

The Great Lake Review

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The Great Lake Review

Visual and Writing Arts

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untitled

9½ x 6½

Timothy Fleming

At night;

At night;
heat lightning.
A flicker bursts
out of no-where
like yesterday
or tomorrow

breaking out
of the cycle
for a flash.

It is the spice
I cannot identify,
the dream I cannot
remember,

the way
I touch my
bare knee
in the dark
and wonder,
"Is it mine?"

- Joe Wiecha

Mao Stiffens

After the last rattle of the instruments, after
the sweating faces of the terrified physicians, after
the last light failed in the disinfected room,
you thought of Lenin crawling in his impotence,
 attended but by her who
 only
understood the Revolution.

In your dreams you flew to Moscow,
reliving in his heart
 the ruined calculations
 the awesome betrayals
 the unstilled memories of frozen blood awash in the mouths of vacant eyed soldiers
and the last frantic orders: forgotten or ignored.

- Richard Snell

The Shield

Comfortably I sit inside my car;
The desolate road twists and weaves past farms.
The night looks warm, and even bearable
While peering through the wet, mud-spattered glass
The radio and wipers battle; soft
Dissonance scatters sounds of studded tires
That tap the road like tails of rattlesnakes.
Slowly, the droning clicks and tats of tires
Are softly lost within the fevered dark.
I wish the muffled radio could drown
My thoughts while wipers would soon beat away
The years that whisper memories again.
The shower breathes a numbness deep inside
The warmth that fears the solid, yellow lines.

- David Aeschbacher

The Cherokee Trail

I walk the trodden path
of my forefathers.
I take the same painful steps as
they did on that sorrowful trail.
I hear the screaming cries of the
frail and famished.
I see the stiffened bodies of those
who have died from the bitter cold.
I hear the shameless laughter of the
callous soldiers and the Great White Father.
I feel the chilling wetness of the snow
and the suffocating heat of a fever.
I see the many who started on the trail
and fear for the few who are left.
I feel the blood-stained earth beneath my feet
and I wonder;
Will my people ever rise again?

- Jackie Carter
Cherokee Indian



untitled

9½ x 4¼

Timothy Fleming

Man

What is white?

It's the color of freshly fallen snow.
Huge clouds on a spring day.
Every human being's bones
Every human being's eyes.
And, supposedly, every man's spirit.
Strange, I've never seen a man that color.

What is black?

It's the color of a freshly paved road.
The coal that warms in winter.
The ashes of every man's body.
The bottom of every man's bare feet.
The deepness of every man's mind.
Strange, I've never seen a man that color.

What is red?

It's the color of a freshly burning fire.
The leaves of the trees in the fall.
Every human being's blood.
Every human being's heart.
And every man's frostbitten ears.
Strange, I've never seen a man that color.

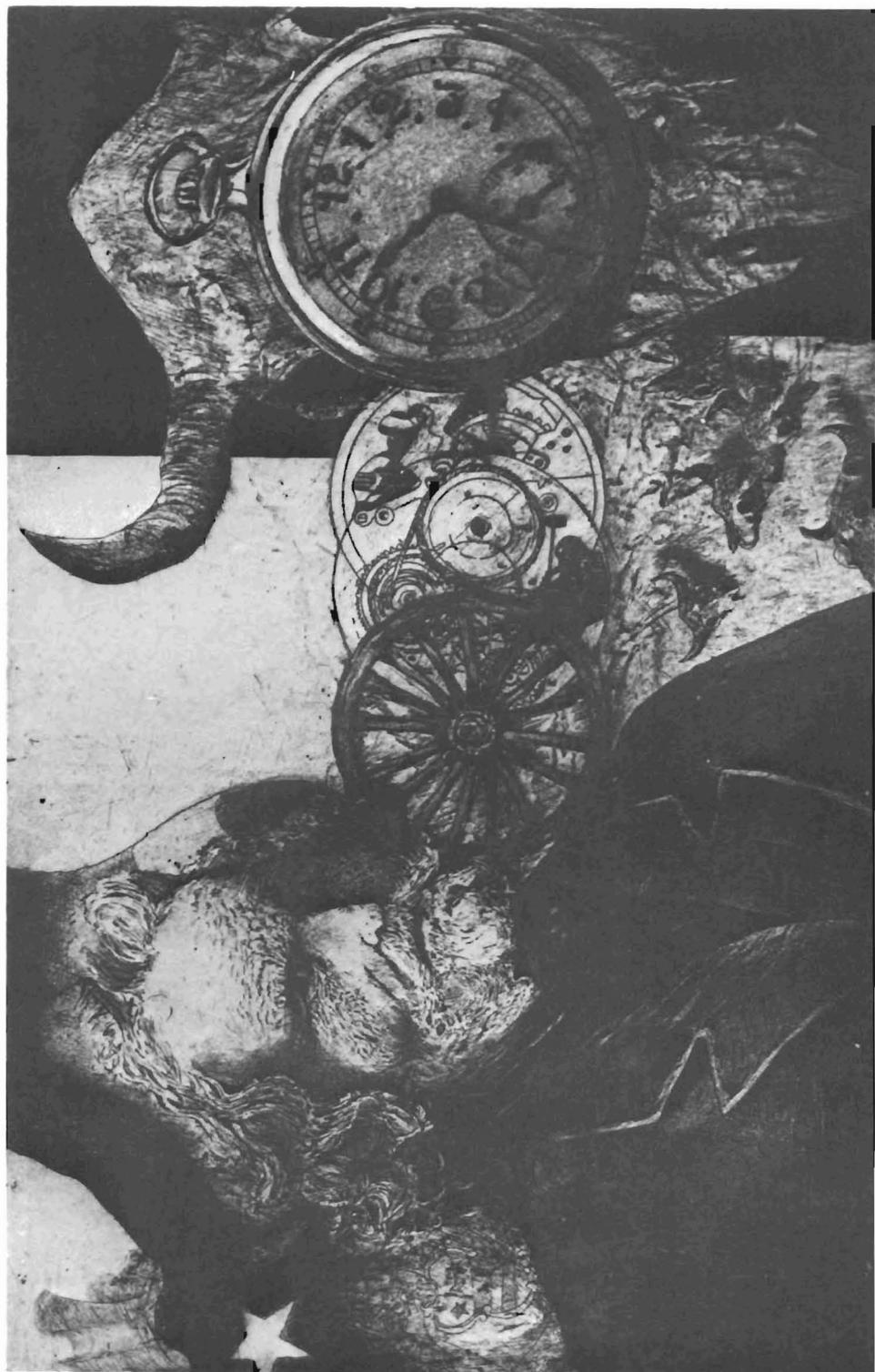
What is yellow?

It's the color of a freshly grown daffodil.
The blaring hot sun in the summer.
The streak down every man's back.
The dirt on every man's teeth.
The liquid waste of every man's body.
Strange, I've never seen a man that color.

What is man?

It is a body with white eyes.
It is a body with black feet.
It is a body with red blood.
It is a body with yellow teeth.
It is a mixture of all these colors.
Now this man, I have seen everywhere.

- Jackie Carter



The Passing of the Buffalo

17³/₄ x 11¹/₄

Mike Barry

[Desert winter is dry as
the ring finger of Death]

Desert winter is dry as the ring finger of Death.
Jagged rocks litter the cracked earth,
 the winds break the brittle mesquite branches,
 the arroyos choke with ruined topsoil.
Give winter long enough
 it will atomize the skulls of these dying cattle.
 Blown sand hones a man clean & sharp
if he survive.

But come in time for the desert spring,
 it only lasts a few short weeks.
Now the arroyos gush with muddy water,
 the air is hushed in expectation.
 Now the red clay quickens into color
& even the cactus flowers beneath its spiny blades.
But after all the scents, the sounds, the vision,
 this touches me the most:
it takes so little rain.

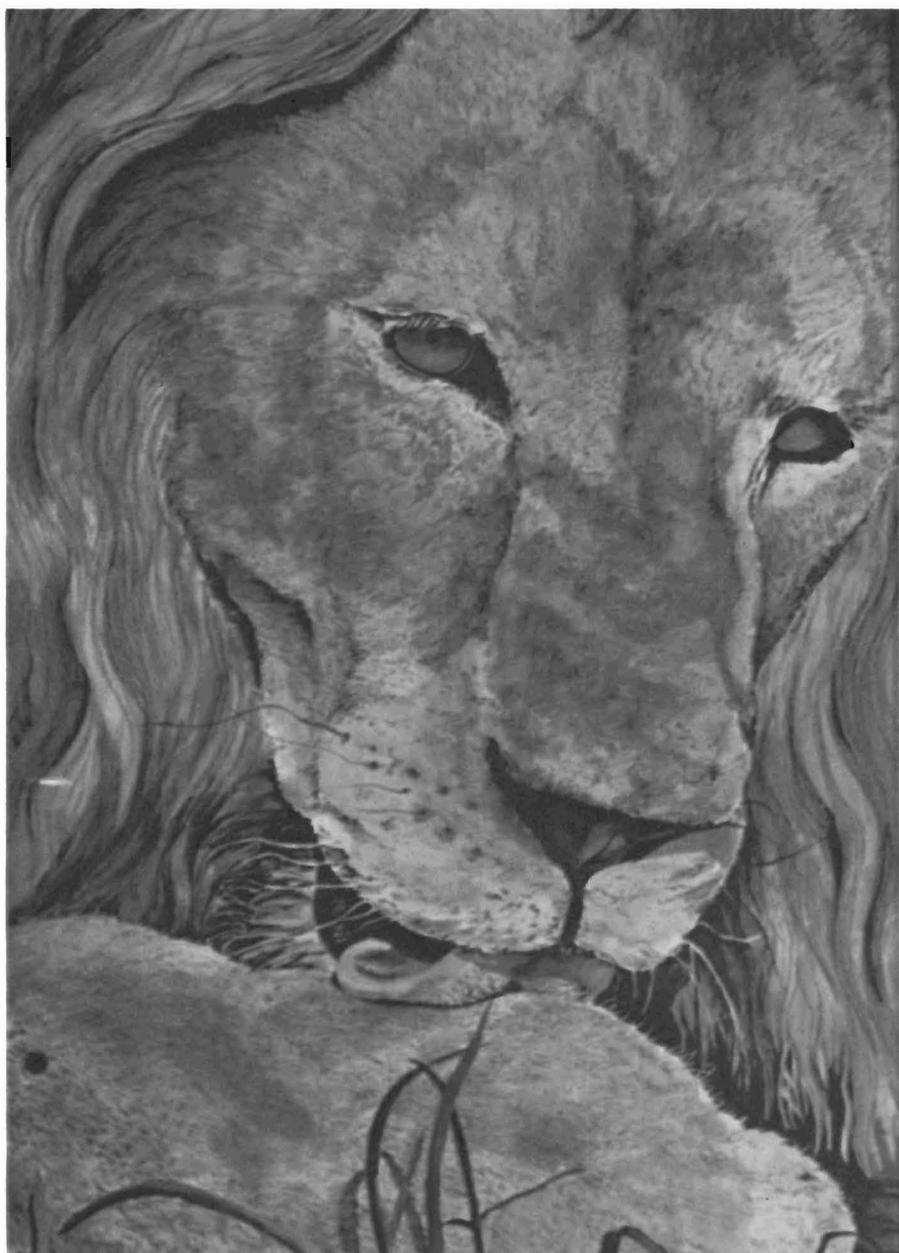
- Richard Snell



untitled

16 x 11

Valerie Shader



untitled

15½ x 11¼

Valerie Shader

A PORTRAIT

The air was heavy with humidity, and the sweat ran from his head as he hung the bag carefully over the can and dropped the acid on the string. Then, calmly, he gathered the leftovers and placed them into his duffle bag and left the building quietly.

Within minutes he was home and changed from his sweat soaked clothes. He stood at the bedroom window and watched the fire colors dance orange against the black sky. He was satisfied. Stretching his nude, exhausted body out on the bed he fell asleep immediately, never rising to turn back the covers.

Jonathan Logan sat in front of his painting and worked hurriedly to put the finishing touches on it while the morning light was fresh and coming through his studio window. His steady hand and sharp eye worked the fine detail of the picture easily. Jonathan barely noticed the knocking. He was annoyed by it.

"Yes," he said, after he opened the door. The anger was visible in the strong lines of his face, but once the door was fully opened his face returned to calm, a steady calm. "Can I do something for you?" he asked.

"I'm sorry to bother you in the morning like this," the woman at the door said, "but I wanted to talk with you before you discovered the accident."

Jonathan turned his head slightly and lowered his eyebrows as if to question the woman's statement. He never broke eye contact with her. Her blonde hair and clear blue eyes were perfect, and her soft features made his mind dizzy with thoughts of pastel colors against white canvas.

"Oh, yes, the accident," she said. "My son, Timmy, knocked over your mailbox yesterday while he was playing. You see we're new in the neighborhood and I'm afraid he didn't..."

Jonathan heard nothing she said. He was captured by her delicate softness, the way the light seemed to play about her head and the way her skin shone so smooth. He opened the door wider, and as if she herself was the one charmed she stepped inside without an invitation.

"What a magnificent old house you have!" she said, looking around as she spoke. Jonathan said nothing. "My name is Julie." She extended her hand. "Julie Price. We just moved in a week ago."

He took her hand and held it gently. "Jonathan Logan," he said. "I'm sorry I didn't notice you had moved in. I'm a painter, and I work all day upstairs in my studio." He pointed to the floor above. "And you're right about this being a beautiful old house. I've taken great pains to restore it and preserve the beauty of it. Beauty should be preserved before it's lost. Would you like to see more of it?"

"Yes, if you don't mind!"

"No, not at all. I would love to show you around." He held her by the elbow and steered her into the living room just off the entrance foyer.

She was stunned. It was an almost perfect room. The wall paper was smooth and right and the wood trim was finished in a natural color, not painted. But the most breath taking thing about the room were the pictures that hung from the walls--two older buildings and a portrait of a child. The buildings were terribly real and exacting in detail, but the child, the little girl in the picture, was life itself. She stood unable to speak for almost a minute. "Did you do these yourself?"

"Yes, they are mine. Lovely aren't they?" Jonathan looked at the pictures almost as if it were the first time he has seen them.

"So real, so very real," she said, never taking her eyes away from the portrait of the child.

"That's a picture of my niece." Jonathan took delight in her fascination for it.

"How old is she?" questioned Julie.

"She would have been twelve this year, but she died almost two years ago. Unfortunate accident."

"I'm sorry to hear that!" Julie said, looking disturbed.

"Don't be sorry. She was a wonderful child, and I'm happy that I was able to capture her loveliness before she died. That's the whole thing of being a painter--capturing the moment the way it is before it's lost. I hate to see something or someone that has those god-sent qualities lose them to age. The charm of that beauty evaporates like water in the hot sun as time passes. That's the way it is with life."

Julie turned her attention to the buildings. "What are these two; I don't recognize them."

"Oh, just a couple of old buildings that I found something in. Something that needed saving. They were lost long before you came here, but I have them now. Small consolation for something so magnificent as these were. I have another upstairs. Would you like to see it? It's one you might recognize."

"I'd like that," she said.

Jonathan led the way up the stairs to his studio.

Julie walked around to the front of the easel where he could get a good view of the painting that was on it. "Why yes I do recognize it. It's the Foster Mansion. I think I heard something about a fire there last night."

Jonathan watched Julie. The light fell just the way he had expected it would. Things were almost perfect. "Yes, I believe there was a fire. Well, it's a shame if there was, but fortunately I'm almost finished. What do you think of it?"

"It's magnificent. You're the best painter I've ever seen. These pictures are almost too real for words. It's amazing."

"Would you like to have a portrait of yourself?"

"Well," she said, placing her hand on her chest. "I'm flattered that you'd even want to paint me, but I could hardly afford..."

Jonathan held his hand up interrupting her. "No, no! There's no cost. To the contrary I should pay you for the privilege."

Julie blushed at the compliment. "If you really want to, I don't see why not."

"Good, let's start immediately. I must finish this first and then get everything set up to begin again." The two of them walked down the stairs and Jonathan opened the front door once again. "How about Thursday. We could start then, if that's alright with you. It won't take more than four or five mornings."

"That's fine. I'll arrange a sitter for Tim. Now what about that mailbox of yours?"

"Never mind about that. I'll take care of it."

"But you should at least let me pay for the damage!"

"Sitting for a portrait will be payment enough."

"Ok, but I think you're crazy to do this for nothing."

Jonathan laughed. "See you Thursday about nine." Jonathan shut the door and started up the stairs and then stopped. He noticed the morning light was almost gone, so he turned and headed toward the basement. He thought it was just as well. He wanted to get the things left over from the previous night cleaned up before lunch anyway.

- Henry Buck



untitled

7½ x 7

Melanie Pyke

[**The absurdity of
each moment**]

The absurdity of each moment
hits me sometimes so hard
that I can almost
feel a rush
of bloody vomit
waiting for relief.
We sit and think
of plans
to pass the day
as if each second
needed purpose
to be real.
And all the effort
for release
is somehow buried
in the droning rhythm
of each day.

- Rich Rombach

American Beauty

You came to me in twos, American
Beauty, a savior and tease, then lover
And butcher, shattering all my blown glass
Perceptions with one act of humanness .
Everyone's wet dream of stark purity
Found a new toy, and like an idiot child
That delights in its own madness, has thrust
Its hands clutching the prize in front of me.
Those splayed legs won't make history, woman.
Neither shall mumbling awkward passions,
Nor the clever way you bite someone's neck.
It has been done before.

- Charles Gange

Case No. S-217

There is no where to go lady.
There is no where to go.

Your children stay hungry.
Your clothes become rags.
Your husband stays sick.
You can't find a job.
Your bills mount
and try to fuck you.
It's cold outside
and you've been evicted.

The system says
that it can help you.
The system says
and you believe them
and all their lies.

Your belly aches
as you stand on line.
Your belly aches
at the welfare office.
Your belly aches
in grocery stores.

And your children are hungry.
And Your husband is dead.
Your big son quit school.
He's a shoe shine boy now.

Your daughter is pregnant.
Your youngest son
was arrested last night
for shop lifting.

You go to a shrink
who prescribes you pills.
The neighborhood pusher
gets your kids dope.

(stanza break)

Your oldest son
is incoherent.
Your daughter's baby
aborted itself.
Your youngest son
O.D.ed on horse.
And the policemen came
and busted him.
The clinic doctor
called your daughter a whore.
Your oldest son
blew his own brains out.
He thought too much.

And the news papers said
Black boy dead,
has killed himself.
Black boy busted
for shooting up dope.
Black girl's baby
dead falling down stairs.

And the mother cries.
She visits the grave yard.
She visits her son
in the state penitentiary.
The mother cries.
She thinks of her daughter,
how she's gone away
to make her own living.
How she took to the streets
with her body.

And the mother looks back.
And the mother remembers.
The attendants don't listen.
They don't see her tears.
They won't come to dry them
'till the ward's asleep.
And they'll mop the floor.
And when they turn on the lights
at eight the next morning,
there'll be a dark blanket
over Mrs. Smith's head.

- Wilfred J. Baez



Saturday

17½ x 13½

Claudette Widdle

Song of an Art Teacher

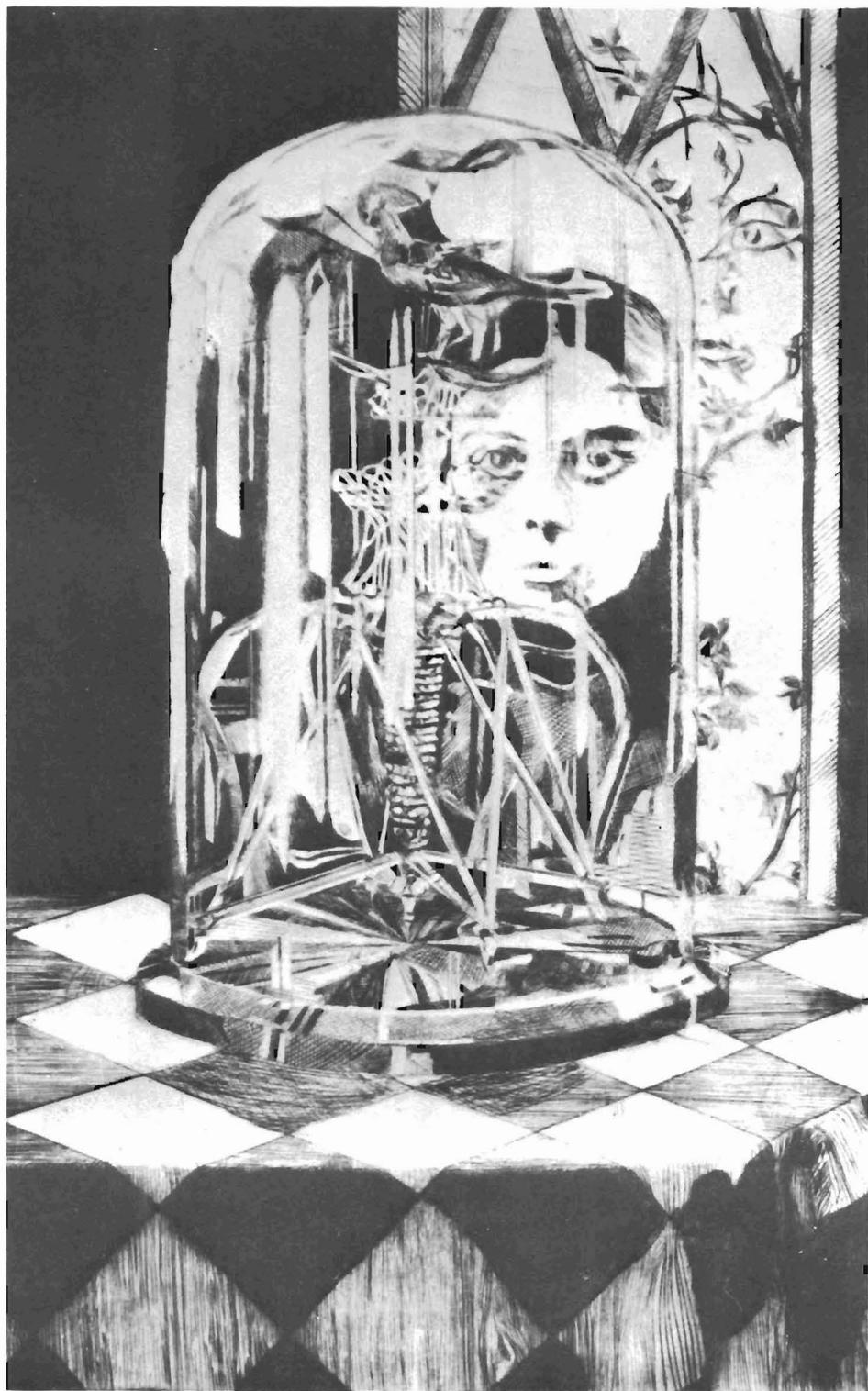
Art teacher died a virgin.
Clutching her heart, raw-boned
Like the withered still-life apple
It shriveled between her fingers

She touched and dreamed the naked models
Composed their hanging soft forms
Drew them with grits and birthmarks
Her mouth dry and black as charcoal

Good shower-steam on the mirror
Acrylic vapors cloaked her, her ugly body
Grey rag, smelling of alcohol
A squeezed-out tube, tiny pulse within

Oh her heart, her heart, her heart
Oh at night she used to hear its crying alone
An eroded human love poem
Hum-bump, hum-bump, hum-bump

- Diana Abu Jaber



untitled

17¾ x 11¼

Cathleen Kuzia

I Fought a Self-Portrait

I fought a self-portrait
the other night,
and it was a blind child
crossing a snake
with a stick. Its shoulders
spun the wind and
its hands released the storm,
but its lightning
eyes inspired the final
kill, and it laughed
out loud as the walls crawled
up into the
knotted cupboards, and screamed.

- Debbie Smith



Lorelei

37½ x 24

Debbie Hammond

To Joseph

While sitting in your room
there are times
that I could scream so full of rage
that surely blood would substitute itself
for my voice.
There are days when I wish
I could be a universe
away from you,
the four walls,
and my fear
of needing you;
And other days
when I feel the crushing,
breaking loneliness
of the years
swell like a raging river
that rushes towards you,
lost and unthinking.

And I hear the echoes
and sighs
of my own hollow past,
and I know the only one
that will never leave me
is myself,
for I am my best lover.
And there are times
when blood would surely substitute itself
for the tears
of a violent fear
that prevents me
from speaking
my love for you.

- Rich Rombach



untitled

both 3 x 5

Claudette Widdle

THE TOY

It was a normal day. Well, it was at least what Bertram Cates considered a normal day, for him. He was seated, as usual, in his large green understuffed easy chair in front of an oversized wooden desk covered with his rather unique collection of wind-up toys. These toys had been occupying eight hours of Bertram's time every day for the last five years. Yes, a normal day. But for Bertram Cates, retired and slightly eccentric, a day that would be remembered as no less than a nightmare.

He started off at nine o'clock on today's eight hour vigil playing with one of his recently acquired wind-ups; a 4½" computerized toy resembling a rather goofy-looking lion standing on two legs. He had picked it up at one of those dingy little pawn shops on 3rd Street yesterday for \$200. The price was too high and Bertram already had eight other computerized wind-ups, but it was the smallest one he had ever seen. And what intrigued Bertram most was that the computer was entirely enclosed in the 1" head. This meant the body contained only the walking and arm mechanisms. All of the other Computoy wind-ups needed most of the body to contain these miniaturized computers and were no smaller than ten inches.

As Bertram started to wind this fascinating Computoy, he thought back to what the proprietor of the pawn shop had said about there not being any record of where the toy had been nor any patent number ever having been filed with the World Patent Office.

"Rumor has it," said the proprietor, cunningly serious, "this toy is from another world."

"Preposterous!" said Bertram as he stormed out of the shop, furious at himself for even having stopped there. "Scientists haven't discovered life on any of the planets in the galaxy," he mumbled to himself as he boarded the monorail that took him back to his fifty-six story retirement complex on 184th Street.

Bertram continued to wind the toy as he thought about why he enjoyed wind-up toys so much. He figured it was because they can't harm you or talk back to you like most people. And it reminded him of a play he had once seen by William Saroyan in which the lead character said to the bartender, "Nick, this is a toy. A contraption devised, by the cunning of man, to drive grief, or boredom, or anger out of children. A noble gadget...Delightful! Tragic, but delightful."¹ Bertram understood why he called them delightful but never could comprehend why the character found them tragic. "Toys," he thought, "are definitely delightful!"

When Bertram finally awakened from his daydreaming he realized he had been winding this toy for over twenty minutes! It was twenty-two minutes exactly, according to his electronic stopwatch that he always set when winding a new toy for the first time.

"What an amazing mainspring this Computoy must have," Bertram said to himself. "No wind-up ever made could wind for longer than 5½ minutes!"

As he set the toy down on the desk and released the winding screw,

¹ Saroyan, William, *The Time of Your Life*, Samuel French, New York 1941.

his curiosity increased as the goofy-looking lion began to move. It walked, or rather wobbled, across the desk at a speed that Bertram estimated to be about fifteen inches per minute. This was rather slow for a Computoy, but Bertram reasoned the awkwardness was due to its bulky 1" feet.

The toy walked around in an exact figure-eight for about five minutes. Then, without warning, just stopped. It was facing front with its eyes tightly closed as though it were asleep and its jaws clamped shut in a very determined frown. Again this shaggy-maned lion waddled forward for another thirty seconds or so, turned to the right, then stopped. As Bertram viewed this crazy lion, a feeling of pride began to seep into his mind and body. Of course Bertram knew that all computerized toys, as opposed to pure mechanical wind-ups, take much longer to wind down depending on the variations of stops and starts programmed into the memory bank. "But this particular one," thought Bertram, "might take an hour or more to run out. This is truly a one-of-a-kind Computoy!"

Bertram's enjoyment of this toy began to dwindle after he had waited a full sixteen minutes for it to move again. The lion just stood facing the right wall, arms at its side, with only its short, curly tail moving hypnotically from side to side. Bertram decided to play with another wind-up until this stupid lion reactivated itself.

He picked up a small old fashioned wind-up go-cart and a mechanic with a tool box. He made the mechanic jack up the go-cart and fix a flat. Although Bertram had done this at least a hundred times in the last five years, he just couldn't make up a new and more interesting game for his wind-ups. This meek, fifty-two-year old's mind was still occupied wondering what the hell that miniature Computoy would do next.

Just as Bertram was about to push the lion aside for awhile, the tiny bow fastened to the lion's mane began to glow a bright red. At that instant its head twisted around precisely 90 degrees and just as suddenly opened its eyes and stared directly at Bertram. A slight chill overcame Bertram as those two beady little pupils gleamed with an eerie yellowish hue. Then the lion broke into a wide, evil-looking smile revealing a full set of teeth and a large menacing fang at each corner of its mouth.

Bertram was astonished! For it seemed as though the lion could see his every thought as they glowered at each other for over a minute.

"Not possible!" Bertram said as the lion now began waddling persistently around the desk. Nevertheless, this strange creation was acting as if it were more than just a toy.

The lion was now facing forward again and began a slow excursion over the top of the desk. It just kept bumping into other wind-ups, knocking some of them over with its left arm. Bertram soon began to realize that he was no longer observing purposeless movement and accidental stumblings. This toy was deliberately upsetting his collection into a confused and disorderly conglomerate of wind-ups.

After an excruciatingly long five minutes of observing this maniacal toy in action, Bertram panicked a bit as the lion halted, turned around, and again glared at him. At this moment a painful thought pervaded Bertram's mind. He almost believed that this 4½" toy feline was angry. Humanly and savagely angry!

"I don't like this game," shouted Bertram. "I don't like this game at all!"

Bertram sat perfectly still, breathing at least three times faster than

normal as his eyes surveyed a desk in complete chaos. He now noticed the uncanny part of this incredible (game?). The only wind-ups left intact were a fire engine, a tin soldier, a dancing bear, a horse, a train, an acrobat, a ferris wheel, and Bertram's favorite Computoy, a 14" Gargoyle. His collection of eight Computoys were the only toys still standing.

Now the most bizarre and terrifying occurrence in Bertram Cates life began to take place. All at once, the fire engine siren started wailing, the soldier began marching and the bear began dancing wildly. The horse started prancing, the train chugged, and the ferris wheel began turning abnormally fast. The acrobat started tumbling with a feror that Bertram had never seen before, and the gargoyle, wings spread, began flying in a circular pattern less than a foot above Bertram's head.

"But I haven't wound you up!" Bertram screamed as this shocking spectacle held him in complete awe.

"You're only a toy!"

As though the lion had heard this, it raised both arms above its head and then lowered them, pointing directly at Bertram. All eight Computoys began moving towards the figure which was now immobilized in the large green chair. The ferris wheel rolled off of its stand, the horse galloped harder than ever, and that ugly bi-horned Gargoyle started flying closer and closer to Bertram, occasionally brushing against his bald head with its large 12" wings.

Bertram's heart was now beating faster than ever. His eyes remained glued to the 4½" monster heading straight for him followed by eight unstoppable Computoy wind-ups closing in on him fast. The lion kept advancing, wearing that same churlish grin while slowly opening and closing its jaws hungrily every few seconds.

Bertram's heart pounded relentlessly, his pulse was racing and his mind was whirling in a sea of unceasing terror. His arms started flailing uncontrollably in every direction as his heartbeat echoed deafeningly in his chest. Suddenly his entire body shook in spasm after spasm as he bellowed almost incoherently with his last ounce of breath, "You're only a toy, you're only a toy, you're only..a toy... you're only a... You're..on..ly..a...toy...!"

"I don't understand it. Father has never had heart trouble in his life," young Julie Cates said as she walked through the Touch-Sensor doors leading to the lobby of the Central Cremation Bureau.

"When was the last time you saw him?" asked Dr. Martin as he reached into the large left pocket of his long white smock.

"Over five years ago just after he retired," said Julie, somewhat ashamed.

"Well, people do tend to get older when they feel they've outlived their usefulness." Dr. Martin said as he withdrew an object from his pocket. "By the way, I found this clutched in you father's hand. Maybe your little five-year-old would like it."

When Julie climbed into the small cockpit of her Air-Copter, she immediately looked at the object still in her hand. As she examined the miniature wind-up toy, she noticed the bottom of the little animal's left foot. There was no usual Wind-Up Corp. or Computoy insignia. Only an unusual inscription engraved in the metal. She puzzled over the inscription as she read out loud, "For Children Only."

- Fred W. Feldt



Sandcastles

13½ x 9¼

Jenny Linn

Grandmother

Her head of wound braids,
Now muted black, props heavily
On a child-soft, red-tinted hand,
Solidly wrinkled
By the endless washing of clothes.
Eyes that appear lashless, are closed
To the yellow light
Of her kitchen. Before morning
Haze crystallizes, she ends her
daydream, then sighless,
Rises, her thumb from long habit
Twists her wedding band as she calls
To wake the others.

- Debbie Hammond

Mama

Daddy it smells like fall
The leaves are red and gold
and they are torn
from the trees
(I want to go back home)

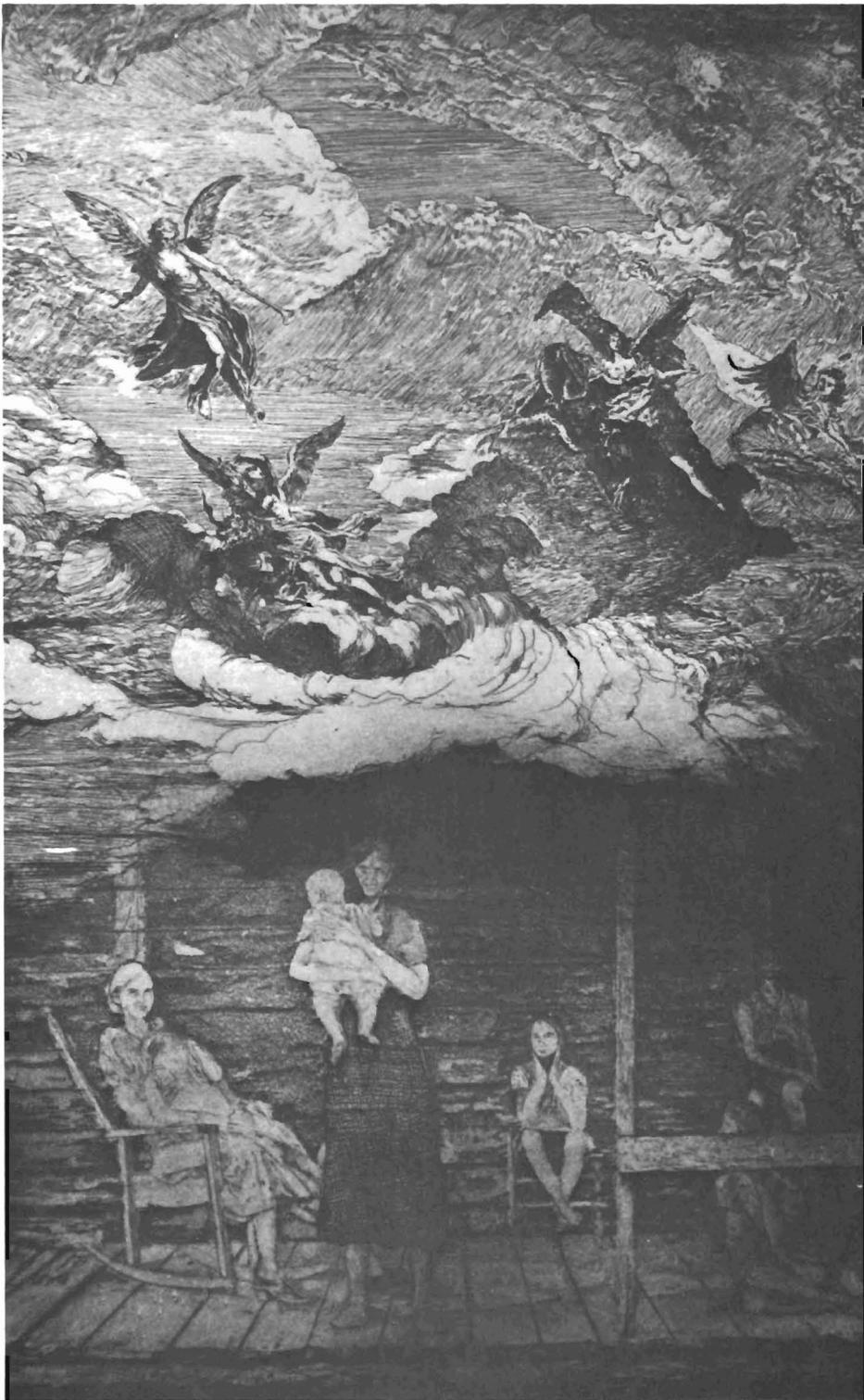
Do you remember?
She bent and stained the patio wood
and she made me breakfast
and kissed me good night
(She tucked me in bed)

Daddy it feels like winter
The thermometer out the window
was too covered with ice
for anyone to read it
(And everyone was cold)

The winter was long
And my throat hurt
when my feet got wet
and my hands were cold
(Where is she?)

Daddy it ended in winter
She turned to a naked tree
with cold ice hanging
I don't know where she is
(And I want to go home I want to go home I want to go home)

- Karen Belove



The Daydream

17 ³/₄ x 11 ¹/₄

Mike Barry

THE WINGS

T'was pretty late at night, I'd say, 'least bout ten, eleven o'clock, the sun was long down and I was getting snug in bed, me an the fat tabby, when somebody came a-pecking at my door. Well, I drug on my old pink coat an shuffled to the door an who should be standing there but my down the road neighbor, Bill Meker.

"Ada," said he, "Ada--you gotta come down to the farm, I got sumpin to show you that you jest ain't gonna believe!"

Now Bill an me's jest good 'ol friends and mebbe if we was a-courting I would be a little more enthused bout arising all unholy hours of the night, but being as we was jest good ol' friends all I could say was, "Okay Bill, but I want you to know whatever in thunderation this thing is, it better be good." An I repeated that a few more times on the way down to let him know I meant it.

His farm t'aint more than a couple o' strides down the road but Bill had to run them all 'cause he was so all-fired excited. He brung me to the ol' barn where he used to keep three cows (Betsy, Laura, and Emile). He didn't keep them there anymore 'cause one day a bolt of lightening put a hole in the roof and he had to build them a new barn so they wouldn't get rained on. Anyhow, there we was at the ol' barn and Bill says to me look inside.

"What do you mean by that? Everybody in Hukersville knows you ain't got nothing in there but a big, black hole," I delcared.

He grinned, then he shrugged with both hands in his pockets, then he tells me look anyhow.

What could I do? I figured mebbe he was hiding sumpin secret in there, little of his special corn whiskey moonshine mebbe, and he wanted to share it with me. I opened the latch and pulled the doors open an--lo and behold--such a creation I never did see! T'was a great big, shiny thing like one o' thum contraptions from outer space. I was so flustered I couldn't help gasping and letting out a tiny holler.

"Hush now!" Bill said, real soft-like under his breath, "You'll waken the whole town! This is something to be kept strictly under wraps -- you understand?"

I nodded but that thing in the barn had me all in a flap and I was too frustrated to say a word.

Seeing my condition, Bill took a match from his pocket and lit a candle. "Ada don't worry now, ain't nothing in there that kin hurt you. Come on" He offered me the crook of his arm and fortunately I knowed that Bill Mekers was an honorable man so I took it an we went inside.

Well, from in there I got a much better sight of what it was that had startled me. T'wasn't quite as frightsome up close but I still wasn't sure as to what it was. The thing was near bout nine feet length-wise, three feet width-wise an. sloped sorty upward at the middle. T'was flat and curvy 'long the edges an on the bottom was three pant-belts. I leant over to get a closer look and -- what a wonder-for-hogs-I never did see so many beer tabs in my entire life, why there must have been at least six thousand or so, all hooked together!

"Why Bill Mekers!" said I, "Did you make this all on your lonesome?"

"Yup." He grinned like a Chesire cat, "I hooked together each and every piece you see right there before your eyes."

"Well Bill, you have got me plumb flabbergasted, I must confess I never would have believed you had such talent. But tell me -- what is it?"

"Why can't you tell? It's a pair o' flying wings!"

Course I didn't understand what in tarnation he meant by that an I tol' him so right off. But all he did was pull the big silvery thing out the door and walk up to the side of his house. Then he turned to me and he said, "I'll show you." An he climbed up on to his winder shutters.

Well, I was not atall sure I was gonna like what he was planning to do, 'specially after I saw him swing up on top of his roof. But I jest kepted quiet and didn't make

a sound, 'cept sometimes telling him to be careful. Then I saw him start buckling the dadburn thing to his arms and 'round his middle, then I started saying things a little louder, like, "What on earth are you planning to do Bill Meker?"

An he answered with jest what I was afraid he was gonna answer with, he says, "I'm gonna fly Ada!"

I started to get mighty nervous and I called back, "If that means you're gonna jump off the roof, you don't have to show me! I already know what'll happen!"

He jest sniggered an tol' me not to worry. Then he started to flap his arms, real graceful-like, an' all those beer tabs fell right into place an' they slid an' clinked together perfect, the way the scales on a fish do when he's swimming. Well I was down there oohing an' ahhing an' all taken aback. He looked so purty I do believe all the field crickets quit screeching an' the bullfrogs over in Maydin's Pond stopped their shiverreeing just to watch Bill up there flapping in the night air.

T'was a calm night. Not barely a sigh of wind but Bill waited up there 'til a teeny gust puffed along. Then he really started waving those arms, he took a step and--heavens and earth--there he went up into the wild night yonder! Right up into the sky like any natural-born eagle!

Well that just sent my heart palpitating all over the place. I felt my head start to swim and swoon so I just had to set down. Oh but he was an eyeful! With the moonlight glinting off each metal tab he was so elegant he reminded me of one o' thum peacock birds. He glided round the farm a few times, then up and down the road, past all the houses an farms, then up and down the road, past all the houses an farms, then he came back putting out his feet and bringing up with a round turn.

I clapped an I fawed an I whooped an I raised a big gewgaw. Bill near bout had a fit though, hushing me an telling me to keep quiet. "Dawg it! Don't go yawling yer head off," he said.

"Boy, that is mighty irregular Bill," said I, "Yes, mighty irregular. Where the world you ever learn to build things like that?"

He was real tickled getting such compliments an he tol' me bout how he studied the bones from his dead farm hens. He said he looked thum skeltons over real-fine and soon's he learned how thum squawkers were put together he started making his beer tab wings. He showed me the layers of metal he done made and tried to 'splain how t'was shaped right like wings. Sho, I didn't git much o' what he was saying but thum wings was a-holding my eyes. I eventouched one wing--Lordy--my but it was colder than porch-ice! It reminded me of the time I rode on a new steel-built tractor, the way the wheel's cold an its shaking got into me an gave me such an everlasting wonderous feeling.

Well, Bill drug those wings into the barn then he asked, "Tomorry night, mebbe you wanting to go flying fer yourself?"

I thought bout it fo' a sec, but, ah dang, nah, t'wasn't the same as bouncing a tractor. Least a tractor's got all four feet on the ground. Course I didn't want him to think I was yeller so I said, "No thank you Bill, mighty decent of you to offer but I don't believe that sort of ruckus is 'fitting to a lady, y'know?"

He understood so he walked me home an tol' me to come 'round agin tomorry night if I wanted to watch.

I said, "Sho' do!" So we shook hands on my porch and went our separate ways.

Next day I didn't say not one word to no one bout last night. I knowed there's jest no telling what folks 'round here would do if they found out Bill Meker could fly. Then that night I went out to watch Bill, and not only that night but the next and the next and the next! Thum wings had me spellbinded and Bill was getting so he could do somersets and all sorts of odd tricks up in the air. I bin seeing him fo', oh, nigh on to two weeks and Bill and me was getting sorty close, y'know, holding hands an such, course only in the night otherwise the people'd start to talk.

Things were getting mighty rosy for Bill and I. We was starting to talk bout building more wings, mebbe selling them, mebbe even going into business, an all such. T'was all but talk naturally, but such talking was not hard to take. Then one night it all changed. What happened was it was right late out, an the rain had

started to come down considerable hard. We both took one gander at the weather and Bill left the wings in the barn. We decided to sit inside and chew the cud awhile instead. Well, we hadn't bin inside fer but a minite when there came an almighty loud knocking at the door. I looked out the winder and if I hadn't of knowed better, I'd of sworn there was a lynching mob standing out there. Bill hustled to the door as soon's he oped it Jim Jones, David Locke and a whole bunch of other guys from all the neighborhood farms came busting in.

Says Jim Jones (he looks nervous, but he said it real nice-like,) "Now Bill we knows you is a good person an all that, but there bin some peculiar carrying-ons bout your place lately an me an the boys come to sorty investigate."

Well I could surely tell they weren't coming fer no cup of tea, they all had with thum their deer rifles an such. Now I don't know much bout thum things but I kin usually tell when folks is planning to use thum an right then I knowed they was looking fer sumpin to shoot full o' holes.

After Jim said that Bill scritchted his head--sorty confused-like and he said, "Well Jim, why don't you jest tell me what zactly y'all's looking fer and mebbe I kin help you find it."

Then David Locke (he's a real smarty, he is) said, "Mekers I kin tell you right off zactly what we's looking fer. Zactly, we want whatever t'is you got hid in yer ol' barn!"

Bill's face went a little white and I knowed mine was a little whiter. Then Bill said, "Why Dave, I'm certain I don't know what yer talking bout!"

A couple o' the other men looked in a pucker when Bill said that Dave Locke wasn't feazed atall, stead he was even louder, "Oh, don't gimme that!" he hollered, "Sumpin's bin scaring our chickens at night an we aim to find out what it is."

"But Dave--"

"Please Bill," said Jim Jones, "we knows you got sumpin in there so if you don't open that old barn door we is jest gonna havta break it down ourselves."

Well, poor Bill looked at me an I jest shrugged--what could we do? So we all went traipsing out in all that mud and rain an such 'til we come to the door. Then all the men moved back bout ten paces, squatted and squinted their guns like they was about to shoot geese; Lord only knows what they was expecting. One feller even said that I might want to be a-turning my head, 'cause he didn't 'spect the scene to be a purty one.

"No thank you suh, I imagine I got more stomach than any of you!" said I, trying to make them feel ashamed. I reckon none heard me though, what with all their blood rushing to their heads; they were in such a sweat over what was behind that barn door that t'was plain funny jest to see thum.

Bill sighed then he yanked open the door and stepped out of the way real quick. Fo' jest a sec I seed the light from one man's lantern reflect off thum wings and make thum beautiful fo' a flistening moment, then some man hollered, "It's a dragon!"

Another yelled, "It's a monster!"

Then David Locke hollered, "Kill the dadblame thing! Fire!"

They pumped so much lead into Bill's poor ol' barn that when the air cleared the only thing left standing was a few pieces of the wood frame an three singed beer tabs. After that the men shook hands with Bill and tol' him he was a good sport. David Locke said next time he caught Bill hiding monsters they wouldn't be so easy on him, an Jim Jones said, "No hard feelings--right Bill?"

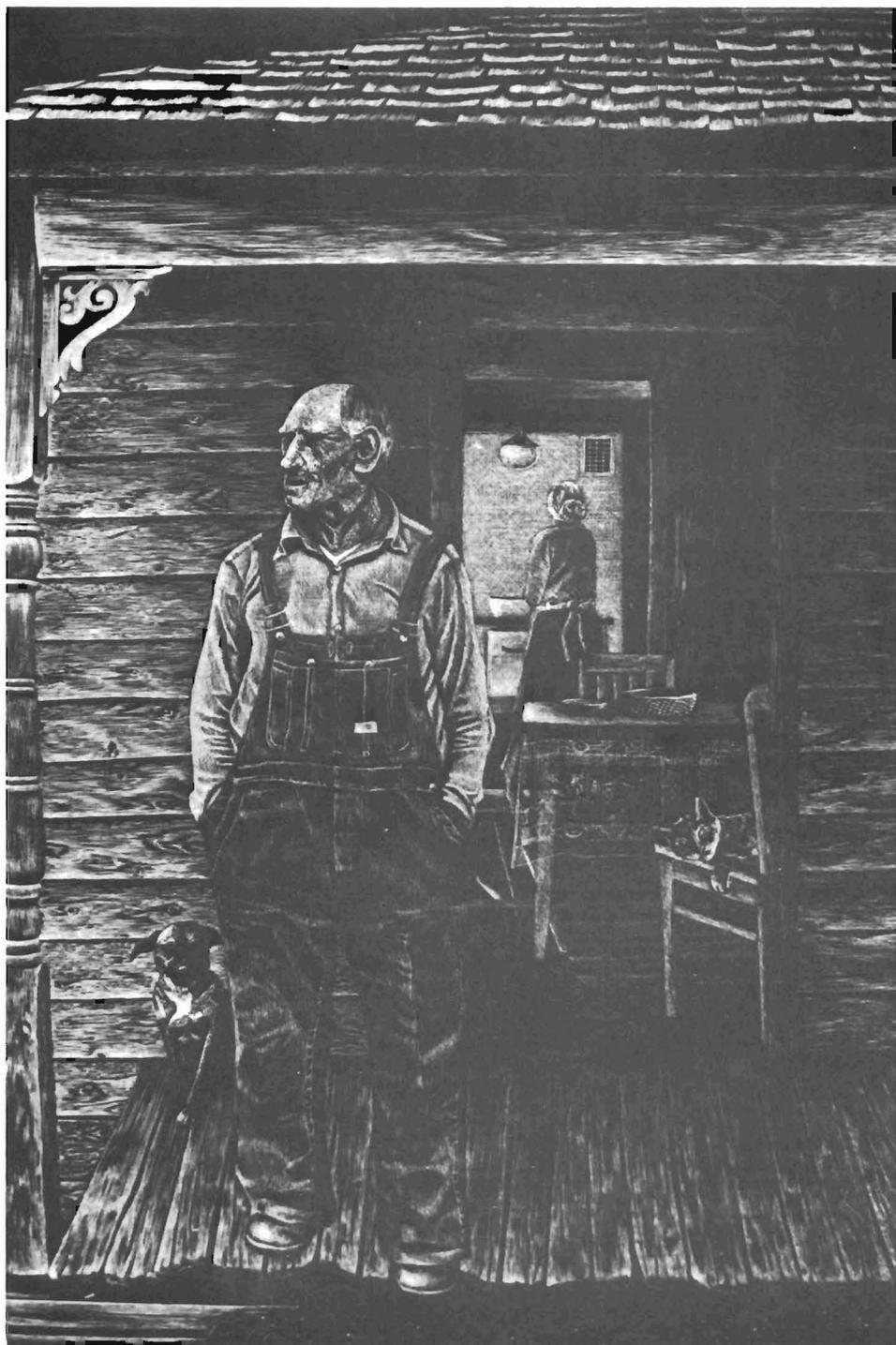
Then they left and Bill stood there all alone, 'cept fo' me an even with me there he seemed alone. He stood right where his barn used to be, the ground was still curling smoke from their fire fan he picked up a beer tab an put it on his pointer-finger.

Asked I, "Are you gonna build another?"

He answered, "Nah, I think I'll go back to farming."

An now Bill an me is jest good ol' friends agin.

- Diana Abu Jaber



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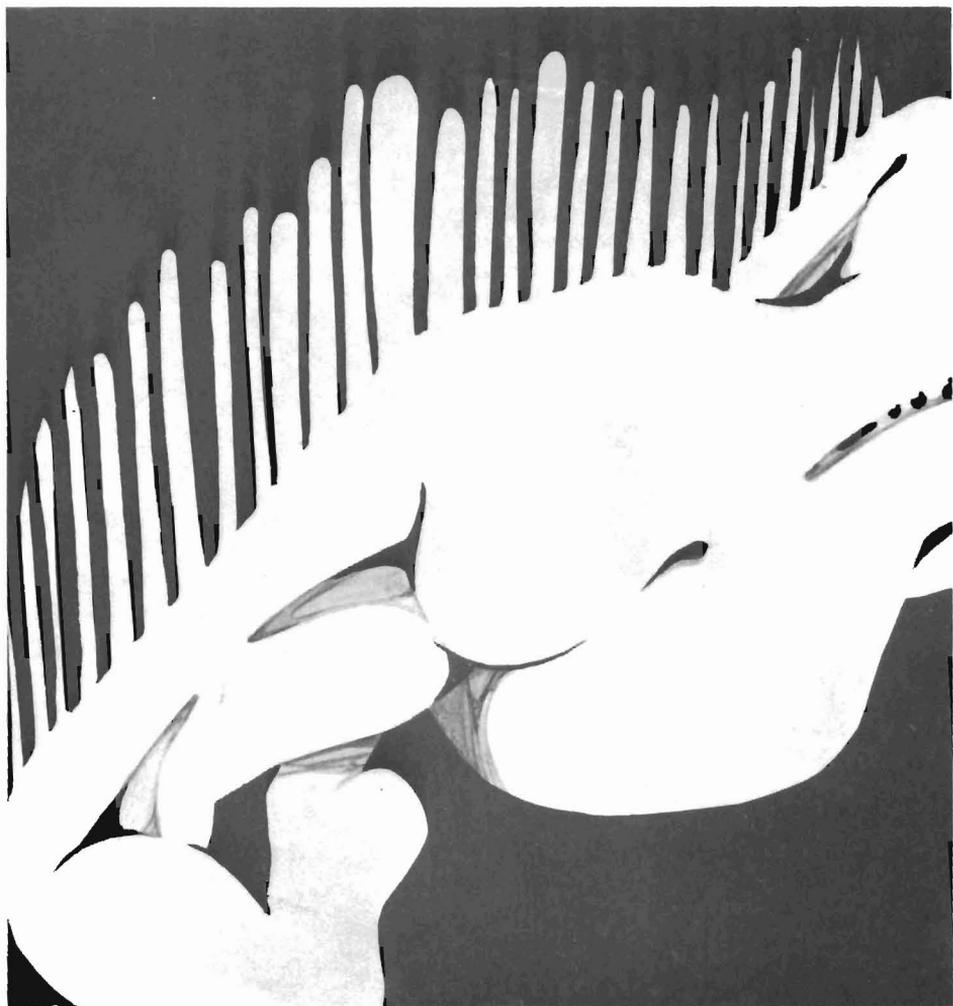
17 x 11½

Valerie Shader

[The intensity]

The intensity
in the stillness
of the bedroom air,
like the tremor
before the quake,
the rustle
before the wind.
Outstretched and laid
upon the soft and sagging
altar.
No service
more cermonious
or song
better put to the tunes
of strident,
rasping notes.
And then the final lull
of rushing applause.

- Rich Rombach



untitled

11¼ x 10½

Pat Mollica