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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"Drawing #1!"  mixed media  Stafford Trapp
At the present moment there is a stranger lying in my bed. His name is Bryce. Bryce has a dog who is also lying in my bed, her name is "Baby" who is a relatively timid dog having spent the first six months of her life tied and beaten by creatures of a lesser breed. Her new master, Bryce, found her and took her with him on the road and it looks as though I'll be putting them up for the night.

This morning I went for a short walk after meeting a friend for breakfast. At one point on my walk I found myself at a street corner surveying a steady stream of traffic. Between quick glances at the traffic light my eyes fell on an unkempt little man with long dirty hair and a tangled beard. He hung a large canvas sack over his shoulders, draped an old baseball cap on his head and a dog, whose hairy profile was interchangeable with that of its master, was trailing closely behind.

It only took a quick glance to understand that Bryce was a drifter. He skipped along the curb allowing his belongings to dangle carelessly at his side as evidence of his freedom. I saw these articles as a collection of fascinating charms; used to satisfy only the most basic and necessary appetites. But this train of thought was cut short by the traffic light which now signaled for me to cross.

The rest of the day was like any other eight-hour day. My fifteen-minute drive home interrupted the regular flow of events. I saw Baby and Bryce for the second time while driving through and intersection at the east-end of town. They hadn't made much progress from where I'd seen them eight hours earlier. This aimlessness, I think, is what puzzled me. There was something tragic about these two that had been abbreviated this morning.

Earlier in the day they served as a quick picture of an exotic lifestyle that enticed me while they hiked off into the happily ever after. But this second meeting extended their epilogue. The dog was still panting and Bryce was still running at the nose. At this point a moral dilemma presented itself to me and I greeted it with a sound argument outlining why it wasn't necessary for me to offer my help to this man. Shortly thereafter I muttered some swear words and turned my car around. Approaching from behind I thought about how I might introduce myself.

He spoke first, posing me with an offer. I replied by saying that marijuana contradicted my personal protocol but that I would gladly have him over for dinner. He shrugged his approval and collapsed beside me in the passenger seat with Baby.

The conversation was sparse and stuttered but no at all awkward. We would soon be strangers again and felt no political obligations toward one another. Occasionally I would point out historical landmarks and fill him in on the characteristics of each passing neighborhood. This filled the silence until we reached my apartment. I found a vat of thanksgiving leftovers in the fridge so we pressed the turkey into a small feast of sandwiches and ate them where we stood. After dinner we made another offhanded attempt at a conversation but before long he had collapsed on my bed.
I do not trust this man. When I inquired about his origins he chose not to disclose his hometown. He told me that he was from North Western Ohio and shrugged off any further questions.

I did a good thing in picking him up off the street but our acquaintance hasn't unfolded into the exciting episode as I thought it might. And I'm trying to convince myself that this act of charity will vindicate me from the previous times that I'd simply driven off, neglecting a wandering carcass in worship of my own schedule, my own regular flow. In truth, I would have rather not dealt with him at all.

Once again Bryce has found himself at the margin of somebody's agenda.

It seems that there is a force that pushes culture along; each culture in its own direction; precipitating new customs, languages and constructions while making giant leaps for mankind along the way. I don't know whether or not the people perpetuate the flow or if the flow has them on the run but this pulse can put a man in a trance in which he is blind to everything but the distance covered between point A and point B. Blind to the carcass wandering about him. When something comes along that disrupts his blind pursuits he might even grow to hate the disruption upon the realization that nothing is gained by feeding him and providing a bed for him to sleep in. And he is often left to scratch his head and wonder why nothing seems to be under his control.

--Peter Stroobosscher
untitled silver gelatin print Stacy Wieringa
Excuse

by Jesse Meyer

I see a kingfisher, wings spread, brilliant
Blue and red, gliding through a shimmering
Forest, over sparkling waters, frozen in time.
A ray of light pierces the canopy,
Angles off a wing, and enters my eye.

A still point is found.

I experience this occasionally in my
Mind: floating into consciousness after a
Warm nap, glimpsing an old man hunched
Over a styrofoam cup, or touching the
Gentle curves of soft flesh.

I know calmness when a rivulet
Drops through eddying violent time.
Excuses are evident not on windblown
Frozen peaks but in the gentle tumble of a
Stream and a kingfisher gliding through the trees.
"Substance" mixed media Tim Terry
That was an exquisite nervous sadness (remember that cold, clear night by the water?) when I allowed myself to think about it. I think you were wondering far ahead, too, but couldn't admit it (I don't think I did, did I?). Everyone else seems to think it foolishness, but I can't help my head's thoughts. Especially these days (the ones of fire-frost-fear-fun). Hmm. What an exquisite thing this is.

Tomorrow is Thanks-giving Eve. What are we thanks-giving for? This grand journey we are on? This mighty trip you will take across rock and sod? This feeling of perpetual aaahhh? Yes-no-yes. What a dark dinner we had (last night - remember?). Nothing seemed to be right because we both knew it was all wrong. But still the kingdom of Spain and of Christ's birth stand in the way of the path to true knowledge. So...we await the Christchild and the aeroplane with heavy hearts full of everything and then something more. I think we will only get more tired before we finally wake up and know (good morning, sunshine?).

"In the wake of your future in Pennsylvania. To D."

by Kathryn Kuipers
"sailing a broken ship"  silver gelatin print  Aaron Horevay
"Topography of Tlön"    oil on canvas    Brian DeYong
the midnight of his birthday

by jane c knol

on the last night of vacation bible school, our teacher took us out to the church's lawn, the grass rubbed off in places by the week of rough play and there were bare patches too on the cushions of the kneeling bench inside, the velvet worn thin by a restless prayer years long

walking out into the grass that night, we each took with us a balloon and to its ribbon leash we each tied a small card with our street address and with a petition that whoever came across that paper, still attached to the rubber petal of a popped balloon, would send a postcard back to say that it had traveled as far as New York or wherever

only one message ever came back; turns out an old man in Florida found Becky Koster's balloon that was July and not until the following fall my brother died

needless to say the memory of Becky's postcard coming back where an old man wrote "i found your balloon when i was fishing" and "good luck in life" kept me from believing that those my parents pressed us to let fly for my brother's birthday would travel any further than Orlando

and still i cried the year it rained so hard we didn't drive out to a field but launched the balloons from the back porch; mine got stuck in the branches of an apple tree. the silver ribbon glimmers there still

though we've long since quit that tradition, out of our own ages or perhaps because he's been gone so long. except this year, at the midnight of his birthday, riding through Chicago, I saw a man filling up balloons to sell off the corner, and as i looked back, One slid from his hand, a shiny red heart with a hollow center. and i thought only this:

countless the entreaties i could fasten to the end of its string
"The Bible's Book of Sex"

by Lise Evans

Nine years old.
My parents evade my vague inquiries.

Nine years old.
I ask Mother directly
How does a man's sperm get into a woman in the first place?
Oh God! (I mean Golly)
No wonder they called it
Original Sin!
No wonder my sister's devotional books said
"Sex will bring you Shame,"
No wonder the Atlanta megachurch
Gave it names like
Promiscuity
Fornication
Copulation
Who would ever want this thing?

Twelve years old
and I am consumed by
thoughts of Sex.

Twelve years old
I am swamped by
Images of Sex.

In the magazines the girls say I should read,
In the movies my parents say I shouldn't watch,
In violent detail on the bathroom stall walls.
I can't help but think about it.
What's it like?
Does it hurt?
Why should I say "no?"

I am wondering, confused, burning, breathing.
Help me out, clue me in, turn me on,
(well, I'm already turned on)

But give me some guidance, O Holy Bible, Word of God,
The Song of Solomon.
Wow. Oh. Whoa. Oh my god, (I mean goodness)

The Bible's book of sex is hot.
The Bible's book of sex is exciting.
The Bible's book of sex is full of metaphors of camels, sheep, towers, vineyards, and myrrh.
The Bible's book of sex doesn't mention getting married first.
The Bible's book of sex doesn't discuss pregnancy, herpes or AIDS.
The Bible's book of sex leaves me more confused than when I started!

Fifteen Years old.
Almost legal.

Fifteen years old.
And high school is raging.
Parents, Teachers, Pastors, Celebrities, Porn Mags and Romance Novels that Tell the girls:
If you don't have a boyfriend, you're nothing.
If you don't have a boyfriend, there's something wrong with you.
If you don't have a boyfriend, you're unattractive.

And so they
Redden their lips,
Shorten their skirts,
Vomit their lunch
In desperate hopes to be sexy enough.

But when the windows are fogged and the hands are wandering
sweat is glistening and the limbs are tight:
If you don't say "no," you're a slut.
If you don't say "no," you're sinful.
If you don't say "no," no one will respect you.

So, too, they tell the boys:
If you don't make a move, you're a chicken.
If you don't make a move, you must be a fag.
And so they stumble, fumble, grope and gasp, ask and ask, desperately hoping to be man enough.
But if you do make a move, you're an asshole.
If you do make a move, the girl will scream
If you do make a move, you're a sex fiend.

Nineteen.
Old enough to make my own choices.

Nineteen...
I must choose
Alienation or Eternal Damnation
Sandra Dee or Trash Whore
Abstinence or Trojan Extra Lubricated Latex,
The man that I love or the faith that I need.
Choose? I'm paralyzed! I can do nothing!
I'm a virgin who yearns in the dark,
I'm a virgin who sighs, "yes" then gasps, "no!"
I'm a virgin because I'm terrified of being anything else.
I'm a Christian because I'm terrified of being anything else.
untitled    silver gelatin print    Rachel Epp
bagatelle
for piano

\( \text{\textcopyright 1998 Scott Blasco} \)
"By the Spirit"

remembering Lionel Basney

by Jay Robinson

My Mother said to me:
"The seasons have no patience
up north
where you live."

Remembering her words
in the park,
the leaves
now a hollow red,
are driven by the Spirit.

It is a foreknowledge of place:
the piling together
of our seasonal nakedness
amongst the drifts of brown
on the pine-needled ground.

"No, Mother, only this winter
will come too soon,"

And I stay
for another hour
with the witness
of the ever-shuffling greens.
"The Desire Quintet I"

by Karen Bulthuis

a breathing in your presence
I rested tangled tired thought
and you saw truth and truly me.
I trembled profoundly deep and deep

and the adagio hiding
slipped between my fingers melody
and harmony awkward lovely.
beauty in the haunting

and thus I am yours awhile
because you moved this
some secret music and broke through
Psyche’s vulnerability

this shivering longing
seeing living breathing beauty you
aches as you have chosen not to see
truth and truly me indefinitely

"The Desire Quintet II"

by Jessie Glover

I reveled in the bliss of a
cancelled class and a cappuccino.
I touched a scratchy pen to the paper if
only for an excuse to claim the tattered sofa.
One eye on my so-called studying venture
and one on the doorway

My cheeks warmed, not from the liquid I consumed
but from the breath lodged in my throat
as I caught the half-glance and the raised eyebrow.

He tossed a greeting my way and settled into place
across the room. I sipped the rapidly cooling
drags of espresso and milk and licked my lips.
"The Desire Quintet III"

by Michelle Schaap

There exists an engulfing fire
Pulsing way down deep
Burning with such intensity
The enormity would make him weep

I desire to unleash this fire
Naked of protective walls
To stand transparent before him
Exposing all my flaws

Emotions subtle, soft, submissive
These flames without remorse consume
But can he return this passion?
Does he possess what was once assumed?

"The Desire Quintet IV"

by Cecily Squier

Oh you pretty thing
standing close, too near
What is this reaction, that I know you see?
I think I'm breaking a sweat the words won't come
the words don't come
my hands flap around, hoping they will distract you from
my blushing face, and the dirty thoughts behind it
Oh you smell good and you talk good
and at this moment, I want nothing more than YOU.
Not God, not wisdom, not those perfect nonexistent leather pants
Just you, in the lobby, basement, restaurant,
Library, car, lecture hall
Forever? Not sure
Right now? Hell yes
untitled polaroid transfer Beth "Turtle" Barber
"The Desire Quintet V"

by Sara VanderHaagen

Hunger rumbles soft lips burn to fill,
Stirring silenced by the warmth of
cream skin.
Desire fruit ripens, softer with each
kiss
Touch indulges neck and fingers,
mouth
Richness ripples down, strays now from
the need.
Decadence consumes the body,
Each part shivering with the ecstasy
of taste.
But thirst wills the soul's quenching;
A clay heart cries with cracking.
Feeble words spatter the dryness
Soothing parched ears for the moment
Soaks in each thought by the droplet
Arms groping for depth grasp an Other,
And, full, the core sighs its release.
"Proclaimer"

Luke Moore
"First train ride"

by Peter LaGrand

"Tickets please!" he shouted again in my ear - the conductor, decked out in dark blue, head drooping
Like a too-full flower in bloom.

He walked the aisle as if drunk moving more side to side than forward with fat body-ugly yet becoming as a tulip in spring

From the back now I see him and it is all clear from here he-with short body and big conductor's hat-is a fresh gerber daisy, vibrant and rank.
by jane c knol

the night i mistook Bella Bartok's voice,
someone said he made the first recordings on wax spools
engraved by sound. and record players still set down needles
to graph the song caked in an album's spiral channel

as if the shape of music could only ever be defined
as something missing-the empty torso of a violin,
your voice behind your throat's waxen hollow,
what you hummed that day in Covent Garden,
carving our initials into a bus stop bench--

and there's something missing at the edge of sound and touch,
the vibration a deaf girl learns to dance to, holding a radio in her arms
(his hearing gone, Beethoven lay down his head on the piano)

so we replicate songs from their casts,
like the tinfoil masks we once made of our faces;
like objects hidden in a paper bag (a pinecone, a rabbit's foot)
and surmised only by the dare of reaching inside;
like the boxes laid out before Christmas
that we shook at the hem of the tree

then again, i think how we found the Royal College of Music
by following the sound of a soprano rehearsing
in a room, it turned out, too high to see into
"anatomical study"

Nate Post
"eyes open"

by Peter LaGrand

he is quite a cynic
some say when they
see me shaking my head

(at the latest shooting
(but

i say that I'm really quite
optimistic, hoping for heaven and
living on earth, scribbling
bad poetry on the backs
of pages, trying
to obey though I
know that

In the end
I will always fail

( . . . . )

yet as i begin
each day
i pray
"Self-Consciousness is Exhausting"  
Josh Ippel
"Under the Influence"

by Peter Stroobosscher

The road washes back and forth
accommodating me while I drift along
at seventy-three blind miles per hour;
three-six cement posted streetlights per mile
and two measurable lengths of softly carved shoulder-

A cigarette writhes along the pavement
chiseling across the black night in the rearview
then it's shot in the air by a phantom car
prowling under the evening

My clouded eyes shift to catch their own glance
a glance that carries with it the weight of previous quarrels
and the copper coin slides forward in my mouth
sharpening the resin of its previous hands...

breathe
spit
breathe

and the terrible, silent, red lightening rings.
from "hard evidence" series  silver gelatin print  Mark Douma