

Creative Writing

Within the English department, there have always been people interested in creative writing (to counterbalance all those essays). Dr. Corporaal started a workshop Creative Writing in the second semester of the academic year of 2004-2005. It has become a continuous workshop, open to anyone interested in creative writing

(mainly poetry, (short) stories and dialogues). Wednesday evening meetings allow participants to read and talk about self-written poetry, and on Poetry Nights, as 9 December last year, the creative writers are able to perform their writings to a real audience. And there are other activities too, as you can read below.

The Creative Writing Trip to The Hague

During the previous Creative Writing workshop one of the assignments was to bring something to class of another kind of art that (had) inspired you. Although unfortunately we missed out on that session due to a miscommunication, everyone was enthusiastic about the idea. Especially music and the plastic arts seemed to be a source of inspiration, so it was not surprising Marguerite Corporaal suggested we should go on a museum trip this year. We soon decided to go to The Hague, to the Escher Museum and the Beelden aan Zee museum.

We started the day calmly with a cup of coffee or tea at the Buitenhof, where the warm and sunny October weather allowed us to sit outside. Although the waitress wasn't sure she could serve a big group like us fast enough, we knew she could, because we weren't in a hasty mood.

When we were walking to the Escher Museum, we were reminded of The Hague being the Dutch political centre by the apparently random presence of the anti-riot police unit. Although long ago they may have had to protect the Palace, which now houses the Escher Museum, that day the building seemed peaceful. Once inside, we saw that the age and beauty of the old palace was emphasised and put into a more modern perspective by the huge, arty chandeliers by Hans van Bentem.

The exhibition was very complete, at least to the eyes of someone that isn't that knowledgeable on Escher. From every stage of his life and work there was a selection of material on display. Starting with rather life-like etchings of landscapes, to his famous impossible buildings, and some modern additions like a 3D interactive film. After having looked around for a while a couple of us started to write about the things they had seen, and Marguerite Corporaal tried to get away with sitting in the old window seat (the word says it all), but unfortunately the custodian told her to find another spot...

Sander had been so kind as to arrange fun and cheap places for lunch and dinner, so

before we went to Beelden aan Zee, we enjoyed sandwiches dressed with interesting and tasteful combinations like banana, raisins and a hot pepper sauce. After that, we went to Beelden aan Zee in Scheveningen, which was very different from the Palace and Escher! Some people thought the building light and spacious, while I myself got a little claustrophobic. But that was partly to do with the art in it, as well as the "squareness" and "viewlessness" (all there was to see was sky, until you got to the highest level of the terrace outside, where you could finally see the sea). Beelden aan Zee displayed art by the Chinese Avant-garde, as well as the fixed exhibition of statues outside. The people who had not been too impressed by the Escher exhibition certainly were impressed now: the Chinese Avant-garde has made some shockingly violent, and yet very creative pieces of art. Of course China has gone through some major changes, and the confusion and protest was easily found in the art. Personally, I learned a lot from the background film material that was shown.

The Statues, including one by Karel Appel (the most colourful statue), and several of the Dutch royal family (they must have been a joke, or so we thought), were placed beautifully against a background of walls, sky, and sea, giving them all the space, and confinement, they needed. When we left the museum, we decided to go for a short walk along the boulevard and discovered the "wild" statues. They were lovely human-like creatures, from huge to tiny, which depicted different myths and fairytales. They were more accessible than most statues inside the museum, figuratively as well as literally: some small children were climbing the bigger ones.

We ended this successful day by eating pancakes in Scheveningen. Although not everybody had written something during the day, within two weeks afterwards, most of us had processed our impressions and put them on paper.

By Merel Mookhoek



Two Poems by Two Creative Writers

Sonnet II

By Merit Elschot

When I had played one reckless game of dice,
It seemed our summer-days were soon expired,
As you resolved to frost your breast in ice;
You felt so numb that even the soul retired.

But tempests roused your lonely heart from rest,
Incessant rain dissolved the tears uncried,
And Jove himself expressed your anger best,
Until the moon bestowed nocturnal pride.

Your inner rosebud slowly gained some strength,
Because a fragile sun replaced the gloom;
Yet you withhold the stem its proper length,
Afraid as well to let your flower bloom.

This sphere isn't fixed, so summer will begin,
Behold, the House of Love does always win.

Short Story

Videodate

A story by Agaath Diemel

So here I am: on the right side of forty, but only just. Three cats and a house full of potted plants to look after. That should be enough. Not that I haven't tried: for nine years I was in a relationship, six of them married. Until one day my now-ex said he had to go and find himself... Famous last words! And for three years I seriously thought that when he did find himself he would come back to me. But then one day I heard from this friend of a friend who had found a lovely guy through a dating-agency. Not just heard, I met them too: he was lovely and they were very much in love. So I thought I might give it a try and I registered with this dating agency. Videodating, it was, but it's not what you think. I know it sounds ambiguous, to say the least, but it is really quite innocent: instead of a profile, they send you a video, or a DVD nowadays, but I'm an old-fashioned girl. So I got in touch with number one. Yes, that means more followed, and all shall be revealed.

Number one was perfect, from his crew-cut down to his cute, small size seven feet. The first time we met in a restaurant it was butterflies for both of us, amazing that that could still happen at our age! After that he came to my place a

No More Wasted Land

By Daniela Silvestri

We talked for an hour
And I understood how cruel the winter had been
to you:

A friend's betrayal, a lover lost.
Ground zero.

Winter had been cruel to me too,
Made me cold, made me forget who I was.
My true nature was covered in forgetful snow.

There we were,
Your arms
melted the snow covering my cold soul,
The innocent look in my eyes
Made you feel free.

With the help of each other
We were breeding lilacs out of the dead land.
Summer sure surprised us.

I'm imagining myself crawling back up,
Dusting off the mud on my face.
Taking matters in my own hand,
Creating and ruling my own luck,
Leaving this desolated place.
I don't want to be stuck
In your world of pessimism.

couple of times, he said he lived with a mate temporarily. So when he came in one day carrying this humongous sports bag, I thought he was about to move in. No need to say I approved. I was in love, we were, well, not so young but free and single...? And the sex was great, every time. That is, until this afternoon, when he suddenly started crying his eyes out! I didn't know what to do: a grown man in my bed, crying like a baby, had someone died or what? The truth came out between sobs: Mr. Perfect turned out to be perfectly married, and he had just realised he was risking his perfect little existence with a wife, a house, a dog and most of all his three year old daughter for what to him was no more than an affair. So I said he'd better leave and he made a run for it. Afterwards I wondered why he didn't just have an affair with the office floozy or someone, why had he gone through all the trouble with the agency and where on earth had they sent him his videos? Of course I never gave him a chance to explain. I did ask after the sports bag however

when he was hurrying out: that turned out to have been his alibi for the day: playing footy with the boys! I could have shopped him to the agency, I'm sure he wasn't breaking my rules only. But I spared him the humiliation: I had a feeling he wasn't gonna do it again in a hurry: those tears looked pretty real to me and I had liked him after all.

I needed some time to get over this, but if you fall off your bike they say.....So I got in touch with number two. I'd learnt my lesson: number two was definitely single, he was about a decade my junior and he still lived with his mum. Beware of men still living with their mother! But I'm getting ahead of the story now, because at first it was perfect bliss again. Number two was a nature lover and as a warm spring was just giving way to a wonderful summer, we sure explored nature! He knew lots of secluded romantic spots and at that time I wasn't cynical enough to realise that living with his mum, he probably needed secluded spots more often than the average person. I can't remember what we used to talk about: he loved cars, I couldn't drive, I love to read, and he never did. Still we must have had more common ground than that which we lay on; otherwise the agency wouldn't have matched us up, would they? Anyway, when the weather changed, we decided to meet at my place. From the moment he came in that day, I sensed something was wrong, though it took me two hours to get it out of him: that morning he had told his mother about me. And she had seriously objected to her darling boy being involved with a somewhat mature divorcee. So Nature Boy was called back into the fold. I told him he'd better leave, and he nearly fell down the stairs running. Well, if he wasn't going to stand up to his darling mum now, he probably never would, so good riddance in the end, or at least that's how I feel about it now.

Now I really needed time to get over it: twice I'd opened my heart and twice it had been stepped on. It was almost as painful as getting over my marriage, but I had managed that, so I was determined this wasn't going to finish me off. Needless to say, I wasn't keen on meeting any number threes. That is, until this tape came through the letterbox and I thought I could at least watch it. Admittedly, with long dark hair and a moustache and a first name like Romano, he wasn't really my cup of tea. More like a cross between a New Age traveller and an extra in a pirate movie. But you know what, this one actually made me laugh, which is what I really needed. So I got in touch with him. I explained I'd been hurt before, but that I wouldn't mind being friends and just see what would happen. And that's how it started, with the occasional phone call, some

text messages and lots of e-mail. He used to send me funny stories about how he hunted this mermaid for two years and when he finally caught her in the local swimming pool, he barbecued her in the changing rooms. Or he would send me outrageous speeches I could use to tell my boss where to put it...Slowly he worked his way into my affection. And long after I was still saying he was just a friend, people around me noticed I had that huge grin on my face again. Mind you, we hadn't met in person yet. But that was about to change. And being the crazy guy he was, he invented we should meet each holding a single white rose, although we knew perfectly well what the other looked liked. By that time, I didn't object to anything anymore, I was sure he would explain the meaning of it some-time. So there I was fifteen minutes early, holding my rose, looking out for my Romano. He was late and by the time he was very late, I started imagining things. Like how it had all been some elaborate hoax, and one of my colleagues was about to jump out from somewhere with a white rose between his teeth, mouthing "Romano says hello". It wasn't as bad as all that, or was it? I guess I'll never know. Maybe Mama Romano had objected for some obscure reason, or maybe Mrs. Romano had returned prematurely from her extended holiday in the Balkan. I was worried enough to try and find out, but he didn't return my call and he never answered my mail.

After that I gave up. This was four months ago now and I've given up on all men since. Me, my cats and my house full of plants, that's enough to look after and worry about for one lifetime. But you can't help dreaming sometimes. There is this program on BBC called "Love me, love my kids", I only saw it once, but there was this guy with four small children and they found him the perfect girlfriend! Maybe they could do a special for me: love me, love my cats. At least the girls are very choosy, they wouldn't pick a dog-owner, for starters, or anyone with other funny smells, or anyone that wouldn't look them in the eyes. It would make great television, my girls scratching the eyes out of the photos of the unsuccessful applicants and jumping claw-extended on the "lucky" guys, to see if they are kitty-proof. But no, I said I'd given up on men. What is going on anyway? Girls, what are you hanging around the front door for, all three of you? Something wrong with the cat-flap? What's all this meowing about, someone trying to get in? Oh, Milady, let me see that, what are you sitting on? Oh no, it couldn't be...not another padded envelope, not another video...hmm, at least this one seems to come with feline approval! OK, girls, let's go and see what the cats dragged in.