Dialogue is a journal of commentary which seeks to describe and stimulate the intellectual and artistic ferment at Calvin through articles, interviews, fiction, poetry, book reviews, visual art, and satire. As such, Dialogue supports artists in the college community, working in all media, encouraging them to express their insights regarding how to closely reflect the image of God to the World.

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Editorial: "Nursing Regret"
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"Chicken Little"
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untitled
Stafford Trapp

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untitled
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untitled
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Editorial: "Nursing Regret"

There are a few things that we can count on throughout our lives: when you throw something up in the air it will eventually make its way back to the ground; if the sun rises it will eventually set; a person who fills his childhood with Sesame Street and his adolescence with MTV will probably lack the attention span required to pour a cup of coffee correctly and finally, a sin is always followed by guilt.

We are all well aware that excessive guilt is a bad thing. It clogs our mindset; hinders our better judgment and when it becomes the center of focus it thickens until everything else is obstructed from view. We would be better off to simply rid ourselves of it after its cause has been identified and corrected. Aldous Huxley knows this too. He says so in his forward to "Brave New World."

"Rolling in the muck is not the best way of getting clean."

On paper this idea makes perfect sense; however, trying to apply it to real people and their real lives proves to be a less successful endeavor. There is something in the human condition that curtails this theory--whatever it is that separates us from the apes serves to complicate the issue. Perhaps by embracing guilt we repel public scrutiny; it's a political safeguard. Who can incriminate a man while he bloodies his knees on the steps of churches? Also, like sunsets and MTV, guilt is consistent, it offers a sense of normalcy. A clear conscience is a rattled conscience in some cases, and if by the slim chance that our conscience is clear we can always dig a little deeper to find some evidence of depravity. Whatever the reason may be, we accept guilt and wear it on our sleeves as proof that we are suffering for our crimes and in doing so we establish for ourselves a god who is bent on a lack of communication.

I've put to waste an embarrassing pile of lined paper trying to sort through this riddle. I think that the problem lies in our misinterpretation of guilt. We mistake it as a virtue and drop it into the back of our heads where it falls somewhere between humility and conscientiousness. Then we brush our teeth, throw on a jacket, and walk around with it all day long. We carry it home, sleep with it and nurse it as if it were a virtue. (If it were an egg we would get an "A+" but that is very much beside the point.) The point is that we consider guilt as being synonymous with conscience. A conscience is a facility that fashions us in accordance with our better motives. It keeps us in line. Guilt, on the other hand, is nothing more than its bastard child and it only fuels regret, which brings nothing to resolution.

--Peter Stroobosscher
Greenskin Peasants from Mars

by Brad Frulauff

Rigery, digery rock
the louse rang out the clothe.
the clothe struck out
it served him well.
Tickery, fickery frock.

Happily tucked away in a far away corner not far from here there are people whom cannot figure out their right from watt's left. They were confused but content, and often congratulated themselves on their constandard of conliving.

It was when a nice little n'ice smiling man with one eye on her goalie box came to them crying over spilled milk and they mopt it up. They all voted to and from then on to cook their legs sunny side up at sundown for an extra minute and toss them to the dogs dogs frogs logs fogs hogs. "Don't pay the fairy man!" they shouted till their horses were vociferous about the cost of food for a familiar of four. "Nay, neighbor! We neighver neighed you the neigh neigh neigh." And it kinda fell apart from ther.

"Cracked heads, dead words are tearing round on m' bleedin' galvanized wood deck." Of course, when he decked her she threw his left foot in the federal mail for the price of a cup of coffee. She sent honey to the local yocal Charity whose only conditioner was the cheap kind and the label was wrong so she cried when it got in her lies.

From her barred wyndoe she could see the world spinning and she was dizzy from the thought of it ull. "But I never, neigh, never did anything normal ull m' life, which was last week and a lot of work." And she watched the people with their bad habits and ugly babies all sticking together around a honeycomb of lemonade and sweet, sweet chocolate. But a cake would be too good for them.

Ad so the biigg gay came when all the witches and horze were to be burned with a steak o'er the fired peasants. What with the unemployment rape it seemed only national that it should be over and done with as soon as ASAP.

The maitre'notre dame got on the podunk and began his screech: "Ci sono due chiavi a vivere: Uno--nascere. Secondo--morire." Ad so they cut off his tie and chain and burned her, too. Neighver befour were there such festivities and partybrating over the coming of sage of the town's sons-of-guns.

Ad sew the coral of the mory is to always look both ways befour crossing yourself in the company of managers.
untitled  silver gelatin print  5.5"x7"  Stafford Trapp
My fingers are stiff. Maybe it means I'm going to die. That'd be something—death by stiff fingers. I look at myself in the mirror. I stare. I gawk. I'm muscular and handsome, or no— I'm pimply and dorky. I'm not sure. I am bored, depressed, lonely. But it's too late to call anyone. I'm at work, Nightwatch, 4:15 in the am. I'd read a book, but I'm too depressed, too lonely, too tired. So I stare into the mirror, I try to figure out if I'm attractive or not, I look deep into my vein-cracked eyes, not sure if I see any signs of sentience. Is there a spark to them? Something alive? Are the eyes themselves fearful, or do I have to observe some of the surrounding face to see the fear? The experiment proves inconclusive.

What shall I tell you? What shall I write? I need a transition. I'm in a small cinderblock room in the middle of a school. There are two computers in here that must remain on at all times and are old and emit an ungodly amount of heat. I bring lots of good healthy food to get me through my shift, but I don't eat any of it because today I'm too depressed, or perhaps I'm better now? Anyway, as uncertain as I am I find it much better just to eat M&Ms. Am I a glutton? Damn, it's so stereotypical, being a security guard and eating junk food. Oh well. No one's caught me yet... I think.

I want to tell you about being a security guard. People don't realize.... Anyway, The Security Guard (nights): The security guard has to climb through the tops and bottoms of all the buildings and walk along the outer bounds of the campus on a regular schedule called tours. The tour takes about an hour and you do four a shift; of course, this is a woefully inadequate schedule for keeping secure an area of approximately four miles. The security guard isn't armed but does have a cellular phone for calling the police, which I have only gotten to use one of the six times I felt like I should use it. I like the name tour because it makes me think of the experience in Vietnam, a fitting allusion because the job is extremes of boredom and fear and reflection and fear and observation and on and on and on. You have to talk to yourself, because there isn't going to be anyone for a long time. Why is there so much fear? I guess because it's downtown. There have been break-ins, and the more you think about it the more you realize your mortality. I think about it a lot.

I don't like going through the big buildings. There are so many corners, and I carefully imagine all the things that could be around each one. Then I try to stare straight ahead; perhaps nothing will come out of that dark corner if I don't look at it. That trick always works. But sometimes you have to look, for superstition is lord and I am subject to it. Here come the goose bumps. Suck. So many spooky places, so many dark corners and eternal shadows. I want to bring the flashlight; it would make me feel a lot better. But it gets in the way, and people you happen to pass on the street seem to fear that you will beat them with it. And it wouldn't help you against the horrors you imagine lurking in the shadows. Except that it allows you to destroy the shadows. It is your weapon against the dark. But I never take it.

I've heard that people with really vivid imaginations can bring themselves to a sexual orgasm just by imagining. That sounds pretty cool, but that sort of imagination would be big trouble for a security guard. The more you let yourself imagine the more senselessly painful and horrifying your job becomes. Buildings and basements that you'd always thought were a little spooky become terrifying,
And having watched horror films doesn't help either. Remember Jack Nicholson in *The Shining* when he comes out from behind the door wielding that ax? That happens to me all the time, happens in my mind. Especially in the noisy boiler rooms when you can't hear anything and have to face away from most of the room to scan your stupid bar code. And it won't scan. You only try twice because he probably couldn't kill you that fast. But you know he could kill you before you even turn your back. And other boiler rooms have dark mysterious tunnels. You can't prove that there is a hairy, fanged horror down there, but you believe it; why else would you stare so fixedly at that spot, shut the steel door so fast, and then walk so swiftly to the elevator door? Not good. If you could stop imagining then the job would be a lot more bearable, but imagining isn't the only problem. It's the corner of your eye as well. You see things in the corner of your eye. Like your partial reflection in unexpected places caught by strangely lighted glass. If only you weren't always haunted by your reflection. But it's not just that, it's also the sounds, all sorts of strange unexplained sounds. Machines spontaneously kicking on as you walk past them. Whenever that happens you need to stop and glare fixedly at the offending machine so that it will learn . . . never mind. Thumps, rustlings, skitterings—what the hell makes those noises? Just ignore them, they've never hurt you . . . yet. In fact none of the things that have made your heart beat fast and the sweat dampen your shirt have ever materialized into something that actually warranted the fear you give it. But you fear nonetheless.

We have barcodes to scan to prove that we did the tours, but half the time they won't scan. I make up little rules and then watch myself fail to obey them. Only try to scan them 9 times, there's no need to become obsessive-compulsive about them. But why won't this one scan? It's brand new, not worn away at all. And this old one that never works worked in the first swipe. I don't even know why I tried it, it never works. Anyway, the night is beautiful, muggy but with a cooling breeze. I heard it was supposed to rain. That would suck. Sitting in the office with your underwear all steamy. No wonder the opposite sex is uninterested. But I'm strong, and I have good hair (?); maybe the girls that drive by in the street think I'm cute. But girls I've actually talked to describe me as looking dorky in a cubscout kind of way - brown shirt red patches, black pants. I do look dorky, but maybe they just said that because it's sort of attractive- or because it's just dorky. I don't know. The girls out smoking on the porches don't seem too interested.

Perhaps an attractive, intelligent, witty, outgoing girl will need me to rescue her from some peril like an indoor bat. But not yet. Only annoying women wanting escorts out to their car parked right next to the door. Is that unfair of me? What's fair? As I walk I become conscious of the sound the air makes going in and out of my nose. It's not unlike the sound the wind makes in the trees. Perhaps the sky is breathing. That's a nice thought. But all the yards between the campus and the dorms have their sprinklers on, and all of them are trying to get me wet. Don't they know I'm already uninteresting to women without steamy, uncomfortable underwear?

I keep walking, and as I do so I fancy that I am strong and invincible. I become conscious of the weight of my arms hanging from my broad shoulders. I inhale and feel my shirt stretch across my abs. Suddenly I feel naked. I remember that strong people got stabbed and shot all the time. And the fanged horror waiting for me in the prehistoric dungeon basement will be glad to find a little meat on this rent-a-cop. Thinking of that basement, why the hell are there all those porcelain toilets there? That base-
ment is so spooky with its rough-hewn torture chamber walls, and dark menacing passages. And part of the spookiness is the stack of unexplained toilets. I have a hard time thinking of porcelain toilet as torture devices, even dirty ones. As long as they are porcelain they seem more like saviors—a strange childhood association, I guess.

As I go down the stairs and through the basement door I turn and catch it just before it slams. I hate it when it slams. I try to scan the bar code, but it has clearly made up its mind not to be scanned, in as far as a barcode can make up its mind. Oh well. Leaving, I almost forget to catch the slamming door. And as I reach back in an unaccustomed motion I strike my head against the low ceiling. That really hurts. Ow ow ow. Ok, I'm ok now.

Walking up to the next building I remember that every lock has its little tricks. This lock won't work if you put the key all the way in it. And on this one you have to pull the handle as you turn the key or else you'll break the key in it, again. There must be a hundred keys on the keyring, but I can still find any one I need in pitch blackness. I know this job too well.

Looking across the parking lot I wonder why there is a flickering, staticky TV in the window on the third floor of that building? There's a car parked by the building. Is someone staying there? It's not a dorm, but people sometimes get put-up in weird places. Maybe it's a cute girl, intelligent, witty, outgoing, just getting ready for bed and glad that I came and checked on her. Or perhaps it's a fanged horror. The upper stories of that building are way too scary to check out. I'll ask my relief officer about it tomorrow.

As I walk I remember what a great day it's been, all the cool things I did, and then I remember how confused I am about life. And that I do stupid, stupid things. What if there's a car full of people parked in that back lot? I guess I'd have to go ask them to leave. But what if they're nervous drug dealers and they shoot me? Good, no one's parked there. There's never anything going on in the parking ramp. I'm tempted to just vault over the low wall barrier, but I'm afraid someone will see me and think I'm lame. I step in the little patch of sand at the bottom of the ramp that I always step in, leaving the same shoe print I always leave.

The birds start really singing around 5:00 am, just as it's starting to get a little lighter out. They're really making some crazy loud music by 6:00. It's refreshing and uplifting. I think that perhaps the terror is over. But there's always a little left in the boiler rooms. I wonder when birds go to bed to get up so early. It's nice watching the sun come up, it's different than sunset; it has an altogether more gentle tone, less red perhaps. We don't see enough sunrises in our culture. I'm starting to get tired, and when I'm tired I don't notice almost any of these things I've been telling you about, which is too bad; and a relief. Sometimes I come across worms trying to make it across dry sidewalks and I feel compelled to help them.
As you enter the room, I note:

faded
  pattern #
  paisley blue
  a blouse lovely
  on no one looks
  different
  on you

As we approach:

mild eyes {w/hint of untamed nature}
whisper, "wild heart."
  I start-
    No, i stand still--
to hear detail finer than ear can discern.
My eyes, concerned with
subtle splinters of understanding,
  soak in your intense gaze...
more delicate
  than the most elegant, accurate word spoken
by soft lips and soothing voice with feather-duster tongue.
Yeah, those dancing eyes express you
better than the finest song sung. Silent notes are hung,
suspended in sweet air. Do I dare breathe?
  No.
  So, i stand still--
to capture this moment's electricity.

purity in vision.

No photograph could handle
this unspoken transmission.
Beauty and Passion fail miserably to describe this situation of
powerless infatuation and caressing eyes,
seeming to
me to be
deeper
than
mid-
July
skies.
And so I hold my tongue, my breath, my mind,
gathering all the visual energy I can find to focus
on you.
It's been 5 seconds.
It's been 5 months.
Who cares? However long we drink this stare, it fills us up.
And was it I who first beheld your eyes, or was I the giver?
Confused...Content. This stare feels so warm I smile and shiver.
untitled mixed media  Stafford Trapp
"Belief in God"

by Nick Dekker

Is it in the cradle of something civilized,
Begotten by commercials
In a country respecting its dead
trough barbecues and the beach,
Where money makes an idiot smart,
And the once cleansing river crawls on its knees
    gasping every time we kick it in the ribs,
Where the river is now the smoother flow of money,
The dry lifeblood of a civilization, turning
The sinners into icons and flooding
Us with murky beliefs.

The culture moves faster than is humanly possible:
    Speeding tickets, accidents, computer crashes,
    fast food.
Where we move too fast to savor, to notice, to
    worship,
And to mean it.
In fulfilling desires with cheap simulations
We are slighted by perverted addictions;
We stumble into morning sunsets,
    Our breath wreaking of disappointment,
Splattering beauty like dew from our fleece
Onto the beaten path.

I don't lay awake thinking about these things--
I fall sound asleep, my last thought a worry that
My alarm will wake me too soon.

We lay a foundation of twisted responsibility,
    And it's not my fault it happens this way.
In fact, I think He loves us too much despite our
shortcomings:
The excess, the runoff,
That which is ladled last to the last starving
    man,
Who turns it down in favor of starving.
How can a man in this world live up to this?
    And love himself all the same?

Save him through systems of thought--
The philosophy of the miscellaneous--
Through belief in a desert rogue
Who wanders lonely like a banished goat,
Writing a book to fit any genre.
Who trudges like a donkey back into town:
A wayward love wandering back.
The goat in the desert that won't go away:
That clings to you the more you let it go.
Both sides work against the middle--you--that way.

Still, He is a useful God.
For public relations, for profit,
For justification, for habit,
And for some--
For everything.

Oh glorious world of simplicities! The ease
The grace!
The ease of both sides!
Simple to hate and simple to love.
Simple to vow something after you've done it
Simple to simply pray.

As we fear the alarm clocks of the world
Not waking us in time to make enough money,
As we move and remain stationary,
As we balance and fall,
Open and close,
We'll talk about belief in God
And a nation slowly prays.
dialogue

untitled  silver gelatin print  8"x10"  Paul Birza
"The American Dream or My dog loves steak or therefore"

oil on masonite

25"x19"

Brett Budde
Little milky Mary,
white and creamy fairy,
learned to juice a cow
which made her hands quite hairy.

And this seemed to make all the hairy
little koods feel better about
their breasts, if not altogether
uncomfortable. A brisk walk hom
frump skool could mek the coldest
dey cry baby cry and your mother
was never hom fer bean at wurk,
which was questionable. Permaybe
they never told us as much as we
thought we knew, and permaychance
it was ull a mother uv control­
ling os.

Tif you get this far and you wonder
bread the bleach bleachin' bleach
outta the whole thing, + you reach
for a knife and play the mettical
professional with yer pest. And
it all represents an iron and your
clothes seemed so wrinkled and
stained by meels you did n' wanna
beat and the only cleaners hive
found iz Across the You-niverse.

Wife shoot I seek thenapy if it's all
about the pest, penitent, and
suture, none of witch I understand
m'selfish. As tho my me me mind
is an onyun, to peel back the
leave-me-alones and it'll only mek
you cry which must be cured by
burning. But that's missplaced
aggression and I must really
luv my parrots else why wood I
stilt talk at dem? That whole in
the grounds seems all the more
cozily the more personable yor
Quest-ians beacome.

Whin it begins to all seem too much
my me me my salvayshun crawls upon
m'hand in the warm of a katiedid.
Because their nearest neighbors were more than a mile away and their house set back behind a thick line of tall trees a few acres from the dirt road leading northward into town, the darkness at night hung stubborn on the fields. They were sitting now in their hard-backed, wooden chairs out on the front porch that wrapped around the facade of the house, facing the trees. He moved and the chair creaked uncomfortably, breaking the stillness that had settled in the wake of what had just happened.

He sat still, resting his forehead in the palm of his hand, the white of his hairline showing. His elbow stood on the round porch table between them. She sat with her legs apart and her fingertips pressed lightly to her cheek. She was looking down at the old boards under her feet. All around them the bugs hummed, unseen.

"Can you light the candle again? Please? They're still biting."

He lit it with a match from a book he held in his hand. Then he dropped the matchstick, still smoking, into the candle and down toward the rising flame. The wax began to puddle, swallowing. Beside the citronella candle on the table, he set down the matchbook. In the light now, her cheek shone pink--hinting at purple--beginning to puff out the little that it would.

"Are you going to say anything?" she asked, picking up the matchbook and moving it back and forth in her hands.

He let out a short, hollow laugh and looked further from her.

"I'm not going to say 'I'm sorry' if that's what you mean." His voice was quiet.

"No. No, I got what I deserved. I just wanted to know if you have anything to say before I go in and make myself a bed on the couch."

His face tightened, the squares of his cheekbones clenched.

"What do you want me to say?" he asked.

"I don't know, I guess I just want you to say something, anything. I guess I just want to hear that you forgive me. I didn't plan this out, you know. We just sort of met and things happened."

"You know what, I'll sleep on the couch, it's about the only place I want to."

She put the matchbook back down on the table and looked up at him, brushing the long hair back from her eyes.

"Well, would you look at me at least? Can't you do that?"

"I could."

It was quiet and then: "You know I'd give anything to go back and do it all over again," she said.

"I bet you would."

"That's not what I meant. Please--"

He turned to her.

"Just go to your damn bed already," and he turned back again to face the trees.

She rose and walked slowly toward the screen door, taking her time with her back toward him. Her bare feet swept across the wood. She went in halfway and looked over her shoulder at him. The back of his neck was tan in the candlelight. "I'm sorry," she said, and went all of the way in, holding on to the screen door as it closed with a hush.

In his chair he turned to blow out the candle.

* * * *

He watched for cars along the road in the dark for some time, but none came from either direction. The road was always quiet, especially at night. The bugs were still humming, though. They had kept on through it all, singing out their unchanging song.
"Alhambra"  color slide  

Paul Birza
He looked down at the old table and ran his fingertips across the thick cracks in the wood, the finish where it showed, and then the bumpy grain which was all worn and sun-beaten. He noticed the stained sweat marks from glasses and the places where the wood had chipped, splintering.

For a time he stood, slightly bowing the horizontal rails of the porch under his weight as he leaned. He looked out onto the stillness of the fields. Watching for cars again, he sat back down in the wooden chair. His face was still tight and breath whistled from his nose.

After a while, he moved down the railing and inside the house, feeling the boards with his fingertips as he walked. He felt his way to the living room, then through it, moving towards the couch at the back of the room.

She had made a bed for him there on the couch. He sat down on it, pulling the sheets to his face. In the afternoon they had hung out on the line and smelled of fresh air and sweetness. His face relaxed, loosening under the sheets. Then wiping his cheeks, he moved down the hall, past the pictures on the wall, and on towards the bedroom.

He creaked open the door and she was awake. She was resting on her side, on her half of the bed, with her face turned towards the nightstand and the corner beyond that. The room was warm and he undressed. He curled up next to her, and put his arm around her waist, pressing his chest to her back, their skin sticking together lightly.

She took his hand in hers.

"I think we should get a new bed. I can't sleep on this one anymore," she told him, looking straight into the corner, his breath on her neck.

Then they slept together in the warmth and the quiet, the bugs still humming through their open window.

It had always been a good bed to lie on.
must everything smell of sex
in this hog-washed, sweat-heavy world?
i keep telling myself that marriage
is much more than the union of two
bodies
but why when the caption
above the larger-than-life billboarded
lingerie model says "Maybe now he'll listen";
and when the Playboy channel
is advertised on ESPN by a short-haired
woman
in a white tank
top
who says "What kind of man watches the Playboy
channel? My kind of man."
and they begin making love
in the camera's moonlight
why do i even think about marriage
or celibacy
when everyone seems to be having a fine
ball of a time
dancing with anyone they rubber well
choose.

i can't even dance upright
let alone head to toe.

the gay men in yesterday's newspaper
were shown holding hands.
i've seen more graphic pictures, and
maybe in real life,
but a perceived controversy of con­traindications
on queer causes at some small christian
college in michigan
makes headlines, front page bold type
letters
in the grand rapids newspaper,
and i wonder if even the religious
aren't a little too highly sexed
for our own good.

and a slain young male is laid bald
and rotting, exposed, on a fence post
for proposing supposedly interesting
things
to two nice clean-cut young men

but what justifies a little violence
anyway, do we condemn unaltered phobia,
or do we make excuses in our own despite?
"just a little violence, please,
to rid the world of one small nuisance."
just a little violence.
does this ring any memories?
or do we not learn from history.

maybe sex is just a sleight-of-the-hand
trick
or maybe an orgy is just a collective
hallucination.
i wonder what [Dido? dildo? who, what?]
felt like when Aeneas left
her bone-dry and bleeding.
she obviously must have felt bad
since she killed herself,
but for love
or unremembered passion in a thundering
cave
i wonder for which. you know every man is a
dog,
that's why i always tell nubile young
women
to see Matthew ten
where it says
(though in separate sentences)
"be innocent as doves,
and wise as serpents, be on your guard against men."

and i've never really touched a woman
in that way but it seems it would be nice
to have a hand to hold
sometimes.

and the cover of cosmopolitan-ation screams
"How To Make Your Man Go Wild In The Bed"
and
"Thirty-Six Sex Secrets For Great Sex"
dialogue

With The Devil When You Finally End Up Having Sex With Him
In Hell Your Eternal Damnation Sex Destination"
(except i added the part about the devil and hell)

pre-pubescence
pre-marital
pre-empt
post-coital
post-experience
post-script
paleontological
pre-wedding night
pre-virginity
pre-anything
bind with briars
my little desires
keep the small curtain of flesh
stretched across my bed
i don't care--
just get me out of here.
i'm like Joseph;
i'm tired of libidity.

libidity
quididity
frigidity
ribald ditty

ok, let's go over this again.
sex leads to pregnancy
pregnancy leads to abortion
abortion leads to people
like James Kopp
killing a doctor in his own kitchen
innocently talking to his wife,
who didn't abort his own, and children.
so sex is bad, right?

dominatrix
cat-nap
feline
hex
witch
sadist
masochistically
satanistically
sadistically
hallucinatory

maybe sex is really a downer
but all those in the know
don't want to let on they've been
shagged
so they keep up the illusion

of orgasmic pleasure for fear and sheer
spite.

and i've never really kissed a woman in
that way
but i think it might be nice
and i think about it
only every once in a great while

but i was wondering what it might be
like
to be able to say
"I never kissed my wife until our wedding
day"
and really mean that you never kissed
that woman
until after the vow,
and not just that, well of course,
because she wasn't your wife
before. is that level of purity
still possible, is it insane
to even think about, or is it not purity
at all
but simple delusion?

and amy grant sings
"But baby we're not going down
If its more than we've got right now
Just give it
Give it time."

but baby her time's up
her Titanic's going down
down down down
sinking splat to the bottom
glug glug glup
just like the rest of 'em;
and i wonder if i,
if me,
if myself
as a twentyish virgin
who still believes in lifetime marriage
is really the exception
or not.

ok, let's do this again.
sex brings children
these children grow up and have sex
producing even more children
these children grow up and have sex
producing even more children
those children grow up
and are tired of the same old sex
so they try something new
producing pedophiles and rapists.
so sex is bad, right?
pimp
limp
nibble
nipple
wench
french
teddy
titty
slip
slap
neck
peck
breast
implants

there was a Hooter's girl
who when questioned about her big boobs,
and if she didn't feel funny
as a modern woman
being an object for men to gaze leeringly
at,
indicated that she was putting herself
through college, quote
"laughing all the way to the bank"
off of the big tips that she got
from her 2 assets
that perennially, annually
waved in the faces of men,
pulled tight in a little white knotted t-
t-shirt
to get them emptying their wallets.

all men are dogs you know,
or did i say that before,
preferring synthetic
to natural
when the choice is put in front
of them like that.

orgy
orgasm
orgasmic
orange, navel
oregon
organ, donor

my brand new michigan driver's license
with a picture of me looking stoned
(as most of them seem to come out) says,
"See back for medical
information, anatomical gift." i like my body just the way it is,
thanks, and if i die with
or without
ever having done it
will you bury me whole
and just the same please?
i mean, once you're dead,

who cares how much you've had? (have you
ever seen a gravestone saying,
'this man died without ever
having sex'?)
but why do i feel like that sometimes,
like 'oh s--t if i die without intimate
union with some
body
i'll be an incomplete person.'
damn sex-soaked culture.
d--- you and your naked showgirls.
d--- your nudity on even pg-13 movies
* your "sex sells" advertising
* mtv's spring break parties
* playboy and penthouse and all the
rest
* steamy romance novels
* viagra
* "let the dance begin"

Safeway checkout line.
9:30 pm.
I'm buying a box of Breyers.
Dulce de Leche.
On sale for 2.50.
Members only.
Magazines catch my eye.
As they always do.
Only i usually try not to look.
The celebrity hype was discouraged in my
childhood.
Not to mention the sex.
And the flippantly posed bodies. (always
female)
I remember reading a morality story once.
In one of those conservative publica-
tions.
About a boy who conquered the pull of
the girly mags at the supermarket.
He looked away.
('Boy Successfully Beats Dragon of Lust')
(Sex is bad, right?)
And there it is.
It brings me back for a second look.
"SEX.
with the stars."
The headline says.
"People share their celeb fantasies."
No pun intended.

Sex is only for procreation, not for
recreation.
Recreation implies pleasure,
and pleasure leads to wanting more pleas­
ure,
which leads to hedonism and lack of self
disipline.
We all know that hedonism is wrong and
lack of self discipline leads to sin.
So sex is bad, right?

if i went to bed with you,
would we get any sleep?

isn't that what beds are for?

I've never proved this, but they say it
is true--
The Law of Diminishing Returns:
if we hold hands this time,
then I'll want to kiss you next time;
and if I touch you here this time,
then I'll want to touch you there next
time;
and if we lay clothed this time,
then next time we'll certainly be naked
and writhing;
and that's bad.
or is it?
i'm confused.

SEX is a normal part of human existence.
SEX is a normal part of human existence.
SEX is a normal part of human existence.
SEX is a normal part of human existence.
SEX is a normal part of human existence.
SEX is a normal

Hi. You interrupted me. No don't worry
about it, I was just writing on the
chalkboard. My teacher told me I had a
warped mind. I guess she thought copying
this would correct it. It doesn't
seem to be working. Could I hold your
hand?

conjugate
conjugal

our bed is verdant
the meeting of our bodies
cause for celebration
in this newfound playfulness and ease
as we speak each to each in verbs
that know only one tense,
that carry all tenses--
pasts, futures, perfects--
in their sweaty, love-laden vowels

i have dreamed of
a sex without words
words without sex
a way to love
to communicate

that is beyond
innuendo
patriarchy
subjugation
harrassment
double entendre
lust,
where two lovers meet perfectly
silent and aware,
where two strangers meet peacefully
talking and unaware.

in a perfect transgendered
world, we would need only
each other, our four eyes, our
four lips,
sparkling,
blending,
being

virginity
was perhaps most
painful
for that
chosen not chosen
father no father
who believed
in angel-prevented
divorce, and took
but did not
take.

Saint Joseph
lover of the blessed virgin
and chaste father of that holy
unbought son
pray for us.
Third eye.

Dreaming of that face again.
It's bright and blue and shimmering.
Grinning wide
And comforting me with its three warm and wild eyes.

On my back and tumbling
That hole and back again
Rising and falling
And willing the days and the time from my cherished end.

Out... In... Out... In... Out...

A child's game stuck in my head.
It said the hole is but a dream.
I've spent so many years in question
To find I've known this all along.

"So glad to see you.
So glad you so much.
I've missed you so much.
Came out to watch you play.
Why are you running?"
Yardwork

by Tim Thompson

I stepped up onto the trailer and swung My shovel into soil: a grainy Slice. The boy below me, by the tongue, said, "I'll bring my Deere down and level all this out for ya . . . " His incisors were angled toward each other, yellow as butter. A drop of sweat rolled off my nose, darkened the dirt; shovel swung and soil dropped on the grass with a shake. Topsoil in three rows lined the yard, settling over drain pipes buried below—"My Dad said your yard looks like shit... but I told him you were filling in low spots."

"I'm going inside to have some lunch," I said. He frowned, mounted his small bicycle And peddled home down the road, John Deere cap Hugging his forehead, resisting the wind.
untitled oil on masonite 6" x 12"  Brian DeYong
untitled  silver gelatin print  5"x7.5"  Manny Figueroa
An Unfinished Poem on Graces
Todd Slager

each night when I sleep
I poor myself like paint
onto those moments of grace
who are waiting to be recognized
on early morning streets
trying to hide their fear
of not knowing on whom
the joke is played or why
the colors they see
are getting lighter every day

every morning I wake and
I see something that reminds me
that the correlations are all false
and waiting to be found out-
that someone misjudged the distances
and assumed all was lost