

**Face**  
Meg Nelson ('11)

*"Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire."*

And I am prepared to do that.

How can I grasp it?  
Where is the damned bone  
Or pulsing flesh  
I can rip from my being?  
Where are the thoughts that I can burn to ash?

They slip through my fingers  
Even as they brand themselves  
Onto my soul.

Shall I be dragged into the eternal suffering?

Nay, this is not the hell of *others*—  
I do not go for their judgment,  
Not even for the curse of god.  
I am my own trial, jury and judge.

I pronounce the verdict—  
    guilty—  
I impose the sentence—  
    damned—  
for ever.

But  
Even as I kneel  
To tear myself apart  
I know that in the midst of this storm  
If I do not take the helm of my own boat,  
No one else will save me from shipwreck.

I see myself and myself alone  
Reflected in the clouds and the waves and the lightning—  
And I steer for the light  
That I know the storm gives way to.

Sometimes I am blind  
To see myself in the mirror,  
But my reflection always reaches out,  
Asking simply,  
"May I... touch your face?"