Editorial
Kevin Buist

In the fall of 2002, the campus was a buzz with the opening of the new Devos Communications Center. One evening, some friends and I were at a student organization meeting in the lobby of the new building. People were chatting, wandering around, eating pizza, and checking out the new facility. On my way out of the restroom, the one near the four plasma televisions, I saw two young students inspecting something on a wall near by. I realized they were discussing Horizon, a sculpture by Peter Stanfield, one of his two works in that hallway. Earlier I had seen Horizon, and the other piece Reflex, and I was very impressed. They are small, their slender horizontal forms made of finely machined aluminum, maple, plastic, and glass. Each piece contains an aluminum case holding a row of small glass vials, filled with a colored liquid, illuminated from behind by a florescent bulb. Each also features a smaller case, containing a paragraph of text. The texts describe intriguing phenomena pertaining to science, art, and spirituality. For me, these pieces are crown jewels in an already stunning art collection contained in the Devos Center (one of my other favorites is the Cedar Nordbye print in the basement, check it out). So, back to these two young students, presumably immersing themselves in the thoughtful little mystery that is Horizon. I began to eavesdrop, curious about their reactions. The first one said, “Hey, what is this thing?”

Now if anyone thinks that Peter Stanfield’s sculptures are ineffective, or trite, or even poorly made, fine, let’s discuss it. But listening to these students' reactions taught me a valuable lesson: a lot of people don’t want art. Plenty of people, almost everyone, want decoration of some kind, but not art. Some people don’t want to be challenged by what hangs on a wall, or is read in a book. If that’s you, Dialogue may not be the right thing to read. Entertainment is one of our goals, but we’re much more concerned with challenging preconceptions and promoting discussion.

Explore this issue of Dialogue, but don’t be frustrated if you don’t “get” something right away, it’s not dumb, it’s just art.
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04 dialogue
September mornings in our new apartment
Johan de Zoete

if I shuffle down the hall
in the early autumn morning,
past the Tom Thomson print
of Algonquin park in October,
to the kitchen,
where the sun slides
in-between the bamboo blinds
and caresses the plates, bowls and glasses
in our glass-paned cupboards,
for a glass of water
will you still be softly sleeping,
wrapped in sheets and sunlight
pouring through our bedroom window,
when I tip-toe back to bed?

Haiku for Jim Vanden Bosch
David Urban

1. Lesson
The Ergative Verbs
Relax together, resting
On an autumn day.

2. After
English 101
Comma splices reappear,
Grammar forgotten.

3. Racquetball: Second Year
Mentoring over,
True camaraderie begins;
Strongest shot still stinks.
Welcome to the endless chaos,
A Sestina
Brian Medema

Sestina: A tightly structured French verse form consisting of six sestets (six-line stanzas) and a three-line envoy. Widely acknowledged to be one of the most complicated of verse forms, the sestina originated in Medieval Provence. The six terminal words of the first stanza (1-2-3-4-5-6) are repeated in a specific and complex pattern as the terminal words in each of the succeeding stanzas (6-1-5-2-4-3; 3-6-4-1-2-5; 5-3-2-6-1-4; 4-5-1-3-6-2; and 2-4-6-5-3-1) the envoy’s terminal words follow the pattern 5-3-1 (and to make the form even more difficult, the other three terminal words from the preceding stanzas must appear in the middle of each of the three envoy lines in a 2-4-6 pattern.)

[This sestina] deals with “a brief history of time.” The six repeating words are: chaos, father, joy, wind, elf and star. I chose these words at random, and started writing. Some symbols:

chaos (lower-case ‘c’): evil in general, darkness, emptiness, etc.
Chaos (upper-case ‘C’): Satan
Father: God the Father
Star: Jesus Christ
Wind (upper-case ‘w’): the Holy Spirit
Elf: the spirit or soul of the earth itself.

Welcome to the endless chaos
Which defines this emptied world. Father,
Son and Holy Spirit spread no joy
Here; but listen to the gentle wind
And you may hear the whispering elf
Tell a tale of the long-lost star
This world once followed. A star
That checked the small black chaos
And allowed the noble ancient elf
To sing of the Love of the Father.
This elf-song the mighty holy Wind
Carried to all, and to all brought joy.
But short lived was this eternal joy:
The bright light of the righteous Star
Was dimmed by human sin. Wind
The ancient trumpet, Archangel! Chaos
Must reign for a time, so has the Father
Decreed. Woe to the broken world, the broken elf!
For the fall silenced the bold voice of the elf.
No longer is he permitted to sing songs of Joy.
But all is not lost. Hope remains. The Father
Promises man may again return to the Star,
Then the Sun will burn away the dark chaos
And evil will flee before the almighty wind.
But can man withstand the powerful Wind?
Will the Spirit’s might destroy the elf?
The Son crushes the head of Chaos
And the whole world rings with joy.
The serpent has claimed many, but the Star
Leads the wise on the path to the Father
All that is good has been brought to the Father.
The Righteous were sought out by the Wind
And the Justified were gathered by the Star.
All that remains are the empty world of the elf
And silent whisperings of half-forgotten joy.
The planet has been discarded to vile chaos.
But soon the Father will redeem the elf
And to the Sanctified the Wind will bring joy.

dialogue 07
Untitled, Juan Garcia

08 dialogue
A Farewell to the Ghost of Christmas Past
Kate Block

Back to the waves, in and out like the gentle breath of someone sleeping. Toes dig into the sand.
...cold and grainy and wet.

She had skin that smelled like the white hydrangea bushes in his parents' backyard next to the fence—and the breeze would wander through them while they sat on the porch, sweating glasses of summer lemonade in their hands—she'd walk the cement railing barefoot like it was a tightrope, smiling at him with her eyes.

A car drove by with the radio far too loud. He cursed quietly and took a long drag from his cigarette. Held his breath and licked his lips, tasting salt and smoke there.
her hand would find his—their fingers laced together like zipper teeth.

The wind tugged at his jacket and tore a sob from his throat. He ran the backs of his hands underneath his eyes and shoved them into his pockets.

He kept tearing out the sutures...
...she was constantly shaking her hair out of her eyes and she would clear her throat when she was nervous...

The moon's long fingers cut through the clouds and grazed the side of his face.

—the words came while snowflakes still clung to their clothes and eyelashes—her cheeks, stung by the cold, red against the glowing whiteness of her skin and the tangled brown of her hair—his hand had drifted so softly across her neck—like floating over piano keys, dark on light—

His head was a mess, searing hot pain like a knife drawn slow across his skin.
...red-rimmed eyes and last goodbye haunted him—he had pulled his hat down over his face, choking on his words—and something hanging in the air had shattered into tiny crystalline shards—she had cried when she thought he was really gone.

And it came like waking from a nightmare. He was shaking and he couldn't catch his breath. Oh, God.

he was still in love with her.

The blood rushed out of his face and pooled in the backs of his hands, draining to his fingertips...

he swallowed twice. His lungs, immersed in stale, twice-breathed smoke, ached for a singular, clean breath.

the pink callous on her right palm—she held her chopsticks in her left hand but her fork in her right—she tasted like the july raspberries that he would press between his tongue and the roof of his mouth, sweet and...

everything ran together like bad paint, blurred indistinguishably...

He was shaken violently from the haze of this non-committal ambiguity they called a friendship, an ugly, veiled carelessness. He shoved his way through the swirling mass of sweaty extras, packed tight like pencils in a box—his heartbeat lagged behind the throbbing bass line—

Then the relief of the cool porcelain, white against his splayed fingers...there was no prick of hot needles behind his eyes—as he would have expected—only a tremulous electric current that passed between his temples like a radio wave...

all her pretty words that had fallen in whispers like lace around his ears, all her feather-light touches, skimming across his shoulders and along his spine—
He felt his stomach turn... he could taste blood in his mouth.

Words—fact or fiction, depending upon who he asked—clawed at him—easing him into their metallic embrace... he needed to purge himself of her, box her up like Christmas decorations on the second week of January.

He watched the saline roll off his nose and drop into the toilet... rings pulled outward, as their catalyst melted into anonymity—

this was too fast. Everything was unraveling

He clutched at the threads...

the rain, her wet face and hair that first night... he had given her a dry t-shirt to put on... she had stepped out of his bathroom, haloed in the too-yellow glow—one hand on each side of the doorframe... she mumbled something about looking a mess and he felt a velvet crush in his chest—his hands had gone to her cheeks and threaded themselves in the damp thickness of her long hair, dirty blond and curling at the ears... a thick strand slicked across her forehead—a chocolate streak against the moon white of her skin, trailing over one eye... ragged end resting on her cheekbone—the floor had creaked as they stepped into each other tentatively—hip bones meeting somewhat awkwardly—she had smelled faintly of sandalwood and cinnamon—and he had pressed his mouth against the wet ribbon of her eyebrow...

He wrapped this inadequate remnant of her around himself like a too-small winter coat.

And she was a supernova—in the space she had left when she burned herself out of existence, there lay a great yawning cavern, opening up somewhere below his heart... swallowing him up from the inside...

her lips hovering inches from someone else's mouth—the haunting sound of her laugh winding through the greens and browns of a night in the forest—the sky was thick with stars.

New ghosts rose...
Red Clay
Susan Meyerer

Red Clay clings to my moccasins
I have passed this way before
It was the Spring of the Buffalo
And you held my hand.
I have passed this way before
When the lavender winds blew my hair
And you held my hand
“Shh…” you said, “listen to love.”
When the lavender winds blew my hair
The Raven sent a feather
“Shh…” you said, “listen to love”
I brushed your hair with my tears.
The Raven sent a feather
To Dance in the falling rains
I brushed your hair with my tears
The acorns of my past forgotten.
“Look at the mountain,” you said
It was the Spring of the Buffalo
When I last saw you walking in the rainbow’s twilight
Red Clay clung to my moccasins.
Hanging Back
(for Rev. David Morrow)
Nathan Sytsma

Sole slipping on algae-slick stones,
I venture into the outskirts of current,
the subdued 'burbs of river-sweep.
Should it surprise me that already
you've slipped off your sandals
without so much as testing the waters?
"I find myself here, but I feel like I'm still waiting,"
picking my way gingerly among words
made slippery by college lecterns.
Your Ulster lilt, though, always strikes
like a skipped stone that refuses
to stop making waves--like the last time
you waded down before me,
drowning your swim trousers in frigid lake
before lowering me like a coffin
in the name of the Father and of the Son
and of the Holy Spirit. Did I find myself there,
or should I feel like I'm still waiting?
It's not as if I can now see flinging myself,
underwear and all, into glacial melt.
Then again, I could trust your claim
that my knees have already given way,
that against the sun you see me bobbing
down the main drag, rising and rising again.
Taste of Heaven
Elizabeth Gonzalez

Hearing your laugh
Resound and echo
Laying in the grass
Watching your eyes light up, and
Sparkle
Realizing
My thoughts are better left
Unspoken
Leaving time
Unshattered
Without restraints, my lips would meet yours, but
Worlds lie between us.
Lazy summer afternoons
Prized moments
Spent with you
Laughing
Imagining
Comprehending
What heaven must be like.

Of the Epicureans
Ann Reilly

Behind my spectacles
Are the words
Of the Epicureans
Dropping into my
Mind, like coins
And rattling about, like
Loose change in my
Pocket.

“Wisdom
was conceived as an ideal
after which one strives
without
the hope of ever
attaining it”

Bending the walls
Of my understanding,
I try to hold this
Thought. I strain, as if
Reaching for a shiny
Quarter behind the
Rain gutter screen.
We Were Seven
Mandy Suhr

When I remember my childhood, I don't remember me. There is no me. I remember my mom: her red-framed sunglasses, her rows and rows of fantasy stories, and the day she left my dad. I remember Ms. O'Connor's skinny paint brushes and a flower-shaped mole in the middle of her forehead. I remember Mrs. Johnson's smile and the jar of jolly ranchers on her desk. I remember my grandma dancing with my mom between the dark wood colonnades in our dining room. I can picture a shelf of Barbie dolls in what must have been my old bedroom. But I don't remember me.

I hadn't remembered Jenny, either. I hadn't remembered her, that is, until she walked into the restaurant. I was working the day shift yesterday when a girl who simply was Jenny, or Jenny twenty years ago, I suppose, came in with her dad. I was wiping down a booth, but I froze the second I saw her. I had known this girl, Jenny; I remembered. This Jenny from yesterday must have been about seven. My Jenny was seven the last time I saw her. Everything about this girl screamed the name I hadn't held in years, Jenny: the way she held her chin up and slouched her shoulders; the way her eyes seemed a hundred years old in her child's head; the way she looked with this intense wonder at a girl who sat across the restaurant. This other girl was dishwater blonde, wearing pink shorts and a pink tee, and holding both of her mother's hands as they whispered across the corner table.

The girl in pink is one of my regulars. Her mom brings her in every Thursday afternoon, and until yesterday, she was just a regular customer. But something about the way this Jenny looked at this little girl brought me back to places I never knew I'd been. And she brought me back again to the day my mom left Clarksville, with me.

I was so entranced by this Jenny in the restaurant that I found myself sitting in the booth I'd been washing, elbows on the table, and eyes on her. I could not stop staring. My mind started whirling with these memories that kept coming and coming, as if this Jenny was pouring them out of her sad eyes to fill the room. First, I went to Mrs. Johnson's second grade classroom. Instead of a jar of Jolly Ranchers or Mrs. Johnson's smile, I saw a bulletin board that must have been buried, but burned in perfect detail in my mind.

On the bulletin board, there's snowman, snowwoman, and snow baby cutouts in clumps of snow families to make up the border and carbon-copy paper with solid lines and dotted lines on a blue background.*Jenny* is scrawled atop a page that's stapled to the bottom corner of the board. The rest reads, "Favorite food: pizza and bananas, but not together! Favorite color: purple and black. Favorite song: Ice Ice Baby. Best friend: Leslie." And she's scribbled in the bottom margin, "She's NOT a Lezzy! She's a real princess!!!"

I jolted at the forgotten words the kids had sung to their sing-song tune.

In my mind, the kids are singing, "Leslie the Lezzy, Leslie the Lezzy." A chorus of them surrounds a tire swing that must hold me. Jenny silently walks through the crowd to the center. Then everyone is spinning and everyone is screaming, and the kids are yelling "Look at that!" "They're gonna spin right off!" And Jenny is laughing. Everything is spinning and spinning.

And my mind was just spinning non-stop, and I found that I'd been pushing the rag in circles over one spot of the table where I sat. I stared at the Jenny in the restaurant. I wiped the salt and pepper shakers and the cream and sugar container, unable to look away from this girl as I performed the mindless tasks. I started washing the rest of the table when the chorus came back, this time for Jenny.

Jenny, my Jenny walks by the lunch lady without giving her a ticket. She never gives her a ticket. She sits at a table with her tray, and someone asks her why she doesn't have lunch tickets.

"I just don't need lunch tickets," Jenny says.

"Yeah, you can't afford them 'cause you're family's so poor 'cause you live in a sewer," a boy whines at her.

Another joins in, "Yeah, and you smell like a sewer, too."
And a little girl in pig tails sings, "Her hair's all slimy, like a sewer rat." "Sewer rat, sewer rat, sewer rat," all of the kids at the table joining the same sing-song tune they sang at me.

Then Jenny's outside behind the school at recess and no one's around and she had turkey and gravy potatoes at lunch and she's throwing them up now because she has spun too much on the tire swing so she's sick and it's the only time Jenny's ever thrown up at school and she says no, she doesn't need to tell a teacher.
No, she'll be fine; she feels better now. No, she's a tough girl; she'll be fine.

I was in the booth, wiping the dishrag back and forth and back and forth over the clean surface as the scene faded. Finally, the memories stopped spinning. I was still staring, but I don't think the Jenny in the restaurant noticed. She looked at the girl in pink, or out the window, or at her dad. I walked over to take their order.

"We'll take two hamburgers, two fries, and two sundaes, please," her Dad told me, and she gave me the slightest smile as I turned to go.

Would this Jenny just sit there, letting all of those kids tease her? Why did my Jenny do that? I wondered. She was a strong farm girl. She could have at least pushed her way past them if she didn't beat somebody up. They picked on me, too, sure, but only for my name, and I usually got out of it. To Jenny, they were plain cruel, and they would keep going and going while she just bent her shoulders under the weight of their mean words, as if she deserved it. Maybe she thought she did. But why would she think that? And what was Jenny like now, the twenty-seven year old Jenny? I wondered. I mean, I am not a lesbian, and I didn't even remember the nick name, so there wasn't too much damage done. But what about Jenny?

I was sort of on my break then, but it was three in the afternoon, so Hannah, the hostess, and I were the only ones on. The girl in pink and her mom were just sipping malts, and this Jenny and her dad were the only other customers in the place. I grabbed a glass of coke and my Women Today magazine from the back and returned to the booth I had cleaned. I tried reading an article about some writer I had never heard of, but halfway down the page I stopped hearing the words I read in my mind. Instead, I heard my Jenny.

She's telling Ms. O'Connor and a class of kids about her cow's tooth. The show-and-tell stool props her up, but she hunches her shoulders so far that she looks like she might fall off. She's saying something about crawling through a feed bunk and how cows have four stomachs and how much hay they can eat in a day. She doesn't have a paper to read off of, but her words are coming out smoothly, though I can't quite get into their stream as it runs through my mind.

But then she says, "It's your turn Leslie. Where's Roller Blade Barbie?"

I dropped the magazine, I think. I don't remember. Someone said, "Orders up," so I got my mind back on burgers and fries. I grabbed the food and brought it over to the restaurant Jenny and her dad.

He said, "Thanks. Looks great."

And then the little Jenny at the table spoke to me, "Yeah, thanks."

I make my way back to my booth.

In my mind, my Jenny is saying "Thanks" because someone hands her a Barbie to play with. She puts the Barbie in a pink Barbie convertible and drives it around in circles on the floor in front of a shelf full of Barbies.

My Jenny asks, "Leslie, do you make your Barbies 'do it'?"

I took a drink of my coke, trying to clear my head, not knowing if I wanted to remember or not. My mind didn't give me a choice. I didn't even look at the Jenny in the restaurant anymore. I don't think I looked at anything. But my mind raced from scene to scene so that I could hardly keep up:

I see a note from Jenny: “Dear Leslie, Thanks for asking me to your house. I love your house. I love you. BFF (Best Friends Forever), Jenny. P.S. Thanks for not getting mad that I don't take you to my house”; the backseat of a blue car and a magazine on the floor, a naked woman looking up like a cat about to pounce: the day we missed the bus and Jenny's brother took us to my house; Jenny's brother making her stay with him longer so they can go for a drive; Jenny braiding a friendship bracelet that's safety-pinned to her jeans as she sits on my steps, saying that I'm the nicest person she knows and how she's glad I have a happy family 'cause I deserve it; Jenny rolling down the hill in my yard, laughing; Jenny saying, "I'm not ticklish, so I just get to tickle you 'til you blow up from laughing so much"; Jenny on the stool with the cow's tooth; Jenny at the county fair, telling me to pet her calf: she won't bite; the brown calf's sad brown eyes looking up into mine; Jenny sitting on the show-and-tell stool in front of Ms. O'Connor's class.

"Come on, Leslie. It's your turn," my Jenny says again.

I had to get some air. I figured my customers would be fine. Hannah could get them something if they needed it. I looked at the restaurant Jenny one more time before I went out just in time to see the girl in pink look back at her. The girl in pink and Jenny both smiled at each other for a second before turning their eyes back towards a mom and a dad, respectively.

continued on page 21
Waiting, Mary Horning

20 dialogue
I took my coke and my Women Today out the back door and sat on the cement steps. I didn't know what to do. I mean, what do you do when you meet this girl you haven't known in years, but you don't really meet her, you just remember her? I sipped my coke and thought about Jenny. I didn't feel like reading the magazine anymore. I watched some ants racing across the sidewalk in miniature rivers. I tried to remember how to make a friendship bracelet. But my mind wasn't done with Jenny. She hadn't said goodbye. The last flood of memories poured over me as I sat there on the step:

My Jenny is sitting on the steps to my house, but she's not making a friendship bracelet this time. She's sitting with her chin propped up on the knees she's hugging to her chest and hunching her shoulders around. Her eyes look sad, disappointed, and a little younger.

The scene changes and Jenny's eyes look old, intense, and unafraid, staring into the day as she wobbles down my street on a purple-streamer, too-big, banana-seat bike. She's riding a real bike without training wheels for the first time. She lives in the country on a farm, so they don't have nice pavement to learn on or time to ride bikes. She is learning fast, though, shaking, but not falling over.

And then a scene I have remembered before: my mom sitting on the floor by her bed, back pressed against the blue wall, bruised, wet face, phone in hand, and breathing like the breaths are shaking up through her from the floor: She's talking to my grandma, but hers is the only voice in the room:

"Thank you," she says, "Yeah, I'm sure he's gone."

She pauses. Then, "Thank you, mom. You don't know how much." Grandma must cut her off because she stops again.

Then, "Okay. We'll see you tonight then." "I love you, too mom. Bye."

Jenny is there. She's listening to my mom talk. She sits on the floor across from my mom like she belongs there. She looks sad, like she should, but also proud. I can tell by the way she holds her chin out, just like she does when our teachers praise her schoolwork.

She was proud to be there, I realized as I sat on the steps watching the never-ending flow of ants, with me. I was there.

I am there. I am sitting right up against Jenny's side, staring blankly at my mom. We watch her. And the seven-year-old me notices that Jenny's eyes are much different than they had been a few minutes earlier when we were riding my bike outside. Jenny was riding a bike for the first time that day. She looks at my mom and I see her seeing for the first time the bruises that were always there, just darker now, and the missing chunks from her chocolaty brown mane, and the way her shoulders bend, too. As she looks into my mom's face, Jenny's eyes get younger.

Then Jenny is sitting on the steps to my house, hugging her knees and looking at me with eyes that have grown sadder, disappointed, and a little younger because she has seen my mom sitting against the blue wall of her bedroom.

My mom is packing. Jenny's not saying much as we sit on the steps, but she's staring into my eyes, creasing her brow as if pulling me towards her. It's like she wants to suck my suffering into her soul, to carry it for me there. I sit there not knowing what to say, crying without noise, looking back with passive eyes.

"I don't think my bike will fit," I say.

"If your grandma doesn't have one, then that's the first thing you should get," Jenny says, "and it better have streamers, but pink, not purple. Pink's your color."

She puts her arm around my hunched shoulders, adding, "And your mom better bring all those princess stories."

Then we just sit, hugging our knees and staring alternately into space and at each other until Jenny's dad pulls up into our driveway almost running over my bike.

"Take my bike. It's not gonna fit, and we're not coming back," I plead with Jenny.

But Jenny won't take it.

Instead, she stands on the step and pulls me up for one last hug. I look in her eyes and know she won't change her mind about the bike. She squeezes me and smashes her cheek into mine to whisper her last words to me,

"Don't worry, Leslie. I won't tell."
Rainy Awakening
Elizabeth Gonzalez

My eyelids
Flutter gently
To the sound of morning rain
Meshing with bassoon and percussion
An unusual symphony
More beautiful than a recording
Mixing and morphing
Changing parts and tone
Perfection, in its rawest voice
Gently rouses me from my bed
And sets my thoughts
To roam and play among the puddles
Inviting images
Of green leaves dripping off their
Silver translucent jewels
That fall and shatter
On the brown earth
Caressing the grass.

Another Self
Robert Zandstra

I was cold when it was just past two--
Cold as I'm sure I'd wake up next morning.
Figured I'd looked like James Dean
as I crossed the sidewalks, fields, puddles,
With my shoulders hunched and hands hidden,
Bits of water dripping from my oily hair
to my nose into the pit of the Port-a-John
on the athletic fields. From the hole,
I could feel the night air stench circulate around me,
And the wind droned past the gaping mouth
of a beer bottle that pointed toward me.
I may have easily discarded it in the restless, dewy grass
There at the edge of the sidewalk, its contents
Already inhaled by another me.
I've given in again. I was the last on my block to get a VCR. The DVD was a struggle. And now I actually have a mobile phone. Next I'll probably wind up with a pooper-scooper and a flat screen television. Who would have guessed? I worry about what Henry David Thoreau would say. He was big, you remember, on asking about the means and the ends. Folks of his time were boasting about the transatlantic cable, the latest in wondrous technology. Thoreau scoffed. The first message to come across the cable would probably be something about the Queen having whooping cough, he said. Improved means to unimproved ends. But the family thought I ought to have this little phone with buttons too small for my bluntish fingers.

You've noticed this jump in social evolution, of course. The ubiquitous plastic bulges clipped to belts and purses. Some of them even take pictures and transmit e-mail. You can purchase leather cases and accessorize. Check the wall in Radio Shack for marvels to accompany your phone, more choices than you get in the discount shoe store. One more piece of essential equipment to complete our electronic hermitages.

You've been strolling the mall behind the frenzied woman with the mobile phone clamped to an ear. You imagine someone on the other end trying to talk here down off the ledge. "Okay, put the shoes down slowly, and move toward the parking lot. No, don't look. Don't listen to the music. You can do it."

Have you had to change seats in the airport waiting area to avoid the intimate details of some guy's loud conversation three seats over? What did we do in airports before the phone and CNN on omnipresent monitors?

And the car talkers. Who would have figured that so many of us have so many friends to phone up? Now we can multi-task indeed—watch the DVD on the flip-down visor screen, conclude the business deal via conference call, sip the coffee, and there's driving in there somewhere, I guess.

When I picked up the latest technical wizardry, I slipped it into my pocket and sheepishly joined the 21st century. My first caller was a wrong number. Thoreau laughed out loud.

I'm tempted to just carry it with the ringer off. I'd be like those earlier purchasers of the bulky car phones that required antennas and a console unit. Apparently, the fake versions were quite popular. They performed that most American of functions. They gave the appearance of sophistication and with-it-ness. It was all about the looks. I wonder how many of our flip phones we could do without? Thoreau again: "A man is rich in proportion to the number of things he can leave alone."

But cell phones are more than status, I know. These miniature marvels can perform real miracles in menacing moments. Now I never have to be out of touch. I'm no doubt safer. But it seems dangerous, too, somehow. How frightening never to be truly alone.
An Ascent
Nathan Sytsma

Maybe the last time we really understood one another—if such a thing were possible—was when we knelt on the office carpet, seeing dimly through that glass wall the radiant green creature whose half dozen jointed crutches propelled it to glory, eight miles high and climbing fast. We pressed so close, you remember, we could make out its limbs' barbed hackles as it tackled the chrome overhang between one sheer face and the next—so close that I peered into its pinprick eyes and wondered if it thought me too, wondered what would compel me, in the pulsing prime of life, to forsake all others and cleave to the climb, the only one with breath naïve enough to ascend a fork-tongued ziggurat. We may have envied its fearlessness; we may have feared its innate amnesia. I think, at least, we dared not think what would happen if it fell.
Ash Wednesday at the Abbey
Nathan Sytsma

We only live, only suspire
Consumed by either fire or fire.

--T.S. Eliot

At the still point
of the solar turntable,
fire. Or so they say.
In this farm-turned-monastery,
February fingers-joints

slow, their wrinkles creaking
in the cold—sky like paper
across the window frame,
no clouds to be distinguished
save tents of mist leaking
from a vent to heat half-tame
deer, stark trees, snowed fields.
In this still season, seeking,
I find it hard to believe
in tongues or orbs of flame.
The sour-milk sky blanches
memories of flame-rose sunrise;
my white-creased fingers
barely remember once,
while tending palm branches,
being burned away to the bone.
The Night is a Mystic
Elizabeth Gonzalez

There's something beautiful about the night
When it wraps around the corner
Like a black panther
Stretching its velvet paws
Silently padding into the darkness
Winding around the window
Until you only notice it
When it has curled up
To rest on your feet;
Smooth as alpaca, combed silky soft
Like an old friend
Coming to visit after many years
Resting their hand upon yours,
Is the touch of the deep.
Raising the hand that held yours to gently brush the tear from
Your ashen cheek
The night is a mystic
Gently teasing as to what tomorrow may hold
How it romances your vision
'Til the sun seems too bright and glaring
And you find yourself fonder of the gentle night moon and
Her loving caress.
Sushi, Heather Luimes
28 dialogue
Contributors

Adam Wolpa [01, 16,17]
Faculty, Art

Cover: Gilded Flicker, 2004. We live in a culture overtired with images. This collection of birds is an attempt at curating from the morass, questioning the responsibility attached to image production, and embracing the complexity of the ordinary. This piece comes from a desire to collect, catalogue, organize, and watch.

16,17: from Birds, 2004. These images, taken from an artist book in progress, are a natural result of my collage practice. The source book becomes a site for haunting juxtapositions, quirky accidents, beautiful shifts, and hybrids. This book has its own exquisite history, maintained over years of excising birds for use in more lofty and serious pictures. This is residue and the absence of residue, vanished remainders.

Edward Westerhuis [04]
Student, Film Studies

I gave you my heart
can I hold your hand?
or should I hold your hair
while you vomit out my love.

Heather Farrell [05]
Student, Art

This arch and bell are part of a castle in Greece, which I visited during Interim.

Hendrik Johan de Zoete [06]
Student, Secondary Education

I like writing little poems that capture the way I am feeling while doing something and include the details that influence the geographical, mental, and emotional environment from which I am coming. But that sounds a little pretentious. Simply put, this poem is just about those early september mornings when I get up before my wife, take a leak, get a drink of water and kind of putz around the apartment for little bit while it is still quiet outside and the sunlight is soft. It is also a way of talking about love, I suppose, but in the form of an extended question.

David V. Urban [06]
Faculty, English

This haiku sequence flows from my delightful experience of being mentored by Prof. Jim Vanden Bosch during 2003-04, my first school year as a faculty member here at Calvin. I got the idea when I read a haiku sequence using ergative verbs that Jim had published in Dialogue a while back. My poems each address some subject in which he mentored me last school year: 1) ergative verbs (Jim explained this grammatical category to me); 2) English 101 (a self-explanatory and ongoing labor of love...); 3) racquetball (Jim deigned to be my partner. He always goes around asking people if they are "feeling strong," so I thought it appropriate to allude to his trademark question in this poem. The "strongest shot" that "still stinks" is mine, not his.)

Brian Medema [07]
Student, Engineering

Juan Garcia [08]
Student, Art

Zoe Perkins [09]
Student, Art

My highschool art teacher always said blind contour was about drawing what something really looks like. But really, it's about finding humor in every line.

Kate Block [10-11]
Student, Biology, Environmental Science

This short story was inspired by the poem "Nothing Gold Can Stay" by Robert Frost and by "Nothing Better" by the Postal Service. Hopefully you enjoy it.

Susan Meyerer [12]
Staff, Grant Proposal Coordinator, Development Office

Pantoum is a 15th century Malayan form of poetry. I lived in New Mexico for 26 years and this poem is written in celebration of the Native American culture that is so much a part of the “Land of Enchantment.” I wrote it for a friend of Apache heritage who helped me through a particularly tough time in my life. I thank him with these words.

Robert Zandstra [13, 22]
Student

Green Betsy
Betsy is the name of my little sister. She likes to paint for fun sometimes, so I thought I'd paint something like she might. Her favorite color is pink. The tear is not a tear of sadness, fear, or pain...
Another Self
The events in this poem took place on three different occasions during high school. They occurred at Calvin, the University of Illinois, and a certain, rather prestigious east coast university. The first two took place on Saturdays, and I had listened to Garrison Keillor’s *A Prairie Home Companion* on NPR earlier both evenings.

Nathan Sytsma [14, 24, 26]
Student, English

An Ascent--The redeeming feature of the DeVos Center: glass walls.

Ash Wednesday at the Abbey--The Abbey in question is St. Gregory’s, a Benedictine monastery located near Three Rivers, MI, which I find myself visiting each winter. Traditionally, the ash used to make the sign of the cross on congregants during the Ash Wednesday service comes from burning palm branches from the last year’s Palm Sunday service.

Hanging Back--David Morrow, originally from N. Ireland, pastors the church in which I grew up in Canada. He began to mentor me when, at the age of 14, I met with him for baptism preparation. Forty years my senior, he still manages to always seem one step ahead.

Elizabeth Gonzalez [15, 22, 27]
Student, Theatre

Writing about nature and relationships is a joy for me, and I like to incorporate memories with emotions. I find the best poetry to be that which is honest and descriptive, but still leaves much to the imagination.

Ann Reilly [15]
Student

Mandy Suhr[18-19, 21]
Student, English

Memories, for many, are triggered—or, in some cases, constructed—by photographs. As I haven’t many photos from my childhood, I miss out on many of my memories. I don’t recall exactly what triggered my memory of Leslie, a childhood friend, but I have remembered and imagined a great deal about Leslie and my own childhood through writing this story. Thanks to the professors who’ve encouraged me in this process and to Leslie, whose face I cannot picture but hope to see again. May God bless you girl, where ever you are.

Mary Horning [20]
Student, Art

Waiting for the metro, waiting for your ride, waiting to get on with your journey, whatever. Be patient in life, my friend. Just Be. Made with Prismacolor pencils and marker.

Thomas B. Phulery [25]

In the Spirit of curmudgeonly Silence Dogood, Thomas B. Phulery offers brief epistles for entertainment purposes only. Like Dogood, Phulery is a busybody. Unlike Dogood, he will not grow up to be Benjamin Franklin. In his day job, Phulery is an investment counselor.

Tina Jackson [25]
Student, Communications

Frankly, they’re just Christmas lights. But that works for me.

Heather Luimes [28]
Student, Art Education

Originally an art project for class. The fish is actually my pet fish named Freddie. He just kinda sits there until I feed him, then he just about leaps out of the bowl. That was my inspiration for this drawing.

Helena Wunderink [29]
Student, Elementary Education

I took this in Germany at the site of the partially completed Holocaust museum. "A deep distress hath humanised my soul" -Wordsworth

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*Dialogue* is a quarterly student-run arts and literary journal that publishes faculty and student work. The editors and staff of Dialogue wish to nurture artistic growth at Calvin, as well as engage contemporary culture through images and words.