

A photograph of a white wooden building with a gabled roof. The building has a window on the upper level and a door on the lower level. The scene is set against a blue sky with bare trees in the background. The word "ALEMBIC" is overlaid in large, bold, black letters on the left side of the building.

ALEMBIC

ALEMBIC

*The Literary Journal
of
Providence College*

Volume 63, Number 1
Spring — 1984
Number Printed: 1000

STAFF

Co-Editors

Treasurer

Secretary

Layout/Circulation

Faculty Advisor

Tony Alix

Mary Jo Rowen

Joanne Belanger

Charlotte Stasiuk

Mia Anastasio

David Llewellyn

Paula Sockler

Jane Lunin Perel

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We wish to thank the following people for their time and effort on behalf of the magazine: Donald Grant, Mrs. Greene and Lana Arcaro.

PHOTOGRAPHY
(in order of appearance)

Vera Chwostyk – *(cover)*
Kristine Struminsky
Kristine Struminsky
Joanne Belanger
Jane Mackin
Kristine Struminsky
M. Whaples
Vera Chwostyk
Kathy O'Connell
Kristine Struminsky
Kristine Struminsky

DEDICATION

We dedicate this year's *Alembic* to the class of 1984, so they may never have to live a life as described in George Orwell's book *1984*.

UNDER THE FIRE ROOF

Something strange has been happening
these days.
all the new books their print only smudges the page
all the high priests prefer dressing in black
all the playpens are made of glass;
everywhere i
search for faces in a crowd
like a window dresser inspecting
life-size dolls.

i can't seem to remember
who takes care of the wind,
as far as dreams go there's nothing
like crushing your wristwatch
under the fire roof where
the time keeper keeps me and the ticking
never stops.

Joseph Sprague

There it is, the nothing
Stuck between their fingers
When they hold hands,
It slides between their palms
With cold, anesthetic cleanliness.
Instead of hands, they could be
Holding rocks
Or dead.
I see them walking, showing off
The love they claim to have
So close together, arm in arm
Entwining both
Their nothings.

Maureen Belden

A CRAB EATING CRABS

Roseanne is a crab eating crabs
with rosy lips and red painted claws
She breaks their backs to suck their juicy meat
while her bookbag sits watching with her fine point Bic
both get sprayed with butter-savory juice.
Roseanne, does not miss her homework
In her mind as she chews boiled bits
She does not construct a poem like me
but daydreams alone while she eats
In a haze of red of fish before bed
looking tired, hungry and harried to me
She eats the crabs that are her ferocious feast

Gail Whelan

THE BAG LADY

walks awkward,
inward bunyon steps through Central
Park. Green chips of park
bench paint hang caught on
dish-rag clothes. Her
bag is full of every-
thing emptied from everyone
else's lives:

the oval rust of
a bicycle bell that only
gives a mettle purr,
a chipped ash-
tray from the Ramada Inn
its cold glass as
clouded as the gaze in her
eyes. Wrapped in yellow
Kleenex is a frayed pink
ribbon left under a swing-
set. She will tie it in
her white hair on Christmas.

The bag lady writes love
poems to swans floating in
polluted ponds. She feeds them small
portions of her

small portions.

"Swans, you float so beautiful, so grace-
ful in your white on water
glide. You live here
in the park with me, you eat
what I eat, and yet you are
so beautiful."

Across the pond walks a man
whose feet are tied
up in Italian leather. She sees them
slide against dull November's sun
and looks down to her own grey
feet. He keeps walking.
She wipes mucus on her
sleeve and kicks a stone on his
murky-pond image. Circular,
sonar-like reproductions of him quiver
through water and the swans
run over each face.



SLEEPING ON A CITY CURB

He cannot stop it.
It is his demon-master—
it scares him, haunting from within
 as he runs from it,
but like a mother
nestles him safely when he returns

to it
and all its power.
Its vengeance will not let him go:
he cannot stop it.

Cannot, cannot, cannot.

Maureen McGuire

WEBSTER'S UNABRIDGED

I am Webster's unabridged
My knowledge is astounding
Misspelling is a sacrilege
that keeps schoolmarms frowning.

To two too, I know the difference
Pronunciation, suffixes
illustrations, derivatives
I list Liz Taylor's husbands.

Certain words children prefer
Slang biology
They have a burning curiosity
About the sexes anatomy.

Students use me more to spell
Businessmen, when writing letters
Secretaries dividing syllables
Or scrabble squabble settlers.

"To eat one's words," "To give one's word"
Are very useful idioms
Except my pages are often missing
By those who take them literally.

I am the world's most perfect book
But next time you repeatedly look
Up the same word with persistence
I'll charge 10¢, like directory assistance.

Jane Mackin

OLD POET
(for Peter Viereck)

You are not old, poet with millennial
smile and thistle
necked. You are brilliant
and childlike, comical eyes a colorless
sort, inspecting details of a
world in multitudes of syllables and eternal
rhyme. You are lucky with language, rehearsed
in myth and complicated-young, you are
defined in your raggedness, like trees
in the distance, the mingling foliage that
is bright against the sky
but old you can
never be like the skuffs
brown constellations on your formless
shoes. You are new
and unbridled in your fancy, unweathered in
your will. write
crafted poet, you are
not old.

Lisa Caliendo

ode to ee

ode to ee
must make little or
no sense it must break
up lines whe
re you least expec
t it and speak about
mysteries of cauli-
flower with meaning so
 deep you'll no doubt
 lose sleep

it must capiTalize the
oddiTies and generalize
the unknown
 and expect
 us
 to

understand
 and make up glorismoothingly
words that float in
 space
most importantest it must
 leave a question like
Why?

Margie Mader



VISITING DAD

How's it going amid all the lonely
Old people sitting in
A corner of the room since
Last year, Dad? You're looking
Pretty good with your watery
Eyes, sagging mustard skin, and new
Bathrobe. What have you
Been doing with hour after hour to pass
All by yourself. It's nice
To see you forced into a wheelchair,
Left to wither to your grave
Alone, but I've got to
Leave you once again because I
Haven't time today.

Maureen Belden

PERFECT TIMING

Green numbers between red lights.
Live free or die.

Outside,
the heart beats rapidly,

as though death
moves closer.

Unreal sight of
two distorted figures

enthralled
by the moisture of thick steam

surrounding bodies
like a blanket

hiding them from me
in the night.

Love is such an awful word.
It binds, it binds,

it cuts like
the edge of a blade on

the heart.
The leash

around your neck
is yours. Keep it.

The siren calls you;
your love toy.

Your harlequin will not
retrieve you from the water.

Drive home
dreaming lies.

Dream alone.

Mary Ciresi

CLOCK

A devil of a fellow
Spending his time hanging in every building
With that same different guise
He could never disguise.
His love is to wallow;
Lurking, prying, reminding
In listless grace to keep the pace.
Unfailing in his bellow
Of insidious prattle meant to rattle
Others' lingering tidbits of blissful stupors
And harder to swallow:
He preys on us all, with need to enthrall
Every human vein in his timeless reign.

Helder Cardoso



CIRCLES

Dropping
stones
rippling water
the shoreline grasps at
the circus
ring.

Mary E. McGarry

BIKE

races through city streets
like a bullet from a gun
flies down the highway on fire
running to everywhere
and his heart is so young
he's laughing,
to call death
a
liar.

Jeff Carter

DORM ROOM

Like hermit crabs,
scorched by shining sand,
we skittered
in to you,
 empty seashell.

After days of
sticky acid fog or pulsing,
searing sun,
you were a temple night-retreat.

As we scrape on, we stay
closer to the ocean where
the beach doesn't sparkle but
its firmer, now, and cooler.

Mary Jo Rowen



I DID NOT CRY

The funeral was today, but I did not cry. Since I was a child, Granny taught me to be strong and hide my emotions. She never did say why.

For a while it had been expected. Whenever the phone rang late at night or early in the morning, a hair-raising chill ran through my body. Anticipation heightened when my brother answered the phone late at night, only to have it be one of his friends calling in question of an assignment. There was hesitation on my part when I rose first to a ringing phone, only to find out the carpool would be arriving slightly tardy that morning.

Four years ago my Grandmother had contracted cancer. These last few months she was very ill. It was especially hard on Grandpa. But all those hardships died yesterday with my Grandmother, only to bring new ones.

Before I knew it, I was in a bleak, red carpeted room. It had a large mirror, lots of chairs, and some cheap lamps scattered about. Just walking into the room made me feel a little strange. I had been to funerals and wakes before, but it was always a formality I went through for the living, never for anyone that I had been intimate with.

The scent of flower arrangements surrounded me. They were all very beautiful. I thought to my self that it is very sad that we never sent flowers to this extent when people were alive, for I am certain that half of just one of these arrangements would have meant the world to Granny. She really loved flowers.

Soon I found myself in a receiving line greeting people. "I'm so sorry," they said. I really wish that some one would come up with a new line. I am growing tired of "I'm sorry." It's almost too common, and very impersonal. I tried my best to be pleasant, but it was difficult. I was anything but sympathetic to their sorrows and needs.

Grandfather is a proud man almost six feet tall. He is balding now, and showing signs of his age with wrinkles and his few remaining grey hairs. But today his head was low, and he seemed all alone. He stared endlessly at a casket that contained what was once his life and reason for existence. I went to Gramps and held his hand tightly, for I thought he

needed some one near him. But I was kidding only myself because it was me who needed him.

All of my grandmother's friends were there. They too had a few more wrinkles and their hair was greying. But still and all they seemed the same to me. They brought back such fond memories. When my parents went away, we always stayed with Granny. We took trips to the beach with her and her friends. My brother and I were king and queen for the day. All of the older ladies loved little kids, and they spoiled us. We swam and built castles in the sand, while they chatted, played cards and drank what I now know were screwdrivers. Then, it is was just "O.J." (as she called it) that I wasn't allowed to have.

My godmother was there too. I hadn't seen her in years. She told me that I had grown into a beautiful young lady and that I looked just like my Mom. For lack of anything better to say, I just thanked her politely.

A priest from a local church stopped by to say a few prayers. When he left, I noticed my Grandfather walking towards the casket. He made a sincere effort to comfort a dear crony of the deceased.

Why do people cry, I thought? My conclusions narrowed to three main reasons. The first was some people are just sensitive, and can cry over something as meaningless as a Kodak commercial. The other things were not as simple, but they were basically what I was dealing with here. Many of the people were scared. They cried because they had been close to my Grandmother. Most of them were her age, maybe older. "This could have been me," they probably thought. Thirdly, there were people crying in grief and sorrow. This was really selfish I often thought to myself at wakes. These people were crying only for themselves. They only cared about what they now had to live without. They never thought about the fact that the deceased lost the precious gift of all, life.

Grandpa sympathized with me, but for another reason. He said Granny's death was a blessing, and that they just did not understand. He bitterly said that no one deserved to suffer the way she had. He added that he didn't know how God could have let it go on as long as he had. This surprised me because I had never heard him make any reference to church or God before.

Now what remains of the day is a small card with the standard prayer, a picture of an unknown saint, and Granny's name printed gothically above it. I recalled my hand reaching for it anything but instinctively. I hesitated, but everyone seemed to be watching: I could not retrieve my hand.

Home again I tearfully remembered my loss and felt sorry for myself. This was the very thing I denounced others for. The funeral was today, I did not cry. One must be strong and aware of a blessing.

Kathy Bresnan



THE LAST STALLION

Mocking Ravens and
 Merry-go-round laughs
echo
 on the deserted Boardwalk.
I am the last stallion
 faded, painted saddle
 golden studs
 fallen to the ground.
My mane and tail are thinner
 than a spider's web
Endless storms and rotting boards
 surround me in this
 summer's end.

I am the last stallion
Waiting to fall into the sea.

Anna T. Tobin

THE ESSENCE OF HUMAN NATURE

The moon is covered
with mist
As amoebic clouds
sail by
Not caring what they hide
or interrupt
The essence of human
Nature is
In the clouds
It does no good to yell
to the clouds
They won't hear or
Move for you.

Tony Alix

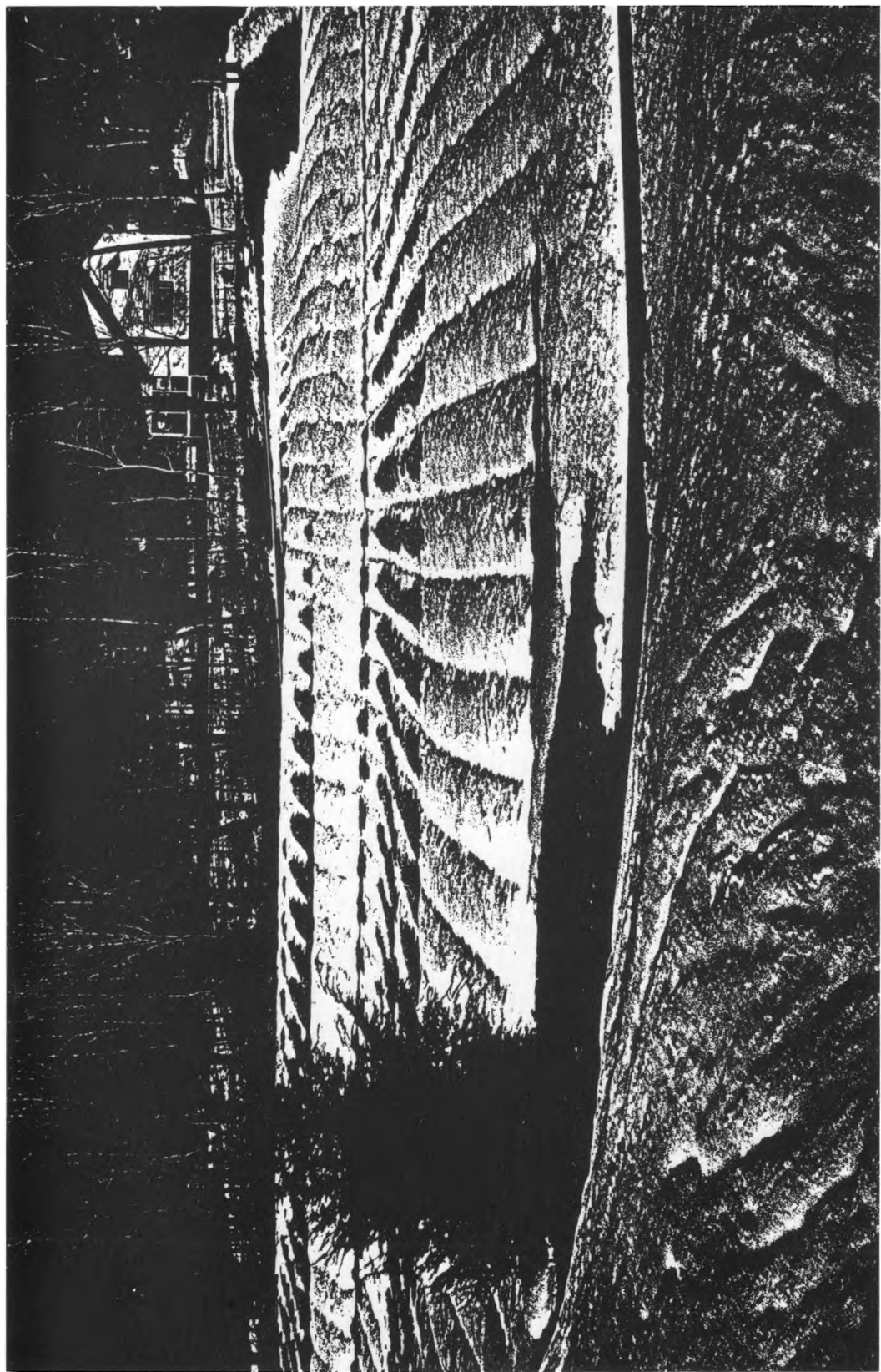
**FLIGHT PATTERNS/NIGHT PATTERNS
DREAMING OF NEIL ARMSTRONG**

When black is white
and white is smooth
and smooth is hewn
with carvings rough,

then icons in-
to blackness soar
as rockets do
in burning flight-

they too will scorch
the winged night.

Vivika R. Hansen



COMMONGROUND

*(In memory of Hans M. Hansen Jr.
1903-1972)*

By the light of fire
you were born,
by the sting of leather
you were tamed.

Father of my father
and farmer of fields
traveled over-
seas, a Viking,
your sweat an offering to
the Freedom-Woman.

Born to comfort,
I listened to your stories
of Thor, the thunder-
God, throwing his hammer to
crush our foes,
like you who broke the iron earth
with a mighty axe,
and sent sparks shivering
up my spine.

And now
standing on your shoulders
I see—
you are fixed in me.
We are two, yet one,
like Thor and Thunder—
never changing.

We have common ground.

Vivika R. Hansen

THE CHILDREN

Use them up
Take all they have
And leave nothing
Make the well dry
Take everything you can
If they don't cooperate
Make them obey
Push the correct button
Pull the right lever
If they don't respond
Oil and clean them
Or send them away to be fixed
Tie their hands and feet
And teach the lesson
Amuse and confuse
So nothing is straight
Type in your message
With permanent ink
If message rejected
Recompute

If rejected again
Teach lesson of pain
Cast away unwanted
They take up space
Slice into pieces
Throw in trash
Or to the wild dogs.
Abuse and mutilate
If your morals forbid
Make them suffer
If rebels, reject
If impressionable,
Give a good grade
And send them to school
To show them off
Must get good reports
Or retype message
If it doesn't compute
Pull the plug
Terminate.

Tony Alix



THE MIME

He goes out before the world
Lone clown clad in black
Tapping walls, feeling air.
He tries to break into an escape
Banging at nothing while his lips
Twist harshly,
and his eyes overflow.
See him stare at no object, and
Grab
To fondle it in air
Then stare back at us.
Gloved hands scratch at the walls
Of his prison, white cheeks
Sag from the weight of his lips.
He looks through his walls one more time —
Looks at us staring at his
Tear sodden sticky mask face
He shivers and turns away from our glare
Watching his nothing.

Maureen Belden

THAT FIRST SMOKED-RAIN EVENING

Steaming home through unseen streets,
coatless, touching,
running barefoot over cracked cement.
A thousand car stereos wrestled;
we sang with whichever was closest.

But cars kept creeping closer.
Ghosts swirled in
fuzzy purple drugstore nightlights.

Morning whispered a chill.
Cheekbones, flecked with mascara ashes
turned downward to the
quiet kitchen table. At
the bottom of a sticky cocktail glass,
a lemon wedge lay shriveled like a
dead fish on a
dirty river-
bank.

Mary Jo Rowen

BALLOON

In a brief second
your rounded world
may blow up in a sacred fashion.
The innocent paws of youth
fumble for you
but you float away
and vanish.
When at long last eternity
is halted with a stone,
your longevity is banished
and with a writhed smile
you wither up
and fall
to the ground.

Tory Mooers

A PARANOID SCHIZOPHRENIC NEGOTIATES WITH DUST

I: Accusations

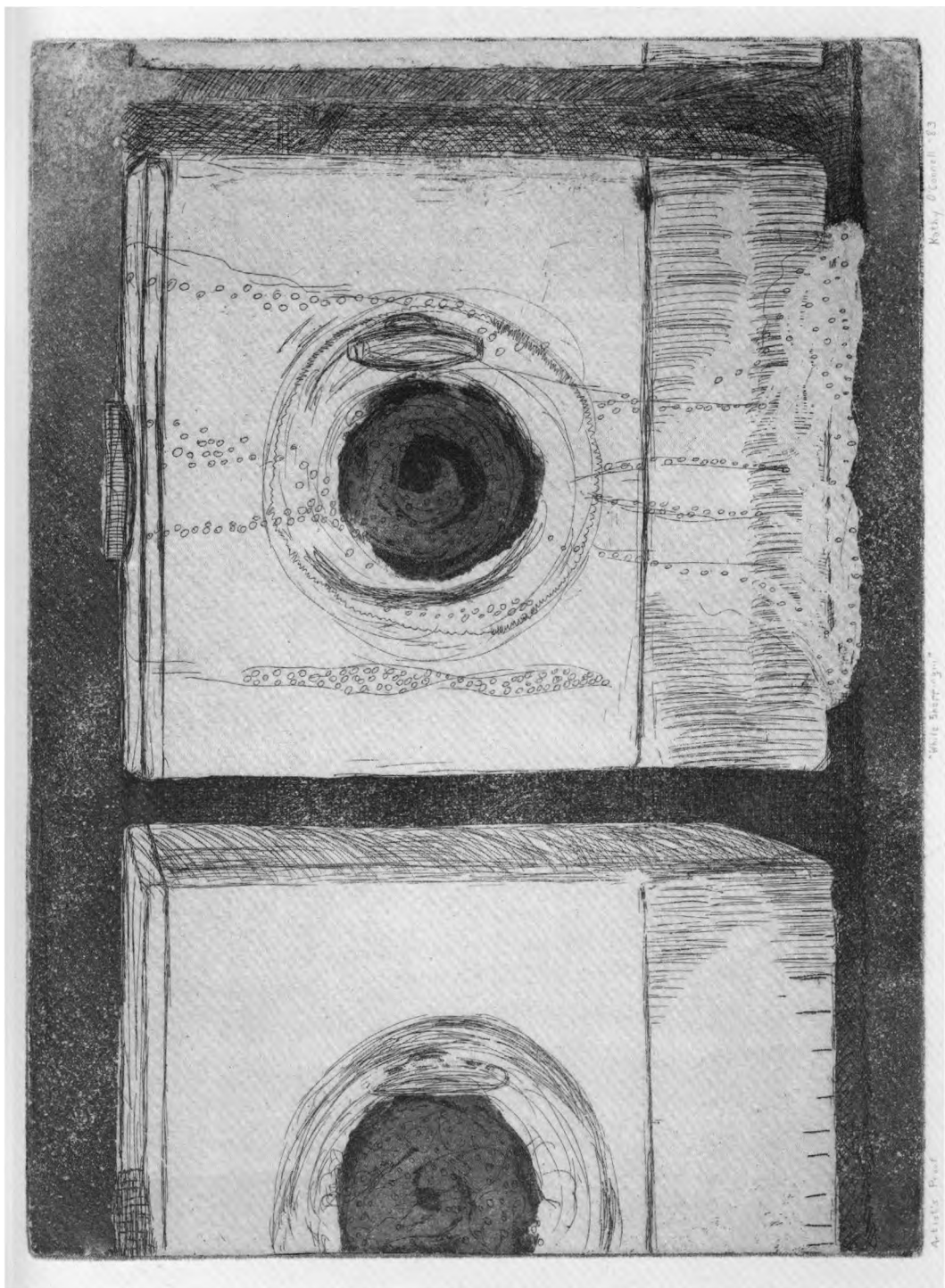
You formed deserts.
Now you attack my furniture.
Why me?
You cling to the soles of little boys'
Shoes and drag them
Through the mud,
While you collect your troops.
Then, when
You have used them,
You discard them like so much dirt,
And hide in the new battlefield:
My Carpet!

II: The Dust Responds

III: War

Go on. . . . Pretend
You're not there.
I declare
War.
I have no mustard
Gas, but I have
Wax. With a fresh
Lemon scent
Heaven-sent
Lemon scent,
Hell-bent
To wipe you out.
DEATH TO LINT!

David W. B. Llewellyn



White Star

Artist's Proof

White Star

PANCAKES

Soft pats of solar spread,
Melting, dripping
Down the mountainous ridges of these
Gilded patties,
And oozing out of the crevices
Of this towering stack.
Ribbons of thick
Syrup flowing down,
From the plateau, into
Each penetrable plain, like a spring
Thaw after a winter freeze when
The hills shed their
White blankets, and the wet remains,
Soak into the starving earth.

Soon this mountainous marvel
Will be destroyed.
Cut, sliced, divided
Devoured by mouths in the
End.
When the plate is empty,
The hillside barren,
Then the sickness starts.

Deanna Domenico

ANDAWRECKAGAIN

At quite late o'clock Apalling suddenly
swerved into the white divider and jumped
towards the night darkened smog but landed
feet further meeting Pity homebound from a
special evening – but isn't that always it –
Pity wasn't a chance tears while Apalling
continued party searching meeting Tragedy
on its way to a station to relieve its
double bladders but Apalling pierced – belly
exploded ravaging yellow anger for arriving
Order to foam cloud minutes later but no
order was restored while Tragedy bore Scandle
hot inside a huge oak forested room where
Apalling met Judge and Jury and became
Criminal

Robert Mercer Deruntz



THE OCEAN

Like a cobra
The ocean slithers
And keeps its
Movement constant,
Until an alien,
An unwanted boat,
Finds her way
Into sight.
The waves stand
Like the cobra, coiled
Ready to strike
As a whip
Snapping its tip,
The waves crumble
The unwanted intruder
And slowly stretch
Returning to the
Smooth slither.

Duane Carbone

THE LANGUAGE OF TREES

Half-way between the Anti-christ
and Heaven there is
 a language
foreign to no one there are no tongues,
a light in colored leaves every color
 a dialect.
there is a secret in trees — stretching up
 pushing down,

these stoic philosophers, arthritic from birth,
silently creaking silently mocking a heritage
 strangled in eternity;

silently chanting there is no time there is no time
there is no time a chant for all time,
a war dance or death prance
will not destroy the glowing orange
snap of leaves burning.

Joseph Sprague



WINNERS
of the Third Annual
Creative Arts Contest

GRAPHICS

Kathy O'Connell
– WHILE SHOPPING

PHOTOGRAPHY

Jane Mackin
– THE ROAD TO HEAVEN

POETRY

Joseph Sprague
– UNDER THE FIRE ROOF

SHORT STORY

Kathy Bresnan
– I DID NOT CRY

