



# MUSINGS AGAINST A TRAIN STATION

VOLUME I

ISSUE I



SPRING 2005

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<b>A Letter from the Editor</b>	
The Editors .....	4
<b>The Battle of Greenbriar Senior Center</b>	
Cahterine Riccio, BK ‘05 .....	6
<b>How I Came to Be</b>	
Rusell Brandom, ES ‘07 .....	8
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	10
<b>Chapter 4: A unique experience from a three-day visit to a city in Italy:</b>	
Zhen Wang, PS ‘08 .....	11
<b>The Young Hipster’s Guide to Being Alternative in the Twenty First Century</b>	
Lydia Whitlock, ES ‘08.....	12
<b>Class Nodding - What You Should Know, What We Can Do</b>	
Sarah Boyette, SY ‘07.....	15
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	16
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	17
<b>The Graduation Tales:</b>	
Zhen Wang, PS ‘08 .....	18
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	20
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	21
<b>The Goat in South Park</b>	
Zhen Wang, PS ‘08 .....	22
<b>Untitled</b>	
Julia Druk, ES ‘06 .....	26
<b>No es Pollo</b>	
Roberto Thais, SM ‘08 .....	26
<b>Musings on “Musings”</b>	
Esteban Morin, SM ‘08 .....	27

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## **Letter From the Editors:**

Dear Reader,

Earlier this year, while I was sick with a high fever, I decided to go to sleep at nine o'clock and not wake up until one the next afternoon. The light stayed on all night. I tossed about on my bed, covered in cold sweat. I heard voices all night long, and I had a recurring dream with almost no visual elements to it. I was bombarded with a slew of emotions and alien screams, tied together by the idea of mining. When my eyes opened for good the next day, I had an awesome story to put in the letter from the editors.

For the longest time, the working title of our first issue was "Musings Against a Train Wreck". That's because no one sent us any submissions. My poetry teacher said I should "Write on, O Theofilos," all of the submissions. I decided I wasn't sure I wanted to do that. Later, through absolutely no fault of our own, we got sixty pages of submissions. That was a surprise, and we were happy. Then all of our staff disappeared except for one fellow, but we forgot to e-mail him back about being on the staff. Maybe that's because we don't know what we're doing. Mike and Esteban helped with submissions because they live next door.

Also, The Record and The Rumpus, but mostly The Record, don't like us. That's OK, because I like The Record and also I like The Rumpus. And also I think we barely qualify as a literary magazine, but we do qualify, and so we are Yale's first humorous literary magazine.

What else can I say? Look at the "thank yous" on the second page. We would never have been able to do this without the Sudler Fund. I like Yale.

I'm glad I didn't have to write the magazine, or it would have ended up like this.

Isn't that funny? It better be funny.

Signed,

The Editors

**S.W.A.K.**

**My IMAGINATION**

**TRS**

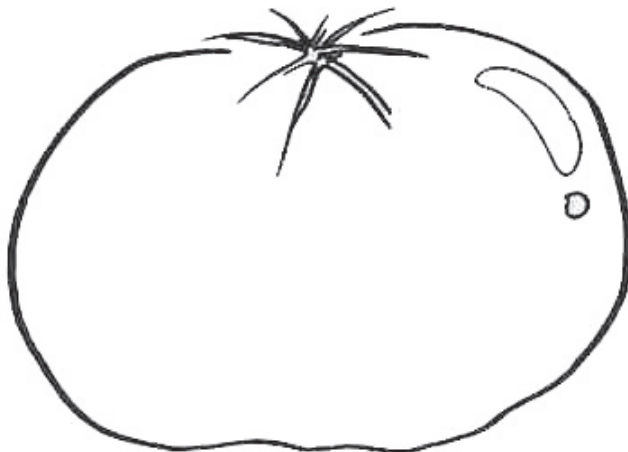
**THE READER  
43 HillHOUSE AVE.  
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## THE BATTLE OF GREENBRIAR SENIOR CENTER

by Catherine Riccio

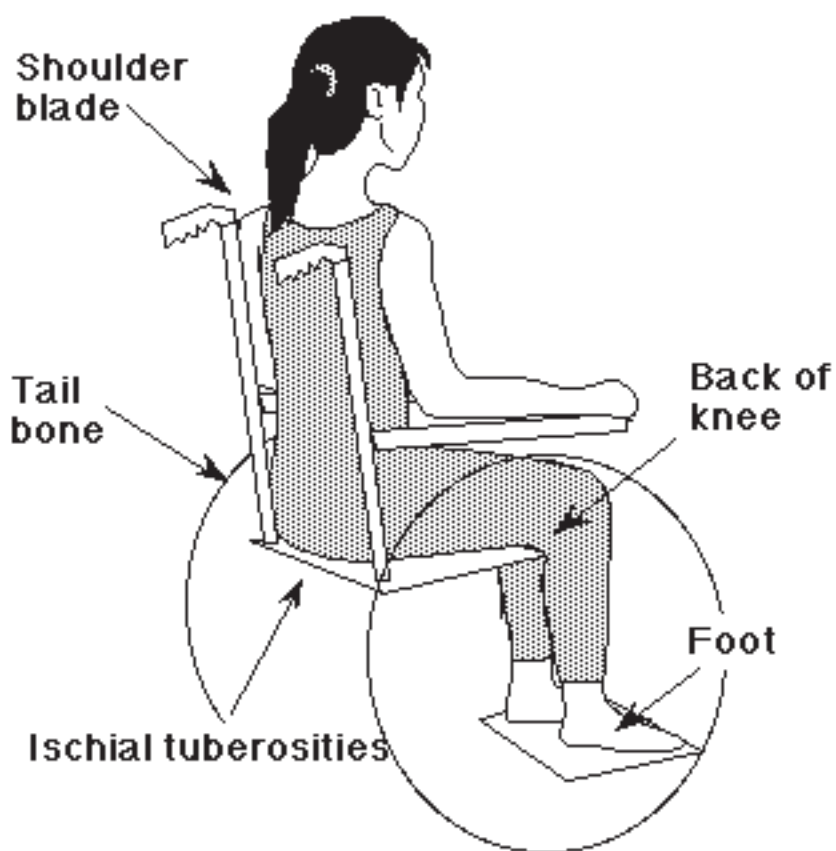
It began with a tomato wedge lobbed over the sneeze-guard at Mrs. Francis Phillips, wife of the late Daniel Phillips, who ruled his home still, with a mere memory. Had it been a leaf of lettuce, or even a bit of napkin, the offending projectile might have glided in a delicate diagonal arc, away from its intended target, to land lightly onto the corner of a lunch tray or perhaps even the floor, where it would wait for one final janitorial sweep. But alas, the treacherous tomato flew with heavy consistency and landed directly onto Mrs. Phillips' ashen brown hair, newly dyed and curled and, before the unjustified splatter of seed and juice, a monument of style which other women in the home often admired.

Everywhere, hands hovered over salad tongs and sliced cucumbers. A flummoxed Mrs. Phillips, wife of the late Daniel Phillips, turned until her eyes laid their furious dignity onto Mrs. Streiter. The two women briefly glared over the sneeze guard before Mrs. Streiter announced for the entire cafeteria to hear, "My dear Francis, what *were* you thinking with that new hair color? You really need to think about putting some more red into it." And before Dear Francis could open her painted lips to respond, Mrs. Streiter grabbed a handful of shredded carrot and pitched it toward the ceiling. The shavings sprinkled downward like an off-color snow shower, and soon everyone on the far side of the salad bar was dotted with toppings.



Once the food began to fly through the air, none could escape its messy consequence. Some residents crawled under tables and pulled the chairs in closer, until they were huddled in a fort from younger days. Others roared against the unjustness and threw themselves into the path of the afternoon rations, while it all fell like shells and exploded over their bodies. Soon no one remembered the first tomato, or if they did, it was a but a momentary launch into the culinary aggression which lasted until lunch's end, until the mustard packets all discharged, and the ketchup dried and stubbornly stuck within the cracks of the tiled floor. And as quickly as it began, it was over.

Gradually people rose from their corners and overturned tables and gaped at the mess. Their bellies vigorously grumbled as they turned their backs to their lunch, now strewn across the floor. Not one spoke a word as they jumbled together, humbly shuffled away to their rooms.



## HOW I CAME TO BE

by Russell Brandom

A number of you have inquired—seeing me on the street, or sending messages through electronic mail—how I came to be the gallant, impeccably-coiffed individual whom you have all grown to love. It is a strange tale, and one that is told with great ache and effort, as many of the events are quite painful to me. It required great ardor and treelike fortitude to come to the position I find myself in, and it is this saga which I will now relate to you all, dear friends.

A note to the squeamish: Conception is not for the faint of heart! One can only imagine many of the ancient, covert events that led up to my existence, and large portions of the story are absent from my memory due to the sheer intensity of their content. What remains is a savage journey from an ocean womb to my current ideal of hairy masculinity. If you suspect yourself insufficient of reliving this quest with me, turn back now! Glory is only for the brave! You must be *this* tall to conceive of my origin! (Here, one imagines a large painted frog wearing a top hat, holding his hand four and a half feet off the ground.)

Scientists date my first moment of existence in the morning of December 4<sup>th</sup>, 1984. (This figure was acquired through months of laborious scientific study of my flesh, replete with microscopes, small bits of glassware, and old men wrapped in hideous white cloth. I confess that I myself doubt it occasionally, but the same rigorous study gave us the toaster oven and has served me well in countless other ways.) I came into being spontaneously somewhere off the coast of Peru, the result of a foul mixture of buried crude oil, algae, and the first rays of dawn. I lived my first years with the dolphins, a kindly group of mammals towards whom I have nothing but gratitude. Although I never mastered their language, they were able to pass on to me the basics of swimming as well as their extensive knowledge of hair care. How they acquired this knowledge I shall never know; I can only comment on the tragedy of such eternal wisdom being bestowed on creatures with so little use for it.

At the age of seven, I killed my first shark with a series of strategic head-butts. My father, whose name my throat is unable to reproduce, gave me an algae-covered shell as a reward and told me it was time to go to land and seek my fortune. As I have said, we were incapable of communicating verbally, so he was forced to convey the gist of his sentiment through a series of snorts and head motions. We argued for days about it, but I could not disrespect his wishes, so I left my Pacific home for the world of novelty key rings.

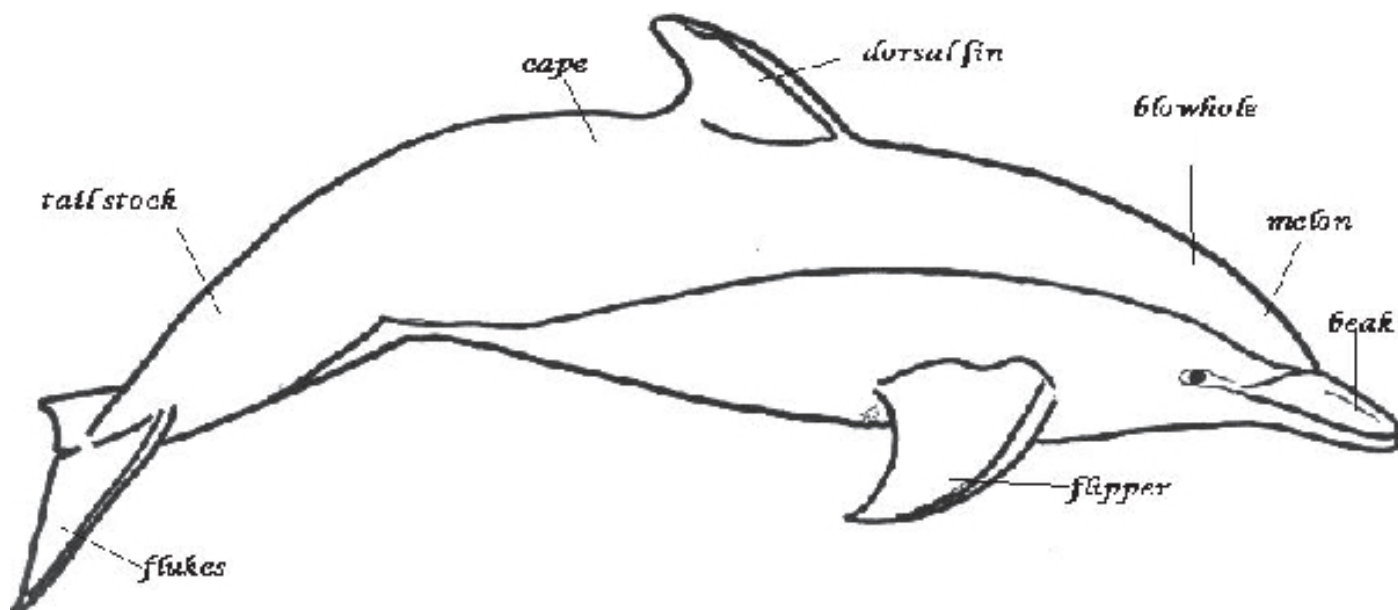
When I came ashore on a nude beach north of Los Angeles, I was taken in by a seventy-year-old bookstore owner named Julian. He cleaned me, clothed me, and taught me to walk and speak. As soon as I explained where I was from, he became frightened and bade me to leave, but I don't blame him. I owe him my clear enunciating voice and inclination towards mixed juices. Hello, Julian, wherever you are.

The media was incensed by the news of my existence. I still have a few newspaper clippings that give me names like, "boy of the ocean," and rambled on about my various astonishing attributes. I've always felt I deserve more unconditional praise than I am accustomed to, but television throws my complexion off, and I won't be presented that way. Over the span of three weeks, the Tonight Show booking agent left a hundred messages on my

machine. (One thing I am proud of is the speed with which I acquired a decent apartment, an answering machine, and a canny knowledge of the entertainment industry. Anyway, I hate Leno.)

The academics were abuzz also. They had a conference about me, and Derrida called me, “a soggy figure of our age, formless and unmoored, still wet from the salivating maw of Being.” I’m not sure if he knew I could hear him. I met him at a party later and I wanted to ask him, but he just looked at me funny. It’s possible he was admiring my hair.

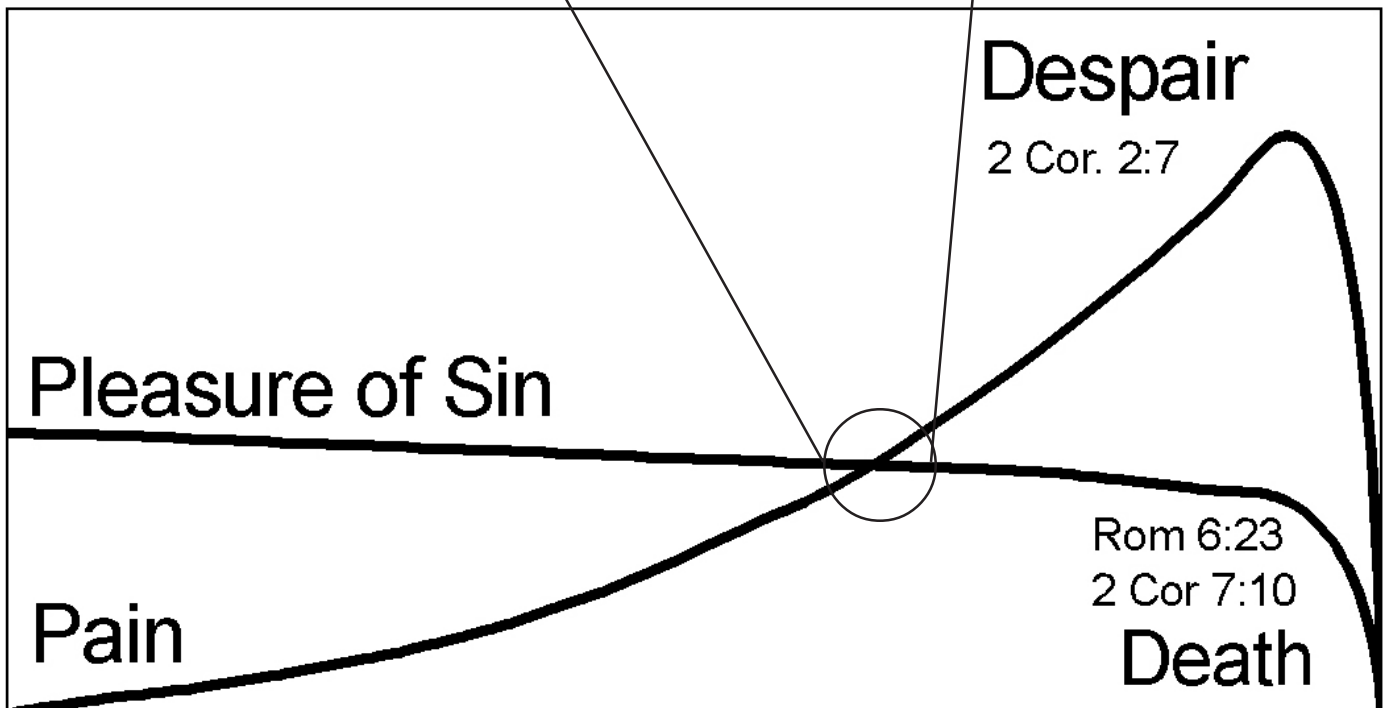
After a while, things died down, and I was able to settle into a normal life of quiet reflection and impeccable hygiene. Sadly, my aquatic origins rendered me incapable of most “hard” or “useful” labor, and relegated me to the composition of treatises, one of which sits before you now. Am I a hero for my remarkable journey? I suppose I am not a great man, although I do my best. I keep my appearance well-maintained, and own an impressive collection of modern sculpture. I do my best for the dolphins, although I must say I no longer understand their way of life. I tell them to look out for the nets, but they never listen, or they don’t understand what I mean. They just nod and wait for another fish. At least I still have my hair.



**Untitled**

by Julia Druk

Look!  
There is a man overboard  
in a sea of graphic despair.  
Let's help him  
with correct aesthetic decisions.



## CHAPTER 4: A UNIQUE EXPERIENCE FROM A THREE-DAY VISIT TO A CITY IN ITALY:

by Zhen Wang

[as reported by our very own special correspondent: Olga Gordon]

I went to Milan and met two men named Andrea Mancini and Luciano Ferrari. I thought those were very good names to have. If I were Italian, I think I would choose those names for myself because I think they are very nice and I like the names very much. Andrea and Luciano spoke really loudly and waved their hands a lot. I think in Italy that is OK to do. We ate lunch together on the first day. Our table was filled with lots of pizzas, lasagnas, olives, and wines. It was a good learning experience indeed for those who want to know more about Italian cuisine by immersion in the culture itself. I learned a lot.

On the second day, I saw many churches and cathedrals. They were very big and pretty. There were also many large buildings and a lot of art. I think the art is good to look at because many people were looking at the art. I learned some Italian phrases, such as “bon-journal” for hello and “grassy” for thank you. The ice cream is very unique and it is called gelato. At first, I thought it was spelled gellatto, but I was wrong, so that goes to show how much you can learn in a country. I am so glad I came here. I am learning so much and seeing so much everyday. It seems like everywhere I go, there is something to see. We saw a protest about a journalist, and I really wanted to say “bon-journal” to the journalist because she was crying a lot. I thought that would make her feel better. I really wanted to tell her that I had a similar job too, but I didn’t get a chance to talk to her because she was surrounded by so many people. Maybe that was why she was crying, because she was scared to be around so many people. I felt bad for her, because I think people were making fun of her and maybe that’s why she was crying. They kept saying she came from “a rock.” Maybe that’s a swear word in Italy, so that I learned something new else that day.

On the third day, we also got tricked by a person selling us food. He overcharged a lot, so it goes to show that you have to be careful about money. This was a good lesson to learn in Italy. I don’t think that would have learned this is if I had not left the United States and traveled the world. It shows that we should not take everything for granted. Going to Italy was a real eye-opener. I liked it a lot. You should go too. The end.

**“I don’t think that would have learned this is if I had not left the United States and traveled the world. It shows that we should not take everything for granted.”**

## THE YOUNG HIPSTER'S GUIDE TO BEING ALTERNATIVE IN THE TWENTY FIRST CENTURY

by Lydia Whitlock

Today's young hipster has many choices of alternative style and attitude. He or she is no longer limited to the prevailing trend of the decade, but can now choose from many different modern versions of past fashions, as well as newly minted categories. This manual is meant to give the young hipster guidance in choosing and maintaining the sub-cultural style and attitude that he or she believes to be the right one. After all, hipsters who try to make this important choice without direction often find themselves in uncomfortable situations. Waffling between styles is frowned upon by those who have already found their alternative niche; therefore, your best opportunity to enter the hipster world is to find the one that fits and stick with it.

### The Indie Musician

The Indie Musician is one of the most popular styles among today's hipsters, so you must be extra-careful to pretend to be original should you decide that this look is for you. Do not be confused by its title; it is not necessary for you to actually *be* a musician to successfully pull this look off. All you need is a good memory for obscure band names and a battered acoustic guitar to carry with you to social events. If you actually have a band that has played in venues other than your drum player's aunt's garage, read no further – you have already mastered the style and attitude necessary.

The Indie Musician



The style of the Indie Musician varies little. Boys should wear dark, tight jeans with enough confidence to keep people from asking if they found them in the girls' section. Girls should wear miniskirts with geometric patterns on them. Both should wear tight t-shirts featuring the names of other Indie Musicians or the name of the person's musical idol. If you do not consider The Velvet Underground, The Who, The Doors, David Bowie, or The Clash to be your musical idols, you will most likely be barred from the status of Indie Musician by your alternative peers. This also holds true if you have ever said or implied that modern pop really isn't that bad.

Hair is very important to the Indie Musician. It's all in the bangs. As long as your bangs reach below your eyebrows, the rest is irrelevant. There's no such thing as bangs that are too long. Many Indie Musicians have actually become bruise resistant after a few weeks of smashing their shins against objects that they couldn't see because of their bangs. If you happen to be a curly-haired Indie Musician, your path is more challenging. You'll have to forgo the traditional look for a more mop-like coiffure.

As an Indie Musician you will have to make a habit of attending every single indie concert in your town. At no time before, during, or after the concert should you make a movement of your body that in any way resembles a dance step. The correct pose for concertgoers is to stand, head cocked to one side, arms crossed, with your weight balanced on one leg. If the music becomes too intense for you to bear, slight head nodding is an acceptable emotional outlet. These concerts not only provide invaluable instruction and experience necessary for your look, but also create great

social situations. The newest sticker on the Alpha Eggs' lead guitarist's Stratocaster is always a great topic to bring up when conversation flags at the All-Nite Diner where you wait tables.

A final word of advice – should you some day actually meet a *real* Indie Musician with a *real* band, he or she will no doubt attempt to engage you in a conversation about your music. Your best option in this situation is to act utterly disdainful of the musician's own work, while explaining that your compositions are not written to be performed by the imperfect instruments of the present. "Obviously," you will say, "I will have to wait until the perfectly-tuned Les Paul is developed. Only then I will take my music out of the sanctuary of my mind and offer it to the world." This kind of statement will usually be enough to leave anyone with his or her mouth hanging open (out of awe and respect), giving you the opportunity to make your escape.

## The Tortured Artist

Unlike the Indie Musician, as a Tortured Artist you will be expected to actually produce something, which may or may not be art. The vocation of the Tortured Artist, however, offers far more choice than that of the Indie Musician. The artist can choose from the fields of painting, drawing, sculpture, or photography, and often dabbles in each in order to produce a "work of art," which is what your creation will be called if it is mediocre. If your work is horrible it will be called a "post-postmodern tour de force" and some sucker will happily buy it for upwards of two thousand dollars. If, by some strange serendipity you actually produce a piece that is considered good art by reputable critics, it will be bought for a measly sum by a museum or broker and be relegated to a wall in some small back room dedicated to "modern art." The direction you take as an artist is entirely up to you.

Whether you are a photographer or a painter, a serious Tortured Artist or a rich one, the style is the same. Everything should appear to have been bought from a thrift store, even if your pants cost you two hundred dollars in a boutique in New York. Jeans should be covered with splotches of dried acrylic paint. This will cause the fabric to become stiff, which will in turn make it difficult for you to walk. So that you can retain the foot-dragging, toes-turned-inwards stride so essential to this look, orthopedic hi-top Converse All-Stars may be necessary. Cardigans should be worn at all times, over layers of collared shirts and t-shirts. Be sure not to layer too much, though, for too many shirts can cause an undesirable lumpy look. For both sexes knee-length skirts are a great addition to your wardrobe, particularly when their lime green and magenta flowered pattern clashes horribly with your puce tights and mustard yellow plaid Dr. Martens.

In your art you should take the same approach that you do toward your wardrobe. Don't be afraid to be original! (This sentence was added to the second edition of this publication, after a rash of bad Duchamp forgeries threatened to overwhelm the art market) It is important that you convey your everyday suffering to the viewer. A painting about a splinter in your thumb can be just as poignant and effective as a requiem painting for your mother. Also, don't be afraid to use unorthodox media in your work. A now rich and famous artist realized one day that he would never be successful and decided to drink himself into oblivion. After two shots of peach

The Tortured Artist



schnapps, however, he passed out, and woke later the next day to find his dealer standing over a vomit-spattered canvas and beaming with delight. He now makes his luxurious living selling variations on that theme to other rich alternative hipsters.

### **The Gloomy Intellectual**

In terms of production of tangible objects, the Gloomy Intellectual has it much easier than the Indie Musician and the Tortured Artist. True Gloomy Intellectuals are quite capable of going through life without making anything except for coffee. Those who give in to popular demand and write their ideas down are considered to be traitors to the life of the mind. But the Gloomy Intellectual more than makes up for his or her lack of creation of concrete goods by his or her production of gloom and anger. If you find yourself to be a generally happy person, you need to consider another style.

The Gloomy Intellectual



In order to be a successfully intimidating Gloomy Intellectual you need to be able to win philosophical arguments. This is not as difficult as it looks, for all you need to do is disagree with everything. First disagree with the person with whom you are arguing, then disagree with the person who is on your side, then disagree with yourself, and at that point everyone will be so confused that the first person to wrap up the discussion with a conclusive “so there!” will be remembered as the winner. When disagreeing, be sure that the basis of your argument is a single, unimportant word in your opponent’s speech. That way, when your opponent changes his or her wording, you can choose yet another word and continue to quarrel without ever having to get down to the real ideas behind a statement.

The style of the Gloomy Intellectual is simple. Only the skin of your hands and face should show; everything else should be covered in black or gray clothing. Turtlenecks are essential for girls and boys, as are black-rimmed glasses. The thicker the frames, the better, and don’t worry if your doctor says that their weight may permanently damage your nose. You need something to be gloomy about, after all. Girls and boys may both wear threadbare black pants – several days in the dryer should produce the desired effect. Girls can add some excitement to their look by wearing black miniskirts over black tights instead. Both genders should invest in a pair of Dr. Martens oxford shoes, black of course.

Since you don’t have to worry about producing anything to prove your status, most of your time can be spent in Starbucks, sipping a grande latte while bemoaning the consumerist nature of America. A Mac PowerBook and forty-gigabyte iPod are also useful in these situations, in order to block out the annoying noises of people enjoying themselves. Make sure to carry an Umberto Eco book with you, so you can appear to be occupied while shooting smoldering glances of intellectual disdain at the people around you. But whatever you do, don’t actually *read* it. In fifty years or so one of your intellectual brethren will prove that Eco’s style and ideas are outmoded and antiquated, so you wouldn’t want to waste your time.

(right by Sarah Boyette)

# Class-Nodding—What You Should Know, What We Can Do

## Symptoms:

- Repetitive motion of head (*up-down*) whenever instructor makes a declarative statement
- Repetitive motion of head (*up-down*) whenever instructor asks rhetorical question
- Repetitive motion of head (*up-down*) whenever instructor agrees with a classmate's comment
- A certain "*Right on!*" facial expression, often accompanying the nod
- A tilt of the head while nodding, to express deep thought as well as affirmation
- Many times, accompanied by a slight pursing of the lips

## Remember: This is Not Your Fault

Class-nodding is a habit that is often picked up in childhood, while good habits of scholarship and classroom behavior are still unformed. Most often, the class-nodder sees someone else doing it (fellow classmates, obnoxious Wall-Street types in movies) and fails to notice that it does not get positive results. It is this oversight that results in the college-age class-nodder: no one has made the problems with class-nodding clear.

## The Problem with Class-Nodding?

- **Annoys** non-nodding classmates
- **Makes** one look like a pretentious asshole who thinks self is cosmically "*in-tune*" with instructor
- **Instructor** sees right through it
- **Head may just fall off**

## What We Can Do Together:

### *The class-nodder can:*

- **Try** a little self-awareness: be on the lookout for other class-nodders. Notice how obnoxious

they are. Try to make the comparison.

- **Wear** a rubber band around your wrist. When you find yourself nodding in class, just snap the rubber band! The pain sends a negative message to your brain, reminding you that class-nodding is "*Not Okay.*"
- **Stop** going to class
- **Superglue** pole between chin and chest to make nodding motion impossible

### *The class-nodder's peers can:*

- **Make** disparaging noises at class-nodder when behavior occurs
- **Talk** shit about class-nodder with friends
- **Ostracize** class-nodder in social situations. Take a cue from the Amish: A little shunning can work wonders!



*The Class-Nodder in Action*

**Remember: Class-Nodding is a Problem, but the Yale Community has the Power to Stop it!**

## Untitled

by Julia Druk

I want to hold your hand forever  
in a jar above my bed.  
Once I hung a poster there,  
with Jesus on it (but he's dead).





## Untitled

by Julia Druk

There's a little pessimist sleeping in my shoe.  
If I was a pessimist, I'd be sleeping too.

## THE GRADUATION TALES

by Zhen Wang

The senior year thus comes and brings the news  
That seniors must their hard-earned money use.  
Some caps and gowns are offered to their eyes...  
“And ladies do not lie about your size”...  
We queued up in an office Wednesday lunch  
To get our bodies measured in a bunch.  
The people next to whom I stood were nice,  
I’ll tell you ’bout them *and* I’ll be precise.

The POTHEAD certainly was likable,  
Though not exactly too reliable.  
I asked her if she wore *Clinique* perfume –  
She smelled exactly like a flower bloom!  
“I certainly do not!” she said with flare.  
“And never would I purchase some (or wear).”  
She knew all sorts of people in the school.  
And they were smart; policemen they could fool.  
She stated that her alias was Clutch.  
Her wisdom I admired very much.

The JOCK, with mesomorphic arms of steel,  
Liked pretty women – them he liked to feel.  
To me he seemed to be a pleasing prince:  
Without him even trying to convince,  
I knew that his best class was named “*Coquette*”.  
My wind-chapped lips he said looked very wet –  
Compared to sculpted muscles of his chest,  
They had so very much more flesh and zest.  
He wore a flashy, black, expensive suit.  
He seemed quite honest; he’d never steal loot.

MYSELF and they, together standing there,  
Were bored to death in every inch of hair.

And while we waited in a crooked line,  
Of boredom I almost began to pine.  
Away I pined until I had a thought,  
“So why don’t we tell stories as we ought?  
Since I suggested it, I’ll take the lead.”  
The jock, the pothead, me – we all agreed.

HERE BEGINS JENNY’S TALE:

There lived three brothers who were lazy bums,  
They slept and slept until their minds were numb.  
But Jack, he wanted knowledge of his dung,  
So studied lots of chemistry (how fun!)  
He graduated by and by, and soon,  
Became quite wealthy (owned a silver spoon!)  
So study hard and learn and read like Jack,  
For he has taught us: no one likes a quack.  
HERE ENDS JENNY’S TALE.

“Your tale sure stinks, a hundred one percent!  
And if I could, I’d throw at you cement!”  
Vizeer the Jock gave Clutch some friendly winks  
And told her that he’d buy her two hard drinks.  
“A better insult I could not have made,  
Now let me tell the tale of my crusade.”

HERE BEGINS THE JOCK’S TALE:

In middle school I teased a wimp, Aesend.  
He never had a single groovy friend.  
Aesend would be, alas, with us here now.  
But luckily he left us... you ask how?  
He left for grad school when fifteen to Yale  
Where no one has skin cancer, they’re all pale.  
Remember this oh Jenny, brand-new friend,  
The guy with *muscle* always wins. The end.  
HERE ENDS THE JOCK’S TALE.

“Bra-VO!” cried Clutch with rounds of her  
applause.

“I liked that story ’cause it has no flaws.”

Vizeer replied “My story’s worth some fee...

So go out with a buffed up man like me.”

“I’d kiss you even if your friends were thugs,”

Said Clutch, “...as long as you can get me drugs!

And I’ll begin a tale of woe right now,

It’s very sad but please don’t have a cow.”

HERE BEGINS THE POTHEAD’S TALE:

A Miss Anita Steele loved Rob M. Blind.

A better man she could not, would not, find.

Oh, such a lovely man was Rob M. Blind,

So many manners he possessed (combined!)...

When lamps around the small bar flickered out,

She hugged him, kissed him, having not a doubt.

His hand slid slowly to her lovely ear,

She wondered, “Did my earrings disappear?”

It seemed those costly pendants had indeed!

And wanted she revenge – she really did.

She formed an evil plan, oh God forbid!

And yes, my tale of sour love is true.

It turned so angry, aye, between the two!

So therefore I could never date a guy,

’Cause money screws up love (no doubt!)...

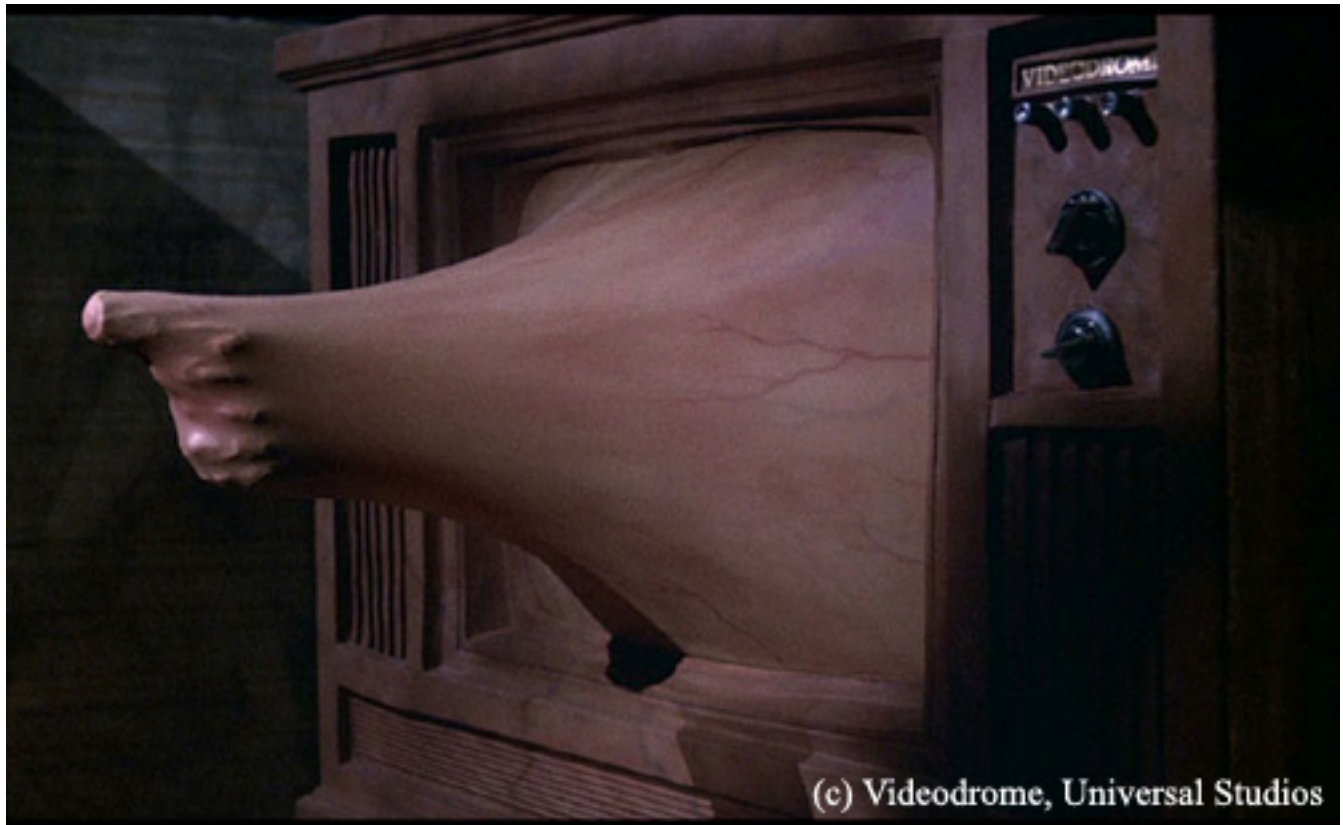
good-bye!

HERE ENDS THE POTHEAD’S TALE.

## Untitled

by Julia Druk

At midnight channel 69 goes on forever,  
As Brokaw reads us off the evening news.  
How clever,  
But we're waiting for the weather.



(c) Videodrome, Universal Studios



## United

by Julia Druk

Our toilet is a lonely eye of God  
that, staring up, remembers all the floods when drained, that left the porcelain intact.

## THE GOAT IN THE SOUTH POLE

by Zhen Wang

I am digging through some old boxes when I come across a story I wrote in elementary school about a witch named Weldy Weldy Griseldy. By golly, what a charming name, I think as I squat on the linoleum floor of the basement. I suppose my children will never suffer the effects of an overly creative mother because it's hard for me to come up with such names now. The story is ridiculous to say the least, but I have compensated over the years. Hopefully, I am a better writer now than before. I mean, I really hope so. I rarely have redundant phrases, and express my perceptions with the eloquent acuity and structured logic of an international SNL news correspondent. Then, I was creative and entertaining, sure, but nothing phenomenal. At least, nothing too phenomenal. I wrote about dark and stormy nights very often. It must have been ideal preparation for a future in writing romance novel seriatim.

*It was a dark and stormy night. Jane felt the sweat drip down from her forehead. The humidity caused the sweat to become infused in Sarah's button-down blouse. Melissa felt the wetness of the drops splashing on her face, trickling down her neck to her shoulders, and from her shoulders to her —*

But no longer! What sort of career would that be anyways? I certainly didn't aspire to write an adult version of *The Babysitter's Club*, something I stopped devouring in fourth grade. In middle school, I committed myself to attaining a higher degree of familiarity with big words. We read The Midwife's Apprentice a week after shedding our in-class togas from the Greek unit. Rather than a daily brief of the incestuous relationships of dead royalty, we instead wrote sentences using vocabulary from this book while sitting on blue plastic chairs in a stuffy brown classroom. I created the following story about a maid named Cinpy in two class periods:

*As stingy old Mr. Meeny took a swig of his wine, he berated his servant, "Cinpy, you are a nitwit! Can't you smell the stench caused by my horse's dung? Don't just stand there and stare at me, go shove it out! And don't forget, pluck out all the chicken feathers that got stuck to it, then, take it to the oven and bake it. Fire burns good dung, so don't waste it. Remember, it costs money to buy firewood, so don't waste things!"*

*Cinpy curtsied and muttered under her breath, "You always moil me around. I don't even know why I'm working here, getting paid one cent per hour."*

*"What did you say?" asked her boss, "I'm merely exercising you and paying you to do it for your own good. Besides, you need to get rid of your lardy belly."*

*Cinpy rolled her eyes and went to the barn and commenced to shove out all the muck. She saw many chicken feathers stuck to it and sundry pieces of hairballs here and there. She plucked them out, then, went back inside.*

*"Well," her boss said, "did you put the dung in the oven?"*

*"Oops," she said.*

*"You lout! You can't remember anything!"*

*Cinpy was stupefied and started crying. Gosh, there was an ample amount of tears. So, she quit her job and she went down to the stream.*

*After that, everything was in turmoil. Cinpy felt so boon quitting her job! She became Dr. C. Good, because she could cure many animals by surfeiting them with sweets until they threw up and at the same time, threw up the sickness inside them.*

Well boon me up, what a fine story about a darling young lass with a pretty little name, and a deft hand with cows at that! But when I ripened into a high school student, out the window went any fanciful little tales. Imagination... I knew him once, he was a fine fellow. Now I was a scholar, training up to spouting forceful arguments with shatterproof reasoning, poignant expostulations, and clairvoyant defenses. I wrote expository essays, descriptive essays, and persuasive essays. Essays, essays, essays. It built a lot of character, or so I was told. The following excerpt I wrote to the beginning of a compare-and-contrast essay:

*Have you ever read a book, then saw the movie version? Most likely, you would have compared the two and chose a preference of one. But you can't really compare the two, because the movie and the book are two entirely different things.*

Well blow me down, can it be? Why, they are indeed! To open and to read? Or better yet, to see? Now *that* is the question; whether the mind can suffer through the paper is quite another.

Really, quite terrible, but I am proud to say that my introductions developed in the most superior fashion after four years.

I took an intense humanities class with a segment on Western literature during my last year of high school. What I remember from The Bacchae of Euripides is the following: Dionysus sure got his revenge when he killed the people of Thebes for refusing to believe that his mother's lover was Zeus. Lesson learned: don't mess with the gods, the demi-gods, and the people that screw the gods.

The Book of Job was quite a different story: God enters into a little bet with Satan that Job will remain faithful no matter what. So the Devil goes his merry way and puts Job through all sorts of nasty ordeals and, among other things, afflicts Job with "loathsome sores from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head". Lesson learned: Stay faithful, even if God kills your wife and children, because in the end, the Omnipotent One will reward you with a new wife. Oh, and let those sores heal before you start creating new children. You might find it painful otherwise.

Again, my teacher assigned an essay asking us to compare and contrast these two works. I spent two hours fiddling around in the kitchen, and with the help of SmartFood White Cheddar Cheese Flavored Popcorn, wrote the following introduction:

*Religion is ubiquitous to all times and places. From the Neanderthals' sacred rituals to the Aztecs' appeasing sacrifices, from Buddhism to Christianity, humans have always had a need to know that gods exist. Perhaps it stems from the human ability of reason that we desire to attribute random daily sufferings to*

*forces out of our control, and as such, we have a preoccupation with understanding the nature of the divine. The exploration of the relationship between man and god manifests itself in almost all cultures through literature. The gods from Bacchae and The Book of Job are both superior to mankind but have differing degrees of emotional investment in the affairs of human life. Both pieces of religious literature use the protagonists to teach that the proper course of human action towards the gods is acceptance.*

A perfect funnel introduction if I may say so myself. Broad, general first sentence to draw readers in. Followed by segment on Neanderthals, human sacrifice, and last but not least, politically correct statement incorporating both Eastern and Western religion, allowing for graceful segue into narrow thesis, artfully placed as penultimate and ultimate sentences.

How utterly brilliant! Finely polished, carefully crafted, and dexterously lettered to reflect quite the opposite beliefs of the aspiring writer, but like said writer's inner self, perfectly formed.

Amen to that. Oh, apologies on the Neanderthal towards the beginning, if that got your hopes up. To find out more about prehistory, I suggest you go seek an essay beginning with a statement on rhetorical devices of Old Norse. But I don't know why you would do that. There ain't much to those slightly overgrown oaf with slightly small brains. They big, they mean, and they don't got nothing to do wit my essay.

The linoleum tiles feel cool under my feet. I realize that stopped writing fiction in high school. Nonfiction was the only thing that teachers ever assigned and I forgot about fiction as time drilled it out of my mind like a dentist drilling out a decayed sweet tooth. I was too busy developing into tomorrow's world leader. As of today, I've written personal narratives, newspaper editorials, research statements, science papers, legal arguments, explanatory essays on mathematical history, and the saddest fact is not that most of them aren't very good, but that they are all true. I haven't touched fiction in years. What worries me is that at some point in my life, I stopped writing stories about witches names Weldy Weldy Griseldy.

Frankly, I'm scared to write fiction. People will always read nonfiction because they know that the story grew out of someone's experiences and personal conclusions, but fiction is much less concrete. It's not about telling a true story; it's about telling a good lie and making everyone, including yourself, believe it. There are so many bad fiction writers (Ann M. Martin, for one), and they write stories that no one with any intelligence would read. But it's not their fault. To create an entire world out of nothing but one's imagination is exceedingly difficult. One reason that I don't write fiction is because I'm scared that no one would want to read about crazy ideas that are churning in my head. Another reason is that I'm terrified of being unable to tie loose ends into a neat happily-ever-after. Plus, my real characters are flat. If it's hard enough to bring a living person to life for readers, it must be near impossible to sculpt out a fake one. I admire J.K. Rowling very much. I can never do what she does.

Or maybe I can. I still saw a grey goat jumping over a palace in Rome as the sun set. On the flight back, I knew that we were flying over the South Pole. I didn't know that there were

geysers under the snow though. I wondered if they scalded polar bears diving for seals. I didn't read a single newspaper. The clouds were magnificent and the sun was brilliant.

It's dark in the basement. I am still squatting on the linoleum floor. I don't know why the previous owners put pink tiles in. It looks like cotton candy, but not that bright. It looks more like cotton candy infused with blood. Vampires must live here. Who would have bought such a house? Obviously, nitwits like us. I put the story of Weldy Weldy back into the box under the shelf and stand up. I really should stop squatting around so much. Mature writers must beware of hemorrhoids.

Standing straight, I am much farther away from the floor and from the box. I head upstairs. Will I be able to write fiction again? My sister is watching Cinderella on the ground floor and I hear voices as I head upstairs.

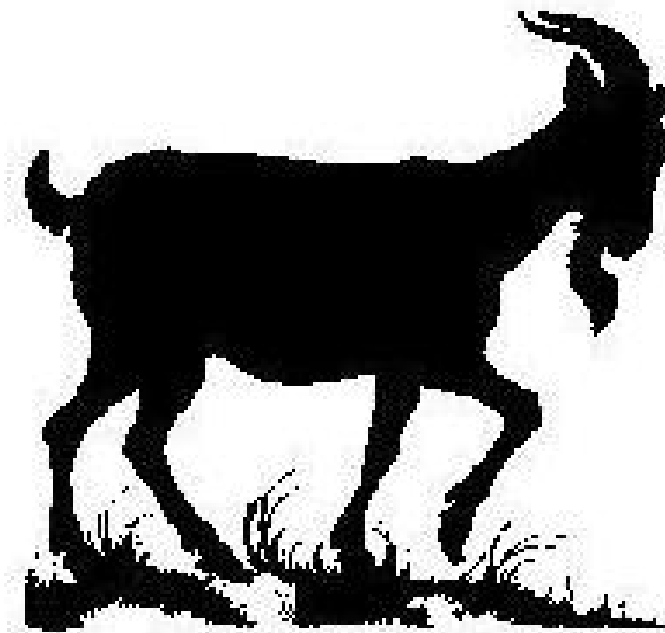
"Perchance," whispers Mr. Meeny.

"Conceivably," murmurs Jane.

"Maybe," breathes Sarah.

"Possibly," gasps Melissa.

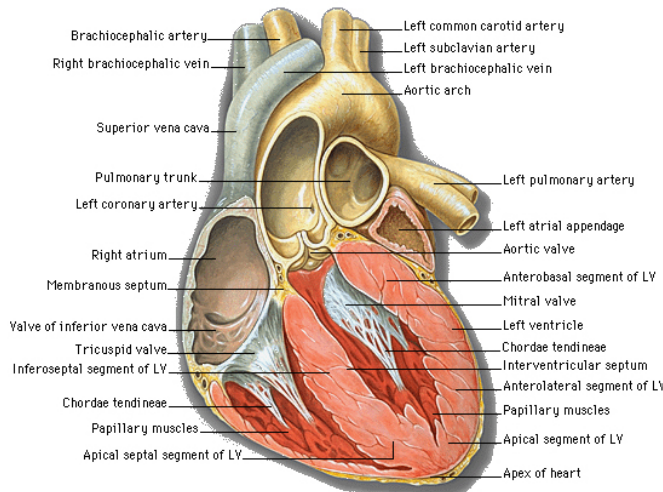
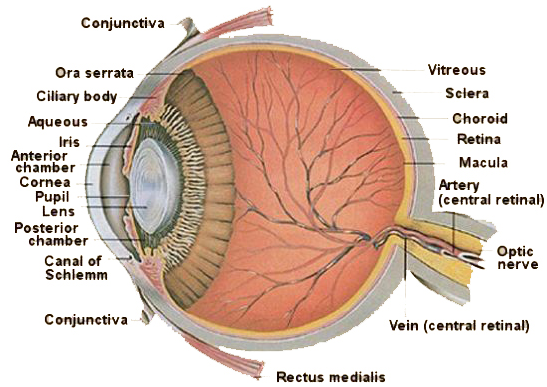
"Oh, undoubtedly," screeches Weldy Weldy Griseldy.



# United

by Julia Druk

My shoes  
are like the sun.  
Because I love you.



# No es Pollo

by Roberto Thais

I eat lobster delicious, served  
On a silver plate rimmed with golden  
Medals tender, boiled and spiced  
With lemon juice. Fruity, meaty, tender  
Language used improper, I mind not  
My lobster delicious I churn and chew and gulp.

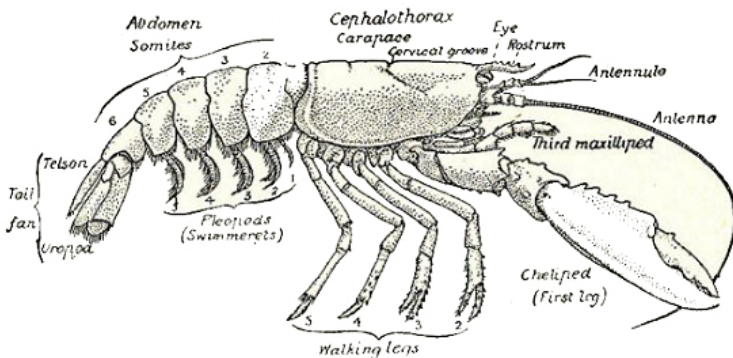


FIG. 74. — External anatomy of a lobster. (After Calman.)

## The Origins of Musings Against a Train Station

The story of Musings is really not that long or interesting, but considering the situation we presently find ourselves in, I see not alternative but to tell it. Yes, it is a biased view of how the name became attached to the publication you currently reading, and No, it is not nearly as interesting as you might imagine.

I find it is easy to get bogged down in details, so I will use a technique I refer to as ‘flash fragmentation’, more commonly known as literary fast forwarding. Friends, John, Tyler, no Yale bus Cambridge, Harvard Game, no other friends, I have friends, I get ticket, no alternatives John Tyler (henceforth referred guys), guys take Greyhound, I take Yale bus, night before, they leave, I leave 3 hours later, I arrive, they arrive 2 hours later, kid from Albuquerque at Harvard, kind of a douche.

I had been wandering with my friend who had accompanied me on the bus ride, and after meeting her Harvard friends, I felt awkward and waited outside their dorms, constantly calling John. I was alone, and finally, after a bit of confusion, I met the guys at the Harvard subway station. They told me they came up with an idea for a humorous literary magazine while they were musing against the train station, and decided to name the magazine “Musings Against a Train Station”. My first response was “Hey, that’s a good idea, but isn’t there already a humorous literary magazine, the Record?” (Editor’s Note: I disagree with this statement). After a moment or two of glaring at me, they explained their magazine would be different, then Tyler started talking about living in a castle or strobe lights or something.

I was kind of interested, considering I was not involved in as many extracurricular activities as many of the individuals I hang out with (except Mike, but he gets better grades than me, so it evens out), and I wanted in on this concept. It was clear that they were the founders, and considering my lack of tenure in their little circle, I pouted a bit and listened to them talk about how amazing said magazine would be. Ultimately the situation kind of wore itself out due to a combination of fatigue. John went to some prep school in Florida, so he knew a girl at Harvard, who let us sleep in her common room. I used the bathroom, and the floor was covered in vomit. Not the regular kind of vomit, but the kind with chunks of carrots and onion, and the smell was pretty bad. I was the first to use the bathroom, and the combination of the smell already present, combined with the apparent constant and widespread bowel problems cantabs have, caused John to become physically ill and grouchy for the rest of the night. We slept on the couch, and used the kitchen sink to dispose of our waste in the morning.

I would also like to note I’m honestly amazed this magazine is actually in print. I remember when, after spending a couple hundred dollars and a few nights posting posters asking for submissions all over, the week of our deadline came and went without a single one. Tyler even asked me to submit my final fictional story for my Chemistry in Popular Novels course (yes, there is a Chem 100, shut up).

...and that’s the end of that.

-Esteban “The Mercier” Morin

[www.yale.edu/musings](http://www.yale.edu/musings)