

DAVID EBENBACH

The Flower

The poet from Iran
was born before her parents,
is what the interpreter says.
It means she knows everything.
When we give her the tour,
she says, Let's go inside,
where she keeps wearing her
white coat. In the campus chapel
under the new ceiling, beside the new
stained glass, she asks me
if I go to church every week
and I have to say I'm Jewish.
She takes the quietest step
backward. And when we get to the room
where she's going to read she sits
in the row in front of me and turns to say,
Sorry to give you my back.
What you say in Iran, I know, is
A flower has no back.