Staff and writers of Dialogue

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I art which traditionally appears in the fine arts anthology is not led in this issue. Visual artists boycotted the Fine Arts Festival it this year protesting poor treatment from the Fine Arts Festival ittee with respect to the handling of the show and the maintenance of community relations. The boycott was intended to create a vacuum rts and demonstrate the need for an atmosphere more conducive tistic growth at Calvin. The challenge, at least, has been ited.

Paul Stoub
PICTURES FROM BREUGHAL:
SELF-PORTRAIT 1

one of his eyes was like
a patch of brown grass
dropped carelessly in a
green field

the other, a glob of soft
fruit, warming itself on
a wooden table.

but when he placed himself
into canvas, with a wide selection
of pigments from which to choose,

he chose for his own eyes
a simple black, for he
had at that point gone beyond
the color to the sense.

Robert Swets
Like everyone else
I've been looking for America
and I'm happy to say
I've found her.
It was rather sad.
Sitting, tired and emaciated
on a curb in South Bend, Ind.,
before a Col. Sanders chicken store,
she seemed a little confused
and muttered over and over again
"The sky is falling."

Sharon DeVries
IN THE GARDEN

I. Sounds of still water like sleep, 
a bird touches, a fish jumps, 
it is quiet.

II. At four o’clock I had a vision of you 
lying naked on the blades of grass, 
waiting.

III. My pulse beats into the ground 
and with it. Flowers understand 
how to live and die gracefully.

IV. Remember how it was in Eden? 
We never spoke to make each other 
understand.

Sharon DeVries
SOPHOMORES, 1967

In the Spring,
when the dew rained up and covered us
with borning babies' moisture;
when the dew rained up and crystallized
in the cold new air and
made the fine air glassy
so it tinkled when we walked through it
like Chinese bells;

then, never thinking that we'd live forever,
but never thinking, either,
that we wouldn't,
Ann and I whistled down day-lanes of amber
and wondered at the waning of Winter in us.

Fred Exoo
THE CHEQUE

Emma Flach

The moment Mrs. Therby saw her husband turn around the corner walking toward home, she knew from his face something terrible had happened. An icy hand seemed to clasp around her heart. “It’s war,” was her first thought, and with this in mind she opened the door to her husband. His face looked grey, his eyes were full of watchful concern for his wife. They went to the kitchen. He put one hand on the table, heavily leaning on it. Then he slowly turned his head to look at his wife. “Don’t say it,” she said, “don’t, don’t.” He nodded his head as if in a trance. Head slumped down between his shoulders, both hands planted on the kitchen table now, he stood scarcely moving. Mrs. Therby could not take her eyes off him, as if caught in the same spell. The icy feeling around her heart slowly changed into a kind of
numbness, spreading all through her body. She took a chair, brought it to him, then she took his hands off the table, forcing him to sit down. After that she sat down herself. "There's war," she said. As before he nodded his head. "I'm ready now," she said, keeping her eyes fixed on him. She did not feel the weight of her body. "It's Jos," he said. She said nothing. "He had an accident at the plant." The numbness increased; she tried to lift her hand, but could not. "He's in the hospital now, they're helping him. I just came from there — wasn't allowed to see him — but he's alive." Still she made no sound, only she was struggling with her breath. No thoughts were in her mind — it was empty, entirely empty. "Did you eat tonight?" she asked him. Suddenly he looked up at her, in fearful surprise. He saw her face empty, well composed. His head fell down at the table, "Oh, God!" he said three times. "You must eat something," she said, getting ready to heat some soup for him. She moved about in a stiff manner, as if she were a wooden doll, a puppet. And still she felt no pain, only a great empty space growing within her.

"Was it the testing machine?" she asked him, when putting a plate in front of him. Jos was a student engineer. He and his fellow workers had been labouring for months on a machine to be used in the plant. Today they were to test it. Jos had been so excited when he left in the morning. "It exploded," her husband said only. She did not answer, but saw a flood of boiling oil coming down over the backs of those men, whom she didn't know, except for Jos, her son.

Later at night the neighbours came in. They had heard about the accident over the radio and T.V. They were perplexed and defeated. Jos was their pride and joy, the most intelligent boy of the block, everyone looked up to him. His parents as well as his neighbours expected great things from him. He was such a good boy, so handsome, so honest and friendly. Hadn't he always worked hard and made the highest grades in school? The living room was soon filled with sympathetic people. Mr. and Mrs. Therby left after a while to go to the hospital. Willing neighbors, eager to help in the confusion, offered to put the younger children, who walked around in a bewildered state, to bed and to take care of them.

The smell of ether made Mrs. Therby nauseated. Later on
she would always remember and associate the smell with this dreadful night. It was summer, and though late evening now, the heat of the day was still hanging in the hospital halls, where they sat down on a couch, close by the operating room Jos was in. Her husband held her hand; they sat close together. Tears were trickling down his cheeks. She wiped them away with her handkerchief and later with his, and later still with a paper towel she had gotten from the ladies’ room. But she herself did not cry.

Two doctors walked out of the operating room, looking around. Seeing the parents, they came up to them. “We’re finishing up now,” one of them said. The other stood by, idly, looking at his hands. “How is he?” Mrs. Therby asked. The doctor was careful. “He is in quite serious condition,” he said, “quite serious. We cannot predict anything with certainty. He might be all right, he might be...but, it’s serious, third degree burns.” Now the other doctor spoke. “How are you Mrs. Therby? I should think you need some rest. It’s no use waiting out here. He won’t be conscious when he comes out. You can sleep on a couch in the waiting room. It’s better not to see him now.” He asked a nurse to lead the way for them. He also ordered some tablets to be taken by both of them. It would relax her, the nurse said. Mrs. Therby said she did not need it; she was all right, she had always been a strong woman. But she did not know where her own voice came from. It seemed as if her voice came not from her own mouth, but from far away, someone else saying it really. The nurse made her take the pills anyway and the husband too. Finally Mrs. Therby slept, feeling nothing, dreaming nothing that she could remember later on.

The next morning they were allowed to see him. The doctor warned them, “don’t expect anything,” he said, “you won’t be able to recognize him, for he’s all bandaged up, except for his face.” They went in. The smell of oil, sweat, medicine, and burned flesh was worse than the ether smell of the previous night. It seemed to choke them, or was it the sight of Jos — it could have been anyone — lying on top of a bed as a bundle of white bandages and clippings. “Better not speak to him,” the nurse whispered, “he is too tired.” They bent over. Mrs. Therby was too small; she had to step on the low stool beside the bed to be able to look in his face. Only
his eyes were there, sunken deep behind the white gauze. He looked at her; she wanted to speak to him, but again experienced the feeling that her voice was not in her. She moved her lips, but no sound came out. "Hi," Jos said. Now her voice returned. "My child!" But her eyes were dry and still the emptiness in her seemed to be growing, farther, wider. Was this Jos? She could see nothing of him except for his grey eyes. The nurse softly led her away from the bed. "Jos, my boy," her husband said, "we love you." He could not speak anymore, tears choking his voice. From the bed came no answer. The nurse brought them outside the room. "Nothing should disturb him now," she said, "he's gone through so much." They understood, nodding their heads in silence. "We'll hope to pull him through," the nurse said. "Pull him through, pull him through ..." the words repeated in the father's mind. The nurse, the doctors, the hospital, everything seemed so insignificant and futile to him. "God," he prayed, "what do these people know. How can they know what You know? Pull him through. God, please, please, pull him through!"

There were so many people walking behind the black car on the road to Jos's grave, so many people. It was a silent march, with women crying. Some men were sniffing. A long line of people filled the streets of the little village where Jos had spent his life, though short it had been. The traffic stopped in reverence till the black car had passed by. Those people who could not attend the funeral watched it go by, and stood in silence behind their glass windows. At the grave side the minister spoke. "Until the day of the resurrection." "Amen," the father brought out, tears streaming down his face. Mrs. Therby heard the words, and yet she could not understand what was being said. The words from the minister seemed to come as a monotonous play of sounds, with some variations, but no meaning to it. She felt no ties to the person in the yellow box. It was not Jos. Jos was strong, good looking and had a friendly face. That in the yellow box was no Jos, it was a bundle of bandages, white and smelling. She remembered it well. No, it was not Jos, but she could not think of where he was, if not there and not at home either. Her husband held his arm around her. His body shook as if
electrical waves were going through him. He didn't have to cry, Mrs. Therby thought. She knew it was not Jos in there. Only, where was he, if not there and not at home either? Finally it was all over and they went home. Again the doctor gave her pills, to relax, he said. She was relaxed, Mrs. Therby said. Nothing was wrong with her. Except that she could not feel the weight of her body and it was empty inside, as if someone had taken out her heart and put straw inside of her. But they told the husband to watch her.

Mr. Therby stayed home for three days, but there was nothing to do for him at home, and his wife went about in stiff movements. She did the work as she had always done it, spoke to the children, and cooked the meals. So, after three days her husband returned to work, he was too sick to stay home any longer. Mrs. Therby went about her business of cleaning and dusting the house. She cleaned Jos's room also, putting everything in order, ready for Jos to come, only, she didn't know from where.

One morning the postman brought the mail. She took it out to the kitchen table, where her husband had first told her about Jos's accident. Looking through the envelopes, she found one addressed to Jos. She jumped, as if she were stung. Hurriedly her fingers moved to open the envelope. She took out what was inside. It was his pay cheque — for the time that he had worked at the plant. She held it in her hands, staring at it. And suddenly it seemed as if the space within was closing in on her. The numbness slowly started to melt, leaving her body. With every inch of space being filled in, her feelings returned. The dark hole was getting smaller and smaller, and now it closed. And with its closing the pain came, instantly, flashing through her like slashing knives. She bent over, convulsing. It was like the pain of the time she had delivered Jos; her body was in a state of spasm, cramping and relaxing at times. And now the flood of water broke loose from behind her eyes, bursting forth like a river through a broken dam. She moaned suddenly loud and louder she cried out, pulling her hair, rocking her head in her arms, walking back and forth through the kitchen. The youngest child began to scream hysterically — she did not hear it. The child kept on screaming, until a neighbor, who came to visit her, found them.
FARM ACCIDENT

God once mounted his Harvester
and threshed his only-begotten son
who stood in the field and
saw his father coming closer
who watched
the broad blades fall in successions
and slice wheat
who winced at
sun-glint on the shimmering metal
who cringed to see dark
goggles on his father's eyes
who fell beneath the tumbling sickles.
God shouted
Damn stump
and jumped from the cab.
There on shafts of bloody grain
he saw his broken Jesus
and wept.

Richard Prins
SALT RIVER CANYON

Donald Mulder

In a chasm gouged from
Eon-chiseled rock
A dust-filled river gnawed
For centuries,
A puny bridge absurdly spans
The sated stream.

Content to let the face
Of broken hills remain
Untouched
Armageddon bids
His hand hold up a knife
To cut the bridge from undern

a road leads down
to a decrepit
bridge
in shadow
of a crooked tree
which raises
twisted fingers
skyward
a tattered man
his cry
which only heaven hears
finds comfort
just to know
that he may cross
and not
return
where trumpet winds
shriek terror in the hills
when once in silent, passing wisps of dreams he would not let fear of blasphemy stop a road to slip in shadows to a bridge. instead, he daubed his eye with mud and spit and built a fecund vale with birds and fruit. a stream flowed richly textured through the hedge; its spirit led him to make in words what God resembled, in nascent love of man. it was too much for him to justify: he would have torn up hills to bury it. when he fell into the scenic idyll, he forged a curious delight with care and watched as it deceived its perfect foe. when it was finished, the bridge led upward.
would you like to see?
would you like to see all there is to say?
ok
here it is

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nothing nothing nothing new

the sun (under)

except for th

e little matte

r of placeing.

that is all there is
to say say say

and one may truly?

say that there is nothing

Mark Trover
MYOPIA

Today
like no other thought
clicks past with amazing
efficiency, and,
spinning,

reel under (soft
green fields in my head)
my deficiency,
grinning

Timothy Orlebeke
alone the moth among iron

alone the moth among iron
The thin wing flutters its shadow
over bronze and copper into
the stone. The thin song of morning
breaks over the skin of water.
Pebbles wet with color rest in
the clear pools like the eyes of fish.
I dream from the crucifixion
into the shell of a turtle.
I sleep on its warm and smooth stone.
From thin color in the gray dawn
I wake early with the new day
my eyelids marked like the wings of
a moth.

Rintrah roars

On the shore I slept like Jonah.
The loud rage of air and water
crushed my body into the cold
sand. After wandering the gray
empty roads of that storming night
I felt the churning clouds on the
thin grass. I touched the white roots torn
by the wind and bent like the rough
pounding waves. And I was of both
grass and water. I heard only
the loud pulsing rage of waves and
the hard rushing wind. The Spirit
roared in the night. And on the shore
I slept like Jonah.
dream from the crucifixion

A new hunger is in my veins.
As I lie on my back in this late summer night I can see stars break into chips of light and pulse across the dark sky across the hungry void. And in my veins I feel those stars dissolve with blood. No one starves in this universe of meat and water the wine-faced sea and the rosy-fingered dawn. Elijah was fed by ravens birds as black as this midnight sky. I feel the pulse of light in my hungry veins.
I REALLY CAN NOT SAY

I really can not say now
how it was that night.
You were scared and I was bold
and it was as quiet as a room
that night on the lake.
Perhaps it was like a knight
befriending a fair maiden
after a fearless rescue,
and she over-awed
forgot herself too long.
Or perhaps it was like
a gray-haired gentleman
dancing with a girl,
just a girl, with glassy eyes.
Or perhaps it was like
a voluptuous girl rescued from drowning
by a man wearing a clerical collar
and thinking herself safe kissing him.
It was like all that and yet
I remember later in the night
when the crickets were screeching,
and the frogs were belching,
and the foxes yelled in the woods.
You pressed tight against me shivering
and I tried to reassure you
that I would always be with you
tomorrow and forever.
I have said to myself often
that if I could only go back to that night
and hold you once more and then drown,
I might be happy.
But we are miles apart
and the nights are long. I am crying
in my dreams, hoping for all that and more.

Hubert VanTol
DEATH AT AN EARLY AGE

In the car they had whispered
He was your uncle.
On the thick lip of his polished coffin
my fingers left smudges,
their color gone out from
raising my head enough to
watch his eyes
absorb the parlor light and
splotch it. The lips
of that man's face were shut tight.
Up to his waist where the lid was down
the body rested
like a piece of finger in a
cufflink box.
I wondered
what kind of an uncle was he.
Mother bent over and said
he's dead, let's go.
I looked once more
and yup
he was like the bird that
hit our window early Spring
and broke its neck,
only he had been composed.

Richard Prins
Catullus XXXIX

Egnatius, quod candidos habet dentes, renidet usque quaque: sei ad rei ventum est subsellium, cum orator excitat fletum, renidet ille: si ad pii rogum fili lugetur, orba cum flet unicum mater, renidet ille: quidquid est, ubicumque est, quodcumque egit, renidet: hunc habet morbum, neque elegantem, ut arbitror, neque urbanum. quare monendum est mihi, bone Egnati. si urbanus esses aut Sabinus aut Tiburs, aut parcus Umber aut obesus Etruscus, aut Lanvinus ater atque dentatus, aut Transpadanus, ut meos quoque attigam, aut qui lubet, qui puriter lavit dentes, tamen renidere usque quaque te nollem: nam risu inepto res ineptior nulla est. nunc Celtiber es: Celtiberia in terra, quod quisque minxit, hoc sibi solet mane dentem atque russam defricare gingivam, ut quo iste vester expolitior dens est, hoc te amplius bibisse praedicet loti.
Because he has bright white teeth
Egnatius flashes them
everytime
he gets a chance.
Say he’s called to the stand just when
defence is raising tears—
gleaming smile.
Or say he’s mourning at the burial
of an only son, devoted, too,
whose widowed mother’s weeping—
gleaming smile.
No matter what the occasion
or where he is or
what the situation,
all you see is Smile.
That’s his fawlt,
neither quaint nor civilized
in my opinion.
So consider this a warning my good buddy Egnatius:
If you were Roman Sabinian or Tiburian
greased-up Umbrian or fat Etruscan
dark and well-tanned Lanuvian or even
Transpadanian
(to get closer to home)
or anyone else you damn well please to be
who washes his teeth in running water—
still,
I’d rather you wouldn’t smile
quite so close to Always,
as there’s nothing so foolish as a foolish smile.
Now as it stands
you’re a Celtiberian
and in Celtiberia land
the natives
scrub their teeth and
plush red gums
with their own running water
(if you know what I mean).
And what’s more
though your teeth perhaps are whiter
I hear it said you people drink what’s left.

Richard Prins
WAITING

On this eighth day of April
the hoary sky threatens
broken promises.

We have waited
so long
for the tongues of fire
to visit these silent hordes
of dry bones,
and today
I would gladly lie
beneath the juniper tree
and eat the food of angels
or feast beneath the gourd tree
on indignation
or fast
until the black birds
perch upon my shoulders
and shrill
“A sign! A sign!”

Sharon DeVries
A man swings over the city
hung by his suspenders
from the cable of a large industrial crane.
He is amazed at the intricacy of the city,
and as he swings
he is given a man's-eye-view
of several birds
who flutter up around him.

One shits on his head.

In the underworld he is mirrored
by a spider climbing
a flagellating twine.
Down around the buildings
with the birds he floats
until sunset when his suspenders break,
and he falls like pudding
on the asphalt.
He picks himself up, shakes off the dust,
walks home carrying his empty lunch pail,
and leaves a diving vulture disappointed.

Hubert VanTol
MY LOVE IS A WASHER WOMAN,
I AM AN ARENA

When the screaming spot is silent,
And the hideous crowd’s gone out;
When the athletes’ fury’s burned out,
And their daily blood is spent;

When the echo through the dark halls
Tries to maximize the sound
But can’t remake The Great Resound
With an empty beer can’s fall;

When the pornographic smears of
Blood and popcorn make my yen
For madding glory dirty, then
Comes the trudging of my love.

Stood and wizened with the years,
Stood and wisened by the years,
Comes with bucket full of tears
Shed for blood and popcorn smears.

Aged eyes care not to see
That battles bright precede the brown;
Just one old sigh, and then slosh down
The sludge the crowd has left on me.

Fred Exoo