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I remember my first pack of Desert Storm Trading Cards. [8 cards to a pack with one sticker included, wax packs were still normative-God rest their tactile pre-foil souls]. It was a Saturday afternoon situation in which best friend Bryan and I had no doubt taken a video game break to trot down the block for a thirst quenching slurpee.

We couldn't not buy the cards. The box had just been opened and all 36 packs were there-complete with plane, soldier and tank [coalition for peace]. With baseball card collecting as an impetus, the progression to collecting Operation Desert Storm Trading Cards [referred to as ODSTC's from here on out] felt entirely natural.

The endless combinations of slurpee flavors [blue-raspberry/Coca-Cola, Coca-Cola/orange, etc.] were enough to keep us coming back. And as the bell over the door chimed our exit on this specific occasion, we [two friends and a clerk] formed an understanding that a slurpee and a pack of ODSTC's would become the most rehearsed purchase duo to date.

I never questioned trading my first 'bombs-eye-view' card for a double of the 'Commander in Chief.' First, George the Elder was always worth more than some silly photograph taken from a fighter jet. And Second, my first George the Elder wound up with a Gorbachevesque slurpee stain on his forehead. [His market value and his public opinion bottomed-out as if I had click-clacked him in my bike spokes].

A photograph of an actual jet was another story. No sir would I have given up a 'Tried and True B-52' or a 'State of the Art Stealth Fighter Bomber' for a double of the 'Commander in Chief.' No one traded his or her stealth bombers. My fleet was seven strong and I was proud.

It was a playground wide phenomenon. One could trade 'Secretary Cheney' for two 'Scud Missile-B's. And for two 'Iraqis Surrender' you could put a 'These Colors Don't Run' sticker on your Trapper Keeper.

The war didn't last too much longer, but thanks to the 'Victory Series' we kept collecting long into the summer of '91.

Hopefully my ODSTC album is still preserved somewhere at my parents' house. I've been meaning to sell them on E-bay. I'm missing only one card, Saddam Hussein, and you'd think he wouldn't be so difficult to find. And now, I'm starting to wonder if card #88 actually exists and if they paid Hussein to use his image.
After Four Years
Micah Bruxvoort

after four years
of weekend updates
weather predictions
have-a-nice-days
i realize
if this is friendship
i don't want it

so i've stopped saying "hi"
and wordlessly walk on
forced to acknowledge that
i really don't know you
really don't know me
our moment of silence
marking the death of pretense

Some Black-Rimmed Art Critic
Micah Bruxvoort

some black-rimmed art critic
once said that georgia o'keefe's clouds
resemble monet's water lilies
noting i guess the flat, round quality of both
it made me think of frogs
frog-kicking in pondy murks
surfacing on precarious pads
to sing Sinatra-esque love songs
and i wonder
what new worlds await me
if i kicked real hard
and surfaced?
Buddha, Boston MFA
Nathan Sytsma

Your eyelids' insides
must open worlds to you,
like night
turning the earth
to ponder her core
in the hours when she
flies blind, unable
to stare off elsewhere.
Can you hear me?
Are you examining
your insides? Or
have you flown away
more fleetly than any
magic-carpeted fakir?
You know, if I saw you
in a church—in the midst
of dim light, humid silence—
I would probably venerate you.
I might even love you.
Those eyes of yours...
their freedom not to see...
I am transfixed.
Is it simply stillness,
then, that I worship?
Still, if I turn
to the molten core,
whose fingers will savor
the earth's rough skin?
Or let's say I fly away
to a new reality;
whose pupils will tighten
against the light?

Come Back
Mary Herrema

alone at two a.m.
wrapped in moonlit sheets
why am I so hungry?
CLARITY
Kim De Hoog

CLARITY
Clarity. Clear to a T. It is never a straight line.
It is a series of U-turns and spirals, stray marks and eraser smudges.
It's when you crinkle up your well thought-out thesis and recycle it
into a petition.
It's an endless string of nonsense hanging around your neck among
One tiny bead of truth.
It's a tangled web of disarray fumbling in the dark, detached and
unsettled,
uprooted and groping desperately for any other option.
Clarity. Clear to a T. It is never a straight line.

I walk beside the lake and ever so gently, sit on the fingernails of
God,
crouched and poised,
waiting,
watching my rookie dreams bobbing helplessly and lightweight on the
surface of swirling currents.
I sigh like a stalled out car and slowly work my fingers,
delicately untangling my thoughts.
Bullet-riddled with seed, my hope swims underwater with long and easy
strokes
while all surround sound loses its noise.
My absorbent eyes stare at nothing until the sun rolls belly-side up,
flat on its back and slides
lazily behind a thick curtain of gray ashen fog and in the middle of it
I perceive
one lone boat.

Then the train whistle cracks my ears from afar
and I clutch my anonymity and hurl it up where it clanks against an
iron sky
and lands back at my feet with an empty thud.
Someone tell me how to draw a straight line because I was born crooked.
Clarity.
All this time what I thought were leads were dead-ends and what I
thought were dead ends were actually one more corner to turn,
And when I did just that, old weathered fingers reached out to accept
anything that would make them feel human
And when I looked at the face I thought it was me,
but when I realized it wasn't I said
"I'm sorry"
But what I meant was
"I don't know how to fix this world"

Clarity.
One dime in my pocket and one dime short of a jingle in my walk.
Expectations are the damnest things you know.
I asked God to whittle away at me until I was bleached with splintered
flakes.
Running like a crazed hamster in this 9-5 wheel
Not once did I know where I was going, not once did I forget where I've
been.
But gazing around me what has become clear to me is that
I charged in here not as a comma but as a period
And now I crawl out not as an exclamation point, but as a question
mark.
I stared at the pavement
thinking the places God calls us are often the places where we least
want to be.
I stared at the sky
thinking there's no other place I'd rather be.
Tripped and trapped in a wordless faceless being
I peek at heaven with a small smile
Posing for the spilled stars and think to myself,
I envy the winged creatures I have seen.
A Small Case of Ergative Poems-II
James Vanden Bosch

IV. Aubade

Darkness splinters into streaks of gray,
And the night turns pale.
The morning brightens as day breaks,
And the night turns pale.
We thrilled at the coming of darkness;
Love awakened and grew.
But the day opened and love moved away,
When the night turned pale.

V. Ubi Sunt

Where is the love that formed in joy?
Where is the love that stopped?
Where is the heart that filled with hope?
Where is the heart that broke?
Where are the senses that jangled and frayed?
Where are the wounds that healed?
Where is the joy that kindled and burned?
Where is the music that played?

VI. Encomium

Darkness dims when words flash through the night;
Dullness spreads no more.
Virtue strengthens, stretches, swells;
Vice contracts.
Stupidity slackens, arrogance fractures,
Wit quickens, truth revives, resolve stiffens, the senses recommence.
Goodness grows when words flash through the night.
may 25th 2001
meredith kathryn-case gipson

how many pictures have i been in back of?
the passer-by, the wanderer behind
the main focus of little girls
holding ice cream cones, old men
buying fish at the seaside market.

i am the bohemian mid-westerner, the spikey-haired woman
walking the middle line
between the cosmos and your automatic flash.

i am the napkin poet, writing down your words
from the window of a coffeeshop chain
while you discuss the day's itinerary and if
you should've bought the keychain
two blocks down, where you know it'd be cheaper.

i am the riverside junkie, sitting on the shore
while you hoist the boat
and no one but your little girl looks
me in the eye to say,
i know, we are the same.

next time you take down the album
to show them your trip to seattle,
or graceland, or tokyo, look
for me.

i will be approximately four feet behind
you, i will not be
distracted, i will be
staring straight back.

The Tourist
Adam Petty

Each place is foreign.
I have no allegiance, and strangeness
is my only sovereign.
I am a daguerreotype impressed
with my every visit's distinctiveness.

No camera do I carry,
no record can I offer as proof,
save that which is wary
of outside illumination (poof):
my brain, like a dark room secured and roofed.

When I arrive home
I shall process my memory
to see what has become
of my life, and to keep me company
when I grow forgetful of all I've seen.
I'm at an airport in Germany now. I'm thinking of seeing our breath in the air as we said our goodbyes half a day ago, standing outside the hotel in Grand Rapids, the white winter stars sharp against the black sky. And now I'm here - a window, an early morning sky, a gray truck drives on the road below - and I am ok. You'll be getting lots of postcards. Be nice to them.

So, I'm sitting alone at this little table, in this little kitchen, in a little apartment, eating breakfast in Spain. How wonderful is that - to realize what you are doing, to enjoy so much the little things.

Barcelona - sitting on a bench, eating sunflower seeds from a vendor, watching all the people, writing you. In the middle of the plaza a little girl stands in the sun, her arms outstretched and bread crumbs in her open palms. Soon the birds light upon her and eat from her hands, until she laughs and they fly away; her face lost in the flutter of wings.

Last night we slept in some seminary on the outskirts of Barcelona. We walked around the city for awhile and on a back street we saw two girls get robbed. We had sangria at one in the morning, then rode the metro back to our bunkbeds. I lay and watched the orange, twisting shadows of leaves on the ceiling and still felt sad about the whole thing.

Twilight on the balcony - bats fly back and forth in the air between the buildings and the sky burns red and orange. Sitting on the balcony is one of the two things I do most here in Spain, the other being taking walks along the sea. Sometimes I get up for the sunrise - the Mediterranean has a good, sad smell in the early morning.

It'll be dark soon and the stars will come out. From my room I'll watch the Big Dipper over the courtyard, then I'll go to sleep. What are you doing these days?

Thoughts on travel: What traveling does for me is give me a seemingly new sense of something, which, I think, is the simple fact that I am alive. It's so close to us, in front of us, surrounding us, that it's often lost on us. Sometimes it takes leaving to know the place I left. Sometimes it takes moving to remember I am alive.

The funny thing is how quickly we get used to it all. Whenever you get the chance to see something for how vast and promising it really is, take it. When I first saw the Mediterranean I felt like throwing my arms open and laughing at how big it was. Now I just walk by it - it's not that I forget to notice, I guess I just don't have the capacity.

A rainy day. Puddles in the street reflect the streetlights and the gray sky. I just called my Grandma and it's raining at her house in Detroit too, so I think it's raining all over the world. Which, if it didn't cause flooding, might be kind of nice.

Ben and I went and bought a used bike together. We're taking turns with it. It's a red 10 speed. Today I rode out of the city to the west, past little houses and stone walls and fields of orange trees. I had rubber bands over my pant leg so it wouldn't get all greasy from the chain (no chain guard). I saw a horse. Then I rode back because it started to rain.

Granada - I thought of you as we ate sack lunches under a gray sky in Lorca's Park. Federico Garcia Lorca the poet, killed on August 19, 1936, in the Spanish Civil War. Brown cats walked under the hedges lining the paths in the park and the clouds threatened rain. I tried to think about Lorca but ended up thinking how long it's been since I talked to you. I'll try calling from a payphone tonight.

Sevilla - A soft rain. Orange trees line the cobblestone streets and the oranges lie crushed on the sidewalks. You can be lonely just about anywhere. Every day I patch up this hole inside myself with whatever I can find littered about my feet, and I plan on not doing that anymore. I think you've told me as much, that I shouldn't be so scared. I think that's why I send you these words.

Last night I played football on the beach with kids from four different countries. I learned how to say, "Throw me the ball," in French, German, and Spanish. The game was interrupted by a big, red, glowing sphere that began to rise out of the sea. After awhile we figured out that it was the moon. Beautiful.
3.21.01 Paddy O'Connell's is the Irish pub in town - you'd like it. Spaniards like to bar hop but we're loyal patrons. It's nice to be a regular. It'd be nice to have you join us - I'd buy you a pint or two.

3.23.01 San Juan - another coastal town on the train line. I rolled up my pants and scrunched my toes into the sand on the white beach. Then I sat too long in an internet café, waiting for God to send me an e-mail. I called you and left a message; I held the phone up to the air so you could hear the birds. Did you?

3.29.01 After dinner Alfonso (my Spanish dad) and I had a smoke and talked about the bullfights. I told him about the one I saw in Valencia - how Finito de Cordoba did very well with his second bull, and everyone cheered and threw down their wineskins. Alfonso likes bullfights. Me too.

3.31.01 Madrid - I sat in Dunkin' Donuts (American coffee & Boston Kremes), watching the evening spill onto the street. I thought I might be up for something exciting at night, but I wasn't. We bought a bottle of wine and sat around in the hotel room, watching CNN (in English) and smoking cigarettes on the balcony while the streets below teemed with people even at 2 and 3 a.m.

4.08.01 I went to see a bullfight in Cartagena but it got canceled. Then I missed my 2 a.m. bus back home. I've been sleeping on benches since then. At 7 a.m. the park opened up so I sat on the grass and watched people going into church, wondering why everyone had palm branches. Then I realized it was Palm Sunday - I had forgotten.

4.13.01 Leon - Easter. Our hostel only gave us one room instead of the two we reserved. 6 of us (in sleeping bags) slept in 3 beds. Thomas couldn't sleep so he did a headstand at 4 a.m. and woke everyone up when he fell over sideways. In the morning The Land Before Time was on TV (dubbed into Spanish). I lay in my sleeping bag and watched it, feeling content.

4.15.01 Astorga - Our first stop on the big hike we're doing for spring break. We begin early tomorrow morning. Today we watched an amateur bullfight, then stood on a hill overlooking the country we'll head into - rolling red fields leading to mountains. I've been looking forward to this for awhile.

4.24.01 So, the hike is amazing. I can't write it all here. We took naps in fields by rivers and in cherry orchards, we ate well, we drank wine, we hiked and hiked and hiked. We have a small side trip in a few days too. I'll tell you all about it when I get back.

4.28.01 We bought tickets for a bus up the mountain but instead of a bus a new Mercedes came and picked us up. A good deal for 500 pesetas - speeding around mountain curves in a fast car, watching as snow capped peaks surfaced over green pines. I was so sick of bread and cheese that we ate baked beans from a can for dinner. I gave the last half of mine to a dog.

4.29.01 We're stuck in a cabin high in the Pyrenees (20 kilometers south of the French border), snowed in actually. It was a long, wet, tiring hike up here, but the snow (in April!) is beautiful. We met some Irish architecture students who carried wine in their packs and shared some with us. A wintry descent tomorrow - if I don't make it down alive write a book about me, and let people know I died on some stupid hike and not a heroic adventure. They'll like that.

5.08.01 So, I'm coming back soon. I've been trying to come up with something final to say, but I can't think of anything. I've also been trying to figure out what I have: Some rocks in my pocket from the beach. A few rolls of film. Some wine corks. A backpack full of journals and letters. That's about it. My thoughts are a dime a dozen - thank you for offering them all homes.
White Circle
meredith kathryn-case gipson

Sara looks into the pierce point sun,
holds a cardboard camera to her ocean eye,
sees a pinhole version of the world.
Sara knows when she dies she will see a point
of light pierce down through the tunnel
of her life, and film clips will appear.
She will see glimpses of herself
catching yellow glowing fireflies,
and she will watch herself receive
her first menstrual period, an invisible
little egg in that bloody ocean,
the surprising contrast of epidermal layers, skin
beneath skin beneath skin beneath skin.

Sara wonders:
If she could strip a living person bare,
flank off flesh like yesterday's
underwear, if she could disregard
bones and muscle and hair,
would she see the soul underneath?
Could she put it in a mayonnaise jar
like all those fireflies?
Would she need to punch holes
in the lid for
breathing?

The pill drops its way through layers
of fluid, but Sara is not convinced
of its dissolution. Sara is still afraid
to make love; would she get
pregnant? How does a pill stop
time and God's creative hand?
Does a pill bar God
from coming to earth?
Sara worries-
what if Mary had been on it
when the angel came
that day?
Sara cries to herself in the cold bed.

There's a video of Sara being
born, a documentary without
sound. Sara sees Sara's head emerge
from Sara's mother's vagina. Sara
watches as Sara's mother's body bleeds
and opens itself for her. Sara holds
herself close as Sara begins to breathe
the air of this world, Sara's breath
gets fast, Sara takes a sip of tea, while Sara's mouth
and ears are cleaned of fluid. Sara cannot believe
in her own birth. She does not remember it happening.
Sara doesn't take her pill tonight.
Surrender
Andrew White

Winter white wraps the
Night, enfolds it in comfort,
And the light of the
Moon, magnified by snowfall,
Makes darkness an early dawn.

I look up to a
Blank sky and the falling flakes
Feel gentle on my
Skin. Not so gentle as her-
No, I think, not nearly so.

The wind flares up and
It pulls at the page in my
Hand, which I tore from
An odd volume of writings
By some pretentious old fool.

A page in my hand
To ward off desolation
In the bitter cold night.
When the wind whips up fury
Like I did once, in July.

And if I let go,
Let go of that single page,
Surrender to wind,
Will revelation remain
Instead of desolation?

It is consequence,
Is truth and form and...lovely.
I am half-won man,
Am ambling tragic. I am
Broke down poet and...alone.

Night Laughter
T. C. Avery

near, but ever far, and wide
as strands of silk or wings of floating
may-flies or sliver-light of stars
lies the beloved country's threshold.

And there, holding watch over lives
of children, the natives in fire white
pass knowing glances, watch,
and chuckle in the glowing night.
Jenny Scott/Royal Tenenbaums Series/oil pastel on paper/20x24 each
In the Basement
Peter Berghoef

Down below
in the basement
I was eaten
by your electric dog
(the machine that waits
behind furnaces and washing machines
to chew and swallow any open face).

Afterwards the sun was gone;
my shoulders sagged
as I walked home
past empty cars
and trees that knew my name.

One Valentine Nightmare
Ted Fackler

Fancy dining on a snowy night, walls of gold and red

Tonight, i thought i saw you in a crowded restaurant
Laughing and making small talk with a dark haired gentleman
It was your brilliant blue eyes that made me think it was you
And the way you sat in your chair, and the way you pretended to laugh at all his jokes
And for a brief moment, your smell intoxicated the room. You know,
That sweet little girl smell, something like orange and vanilla, the kind i used to say always reminded me
of flowers and summertime
Well, i watched you for a while, laughing, then taking a drink from your tall thin glass
Glancing at that dark haired gentleman like he was your best catch yet.
Questioning myself over and over as to whether it was really you, i took one long last look
That's when i walked away
Later, a friend of mine told me that you just stared and stared at that gentleman, until she said you couldn't
stare any harder
Laughing and kicking back, having the time of your life
Then you got up, pushed in your chair neatly, and walked away
And that dark haired gentleman just sat there, staring back across the table into space, thinking,
That you were the best catch he's ever had.
He stands there, “a minstrel man,” fire-blackened, with the fierce grin of thin joy carved permanently on his face. His unquestioning glee is nurtured in his success at denying his curiosity, at burying his desire to ask questions. His is a world devoid of books, devoid of questions, a world of averted glances supported by generations of fear. Bradbury’s claim that it was such a pleasure to burn could be true, but in a mere page or two, Fahrenheit 451’s main character rounds a corner on his way home from work and in an instant in which the odor of kerosene is swallowed by the fragrance of strawberry and apricot, bumps into Clarisse, his seventeen-year-old neighbor. Her was a world of "Why?", a place of danger and dissonance, and her academic curiosity was about to collide with his dull-witted apathy. She simply asks him if he was happy, and his thin veil of joy evaporates. So it is that later, just before Montag’s house is to be burned as required by law because he had been secretly caching and reading books, as the Captain Beatty jabs his rhetorical index finger into Montag's chest, observing, "She chewed around you, didn't she?", the reader suddenly recognizes that in this opening scene, this early encounter with Clarisse, the inciting impulse that fed Montag's dissonance was clear. She had asked him if he was happy, he was baffled by his inability to respond, and his world of carefully sheltered answers was about to collapse.

Some say that English 101 might work well as a gatekeeper, as one of those courses here at Calvin College designed to keep out those who cannot cut it. That claim might be true, but perhaps the reasons for that claim might not be what folks intend. For many incoming freshmen, the 101 experience is indeed rugged because of issues of grammar, syntax, and rhetorical beauty. Perhaps some have seldom been asked to read and write analytically. But perhaps this rhetorical journey is more daunting because it has the potential to "knock the fire hose out of their hands." Perhaps many young scholars arrive here on campus with minstrel grins on their faces and no questions in their souls. For these, the 101 experience is even more traumatic because it is an initiation into an exciting but traumatic journey, one that is not expected, one that perhaps had not been part of the high school adventure. Maybe Bradbury comes chillingly close when he, through the voice of that same Captain Beatty, cynically claims: “With schools turning out more runners, jumpers, racers, tinkerers, grabbers, snatchers, fliers, and swimmers instead of examiners, critics, knowers, and imaginative creators, the word ‘intellectual’ became the swear word it deserved to be.” To catapult from a world in which "intellectual" is a swear word to a world of "thesis" and "antithesis" might be the ingredient that makes English 101 seem like the gatekeeper that some claim it to be.

A central skill taught in English 101 is the proficiency with which one can consider an issue and articulate a thesis. The shaping of this thesis, however, suggests the presence of an antithesis. And this is the spot on the road where the speed bump might be most jarring. For all reformed Christians, the ability to recognize the antithesis is essential but essentially difficult; for some it is even threatening and can generate hysteria and a desire to grab the kerosene-filled fire hose. Some young reformed Christians have never seen this intellectual nimbleness modeled, and the journey into scholarship is made even more difficult. To confront the antithesis, to recognize its existence, is to suggest that the person holding the antithetical position might have arrived at it with some validity, and that his or her argument needs to be engaged. Out of that fear then, it becomes tempting to embrace the notion that the antithesis does not exist. And to enforce that response, antithetical scholarship can be denied, ignored, or even punished. Perhaps a fire of destruction needs to be ignited.

What we are left with, then, is the choice between two options. We can write English 101 curriculum that generates the rhetoric of a Hallmark greeting card, or we nurture dangerous juxtapositions. To do this deliberately, and with grace, is the blessing with which we can bless each other. This path is difficult. The fires we start are not measured in degrees Fahrenheit. But, oddly enough, the path of intentional dissonance is the true path to shalom, to peace, to happiness. Our success is measured by the number of fire hoses we can knock out of the hands of our future leaders.

At the end of the novel, Montag is reading from the book of “Revelations.” "And the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations." The leaf of a freshmen essay might contain such healing.
What Passed Between
Abram Van Engen

Technically, it was the air that came between them first, leaking in like a rivulet as the sand pulls apart. But then she blinked and a flake passed her lashes by, descending to the ground that stood between them now. The first he saw of separation was the snow, almost graceful, almost peaceful as it passed between. He did not move. He did not speak. He did not know what he should do.

As a boy, he had sat behind the white-flaked wire mesh of a makeshift confessional in a Catholic school where his lack of faith did not belong. His teachers spoke of grace, and so he went in search of what he did not know.

She turned and walked through the drifting snow to the car that would take her away.

He was scared then too, and when the priest asked him to speak, he knew no words with which to reach across the gap.

He traced the outline of her back, as it blurred into the snow.

He would have to go. Those who knew how to whisper in the dark past the white-flaked wire mesh were fidgeting at his back in their single file rows.

The door clicked open, and then he heard it close.

But when he moved to leave, he saw the priest press his hand against the mesh. "Peace," was all the priest could whisper through, the white mesh bright against the skin.

The car shook and stumbled to begin, but though it choked as if to go it did not move. He looked, and through the swirling snow he found her hand pressed lightly to the glass. It was all that she could do. In a flurry of white, she was gone.
maybe it always was
Neal DeRoo

A young man, uncertain, confused
re-reads a letter he's read
hundreds of times before
and tries to discover just what she meant
when she said sorry
while his desk is cluttered by the possibilities of a future
bright and cloudless....

...as rain washes the streets of the city of Brotherly Love
a single street light
glows in the fog of moisture
and one man, old, hollow--
cracked like the monument he first came to see
twenty-seven years before--
looks up from his seat
and, speaking to no one and anyone,
talks about what might have been.

*******

what happens in between is
the rising and the setting of the sun
with only a book to watch with me
as it slides slowly into the softened seas
and rises again above the horizon
to echo in the quiet parts:
"What might have been...What might have been?"
the comforting chill
of two small fingers grasping my hand,
the outer one resplendent in the moonlight
the inner one, oft met in anger,
bewailing itself to me:
"If only you or I could see."

*******

a black and white photograph
of a middle-aged man
whose eyes betray the reflection
of a white fridge with nothing on it
is hung up to represent
loneliness.
no one reaches out
no one brings him in

dialogue 26
The Curmudgeon Chronicles
Thomas B. Phulery

Thanks for your kind question about that word curmudgeon. I'll try to explain.

In the give and take of any healthy community, you'll generally find the curmudgeon, the grumpy one on the fringe of the circle. Though we often laugh at their witticisms, we just as often fuss about their cynicisms. “Can't she see the good in anything?” we say. “Doesn’t he ever do anything but tear down?” But where would we be without the grumpy ones?

Bandwagoners abound. Trained by advertisers and public relations professionals, most of us are willingly herded into one dubious venture after another. We nod agreement even before the sentences are completely uttered. Go along. Be nice. Perhaps we need the spoilsports who decline membership in the club. Perhaps we should elevate them to consultants of the first order.

My heroes are usually those who say no. I admire Annie Dillard, for example, in part because she said no to the “The Phil Donahue Show.” I admire Eudora Welty, who left her public relations job in New York City during the depression, because “It seemed too much like sticking pins into people to get them to buy things they didn't need or really much want.” And I admire Robert E. Lee who, penniless after the awful war, nonetheless said no to Hartford Life Insurance's $50,000.00 offer for the use of his name. I'm even proud of the Salvation Army for saying no to lottery cash.

It is simpler to be agreeable. Who needs a reputation for grouchiness? But the cantankerous have saved us from time to time. Although they are generally flawed folks, like the rest of us, full of contradictions, they manage to stand up when it counts. Remember Elijah, who said no to all the prophets of Baal and brought down fire from heaven, only to cave when Jezebel mustered the troops? He was a mess of a man who, despite himself, offered a fine example of voting against the status quo.

Academic institutions seem to attract more than their statistical share of curmudgeons. Maybe that's why the college experience is sometimes suspiciously viewed as immersion in cynicism. Despite the trickiness of having sometimes to turn their grumpy gazes to themselves and their too-frequent, Elijah-like, watery knees, they soldier on. I admire that. They teach their classes even when the studies seem increasingly marginal to the real business of the place. I once gave a final exam on the same day that a success seminar was setting up shop in the corridor outside the classroom. Departing students left via the “Dress for Success” exhibit. I wondered what Thoreau and Tolstoy would have made of that. I muttered my way back to my room by way of the “How to Order Wine” kiosk.

At my school, curmudgeonly colleagues have questioned everything from speed bumps to chapel construction. We have had demurrals from the fringes on curricula, overpasses, Christian school rules, and conference centers. Sometimes the objections are well-informed and useful. Sometimes not. Sometimes the protests tell us more about morale at the college than about any particular issue. Admittedly, the grousers seldom make any difference. Most institutions require extraordinary weight against the rudder to even slightly alter direction. Naysayers are categorized, tolerated, and ignored more than they are cultivated and heeded. Prophets are okay for passing in the hallway. Nobody wants a long car ride with one. Our loss.
Pine-Sol

Daniel Cooper, a senior BFA student at Calvin College, wrote, illustrated, and published this book in the fall semester 2002.

Pine-Sol smells like the Pine Forest.
...and therefore sells many bottles to the animals of the forest

...to make the forest smell more like home.
 Dialogue Contributors
 Volume 35, Issue 3, February/March 2003

Dialogue Contributor
Student/Staff/Faculty
Area of Study
A short statement about their work in Dialogue, art and literature, or life in general.

T.C. Avery [19]
-Student
-English for Secondary Education
-I was going for a minimalist piece with this poem. Read it two ways: with the title included and without. It's an expression of peace that I've felt at times, hoped for at others.

noah paul borgondy [14]
-Student
-English

Jes Brouwer [5]
-Student
-Undecided
-I took this picture with a disposable camera when I was in Guatemala last summer.

Micah Bruxvoort [6]
-Student
-Spanish major, Third World Development minor, Pre-Seminary
-For me, "surfacing" is those moments in life when you feel at peace with God, with life, and most importantly with yourself. It's that joy that you feel when you read an amazing poem, witness a powerful sunset, connect with a song, have a meaningful conversation with a friend, etc...when you encounter the beauty and grace that underlie life. "After Four Years" is about my struggle to find that trueness, that beauty, in relationships.

Erin Bryant [8]
-Student
-Art/English
-"Pull your hat down, baby, pull the wool down over your eyes, Keep a-talking, baby, 'til you run right out of alibis. Someday you'll account for all the deeds that you done. Well, there ain't no man righteous, no not one." -Bob Dylan, "Ain't No Man Righteous"

Raleigh Chaderdon [16]
-Student
-B.F.A. & Art History double major
-In the commercial photography business there are people whose sole job is to fold clothing perfectly. Others make beds and fluff pillows. For one picture of an object, up to four people and a $50,000.00+ camera are needed. The goal of commercial photography is to incite desire for the objects photographed. My photographs here in Dialogue reference a Gap-style mix of satire, desire, and beauty. Thanks to Sarah McMinn, who assisted me in this project.

Daniel Clemo [4]
-Student
-Business Communications major
-The photo I submitted is part of a "series" of photos that I had the opportunity to take on a recent trip to the west coast. These photos were taken in an effort to document my travels and companions while also attempting to capture some small fragment of the grandeur experienced in the wilderness. This effort to capture the beauty of God's creation has been an interest of mine for several years. The title of the piece [in Dialogue] is "Companions at Dusk". It captures the brilliant end to a day-long horseback ride into the mountains near the Canada/US border. The small dog in the picture accompanies my second uncle on all of his trail rides.

Daniel Cooper [28]
-Student
-B.F.A.
-This book illustrates the ridiculous nature of placing Pine-Sol in the forest with the forest animals.

Kim DeHoog [9]
-Student
-Communications and English
-This poem roughly gets at the process we go through in being shaped, misshaped and reshaped, much to our surprise. At least that was my experience during a semester in Chicago when every intention and plan I started off with slowly unraveled and I couldn't raise my hand to answer the questions I saw in anonymous faces on the street. Sometimes we can only reach clarity through a process of confusion, and that can be a really humbling experience.

Neal DeRoo [26]
-Student
-Philosophy

meredith kathryn-case gipson [12/18]
-Student
-Post-BA student in education, english and cas double major at Hope
-I wrote white circle just about a year ago, as a response both to a friend's painting, and to the personal and universal issues that surround birth control. sara is one of my personalities, and one with a very deliberately chosen name. i believe that life is bloody, controversial, and human. it makes me smile to read or write literature that reflects this reality.

Jessica Head [25]
-Student
-Art Education
-This work was not meant to be more than a study of forms from a book, but Bob Ross taught us to delight in those happy mistakes. This study came out so well that I decided to create a large acrylic painting out of it that covered an entire wall in my studio. I'd been in a rather narcissistic phase as I painted one self-portrait after another, so I was more than ready for a change. I think it startled people who came to visit my studio to see larger than life nudes on the wall. I led many innocent friends through the studios--past Diane's portraits, Ryan's "room," Dan's Pine Sol, Jenny's candy (mmm...), and Robin's mosaic--only to hear them exclaim, "There are naked people in your studio!"
Mary Herrema [7]  
-Student  

Emerson Hettinga [10]  
-Student  
-BFA  
-These are close-ups of my mother’s cancer slides, which turned out to look like land formations from an airplane.

Adam Petty [12]  
-Student  
-English major  
-This was written while I was in Germany for this past Interim, at a cafe in Leipzig. Thanks to Professors David Smith and Barbara Carvill for beating me over the head with the idea of being a guest in a foreign country.

Thomas B. Phulery [27]  
-Faculty curmudgeon  
-Laboring in obscurity to embrace the given. At work on a major study of Emily Dickinson’s third lines.

Jenny Scott [20]  
-Student  
-Art major  
-I drew this series for my final project in my drawing class. At first I was only going to draw my favorite character, Owen Wilson, because he is the sexiest man in the world (well maybe second sexiest...Conan O’Brien is definitely more bootylicious) but after I drew the first one I couldn’t stop until I finished the whole Tenenbaum gang. I thought the movie was hilarious even though the characters were so serious. I hope these pictures can make people laugh, even though they’re not really smiling, or maybe someday Owen Wilson will be flipping through this issue of Dialogue and see these pictures, and then he’ll want to marry me...yeah, that would be awesome.

Josh Speyers [22]  
-Student  
-History for Secondary Education  
-This is a picture I drew of my cousin Jonathan Hurst in Sydney Australia

Nathan Sytsma [7]  
-Student  
-English major  
-In visiting the Boston Museum of Fine Art this January, I found the Eastern art the most compelling. This poem emerged as a way of trying to understand the potency and peace that I felt while standing in front of one particular representation of Buddha, in a room designed to evoke the sense of a Buddhist temple.

-Professor, English Department  
-Areas of Study: Genres, Grammar, and Style  
-I’m still experimenting with the so-called ergative verbs in English, trying to determine the extent to which such verbs make it easy or difficult to write poems of a particular kind.

Abram Van Engen [24]  
-Student  
-English & Philosophy majors

Andrew White [19]  
-Student  
-English major  
-I’m trying to figure out what I really need. I’ve recently been wondering if I’m relying on some altogether useless or damaging notions. This is me trying to let go.

Matt Walhout [13]  
-Faculty  
-Physics  
-Prof. Walhout is on sabbatical in France this year. He took this digital image during a family trip to Alsace.

Dialogue is a student-run arts and literary journal that publishes faculty and student work (e.g. poetry, short stories, essays, plays, scripts, diary entries, sermons, recipes, memoirs, paintings, drawings, sketches, photographs, sculptures, video stills, installations, etcetera.) The editors and staff of Dialogue wish to nurture artistic growth at Calvin, as well as engage contemporary culture through images and words. We wish to thank all those who submitted work for the third issue. Thank you also to our readers. We welcome submissions and feedback at any time. dialogue@calvin.edu - 957-7079.