

ALEMBIC



Providence College

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INTRODUCTION

The *Alembic* — literally, the term denotes a medieval mechanical apparatus used in distillation. In this magazine, the term connotes a figurative “distillation” of the collective literary and artistic talents present in the Providence College community. The medieval apparatus distilled each season’s yield of grapes and produced a refined and tasteful mixture of wine. This literary “apparatus” also attempts to collect and distill each year’s fruitful yield of creativity, in hopes of likewise producing a palatable artistic vintage.

DEDICATION

We are pleased to dedicate this year's *Alembic* to Donald Grant for his unceasing support and direction, and whose efforts have helped in fostering a successful magazine.

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A PRAYER TO ANNE BUTLER YEATS	Sheila Laitres
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THE ACTOR	Tony Kulbis
A REFLECTION ON DISAPPEARANCE	Sandra J. Deryck
ROAD CONSTRUCTION	Eileen Reynolds
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I RETURN YOUR GIFT	Tony Alix
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PHOTOGRAPHY

(in order of appearance)

Kristine Struminsky — *(cover photo)*
Elizabeth Larkin
Kristine Struminsky
Elizabeth Larkin

SPANISH STEPS

Red-eyed windows glint at signoras.
Keats died across the Square.
I head for a bar called BYRON.

Wine's a mutter of would-be doctors
and poets, arthritic day-old steel,
temples infarcted, wheels on belltowers.

Pavements beg for a salve
and deep in the bar somebody's coughed —
but TB's dead of course.

I don't have pills or patches.
Why do you keep on hacking?
My wine won't change your blood.

Edward McCrorie

A PRAYER TO ANNE BUTLER YEATS

(Written in response to W. B. Yeats', "A Prayer for My Daughter")

You slept in a prayer-womb
of your father's
Words. Your skin was soft,
warm like a sunshined mushroom
from Gregory's Wood.

Now, your skin must be
like pine bark—
dry, cracked—
Or, maybe you are on
Again with that wood,
Soil with your father's soil.

Life, now, for me is
with my father.
His cradle song a
Plaster backbone. And yours?
Did you build your life
Standing on your father's legs?
Maybe, you found your own
moral cartilage.

I am a Woman, formed
by a Man's seed.
By man's bread
I am sustained.
I will take my father's song
And, in my garden,
I will plant it
With my water and with
my sunshine
I will nourish it.
His verse will grow
In and around my own.
I will weed
And I will slowly
Harvest my own song.

Sheila Laitres

JOANNE

You have a dichotomatic heart; both are broken.
They took you away because they said you were unable to
"function" in society.
Does that mean he is angry with the way you wash the dishes?

Christ,
Didn't anyone tell them you were carrying a dead baby?
Your womb turned to ice and
Your mind froze;
Like frozen roses, wet leaves on a December afternoon,
A chill that anticipates the first snow fall.

Your room is white, flourescent
Almost as if you were living within a lightbulb.
Someone should have told them that snowflakes
Don't belong under microscopes.

Diane Cinquegrana

THE ACTOR

Pores permanently
 filled with make-up
Face always
 stuck expressive
The final curtain call
 a bow and applause.
The actor sinks backstage.
 Surrounded by mirrors
reflect roles he plays in
 his imagination.
A forgotten book with a broken binding.
 His skin peels off
like paint chips.
This was the last call.
 He lived other peoples' lives.
Yards of lines
 strangle normal words.
His brain, cultural
 goulash.
WHO ARE YOU?
I am the great . . .
 You must be joking . . .
 I was in . . . You must have seen me in . . .
 I am . . .
Whoever you are
 get out of the dressing room before
 the boss sees you.
And make sure you emptied
 all the trash cans.

Tony Kulbis

A REFLECTION ON DISAPPEARANCE

(for Sylvia Plath)

As you might a clown, ease
the ache out of my jaw,
sneak me off stage and wash
away the smile. I am tired
of applause.

Tonight I saw a falling star—
how wonderful it must feel to shoot
out of existence, to break
the suction, to
for once stop shining.

Sandra J. Deryck

ROAD CONSTRUCTION

(a love poem)

You are paralysis.
You cause me to stall
Rolling backward downhill
Into . . .
Open manhole.
Quick!
Clamp the lid shut!

Eileen Reynolds

BETRAYAL

It was a dark lounge filled with people. Slow, sexy jazz flowed from hidden speakers as candles burned in red goblets, producing red clouds of light at each table.

At one of these tables was an attractive couple who sat facing one another over their goblets. The woman's hair swept around her head so that one side of her face and neck was bare while the other side was bathed in soft dark waves of hair. The clear white skin and luxurious black hair formed a striking contrast. The man had strong appealing features. A slight imperfection in the line of his nose and the fleshiness of his lips gave him an aura of sensuality.

The couple talked and laughed quietly, occasionally touching hands across the table. Anna's intense love for this man was betrayed by the way she tenderly studied Carl's every expression and gesture.

"Carl, would you get me some more wine? I don't see our waitress anywhere."

"Sure, I'm ready for another glass, too."

She watched him walk to the bar. Rather than waste time in the rest room while Carl was at the table, Anna left to freshen up during his absence. She cringed at the garish red and black wallpaper and examined herself in the mirror. Her feelings were intensified by the wine, for she felt euphoric, being completely swept away by the romance of the evening.

When she returned and found the booth empty, she scanned the crowd. She put her handbag down on the table and saw that she had a full glass of wine. She took a drink. But where was his drink? Again, she scanned the people that lined the bar, and suddenly saw him talking to a woman at the bar with their heads bent closely together in conversation. Anna's stomach tightened. She didn't know whether to walk to the bar and join them, or to sit and wait. The woman kept touching Carl with her long, red fingernails, and pressing herself close to him.

Anna had another drink and turned away. She felt very sober now. Looking around the lounge gave her no relief. Most tables were occupied by couples, but faces were indistinct, the features blurred. Candlelight played on shiny red lips at one table and on handsome white teeth at another. She could hear glasses clinking and the shrill laughter of a drunken woman over the low hum of blended conversations. She swallowed more wine. She tried to calm herself with other thoughts and a deep breath, but she was already knotted inside.

Turning around she caught Carl's eye. She smiled and waved. He just looked at her, and said something to the woman which made them laugh. He pulled out the woman's chair, and they walked over to the booth where Anna sat.

"Anna, this is Christine. Christine, Anna," Carl said.

"How do you do, Christine?" Anna said with a smile.

Christine smiled back at her coldly, and said nothing. Her red fingernails matched the tight red sweater she wore tucked into a black skirt. She and Carl slid into the booth across from Anna. Anna's look questioned Carl, but he looked through her as if she wasn't there at all.

"I wondered where you had gone when I found just one drink on the table, Carl."

"Really?" he said flatly as he turned to Christine, "What were you saying?" They spoke quietly back and forth, excluding Anna. He put his arm along the back of the seat behind Christine's shoulders.

Anna's hurt was so acute she felt feverish. No matter how quickly or deeply she breathed, she couldn't get enough air. She wanted to shake Carl, to get through to him that she knew. "Come on, you two. Let me in on the conversation," she nervously said. They looked over at her with slight irritation as if she were a small child interrupting an adult conversation. They continued to talk in an intimate fashion as Anna's hands shook with anger and pain.

She held her glass with both hands and took a long drink. He brushed a strand of Christine's light brown hair out of her face and stroked her cheek. Enraged and humiliated, Anna cried out, "Carl!"

He turned to her contemptuously, and leaned menacingly over the table. He hissed at her, "If you make a scene, I'll never speak to you again."

Tears flooded her eyes, and she ran from the table. Coming to a dark corner of the room, Anna held her face between her hands and sobbed. She rocked back and forth, eyes squeezed shut, as she felt the solid surface of the wall against her.

Finally, she stopped rocking, and lay still. Her arms fell to her sides and her eyes slowly opened. She saw the crack in the ceiling run its familiar path to the light fixture. Gradually, her muscles relaxed and the awful hurting stopped. In the bed beside her shivering frame, Carl breathed regularly while still dreaming. Anna felt empty, her mind blank. She turned onto her side, and closed her eyes. Carl stirred in his sleep. She felt his arm encircle her, and pull her close.

Sarah Karp

lament for phones

i lived through
your version of our
Break-up
over the phone

xlovers
xfriends drawing
circles of our hunger
with toothless
voices

warring
like crows over
a stale bread crust
on a cold morning

night of
no-win war
no connection
only wire-throat combat
between dry (electric) swallows
and static

for the dime

i could not see
your eyes
so i must wonder
what they said

when goodbye

was

a click.

Ann Marie Palmisciano

NIGHTMARE

It begins
with money and dust
and the wrong eyes

I gauge my entrance like a knife
a steel-eyed, serrated spine
slicing the silence

At the bent nail in the mirror
I hang my face.
My bones are taken at the door
"To repair the sidewalks" the doorman says.

Nerves begin to thicken in the plaster

Then Pandora arrives
bearing a box of thorns like an Old
Friend
I take a few to fasten on an
Old smile.

Just in time for the conversations
forming like a surprised wind
amid the clatter of ceaseless teeth.
Black suit shouts to the firm buttocks
in the Mauve dress, "I am not bald.
There's a bowl of hair in the corner
with my name on it."
Mauve dress replies "No, no, the air
is free, it's just the smoke that costs a lot."

We are accidents requiring proof.

Brian Ellerbeck

STRIVING FOR THE RICH

Run down the hallway
Seek the high stairs
Race toward the gold
Leave behind the tin.
Faster, faster though you
Swerve and brake as a
Squirrel darting cars.
The light blinds, and the wheels
Crush your toes.
Crumbling like an ancient temple, you
Examine the injury,
Caress the damage
Limp along, follow the dotted
Lines, the yellow brick hall
While the wind, pressing you
Backwards, like fear,
Freezes your movements
Stealing your strength
Pushing every
Muscle into your bones, until you
Collapse at the gold
Double doors to find them
 Locked.

Tony Alix

STAYING FOR THE WINTER



ICICLE

Daggers hang still
in the freeze again,
clinging to the gutter dripping,
clear blood
shed in this rash of stabbings,
clear blood guiltlessly washing
away any evidence, it's getting warmer
here now, nothing seems
to have happened.

Joe Sprague

WAR

You said you would move on,
build another city not made for timorous bodies
Lies!

My heart remains, like a corpse, buried.
Stay in your waste land and breathe
your atomic air and may your eyes burn
with the black ruins of our lives. Here
where we spend years wasting.

Do not hope for another city, you will
grow grey with us in this neighborhood.
You destroyed your life here.

Aging fingers point to your stern whiskers and whiskey breath,
like a teacher lecturing to her disruptive pupils,
and say "You will stay with us,
there is no road for you to leave,
the city will follow you like a bad conscience."

Kerry Dillon

THE ARBITRARY MURDER OF THE TUNA MEN

Fins glide in the surf
or gallop like wild horses
over foaming waves in a
porpoise dance

Sleek
bodies joyful innocence of
children at play oblivious to
Men

Whose heads are full
of holes like their
nets
The draw
of cards useless
but played anyway

Fools who deal destruction
as carelessly as a deck
of cards
aboard

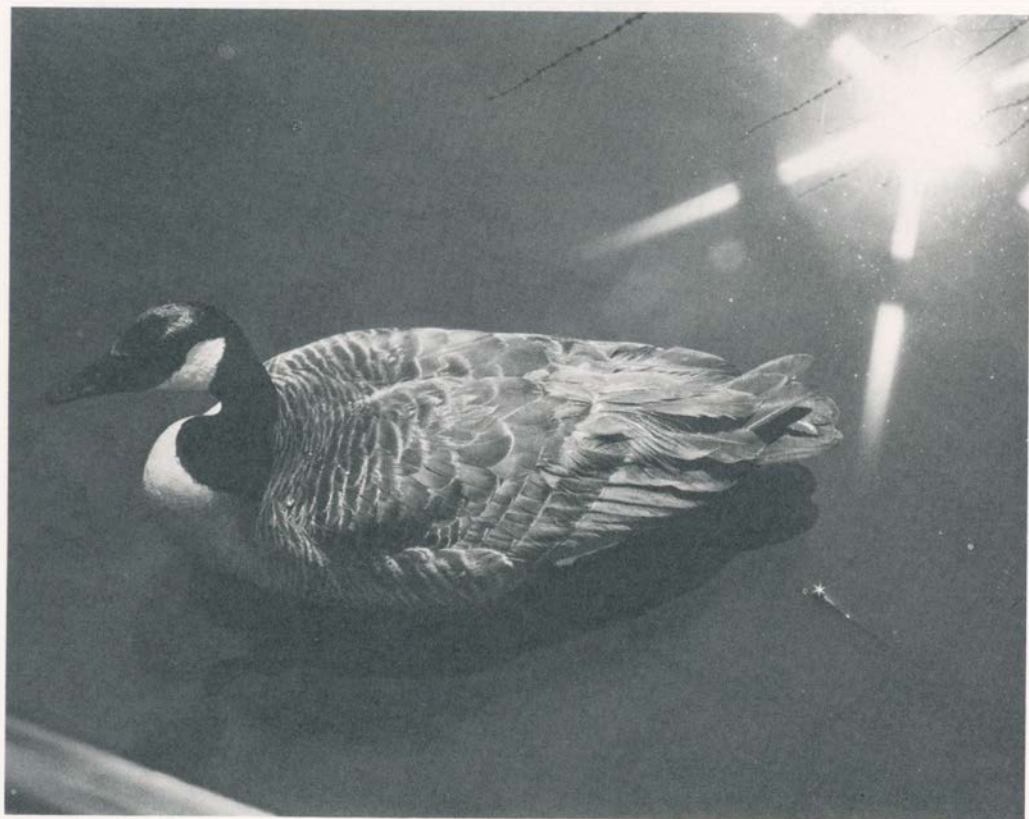
Death Ark
staggering onward
drunken with its
arbitrary catch

Red stained waters behind
the men
play cards and smoke and
laugh tossing bones to the
gulls and wash their
bloody hands
with a cheap stock gin.

Diane Lombardi

THE ARBITRARY NUMBER OF THE YOUNG MEN

...and when I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the



...and when I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the
...of the world, I have seen the

...and when I have seen the

THE BEAST WHO WAITS

I

The day is given to us like a peach
Freshly cut and ripe to the pit.
Come, let us taste.
Rush into a shower of gold
And let it drench your hair,
Lace fingers with the wind—
Do not wait.

The mantis mimics the tall grass and stalks the
noonday beetle
While from the purring shade, green hunger eyes the
bird among the berries.
The shadow lengthens in the west —
A distant bell is tolling.

II

Child of sorrow, forgive my anger.
I was afraid.
For I remembered old terrors
Perched like crows above a darkened cliff;
Where on a solitary rock, I held you fast
While the rising tide licked our feet.

Now, sunlight mantles the fragile sapling in the
morning meadow.
And the springtime fawn follows the wary doe.

But yet, I still remember —
And think I hear the sound of thunder —
The howl of the beast who waits.

Eric D'Adamo

ROSES

this heart is
at least
one
hundred roses
in full
bloom
for
your shimmering eyes

the two brown
suns.

Ann Marie Palmisciano

A DEBT

Having borrowed the use of a smile
having borrowed the lineage of dust
having borrowed the lid of a gestureless
stare as a tongue
to lick the night clean white
darkness coming to rest in the middle of an
egg-white eye
having borrowed the egg-white eye of the night
black and white, black and white swirling
like tears at a funeral
having borrowed a toothless spine and
a bullet
to stop the blood-rubble of hissing bones
nervelessly clawing at the faltering air.

Brian Ellerbeck

WONDERLUST

. . . and I sit
(in Wonderlust)
knowing full well that
the Northern Lights
aren't half as bright
on this New Hampshire hill
as they are
in Alaska.
Yet, I still sit
and watch the
mesmorizing,
hypnotizing
kaleidoscope-
with a man
who sends no fireworks
to compete with those lights,
who isn't half as bright,
not half as bright
as they are.
Yet, I still sit.

Vivika R. Hansen

The leaves
in accidental splendour
set fire to the windy
golden morning.
Now, they like frigid fingers
freeze and crumple
on a quiet rusted ground.
It is winter.

Linda Jean Haelson

