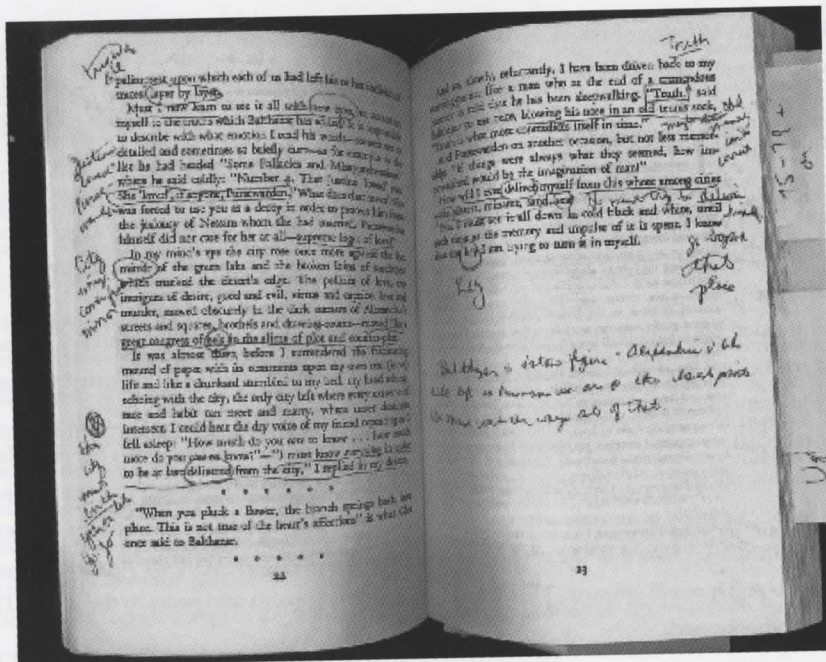
The two-toned man naps. I spread out in the seat.

Glancing up at the sketches above me, I wonder how many arrows I could find on an airplane, and if that percentage would exceed any other comparison with a space of the same dimensions. And then I debate another ratio, the ratio that I meant to ponder about in the first place. I wonder if the ratio of distance between her in seat 14D and me in seat 13C would be comparable if seated in first class. I had tiptoed through there earlier. The flimsy curtain as divider bars the way. Perhaps they would have smelled me and recognized a scent unlike their own.

Out of my bag from beneath the seat in front of me, I pull out a medium sized notebook, where I keep all of my ideas, journal entries and the like. She scribbled on margins and fragments. I write on the lines.

*I am a liar. I write on many things. But not in books, not like her.*

*The day she left, I got back from school to find my father already home from the mill. With the sleeves of his blue security uniform rolled up, he was hauling out piles of fabric. A turquoise belt with golden buckle slipped from among the mix. They were my mother's backroom clothes, those she no longer wore.*





I watched random articles fall from the mound between his arms. A black and white pump, a purple scarf... I picked her belongings up, following his movement around the back of the house to the dead ground where the foundation of our garage stood months before. Bits of glass and concrete block emerged from the bald earth, like crooked teeth.

He dumped the articles down, into a fire ring of bricks, those salvaged from the foundation, and turned without acknowledging me.

She had finally left.

There were days where she would sit locked inside the blue Ford. I would watch from my bedroom window. He would have removed the spark plugs, not permitting her to leave. But she would stay until the dark encroached, until her bladder was full, filling up that space where anger had been.

But she had done it this time.

He came back with my great-grandfather's chest. It held her precious things, family and childhood things. Pushing me out of the way, he dumped it on top of the pit of clothes and returned inside.

Opening the wooden lid, I embraced what I could: wedding album, some books, baby clothes, into an old patchwork quilt that held no meaning to me. Like a vagabond, I threw the keepsake sack over my shoulder and ran to the barn.

The truck camper, housed underneath the sturdy rafters, still rotted in places where the damp could settle. The door fell from the hinges as I pulled it open. Tossing the blanket, I threw it in and reworked the door, too warped and swollen with moisture to puzzle correctly together inside the frame.

Back at the plateau of the old garage, fire licked at what was left of her. He even threw in boxes of records and National Geographics meant for me that she had bought at an auction a few years earlier. There were only a few with flecks of mold, and I had enjoyed their smell, as I hid among them in the backroom, regardless.

The smoke of his cigarette entwined with that of the fire. After a long drag, he pierced his eyes onto the melting fragments. I noticed my old Halloween costumes, a clown and genie, that she had sown for me, among them. They were made out of bits of her own clothes. I wanted to reach in for them. He made a mistake. Those were mine.

"Get those traps out. It's about time we get rid of those snapping turtles."

The way you catch a snapping turtle:

- wooden barrel or plastic milk jug
- large hook, cross between a fishing and a meat one
- chunk of raw meat, preferably chicken

Hook the meat. Don't worry if the hook is partially visible. Unlike a fish, the turtle will bite in regardless. This works for most turtles. At the end of the hook and its metal links, attach a barrel or plastic jug. The weight of the floating barrel atop the water will catch the hook in the turtle's mouth as it bites. The turtle tires itself out, trying to pull the jug or barrel filled with air, underwater. It eventually gives up on the shore, where the trapper finds it.

Or, you can use a pole, your hand, and pull them out. This method only works in shallow water, similar to creeks.

Or, you can wait and shoot them with a rifle.

This is where I come from.

That spring, he killed all the turtles out of our two ponds. I only helped once, like I had as a child.

Not yet dead, he carried it up the hill from the pond beside the barn. Calling me from the tire swing underneath the sycamore behind our house, he continued to the metal pole which held one end of a clothesline. Hanging the turtle upside down, he tied its tail and back with the heavy line, so it dangled from the pole. It swung angrily toward him, a gnarled mouth opening like some prehistoric creature.

My father pulled his hand back, the "stupid sunwabitch" flailing its limbs in the empty air. The flesh was softer than you would imagine.

"Here," handing me a once waterlogged, now dried, stick. "Put it in his mouth." He knew it was male by the eye color, either red or orange denoted a male or a female.

Mechanically, I allowed the turtle to bite down, an ineffectual effort to free itself and stretched its neck out. Looking away, I felt a great weight lifted. Its head still clamped onto the stick end, eyes wide.

My mother killed herself.

"Donna killed herself, slit her wrists with a razorblade like a true romantic. We're all flying out there. She wanted that, I think." My aunt over my apartment phone, as I stretched the cord into the hallway's dark recesses. Never one to lie anything gently, much like the beat flying off of her drumsticks. I follow her meter, nodding across the line, hanging up in tempo. My friends said their momentary goodbyes in the living area. They thought she was already dead, victim of a car accident.

I'm sure my father doesn't know. I wonder where he is now, if he knows at all. Maybe he finally made it back to his island, one of them in Hawaii. His favorite Marines stories came from then, the ones he was willing to share.

Turbulence again.

Quieter now and close, I put on my headphones and listen to The Beatles. There's never a time when their songs don't seem appropriate. I wait until it's time to peak under the half-shaded window, Here Comes the Sun, ready to see the never-before-seen lights of Las Vegas.

\* \* \*

Sarah Broderick, '06



*"Untitled" David Savoie, '08*

### Lyric exploited

Almost everything I do is blue,  
coloring the lines in your face.  
Let us be holy. Let us be not afraid;  
pause in the suffocated folding of our hands.  
Try to breathe. Greet us as you should with lungs:  
vibrato, an ancient welcome.  
Sing a scar above the world. Flame should not enter  
where beryl masks officiate and breath freezes  
into a lyric. Cold on lips, the color you know  
until it licks your tongue and spills from broken eyes.  
Find an untouched field and defile it, cut away;  
deep night, thick bristles accompany your destruction  
of light. The slow decay of life brands itself on the world.  
Swift, the wind traps pollen, sight. We are lost,  
or rather, we forget the stars, their breath, their flight.

*Anonymous*

## Contributors Notes

### Art Bios:

*Mark Williams*- Mark Williams is a senior political science major from Ann Arbor Michigan. Mark plans to go on to graduate school to study education and gain secondary teaching certification for social studies. Mark is a member of the Denison Crew team and has competed, in previous summers, with St. Catharines Rowing Club in Ontario in their senior men's 140 pound lightweight program. This summer, Mark hopes to continue developing his sports and nature photography skills.

*David Savoie*- David is a sophomore from Richwood, OH. He is a self taught photographer and digital artist, and has been working on and off with photography since he was 15.

*Michael Queen*- Michael is a junior cinema major with a studio art minor focusing on photography. Next semester he'll be studying in New York with the New York Arts Program and Saturday Night Live's photographer, Norman Ng. Someday he'd like to run his own studio and be able to create the art that he loves. If he goes into cinema, although it's embarrassing, he'd like to work with music videos.

*Medha Jaishankar*- Medha Jaishankar was conceived in the mind of a rogue nuclear scientist of mixed European stock. Upon her birth, her mitochondrial DNA was mixed with that of a ferret, producing a plethora of unmentionable natural disasters. In her mid-twenties (days, that is) she began taking photographs and giving them names of the post-modern persuasion. They are currently housed in the Saachi collection in London. Her weighty resume lists her as working as a wig maker, prison guard, radio talk show host and Olympic luger. Jaishankar is an active reality show watcher and voting machine checker. Her interests include teriyaki sauce, lymphatic systems and semi-percussive instruments. She currently lives in Lincoln, Nebraska with her fish Algie.

*Jon Efe*- Jon Efe is a junior at Denison.

*Chih Ling Chou*- Chih Ling is an International student from Taiwan, now living in Costa Rica. She works as a peer international student advisor and a tutor at Denison. A biochemistry major, she likes science but at the same time she loves all kinds of artwork and music. She wants to take more art classes but labs are always at the same time as the class. Therefore, drawing is just one of her ways to relax.

### Fiction Bios:

*Zach Walters*- Zack Walters is a senior English major with a concentration in narrative writing. He is currently working on his senior writing project, comprising a collection of short stories, some of which he hopes to submit to the next EXILE.

*Sarah Clapp*- Sarah Clapp is a senior at Denison University.

*Sarah Broderick*- Sarah Broderick is a senior majoring in English and Cinema at Denison University.

### Poetry Bios:

*Diamond Sankey*- Diamond Sankey is a senior English Major at Denison University

*Jess Haberman*- Jess Haberman is a senior English major at Denison University

*Ian Conwell*- Ian Conwell is a Creative Writing/Latin double major at Denison University, and a first-time contributor to EXILE.

*Caitlyn Closser*- Caitlin Closser is a senior English writing major who hails from Dayton, OH. She has been writing poetry for as long as she can remember, and is currently working on a senior writing project to showcase her latest achievements.

*Sarah Bishop*- Sarah Bishop is a senior majoring in English Writing who hails from Nashville, Tennessee. She enjoys large boots, books on tape, and earrings of unusual size. Needless to say, her ear lobes hurt a lot. Her biggest fan, Milo, also hails from Nashville. His orange fur can most likely be found on all of her dark clothing. Sarah hopes to move on to graduate school where she can earn an MFA in creative writing and fans not of the feline variety.

*Katie Berta*- Katie Berta is a Sophomore English major with a minor in Sociology.

## **Editorial Board**

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