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Dialogue is Calvin College’s student-run journal of commentary and the arts, published quarterly, including a music CD released in conjunction with the Spring Arts Festival. Dialogue is a magazine dedicated to enhancing productive discourses, nurturing artistic growth at Calvin, as well as engaging culture through images, words, and ideas. We welcome submissions of articles, reviews, essays, literature and visual art of every sort, as well as responses to Dialogue. Submissions, questions, feedback, and all other correspondence may be addressed to the editor at dialogue@calvin.edu.

Cover: “I’m Significant,” Hannah Piedt
Art, Nature, and the Detritus of Civilization
Robert Zandstra

I grew up on a rural Indiana farm called Arrowhead Farm. It lies in the drained Grand Kankakee Marsh. This area contains numerous sand ridges, former islands, which hold a multitude of Pre-Columbian artifacts, from primitive hand axes to finely crafted arrowheads and atlatl spearheads made of imported flint. It’s fascinating to imagine a craftsman or hunter casting aside a slightly defective arrowhead or watching a flawless one disappear into the marsh in the side of a wounded animal. Taking the time on many a windy, spring, Sunday afternoon to walk slowly through the fields with a few family members, staring into the dirt, has tried my patience but has also been an important part of my family’s relationship to our place.

This past Christmas break, I was walking alone on a neighboring farm and was shocked to find a layer of ground-up garbage (bits of colored plastic, batteries, a Barbie head, crushed glass, etc.) spread out over the entire field, glinting in the sun. It came from a Chicago recycling initiative in which yard waste could be put into “blue bags” to be ground up and spread on the agricultural hinterland instead of going to landfills. Unfortunately, non-organic garbage went into the blue bags by the ton and ended up on farms near mine, where it not only is decreasing soil productivity but will remain in the soil indefinitely, becoming an artifact like the arrowhead. Though neither was meant to end up in the field, an arrowhead seems far less out of place than a Barbie head.

Actually, the artifacts mentioned above served similar practical functions in their respective civilizations. Arrows killed animals for food. Some of the money used to buy Barbies and other similar plastic things is profit, which may be used to materially benefit people. A skillfully crafted and used arrowhead could be used indefinitely. Plastic toys may only be entertaining and distracting for a while, but they do encourage the indefinite spending of more money.

Like the artifacts above, good art can also serve a functional purpose: to grow people, though in a different way. The story shows cultural artifacts in relationship to the environment. Likewise, art also reflects the culture it comes out of, directly or indirectly, and culture is always nestled in nature. As cultural artifacts, the arts (not just visual art) always indirectly respond to nature. Historically, art has largely been a response to nature. The intentional integration of art and nature is evident from any neighborhood garden to Frederick Meijer Gardens to the world-famous Kröller-Müller Museum or the gardens of Suzhou, China to Calvin’s own prairie style architecture. Recently, many artists have directly addressed environmental concerns.

The Calvin community talks and does a lot about ecology, sustainability, sense of place, and stewardship. Consider the recently drafted statement on sustainability, the wind turbine to be built, and the work of ESC. The art and literature communities at Calvin have a lot to contribute to this discourse as well: thus, this environmental issue of Dialogue. Dialogue also did an environmental issue in 1976. (Imagine a 32 page advertisement for being a Christian hippie.) Much art in recent issues of Dialogue has dealt explicitly with humans’ relationship to both their natural and modified environments. Through various means, this issue focuses almost exclusively on such relationships. Hopefully this issue will provide a meaningful contribution.

The value and beauty of both art and nature often goes underappreciated: art because many fail to see its functionality, nature because no one can function without it, and many cannot see beyond this. Hopefully this issue will lead to a greater appreciation of both of these good forms of creation. Hopefully it will lead to a greater awareness of how the debris of contemporary life is being layered over various valuable cultural, agricultural, and natural artifacts. Let us hope that the fragments of our civilization that pass down into the future as artifacts may be weighed impartially in the balances of God, man, and nature and not be found wanting. The writing is on the wall, and it’s the artifacts contained in these pages.
The Unnameable – Fragment #1
Tom Mazanec

A hymn I sing which will break forth and rise like incense: “Holy holy holy LORD,” and echo to the stratosphere’s adored YHWH. But somewhere intercedes the cries and groans of God the Ghost, who then replies in epileptic fragments of the Word th’accoutrements so carefully adorned are burndt away in fires unknown and twice-ellipsing seraphim soar – touching the smooth bodhisattvic garment’s hem to cleanse my pen – the human fragile vessel – verse – pressed in schizophrenia – neither earth nor i can withstandbearunify blends of vision – hear me ΘΕ’ΟΣ ΘΕΟΣ THEOS THE–
Madroña I, Madroña II, Jo-Ann Van Reeuwyk

dialogue 05
Nude in My Peacock Mirror
Anonymous

I am this: simple earth, simple teeth,
firm skin, far eyes and slow land-
scapes; I am bright pulses, sudden
reds and soft darks upon light dermis.

Loaves well-risen and tender
islands awash in dark meadows.

I am gold and thinning, my widow’s
peak talks quietly of age and gravity

while in the peacock mirror I am brambled
and wild, unable to resist my blood’s

movement: the sudden tightening of skin,
the cool, slender hands of winter; such a life

and such a self, alive, and thus being—
simple root and simple tongue, blushing,

widening, I am quickened
by each flashing pulse
Salisbury Cathedral
a pantoum
Calen Rubin

We die with the dying
see they depart and we go with them
we are born with the dead
See, they return and bring us with them.
-SC, TSE

walking on the dead
blurred vision in the candlelight
the cold press of stone on weary bones
our words sing them softly to sleep.

blurred vision in the candlelight
buried in a silent tomb
our words sing them softly to sleep
in lilting tongues of flame.

buried in a silent tomb
icy fingers entombed in stone
in lilting tongues of flame
frozen bodies wrapped in quiet chanting.

icy fingers entombed in stone
the cold press of stone on weary bones
quiet chanting wrapping frozen bodies
walking on the dead.
Two workers dig a hole in the Kibera district of Nairobi, Kenya. Kibera is Africa’s largest slum with an estimated population of 1.2 million people on less than one square mile, an estimated 440,000 of whom have HIV. The slum was established in 1920 by the British colonial government. Most inhabitants now rent land cheaply and illegally from former Nubian soldiers. Layers of garbage have compounded to create a bizarre, artificial stratigraphy. People commonly throw their bodily waste into the streets, which is often referred to as flying toilets. This causes major sanitary problems. Digging pit latrines is one way to cope. Boards will be placed across the pit to give people access to the latrine. –TGV

Kibera Pit Latrine, Taylor Voss

08 dialogue
For a Forest Fire Fighting Friend
Anonymous

I think we both saw the lightning strike
the years of understory growth,
collecting intense and untended,
then burning high, like tinder on an altar.

You were quick to dig your line,
blessing others, you believed, like your predecessors
by refusing to surrender to the fire,
protecting all those human things at stake.

You stand now at the edge of the charred clearing
contemplating the work you must do outside,
mechanically returning trees to dust,
though not like the fire which, devouring
and cleansing, created the black ash field,
whose only work is to grow. And who knows
what may have blossomed, twenty seasons up the path,
when human eyes next see this place:
maybe yourself, a silent mother with a missing breast,
letting her child pick trilliums and drop them
for an empty robin’s nest, like the one
that now rests in one of the two thick trees
left standing near the center of the clearing.
Their branches stretch like shadows,
not yet touching, but their leaves soon will,
and their roots must mingle still beneath the surface...

Lest we leave believing we’ve been blest,
to cross ourselves with the ashes of innocents
again, once we’ve forgotten, ages hence,
our present vision of the searing fire,

I plant my feet here as a silent witness
to foretell the growth of coming days:
that lightning’s sure to strike the woods again,
and I won’t let you stop the fire then.
10 dialogue
Proven: The Grass is Greener
Anna M. Fongers

For the purpose of an upcoming advertising campaign, Real World Optics, in partnership with funding from FantasticArt Crayons, conducted a study in regards to the age-old idiom, “the grass is always greener on the other side”. Largely popularized by the children’s story of The Three Billy Goat’s Gruff, this commonly used saying makes the claim that what one doesn’t have always appears more desired then what one does have. In the conducted study, however, Real World Optics decided to try a literal approach to this assertion, conducting careful scientific study to see whether or not grass may appear greener than its actual shade of green when observed from a distance. Records from a number of experiments show that the ‘greenness’ of most sub-species of grass will, in fact, appear two or three ‘shade-levels’ brighter when viewed at a distance of at least twenty feet away with the dominant light source at one’s back. Optics claims, however, that this difference, although existent, would hardly be perceptible to the naked eye. That is unless, of course, the viewer happened to be wearing new Coloramp™ contacts, only available at Real World Optics until June 2007.

Titan Arum: Carpe Florem
Tom Mazanec

The Titan Arum, idle most the year,
Blooms bold but brief, then in two days,
With reek of rotting flesh, quickly decays,
Its beauty bringing but the slightest leer.

Triumphant, green, and tall, its virile tusk,
Is useless, impotent without a mate.
For all its might, it can’t self-pollinate –
In fifty hours’ time, an empty husk.

As with the Titan, so we too to earth:
Our buds have burst, and mortal stench now calls,
And second sun of youth hastily falls,
And crusted leaves will come of all our mirth.

So pollinate with me; we’ll raze the tomb
With pistils drawn and stamens in full bloom.
The Politics of Grass
Kaitlyn C. Bohlin

My stomach churns to remember my first experiences with the stuff. My mom introduced me to it. I could smell it on her sweaty skin in the summertime when she would walk through the playroom. I would be punching away at the buttons on my Nintendo controller, distracted with the focus any child prodigy knows, when suddenly and swiftly the stench would crawl up my nostrils and send my eyes rolling back in a nauseous trance. It made me dizzy. It made me ill. The scent of manual labor poisoned the air. My mom had just finished mowing the lawn, and the odor of cut grass mixed with gasoline and sweat had repulsed me yet again. This, my introduction, taught me the childlike instinct to stay away from grass; the scent alone made me realize that only certain kinds of people would stoop so low as to handle it, and I did not want to be associated with them.

But there comes a point when slumming is hard to resist. Thus, as the buds of my innocence withered, making room for adolescence, I found new rebellious power in my activities with grass. Amidst clapping songs about bullfrogs getting some hanky panky down by the banks, I would rip out fistfuls of the fibrous blades, listening to the struggle as their roots gave way. It felt good and empowering. It relieved tension. But it got me in trouble. Teachers scolded that we do not pull the grass out of the ground. And so the compulsive addict nervously obeyed the restrictions prohibiting her cathartic pleasure. I accepted the boundaries, like most children did, and gave up the weed.

It was only years later, while living in a small Spanish city, that I finally dared to question boundaries again. Perhaps the absence of foundational sources of personal identity and comfort (such as family, friends, American television, and peanut butter) made my lengthy withdrawal abroad so urgently unbearable. I missed that good old American grass. I missed its security, its familiarity, its accessibility. In Spain, grass is off-limits. Fences surround it with signs saying, “Toques el césped no.” Pets cannot walk, pee, poop, or copulate on grass, and same rules apply to humans. Only once amidst my thorough travels of the country did I find a patch of grass I could legally sit on. Lush and alluring, the green terrestrial sea pulled me to my knees with my face planted in the bristly blades. I breathed in deep, remembered my mother, and wondered, “How could I have been so wrong, so careless?” I vowed to never underestimate grass again.

Returning home to this country whose manifest destiny is sprawl, I anticipated something like a familial reconciliation with those jade blades displayed in front of every building. It was with great surprise, therefore, that passing home after home after lawn after lawn, I discovered seeds of resentment, even disgust, rooted within me against those perfectly cropped kelly carpets. There they were, the American lawns, purchased with pride, and cared
for by Mexicans. Each street endlessly lined with pristine lawns never touched except by the unenviable alien paid to push a cantankerous mower over them each week. All I had ever craved was sprawled out before me, yet the sheer ease, the lack of intrigue, the sudden careless surfet of grass deflated my fantasies of forbidden pleasure.

Chalk it up to the ritzy tinsels if you like. Perhaps I envied my white brothers and sisters powerful enough to avert association with the incriminatingly liberal amounts of spacious grass surrounding their homes. They had someone else—illegal and illiterate—to do all the dirty work for them.

In public places like parks, schools, and sports fields, those Kentucky bluegrass blankets seems respectable and modest, certainly friendlier than those ne’er-do-well upper-class types. After all, no one wants a private, woodsy, or perhaps even natural feeling invading the civic space. In America, we thank God that while we punch holes into our bank accounts, trying to make ends meet, we can count on local officials to pour our money into excessive lawn care services and sprinkler systems.

Oh, sprinklers! Great is your care for the lush saturation of our grass. Some people wait for drought until they water their grass. An admirably naive assumption. Better yet, though, are systems in which sprinklers sprits the earth when it’s pouring rain. This way the sprinkler water and the rain water can celebrate their nourishing the soil together!

You see, grass is democratic. It does not discriminate between rain and sprinkler, nature and institution. It sees water for water. Yet at the same time, grass brings out the variety in us all. It allows us to see where we belong. White collar? Step aside, Sir. No need for you to risk staining that clean suit with the scent of work. ¿No hablas inglés? Ay, perdón. Pues, aquí tenemos tu futuro. This is where you belong, and be careful not to track mud inside when you have the need for a bathroom. In fact, why don’t you just wait until your lunch break? ¿Comprendes?

I understand; grass offers the illusion of limitlessness. A college’s quad offers just enough grass to awaken my subverted addictions and temptations, but it does not push me over the edge. I get a grip, remember the boundaries, and breathe a sigh of control. And although grass accepts the rebellious stepper—a courageous explorer disinterested with boundaries of class and race—the rest of us prefer the path, a guide of passivity, compliance, and assured safety. We believe in mobility, no doubt, but prefer boarders and fences. Yes, grass is good. It provides the perfect American fantasy: limitlessness, order, and lower-class aliens to keep things clean. 对话
Freedom From Fear, 2006, collage, Adam Wolpa

16 dialogue
Untitled, The Nature of Invasion Series, Jennifer Steensma Hoag

dialogue 17
creation's chorus
Annalise Venhuizen

Trees straight as towers and firmly grounded
   Draw my gaze upward to the heights,
And, moved as by a mighty rushing wind,
   Arms lifted up in continual praise,
   They clap their hands.

Beaten mountain paths lead me forth,
   Guide my footsteps higher and deeper
To where dark, hard earth yields to lively moss,
   And stone breaks beneath pure, powerful surges
   That resound in triumph.

Amidst nature’s ever-loudening worship,
   My stiff soul softens, sienna to sage,
My heart of stone splits, spills out supple streams,
   A spoke of splendid, sparkling sun speaks still and small.

Knowing, I am still.

Sanctification
Dave Warners

Silently the cleansing shroud was born.
We slept the while, blindly unaware
Its descending glory. Dawn hearts mourned
As ivory-etched edges blew bare.
The transient beauty that had adorned
In such grace, now ripped, hurled without care
To earth below. Exposed and forlorn,
Our gray world ached for more snow.
Untitled Metaphor #7  
Jonathan Lovelace

Silence, like new-fallen snow,  
Is a beautiful thing in its season.  
It comes, like Portia's rain of mercy,  
Down from heav'n above to blanket –  
And, again like mercy, bless – us all.  
Unneeded words, for once not spoken,  
Richen all here by their absence,  
Cheering friends (and closer) all alike.  
Speech only in the heart, or with the eyes,  
Lightens both those who "speak" and those who see:  
As the white flakes blanket the ground,  
So silence deadens all unsightly things.

But silence, like snow in summer,  
Is a terrible thing out of season.  
It deadens life, stifling needed growth,  
For some things must be said –  
Almost as tender plants need human aid  
To break through hard-packed ground –  
And music needs must echo to our ears  
To salve our souls with balm.  
A healing tongue's unnatural idleness,  
Like killing frost, snuffs life from all that grows  
As the white flakes blanket the ground,  
So silence deadens every true good thing.
Dear Beth, Rei, Brooke, and Christy: These tea bags are stapled above my window because they weren't drying well in the kitchen. Love, Anna, Anna M. Fongers
the coin
anreilly

from the fountain ever
collecting lost coins, dropped pennies
i was taken—
pulled from water, spun round,
deposited between the Pagan
and the Prophet, a meager offering
for the coffer.

within the holy chapel walls
Pagan smoked clove cigarettes.
Prophet thought it smelled like
incense. i set my stinging eyes
on the gold cross lit,
by glorious morning sun
a glint to my eye, a
burn to my brain.

Prophet said bless
bent to kiss the holy likeness.
Pagan coughed, thought
it all a show. i dropped—
knees awkward on cold stone
and tried not to feel their eyes
as i closed mine, tried
not to taste the blood as
I bit my tongue, fear
before the Lord.

Pagan said curse
left to join the rubbish of
markets and taxis.
Prophet thought him a loss
to all that glitters.
words on my lips caught tears
as i prayed, felt the sympathetic
scrubbing of the Lord’s redemption.

outside the fen was rife with
water from winter’s rain. i,
red and raw went out without
wellies. the sun dripped from my
hair, second baptism of
holy ghostly fire.

Prophet whispered latin rhymes.
Pagan was off in a bar
warming up with a double scotch.

alone in a corner somewhere
one angel hummed salvation
for this lost coin
among prophets and pagans.
Farming for Shalom: Going Beyond ‘Organic’ for a Sustainable Agriculture
Eric Bradley

It’s a short road from environmental thought to agricultural thought- agriculture sits at a crossroads of primary human interests and natural laws. Beyond the interest of having food to eat, agriculture continues to shape our culture and to profoundly affect the flourishing of human and land communities. Seminal environmentalist Aldo Leopold considers ‘the land community’ as the interacting soils, waters, plants and animals. Leopold’s definition is quite dignifying to the circumstance- all parts are interacting and mandate man’s cooperation in stewarding the land community.

My initial experience with agriculture outside of the pages of a book was while I was studying abroad in Belize. During an internship at the Ministry of Agriculture Livestock Section, I started to learn cattle herd health, pasture management and the unfortunate economics of farming in a developing country. I was determined to expand on my experience when I returned to the States. So the following summer I put in lots of hours tracking down my passion: I worked for two dairy farms and a food animal veterinarian. I was able to see a large variety of animal operations while on calls for consults and surgeries with the traveling vet. However, my most formative experiences were centered on my pre-dawn milking routine and the few races against the twilight to bring in harvests. It was in those paradoxical circumstances of caution and frenzy that I started to understand the nature of a sustainable agriculture.

Sustainable agriculture is a means of beneficial development of the human and land communities. To seek a sustainable agriculture is to strive for an agriculture that will flourish because of right relationships that society has with its place, man has with his animal, man has with his land and man has with his neighbor. This is the call to work for Shalom. This is not a call to revert to a fantasized vision of historic agriculture nor is it a call to conform to a trendy farming method. Summarizing the practice of ‘good farming,’ farmer and philosopher Wendell Berry writes, “farming [is] the proper use and care of an immeasurable gift.”

In some circles, the term ‘sustainable agriculture’ is another meaningless cliché. Perhaps the term evokes thoughts of the “organic”, “free-range” and “hormone-free” labels bouncing around the grocery store aisles. All of those buzz-worthy labels and production methods have some admirable and some unworthy aspects. The faults of any one method are abundantly described in other publications, (e.g. factory ‘organic’ farms, safety of supplementing animal hormones) thus the long, disheartening list will be avoided here.

Hope for tangible progress towards sustainability can be found in localizing agriculture. The general trend in farming has been ‘bigger is better’- that exploitation of resources and people is acceptable under the guise of ‘increasing productivity and efficiency.’ However, God’s creation is an intensely relational one, and a local agriculture holds potential to multiply and develop fruitful relationships. Wendell Berry has a vision for the future of agriculture he calls the ‘Agrarian Standard,’ which “is local adaptation, which requires bringing local nature, local people, local economy, and local culture into a practical enduring harmony.”

Sharing Berry’s vision for locally based agriculture, Calvin Biotechnology professor David Koetje offers a revised standard that uses ‘Place as a Normative Standard,’ “Our goal is to develop technologies that are appropriate, that match the needs and cycles of the that place
in a way that is resilient- promoting ecological and cultural sustainability.” By presenting five characteristics of 'Place-Based Agriculture,' Koetje constructs a framework to help understand how decisions are working toward a sustainable agriculture.

1. Place-based agriculture is attuned to the ecological resilience of local bioregions.
2. Place-based agriculture is responsive to the needs and knowledge of local communities.
3. Place-based agriculture is sensitive to community values.
4. Place-based agriculture exercises precaution, care and restraint.
5. Place-based agriculture solutions enhance the embeddedness in local ecosystems and cultures.

It is important to remember that there is value in efficiency and there is value in restraint. Both must be exercised to effectively care for the human and land communities. It is in this light that Christian agricultural stewards make positive decisions to flourish the operations they affect. “Love your neighbor as yourself” may become a fuller, more challenging command with broader understanding of humankind’s relation to Creation. Given that we are here to tend, use and care for the earth as a tenant (God is the real owner), the use of resources and resulting impact is not a thing to be avoided. However, in the context of a place-based agricultural operation the negative impacts, unforeseen consequences and unwise use of resources may be more easily minimized and mitigated. It may aggravate some romantics that this paradigm places no explicit constraints on operations, but the implicit constraints are satisfying. Food production and distribution could become decentralized, diversified and cultural- three of many characteristics of that satisfy those longing for a better system.

With our lives we are aiming to participate, Christian friends, in the work of redemption. All parts of Creation are bound in relationships around and with us, so we ought to dignify and flourish those associations. Because agriculture sits at the junction of numerous relational values- economic and social, human community and land community, faith and action- it demands our discerning attention and passionate action. I urge you fellow child of God, that while you seek a more sustainable way of engaging agriculture as a consumer, be satisfied with what you are able to accomplish. Don’t just ‘buy local,’ but know local. Love local.

We ought to always humbly consider that in the periphery of any discussion lies more input, more information, more perspectives to inform and sharpen our own in our work for Shalom.

Recommended Reading:
Wendell Berry, *The Unsettling of America, Home Economics, or Citizenship Papers*
Aldo Leopold, “The Land Ethic” in *A Sand County Almanac*
Joel Salatin, *You Can Farm: An Entrepreneur’s Guide to Farming for Pleasure and Profit*
*Perspectives on Science and Christian Faith.* March 2005:
David Koetje, “Place-Based Agriculture: Christian Environmentalism Informing Collaborations in Agroecology & Biotechnology.”
David Warners and Larry Borst, “The Good of a Flourishing Creation: Seeking God in a Culture in Affluence.”
The trees stand strong amidst the controversy.
the only force to which they submit is God, bowing to the winds as
pilgrims to the bell, twiggedly praising the Creator.

Winds of progress are tickling the people, prophesying a future of glory and brick;
where the chapel of nature is dead
where the sanctuary of life is sacrificed
when the human-earth communion altar is a breathless symbol in memory.

[THERE IS MORE HERE THAN MEETS YOUR EYE,
HE CRIES ON BEHALF OF THE VOICELESS]

but compromise wages on.

The winds
of pride
will plow the
steady
bladdernuts,
and the
living
sentinels
will
reluctantly
relent,

mourning
decisions
of men
while
their
sweet
lifebloods
make
way for
brick and glory.
Celebrate! Nature, Tracy Rose Guajardo
dialogue 25
Realizing an Aesthetic Ethic on Calvin’s Campus
Nate Haan

My concentration of study is in biology. I spend my time learning about the interactions and inter-relatedness of living things. I know embarrassingly little about art, theology, or the interplay between the two. Still, I have come to appreciate the themes represented in the architecture and layout of our campus, and the accuracy with which they reflect the principles upon which Calvin is founded. However, while the original architecture sets a fitting precedent for the realization of these values, our treatment of the natural landscape on campus is consistent neither with our theology nor with our campus’ aesthetic.

In his Institutes, John Calvin wrote affirmingly of the importance of nature as a medium for the revelation of God: “the most perfect way of seeking God . . . is for us to contemplate him in his works whereby he renders himself near and familiar to us, and in some manner communicates himself.” Similarly, Abraham Kuyper wrote, “God himself is in and behind nature . . . In everything that lives in nature, rustles, throbs and stirs itself, we feel the pulsebeat of God’s own life.” Our theology mandates a deep concern for the environment. It follows, then, that our institution should concern itself with maintaining harmony with the green parts of God’s green earth. This is a project we’ve begun to undertake on many fronts, and it is imperative that we continue toward this end.

The Knollcrest campus’ layout and design was intended to embody the mission of Calvin College. Embedded in the landscape, the original prairie-style brick buildings complement the slopes and contours of the land on which they were built. The arrangement of the buildings around commons lawn was intended to symbolize the free flow of ideas between disciplines. The long, horizontal planes and deep, overhanging eaves that characterize this style of architecture mimic the prairie landscape that historically dominated the Midwest. The earth-colored brick and the buildings’ conformity to the surrounding landscape were meant in part to be testaments to the earth-embracing theology to which we subscribe.

Our prairie-style campus represents the college’s commitment to care for the earth. However, a prairie is a real—and important—type of habitat in Michigan, but one which is not allowed to thrive on our campus. A prairie is simply an open area with few trees, dominated by native grasses and an assortment of herbs. Indigenous to Michigan, these plants give even the most manicured tulip garden a run for its money. In the fall, the tall grasses flush deep red and blue hues. The herbs flower, attracting birds and insects with their nectar and seeds. When wind blows over the prairie, the grasses bend in waves, like water. In a prairie, the pulsebeat described by Kuyper thumps audibly.

Unfortunately, our prairie-style campus has yet to be realized. We maintain a beautiful nature preserve, as well as a unique woodlot adjacent to the HPERDS building. But while our
preservation of areas like these is deeply significant, other areas of campus which have been designated for everyday human use have been curiously exempt from this treatment. Nature is all around us—we participate in it, and we depend on it. Yet almost by default, it seems, the “human” portion of our campus has been filled and subdued by a fertilized, sterilized blanket of Kentucky bluegrass, punctuated with neat beds of anemic, greenhouse-grown annual flowers—plopped in the bare soil, and yanked out again before they even take root.

Native plants, attuned to the local soil and climate, require no more water than they would receive from normal amounts of rainfall, and virtually no pesticides or fertilizer. In short, they make for ideal green landscaping—not just for flowerbeds, but for every area of our campus which doesn’t need to be covered with turf grass. I’m not proposing that we convert Commons Lawn or the baseball field course into a roped-off nature preserve. But the aesthetic of our campus grounds needs to be altered so as not to diverge from the precedent set by the architecture. Instead, it should complement it.

Why should our concern for nature stop at the edge of the Ecosystem Preserve? This designation of “wild” and “domestic” places on Calvin’s campus represents a false dualism, one which we must seek to dismantle. One of the goals of the design principles developed for our campus by planning architect William Fyfe and President Spoelhof was to “symbolically represent and physically promote” a “strong interdepartmental discipline,” an interdisciplinary atmosphere unified in “organic oneness.” This statement is practically the antithesis of the culture/nature dualism to which our campus aesthetic currently conforms. Each discipline’s area of study, and the actions that follow from it, is meant to permeate our entire campus—to encompass all things. Given what the study of ecology has contributed to our understanding of creation, its findings—namely that our landscape suffers when it is stripped of its natural diversity—must be applied, not just in the nature preserve, but on the entire campus.

Calvin has taken impressive strides toward environmentally responsible actions, including the green building practices used for the Bunker Interpretive Center, and the preservation of some of the natural areas on campus. However, actions like these have yet to be made pervasive in the larger decisions and everyday actions that define Calvin College. Creating a campus environment that symbolically promotes and physically embodies this ideal would be an important step towards this goal.

Pour, Jeremy Chen

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This, and This Too, Bradley Smith

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Tom Mazanec [04]
For my Honors Thesis, I'm creating companion graphic poems called "The Nameable" and "The Unnameable," which examine and praise the dual nature of God: as Incarnate, revealed, and knowable (Nameable) and as Mystery, hidden, and unknowable (Unnameable). This poem is the text of the first fragment of "The Unnameable," and it is a sonnet that self-destructs, symbolizing the way in which God cannot be contained in any form or structure.

Jo-Ann Van Reeuwyk [04-05]
Beyond being 'aware' of our environment and acknowledging its fragility, I believe we are required to pay particular and specific attention to it. More than that we need to find novel ways to connect with others who may still be making baby steps toward realization. As artists we have a unique vantage point and the abilities (if we choose to use them) to help make that happen. Photos Created by J. Steensma Hoag.

Anonymous [06]
dialogue will award a prize to the first reader who can identify the body which this poem is written about, email your answers to dialogue@calvin.edu.

Calen Rubin [07]
The bodies are buried beneath the floor. Visitors are too busy to notice that they're standing in a graveyard.

Anonymous [09]
This poem deals in part with altered fire regimes, a way in which humans impact the environment by preventing the natural cycle of burning and new growth. The images come from personal experience and descriptions from a friend who fights fires out west. But the woman in the poem isn't her.

Paul Miyamoto [10-11]
A forecast on an alley wall. Downtown Kalamazoo, MI.

Anna M. Fongers [12]
Dropping out of the writing scene entirely, Anthony Joseph Gretz has spent the last five years studying the intricacies of Einstein's last, unfinished Unifying Theory. Reading and re-reading the genius's notes has led Gretz to believe that, through the application of human reasoning, time travel through wormholes and other extra-dimensional phenomena is possible, creating the possibility for an author to craft a fictionalized version of past events in the present, then travel through time and alter the events of that past life until those fictionalized details are true, and thus, become nonfiction.

Tom Mazanec [12]
The Titan Arum, known as the "corpse flower" in Indonesia for its putrid smell, is the largest unbranched inflorescence in the world and often fails to breed in captivity because its male and female flowers bloom at different times, preventing it from self-pollinating.

Taylor Voss [13]
As the glass reaches 121°, the machines roll along in the Arizona Sonoran Desert, clear cutting the soil. These sod producers cater to new, water-consuming suburban housing developments and gold courses in the middle of an otherwise parched desert. This farm recently lost its water rights to local Native Americans, but continues to operate despite pressures to conserve. Only one year ago, Hispanics did the labor that this new John Deere sod-harvesting machine now performs. While such a fully mechanized farm is efficient, the resource use could be considered unsustainable, and the consequences for the land and humans involved are questionable.

Adam Wolpa [16]
This image is a contemporary adaptation of one of four illustrations painted by Norman Rockwell and published in the Saturday Evening Post in 1943, in response to President Franklin Delano Roosevelt's 1941 address to Congress. This address illuminated "four essential human freedoms," which are as follows: Freedom of Speech, Freedom of Worship, Freedom from Want, and Freedom from Fear. Wolpa's four Mini-Posters were originally published in the catalogue for the Four Freedoms exhibition at the Martin Art Gallery of Muhlenberg College in Allentown, PA in 2006.

Jennifer Steensma Hoag [17]
The Nature of Invasion is a series of photographic fictions produced by digitally importing deer into urban and suburban environments. Ranging in their plausibility, these photographic narratives explore the conflicted relationship we have with wild animals. I photographed white, whitetail, and albino deer of various ages at a deer farm in the Upper Peninsula of Michigan. Cultivated for purposes of hunting or spectacle, deer on deer farms are selectively bred for desired traits. The environments that form the backgrounds of the images were photographed in West Michigan and Chicago. Chosen for the variety of land
use depicted, some images display environments transitioning from rural to suburban, and urban sites contrast park settings with high-rise buildings.

All attempts were made to produce a convincing digital collage, however points of facture exist between the image of the deer and the background. These discrepancies in, for example, lighting or perspective, seem to emphasize that the deer do not belong in that environment. It begs the question: where do deer belong, then, and how much is our notion of where deer belong informed by traditional wildlife photography?

In a culture where we are becoming increasingly distanced from the land and animals, it is my hope that this work prompts viewers to wrestle with their assumptions regarding the place and function of animals.

Annalise Venhuizen [18]

Isaiah 55:12 – "For ye shall go out with joy, and be led forth with peace: the mountains and the hills shall break forth before you into singing, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands." Be still and know that He is God.

Jonathan Lovelace [19]

For Libby, in whose presence and about whose silence the first part of this poem was written late last semester, and without whose help it would be much worse. Part of the beauty of your silence is that when you do speak your words are invariably 'apples of gold in settings of silver'; take courage, fear not, and speak more often and more boldly.

Anna M. Fongers [20]

Manes and strangled hairs forget the silence snarls and snarls sing the country women in their aprons and log haired ribbons. We're definitely not like this she says as the employee changes her earnings from the other side of the counter. We can't afford those. Punch them a little bit... then we'll know.

By, Brooke Cooper
About The Author: Brooke Cooper is almost twenty. She lives in Colorado and she likes to clean.

anneilly [21]

"the coin" is loosely based on Ely, England; a town just outside of Cambridge where I attended a morning service in a beautiful old cathedral with some who would become my closest friends. As such, this piece is dedicated to Professors Clark and Corcoran and those with whom I had the distinct pleasure of touring with during January.

Eric Bradley [22-23]

I wrote this as a response to the growing trend of organic food- some celebrities now brag about it. In my pessimism (or realism), I bet this fad will filter down to 'us' like everything else those people do. I hope that I articulated a view that builds confidence in our conventional ag system, but also stimulates our participation to improve it.

Tracy Rose Guajardo [25]

These are sepia toned photograms of plant life found in the cold and snowy month of December. Isn't it amazing that life still thrives under these conditions?

Bradley Smith [29]

The red rubylith layer you see in the smaller thumbnail picture is actually a transparent, glow-in-the-dark layer, printed on top of the visible layers. This transparent layer includes some text and shapes referencing the melting of the world's glaciers, in particular, the south pole's. In the sky, the text reads "protect and preserve." On the glacier it reads, "THIS and," and on the penguin it reads, "THIS TOO."

Casey Nagle [31]

*Sharks*

mammoth like bloody eyeless sockets
horribly blinking wreathed in teeth

bodies like un-sinking marble
cut from hunger's taut geometry:

such shape like arrows off one-way signs: inexorable enormous:

Great White Sharks—fuses of need
what lit them?

hollow as wind socks
these animated needles

what could ever fill them?

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*Thanks to all those who submitted their work, and thanks also to our readers. Thanks to Brad for photographing. Printed at Spectrum Graphics.*

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