



# Point of View

## 1994-1995

### 25th Anniversary Edition

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This collage was created to honor the students whose work appeared in the first 25 years of *Point of View*.





Paul Andrew E. Smith  
*Point of View* 25th Anniversary

Collage of Covers  
(40" x 30")

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Winner of the *Point of View* Award \*

Winner of the Vivian Steward Award \*\*

Winner of the Ray Mills Award \*\*\*



## A Tribute to John Muchmore

Eileen Manusos

When it was first suggested to me that this year's *Point of View* might include a tribute to Dr. John Muchmore, who will retire this summer, I quickly agreed. In fact, I decided to write the article myself, so that I could be sure it conveyed not only Dr. Muchmore's (significant) academic contributions to Harper, but that it emphasized the personal impact he has made on those he comes in contact with.

I sat down and wrote one introductory paragraph after another, each sounding as sentimental as an eulogy for Mother Theresa would be . . . Harper College suffers a loss . . . highly respected . . . truly gifted. . . .

No, no! I'll try another approach I thought, and so I solicited the remarks of some of the staff, faculty and past students. What I learned was that my emotional response to Dr. Muchmore's

retirement was hardly a unique position. Sometimes, I decided, sentimentality is called for and is entirely appropriate. I went back home, dug out my old "To Sir With Love" 45, and indulged myself. No longer struggling to write a highly polished, "collegiate-type" article, I just strung together stories and comments I'd collected.

English Professor, Barbara Njus, marvels at Dr. Muchmore's speaking style. She writes, "Vachel Lindsay, John's favorite poet, was renowned for his dynamic delivery during readings, but in March, at John's performance 'From Bad to Verse,' John himself out-Lindsayed Lindsay."

Jeanne Pankanin, Director of Student Activities, will miss the times she and John would lunch together. "He used to beg me for rides on the back of my motorcycle. So off we'd go, I in my pink leather jacket and he in his coat and tie. Maybe now that he's retiring, he'll be able to get his *own* darn motorcycle!"

English Professor, Roy Mottla, credits some of Dr. Muchmore's success to his "complete lack of cynicism. I have never once heard him ridicule student efforts, or indicate that he feels them incapable of achieving. On the contrary, he takes his students and their work very seriously, and treats them respectfully. Students recognize this and respond to it, and it sets a wonderful example for the rest of us."

Pat Wenthold, Supervisor of the Writing Center, "admires his ability to bring two opposing sides to a consensus. This is a quality I hate to see lost here at Harper." Dr. Muchmore was Pat's high school English teacher "some time ago." She was unaware he taught at Harper when she was hired and remembers walking down the hallway and hearing him call "Patti" behind her. We both agreed that even his ability to recall names so quickly is in itself a reflection of his character.

Part-time Instructor Judy Kaplow shares with us her difficulty in refraining from punning Dr. Muchmore's name (who of us hasn't had the same urge?). "Muchmore . . . how could I not? So I did. But John is not the kind of man to let aggression, linguistic or otherwise, go unanswered. My name—Kaplow—isn't an obvious target, but imagination and determination combined can do wonders. For the rest of my life, I can expect John to mispronounce my name gleefully and with impunity, for I have no one to blame but myself. Obviously, I should pick the targets of my sorry attempts at wit with greater care. Or should I say, with much more care? (Good parting shot!) She closes with, "Oh, John, you still do wear the best ties on campus."

Which brings me to the comments of Frank Smith, yet another English professor. Twice I asked him to share a "Muchmore story" with me, and both times he chuckled, shook his head and said, "Well, he had an amazing collection of 'leisure suites' in the seventies." (I wonder, what's with the fashion fixation in the Liberal Arts Division?)

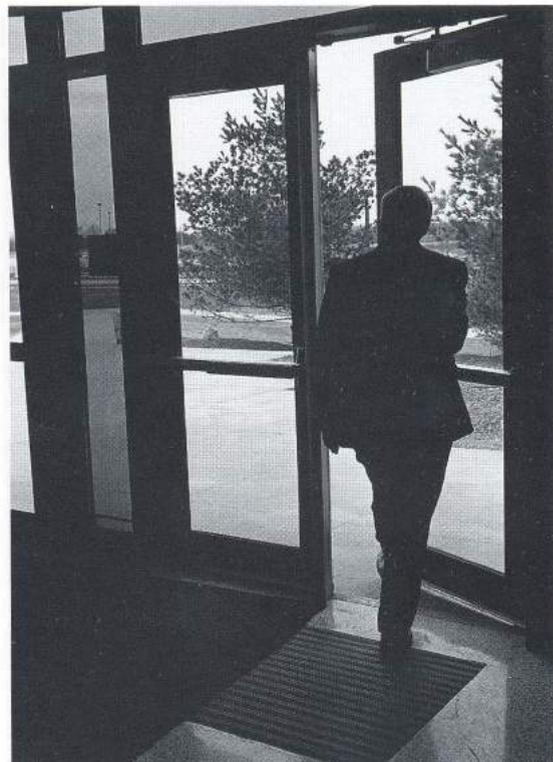
Mary Jo Willis, Associate Professor of Speech and Theatre, credits Dr. Muchmore with saving her job. She recalls when she was still working towards tenure, the school was suffering from financial difficulties and decided to let go of all non-tenured faculty. Each dean was to submit a list of all such teachers to the administration. Dr. Muchmore marched into the dean's office, took the paper with Mary Jo's name on it off his desk and tore it up, stating that he would not permit such a thing to happen. "His success in this matter was a testimony to the esteem in which John was held by both faculty and administration. In the years since, our admiration for him has only increased."

Past student, Marti Lansu confesses to putting off taking Speech

as long as she could, hoping that "the Guardians of Curriculum would eventually decide that Speech class was no longer necessary and drop the requirement." Having no such luck, she finally took Dr. Muchmore's class and now wishes she would have taken it sooner. She admits her hands shook during her first speech, but with Dr. Muchmore's direction, she gained more confidence with each speech. She says he has "given me tools, and I am already seeing the benefits in presentations I make and in the groups I lead."

My own memory is of my last day of speech class. I was finishing up the final exam, and realized that I would turn it in and end my association with a person I was sincerely going to miss. Consequently, I have since dropped in on Dr. Muchmore once or twice every semester, and each time he graciously acts as if I were an invited guest (when I know he must be thinking, *will this person never graduate?!).*

There you have it, Dr. Muchmore, a great-big, teary-eyed, sentimental send off from the people who know and love you . . . "To Sir, With Love."



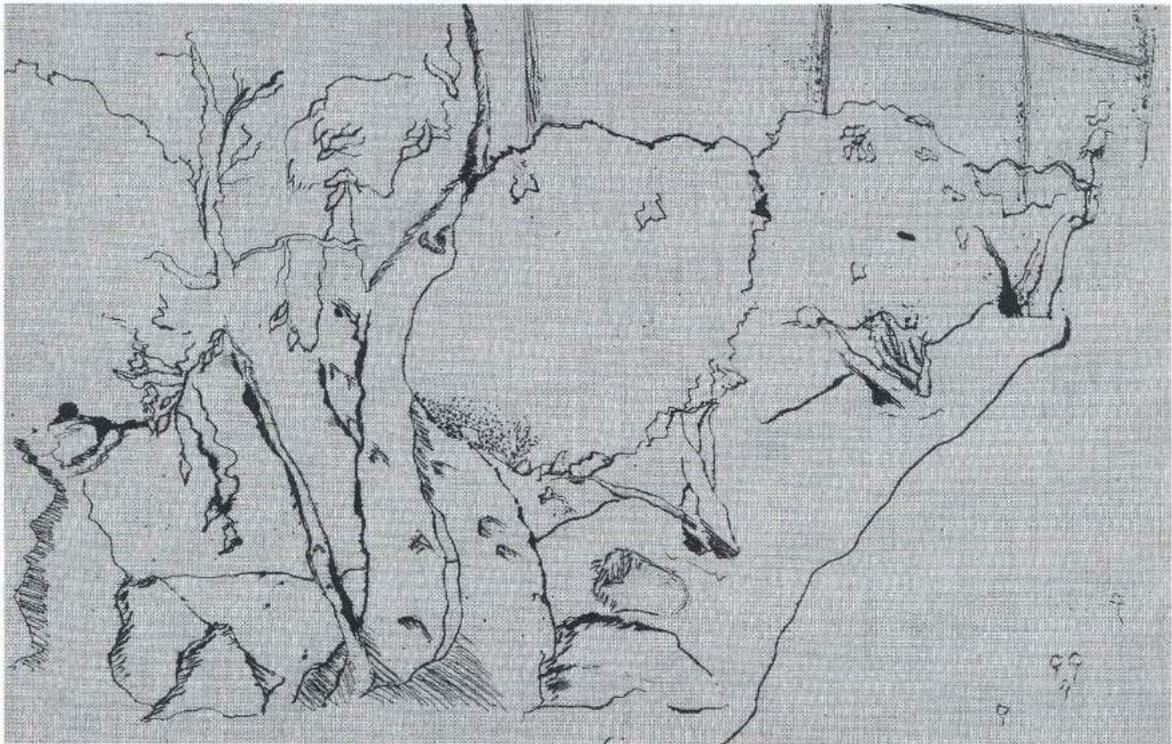
## Remembering Apt. #36

Audrey Schumacher

Full of dingy  
Grey dank  
Old kitchen curtains  
And yellowed linoleum in the bathroom.  
Stiff scratchy Green  
Carpeting  
Making you prefer to wear shoes inside  
Instead of running your bare toes  
Across.  
Mom sitting on the couch  
Smoking her cigarettes, listening  
To Linda Ronstadt tell her how easy it is to fall in love  
As I sat next to her in my Sesame Street nightgown.  
Nights of watching Norma Rae  
Over and over  
Listening to loud drunk men in the alley  
Mom getting up to check the lock on the door.  
Inside was full of quiet empty nights  
Of T.V. and Candyland  
If I could get her to play, that is.  
Laughing and dancing to Barbra Streisand records  
Feeling like Mom was the only person in the world.  
And the night she told me that John Lennon was shot  
Telling me she'd shoot anyone who tried to  
Hurt me  
Knowing she was telling the truth  
Afraid of what she might be capable of.  
Apartment #36  
Is full of little girl nights with Mom  
And feeling that nothing would ever end.



Rosalyn B. Campbell  
**Pride**  
Color Photo  
(5" x 7")



Charlotte Katial  
**Landscape Study**  
Pen and Ink  
(17" x 11")

## A Fairy Tale

M. B. Erin

Little boy stands, grass past his ass, smoking grass between finger and thumb. Old man next door, sticks his head outside his living room window, shakes his head. Points his shotgun BANG! he says. Little varmint up to something like a coyote lookin' at a henhouse.

No reaction. Little boy sees nothing but the house across the way; hears nothing but thoughts in his head. Feels arm emotions and leg emotions, physical feelings. Worthless, weak feelings masticated, digested, and excreted out by the anticipating mouths of Smoke and Drink. Takes a hit from his joint.

Miss Laury Lisa could see the boy staring at her through the window. Everyday for the past two weeks, he had been there. Standing in her backyard. Smoking bud. Watching her. She puzzled about him. Couldn't be more than eleven or twelve. Don't think he's a voyeur. Potential sociopath, maybe. Never yelled, "Shoo! Get outta here, kid!" Just let him stand there, while she painted her canvas, until he tired of watching her and left.

Today he stands closer. He watches Laury squeeze a tube of phthalo green acrylic. Plllt, it says vomiting up its guts onto a make-shift palette, a plastic tray once used for keeping pens organized. What can he see from there? she thinks. He obviously does not see Old Man Next Door giving him the finger. He just watches her. So she watches him. She puts her elbow on the window-sill and leans on her hand, locking their eyes together. Swimmy smoke floats in front of his steadfast gaze, while his

fresh-lit cigarette devours itself with fiery teeth.

Five minutes pass. Nothing. He still stands, staring. Unwavering. Her arm aches and her mind mixes feelings of boredom and intimidation. Whatshouldldo FUCK. Riing.

Hello? Oh, good, Cheryl, it's you. That kid's back . . . No. What would the police do? . . . Yeah, I guess trespassin' . . . Hell, you know Vernon. My brother wouldn't get outta his chair, 'cept maybe to getta beer. He just says Who cares? Who cares, all the time. Says we're all goin' to hell anyway, might as well let the kid earn his place there now 'stead a later. Whattaya figger all that means? . . . Why don't you come over for lunch today? You can see that kid.

White paint peels from old wood framing grassy ground and sky. Laury Lisa slides up window pane for better view, sticking her head out looking side to side. Kid's gone. Damn. Everybody's gonna think I'm imagining things.

Two plates. Two faces facing each other over fried chicken, corn, potatoes. "You know Ethan Mitchell? Got laid off from the factory the other day. His cousin was laid off month before that. Right before the strike, too. Company knows that, too. Hell, everyone knows there's a strike every four years."

Laury squished her corn with the back of her fork. "Think that kid lives round these parts, Cheryl?"

"That's what I'm gettin' at. I'm thinkin' he's Ethan's kid. Ain't got no mother. Remember how she disappeared and they ain't never found the body?"

"You tryin' to tell me that kid's killed his mother and now is after me?"

"Hell, no, Laury. You know as well as I that that boy's mother disappeared when he was two. What I'm thinkin' is...maybe he's lookin' for another *mother*."

"Fairytales," said Laury. Tales

about fairies. Tales of fairies. Tales told by fairies.

\* \* \*

Pink wings tremble in the breeze as the wild daisies sway. The fairies are gathered in a circle, each one sits atop his or her own flower.

"It's storytime!" cries out one gaily. This one stands as shouts of joy ring out around him.

"I have a true story for you...of a *fire-breathing* human!"

"Like the dragons who fly over the mountains in the old stories?" asks another fairy.

"Right."

"Was he old and wrinkled and evil?"

"Wrong. He was young and smooth and no more evil than good."

"Was he, perhaps, looking for his long lost mother?"

\* \* \*

He stands There as she paints his likeness on the canvas. There, amongst the wild grass and daisies, he poses. Between sleeping ashes and dying sun. Everything alive is composed of things dead, thinks Laury. It's seems to make sense that we are living and dying at the same time. Laury was dying. Little boy was dying.

Little boy doesn't feel like he's dying. Except when he smokes weed does he feel the grip of life loosening, as though he isn't totally there. Old Man doesn't scare him with his unloaded rifle and his crazy shouts. The older you get, the crazier. Crazy. I'm already crazy. Crazy like a wild dog. Crazy and carefree. And unloved. Maybe that's how I like to be, he shouts out loud.

He sees the lady stir. She looks away from her painting. The wild animal speaks? When he first started coming round, she acted as though she did not even see him watching her. Lately, however, *she* seemed to be watching *him*. He edges closer to

see her reaction. After all, he is a kid, and kids like games. This is his favorite game, but he isn't really sure what the game is.

He just likes the open field, the seeming seclusion in the midst of so much openness. Open sky. Open space. He can do whatever he wants right in front of the farmhouses and the people and the world, and no one does anything to stop him.

He is free.

He is.

alone and surrounded  
StrongINDEPENDENT!not one to  
succumb to the needs of the soul  
LOVE

Love makes you die

Something *Missing*.

It's fun to see what people do, after I have done. Fill that empty boredom with fun. FUNFUNFUN is what's missing . . . it *must* be that which is missing.

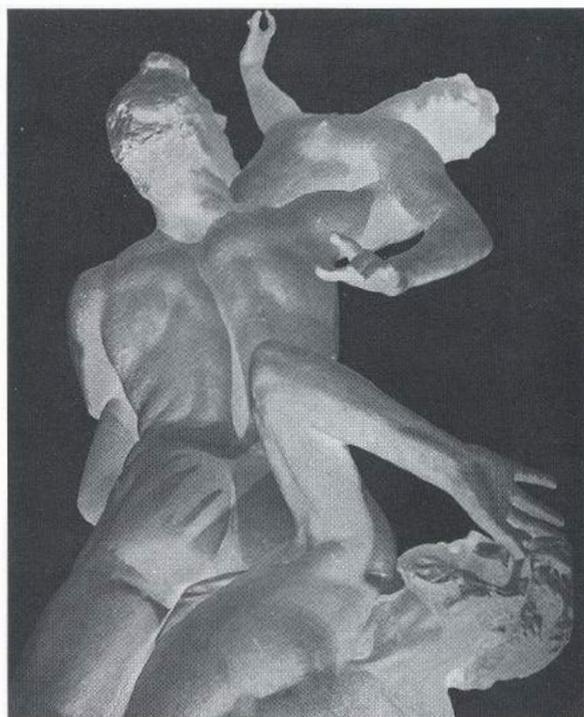
What else is there?

Schoolisboringandespeciallymathisbor  
ingandparentsareboingandbaseballan  
dsportsareboringandreadingisboringan  
ndcleaningisboringandpeopleareborin  
gandsoarepetsandinsideisboringando  
utsideisboringandEarthisboringandsoi  
sHeavenandHell!

"BANG!" laughs Old Man at his Old Joke. Shit, that rifle was loaded. Oh, well, it's all legal. The kid was trespassing. Just another coyote no one wants hanging around, anyway.

Little Boy stumbles through hands of grass grabbing at his legs, twisting about him, trying to pull him down. A rabbit footsteps away from where Little Boy had stood, the rabbit now lay bleeding, not feeling its death. Little Boy felt his life beating heavy in his chest. Everything surrounding him (grass, sun, trees, homes, all) jumps out at him, clear and real in odor, sight, and feel. Little Boy runs in fear, but after a long distance his pace begins to slow, and a sensation creeps up through his throat. He begins to laugh.

\* \* \*



Katie Kavanagh  
**The Rape**

B&W Photo  
(7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" )

Laury jumped. A sudden bang had shocked her.

Old Man Next Door disappeared from his window, melting into the darkness.

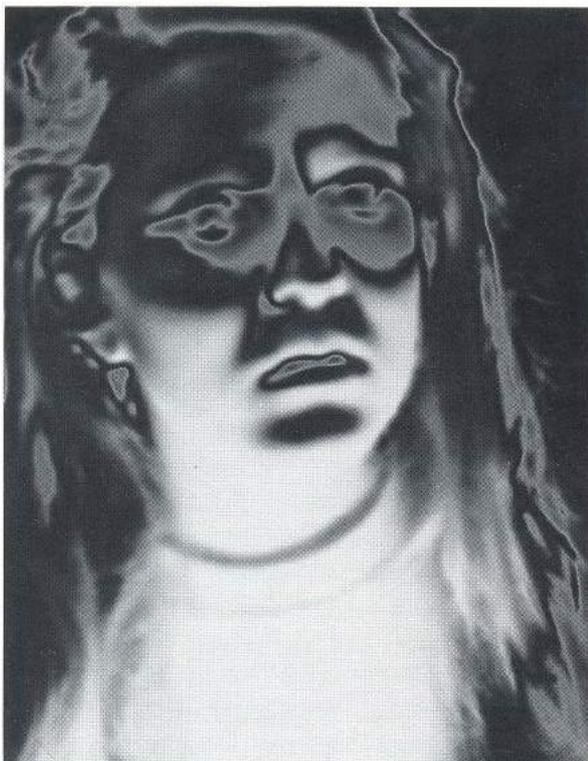
"My God! He's shooting at him!"

The back door of her house swung open. There, among the wild grass and daisies, Laury found a tiny bleeding bunny body. Little Boy was gone.

Laury had a mind to go over to Old Man Next Door's house and have a word or two with him, but decided against it, fearing he might be in the state of mind to plug *her* with a few of those bullets. She decided, instead, that it was about time to get the police involved.

\* \* \*

"Benjamin! Ben! Where you been, boy?" Little Boy's father stands, resting one arm on a rake, beckoning with the hand of his other arm for Ben to come closer. Ben stops laughing



Katie Kavanagh  
Krissey

B&W Photo  
(7<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" x 9<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" )

immediately upon hearing his name. The excitement of escape begins to drain from him. He walks slowly towards his father.

"You been disappearin' a lot lately, Ben."

His father's eyes penetrated Ben's head steadily for an accusing minute of silence.

Ben shrugs. His eyes remained locked on his shoes.

"Don't you disappear on me, too, son."

*Don't you disappear, too . . . disappear, too . . . disappear, too . . .*

Little Boy Ben watches the minnows ripple the quiet creek. He catches a tiny brown toad, and lets it spring out of his hands. Another Indian Bead is found among the pebbles. He adds it to the collection in his pocket. He reads the graffiti written on the concrete under the bridge. Alison gives good head. MJ + LL Forever. Mike R. was here. Rob A. was here. For a good time, call

Alison.

This beautiful place. This frightening lonely place.

At home, he draws in his sketch pad a quiet creek. Minnows mind their own business, swimming quickly around an obstruction that dams the creek. The water taunts the hair and naked flesh of the unwelcome obstruction. The decaying woman ignores everything, including her nakedness, while she doesn't feel her death.

What if Mama *is* lying in a ditch somewhere? Ben thinks. What if Mama suffered? No, no. Mama just disappeared like steam into the air.

\* \* \*

"His mother wasn't long lost," says the fairy. "No one misplaced her. One day she woke up, went down to the kitchen, put a kettle on the stove, and evaporated."

"I hate when that happens," says another fairy.

"She didn't like it much, either. But that's another story. This story is about a misconception."

"I thought it was about a fire-breathing human!"

"That was then. This is now. He isn't smoking anymore. Now he is dreaming."

"Of what?"

"I will tell you. But first I have to tell you another story."

"Oh, no. Not more diversions."

\* \* \*

"Well, I called the police, Cheryl," Laury says to the phone.

"It's about time," the phone says back. "I don't know, Laury. But I'm afraid that kid's some kind of freak...always watchin' you like that."

"Mr. Phelps, my next door neighbor, shot at him."

"Whattaya mean, 'shot at him'?"

"I mean, *shot at him*."

"My God! He's crazy!"

"This whole thing's crazy. Mr. Phelps's crazy. That kid's crazy. The



Michelle Brandau

untitled

Pencil

(11" x 19<sup>3</sup>/<sub>4</sub>" )

headphones. The singer moans about his feelings of inadequacy and loneliness. Ben wishes he knew this man. This was a man who would truly understand him. Nobody at school understands him. The guys call him names. The girls point and giggle, whispering hurtful things in one another's ears. Today, one even walked over and said, "You know, you're really cute. You want to be my boyfriend?" And all her friends started laughing, while she smirked.

He punched her in the face.

He ran out of the school and down the street before any of the other boys could catch him. Tomorrow will suck. But today, bitchy Betsy Fuck-Face has a black eye and he has some time off. Betsy could care less about hurting Ben, but that is because she isn't human. And since she isn't human, she hasn't any feelings. So it doesn't matter that Ben punched her in the face because she couldn't feel it anyway.

This singer understands. He is a human being. He knows how it feels to be one. He is an artist, and all artists are sensitive. They feel others' emotions. They *know*.

Ben is an artist. And so is that lady in the big house. Maybe she would listen. Or maybe she would just understand him without him saying a word.

\* \* \*

"This is a story about fairies," says the fairy.

"Oh, no, not another story about fairies. WAIT! That's us! It's a story about us!" This other fairy claps his hands.

whole damn thing's crazy! The police said next time he comes trespassin', to give them a call. Doubt if he will come back after that scare, though."

"Well, then. Maybe your neighbor shooting at him was a good thing."

Three days have passed without a visit from Little Boy. He still stares at her, though, with glossy painted eyes. So she tucks the painting of him away behind a pile of old masterpieces. She primes a new canvas. Her brother burps.

So does Ben, who is just finishing lunch at his house. He should be in school. But then again, he was never where he should be. He tosses back cheese curls while listening to his

"A group of fairies assembled on the daisies to hear stories. One begins to tell the story of a fire-breathing human..."

"Wo. Deja-vu."

"...but he is interrupted by a lump of mud."

"Hey, I'm offended!"

"No. No. You're not the mud. Do you think we are the only fairies who tell the tales? No. For this fairy was telling the tale, too, when a lump of mud interrupted him by landing PLOP! right on him. He dug out from under the pile and stood up, looking around angrily. Three rabbits were slinging mud at each other and shouting ugly things. As you know, it is really out of character for rabbits to do this, but nonetheless, they were. 'Hey, what's wrong with you rabbits?!' yelled the fairy. 'Yeah,' said the other fairies. 'What's the deal?' 'That one touched my carrot! He was going to steal it!' said one rabbit, pointing accusingly at another. 'Liar! There was no carrot! You just threw mud at me to be mean! You think you're the only one in this world with problems so you take it out on me!' said the second rabbit. The third rabbit stomped his big feet and fumed, 'I have problems, too, you know.' The second rabbit pointed at the muddy fairy. 'Hey, you're a fairy. So you're magical, right? So you *know*. You understand me. You know that these other guys are evil and I am good.' 'Hey, I'm the good one here, buddy!' yelled the other two. 'Hey hey hey. Look here. I'm just a fairy!' says the fairy. The end."

\* \* \*

"All artists are fairies," belches Laury's brother, oozing his body into a chair. Laury ignores him. No point telling a toilet it's full of shit. Laury stares at blank canvas. She cannot paint, knowing that Little Boy is there in the room with her, watching her from her most recently finished painting. Suddenly, she pushes aside the paintings in front of it, grabs it and

throws it into a trash bag, and puts it out on the street to await a landfill.

Laury's brother stares at a *Playboy* centerfold. He coughs, his mouth open and head tilted down, causing drool to shoot out onto the image of the woman's left breast. Laury comes into the living room to see this. That's what that boy is...another pervert, she thinks. Cheryl had been telling her all about the kinds of people who watch other people through windows. They're called stalkers. They're called psychos. It doesn't matter what age they are. Laury had been too calm about the whole situation. That boy is definitely a nut case and should be locked up. The old nut next door should be locked up along with him.

Laury picks up a paintbrush. She has no idea what to paint. She puts the paintbrush back down. From the corner of her eye she sees movement outside her window. She turns and looks outside. The Psycho is back.

\* \* \*

"You never told us the story about the dreaming human," complains the other fairy.

"It's too late, now. The story is almost over," replied the story-telling fairy.

"Oh, come on. Tell us the story."

"O.K. But I'll have to talk fast. He is dreaming while he walks awake. He dreams of a missing mother, who one day left the house and never came back. He is dreaming of shattered fragments that become whole again, become his father again. He is dreaming of a perfect human who can see him as being not only bad, but good. And not only good, but bad. As being human, with weaknesses. Not wholly evil. Not perfect. But he wants this understanding person to be perfect, he *believes* this person is perfect. But human beings can only be human beings, not matter what they call themselves. Be it artist. Be it poet. Be it psychologist. Be it King. And so it ends."

"That's it? That's the end?"  
"Not quite. But here it comes."

Laury calls the police. They're sending someone right now, they say. Ben stands between trees. He wants to walk up to the house and ring the doorbell but the fear of a bullet tearing through him holds him back. He imagines the artist-lady opening the door, nodding her head, saying, "I knew you would come back. Although you looked so tough, so indifferent to me, I knew that you would come back because you were missing something. You're missing love and understanding." Yes, Ben thinks. Everything is going to turn out alright.

The old man isn't in his window, but Ben decides to keep low just in case. On his hands and knees, he crawls through the grass towards Laury's house. Laury sees him approaching. She locks her doors and windows.

"Go see what that kid wants, Vernon! Get off your lazy ass and see what that kid is doin' out there!!!"

Vernon burps at her. Then, he gets up. Slowly. And lumbers to the door. He swings it wide.

"Listen, kid...!" Ben is standing before him.

A squad car pulls up in front of the house. Laury opens the front door and gestures towards the back of the house. "Around back. The kid's back there."

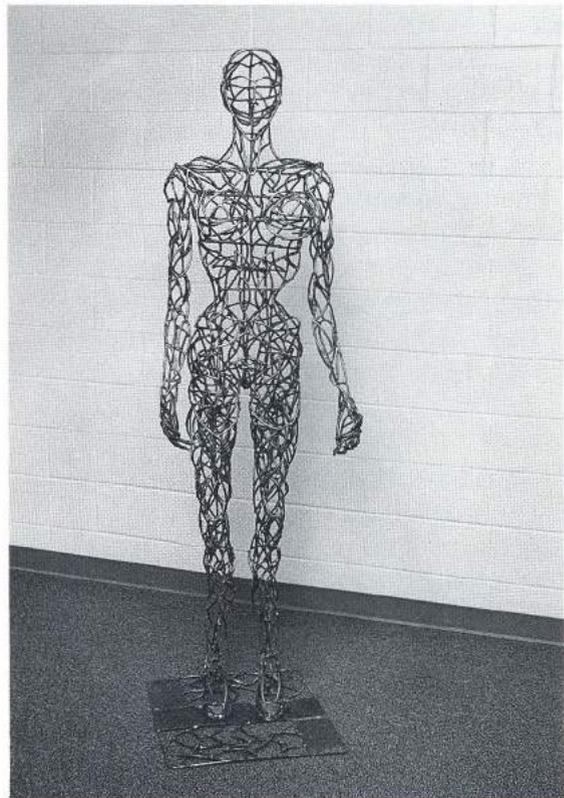
Ben stumbles back, not expecting to see the large, sloppy man in the doorway. The sound of shuffling feet to the side of the house turns Ben's head. Vernon seizes Ben by the

collar, just as policeman comes around the corner.

"You're not leaving, just when you got here, are you?" says Vernon.

The policeman questions him, but receives no answer. Laury watches through the window. The little boy is nearer to her now than he has ever been before. He is looking at her, still. He does not look shocked or angry. Instead, he looks confused. He wore the look that someone innocent would give to his accuser. How could he dare look at her that way, like he didn't understand? After all that shit he had pulled?

He sits quietly in the squad car during the ride down to the station. Little Boy's mind's direction is lost. The path it had followed had been the wrong one. I don't need anybody, he thinks. There is nobody for me.



Bryant Eng  
**untitled**  
Welded Steel

# STRIPES

**Jim Schiferl**

Every white Honda Civic hatchback is you  
minus 915 024 and stripes.  
No others have stripes, you said.  
Not black ones alternating thick and thin  
giving it a two tone effect.  
I think of a prisoner pounding out the plates  
in some jail, lucky to be alive.  
Do they really make them?

Every white Honda Civic hatchback that drove by  
caught my eye as I looked for the stripes, the numbers.  
You're so silly, you'd say.  
But my heart would race upon first glimpse of 9 or stripe,  
sending it out of rhythm.  
I think of the elderly couple still dancing and glancing  
like puppy lovers.  
Is that you behind the wheel?

White Honda hatchbacks still make me look  
just in case.  
Stop it, I tell myself every time.  
They don't have stripes or 915 024 or anyone important  
behind the wheel, yet the heart slips.  
I go home and take my medication for the bad heart,  
no side effects or pain.  
How do people take AZT?

With the Honda gone, I am bored as I drive around town  
without anything to hope for.  
The motions are the same and I muddle through.  
Eyes the color of the stripes, body scent as unique s car plates  
both left with the Honda.  
Your "punkin" dreams of purchasing a Honda,  
not white, not even a hatchback.  
They are good cars, aren't they?

Every man is you  
minus the Honda and the eyes and the stripes  
and the plates and the scent.  
The 90 pound frail thing crouched in wheelchair  
with grey eyes and hospital smell was not you.  
I think of you full of gasoline, driving around  
sporting your stripes.

## Pillow Lover

Jim Schiferl

Four pillows required,  
Minimum.  
Extra firm, extra long,  
cuddle-solid like a person.  
Squeeze tighter and tighter  
and pretend.  
Arm-embraced, leg-hugged,  
face buried, back supported,  
they are comfort and safety and  
they don't toss or turn or talk or take off  
at three in the morning  
(although one occasionally falls out).  
Admittedly bland in odor  
And not very active.  
They don't touch back  
or caress  
or hold on tight  
but they keep the boogie-man away  
and they stay in my bed  
and no one else can use them.  
Not even overnight guests.

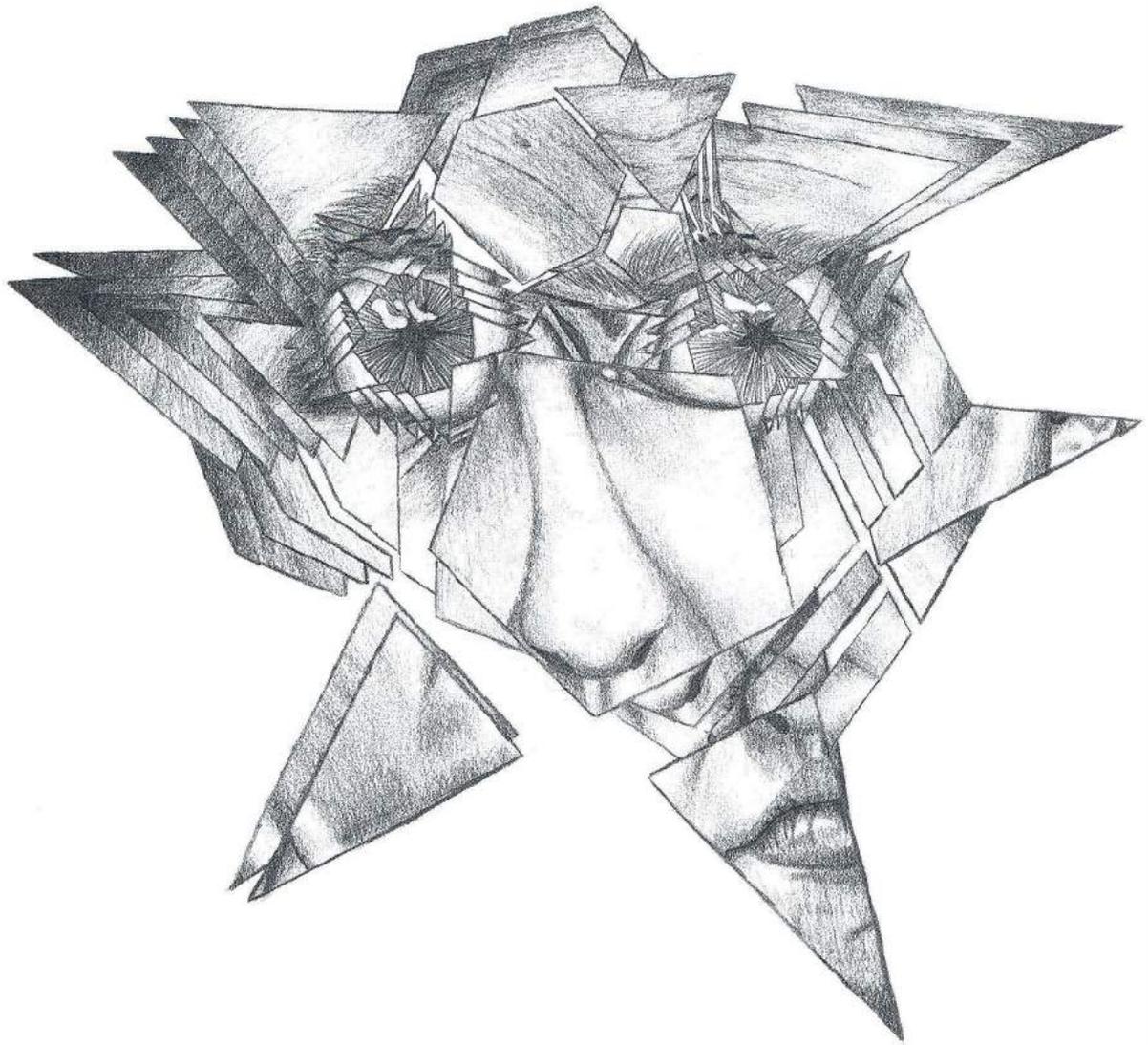
## Sonnet 2

Erik Croy

The soul that love's own hand did make  
held forth its hue and cry "I hate"  
at He to whom my dreams I spake  
and yet ignored my woeful state;  
so heartless, I, no mercy from  
that tongue that called her ever-sweet  
then curst the seed from whence she'd come,  
plucked out mine eyes rather they meet:  
"I hate"—but altered not the end,  
gentility had flown away  
and left me first without a friend  
for heaven is but Hell these days  
"I hate"—I must confess I do  
as much as love, "both She and You."



Angie Mulé  
**Waiting**  
B&W Photo  
(8" x 10')



Charles Hinners  
**untitled**  
Pencil  
(11" x 10")

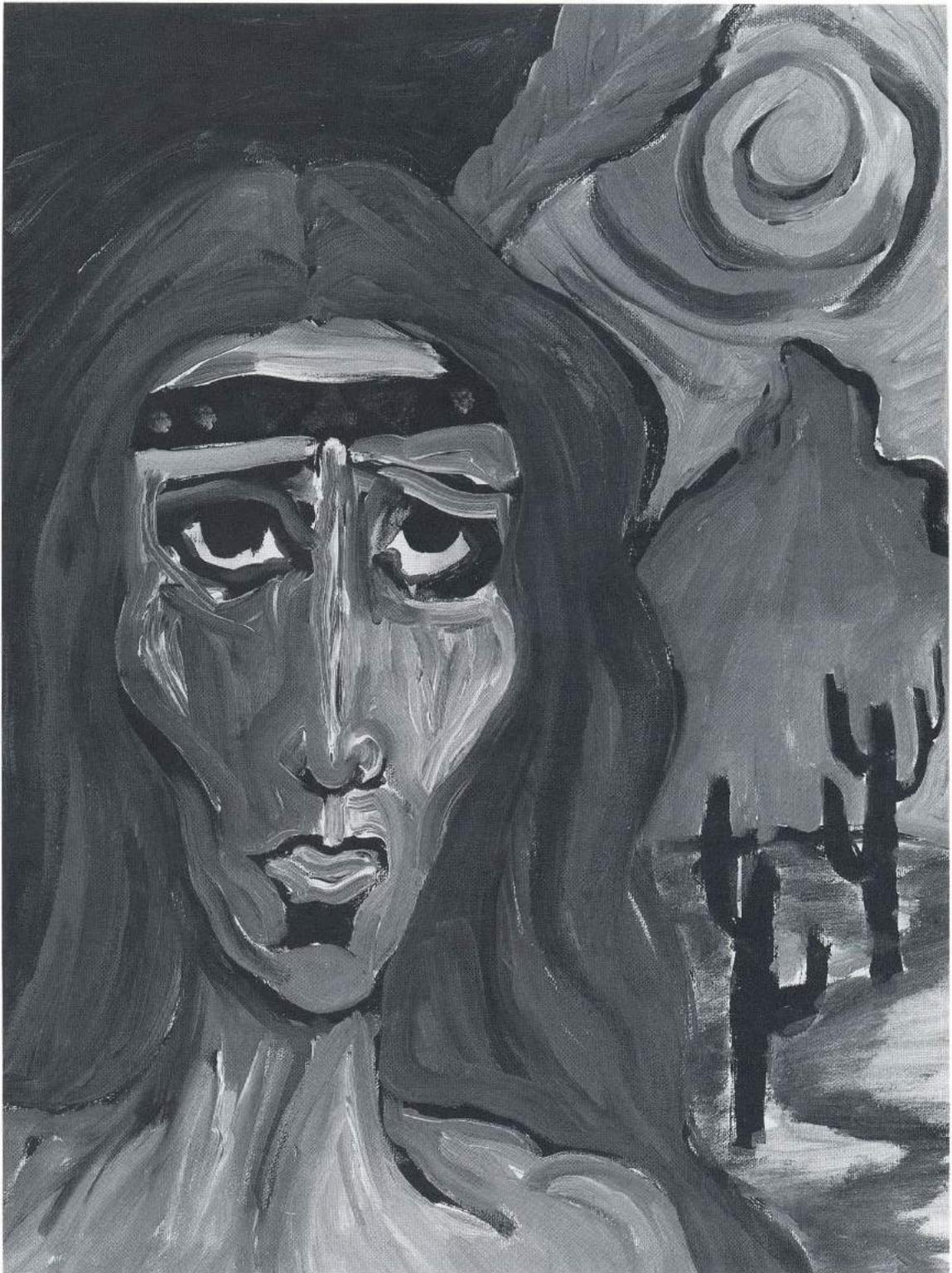
## What Would I Do If I Loved You?

**Kristen Wunder**

What would the pink speckles  
on my pet rock think  
if I loved you more than them?  
I guess they would cry pebble tears  
and melt into hot sand along the beach,  
drowning in cold water.  
But if I loved you less,  
my dear sparkling rock would shimmer  
in the palm of my hand,  
creeping its way into my heart,  
where it would stay.  
And I would melt into the rock  
and bury myself under the sand castles  
that would wash away  
on a bittersweet day.



Angie Mulé  
**Window City**  
B&W Photo  
(8" x 10")



Cheryl Neufeldt  
**untitled**  
Acrylic  
(18" x 24")

# In the Wake of Grandpa Petak

Tom Gillis

It would be difficult to say exactly where this was all set into motion. Bishop Usher would have placed the starting point a little under six thousand years ago, while Carl Sagan might place it a few billion earlier. I guess for the sake of convenience, the twenty-ninth of June, 1911, will work just as well. It's nice to be able to say "I guess" again in my writing. It's been so long since I could write as an individual, an actual real person with opinions and feelings, and not just as one anonym to another anonym.

On the twenty-ninth of June, 1911, Paul Petak was born in Johnstown, Pennsylvania. (Petak is pronounced with a long "E" sound, just so I won't have to correct anybody in their pronunciation later). Paul Petak was my grandfather on my mother's side. He as one of those quiet, kindly old men. I guess you could call him stoic. I can't recall one time in my whole life when he raised his voice at anyone or anything, and I can only remember him hitting me once. He smacked me upside the head when I was about five because I was teasing my little sister Caryn. My mother told me he used to threaten my uncles with his belt, but usually Grandma just forced them to chew jalapeno peppers instead.

I guess I've really never known a person until he or she was gone from my life. I don't think I really knew my grandfather until after his funeral.

He died last Sunday, but the wake wasn't until Friday. This gave us time to call in relatives from all over the country. Funerals are for putting the living at rest, I think. That whole

week, until the funeral, we just existed, passing time in a sort of emotionless limbo. He had been sick for months, so his death was not much of a shock, but without the funeral there was no finality to it either.

Grandpa was quiet and gentle. Gentle people always seem to get run down by something. He had been sick many times before, and the family would worry, but he would always recover, and we would say how much better he looked. "Twenty years younger," we would say. Perhaps it was a good thing, him being sick for so long. We all had time to prepare for it.

There are two schools of thought on death, one saying that it should come immediately, the other saying it should take time. There are probably an equal number of believers in each. Like any ideology, the two factions will be in a standoff forever, a yin-yang situation. I think Carl Sagan and Bishop Usher would both agree on that.

Why is it called a wake? To wake means to assume a state of consciousness after sleep, but I don't think that we were hoping Grandpa would do that. There's the other definition, the trail left in the passage of something. That's the way I like to think of it. During the course of his life, Grandpa's family had drifted westward, from Pennsylvania all the way to California. Now, all of the scattered parts that he had touched in some way were re-gathering to see him one final time.

I had never realized until the wake how many "Marys" there are in the Petak family. Both my uncle Bob and my uncle Gerry married Marys. My father always refers to them as "Mary Lavina" and "Mary Aphrodite," but the rest of the family calls them "Bob's Mary" and "Gerry's Mary." My other Petak aunt in Mari-Anne, and her daughter is Mari-Jo. My mother's cousin is Mary-Lou, although

Leslie Jo Kinsky

## Fate

B&W Computer Graphics  
(6¼" x 4¾")



sometimes we call her Maria. She married Bob Evans, but not the one who owns the restaurants. Thursday, their second grandchild was born. Perhaps all the Marys will come together again for her baptism.

Growing up a working-class child of the Jazz Age, Paul did not go without his share of childhood mischief. When he was nine, he had taken to throwing stones down the smokestacks of trains that passed under the bridge he crossed to get to school. He was found out and spent part of the day in jail.

Grandma and Grandpa both came from Slovakia (my cultural pride won't allow me to say Czechoslovakia). They would speak Slovak whenever they wanted to tell a secret, the same way my parents used to spell things out until I learned to spell myself. When I was about six, I vowed to secretly learn Slovak, so that I'd know everything they said behind my back. I never did learn it, but perhaps there are secrets we shouldn't know.

The funeral home seemed just like a regular house, and the little ante-room we were led into seemed pleasant enough, like a living room or parlor in any ordinary house. The room glowed a warm, familiar sort of yellowness; I felt right at home. Opposite the couch sat a squat oaken

writing desk. Pamphlets on dealing with the loss of loved ones were spread carefully on top. Signs hung on either side of the desk, "MASS CARDS" and "NO SMOKING PLEASE."

Grandma was to arrive with Mary Aphrodite and uncle Gerry, but they were late. My father said that was no wonder, as it takes Mary Aphrodite three hours just to put on a pair of jeans to go work in the yard. By the time they got to the funeral home Grandma looked too exhausted to feel any more grief. We were taken all together as a group to see Grandpa.

Flowers adorned the entire room—carnations, chrysanthemums, and lots and lots of blossoms I couldn't identify. There was a heart-shaped arrangement of white flowers in the casket behind Grandpa's head, ten white flowers, one for each grandchild. Columns flanked the casket, one with a pot of carnations on top from all of Grandpa's cousins in Streeter, Illinois. It seemed everybody sent flowers, even my father's construction company.

The casket had an odd dark gray shine to it. Later, I noticed a label on the back end boasting *18 Gauge Steel*. "The worms will get you either way," Grandma Gillis asserts.

Perhaps it's better that way. Both Bishop Usher and Carl Sagan would agree on that.

We knelt on the kneeler before the casket and Grandma Petak said, "Say the words: May you rest in peace Grandpa."

Grandma Gillis was sitting on a couch, muttering to herself. "My, didn't they make him look good?"

Grandma Petak is my short, plump grandmother, whereas Grandma Gillis is tall and thin. Grandma Petak is spry and lively, a little round Slavic ball of energy. She has a little two-step dance she does whenever she listens to music—the same dance, no matter what kind of music it is. And she hums the same little waltz whenever she dances, or cooks, or hangs laundry, or anytime really.

Grandma Gillis is filled with a different sort of energy. I can never picture her anywhere in my house except our living room armchair, a beer in one hand and a cigarette in the other, watching soaps on TV. She's been living like that as long as anybody can remember, drinking and smoking for almost sixty years.

Grandma Petak doesn't smoke, but enjoys the smell of cigars. Occasionally, she'll light one up and wave it around in the air (singing all the while—"Dee da lee da lee da lee da lee da lee") making designs with the smoke, like I do with sparklers on the Fourth of July.

Grandpa did look good, twenty years younger, my father said. Those mysterious people who drag off emaciated, pale corpses put them through some arcane transformation best not thought about and return them "good as new," had colored him. They filled out his cheeks, cut his hair and trimmed his nails. But that wasn't Grandpa. Neither was the sick old man in the wheelchair I saw at Christmas. When somebody lived as full a life as he did, you can't really pin down who he was at any one moment.

He taught me how to play chess.

We built a telescope in his garage. We blew up pipe-bombs in the street and scared off crows. That's how I like to remember him, that's who he was, to me anyhow.

My Grandpa Gillis died when I was in kindergarten. I don't remember too much of it except that I got a day off of school. My mother brought home a book and read it to me. I remember feeling like it was written just for me. It compared death to the life of a butterfly, saying that while Grandpa was alive he was like a caterpillar, but now that he died he's turned into something better, like a butterfly. But he's flown away and we can't see him anymore. I still believe that. I just say it with lots of big, philosophical words now.

I think all religions are essentially the same. They're all about birth and death, and they all believe in the butterfly story. Except, like me, they use big, philosophical words and they waste most of their time squabbling amongst themselves over who said the words, or what the details are. In the end, it doesn't really matter who says the truth, as long as it's true. I think Carl Sagan would agree with me here. I'm not so sure about Bishop Usher.

The mood had lightened somewhat after the prayers were said and I went to do what all of the little kids had been doing since they got to the funeral home—explore. In a small alcove two organs sat silently. One was an ancient piece of craftsmanship complete with a foot-bellows and manual pull-out stops. The other was slightly more modern, a genuine electrically-powered Hammond Organ. It had two switches on it and reminded me of a lathe in Grandpa's workshop.

By now the little grandkids were downstairs watching television in the lounge. There was a coffee machine down there, and I made myself a cup. It smelled like ozone and machine oil. The non-dairy creamer was like sawdust.

For the longest time, Grandma and Grandpa lived in a funky old two-story brick bungalow on Kildare Avenue in Chicago. Grandpa had built up the attic, making a sort of really big closet, a warren of boxes and crates and bags of old clothes and Christmas decorations. I used to crawl around in there, making forts out of the boxes.

The basement was like another world. The first time I ever went down those stairs alone, I tripped and fell, breaking my collarbone. It was set poorly, and still bows out a little. I was wearing a Mickey Mouse sweater that day. Why do I remember that?

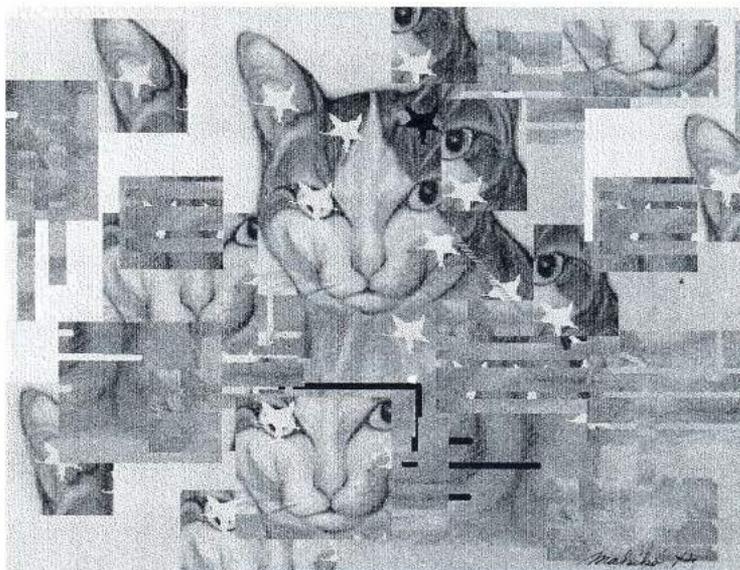
Grandpa's workshop was in the basement and, outside of Disney World, it was one of the most amazing things I had seen in my childhood. It was filled with sharp things and pointy things, jars of stubby little round things and boxes of long round things. There were machines that made lots of noise and spun, and some that throbbed deep and resonant like a church organ. A lot of them had labels stuck of their backs boasting that they were made of *18-Gauge Steel*. It smelled like ozone and machine oil. Sawdust covered the floor. That was Grandpa's heaven, under the single light bulb, building something out of wood or tinkering with a broken gadget.

That old house was him. Nondescript, plain-looking, but filled throughout with all sorts of neat secrets. It must have hurt him when they sold it and moved to a retirement village in Fox Lake.

I was a pallbearer. Grandma thanked me for carrying Grandpa to rest. She said that he knew. It was strange, there was a weight in the coffin that was Grandpa, but at the same time it wasn't Grandpa. If Grandpa was just a memory, what was making the weight in the coffin? All philosophies are word games, I reminded myself. Snow covered the ground and I worried about slipping and falling.

We came back to Grandma's house (now just Grandma's, no longer Grandma and Grandpa's.) Grandma had brought out a box of old papers, Grandpa's high school memorabilia. It must have been hidden away somewhere, because nobody could remember seeing it before. There were dance cards from all of his dances, but he never danced. I guess he couldn't, with his leg. When he was nine he cut his right leg, it became infected, and its growth was stunted for the rest of his life. I don't think he ever considered himself handicapped, he just had to find a different way of getting at things.

Makiko Horio  
**untitled**  
B&W Computer Graphics  
(11" x 8½")



Grandpa graduated fourth in his class, with highest honors. An article in the school newspaper described him as "dignified, studious and ambitious." As long as I knew him, he was learning new things, always reading, figuring out how things worked. Until just a few months ago, he always had some sort of project going in his workshop or garage.

Growing up the son of immigrants in the hills of Pennsylvania, my great-grandparents needed him to work and he never went to college. Perhaps it was better that way. He went to work for a local tool and dye company and soon moved to Chicago and became supervisor. In his own little way, he helped send us all on our eventual way to the stars. He designed the drill bit which Martin Marietta put in their drill that they sent to NASA, who sent the whole thing to the moon. I saw the drill on display at the Smithsonian. So have millions of other people, but their grandfathers didn't build it.

When we drove out of the cemetery, the casket was still above ground, polished gray against the green square of Astroturf in the windswept snow; a bouquet laid on

top of it and the six pairs of pallbearers gloves were stuffed in the handles.

It's underground now, and when spring comes around, the grass will grow back and somebody will have to look at the headstone to realize it's a new grave. I like to think that the butterflies will come by to visit him. They wouldn't be able to stay too long, because there's lots of people in the world and so few butterflies. Every time you see one it's a unique and special occasion. But perhaps it's better that way.



Charles Hinners  
**Coolie**  
Oil  
(20" x 16")

# N'Orlens Lace

Dave Hendricks

I owned a small lingerie shop in the mall the city built to replace the one that burnt down seven years ago. They said it was arson—an inside job—because all the alarm systems were turned off. But the New Cortana Mall valiantly took its place. Of course it has a state-of-the-art fire alarm system in it.

It was at the old mall when I worked at Nancy's Intimacies about twelve years ago that I met Mrs. Chelsea Navarre. She was shopping for a sexy little number to surprise her husband with that night for their fifteen year anniversary. She was a spunky lady with an incredible figure for being forty-three with four kids, the youngest being eleven years old. She was an old school Bayou native who grew up in Port Allen right across the river from Baton Rouge and the mall.

As the Deputy Surgeon General of the Navy visiting the New Orleans Naval Air Station to inspect the Emergency Medical Services, there was a big ballyhoo throughout southeastern Louisiana for her—a parade, dinners, luncheons, breakfasts, tours, and salutes. The Commanding Officer of the air station, Admiral Devon X. St. Romaine, even took her and her entourage out on Bourbon Street for a night of strip clubs and Pat O'Brian's Hurricanes. She must have had a good time because she dropped about \$200 between Canal Street and St. Charles Avenue. She had three Hurricanes before reaching Canal, so it's no wonder why she's not sure how much she actually spent on gifts for her family and how much she stuffed in the dancer's g-strings.

It was her last day in Louisiana

with four hours to waste before her flight back to Washington D.C. when she came into the lingerie shop. She was looking through the silk teddies when she caught my attention.

"Honey, I'm lookin' for a sexy lil' numbah for mah beau. Somethin' with some revealin' lace." She had a smile that only the Bayou folks have, a mischievous grin that made her whole body glow. "It's our fifteen year anniversary togethuh." Anyone could tell that she was born and raised in Louisiana because she spoke with the age old dialect.

After moving here sixteen years ago from Michigan, I picked up the accent, but not the dialect. That can only be inbred.

"Well, we have plenty of lace, so take your time." I had my saleswoman smile firmly in place.

"That's whut ah don' have. Mah flight takes off in four hours." She looked at me the way a child who doesn't want to go to school looks at her mother.

"That's okay, the airport is only a half hour away." I began to rifle through another rack of lace panties.

"Me sha, N'Orleans isn't a half hour away, no!" She looked at me with wide eyes and a surprised grin.

"Well, you don't have much time, do you?" I returned her surprised look. "Let's pick some sexy things to throw your husband back fifteen years! What size are you? A fix-six?"

"Good guess, hon. I can still fit into mah weddin' gown."

We grabbed a few things for her to try on and I put her in room two. We exchanged names and other basic information while she tried on a purple silk teddy, a flowered push-up bra with matching thongs, panties, and a black satin Grecian teddy with lace skirting. She liked it all, but none of it had enough "vavoom" for her husband. Whatever she didn't want she handed over to me to put back, and I picked out other things for her to try on. It was when I handed over the black

sheer fishnet teddy with attached tulle netting overshirt that I asked her about her Naval career. All it took was one question, and like all Cajuns, she wouldn't stop talking about it.

"Lordy-be, sha. It's been a good long time since I signed my life away." She threw two satin sleepshirts with long thigh slits over the door.

"Boo, these won't get his seeds to grow, if ya' know what I mean!" I hung a red lace teddy trimmed in satin along with a blue satin teddisette with a thong back, sheer stockings, and fingerless gloves back over the door.

"It was twenty-five years ago, I was fresh out of Port Allen High and somethin' inspired me to join the Navy. They sent me all over—Great Lakes, Illinois; Camp Lejeune, South Carolina; Yokuska, Japan; Bethesda, Maryland—an' then where ah am now, Washington D.C. They put me through all sorts of schools, from Hospital Corps School to Field Medical Service School to Independent Duty Corpsman School to Operating Room Technician School, and finally Officer Training School. Yep, all over. Lots o' good times an' lots o' bad 'uns, too."

She went into more schools, but I was most impressed with how quickly she climbed in the ranks. In eight years, she was a First Class Petty Officer ready to take the Chief Petty Officer's examination. That was when she went to Officer Training School and became a Lieutenant in the Medical Service Corps. The Navy gave her more school and more time to go to a civilian school, and in seven years after her commissioning, she received her M.D. She then quickly rose up in rank, making Admiral at Yokuska, Japan.

"Hey, boo. Ya' know ah was in the desert durin' the Persian Gulf War way back in '91? Um hum, that's right. It was the best time in the Navy an' the worst."

"Ah was stationed with the Marines as their Corpsman 'cause they don't have uh medical division, so the Navy

supplies 'um. Anyway, as I was sayin', I was with the Third Force Service Support Group outta Yokuska. We were walkin' through the Iraqi desert an' our scout, who was in front of the whole platoon—that's why he's called a scout, if ya' didn't know—stopped dead in his tracks. The rest of the platoon got their butts to the sand so's they don't get shot off. But, the scout stayed standin', and you could see, even from where ah was, which was pretty far back, that he urinated on 'imself. He was cryin' like a baby, too. Another scout crawled up t'him and he started shakin' all over. Then he yelled, 'Clicker mine! Mother-fuckin' clicker mine!' Excuse my foul mouth, dearie. I get kinda wrapped up in mahself when I think about it.

"Girl, ah like this 'un. It won't be for tonight, but it'll do well for tomorrow!" She threw over a three piece ruffled camisette in lace with a mesh back.

"Anyway, a clicker mine lets the victim know that they're about to be blown to nothin' by makin' a 'click' noise when you step on it. It detonates when you step off it.

"So here come Sergeant Wiyrick with a 150 pound iron plate that was a three foot square. We used that to shimmy under the scout's foot and over the mine so's that the mine thinks that someone is still standin' on it, right? Saddam buried the mines about a foot under the sand. They threw thirty pound sandbags around his foot to make sure that it'd work. They worked on that for three hours! The Republican Guard coulda' come in an' killed us all in that time! They were stupid, though. Anyway, when they were finally done loadin it down and he took his foot off, they found out the hard way that they were wrong. They loaded one side too much an' tipped the plate." I stood, frozen in my tracks listening to Chelsea relive her war. I could hear her begin to cry a little.

"Chelsea, are you okay? Can I do

anything for you?" I walked slowly over to her dressing room to listen better.

"You just shut your hole, girl! An' get me more sexy things! Hey boo, stick with purple. It looks the best on me." She took a long, slow sigh and sucked in air through her nose rapidly.

"Fourteen Marines died...no, they were in pieces as far as the eye could see. Twenty-two more were injured. Marines were never known for their ah.Q." Neither of us said a word for a few minutes.

"Girl, ah like this 'un. Ooh, yeah. This is it. He's gonna see this and die of a heart attack! I'm gonna have this off me faster than a virgin's prom dress! Hee, hee!"

"Which one is it? The two piece loose sleepwear, or the bodysuit? I was almost as excited as she was. She had been here an hour and tried on everything we had.

"No, no sugar. This is much better." She threw three teddies and a bodysuit over the door. "Ah don' want these. Ah got what I came for." She laughed and walked out of the dressing room holding her husband's heart.

It was a purple, crotchless four piece teddisette with ribbons untying down the front, lace support rings around bare breasts, fingerless gloves, sheer stockings, garters, and a neck bow.

I smiled knowing that it was exactly what I would buy.

I rang up her lingerie at the front register, giving her my fifteen percent employee discount.

"Why, thank ya', sha. That was mighty kind of ya', boo." She grabbed my hand and squeezed it gently.

"Well, ah gots to be goin'. You be good to yourself, an' buy yourself a store. It'll do ya' some good to be in command." She gave me a wink and left the store.

Now, that I have my own store, I can say that she was right. It is good to be in command. Would the Navy take an old woman with a lingerie store?

Kevin White

untitled

Color Pencil, Marker, Pen  
(13½" x 10½")

ALL IS GRIM, WITHOUT EXCEPTION  
FROM BOTH SIDES OF YOUR PERCEPTION  
THE TROUBLES OUTSIDE ARE IN YOUR HEAD  
NEVER THE SAME

YOUR SKULL'S AN EGG  
YOUR BRAIN IS LEAD

ONLY CHAOTIC, CREATING THE THOUGHTS OF A  
PSYCHOTIC. ALL IS GRIM AND GETTING WORSE  
ONLY LOVE CAN LIFT THIS CURSE.



## One Night Stand

Jim Schiferl

A one night stand  
doesn't ring your doorbell the next day  
or visit you at work  
or seek out your friends  
(to find out where you are)  
or send you a dozen red roses  
or take you to Dairy Queen for a Blizzard  
or drive around town to find your car.  
One night stands  
cannot follow you like a motherless pup  
or buy you your favorite CD's  
or call you every day  
(at exactly 10 a.m.)  
or send shivers up your nostrils  
or make your skin go numb  
or taste so good the next day, month, year.

You don't care so much about a one night stand  
that you can't eat or sleep or think  
unless you cry for a while first.  
And when you find out they are dying  
you don't need a psychiatrist to help you deal with  
the love, the pain, and the desire  
to stop having one night stands.

# The Caretaker

Eileen Hill

The man sat on the bed behind his wife and brushed her hair. Stroke after stroke, her head bobbed and pulled a little, but her face showed neither pain nor enjoyment. Her eyes wandered vacantly around the room. "There," the man said. "All done. What do you want for breakfast, Em?" He didn't wait for her answer. "How about french toast? Or waffles?" He put his arms around her and patted her hand, "You want some waffles?" He moved around his wife to look at her face.

"Waffles sound good to me, too," he said as he maneuvered out of bed, first bending over to give his wife's forehead a quick kiss. "I'll be right back." He gathered up her hairbrush, toothbrush and yesterday's nightgown and underwear and began walking down the hall. "I'll just drop these things off here," he muttered. He tossed the dirty clothes onto the bathroom floor, put the brushes on the vanity top and went downstairs to the kitchen.

Stacks of laundry sat piled on the kitchen floor. A newspaper lay open on the kitchen table, surrounded by older newspapers, empty *Hungry Man* frozen dinner trays and a dirty coffee cup. The man kicked some laundry out of the way and made his way towards the refrigerator. "Somebody should clean this place up," he reprimanded himself.

He opened the refrigerator door, grabbed the orange juice container and pulled open the spout. He peered into it with one eye and then sniffed at it. "How long have you been in there?" he said aloud. He put the orange juice in the crook of his elbow, grabbed the margarine and shut the

refrigerator door with a kick of a foot. He pulled open the freezer door and quickly snatched a couple of packages of waffles before the rest of the freezer's contents could spill to the floor.

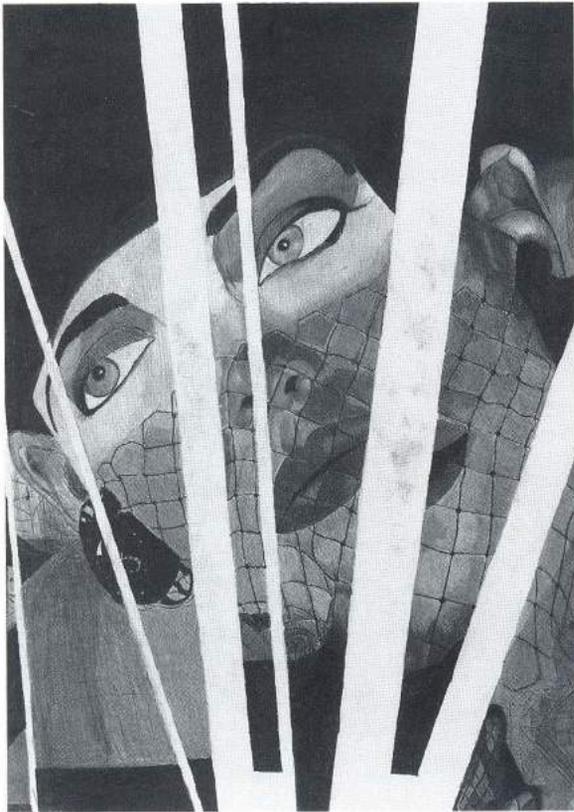
Clearing a space on the counter with a sweep of his forearm, the man set the items down and turned on a talk radio station.

"...will be partly cloudy, with temperatures in the low twenties. Tonight, there will be wind gusts of up to forty miles per hour, and we can expect the temperatures to drop into the single digits."

The man frowned. He walked through the kitchen, into the family room and stopped to look out the back sliding glass door. A pair of fleece lined slippers lay next to the door, and he slid them on. He unlocked the frosty door, and pulled on it a moment before it gave way and slid open. He put one foot outside on the patio, leaned out and said "cat," quickly and quietly. No response. "Cat," he said again, still lacking enthusiasm, but this time a little louder. He waited.

He looked around self-consciously and stepped completely outside, shivering in the cold. "Here cat....Here kitty, kitty." A cream color cat, nearly invisible next to the dirty snow, came crawling out from beneath the evergreen bushes. Two smaller cats followed behind her. "Brought the whole family today, huh cat?" The man quickly bent over to pat the animal's head, his movement startling all but the mama cat. "Come on in. It's freezing," he said as he lead the way back to the house. The mama cat followed eagerly, but the kittens held cautiously back. "Come on," he coaxed as he opened the door and stepped in. The kittens ran back beneath the bushes, but the larger cat followed him into the house.

The man looked back and, after some hesitation, closed the door. The mama cat seemed far less disturbed than the man felt. She began to purr



Michelle Brandau  
**Shattered**  
Color Pencil  
(14½" x 20")

loudly as she rubbed back and forth between his legs. The man squatted down and put his hand out. The cat sniffed it, then pushed her head into his fingers and ran the length of her body under his touch. He picked her up, brought her into the kitchen and poured some milk into an empty margarine container, all the while holding her with one hand against his chest.

"There you go," he said as he put both the milk and the cat on the counter. "What are we going to do about your scardy-cat kittens out there?" he asked as he scratched the cat between her ears.

The cat was lapping up her second container of milk when the doorbell rang. The man left the cat and hurried to answer it. As he worked the locks, he caught glimpse of his daughter Katie through the window. Her long hair whipped around her face and neck as she jumped and danced around the porch. He opened the door, and she quickly

stepped inside, brushing her cold face and lips in a kiss against his cheek.

"Hi Daddy," she said. Her curly red, windblown hair stuck out crazily in all directions. Her face was blotchy from the weather, and she smelled of fresh air. The man smiled affectionately and quickly reached to help her off with her coat, but she was already walking past him down the hallway.

"How's Mom today?" her tone casual, until she reached the kitchen. "*Oh my God*. Daddy! The cats are in the house now? Oh sick, look at this, it's on the counter." She looked around the kitchen, her eyes falling from one cluttered spot to another. "Wouldya look at this place?" She looked at him in disbelief.

"Shhh! You'll scare the cat." The man walked past his daughter to collect the object of her scorn. "Notice I said cat, not cats. One cat, singular. Not an army of cats. Just one, solitary cat."

"Whose cat is this anyway?" Katie asked, her face pinched. "Is this Mom's breakfast it was sniffing?"

"I was just bringing that up to your mother."

Katie studied her father for a moment. His silver hair had grown long and curled about his ears. His moustache was badly in need of a trim and his clothes were wrinkled and unkept.

"You look like Albert Einstein," she finally said. "Why don't you let me fix this and you go and clean up?"

"Albert Einstein?" Her father grinned awkwardly. "Thanks," he winked playfully at his daughter and said in the best Eastern-block accent he could muster, "he was handsome in a scientific way, no?"

"Go ahead," Katie said, "I'll take care of Mom."

The man hesitated slightly, smiled and put the cat down. He turned and walked out of the kitchen and down the hall towards the garage. The cat followed him closely.

"Did you eat, Dad?" Katie called after her father.

"Hmm? Oh, I'm not hungry." The man chastised himself for feeling like a second thought. He really was hungry and could have used some company. "Thanks anyway," he called as he stepped into the garage. He began tossing things about and picking through years of accumulation. Mama cat jumped onto the top of an old outdoor nativity barn and watched the man with big golden eyes.

"It's freezing," the man said, "even in here." He looked at the cat, perched on the barn. "We've got to rig something up for your family out there." He continued rummaging through the garage until he found all he was looking for.

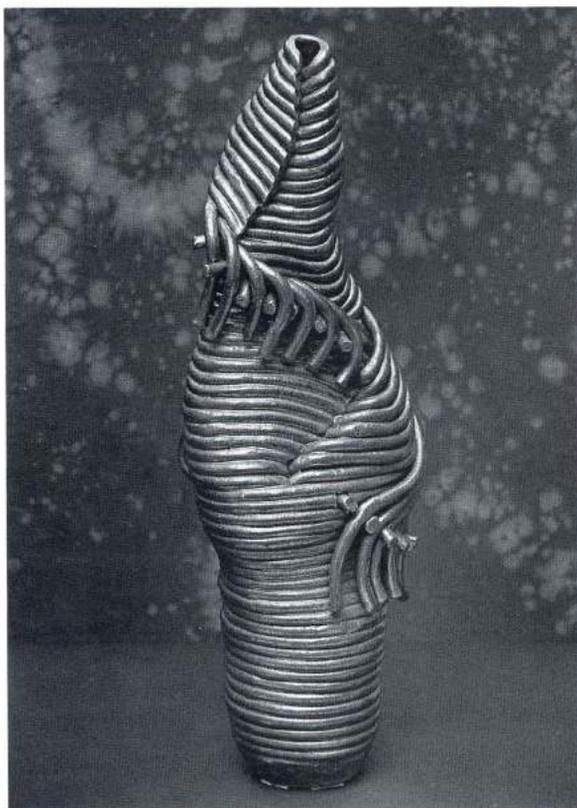
He lugged various tools back into the house and set them down. He pulled on his coat, put on his boots and went back outside through the sliding glass doors. Mama cat had been following at his heels, but once she was back outside, she passed the man and went directly to the evergreen bushes.

"Yes, yes, I know," said the man. "I was worried about them too." At the sound of his voice, the kittens ran from under the bushes to some distance away. Mama cat followed them but stepped on the man's feet and paused there a moment first.

"Oh you big babies. What's so scary about an old man?" The man arranged his gear on the ground, picked up his shovel and began to try to dig a hole between two bushes and back under his bay window. The ground was frozen solid.

The man trekked back into the house, into the garage and back out again with a pick. He worked furiously, swinging the pick overhead and slamming it into the ground. Each time the ground gave way just a little bit, until finally the man had dug his ditch. Sweating beneath his coat, the man picked up the empty ice chest and blankets he had brought from the garage. Pushing them through the bushes on his hands and knees, he worked them under the bay window and arranged the ice chest on its side. He wrapped a blanket around the outside of the ice chest and put another one on the inside as well.

Katie had been upstairs feeding her mother when she heard the pick-axe. "What's your husband up to now, Ma?" She got up from the bed



Scott MacDonald  
untitled  
Ceramic



Greg Goluska  
**untitled**  
B&W Photo  
(14" x 19")

and walked to the window. She put her forehead against the cold pane and looked down into the backyard to see her father working diligently. "Now what?" She shook her head, but hurried back to the task of feeding her mother. She spoke soothingly to her mother. "That's some character you've got there." She wiped her mother's mouth and brought a glass to her lips. "Drink this Mom. When your all done, I'll go see what your crazy husband is up to."

The rhythmic pounding sound of the pick-axe stopped. Curious, Katie went back to the window. She had to rub away a little frost to be sure she was seeing correctly. Her father's hind-end was sticking out from the bushes below her, and a group of cats were sitting on the patio, as if his audience. Katie's brow furrowed. "Jesus. Now I gotta worry about him, too."

"I'll be back, Ma." Katie gathered the dirty dishes, set them on the breakfast tray and started towards the

stairs. As she got towards the bottom of the steps, a movement outside the front door caught her attention. "Brenda! One second," she mouthed through the glass window. She set the tray down on the foyer floor and quickly opened the front door. "What are you doing here? This is my day to check on 'em."

"Yeah, I know. I forgot my mittens last time I was here." She stamped some snow off her boots, stepped inside, took her coat off and tossed it on the floor. "God knows you need all you can get to keep warm today. How's Mom?"

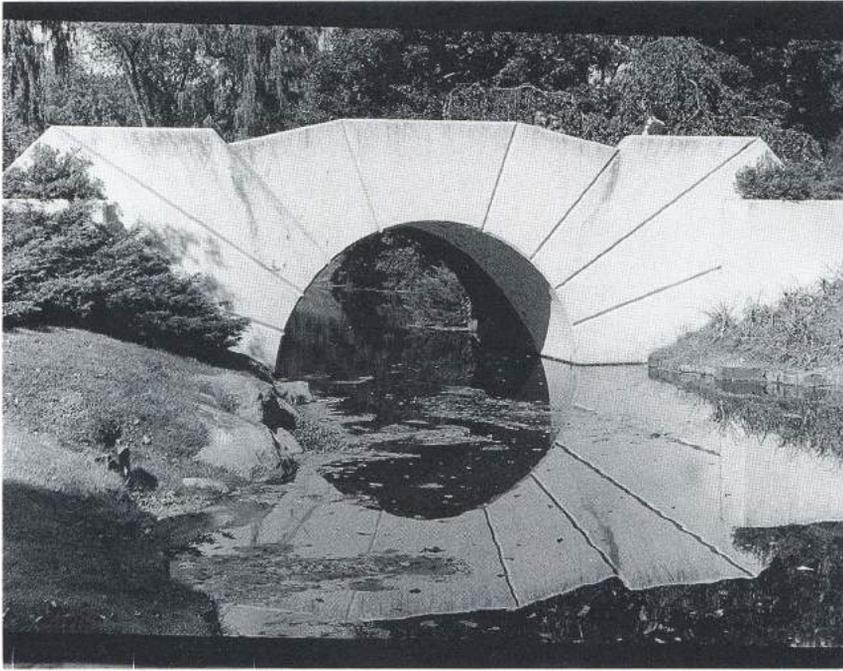
"The same. You should be asking how Dad is though."

"Why? Is something wrong with Daddy?"

"I don't know. Look at this place. Look at Daddy. Haven't you noticed how awful he looks? When I came in today he had that cat in the house. It was up on the counter with its face in Mom's breakfast. And now I'm here, and what's Daddy doing? Does he spend any time with me? No. Does he take some time for himself? Clean up a little? No. He's outside in this freezing weather, doing I don't know what with those cats."

"Yeah well, they're probably just some kind of diversion for him. What is he doing outside?" The girls moved towards the back of the house to observe their father.

"He was digging something behind those bushes," Katie said. Their father was nowhere to be seen. As they both peered out the sliding glass



Angie Mulé  
**Bridge**  
B&W Photo  
(10" x 8")

door, the man stepped in through the garage door behind them, mama cat at his heels.

"Oh hi, Brenda. Whaddya guys lookin' for?" he asked.

"We were looking for you. We're just wondering what you're doin' out there."

"Oh, I guess I'm making a sort of kitty hotel." He smiled as he walked past his daughters, feeling as if he were under inspection. The cat and his daughters followed him into the kitchen.

"Why do they need a hotel, when they have the run of your house?" Brenda asked as she watched the mama cat knead a throw rug into a heap and then drop herself onto it.

"Because, for some reason, the kittens seem to be afraid of me, and they won't come into the house." The man had to raise his voice to be heard over the electric can opener.

"Whatcha gonna do with that?" Brenda motioned towards the can of tuna the man was opening.

*Why do I feel so self-conscious?* the man wondered. "I guess I'm in charge of room service too," the man bowed at the waist. The girls looked at each other and back at their father. The man took a deep breath and said almost sing-songy, "I'm going to put this into the house I rigged up for them. As a type of bait...They don't seem to understand what I want them to do." The man zipped up his coat to go back outside. "When did it happen?" he paused before leaving. "When did I become the child and you two become the parent?"

"Whaddya talking about, Daddy?" Brenda looked sincerely puzzled. Katie appeared irritated.

"I don't know." *I don't know what I'm saying*, the man thought as he went back outside. The kittens had been sitting on the patio, but ran as he stepped off the stoop.

"Scardy-cats," he said. *I'll go back in and apologize*. He got down on his hands and knees and began to squeeze between the bushes.



Rosalyn B. Campbell  
**Solitude**

Color Photo  
(7" x 5")

*Apologize for what?* He put the opened can of tuna into the ice chest and began backing out. *Apologize for . . . what?*

He straightened out and went back inside the house. He could hear the girls upstairs with their mother. He moved to the foyer at the bottom of the stairs and listened.

"Lisa said to give this to her Gramma. Mom, can you hear me? Lisa made this for you at school. I'll put it right here so you can see it. How's that? Katie, did you tell Mom about your promotion?"

The man moved closer to the staircase so that he could hear of his daughter's promotion. He put his foot down on the edge of the breakfast tray Katie had left there earlier. The tray flipped up, flinging the dishes and their contents all over.

"Goddammit!" the man shouted. He kicked the tray further across the foyer; food splattered against the wall and on Brenda's coat.

The girls ran to the top of the

staircase and stood there staring at the man. The man looked up at his daughters, two frightened girls, two grown-up women. The man felt his throat tighten and his eyes burn.

*Goddammit.*

"Sorry, Daddy. I put that there to let Brenda in and I just forgot about it. I'll clean it up."

"I'll go take care of Mom, and I'll be right there to help you, Katie." The girls moved with purpose, without further conversation.

The man walked into the kitchen and stooped down to pet the cat who was still on the rug. The cat lay on her side panting, and did not pick up her head or otherwise acknowledge the man's touch.

"Okay, Dad. Everything's cleaned up. Mom's all tucked in. It looks like she'll sleep a little. I'm sorry about the mess. The girls stood in the kitchen doorway with their coats on.

"Look at the cat," the man motioned the girls over to the rug. "I think she's sick."

"What? Oh. She was fine just a minute ago. That's weird. Do you know whose cat she is?"

"I kinda think of her as mine."

"Oh, well. I'm sorry. I hope she feels better. Poor cat. I wonder what happened."

The man stood up and walked the girls to the front door.

"Call us if you need anything," Katie said. "Are you gonna be okay?"

The man nodded.

"Is Mom gonna be okay?"

"Well if I haven't killed her by now, I imagine she'll be okay, too."

The girls smiled, kissed him and left.

The man watched them get into their cars and continued to watch them until they drove out of sight. He returned to the kitchen, wrapped the cat in the rug and carried the bundle upstairs. Emily was sound asleep.

The man laid the cat on the floor next to the side of the bed. He gently pulled the blankets on the bed back, and slid in along side his wife. He listened for a long time, to his wife's labored breathing, and to the cat's panting. Finally, he slept too.

\* \* \*

It was dark when the man awoke. He lay there with a tightness in his chest, and a fear he couldn't place. *I've missed Emily's afternoon medications*, he thought. He listened

to his wife's heavy breathing. He squinted at the clock. Four forty-five. *I've missed lunch. I've got to get her on the bedpan, I've . . .* He remembered the cat.

He sat up in bed and gently felt along the floor with his foot. The cat lay still beneath his foot. The man sat on the bed a long time before getting up and flipping on the light switch. The cat lay motionless on her side, her eyes and mouth open.

With deliberate actions, the man wrapped the cat up in the rug and carried her downstairs. He set her down by the back door while he put on his cap, gloves and boots. He turned on the back light. The two kittens came out from under the bushes. The man picked up the cat, stepped outside and without pause, laid her down on the patio and unwrapped the rug. He stood up slowly so as not to startle the kittens. He walked quietly back into the dark house.

He shut the door and let his forehead rest on the cold glass. He watched the kittens creep cautiously across the patio. They sniffed at their mother, and circled her a few times. The man slowly slid open the door. "Here kitty, kitty," he said softly. The kittens darted off the patio and into the cold night. He watched them run until they were out of sight.

*Goddammit*, he thought. He stood there letting the cold air surround him. *Goddammit*.

## Safe Couch

**Jim Schiferl**

The left side of the couch  
(right side if you face it)  
is mine.

Curled up in comfort,  
Blind to the television or  
deaf to the stereo.

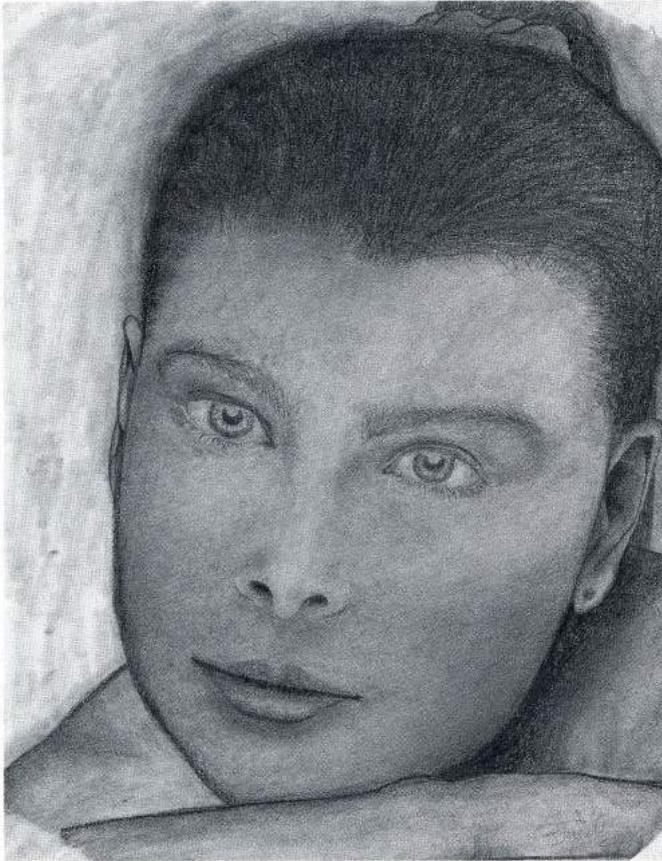
I should vacuum that carpet  
or wipe the fingerprint smears  
off the glass protecting the  
dusty stereo.

Feather poking out of oak drawer  
begs to be taken out to like the  
dust off the t.v., the stereo, the lamp.

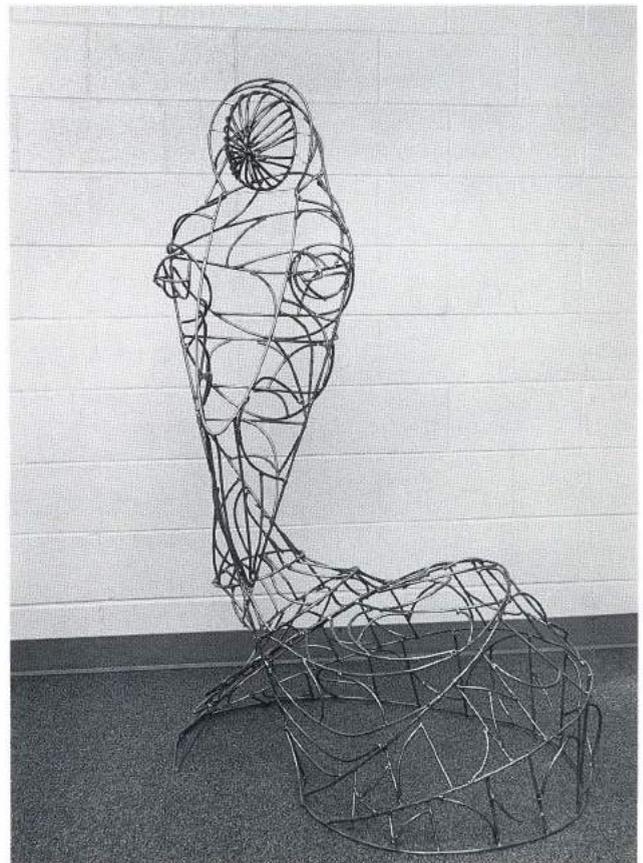
I ignore it with a smile  
and continue to fantasize about  
sharing my corner of the couch  
with the one at the gym  
who is clueless of my desire  
or the one I swap small talk with  
at the bar every Saturday.

They are a part of my  
safe, comfortable, cozy corner  
of the couch.

I cling to them with a couch cushion  
and a blanket (from my bed)  
as I close my eyes  
and fall asleep.



Bryant Eng  
**Tracy**  
Pencil  
(9" x 12")

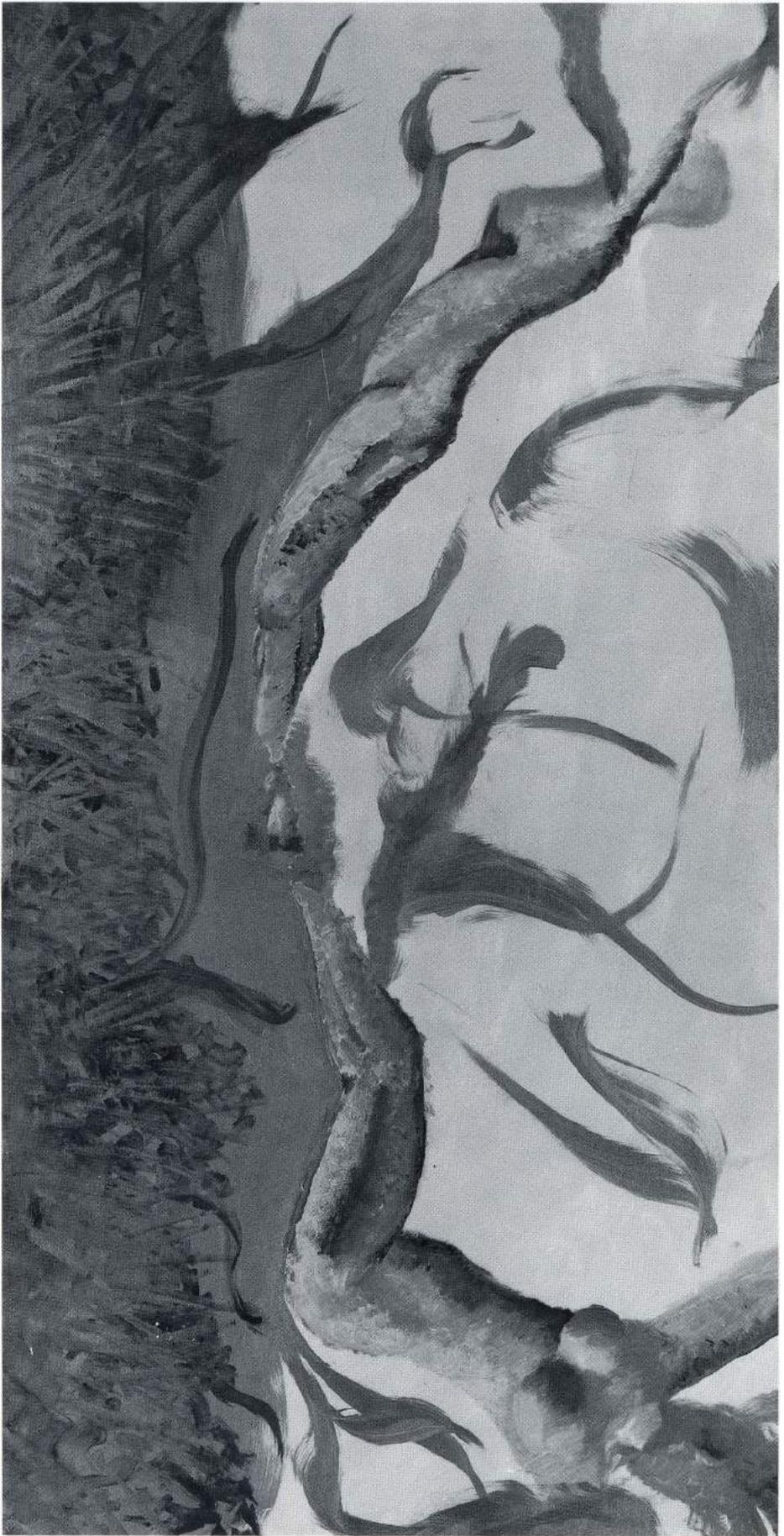


Bryant Eng  
**Becoming**  
Welded Steel  
(4' x 2½' x 2½')

## Tangled Words

Holly Rushakoff

And now it's me delving in my mind,  
not you.  
But thanks for teaching me what I  
wanted, wished would be  
a part of me.  
From premature lividness  
to ripe gush  
my insides sparkle  
like night sky.  
And now  
I'm learning you  
can't manipulate molasses  
and wipe your hands very clean.  
So sticky fingered, I blow my pinwheel colors fast  
and twirl the crinkly toy  
and triangles become circles  
and red bleeds purple  
and it is then that I may find  
my ink  
hiding a sunset truth for you.



Charlotte Katial  
**Spiritual Journey**  
Acrylic  
(48" x 24")

