



# The Sewanee Review



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## Spilt Ink No. 8: Margot I

### DOLPHINS AND DISTRACTION

#### Margot Demopoulos

One cold winter morning in the coastal waters off Los Angeles, 10 researchers from UCLA were tracking a school of bottlenose dolphin that carried cameras, hydrophones, and computers.

Field biologist, Maddalena Bearzi, was photo-identifying the school. She recounts in *Beautiful Minds, the Parallel Lives of Great Apes and Dolphins*. She was taking pictures of each individual in the group, using the notches in the fins are as distinctive as human fingerprints. The dolphins were along the Santa Monica beach, stopping on occasion to dive and they encountered a large school of sardines just off Malibu pier.

“The fish were trapped ingeniously,” she writes, “as if in a net she had they began feeding, one of the dolphins in the group suddenly leapt. In less than an instant, the other dolphins abandoned their prey.”

This was odd behavior for the dolphins, Bearzi notes.

“Usually they moved back and forth very close to the beach, taking on which they were dining while occasionally milling at the surface. They abruptly stop feeding and take off in an unrelated direction was.”

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Distractions matter, and not just to dolphins. Writers of fiction know

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