

# The Launch of the 2013 Elysium

Books & Books in Coral Gables

Sunday, June 2, 2013

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

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



Published continuously since 2005, *Elysium* hopes  
to acknowledge & encourage creativity in young artists



## MUSICAL ARTS

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

## INTRODUCTION

Mrs. Scott, sponsor of *Elysium*

Opening remarks and expression of  
gratitude to Mitch Kaplan and Books &  
Books for their continuing support.

Hannah Pustejovsky, editor-in-chief

Introduction and recognition of the staff,  
writers, and artists who contributed to  
*Elysium* 2013.

## PROSE & POETRY

Danielle Coogan "Pen Taps"

Isabell Manibusan "Scott"

Ana Chang "Chinese-American War"

Tommy Chaisuesomboon

"What Should I Know About Jazz?"

Joany Lamur  
"A Different Shade of Black"

## MUSICAL ARTS

Lorna Zane & Jacky Prieto  
sing "House of the Rising Sun"

accompanied on guitar by **Nick Reed**

## SPOKEN WORD

Janay Blakely  
Impromptu Spoken Word

## VISUAL ARTS

Jurissa Tellez  
"The Washing of Feet"

Yinimi Galego Art Talk

Lee Pivnik Art Talk

## PROSE & POETRY

Janay Blakely  
"My Grandpa's Hands"

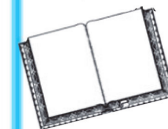
Derek Abella "Varadero"

Bruno Olmedo  
"Entangled Memories"

## VISUAL ARTS

Martin Gargaglione: Art Talk

Dylan Alvarez: Art Talk



## PROSE & POETRY

Lynn Fann  
"Western Suicide"

Neelanshu Thapar  
"My Struggle Against the Piano"

Jialin Zhang  
"On Treading Softly"

David Ernsberger:  
"Diamond Kites"

## MUSICAL CONCLUSION

Excerpts from *Woman Child*



Cécile McLorin Salvant, *Elysium*'s 2007 editor-in-chief, won the International  
Thelonious Monk Competition and has two CDs, *Woman Child* and *Cécile*.

"If anyone can extend the legend of the big 3, Billie Holiday, Sarah Vaughan, Ella  
Fitzgerald, it is this 23 year old virtuoso."

Steven Holden, the New York Times

# *The 2013 Elysium Staff*



*Hannah Pustejovsky Editor-in-chief*



# *Tom Zhang*



“Gavotte I and II”

from Cello Suite No. 6 by Bach

# Danielle Coogan

## A VIOLENT EXPLOSION

Danielle Coogan

Ah—!

The dam would hold no more inside her soul  
As air flew in, t'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



# Isabell Manibusan



## SCOTT

Isabell Manibusan

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 fidgets 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 floating footsteps that echoed in my heart.

# Ana Chang

## 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 Mandarins'. 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 gunfi e 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.



# Tommy Chaisuesomboon



## WHAT SHOULD I KNOW ABOUT JAZZ? Tanarut Chaisuesomboon

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 portrayals 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?



# Joany Lamur

## A DIFFERENT SHADE OF BLACK

Joany Lamur

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;

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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 Lane*

“House of the Rising Sun” Guitar and vocals



# Janay Blakely

## MY GRANDPA'S HANDS

Janay Blakely

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

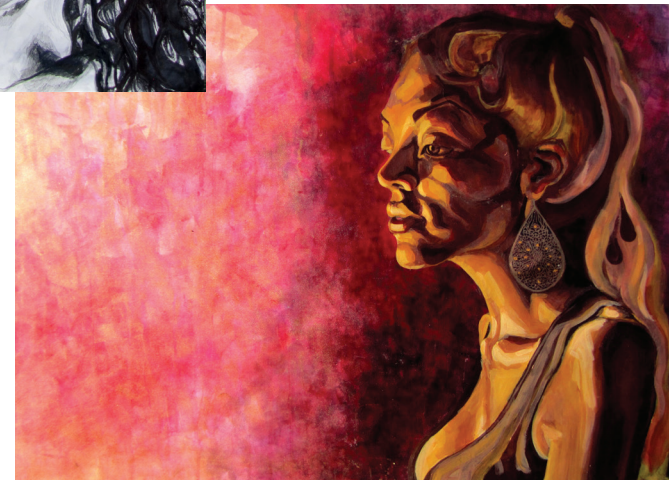
The darkness of a cotton field at midnight

Of an empty house

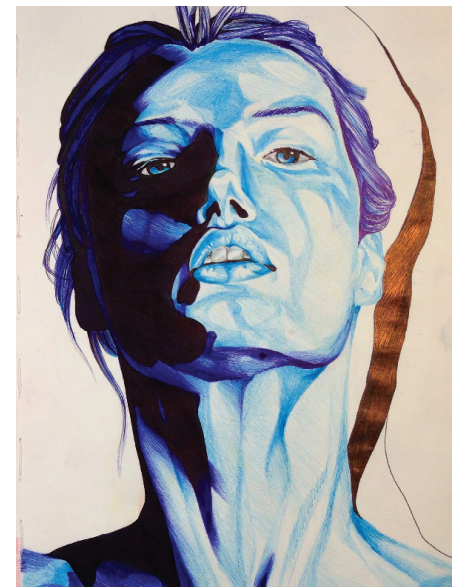
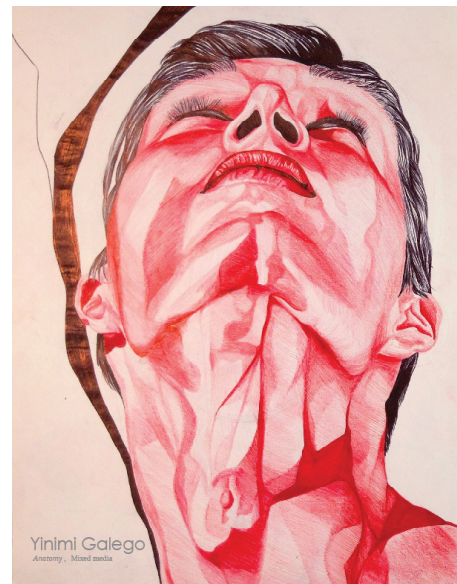
These are my grandfather's hands



# *Jurissa Tellez*

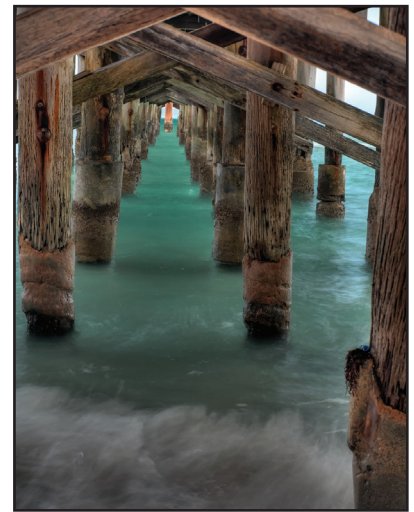
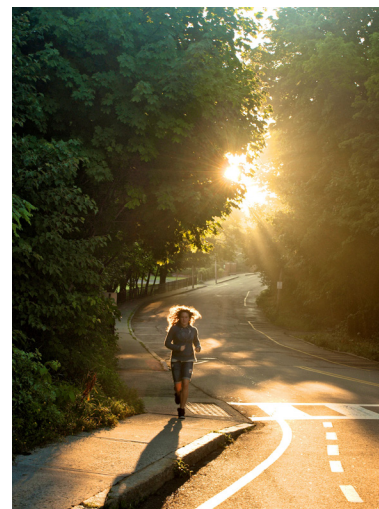


# *Yinimi Galego*





*Dylan Alvarez*

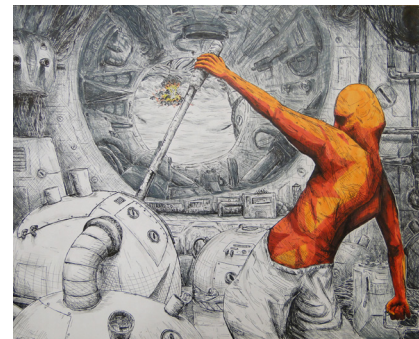




*Lee Pivnik*



# Martin Gargaglione





# Derek Abella

## VARADERO

Derek Abella

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.*





*Bruno Olmedo*

## 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

Page 2 continued

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.

# Lynn Fann

## WESTERN SUICIDE Lynn Fan

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.



# *Neelanshu Thapar*



## MY STRUGGLE AGAINST THE PIANO

Neelanshu Thapar

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.



Theresa Lee Dover, *The Piano*, Pastels

# Jialin Zhang



## ON TREADING SOFTLY

Jialin Zhang

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  
'til 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.

# David Ernsberger

DIAMOND KITES  
David Ernsberger

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—bloating, swollen.

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# *Luncheon in the Courtyard*







# A Note of Thanks

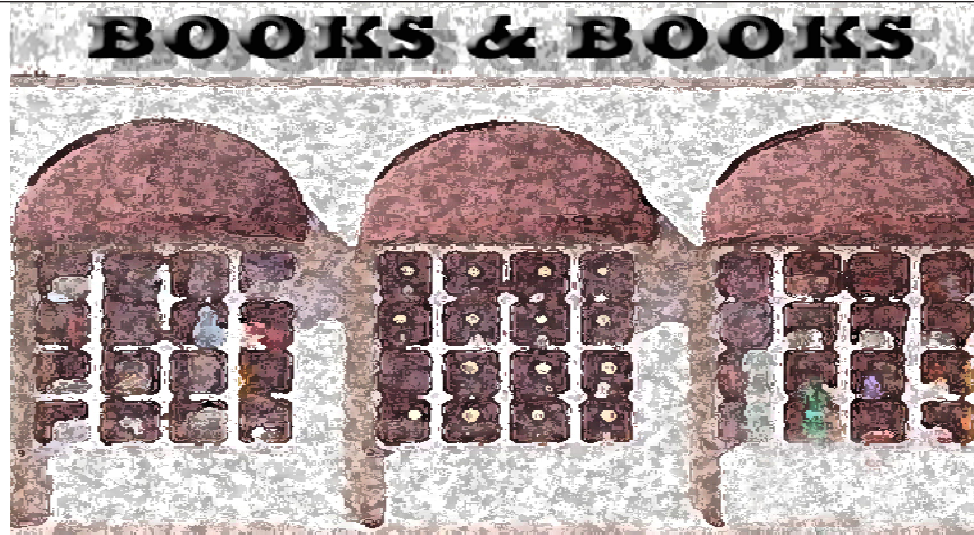


The student members of *Elysium* would like to express their heartfelt gratitude to Mitch Kaplan and the staff of Books & Books. This is the fifth year they have hosted our magazine launch, accommodating approximately 120 people and providing use of their central courtyard for our luncheon. The importance 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.

Contact: [amyscott@dadeschools.net](mailto:amyscott@dadeschools.net)

Website: <http://teachers.dadeschools.net/ascott/index.html>



*Elysium Literary/ Arts*

*Magazine 2013*

Presentation at

Books & Books in Coral Gables

<http://www.booksandbooks.com/coralgables> 265 Aragon Avenue | Coral Gables, Florida 33134 | 305.442.4408  
Store Hours: Sun-Thur: 9am-11pm | Fri-Sat: 9am-Midnight