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Exile Vol. XXXVI No. 1

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Exile Vol. XXXVI No. 1

Authors

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Table of Contents

Nichola Gracille	Cover
<i>Words</i> , Kent Lambert.....	1
<i>Talk</i> , Richard Latimer.....	2
<i>Storm Passing</i> , Ben Kell.....	3
Ed Stanley	4
<i>I Again Awake</i> , Sharon Salser.....	5
<i>Demigods and Demons</i> , Kent Lambert.....	7
Tim Loving.....	8
<i>Apology</i> , Kelly Bondurant	9
<i>Guest Speaker</i> , Ann Mierson	11
Nicholas Gracilla	12
<i>Watching for Minnows</i> , Kent Lambert.....	13
<i>Thunderbird</i> , Kelly Bondurant	14
<i>Glendalough (St. Kevin)</i> , Ben Kell.....	17
Untitled, Craig Bagno	19
<i>Flying Machines In Pieces On The Ground</i> , Kelly Bondurant	20
<i>Tuesday, December 13, 1988 Bill & Walt's Toy Shoppe</i> , Alexander Speyer.....	21
<i>Weathered Wood</i> , Kelly Bondurant	22
<i>Above Grey Water</i> , Susanna Duff.....	23
Ed Stanley	26
Contributor's Notes.....	27

Words

Words are broken in the world

And they are broken in the world

Words are broken in the world

You of the finer sense,
Broken against false knowledge,
You who can know at first hand,
Hated, shut in, mistrusted:

Robert Frost

Take thought:
I have weathered the storm,
I have beaten out my exile.

Ezra Pound

Table of Contents

Preface	viii
1. Introduction	1
2. The Problem	2
3. The Method	3
4. The Results	4
5. The Discussion	5
6. The Conclusions	6
7. The Acknowledgments	7
8. The References	8
9. The Appendixes	9
10. The Index	10
11. The Bibliography	11
12. The Glossary	12
13. The Plates	13
14. The Figures	14
15. The Tables	15
16. The Maps	16
17. The Photographs	17
18. The Reproductions	18
19. The Corrections	19
20. The Errata	20
21. The Addenda	21
22. The Postscript	22
23. The Index	23
24. The Bibliography	24
25. The Glossary	25
26. The Plates	26
27. The Figures	27
28. The Tables	28
29. The Maps	29
30. The Photographs	30
31. The Reproductions	31
32. The Corrections	32
33. The Errata	33
34. The Addenda	34
35. The Postscript	35
36. The Index	36
37. The Bibliography	37
38. The Glossary	38
39. The Plates	39
40. The Figures	40
41. The Tables	41
42. The Maps	42
43. The Photographs	43
44. The Reproductions	44
45. The Corrections	45
46. The Errata	46
47. The Addenda	47
48. The Postscript	48
49. The Index	49
50. The Bibliography	50
51. The Glossary	51
52. The Plates	52
53. The Figures	53
54. The Tables	54
55. The Maps	55
56. The Photographs	56
57. The Reproductions	57
58. The Corrections	58
59. The Errata	59
60. The Addenda	60
61. The Postscript	61
62. The Index	62
63. The Bibliography	63
64. The Glossary	64
65. The Plates	65
66. The Figures	66
67. The Tables	67
68. The Maps	68
69. The Photographs	69
70. The Reproductions	70
71. The Corrections	71
72. The Errata	72
73. The Addenda	73
74. The Postscript	74
75. The Index	75
76. The Bibliography	76
77. The Glossary	77
78. The Plates	78
79. The Figures	79
80. The Tables	80
81. The Maps	81
82. The Photographs	82
83. The Reproductions	83
84. The Corrections	84
85. The Errata	85
86. The Addenda	86
87. The Postscript	87
88. The Index	88
89. The Bibliography	89
90. The Glossary	90
91. The Plates	91
92. The Figures	92
93. The Tables	93
94. The Maps	94
95. The Photographs	95
96. The Reproductions	96
97. The Corrections	97
98. The Errata	98
99. The Addenda	99
100. The Postscript	100
101. The Index	101
102. The Bibliography	102
103. The Glossary	103
104. The Plates	104
105. The Figures	105
106. The Tables	106
107. The Maps	107
108. The Photographs	108
109. The Reproductions	109
110. The Corrections	110
111. The Errata	111
112. The Addenda	112
113. The Postscript	113
114. The Index	114
115. The Bibliography	115
116. The Glossary	116
117. The Plates	117
118. The Figures	118
119. The Tables	119
120. The Maps	120
121. The Photographs	121
122. The Reproductions	122
123. The Corrections	123
124. The Errata	124
125. The Addenda	125
126. The Postscript	126
127. The Index	127
128. The Bibliography	128
129. The Glossary	129
130. The Plates	130
131. The Figures	131
132. The Tables	132
133. The Maps	133
134. The Photographs	134
135. The Reproductions	135
136. The Corrections	136
137. The Errata	137
138. The Addenda	138
139. The Postscript	139
140. The Index	140
141. The Bibliography	141
142. The Glossary	142
143. The Plates	143
144. The Figures	144
145. The Tables	145
146. The Maps	146
147. The Photographs	147
148. The Reproductions	148
149. The Corrections	149
150. The Errata	150
151. The Addenda	151
152. The Postscript	152
153. The Index	153
154. The Bibliography	154
155. The Glossary	155
156. The Plates	156
157. The Figures	157
158. The Tables	158
159. The Maps	159
160. The Photographs	160
161. The Reproductions	161
162. The Corrections	162
163. The Errata	163
164. The Addenda	164
165. The Postscript	165
166. The Index	166
167. The Bibliography	167
168. The Glossary	168
169. The Plates	169
170. The Figures	170
171. The Tables	171
172. The Maps	172
173. The Photographs	173
174. The Reproductions	174
175. The Corrections	175
176. The Errata	176
177. The Addenda	177
178. The Postscript	178
179. The Index	179
180. The Bibliography	180
181. The Glossary	181
182. The Plates	182
183. The Figures	183
184. The Tables	184
185. The Maps	185
186. The Photographs	186
187. The Reproductions	187
188. The Corrections	188
189. The Errata	189
190. The Addenda	190
191. The Postscript	191
192. The Index	192
193. The Bibliography	193
194. The Glossary	194
195. The Plates	195
196. The Figures	196
197. The Tables	197
198. The Maps	198
199. The Photographs	199
200. The Reproductions	200
201. The Corrections	201
202. The Errata	202
203. The Addenda	203
204. The Postscript	204
205. The Index	205
206. The Bibliography	206
207. The Glossary	207
208. The Plates	208
209. The Figures	209
210. The Tables	210
211. The Maps	211
212. The Photographs	212
213. The Reproductions	213
214. The Corrections	214
215. The Errata	215
216. The Addenda	216
217. The Postscript	217
218. The Index	218
219. The Bibliography	219
220. The Glossary	220
221. The Plates	221
222. The Figures	222
223. The Tables	223
224. The Maps	224
225. The Photographs	225
226. The Reproductions	226
227. The Corrections	227
228. The Errata	228
229. The Addenda	229
230. The Postscript	230
231. The Index	231
232. The Bibliography	232
233. The Glossary	233
234. The Plates	234
235. The Figures	235
236. The Tables	236
237. The Maps	237
238. The Photographs	238
239. The Reproductions	239
240. The Corrections	240
241. The Errata	241
242. The Addenda	242
243. The Postscript	243
244. The Index	244
245. The Bibliography	245
246. The Glossary	246
247. The Plates	247
248. The Figures	248
249. The Tables	249
250. The Maps	250
251. The Photographs	251
252. The Reproductions	252
253. The Corrections	253
254. The Errata	254
255. The Addenda	255
256. The Postscript	256
257. The Index	257
258. The Bibliography	258
259. The Glossary	259
260. The Plates	260
261. The Figures	261
262. The Tables	262
263. The Maps	263
264. The Photographs	264
265. The Reproductions	265
266. The Corrections	266
267. The Errata	267
268. The Addenda	268
269. The Postscript	269
270. The Index	270
271. The Bibliography	271
272. The Glossary	272
273. The Plates	273
274. The Figures	274
275. The Tables	275
276. The Maps	276
277. The Photographs	277
278. The Reproductions	278
279. The Corrections	279
280. The Errata	280
281. The Addenda	281
282. The Postscript	282
283. The Index	283
284. The Bibliography	284
285. The Glossary	285
286. The Plates	286
287. The Figures	287
288. The Tables	288
289. The Maps	289
290. The Photographs	290
291. The Reproductions	291
292. The Corrections	292
293. The Errata	293
294. The Addenda	294
295. The Postscript	295
296. The Index	296
297. The Bibliography	297
298. The Glossary	298
299. The Plates	299
300. The Figures	300
301. The Tables	301
302. The Maps	302
303. The Photographs	303
304. The Reproductions	304
305. The Corrections	305
306. The Errata	306
307. The Addenda	307
308. The Postscript	

Words

We make broken conversation,
And this, too, is making love;
Mingling and groping—
Intimate and selfish and vulnerable
And full of hunger.

Kent Lambert

Talk

They will tell you that we learn to love each other
in the barest of rooms, with a spartan lightbulb
and folding chairs, our conversation clinging to us
like sand. They will tell you about drunken fistfights
in Charleston, South Carolina, where men embraced
and struck each other in passing seconds.
They will tell you that you are inconsolable,
and they will teach you how to bleed,
not wistful like a spinster's tears, but rigid
and unyielding, a fist of emotion.
They will tell you about white tiled walls
and the sound of a windshield shattering.

They will tell you that desire is a brittle word,
and you will believe them – because yours is a
country
of thin lines and small promises, where men
who gave their backs and broad shoulders for the
frontiers
now sit in lame silences, in steel town bars
and coffee shops everywhere. You have never felt
the way a man's hands will ache for a beer
and sympathy. There are words, Katrin,
you have no definitions for. This, for instance,
is what we call progress. Tell me what you know
about progress. You wrote me stories about desire
and the Mississippi, moonlight on the grey Hudson.
When you see a river, you imagine its ocean,
and dream of fictional deltas. I only see water.
They will tell you all this. You will believe them.

Richard Latimer

Storm Passing

Clouds as smooth and cool as marble
pushed by impatient, mad winds

grind out the benign fire burning in the sun
and drive my thoughts into darkness.
Green, the desire of water, place and light
turns brown in the cold, heavy darkness

and a cry for rain is answered
with the pounding of thundering fists.

I half-dream of trampled and of trampling fields
flattened under the weight and strength of stone,
of the desire to live unfulfilled
famished on a harvest of stone.

while malicious lightning burnt brown black
while rivers overflowed with tears.

Silence clings to every sound
while darkness fades to shadowed light
life mends itself in the vacuum
filling the stillness with dancing light

and I lie down in my exhaustion
my mind as empty as the new blue sky.

Ben Kell



I Again Awake

Red blood platelets encompass
my feeble view of creation as
the dogeared pages of war-torn
books flap delectably and languidly in
the salty air of wickedness.
I stir and lift myself from the red-clay
mud of the deserted field and
walk slowly north on the black
paved highway leaving red-clay footprints
weaving and playing with the
broken-yellow line.
The blue chevy van swishes past and
swerves as it notices my nakedness
and the speeds up when
it sees my blood. The blood
pouring from the wounds on my hands
and feet and head and from the
tears in my happy flesh –

I fall onto the darkness and
fighting the blue-brown pain, I
 rise again and walk toward
the Elysian Fields that lie to either
side of the long highway.

 I fall once again at the rocky edge
of the road, my hand falling into the downy
 neck-hair softness of the field.

 The flowers of the field begin
to glow yet before I can grasp their
 beauty and message, I awake
in the trench-hole in the fields of France in 1943,
and I again awake in the tepid jungle of Vietnam in 1969
and I again awake in the tank in Panama, 1989, and I again awake . . .

Shannon Salser

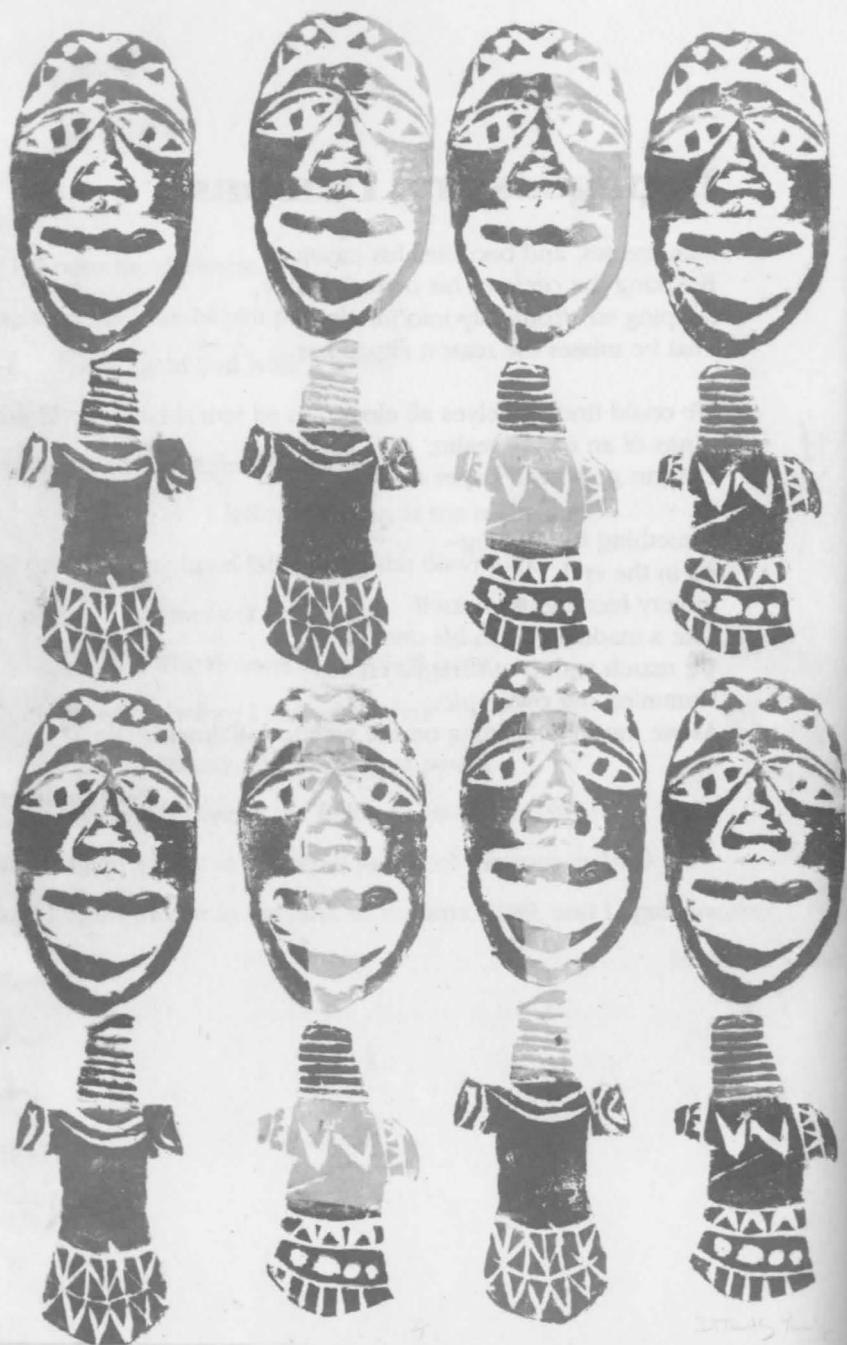
Demigods and Demons

Man creates, and becomes his creation,
Breaking the circle of his own mortality,
Slipping so effortlessly into infinity
That he misses the reason altogether.

We could find ourselves all alone,
Kings of an empty realm,
Defacto gods with paper crowns.

Something for nothing—
All in the end.
Infinity feeding upon itself
Like a madman upon his own hand.
We march within our fragile creeds
Humming our own epics
As we trample meaning on the way to fulfillment.

Kent Lambert



Apology

My mother once fought over the will
Her father wrote in a hospital ward. Her brother,
Godfrey Child, wanted to auction his inheritance
With a loudspeaker and bidding tables, & he tore
The typed papers, evenly, between his callused
Bare hands, so it seemed final
And with terrific sincerity,
He left her life. It was like a dark fork in a road,
And for a moment, the nurse held still
With that syringe. When it was over,
My mother simply drove home and cooked dinner, and then,
As always, sat alone in her den, reading the paper.
She never talked about it.

Sometimes, I drive out to this beach at night,
And listen to the wet lap of the sea in autumn,
The black edge of the world turning over.
It used to make me feel smaller, looking out on it.
In Maryland, that depth was enough.
In a Maryland I will not see again,
My life is beginning to change. Something
Inside me is slowly turning over
Everything it ever owned.
Now, if I try to talk, I hear my mother
Find all the right words she forgot to say
As if her voice, calling from in me,
Might solve everything, and though now, my uncle
Is dying, that voice is sorry . . .

If you can think of the senses as a network,
A city mile driven behind the wheel of a car,
Acknowledging every red light,
Imagine, now, a turn – as when the road changes
To dirt and the billboards change to fields, mile after
Mile, heading in one direction, until at last
The engine grows tired and sleeps, or until
Even the hum from travel is a kind
Of lullaby; and when the afternoon turns to night
And the head lamps grow narrow into dark,
You can almost feel that the engine, as it slows,
Must fall off the land and open onto sea.

Kelly Bondurant

Guest Speaker

Standing before me
pinching and prodding
deforming the air between us
with plump colorless hands

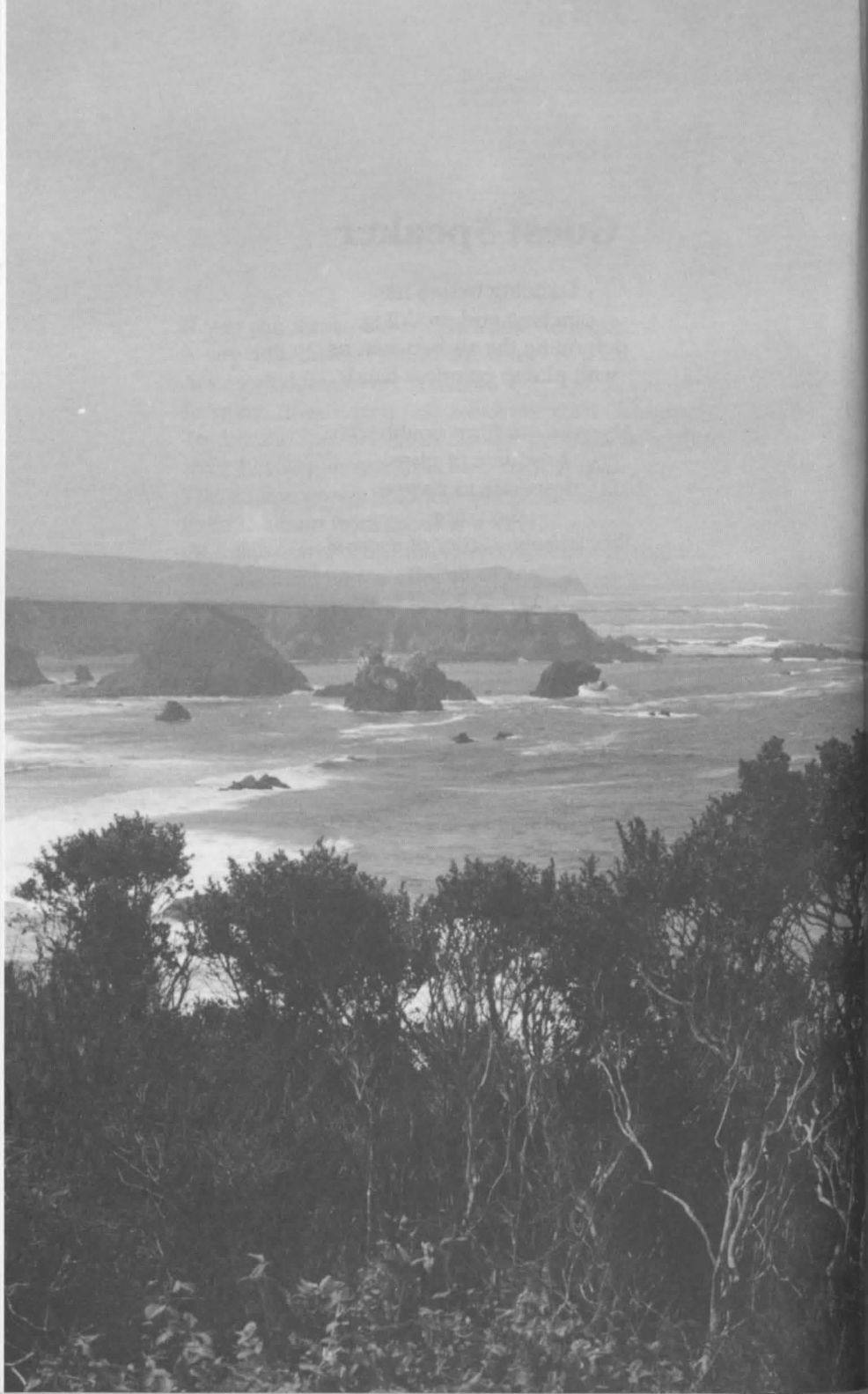
My eyes run from double chin
to square of glass
desperate to escape
the voice

Proclaiming a story of success
Rags to Riches
All you need is Self Love
Positive Attitudes
You can do it too
Just look at me
Look at me

Bullshit
my mind screeches
sounding like fingernails
on a black board

Inflated with nothingness
Arms pumping
Lips flapping
like a silent movie
you kill something inside me

Ann Mierson



Watching for Minnows

So we will not forget,
The silence whispers its name again,
And I am reminded
Of a small boy
Who once stood
Looking off a bridge
As I stand now
Looking into your eyes,
That same name fresh on his lips
As he looked through his reflection
To the darting silver flashes beyond
That glistened in his treasure box eyes,
More fascinating than the odd look
That hovered just above them.
And now, as then,
The light glances off the surface
Of watery eyes thick with clouds
As I wait,
Watching for minnows.

Kent Lambert

Thunderbird

Black granite, ash, warped pews, overgrowth so dense
it takes hours to hack through, a tarnished brass
cross slanting the thin streamlets of sun, and one
turquoise egg half-shaded by a limb. The pastor
who left parish 11 for New Staunton, left his robes
too. I come here alone, unnerved
the way I came years before to run side-
by-side setters and pointers. They were
the first closed under good bird cover.

Six miles of oak loom, thickened, curling
like paint on walls where dim-wit yokels plead, half
starved near drying fields with something
to consider and plenty to hate. One contractor sits
children on his right knee, a gesture
like an earthquake. Soil caulks their nails.
I am one of few who hiked uphill
through gullies of vine to pull
back his tracks, scared to death.

Now only hunters find the stained glass
if they're lucky, if birds have coveyed
and dogs go on point, if light hits the grove
just right. This time there's no secret being kept.
The pews are riddled with shot: 7 1/2's, 8's, 9's, a slug
or two. My grandfather hoarsed-up when he told the story.
His father, the leader, bought by Virginia power,
needing his family more than the land.
On this hill crest I think of all the sweat
poured over the ascent in barrow and cinder block.
I stare through the looped honeysuckle
circling the bell tower and catch a stuttered
glimpse of faces hardened like troops on leave,
women wearing frocks, black as famine potatoes.

Wendalough (St. Kevin)

Stirring into the conscience of this shrouded
wayside, I feel the alter start to tremble and I prod
my memory to bury a boy killed
near Spotsylvania, a farmer straining
alcohol from tubing out a still.
Where I stand in this darkened, hateful home
will not leave me. The echo of bells I hear
more like coon hounds at bay,
runned scared and lost with scent.

Father, you and I bore barrels flush
in late November hollows, swapping tales
mothers should never hear, fumbling for shells
in briars we named by each rigid point.
You never stopped here? I've been sitting in the pews
thinking about us a long time, long enough to see
weathered stones pushed awkward against
a rooted birch. The dates our family owns.

I keep promising I'll forget, I'll leave them,
this chapel yard, and get on with my life.
A year ago a man with sanitarium eyes
stumbled across these broken floorboards and sang
from a hymnal and pulled out a bottle of Thunderbird
and nobody gave a damn because nobody heard
a thing from that podium or even listed to find out
what was sung: old verses, "Onward Christian
Soldiers" above the strip-mine clangor of drills.

Thunderbird

I'm the boy who stole up to this promontory
without your knowing to summon mercy
for ungrateful years. I stand deranged
on the swelling ground to curse the sermon
in this room and to catch the faces
aged to stone. All I catch are mossed numbers,
nicknames, and fabled quotes, rusted brass
shells scattered like an archaic testimony,
an empty language only a grim handful can understand.

Outside bobwhites whistle their broken lives
back together and you and I sit miles apart.
Every crack in the wall speaks of age
and father, I hear the leaves brush it all down
like the wind was a final, silent voice
shaking the land just enough to turn things over,
to pull from the ground whatever it needs to hide.

Kelly Bondurant

Glendalough (St. Kevin)

After a lifetime of solitude, cultivated like an empty garden,
I allowed her in: a seed of doubt reached fruition
choking the songbirds hymn into silence
as things were revealed to me. Gradually,
she removed the veils like the carving dance of the water
falling to the stream by my cell until
she lay naked under me:
deep and misty as the fiery mirror of the lake at sunrise.
With a sudden jolt of the hips
we opened my cloistered mind,
releasing my body into a delicious, earthbound epiphany

flowing from every-uncontainable-thing like God. I heard
the music of the lute snaking and coiling over
the chaste birdsongs, baring me to the glory in my senses,
caressing and holding me in a new
passionate joy for the finite. I awoke free from my life,
rooted firmly within a fertile furrow
crouched between mountains

holding back a growing world and I was afraid. Within
my lone, stone monument to faith I contemplated: every rock
had been a gift: blessed and familiar,
essential of the certainty I tried to believe
into existence. An existence in which every leaf,
blade of grass, breath, drop of water was signed by the Artist,
every creation a celebration of His divinity while
I learned nothing about my world, other worlds, this world
until I retreated here. In my cell

above the water I fast:
meditating on sin and how little I understand of it now,
stare at the smiling mad beauty reflected in the dark pool
below: resisting its call to worship, wait and
listen for birds
after she, siren and Avatar,
let me see
the other signatures on creation and helped me to write my own.

Ben Kell

Untitled

We have had it up to here.
We have slapped a pointy
cap on its head, rapped
it on the knuckles and sent it
upstairs without any supper.
Forget fairy tales and soothing
bedtime stories. There is nothing
more to fear; no more monsters,
slowering through the cracked
closet door, or snashing evil
teeth beneath the bed.
The world is a finite place
and we intend to keep it that way.
No room for
spirits or spectres—
they're only auto exhaust & sewer steam.
Mirages are merely mudpuddles,
Atlantis simply sludge,
We believe only in concrete
buildings, asphalt lots and No
Parking signs. There's a neon dawn
lighting the night that swallowed up
Mom & Pop & and they're penny candy
schtick. Its all convenient as hell.
The stores here never close,
not even on X-Mass and they sell
every necessity—toiletries,
aspirin, cold medicine.

Craig Bagno

Flying Machines In Pieces On The Ground

What is it you think when you look into
the polished wood and your face glares
back at you, dead as the woman lying inside,
and the ceiling light shines clear against
the oak surface and blinds you as the sun
must have spotted her eyes when she glanced
at it from the same airplane window which now lies
in fragments embedded in burnt patches of dirt
in those Carolina hills, dirt charred a shade
darker than the casket in front of you;
the rich grains in the oakwood catch your eyes
and you fall into their coiling pattern
while the preacher's voice fades out as each grain
circles like the plane must have spiraled, twisting
against the still sky, tail spinning downward until
it smashed into the earth and exploded into a shower
of flames and ash which covered the wreckage so completely
that when they hand you the shovel, you will pass it on, knowing too
well she has already been buried.

Kelly Bondurant

Tuesday, December 13, 1988

Bill & Walt's Toy Shoppe:

For a source of pecuniary pleasure,
the gun was poised at her face,
and as the man behind the mask smiled,
he pulled the trigger twice.

And a thousand eyes saw this-
each from every shelf,
and after the man had absconded with the night,
their hands were still raised to themselves.

Alexander Speyer

Weathered Wood

You sit there in your rocking chair
and creak the floorboards back and forth.
Out in the heat of the front yard your voice
holds onto me. Don't you pick at my weeds,
you say, I like 'em just how they is.

Eight years ago today you took me
to the railroad crossing, drove the Chevy
across the track. The Rabun County Courthouse
vanished into the distance like this shack
will disappear in the dust billowing behind

the bus that will take me. Grandpa,
sometime in the next few years your chest
will cease its heaving, your hands turning
as grey as the weathered wood they grasp.
For a moment they'll seem as if carved

from the same wood, withered
skin wrinkled like the armrest
they've held onto for 35 years.
I will reach over and pry your fingers
from the dead wood, then slide into

my good pair of jeans and slip the photograph
of Mother and Father into the back pocket.
when Georgia Gillespie has given her condolences
I'll wait by the fence for the next bus.
But not before I've taken your chair out back

and thrown it into a pile of wood and crumbled papers
The *Clayton Tribune* will spark the splinters jotting
from its legs. I will stand there until the center
splits and falls into itself, and the embers, brittle,
break into tiny glowing ashes against the dirt.

Kelly Bondurant

Above Grey Water

Within
the darkened light
the sweet smoke
swallows me.
Outside
the canal splits
the cobbled streets;
this side blinks red.

I walk out

through the narrowed lane,
turn to cross a bridge
above grey water.
Another cobbled street,
sets the same scene.
Signs jut into the street
announcing the sport
of women kept inside.
Women
stripped
down to lingerie
look down through
dusted panes.

Beyond that,
uniformed sex shops,
at least three to a block,
their windows filled
with unfamiliar toys.

I walk on,
turn a corner
into a sidestreet.
Music rumbles
from cold hands
in small groups against walls;
a hat
awaits reward.
Amid crated vegetables
turns a man
cucumber in hand,
eyes on me,
words spoken
through a slit
of no teeth.
Quickly paced,
a man hisses by.
"Cocaina, hashisha?"
Whispers
down my spine.
People on all sides,
their faces mock me
with foreign smiles.

I do not even
know with
whom I came.

I walk on,
pass the dizziness
to an open square,

through a door
down dark steps,
sit on a stool
and in the coolness
breathe
the welcomed air.

Susanna Duff



Craig Bagno is a senior English Major.

Kelly Bandurant

Susanna Duff

Ben Kell

Kent Lambert is a senior.

Richard Lakmore

Ann Mierson

Shanon Salser - He is what others don't dare to be.

Alexander Speyer