Dialogue
Calvin College's Journal of Commentary and the Arts
Volume Thirty-Nine, Issue Four
May 2007

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Cover: Untitled, Tamara Verhelle

02 dialogue
Last Words
Robert Zandstra

As has become tradition, a large part of this fourth issue of Dialogue is dedicated to featuring the work of certain seniors, particularly those who are graduating with BFA degrees or did creative projects for Honors in English. Moreover, in this expanded, forty-page issue, only six pages do not contain the work of seniors. I am pleased that the collegiate work of so many Calvin artists can culminate in this way.

Reflecting on this present issue, I felt a strange mixing of memory of this past year of Dialogue, the desire to move on, and also the desire to see what would become of Dialogue. I do hope Dialogue has helped people appreciate some of the fabulous art and literature produced here at Calvin and has contributed to people’s engaging in some meaningful dialogue. It has helped me see, for example, that I’m more a Once-ler than a Lorax, less in control of my own story than I’d like, and less learned than I knew I was a year ago. Overall, to use the words sung by Frank Sinatra, it was a very good year for Dialogue.

I also wondered how much different next year’s final issue would look with different contributors, readers, editor, and staff. While this issue or this year might affect next year somehow, soon it would be forgotten. Even if someone were to look through an issue, names would only be names, signifying virtually nothing. My thoughts were almost straight out of Ecclesiastes. It was rather humbling.

Of course, Dialogue is a small, student journal and doesn’t pretend to be anything more. As it serves a purpose, it would be missed if it disappeared, but ultimately that would make about as much difference as if the Canadian Philosophical Review disappeared. Although most of the world could say the same for you, me, and anyone else, that doesn’t mean our lives are meaningless. The incredible number of total hours taken to “produce” and “consume” the work in and of Dialogue weren’t a complete chasing after the wind.

The thought that Dialogue and a host of other toils and enjoyments didn’t really matter was rather freeing. These things (Dialogue, graduation, life…) have been done before and will be done again, probably by those better than us. Strutting and fretting cannot transport us to yesterday or tomorrow or add an hour to our lives or an inch to our heights. That thought made me much more inclined to try to create, care, celebrate, participate, take interest, and look for connections—and to seek out those things that ultimately do matter.

I pray that God may be gracious to us and bless us as we prepare to take the next great leaps forward in our lives—and happily just fade away.
I am engaged in a search for social, spiritual, and personal identity. By employing the force of imagination and the spirit of empathy, I am involved in a process of conjuring worlds that I wish to explore. My narratives are rooted in personal history – informed by my experience growing up in rural, northern Canada – yet in imagining a world that is either embellished, ironic or otherworldly I am able to stand apart from my personal history. Through imagination I can detach myself from autobiography, with the hope of acquiring new insight and perspective.

I am presently interested in the adventures of adolescent boys as they wander through forests, encounter animals, and struggle against older men. In these liminal spaces where ambiguity and openness bring forth states of disorientation and periods of transition, I meditate on moment of calm and beauty. Where beauty gives way to melancholy I explore ideas of same-sex attraction, violence and tragedy, the process of masculinization, and the places that inform these discoveries.

Important to my work is the way in which the images are displayed. Because my narratives are fragmented and often disjointed, I rely on the viewer to make meaning based on how the images are arranged on the wall, or layered on top of one another (using transparent materials). Thus it allows the space between images to involve the viewer more inclusively, as a participant in discovering meaning. Contingent on where an image is placed in relation to another, narrative is either created or confused: and in the varying disjointedness, a visual and metaphoric poetry is established. – EDD

Excerpts From “Crossing the River,” Eugene Dening
The Weasel
Nathan Gelinas

I saw a weasel climb up the side of a rabbit
and lick her throat with incisors small as thumbtacks
that hang messages on the board above the key rack:
“Utilities: $59”, “Get milk”, “Speak only in love”, and
“Your darling mother called.”

I saw a weasel 1,000 years old consuming the rabbit,
its mind muzzled to its body, immediate
as a word slicing a closed mouth open, a hand sliding down
a butterflied stomach, oblivious to what came before
and what comes after.

I saw a weasel and what could I think of but my stepfather,
eyeing the trash of my brother’s room, the trashed kitchen
sink, the trash falling onto the floor—always room for something
more—and his voice disgusted, saying, “He’s a weasel,
he weasels his way out of everything!”

I saw a weasel lick carnage from his chest, and I thought,
no, stepfather, you were wrong. The weasel doesn’t weasel out
of anything. It only knows how to weasel his way in.
How else do you explain the rabbit inside, the teeth
that will crumble before they let go?

I saw a weasel and remembered a hymn sung over the body,
silence, and empty rooms converging. My brother
was washing the dishes, taking out the trash, calmly breaking
his rage over his knees, oblivious to what came before
and what comes after, breaking his rage like bread.
the tuesday of our lives
annreilly

i’m stuck in the never-ending feel of tuesday. nothing started, nothing completed or celebrated. a dirty crescent moon puddle, once snow on my boots, is the only product of a morning at my desk. my fork, for the purpose of eating yet another wilted iceberg salad, beckons to the power outlet. it longs for a quiet, violent shock; a quick end to all the talking heads, deadlines and fruitless directions. my inkpen tells the secret of a hundred love letters filled with cliché and perfume. i start to think the power outlet looks better with each second checked off by the wallclock—that bastard. the institutional white paint waits anxiously to chip away. overpriced office chairs spin their awkward dance now released from the weight of hypocrisy. i breathe the filtered air and am none the better for it. the anticipation of the axe, a cheery pink slip, hovers. panic (or hypochondria) rises in my throat. overhead a florescent light flickers. i snatch the fork. my fingers tighten. muscles coil, ready to lunge.

the phone— that pain in the ass, rings to bring me back.

just as well.

“while on the blue line train”
anonymous

two men raped me.
tag-team pupils penetrated

my peace-ful hair-
do, flyaway
eyes bloodshot,

shadowed under stares, their scorching whiskey pores, sidelong whines

of ruddy cheek to throbbing ear,

my skull sniffing vanilla wafts,

that sun-warmed brisk-frisked shirt overheated,

“new one every week,” virgin mind gone to puckered leather jacket jerks at Finsbury Park
Leaving Church after Communion
Anonymous

As ions in autumn’s afternoon air
swirl past my taut and tingling lips
through sun and scents of withered leaves,
the church’s stones themselves could not cry out
to fill my soul as I keep quiet,

I, aphasic infant, standing heartsunk,
face-to-face in front of ineffable,
idolized self-iconoclast,
    infinity’s origin,
    opposite of zero,
one in three and two in one.

My heavy lungs inhale the outdoor air.
My chest feels filled with water to my neck.
Should I have heard a voice, a word,
speak from some crumbling on my tongue?

I walk headhung, shoulders shrugged
as if sneaking pocketed collection coins
or being led back out from a store by Mom
after returning stolen checkout counter candy
in a storm of half-repentant tears,
half resenting the unworthy manner
with which I judged that I’d been treated.

I remember my digested guilt,
    taken and eaten,
that which I’d believed
that I might later rightfully deny:
Would I? Would I? Would I?

My mercurial heart stands still,
    uplifted
like the barometric pressure,
rising.
Reprobate Souls (Triptych), Tory Roff
As with most of my work, my cameras and images are usually inspired by either things I see or things I find. I’m always on the lookout for nontraditional methods and materials. My work is both sculptural and photographic. I later realized that my interest in pinhole photography came from the fact that with many manufactured cameras, photographs can be created almost completely independent from the artist. The images can sometimes be sterile and generic in result, as the camera is essentially doing all the thinking for you (auto exposure and auto focus).

Through my work, I hope to expose the viewer to the pinhole process and the possible results. I wish to offer it as an alternative, a way to break free from the autonomy of manufactured cameras and images. A more relational type of art practice, one that creates more of a dialogue and a chance for community between artist and viewer.

The idea that an artist would share their work, in a way that allows the viewer to be involved in the work’s production, is something that’s exciting to me. Sol LeWitt’s work, although planned by him, was not actually carried out by him. Some of his works started out as a set of written instructions which were then read and carried out by others. This type of art practice required the viewer’s involvement in order for the work to exist beyond the artist’s instructions. – BRS
Mesa
A Pantoum
Calen Rubin

As the earth breathes
husky and whispering softly,
dry green cacti, a shimmering horizon
dusty cobwebs and dried blooms sigh.

Husky and whispering softly
the smells of lavender and tobacco hang in the air,
dusty cobwebs and dried blooms sigh,
casting shadows in the desert.
The smells of lavender and tobacco hang in the air
as clouds gather slowly over the relentless sun
casting shadows in the desert
in the cooling musty air.
As clouds gather over the relentless sun
the snakes and the golden moles hide
in the cooling musty air,
and the people pass each other silently.
The snakes and the golden moles hide,
dry green cacti, a shimmering horizon,
and the people pass each other silently
As the earth breathes.
Hollows, Natalie Good

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English Honors Spotlight: Tom Mazanec

The Nameable and The Unnameable

“The Nameable” and “The Unnameable” are complementary graphic poems which explore humanity’s two ways of perceiving God: as knowable and unknowable, immanent and ultimate. My work finds Truth in fragments and paradoxes, in contrary positions that can hold equal weight. One example of such a paradox is the Hebrew name for God, YHWH, which is simultaneously the revered name given to Moses at the burning bush (Ex. 3:14) and the unknown, ineffable holy signifier for God’s transcendence. Only by exploring binary oppositions and the points at which they break down can we understand the nature of the Divine.

One such binary opposition I explore through the form of graphic poetry is the distinction between image and text. Graphic poetry is to verse what graphic novels are to prose – image and text combine and blur to make a new medium. The graphics “illuminate” (augment) rather than “illustrate” (imitate) the words.

“The Nameable” is a narrative piece written in strict poetic meter (blank verse) that describes the violent conversion of a wayward priest. The graphics of “The Nameable” are unified, created by Kyle Schultz. “The Unnameable” is a series of poetic fragments, each invoking different traditions and forms to find a common principle behind a parallax view. The graphics of “The Unnameable” are fragmented, each section created by different artists, namely Steve Bakker, Miranda Brouwer, Eugene Dening / Tamara Verhelle, Herman Hellion, and Brad Smith. – TJM

Copies will be available at the Spring Arts Festival or by contacting the author at thomas.j.mazanec@gmail.com.
Excerpts from “The Nameable,” Tom Mazanec

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Excerpts from “The Unnameable,” Tom Mazanec

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English Honors Spotlight: Amy Lewis

“There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamt of in your philosophy.” Hamlet Act 1, Scene V.

There is mystery in the world, mystery woven into every cell of our bodies.

Poetry is a space where earth and infinity intersect. To understand the earth we reach into the void, become an astronaut of “Inner Space,” as Nikki Giovanni writes. Poetry taps into the unknown—the imagination, the subconscious, the infinite. It is a mysterious art where words that come from “nowhere” have the ability to take the reader (and writer) places previously unknown. Here mundane things of earth (tea, pomegranates, fields of wild flowers, etc.) lead us beyond earth. – AML

Wednesday night in late September
Amy Lewis

always asking me,
what are we to do
what are we to do
always quick to point out that I have no answer.
sitting on cold tile floor, head in hands
there needs to be a place where minds can go before they’re shattered.
writing no answers only what comes into my head
and out of my ears. The only thing that goes into the toilet is my vomit. But nothing goes over Barbie’s head.
The tighter the corset the better, the less said the better, the less clichés the better it is; the better it is to be dead.
I do not write love poems, I do not write hate songs
or anything but what I breathe through my open window
when thinking of Truman Capote, my hands sliding over greasy grey plastic keys, neatly indented in the center,
for convex fingertips to fit into concave divots (concave: anywhere a bear can go). How I am tired of you tonight.
How I would do anything not to be close to you,
go for milk, burst into rhyme, blurt out of the window and onto the grass three stories below. But I worry—what if I am a superhero inside and do not die but learn to fly at the very last second before I hit earth.
Butterfly Summer
Amy Lewis

memories of you are slight,
    elusive,
    flitting across my mind
as often as I—
wish I didn’t—

I hate the incense that smells of your room and flannel shirts—
    the odiferous hitchhiker of memory

I hate waking
only to be pulled down
    by thoughts of you, heavy as mercury,
    the magnetism of earthly
    gravity.

I hate the butterflies which invaded the streets,
    the summer you died.
Brown and tiny; nervously flitting around our heads
small quick pecks on arms and cheeks
I hated them.
Barely more attractive than a simple house moths.
    I hated them.
Lighting in my hair, on my jeans
Dying in droves on
    sidewalks and cars
    to be eaten by
    grackles and mockingbirds.

Summer of lamentation
    no rituals of mourning to cling to
I am at a loss
there is little liturgy
    to cover this occurrence.
No kaddish to
    repeat with gritted teeth,
"May His great name be blessed forever and to all eternity"

There are a lot of growls
    waiting to be released as sighs pushed out
    over the asphalt of my throat.
Rumbles that reach down to the lower lobes of my lungs,
    reverb into my toes,
until I am all out of breath again.
BFA Spotlight: Robert Bosscher

I feel there is a cadence to working with clay that is unlike any other medium. This is not only time spent in repetition and practice, honing one’s technique, but also in the very cycle the works are produced. By its nature, clay requires a slower paced approach than a more immediate medium. The clay must be worked in specific stages if desired results are to be achieved, and only through repetition and practice are those stages discovered. As an artist who works mainly in the medium of ceramics, this means paying attention to the craft and technical aspects that allow me to most effectively express the conceptual problems I am dealing with. Whether I am working in vessel forms or in more sculptural directions, there has to be an understanding of the character of the clay in order for me to use it completely.

Much of what I do is personal. Both functional vessels and sculptures are driven by my responses to individuals. In both of these directions of work, the use of the hand in creating the artwork becomes very important. The works are not mass produced and there is the mark of the artist on each piece, be it a thumbprint or a signature. The work unfolds in a careful way through a process that cannot be rushed or forced. While I may use the wheel as a tool to create vessels, there is still the measured pace of the hand working to create the form. I use different firing, glazing and construction methods, with the intention of giving each work an approachable quality. For me, the hand directs the tempo of the work while giving voice to ideas.

Ceramics also connects craft traditions of the past to the present. In the same way the creating of the work has its own pace, understanding the identity of others is revealed through a process of building relationships that cannot be hurried. Historically, potters have worked together doing tasks which an individual could never accomplish. There is a sense of community gained in working toward a common goal through loading a kiln and feeding the fire. It is this idea of the importance of the individual through the group that I try to bring to my work. When the hand and the idea come together I feel art is at its fullest. – RJB

Sister [Katie]
stoneware, cotton, jute, sisal, straw, feathers

(Self opposite right)

Self-Portrait [Composite]
stoneware, porcelain, earthenware, locally excavated clay body (above right)

Grace [for Felix]
porcelain, copper wire (left)
According to a common narrative recounted throughout most of the twentieth century, the story of modern art is a triumphal tale of opticality. Vision shakes off the shackles of other modes of artistic expression, of other sensory entanglements and emerges at last as independent and autonomous.

Before the triumph of the Moderns over the Ancients, however, things were different. For the better part of the last 2500 years, the most sophisticated viewers (at least within the Western tradition) were confident that the eyes worked according to a model of proximity rather than distance. Debates raged over whether objects emitted rays that touched the eyes, or if the eyes, in fact, sent out probes that touched the objects on which we gaze. Yet, generally everyone concurred that somehow vision was a literal extension of touch. Whatever these accounts occlude in terms of what we now think of as the physics of light and vision, they nonetheless provide a compelling model for understanding what happens between an artist and an object, between a maker and an image.

Without in anyway ignoring the last century of artistic production, Robert Bosscher insists that touch and vision go hand-in-hand, that sight is diminished when it stands alone. Specifically, his current body of work explores themes of craft and the inconsistencies of handmade uniformity. It revels in subtle – but intentionally evident – variations. For all their differences, Composite Self Portrait may be unthinkable without Pollock. And yet, it’s the visible thumbprints of the former that ultimately signal how far we are from 1950s New York. The porcelain curtain, Grace [for Felix], leads us to move as it sways gently. We hear and see. Opticality? Plenty. But that’s just the beginning. Above all, Bosscher’s work aims to join serious fine arts concept with rigorous attention to craft. And in the end, one central question haunts all of the work: what role is there for ceramics within the narratives we shall someday recount about the art of the twenty-first century?

— Craig Hanson, Professor of Art History, Calvin College
BFA Spotlight: Heather Luimes

I enjoy working with patterns and design and have been incorporating them into my work for the past two years. Many of the patterns that I use come from textiles, religious art pieces, tattoos, architecture, furniture, and mathematics. My current exploration with these decorative elements involves combining different pieces from different origins. I am particularly concerned with questioning whether two styles, with separate meanings from different eras, can be interwoven to create a cohesive and successful composition. Does the combination create a different meaning? Do the individual components still hold the same visual meaning? I enjoy the moment when a familiar pattern is recognized and experienced in a new context.

In the past several months I have shifted my focus in terms of medium from a fairly tight use of paint to an open exploration of materials and media. I have spent a great deal of time experimenting with plaster in order to understand its capabilities and limitations. My most recent plaster sculptures, or as I like to refer to them, the “drip castles,” are created in the same way one would make a drip castle out of sand. Unlike sand, however, this particular kind of plaster has a 30 second time frame in which the plaster is at the perfect state of viscosity to create the height and still maintain a smooth look. I find much satisfaction in the ability to create something so visually pleasing in such an elementary way. – HAL

The Golden Doily
Galkyd, oil, watercolor, paper on canvas, 2007
(right)

untitled
plaster, krylon (above)
Dear Participant,

This collection is incomplete. Please take a jar and fill it with something mythical, magical, iconic or otherwise legendary. Label your contribution and place it in the drawer of your choosing and arrange the jars as you see fit.

With regards,
Taylor

One might call Taylor Greenfield a mystic for the MySpace generation. Her artistic explorations—taking shape in canvas, paper, gold leaf, ceramic, and human interaction—seek to reconstruct the fractured bond between classical Western narratives and contemporary visual culture.

Greenfield’s images reinterpret the legends of saints using a modern aesthetic informed by American and Japanese comics and animation. While one might think it strange, or even blasphemous, to draw parallels between someone like St. Catherine and, say, Ghost in the Shell; the comparison yields some interesting results. Many of the legends of saints are implausibly fantastic and incredibly violent.

If myths pin the beliefs of a culture to a provocative narrative, how does one articulate contemporary Christian mythology? By throwing ancient Christian legends in the mix with contemporary storytelling, Greenfield shows some promising directions. Her work readily invites the storybook postmodern comment about a mixing of “high” and “low” cultures. But this goes beyond simply forcing reverent content to coexist with the seemingly irreverent aesthetic of anime and comic books. When Greenfield brings her medieval subjects into our world she plays with them in various contemporary arenas. Some narratives are articulated with a pulp graphic style, while others are brought to life through the haute language of contemporary art, explored through the emerging languages of installation and relational aesthetics.

An excellent example of the latter is Greenfield’s interactive sculpture, Legend. The artist presents an antique card catalogue, empty Ball jars, and instructions for the viewer to fill the jars with “something mythical, magical, iconic, or otherwise legendary,” which they are to label and file as they see fit.

While Greenfield’s works cause Christian history to flirt with contemporary irreverence, her admiration for her subject matter is always clear. In the end, the way she shows the relevance of ancient tales does a service to the Christian narrative tradition from which she draws.

— Kevin Buist, Gallery Assistant
Oh Circulating Cell
Ryan Weberling

Oh circulating cell,
wrapped with flesh,

all rests upon a root,
life rushing beneath.

I press two feet to you,
soles in osmosis,

and my mouth shapes a seed.

Resting against the trunk,
a gradual spine--

the bend of shade reaches
down, hands over my eyes.

I see our horizon, swaddled
in skin and bloodstreams,

turning into turning.

Your First Rosary
Anonymous

Remember her tremble? How fear traveled through strings of beads, pearlescent and waning like rosary-moons: orbits unraveled. While votive fingers quietly flaming

atop candles were fervently praying—
they guttered low as she lowered the cross—
bead by bead expunging their glow. Laying her gift in your grasp she quivered with loss,

as seeds of prayer clattered upon black walls
she pried at your hands with one of her own,
the other clutched tightly onto brass palls.
The sower lay beads, as barren as stones,

Hail Mary near end, left wanting for breath,
forever positioned between 'hour' and 'death.'
Appalachian Morning
Anne VanLoon

I slid down the sandy gravel hillside,
into a denseness of fog
so thick I swam in vapor.
Suspended in moisture I held my breath
and stared into the depths.

Ghosts, flickering in and out
of puffs and vision,
faint shadows smelling of grass
and the musk of wildlings.
Ears alert, limpid brown eyes nearly blinded,
they flicked tails in silent code.

Fooled by the water in their eyes
they mistook my hand
for a safe signal and ventured
on all sides. The faint, delicate
crashing of their hooves like waves
pulsing against my ears.

I could have extended the tips of my fingers
into the invisible and signaled my belonging,
but I sat like a rock in the path
and let them flow down the trail without me.

Jejune
poemo
:: colon :: . period
:: colon :: ; ::
   a.) semicolon
   b.) jejunum
   c.) trimeter
   d.) el hijo de colón

dialogue 25
During times of hardship, many people say that God is not present. I feel that's not true. I have come across many situations where I felt that I was being watched over or protected. Even when things seemed to be going poorly, I found solace in knowing that someone was looking out for me. I think that's what faith is all about - having hope in something greater than ourselves, even when our own lives seem to be falling apart. It gives us a sense of comfort and reassurance that we are not alone.
Cloves
Kristofer Nivens

Dedicated to the people of Maluku

Cloves floating scattered on the crest of a restless wave
The fishing boat putters on forward
At three-and-a-half knots
And only the four-year-old boy holding hands
With the wrinkled brown woman
Sees the twine snap
And the sacks tumble one by one into the sea

Twenty kilograms —
Twenty kilos'—worth of a father, a mother,
Grandmother, and oldest child
Spending years on the land,
Their palm-brown hands
Tilling true black earth,
Tending diligently their only tree, bringing forth
The crimson bud, the red-gold spice
Sun-dried, sharp and pungent,
Aroma heady in the noonday heat

When they gather all their work — their prize —
A hundred thousand tiny buds,
The hard-earned treasure, with luck, should fetch a price
Around fifty thousand rupiah for a kilo:
Twenty kilos — a family — make
One hundred dollars — give or take —

Today it's take,
Tomorrow sell
What's left of our other crop.
Give only what you can,
For this time we take less back.
Next time, tie the sack tighter,
Pray hard, and barter harder.
Mary Jo,

on that drive
through the
countryside

I should have
stopped to lie
in that sunset

puddle. Should
have taken it by
the hems of its
ripples and nestled
in the folds of that up­
side-down heaven.

Then! by some ecstatic
magic, pinching two corners
to make a clouded cape, I would
run as if in a race against the dimday fading—

imagine it! Embroidered with the day’s last electric
moments, my body ablaze like a cloud of winter-light,
wind-whipped across fields and furrows head­
-over-heals and fleeing I would tumble

through dense thickets
dragging clouds and rays
of sunlight amongst the dusk
brambles while my cape,
    burning to the fringes,
would catch
        in snatches
of pink
    and purple
on sharp twigs
and nettles,
leaving the horizon
in tatters

but
in my contest against
the sun,
I would not stop

until I
reached
the haven
of our bowery,

and could take
my puddle
gently by

the corner
to show you
the white tusk

of the
moon,
afloat

in
the
water, where we
could keep it forever,
in our varnished
brass kettle

the evolution., Nathan Doran
Phulery's Farewell
Thomas B. Phulery

Emails have been pouring in. "We haven't heard a word from you," they say. I take it that my acerbic commentary has been missed. As flattered as I am by your queries, I feel that I must explain my silence. I've been away. Yes, I've gone into rehabilitation to address my overlong sojourn in the land of cynicism.

I woke one cloudy January morning to discover that I had become bitter. Gentle curmudgeonliness had given way to genuine outrage. Wherever I looked, I saw demons. It was time to get help. One step short of calling radio talk shows, I went searching for a program ministering to recovering mockers.

After that initial realization that grumpiness had given way to grimness, I prowled the internet for help. I found a ten-step program in Lake Woebegon, Minnesota that promised "health, wholeness, and prosperity." That sounded promising. The behavior modification course there is administered by Dominican nuns working out of a facility once owned by Deep Water Baptists. Apparently, the regimen includes morning immersions in shockingly the cold water of a primitive baptismal tank. The idea is that patients will be able to deal with most any circumstance after starting their days in shock.

Prowling on, I settled on Poshland Institute in Hollywood, California, the beginning of the end of bitter. Embarrassed and ashamed, I found myself standing there in front of a small cluster of fellow inmates and confessing: "Hello, my name is Tom Phulery. And I'm an ironist." So many of the inmates at Poshland were young women with exotic names and nervous eyes. They were recovering from eating confusions, alcohol attractions, pill obsessions, and attention abundance disorders. I saw them mainly at the pool. They were bright and friendly, playing tennis, reading People, hanging out. The modification theories at Poshland were as far from those of the Dominican dunkers as California is from Minnesota.

We had musical therapy, for example. My song was "Keep on the Sunny Side." I hummed the tune, though the words eluded me. I remember the line about "clouds and storms" passing away, the promise that "the sun again will shine bright and clear." My therapist, Chrissy, scolded me whenever I segued into Monty Python's "Bright Side of Life" parody. Early on in my treatment, lines like "Life's a laugh and death's a joke, it's true" were most congenial to me. I went into rehab thinking that the last laugh was indeed on me. But I got better.

Poshland was ambivalent about religion, but we had a chaplain, Reverend Goodly, who had a good bit to say about the fruits of bitter trees. He loved those verses about causing one's brother to stumble and the call to build up one another in the faith instead of tearing down by insisting on the emperor's nakedness.

I learned that the emperor might just be wearing clothing that I couldn't quite see.

So I am back at my post now—a new man. I don't watch the news much; I don't listen for hidden agendas in the meetings I attend. I hum "Sunny Side" and smile a lot. The pills help. I'm reading that Oprah book, Secret. I figure to out Dale Carnegie once I get this new attitude in place. Who cares who's wearing clothes? Look for my new work in Ladies Home Journal. The last laugh won't be on me.
Switchgrass: Attack!, Tory Roff

dialogue 31
Black is Blues, Michael Rodriguez

32 dialogue
Dutch Ways in the Big City
Jon Bratt
Winner of the 2007 Ten Hoor Writing Award

Washington, D.C. is one of the most cosmopolitan cities in the United States. People living here come from all over the world, representing every nationality, ethnic group, and language there is. It is not uncommon to hear five different languages in the grocery store, or to see a Buddhist temple and a Muslim mosque on the same street. Indeed, ethnic identity tends to get lost in such circumstances. When your coworkers or classmates all belong to different “groups,” there is little sense of common cultural identity in society. Most experiences involve a hodgepodge of people from a number of backgrounds, and one rarely finds him or herself among people like them. Where a person comes from is interesting to others, but rarely significant or meaningful. Because everybody here is different.

The Dutch-Americans here are not too different from any other group. We work with a variety of coworkers, study with a variety of students, and hear five different languages when we go to the grocery story, just like anyone else. Many go for long periods without encountering anyone who even remotely looks Dutch. We are full participants in the cultural melting pot around us.

A small church exists in a quiet suburb here, just north of the District of Columbia. It stands next to a synagogue, and every Saturday streams of observant Jews walk by on their way to service. Although religiously distinct, the church and the synagogue are very similar in one respect: each represents a strong cultural identity within a very multicultural society.

The Dutch-Americans of the Washington, DC area spend much of their week out in this society. Sunday, however, is different. Every Sunday an assortment of them converge on this small church. They come for the services, but they also come for something more. Sunday is a time not just for worship but also for cultural reunion. After a long week out in the melting pot, we spend one day among our fellow Dutch. Six days thou shalt labor and do all thy work; the seventh day thou shalt return to thy roots.

Our church is not particularly striking. The exterior of the building is painted a dull gray, and only the smallest bit of stained glass can be seen in the sanctuary. A large pipe organ, probably several centuries old, stands in the back corner. Services are fairly restrained, and, frankly, most of the members look exactly alike. In other words, it is thoroughly Dutch. We don’t complain, though. It is exactly what we are used to.

Many people around Washington find this community quite peculiar. They wonder how we all got so tall, why we bring “oliebollen” to school bake sales, and why we have two services every Sunday when every other church in the county only has one. Most of all, they wonder why we insist on going to college in such frigid places as Grand Rapids, Michigan. These questions have become quite normal to us, and we usually just smile. They just don’t understand.

It is easy for people in places like Washington to abandon their cultural and religious heritage completely. But something about this particular handful of people makes them keep coming back to that heritage, if only for one day a week. In the midst of an overwhelming assemblage of nationalities, we stick together. Dutch ways persist, even in the most non-Dutch environments.
English Honors Spotlight: Daina Carr

History is no longer talked about as objective, precisely because we have admitted its selectiveness. Whichever facts and stories the author or historian selects to record and write about turn into the historical narrative which then goes down as “history”. The positive thing about the subjective nature of the recording of history is that it allows all voices to be equally considered and heard: especially those voices that may have been suppressed in the past.

My creative English honor’s thesis aims to bring one of these voices to the historical table, namely that of African Americans living in Grand Rapids, especially those who are today concentrated in the south east side. Through Gail Heffner, I was introduced to Sarah Smith, the director of community organizing at the South East Community Association, a neighborhood association for the residents between Madison and Division. I was able to do the majority of my project through face-to-face interactions, observations, and interviews.

The majority of these residents are African American and almost half are over the age of 50. This means that many of them have lived through a unique history of their own, including migration from the south at a young age, the civil rights movement, and numerous injustices of anything from housing and employment to media portrayal. This history of both the challenges and the contributions this neighborhood has made to the city of Grand Rapids needs to be told or else Grand Rapids will be missing a significant and unique chunk of its own history. And to understand the south east community today is to understand the past history of African Americans in Grand Rapids.

I also worked in conjunction with Daniel Garcia’s CAS film class, which is doing a documentary film on the SECA neighborhood. – DLC

My Thesis:

In the early 1900’s, southern born African Americans began to migrate during and after WWI to Northern cities in what has been called the Great Migration. Between 1900 and 1930, over one million African Americans left the south (Boyd Demographic). Many left in search of a better life with the promise of industrial jobs and desiring to leave behind racial tensions such as Jim Crow laws. Many headed towards industrial cities such as Cleveland, Chicago, Detroit and Pittsburgh (Samuelson 92). And though Grand Rapids did not offer as many employment opportunities, the community’s African American population grew steadily from 1915 to 1945.

In a 1910 census it was found that 659 African Americans were living in Grand Rapids, 0.7% of the population and by 1930 that number jumped to 2,795. During the Depression, the number decreased to 2,600 but by the end of WWII the African American population had tripled in size (Jelks 80). The majority of African Americans migrating from the south moved into the west side of Grand Rapids when they first arrived near Grandville Ave and the dividing rail road tracks.

“The African American community was all grouped up in a different section of town. We got along-all went to the same schools,” said Arthur Murray, an older resident of the south east neighborhood. “But it was all grouped, we were on one side of town and on the other side of town was a richer group of people. The west side of Division Ave-across this side is the east side. That’s your dividing line east and west, and Fulton divides from north and south.”

Murray, a gentle giant with a fuzzy brown top of hair, is known to many as the local historian of the neighborhood. The first time I sat down to talk with him, I listened intently for almost two hours to his life story. He remembered every detail and more impressively, every date.

“I’ve been in this neighborhood since Oct. 19, 1970,” said Murray with a matter of factness. “I purchased a home on Lafayette, a 100-year-old boarded up house, dilapidated, run-down.”

He laughed at his own comment, and his big bright eyes lit up under his wide brown rimmed glasses.
Yet today you would never guess the original run-down condition of the house as the proud yellow vinyl siding and white trim shows little wear.

Murray is a simple, good humored man whose glass is always half full despite early struggles in his life. Like many older African Americans living in Grand Rapids, Murray grew up in the south until he was about nine years old. Born in Union Springs, Alabama, in 1939 and later moving to Louisiana, Murray never had a chance to go to school in the south.

“We had to work in fields. My mom worked in fields and did in those days: daywork,” said Murray. “I picked cotton. We worked in various fields with hardly any schooling. I was never allowed to go to school. You have to get up and get in a truck like cattle to go to the fields to work.”

This became a hard life for him and his family especially after his father, who was a coal miner, passed away in 1940 when Murray was only one year old.

“You didn’t get paid any money, you maybe had a dollar, two dollars a day from sun up to sun down; the whole family had to work in fields to survive for room, board, and shelter. We never owned any homes then, always rental shotgun homes-wooden shack. And it was hot,” said Murray.

The Jim Crow laws prevented whites and blacks from attending the same schools.

“The south had their laws and the north had theirs,” said Murray. “We couldn’t go to white schools down there. White and blacks couldn’t play ball together; you didn’t go to the same bathroom; you didn’t drink from the same water fountains or go to the same restaurants. Their laws was much different than the northern way of life we found out.”

Black schools consisted of a pine room, a wooden shack, or sometimes simply took place in the church one attended according to Murray.

In the early 40’s, Murray’s mother decided to migrate north in search of a better life for her and her two sons. As most southern born African Americans in Grand Rapids, they settled on the Westside and Murray began attending Franklin Elementary. But because of his lack of prior schooling in the south, Murray was behind; he couldn’t read or write.

“First I started off in regular classrooms but I could not function with the students because of my lack of previous education, so I never was able to pass in the fifth and sixth grade,” said Murray.

Sixth through eighth grade became very difficult. “I was stereotyped. I was laughed at basically because I couldn’t read or write and I had a southern accent or dialect.”

In eighth grade at Central High, Murray was removed from his class and put in a Trade Opportunity program, because he could not learn the required subjects. The TO class was to teach him a trade like shoe repair or woodworking.

“My mom begged them to give me someone to help me learn how to read and write, today such as a mentor or tutor. She begged them. She said, “My son is very nice, he’s mannerly. He’s been brought up here, born in the south, but he’s a good young man.” And they ignored her pleading and begging to give me someone to help me learn how to read and write.”

“I think in those days, based on a lot of poor black people coming out of the south and denied education that they had very little knowledge of how my family was treated in the south. We don’t know whether they cared or not, but they did not show much care about my mother pleading to them to give me some help. They denied us of that privilege as someone born in the United States of America and came up in the Jim Crow south. There were laws made against black people. They wasn’t made to give black people a chance or equal chance. Their aim, in my opinion, was to keep a black person in their place. And their place was not education; their place was to be in the fields, working, scrubbing floors or janitor work. With a limited education, that was the only jobs in the north they had to offer: janitors and maids for ladies, and for men: janitors, cleaning floors at the hotels.”

dialogue 35
Comments

Tamara Verhelle [01, 36, 37, 40]
My work is inspired from early 21st century children’s literature illustrations and treats the elements of what it could be like to be a part of a world that doesn’t exist. There are feelings of loneliness, anxiety, joy, wonder, and the coexistence of fear and curiosity of the unknown.

annreilly [07]
cheers.

Tory Roff [09]
Watercolor/Charcoal
These images were made using watercolor administered at random then reinterpreted using charcoal, thus allowing the subject matter to define itself through the relatively subconscious process of symbolic assignment. I quickly discovered that much of what I was reading into these images drew heavily on the theologies I was indoctrinated with as a child. Included here, are the three images that deal most directly with the soul in relation to God and salvation.

Elizabeth Oliver [20, 21]
Humans constantly process information. To shortcut this task, humans create categories and borders around complex subject matter. Interpretations of reality created by humans in turn work to create human reality; that is, we raise up the subjective to the level of objective. A map’s borders show this interplay: what we have defined comes to define us.

Anonymous [24]
In memory of Joshua A. Landavazo

Anne VanLoon [25]
Anne VanLoon is a Calvin senior and only submitted poems in a somewhat supreme (for her) act of bravery. She believes that she may have learned her lesson and plans to share other pieces she has written. As a lover of camping, and of travel around the US, much of her inspiration comes directly from the many wonderful places and creatures she has seen and enjoyed with her family.

poemo [25]
the road to hell is paved with just a pin(+)ch

Kristofer Nivens [27]
This piece is dedicated to the people of Maluku, who have toiled so hard and lost so much, and yet persevere.

Bull [28, 29]
Mary Jo,
I think you’re really keen, so I wrote you a poem, and I was hoping that you would be my steady girl. See you on the field.
Love,
Bull
P.S. Circle your answer: Yes No Maybe

Nathan Doran [29]
Please rotate.

Tory Roff [31]
One photo in a developing series addressing human occupation of the natural world.

Michael Rodriguez [32]
This is a palimpsest-themed project. A palimpsest refers to a tablet or manuscript that is repeatedly written upon, erased or scraped clean, and written upon again, creating a rich layering of markings. The blues is a musical palimpsest. Growing out of a mixture of black spirituals, field hollers, and African chants, the blues has been repeated by generations of musical story tellers and is the root of most music we are familiar with today. Representing three generations of bluesmen, this piece features the words and faces of Robert Johnson, John Lee Hooker, and Robert Cray.
Dialogue Music CD 2007

The Dialogue Music CD features and appreciates the music of the Calvin College community. These songs and songs from all past Dialogue CD’s are available at the Dialogue website: http://clubs.calvin.edu/dialogue/

01 Manifesto, Nice Machine
02 Africa, Oihoma Eigege
03 Who Could Be Against Us, A Thousand Plateaus
04 Jacques Cousteau, Edward Westerhuis
05 Home Décor, The Snowdays
06 Flowin’ With The Arabic Beat, Egyptian Heat
07 Seaside, the Camp
08 What your Love is, Laura Hollingsworth
09 What I’m Lookin’ For, Jenna Karas
10 I’m awakened, Ben and Bruno
11 Crying Out Loud, Jeff Lawson, Kyle Sandison, and Amy de Jong
12 She’s Not Me, Katie Renton
13 Tie Me Up, Kyle Veldhouse
14 blue eyed baby, the story painted
15 107, Tara Kloostra
16 Vinyl/New Friend Song, Merry Christmas + Abe Lincoln Envy, The Disco Yahtzee Empire

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.

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Staff
(in order of length of time attending Church of the Servant)
Elizabeth Schaefer, EJV, Lisa Szumiak, RAZ, Beth Oliver, Jonathan Lovelace, Bradley Smith, Amy de Jong, Alissa Goudswaard, Ryan Weberling, KJK, John Van Dyke, John “Moose” Williamson
Patron Saint Wangari Maathai

Thanks to all those who submitted their work, and thanks also to our readers. Thanks to Brad for photographing and to Visual Arts Guild. Printed at Spectrum Graphics. Soli Deo Gloria.