

**ALEMBIC**



Alembic

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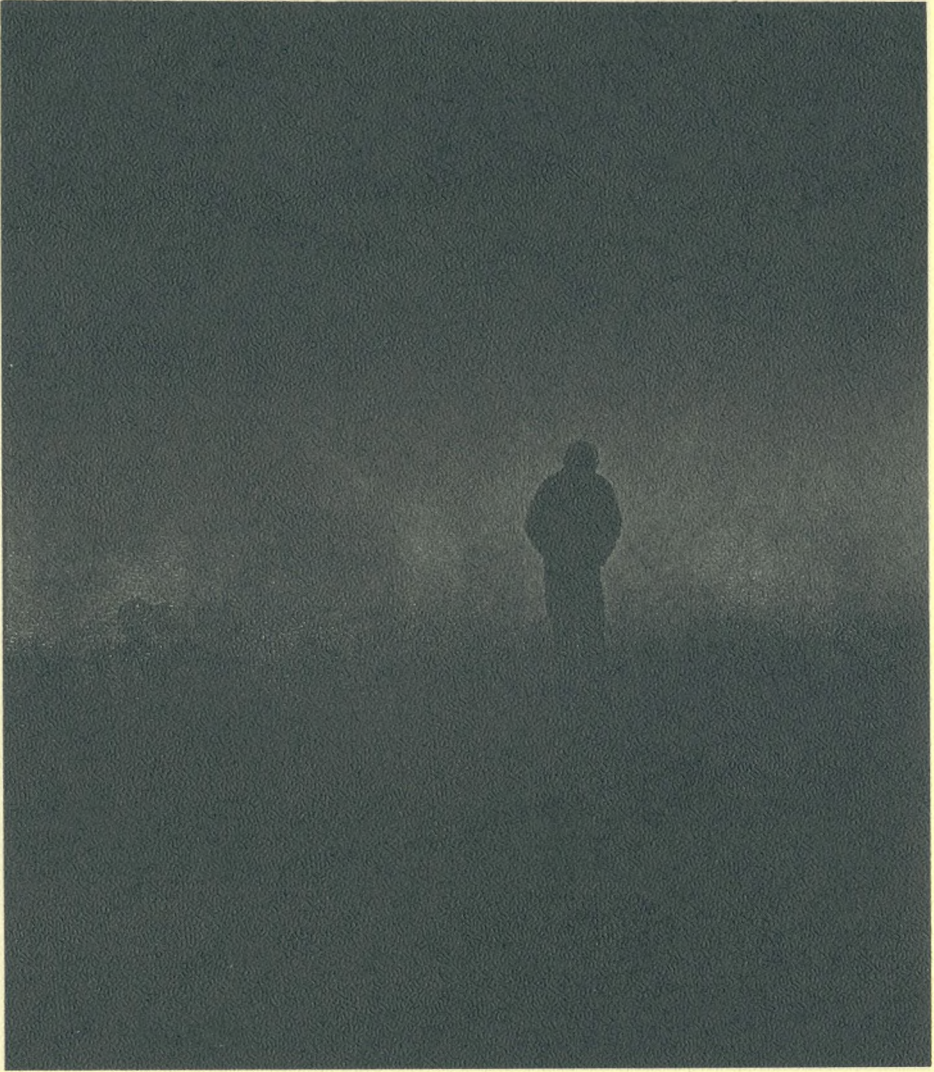
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Photographs  
Michael Kiely

Cover  
Christopher Donohue  
*"View from the Kitchen Table"*





*Variation On A Theme By Williams*

*So little depends  
On the aspiring young poet  
Caught on this bus ride  
To a part-time job.*

Drew Maciag

## *Watch the Men*

### I

Watch the men building arks  
and preaching to the animals.  
They roll their eyes and pray  
for the murderous drops to begin.  
They prophesy the day when  
their brown wooden islands  
will be alone and floating  
silently on the world.

See the men sacrificing other wolves  
to save the lambskins of their own disguises.  
Hurling stones among themselves,  
bruised egos and black eyes  
bear witness to the peace that they proclaim.  
Promising the profits of submission,  
they bargain and slander in sleek sentences,  
sowing delusion to reap followers.

### II

A mysterious rain falls  
not from the sky  
but from the mouths of men.  
And floating on a sea  
of fanaticism,  
the animals watch  
the virtuous weighed down  
by their own words  
and drowned.  
Three times they rise  
before the end  
and spout their frothy spume,  
little knowing  
they are only adding  
to the source of  
their death.



III

Soon all is quiet  
and the moonlight erases  
all trace of what was before.

But out of the dark  
come men, clamoring  
that they bring the dawn.

Watch the men building arks  
and preaching to the animals.  
They roll their eyes and pray  
for the murderous drops to begin.

God help us if they all should learn to swim.

Susan Rogers

### *Reflection*

If you stand in a mirror  
Long enough  
Someone may join you

Craig Watt

### *Monumental*

I want to be there  
When the first statue of  
A pigeon is  
Erected  
To see the generals come  
From miles around  
To be the first in line

Craig Watt

## *Jessica Arrived*

Jessica arrived throwing a wicked  
scarf to the wind.  
She is dressed tan for traveling.  
She is dressed white for summer  
for champagne by the sea.

Jessica arrived flinging open  
her precious straw bag.  
She has a gift of toys for my child  
and some frolicking words for me.  
"It's wedding time!" She laughs a wild laugh  
and I am dazed by the steel of her touch.

You are a sorceress, Jessica.  
A large brilliant bird beating against my ribs  
pulsing through me painful  
blood. A commander of venomous caves.  
Have you come, my friend, to make another ruling?  
Gypsy, have you come to lure my love  
away?

(Jessica, my secret wish for you: to suspend  
you in time. To press you between crystal  
lenses. Once again to see you a delicate  
spider in silver webbing.)

Jessica departs a dancer like swift lightning.

My sister sets up her easel to paint  
Jessica in red  
while I board up her lover's old room.

Kathleen Mele



## *Fool In The Rain*

On a bench in the city  
Where I sat unnoticed  
I fell in love with a torrent of rain.

It painted the air  
and hit hard with a vengeance  
Making clowns of the people  
Who scattered like ants.

‘Men with bankers’ suits and wallets,  
women taking themselves seriously with  
shopping bags and make-up; all headed  
for one stone building or another. They  
left their dignity on the sidewalks and  
became cattle — stampeding and bolting  
as if from lightning. I saw in the face  
of one man, an executive anger with no  
one to blame. I wondered if the down-  
pour would change anyone’s politics.’

Cool enough to drink  
or be washed in  
The rain gave me great pleasure  
as my drenched form melted to the bench.

And I made myself a hero  
and laughed and rose to  
walk down the street alone  
Like Gary Cooper in *High Noon*.

Drew Maciag



## *After The Drought*

We waltzed with rain drops, wind-driven and chilled  
which gurgled and bubbled in the turf

Soaked to our skins in oceans of mud  
we sloshed all about with mirth

Our hands and our arms thrown up in the air  
water rolled down to our soles

Folk's clothes were open, and covered with muck  
but long smiles glowed through the cold

Loudly we called between thunder and din  
praising the blessing of clouds

Rolling in furrows which flowed full of ooze  
farmland now ready to plow

Kevin Tierney

## *Ocean Girl*

(a p.s.)

She is decoction  
of bubbles and splendor on rocks.

Strong goddess  
of inland lappings who nurses

wisps of marinas.  
The brown foam of her hair

flung into lichen —  
a million bits blink

in her thrashing . . .  
Graceful midwife  
to these commas,

I could have buried my head  
in your sand

breasts and brailled the lush  
evanescence of your

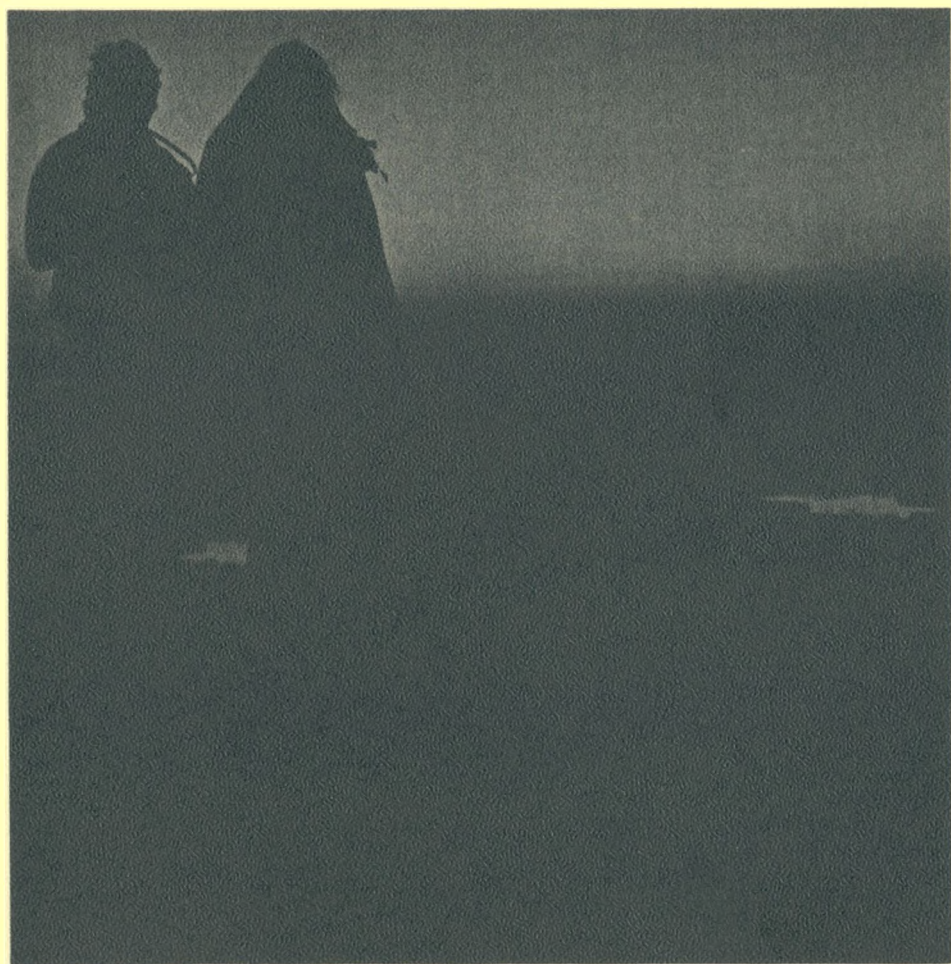
thighs . . . but a finger and thumb were pricked.  
My hand flew

into a rage  
of minor bleeding

at the brilliant passion  
of your pools, tidestranded, sunhooked.

Edward McCrorie





## *Loose Horse*

Dancing on ropes  
hanging from a machine  
the horses lead each other: seeing eye  
dogs in a circle  
the heads are anchored in halters  
churning in their sockets  
eyes drown in white  
straining to see  
the trainer urges them on.

Rising from hind legs  
a horse disconnects:

Zeezer  
galloping  
eyewhites and nostrils unfurling  
catching the air: pink sails  
he runs round the others  
his white tail  
bending like a wing  
cutting him off  
the trainer waves his arms  
stretching  
curling blizzard of snakes  
tangling thin legs.

Zeezer stops suddenly  
lost in a ropeless theory

holding  
pulling-the trainer walks to him  
dunking his head in a halter  
returning together  
the trainer looks straight ahead  
Zeezer's hot breath  
like a tropical wind  
burning his neck.

Dora Schaffer



## *Confessions of a Latent Confederate*

Do not believe we've forgotten.  
All one need do is go north and see  
Just what's been done,  
You raped everything but the drawl,  
That's just what's been done.

It was no Wind, but we are not yet gone,  
Northern hate's not fire, but fuel.  
Flesh burns, not the people.  
The black fire of Northern whites, the false fire  
Burned the flesh, not people.

Can't you smell the tobacco wrinkling in the heavy sun,  
Every week to Louisville, and if you're good  
Daddy might take you to Charleston?  
Nanny used to wake me early for those trips,  
The trips to Charleston.

Whitney can take his gin and go the Hell.

Michael Woody

## *minnows*

Scitter

scittering they are electrocuted  
green  
vegetable fingers tiny kites caught in the jag-  
ging current.

They stammer the fat strands of themselves  
through light that bends through  
water; through them. Where  
are they flying? Are they late? Or only so fired  
that like pure chemicals they burst into the veins  
of the stunned echoing waves?

Oh they are fluttering and fizzing around your thighs  
singing to your knees, making exotic anklets for you  
frenetic jade.  
They are blinking out the code that explains  
the equation of muscles and longing.

When you sleep your eyebrows  
twitch because you return with all  
the other minnows  
swinging inside the weightless  
jukebox, boogalooing in the arms of light.

Jane Lunin Perel



## *The Hunter*

crawling down your hallways  
fingernails grating my greetings  
thrusting through your steel plated doors  
my shadows fingering your pain  
tapping your pain, sealing it over  
aborted, stone cold living  
cutting my teeth on a scimitars blade  
gaping, mouthing tongueless wonders  
come, follow listen to the night  
the crawling chaos beckons, come and be suckled on my art.

Mark Casey

## *For A Drinking Buddy At Midnight*

Now that the dried foam is stuck to the sides  
of the glass  
And whatever beer remains is warm  
like a urine sample  
The palms are done sweating for a while  
And the neon magnet knows its time is marked

Take me by the coat  
and lead me out of this stuffy haven  
The lost souls are beginning to come  
back into focus  
Making the night's effort worthless

Let's go somewhere more private  
To piss and retune our deadened senses

Let's hope for a subtle turning point  
Or a new constellation  
Or at least a clear night  
And a long and peaceful walk

Drew Maciag

## *Sakonnet Point*

This rock walkway divides the ocean  
one side surging in deep swells  
up and down the wall's length  
sounding like a windy morning.

The other side is still  
a harbor to itself  
lapping against its only horizon.

At the rounded thumb tip  
the waters move into each other  
meeting, mixing naturally.

I stand behind a white weather  
station built by the Portuguese  
fishermen the sun breaking  
over my shoulder spilling into dry  
crevices sparkling off the wet  
mosses growing on the lowest rocks.

To one side is all the ocean  
painted blue close to the cloud  
layered skyline, way off

on the other side are many  
mute fields and farmhouses —  
pictures with white window frames  
and dark chimneys poised in the winter  
light, patient as waiting gulls.

One brief afternoon is never long  
enough to settle into  
these deep cracked rocks to find  
the secrets they have kept smooth.

I always leave taking  
some small part of my visit,  
choose jagged orange rocks  
that are Sunday gifts for one or two  
friends who simply accept  
the giving.

Patricia L. Slonina





*Pettaquamscutt* ("At the Round Rock" - Indian meaning)

This river does not rage  
but accepts autumn like an old coat,

a light with no sharp edges  
that settles in some morning before  
you're awake and walking the garden.

She is harvest to herself,  
few share the last feasting days.

Late some afternoon, look up  
you'll see the geese flying  
v-shaped south  
you'll know.

She knows  
winter is coming:  
the long nights of icy stillness  
when even the swans are sleeping.

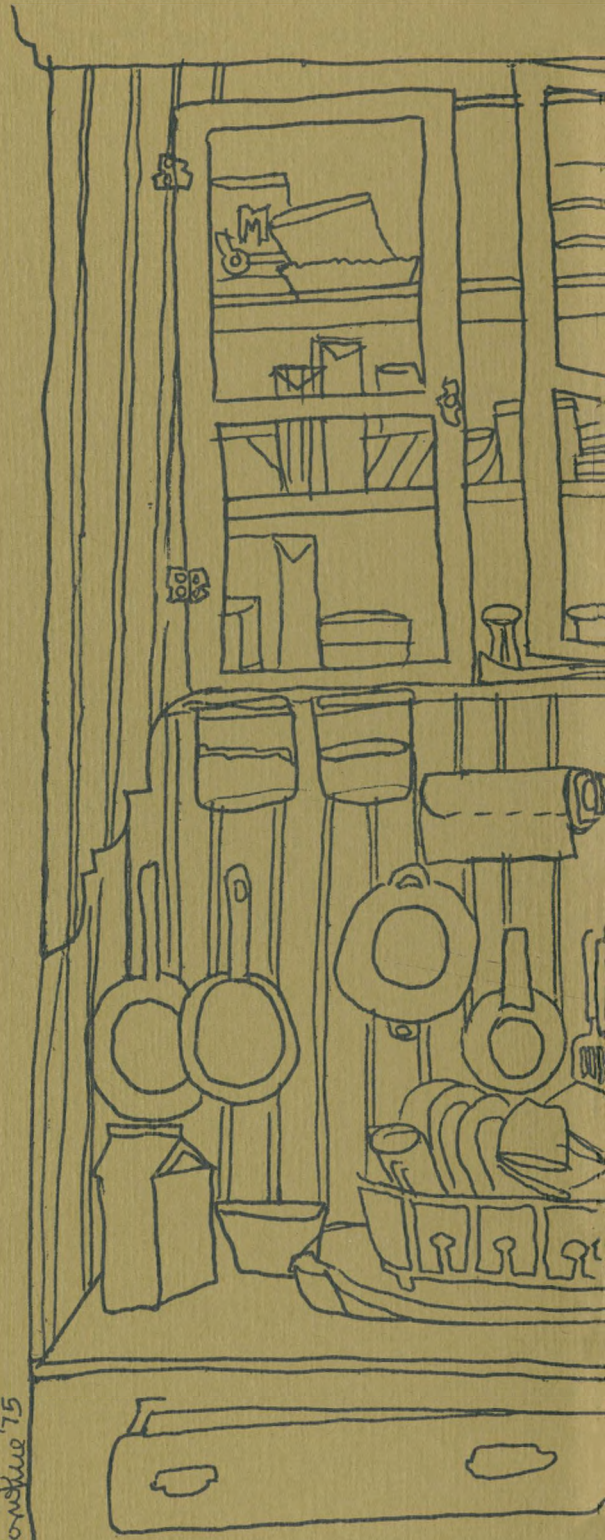
Listen.  
All seasons move to the ocean —  
that moment of rounding  
the rocks,  
the break  
towards a further horizon.

The wind can beat you to sleep  
when you leave the channel  
and risk it all  
to ride the rhythm of the waves.

This, I believe must be like the first womb swayings —  
that original journey of myself  
rocking, rocking  
rhyming  
with all things

such harmony sings:  
this is where the river  
will always bring us  
and we return the same way  
to her  
there is no other way  
home.





Christopher Donahue '75