Welcome to the Books & Books Presentation of the 2013 Edition of Elysium Literary /Art Magazine

Sunday, June 2, 2013 1 -2:30 p.m.

The Launch of the 2013 Elysium
Books & Books in Coral Gables Sunday, June 2, 2013

INTRODUCTION
Mrs. Scott, sponsor of Elysium
Opening remarks and expression of gratitude to Mitch Kaplan and Books & Books for their continuing support.

Hannah Pusteovsky, editor-in-chief
Introduction and recognition of the staff, writers, and artists who contributed to Elysium 2013.

LITERARY STAFF
Alejandra De La Fuente
Annmarie Raskin
Danielle Coogan
Derek Abella
Josie Lobello
Lynn Fan
Matthew Henao
Nick Reed

ART STAFF
Alejandra Chinea
Diana Wynne
Lee Pivnik
Martin Gargaglione
Rachel Pena

LAYOUT STAFF
Caitlin Lopez
Sophia Padgett-Perez

MUSICAL ARTS
"Gavotte I and II" from Cello Suite No. 6 by Bach
cellist Tom Zhang

EXCERPTS FROM WOMAN CHILD
Lynn Fan
"Western Suicide"

VISUAL ARTS
Martin Gargaglione: Art Talk
Dylan Alvarez: Art Talk

Lorna Zane & Jacky Prieto
sing "House of the Rising Sun"
accompanied on guitar by Nick Reed

Lynn Fann
"Western Suicide"

PROSE & POETRY
Diane O'Connor
"Pen Taps"

NEELANSHU THAPAR
"My Struggle Against the Piano"

Isabell Manibusan
"Scott"

Jiaxin Zhang
"On Treading Softly"

Ana Chang
"Chinese-American War"

David Ernsberger:
"Diamond Kites"

"What Should I Know About Jazz?"

Yinimi Galego
Art Talk
Lee Pivnik
Art Talk

"The Washing of Feet"

PROSE & POETRY
Janay Blakely
"My Grandpa's Hands"

Jialin Zhang
"On Treading Softly"

Tommy Chaisuesomboon
"Chinese-American War"

DAVID ERNSBERGER:
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"My Grandpa's Hands"

"Entangled Memories"

"What Should I Know About Jazz?"

"Varadero"

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The 2013 Elysium Staff
Hannah Pustejovsky Editor-in-chief
Tom Zhang

“Gavotte I and II”

from Cello Suite No. 6 by Bach
A VIOLENT EXPLOSION

Danielle Coogan

Ah—!
The dam would hold no more inside her soul
As air flew in, ’ward tightened chest met cold
Dawn leap to head as shutter eyes saw dusk
Emotions forced ravines in supple clay
A brutal stoppage—heart immobile once
Out with grandeur, trumpets herald lost rush
—Choo!

PEN TAPS

Danielle Coogan

To drum the idle minutes past some more
Music sheet of wind and rain and ticking
Beckon armies far away to battle
Rhythm frantic, sharp as silence on ears
Conjure harmony to wood and lecture
Virtuoso sitting thinking in class
pale skin visible through the water.
(though it was distorted)
i feel the currents of his kicks caress my body; caress the pool wall.

he emerges with a slight gasp and shivers. schluck. now with swimming goggles perched atop his head, and arms crossed over his chest in a futile effort to conserve warmth. he gazes at me. i study his shivering body and the sun emerges from behind the clouds. i relish the newfound warmth and submerge myself slowly underwater. a bee struggles to escape. lethargic waves of dead gnats are swept into the groove where used band-aids, hair, and other ill-fated bugs collect. glug glug. and they’re gone.

hot asphalt on my feet. cool shaded cement.
then the cheap laminate floor of an elevator. water pools at my feet.
the door is slow to creak open, but i squeeze through.

he keeps flops on his nightstand along with a sewing machine and an alarm clock (rarely used). i collapse onto his mattress and sink in. tempurpedic, he tells me. as i lay there i watch him busily exit and re-enter the room. he fiddles with a knick-knack or two, settles, then moves again. and i lay there thinking of someone else, as he was distracting himself from an entirely different someone else.
i close my eyes and listen to the nervous fl eting footsteps that echoed in my heart.
CHINESE-AMERICAN WAR
Ana Chang

Have you eaten?
is the standard greeting
between my grandmother and her friends. It is not a nasally ni hao like
the Mandarin's. We did not
get the memo
and we remain hick peasant farmers
asking each other if we have eaten, left decades behind in a war and
speaking a dialect no one
knows
but us. The Americans
look at me with gunfighter eyes. They
ask, “How do you say this in Chinese?”
and I am struck silent because I never learned the words for puddings and
poetics
the way others did. The war lives with me. It stares out the window when
the doorbell rings, it
listens to my grandmother sobbing
in her sleep, it cowers before strongmen juggling bombs in their heads,
and it hears the voice in
the telephone asking if
I have eaten.
When I was younger, I always assumed that jazz was off limits, that I was excluded from the world of Count Basie and his Orchestra. Well, not his orchestra. Because, (as any good stereotype would), I was expected to play piano or violin. So I learned the piano. I hated it.

I always feigned my attraction to the piano. Because I had found myself a pile of old tapes and CDs My parents had kept in dusty drawers as if jailed—Leftover music from a day gone by. See, jazz was a mistress. (And I was an adulterer.)

Its exotic body gave color to the monochrome keys In radical signatures and time changes, In voices that echoed of a life years past That I yearned to join. My parents would never know of my bedtime trysts With Lady Ella and Dinah Washington. Yet, I soon learned that it wasn't proper, Wasn't "Asian" to enjoy "black" music, Since listening to jazz was a birthright Only for those with the right amount of melanin And that I should go back to playing Bach. So I hated piano even more.

Yet, it wasn't the melodies and countermelodies, The points and counterpoints I was forced to play That made me hate it. Not my father's "You just have to be good, And then you'll love it" mantra Apparent in all portraits of Asian fathers.

But I was sentenced to a musical hell Where I was dictated every articulation, Every note, every accent, even emotion as if Rubato would be a sufficient substitute for passion. And that I could only enjoy the instrument Because of the tone of my yellow skin, A jaundiced melanin, That would forever play Robotic renditions of technically generic music. Another stereotype checked off.

But you know, I eventually found myself At the piano again. I introduced my mistress to my divorced, My jazz to my piano, And left behind a world in which piano Was only for Mozart and Brahms. See, I once feared of not being "Asian", (a pattern I wasn't brave enough to break) But I waged my silent war in nights of brass, In pentatonics and bebop, That rhythm of the tom-tom beat, So that I didn't have to conform another day As an archetype,

The stereotype, a mere reflection of an Asian. So hey, what should I know about jazz?
I was born in Hispaniola
to parents with big dreams.
And when their dreams grew too great
to fit the tiny island,
They came to America:
The land of opportunity.

Opportunity, synonymous to education,
It was here where I discovered my true shade.
I wasn’t a “legit” black.
See I—I was a trickster,
A wolf who wore a melanin sheepskin
Whose telltale tongue told the immigrant’s story.
I was a pseudo-neo-quasi shade of black.

“Girl you know you’ve got that HAIDS,
You know you’ve got that Haitian AIDS.”
I was bombarded with accusations of the sort,
Too young to know that past racial ideology
Had been reincarnated.
It had morphed into the taunts of youngsters
Whose ancestors it once tormented.

Striving to assimilate, I wrestled with the foreign tongue,
Mastered the js, conquered the rs, indoctrinated the –ings.
Only to proclaim my victory in “white” English.
I had hoped that enunciation would catapult me into full
Blackdom
But Black and I only grew more estranged
So as my peers turned their backs to me;

I myself turned to the pages of books
Seeking comfort but finding instead knowledge.
My tiny voice found its way into the classroom,
At first a vibrato, but later strong and steady.

But high marks and accolades only translated
to cold shoulders and isolation.
Intelligence—the newest fabrication—now distanced
me from others
But the blame was both of ours to bear
For intelligence was and is a double-edged sword
For them a tool of alienation, for me—
An escape from past subjugation.

Labels are a funny thing
After a while you start believing them
I had been black, I had been white
And now I may be gray
Beneath my black skin I can still feel the white paper
patches with sticky residue,
I have become a collage.

I have spent so long playing a role
I forgot that black is a birthright rather than a gift
Black is not limited to African-Americans.
“Black” describes a people scattered across the globe
By the forces of history.

Black does not define those it used to describe.
There can be no foreclosure on identity.
Nick Reed  Jackie Prieto  Lorna Zane

“House of the Rising Sun”  Guitar and vocals
Brown sullied dirt molded into life

These are my grandfather’s hands

Large enough to swallow all of the night sky

Hailing from deep Mississippi, remnants of its great river run thick and strong as

Bulging veins

These are my grandfather’s hands

Hard and calloused, conditioned from years of pulling weeds, the pricking of thorns,

From sunrise ’til sunset

Burnt pages of parchment with illegible messages scrawled apart

Cuban cigars, hand-rolled and sickly sweet

Cracked wood of antique tables

The muddied waters of the Deep South

The darkness of a cotton field at midnight

Of an empty house

These are my grandfather’s hands
Martin Gargaglione
La vieja. La madre. Parada en una playa erosionado por la muerte. 
El suelo—pálido. Frío. 
Hinchados eran sus párpados de color escarlata, embutidos con lágrimas saladas y ardientes. 
Desde este sitio, observó a su hijo escapando en una flotilla oscura. 
Al Norte. 
Este niño, hombre por fuera pero juvenil por dentro. 
Atrapado por la protección de su madre, la vieja santa, parada en la orilla. 
Él: una fiera doméstica con alma silvestre. 
Buscando libertad, se embistió al chance. Se tiró al mar. 
La madre, viendo todo, lo siguió. Se hundió. 
Fue matada por los tiburones de su 
Tristeza. 
Fue consumida por los demonios del 
Caribe. 
Solamente hay cenizas. 
Al Norte.

The old woman. The mother. Standing on a beach eroded by death.
The floor—pale. Cold. 
Swollen were her scarlet eyelids, saturated with salty and burning tears. 
From this place, she observed her son escaping on a dark flotilla. 
To the North.

This boy, man on the outside but juvenile within. 
Trapped by his mother’s protection, the old saint, standing on the shore. 
Him: a domesticated beast with a wild soul. 
Searching for liberty, he charged at the chance. He threw himself into the sea. 
The mother, seeing all, followed him. She sank. 
She was killed by the sharks of her 
Sadness. 
She was consumed by the demons of the 
Caribbean. 
There are only ashes. 
To the North.
ENTANGLED MEMORIES
Bruno Olmedo

Memories cling to my hands, tenderly
cuffed around my wrists, readily
available for when I need them.
People say that the bracelets look tacky, that
I wear too many, but no one understands the
necessity of the memories they evoke. No
one understands that within every filament
and fiber lies the chronicle of my life. My
wrists are a novel, and I am the protagonist.

One bracelet—modest, black, with a
beautiful blue orb—is from a street vendor. I
was waiting for my parents to pick me up from
South Beach when the bracelet caught my eye.
I didn't have enough money, but the elaborate
style of the vendor's creations spelled out a
man whose story was worth hearing. Instead
of bargaining, I sat next to him and listened.

"Venezuelan," he said in Spanish through
a vaguely yellow smile, "Venezuelan and
proud." He had been a successful entrepreneur
in Venezuela until Chavez came into power. He
lost everything he worked for—his home, his
business, and his family—but was lucky enough
to make it to Miami with a rusty bag slung
across his back and a few dollars in his pocket.

I liked him a lot. Maybe it was the ease
and brutal honesty in his words or maybe it was
how disturbingly similar his story was to mine.
"Take the bracelet, son," he said to me as I
left, "And live your life with passion." His life was
tragic, miserable at best, yet his smile radiated
the contagious bliss of a truly happy man. Those
last words remain engraved in that bracelet.

A couple of years before that, my cousin
entrusted me with a red, yellow, and green
bracelet in the midst of a chaotic episode of
my life. "They're the colors of the Bolivian
flag," she struggled as tears gently kissed her
cheeks, "so that you never forget where you
come from, no matter what happens after
this." I looked at her face, blurred by my own
tears, knowing it could be the last time we
see each other. Her mouth quivered. She let
out a soft sob and walked away, leaving the
bracelet tightly wrapped around my wrist.

Upon false accusations, my family was chased
out of Bolivia by the government when I was
fourteen. After a few white lies and harmless
bribes, I made it to Brazil. For four days my
father was nowhere to be found. My mother was
incoherent, drugged into oblivion to avoid the
panic attacks that haunted her. All I could do
was watch as everything around me collapsed
violently. Stripped of all our belongings, we
started over.

The bracelet is worn out but beautiful,
tired but still strong. Every loose end has been
held down with nail hardener and fire, and
every knot has been tightened, unwilling to
break under any circumstances. This bracelet holds
tough times, but it also holds strength and courage.

Since my cousin used to own the bracelet,
the stories it carries go back further than mine.
The bracelet is woven with memories of pain,
but also of childhood laughter. It tells stories of
grand battalions with wooden swords, of great
adventures on a ship with pillows, and of mysterious
expeditions into the deadly forest in my backyard.

Moving on was not easy. It still isn't, but this simple
bracelet holds all the support I need. It reminds me of
what I've been through, and of how strong I can be.
"Tacky," they say, "tacky and weird," but I just
smile because they don't understand.
A Western suicide,
Is in the chauvinistic denim jut of your hips,
The medically pleasing curvature of your spine,
Leather shoulders,
Creased anatomy,
The catharsis of misdirected violence and pseudo-eroticism.

A Western suicide,
Is in the drooling liquor around your eyes,
The gross blue swelling of your Cephalic veins,
Notorious tattoos,
Saturated skin,
The curling tendrils of a rotten scent trapped like a leaf between pages.

Your salty slurs, and curious indulgences,
Y incision carnage and fatherless sons,
A Western suicide,
A Western suicide.
The mirror is your Abel,
Now a kaleidoscope of shards,
And now the aftermath of inky breath, and cello-deep self-loathing.
sometimes I wish I could go back in time and warn myself. If it were possible, I would surely have told myself to run away the day my mother turned to ask what instrument I was going to play (already assuming that I was going to be playing one).

I responded, unaware that the moment I opened my mouth I had already lost the right to refuse. I told her drums. She said no. I said trumpet. She said no. I said cello. Again, she said no. I finally said guitar, to which she replied, "Well... if by guitar you mean piano, then yes, rock on," and so I began piano.

I hated it from the beginning. The repetitive, long, and confusing practices were only exacerbated by the fact that I was playing in a musical genre completely alien to my generation. To make things worse, I was tutored by a bald Russian, a tremendously oppressive man whom I will call Tchaikovsky for the sake of privacy. Tchaikovsky was not a nice guy; he was pleasant enough before and after practice, but for the one hour during which he had me, he was like Ivan the Terrible. After years under his tutelage, the source of his vehemence became apparent. He was obviously looking for a prodigy. At the recitals, he used to compete with another piano teacher to see who had molded the better student. It was like watching children fight over toys.

I realized at some point that I had to get out. I had played long enough to become good; in fact, I might even say I was excellent at one point, but I always felt a heavy hand pushing me to do well instead of inner motivation. When I realized this, I began to play badly on purpose. Mind you, both Tchaikovsky and my mother were tough cookies; so, it took no less than two years of botched performances to reach their breaking points.

One day, my instructor, in his never ending quest to find the next Chopin, looked at me and said earnestly, "I know that you know that I know that you don’t care about piano...let’s be honest here."

All it took was one simple hint at the affirmative and Tchaikovsky quit, without as much as a parting glance.

I felt guilty, but beyond the guilt was a vast well of pleasure. I smiled every time I walked past the piano which now started gathering dust in the corner of my living room. My mother tried to replace the instructor with others, but by this point we both knew I had won.

So, just like that, life went on. After four years I literally forgot that we had a piano. That's when high school started, and I struggled academically and socially. I was incredibly overweight, and although I lost the weight later, back then it left me feeling ostracized and alone. I needed an outlet for those emotions, but like my stoic father, I refused to go to others with my problems.

I started playing the piano again. I had to learn note by note and find pieces that were strong enough to express my feelings. Luckily, it was like riding a bicycle. Slowly, I built myself up until I was content with my music. I played for hours, and hours became days. It's been two years since I took up the piano again. The bitter medicine that used to be the bane of my existence is now one of my greatest pleasures.
Door opens—then closes. A light clicks on and envelops the room in an airy brilliance, mirroring that of the sun.

That mystical room, enchanted space, shows a bright glimpse of what could have been what should have been.

But the location is long forgotten, filed away in an attic where boxes are filled to the brim with memories and left alongside our dreams, abandoned to die 'till they are mere shadows of what could have been what should have been.

Lightly we tread in the dust, fearful of breaking glass and leaving a longer-lasting mark than that old ink stain on the chair.

Staying on only right-left roads, ignoring the gambles stopping the wanting for what could have been what should have been.

Sitting quietly, whispering feverishly, yearning desperately. As to not give up our reveries for reality we choose the half heart over the whole. For fear of breakage, shattering into pieces; we choose the already broken for fear of irreparable damage, not understanding that the whole heart is where we find the courage to climb up and grasp the chances above.

To find what could have been, what still could be.
This to hands to which pinch our minds,
and gloves which strangle pounding hearts—
release—and let the string unwind;
let our kites fly off to different parts.

On winds which whirl and waft 'fore noon
sliding our diamond kites down the dream;
Again we spake and spoke too soon
the lies we dream are things that seem.

On winds, we wish that we were loving,
and yet, our minds, our sails—adrift,
dipping, turning, weaving, swirling,
the diamond dives again—bereft

of seeming dreams those hands have stolen,
and eyes gloves cover—bloated, swollen.
Luncheon in the Courtyard
A Note of Thanks

The student members of *Elysium* would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Mitch Kaplan and the staff of Books & Books. This is the fifth year they have hosted our magazine launch, accommodating approximately 120 people and providing use of their central courtyard for our luncheon. The importance of recognizing and validating young artists and writers can not be stressed enough, and Mitch Kaplan as an independent book seller has proven to be the artistic and cultural host of not only Coral Gables but also Miami at large.

Join us next year at the beginning of June when we will once again present our annual magazine.

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