

1993

## Reflections 1993

Johnny Leon Morris

Joyce Compton Brown

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*Reflections '93*

# Reflections

Volume 25  
1993

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# *Literary Contest*

Each year the English Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors a literary contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in Reflections. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the final contest judges. This year's judges were Dr. Rudee Devon Boan, Dr. William B. Stowe, and Dr. Gayle Price.

## *Awards*

<b>First Place:</b>	A Letter To Anita Hill	Johnny Morris
<b>Second Place:</b>	Peace	Markell Lynch
<b>Third Place:</b>	Salty Brass Juice	Todd Estes

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## *Honorable Mention*

Get You Bone Stripped	Gary Mitchum
To Smile	Johnny Morris
All The World Is Frozen	Markell Lynch

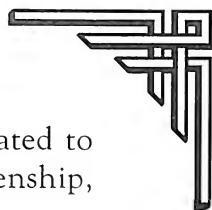
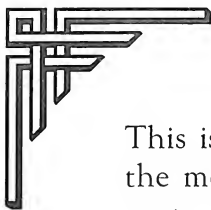
# *Art Contest*

The Art Department of Gardner-Webb University has sponsored an art contest for all student submissions chosen for publication in *Reflections*. Faculty and nonstudent submissions are not eligible for the contest. All works are judged anonymously by the final contest judges. This year's judges were Rita Allid, Ted Vaughan, and Susan Bell.

## *Awards*

First Place:	Tiger, Tiger	Yoshi Shinano
Second Place:	Shadowed	Trey Odom
Third Place:	Stillife Stripes	Sabrina Barnes





This issue of Reflections is dedicated to  
the memory of Ernest M. Blankenship,  
poet and teacher.

The undertaker profits directly from my  
demise.  
My going makes way for someone else to  
rise.

“Loss and Gain”

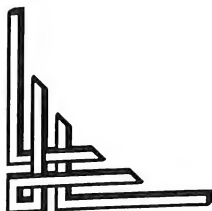
From death we flinch, withdraw, euphem-  
ize.  
Children laugh and play and run.  
Old men sit quietly and contemplate  
The sum.

1

“The Sum”

The statesman rules,  
but his work dies with him.  
The poet writes, and his word remains.  
“Poets and Statesmen”

E.M. Blankenship



## Halloween 1993—my father is missing

Am I expected to fill his shoes?

I go to the closet and pick one of his suits

Go to the desk and begin the melancholy little poem  
which would have been missing from the pages of this year's  
local literary magazine.

Masquerading in his suit, I have his arms exactly.

They lifted me down from a high picnic table  
on the Fourth of July, and up away from the street  
and the small terrible yapping dogs. Now

the hands hold pen to paper and write

"I wonder what Christmas and Easter will bring."

They'll need to be rewritten too —

No longer God, the Father, who so loved the world...

But God, the Son, Fatherless, who shapes

a tiny blue-green orb of loneliness,

a small tribute to our missing father.

*Wayne Ernest Blankenship*

## Ernest

He was quiet and gentle with  
an unique strength for life.  
He was curious and  
sought answers to his search.  
He was a teacher and always  
A student.  
Quiet and unassuming,  
Pleasant and reserved.  
Always a teacher,  
Ever a student.  
Missed and unable to be replaced.  
Brilliant, poetic, co-operative,  
Humorous, congenial.  
Southern and loving it.  
Southern and living it  
(gamecocks and all, and  
not the University kind.)  
He was my mentor,  
My teacher,  
My "student."  
He was a teacher  
Always a student.  
He was a friend.

## Rivers

Superficial, acquaintances.  
Shallow, stagnant brooks  
Gently slapped about by the wind.  
A glimpse of the surface,  
Seemingly protecting the underlying life,  
Reveals...  
Nothing.

Enduring, protector.

A clear, thriving stream  
Racing fluidly in the right direction.  
Motives and momentum shown;  
Nothing shadowed  
Or reflected off the surface.  
Adapts to the environment,  
Slowly breaking all barriers:  
Boundaries set by life.

*Scott Jablonski*

The I  
The perception of  
me,  
as an entity unto  
myself.  
This in fear  
of what I might  
be.  
This from  
the illusionist,  
the dream perception,  
the unreal.  
A standing dream  
on its knees,  
unable to rise  
or fall.  
Turning inside-out,  
like a flower,  
attempting to bloom.  
Twisting  
in the wind,  
like  
some sad wind chime.  
I,  
am the nothing,  
and the no one.  
I am,  
all the dreams,  
all the attempts,  
and all the failures,  
in my life.

Get you  
     Bone stripped  
 Leather faced  
     nerve dead and  
 Chilling cold  
     About your dying day  
     About your livid life  
 Trying, trying, searching  
 Foxholes in dangerous dark  
     in wanton woods  
 Failing, flawing, failing, falling  
     Post by defac'ed post  
     Stage by sagacious stage  
 Crystal whispers blown away  
 Setting stones in downhill bliss  
     Falling, falling,  
     Wingless weak  
 Standing timeless instant spy  
     glowing going "fluttering dove"  
 Living, living, lying, gone  
     Losing, losing, dying, long  
 Closing captive skidding eyes  
     At alternating  
     Knowing, now,  
     Changing groping  
     Falling, falling  
 Probing reaching reaching now  
 Spreading eagle slowing slowing  
     Pulling tireless flowing  
     Freedom now-  
 Breaking through standing  
     Amongst your winged thoughts  
     Amongst your nightless gaze-  
 Follow through, dead;  
     dying dove gone days.

**Tiger, Tiger**  
Yoshi Shinano



# A LETTER TO Anita Hill\*:

in your eyes I see  
whirling gold tierras,  
zooming and spinning  
from the drum in the  
core of your temple.

and I too know that  
gray wooden ramshackle  
houses are keen reminders  
of dignity and dreams

and I am a man of color.

but you possess the lion's claw.

it is a task to sprout  
from yes'ums like those  
of Scarlett's running mane  
or to sprint from caricatures  
of Aunt Jemima in a red and  
white pokey dotted scarf

and you are a woman of color

and you posses the lion's claw.

there is dignity in the  
rhythm of your walk  
there is dignity in the  
music of your speech  
in your dress  
your culture  
and your  
strength  
and a woman that is  
stripped of her dignity  
is like the statue that  
is constructed as an  
emblem and yet shattered



and smashed—worthless  
as debris.

Black sister you are the tamer.

You persuade the spirit

and you possess the lion's claw.

*Johnny Morris*

\*Female, African-American law  
professor who accused Supreme  
Court Justice Clarence Thomas of  
sexual harassment.

## A Decision of Innocence

Mediocrity

With its overwrought journeys down dustless paths,  
Melodious chanting of cyclical verses,  
Empty, timeless smiles.

Intensity

Sparking mortal passions,  
Repelling into chasms of confusion,  
Building elegant wings of wisdom on the way down.

*Jill Galloway*

# Morgan Bay

Let's run away to Morgan Bay,  
Far from fear and close to play.  
Every worry will be cast away  
In our world we call Morgan Bay.

Sunset at Morgan Bay was a haunting sight. In the backwoods of the Camp Lejeune Officer's Housing area, a worn trail of dirt and broken twigs led to a small site of freedom. Few people ever came or even knew that our haven existed. The little strip of beach we dominated became our territory and kingdom. In the center of our hideaway lay ashes, encircled by stones, of camp fires from previous meetings. It was the heart of our refuge. The fires we shared were filled with songs, laughter, and fabricated stories. The trail entering the hideaway ended abruptly with cliffs separating the sand from the trees, tall grass, and other flourishing or scurrying creations. Running parallel to the small cliffs of our beach, a tired tree bent and rested on the sand. The entire place harbored only a few people before a line of pine trees obstructed the way. Pine cones and Spanish Moss mixed freely with the sand, and with them a series of footprints decorated the surface. Across the bay rested a quiet air station. It was a sight full of streaming red radiance with one lighthouse shining a green beam. Above it, streaks of smoke from jets cut through the sky and hid within the clouds.

At the time, President Bush had just declared war on Iraq. The honor students of Camp Lejeune High School were greatly influenced by the workings of our government and the commercialism behind the yellow ribbon campaign. The bay served primarily as a sanctuary. Some of us came to cry while others yearned for an encouraging smile or a joyful laugh. It all came down to one purpose. We wanted comfort in a time of fear and crisis.

David Vintinner graduated as our school's valedictorian. None of his family members or close friends fought in the war; he was able to concentrate on his studies. Every night he sat on the broken tree and devoted most of his time to collecting his thoughts and analyzing situations that occurred during the war time. Remaining motionless as if he were posing as The Thinker, he meditated

and contemplated philosophies under his breath and occasionally blurted out clichés and rhetoric to entertain the group.

For Laura Kasier, the bay was an inspiration. At our meetings, it was not unusual for her to caress the sand and sculpt personal masterpieces on top of the stones we used to build our fires. She also wove twigs, constructed elegant stalagmites, and carved sand dunes with her menagerie of botanical tools. Her fiancée, J. Chamberlain, fought in the war for one tour. With every work she remembered him and said, "This one is for Jeffery."

Ryan Tennor usually sat on the cliffs of our hideaway and sang patriotic songs. His raspy voice saturated the air with careless pitches, and short pauses interrupted his songs after every mistake. The familiar stanzas of Lee Greenwood's "Good Bless the U.S.A." and Don Henley's "The End of the Innocence" kept us company nearly every night to remind us of our obligation to salute and love our troops.

Keith Chappel seemed most affected by the war. One day during class, his father was announced as missing in action over the intercom; the whole school was asked to take a moment of silence. He himself marched in formation the day that President Bush visited. Keith never discussed the possibility of seeing battle. Instead, he remained quiet and slowly paced the sand. With his hands in his pockets, he kicked pine cones to his sides. Some times, he broke a branch off a tree and used it as a golf club to strike the cones into the air. Keith continued to serve duty in the Persian Gulf. His father never made it home.

I never understood why I came to the hideaway. The only comfort I received shone from a lighthouse's green flashes at the other side of the bay. I knew that I wanted to share some intriguing thought or miraculous event that would help us all pull out of the emotional rut we lived in.

It's been nearly two years since I last saw my friends. During my college breaks I frequently visited the bay, hoping to reunite with them. Yet each time I returned I was the only person to appear. In those lonely moments I imagined David sitting on his wooden throne, thinking out the problems of the war and

Laura sculpting into the sand, creating temporary treasures to replace her lover.  
I smiled with every remembrance of Keith swinging aimlessly at a pine cone and  
how we all sang and laughed only during campfires. I missed our talks of hope,  
loyalty, sentiment, unity, and peace.

Then, with all my might, I shot sharp stones through the painted sky, sending  
my hateful message to God. I aimed for the sun, but always came short with my  
missiles falling dead into a still body of water. Afterward, I turned away to walk  
the worn footprints that led to the trail. With my head down low, I cried. The  
sun had set at Morgan Bay.

*Mick Ayala*

## The River

Perched atop a dam of rough hewn logs  
Soaking up the falling sun  
Gazing in wonder at clear as glass pools  
Filled with fish families and fool's gold  
Trees stretch to feel the river's cool spray  
And the rocks creep ever closer  
Calm smooth waters spill with a roar  
Into the mysterious and shadowy depths  
Churning to create a frothy hat

*Denise Fowler*



Old Couple  
*Wilson Brooks*

## The Virgin

I walked to the dark garden  
Alone  
Chills engulfed my body as I journeyed to  
Where the roses grew  
He said he had never received them  
Not until now  
Thorns prickled my fingers as I stretched  
From the bed of many  
But every tribute has its price  
Returning with my selected treasure  
I searched for him  
Fearing the tips might wilt before his manly grasp  
Protected them  
On the other side of the door, I surrendered them  
In awe, he moved his hand over his chest  
To feel his heart  
Too late, I thought  
I've already stolen it  
...and people say flowers just die

*Bridget McNamara*

## The Missed Train

Running. Yelling. Screaming.

The train missed  
Because of arguing over prices.

empty seats...

(Dandelions blowing in the wind.  
Wishes whispered upon wandering seeds  
That travel helplessly,  
Looking to find root in the nurturing  
Soil.)

15

empty seats...

(The crouched and lonely puppy  
That bravely follows you  
During dark nights of  
Crazed monsters under your bed,  
And through hardships of maturing.)

empty seats...

Another train awaits you.

*Scott Jablonski*

## Photos

Those were the good years  
of inner peace and sanity  
Security  
She was beautiful, very  
She was innocent and alive  
Carefree spirits and excitement filled her heart  
Truth illuminated her being  
Hope poured from her eyes—Peace  
She was peace, She was strength  
likened unto her  
A serene, untouched, clean wilderness  
A supernatural being, in whom life abounded  
Men adored her, her wit, charm, beauty  
She was envied by women  
but women couldn't help but like her  
She was new like spring and  
just as warm and just as sunny  
What had happened? Why the sudden change?  
A wilted flower, a gray day  
leafless trees and chilly winds racing up a hill  
The smile had left her, as though her lips forgot how  
She was someone else,  
a deceptive facsimile of the girl I loved  
Eyes swollen from night-time tears, darkened with sadness  
I loved her, I still do  
No life, No hope,—No sunshine  
Her whole being changed, was this the girl of childhood  
The laugh is forced and the eyes stare into false imagination  
Where love and joy; And sweet, sweet  
inner peace once blossomed a cold winter night wears on  
These are the bad years



## New Beginning

An absence of darkness  
Invades the sleeping mind.  
One eye opens, scans the eastern sky  
There is no movement  
But the internal clock is running.

An alarm clock buzzes  
The radio begins to play  
A light clicks on  
The coffee maker rumbles  
A razor hums.

Few words are spoken  
As the paper is fetched from the driveway  
The dogs and fish are fed  
Bacon sizzles in the skillet  
Hot cakes turn to golden brown  
Coffee aroma fills the air.

The newspaper is searched  
Favorite sections passed back and forth  
Two shining apples wait side by side  
Teeth are brushed  
Last minute reminders noted  
Goodbye kisses exchanged.

## Salty Brass Juice

When you first grasp hold  
rub your hand over and feel  
raise it high and  
bounce off the air  
squeeze frame and smell brass

Place the other hand on top  
pop valves snap the whole creature  
to fit the lips  
blazon this odd leg on the face  
You've broken gums before.

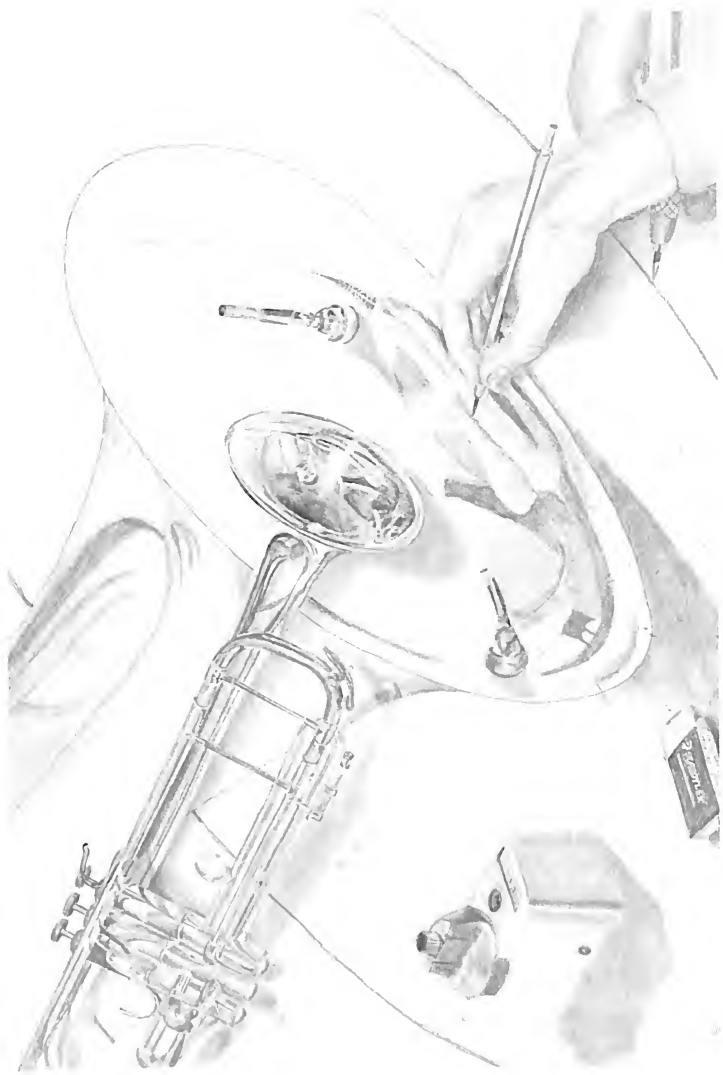
18 Next, buzz lips like a furious mosquito  
tear open sleepy nests and  
release the insect with fury  
clasp lips onto cold brass and  
force the fizzle forward into the frame

ripple the space of the room  
with cries of fury which  
swell into yellow bursts  
until lips hang like rubber  
and ears crack

release and feel the thud of silence.

*Todd Estes*

Trapped in a Drawing  
Wilson Brooks



## Essencebox

when the lad envelopes that humongous  
sunglowing pokey dotted essencebox  
then he'll put the scotch tape over his lips.  
(you won't even know it's there)

it's like trying to lasso a bundle of  
whirling sharp pentagons or metal  
mechanical trapezoids.

it's like chasing lighting bugs or bearded  
chuckling dwarves through a bunch of white  
chalky fog.

when the lad accepts

except

when I think of all the charcoal colored girls  
in green and pink paisley blouses at Harvard and  
all the Goliathy hairy gays in the  
military the holey condoms and halos  
I believe

Since Dad is spelled the same way backwards  
and forwards it's easy to see why the lad  
noticed how the colors of orange and black  
crayons mix and scurry in cold cold white  
milk.

should the lad accept

he'll know what to do with the scotch tape.

Hell!

He should realize that Streisand has a nose!  
And all the fake Santas in the malls read  
hustler!

he'll chew the cube

he'll know

he'll accept

since there're so many yuppies jotting queer  
stuff on the walls of the john in the automat  
and since there're black girls that want to be  
actresses.

he'll know what to do with the scotch tape.

*Johnny Morris*



Shadowed  
Trey Odom

Humanity is no reflection of what  
must be perceived as reality,  
for lack of anything else to call it.

Where we stand  
is not the center of conviction  
but the edge of chaos.

The universe does not exist  
for our amusement.  
It is not a playground.

So, step off the merry-go-round carefully.

*Markell Lynch*

22

warm winds  
to  
cool breeze

trees crying  
tears tainting  
the colors

peeling away bark  
of the sycamore  
where are the roots

*Mike Edwards*

## A Game of War

(For my brother in the Persian Gulf)

Plastic guns, acorn shells, broken twigs,  
Our gallant rescues to claim the victory!  
Games of war in a child's realm.

Now you face the somber discovery  
Of the truths of our games.  
Your sojourn is in the enemy's palace.

23

Death lurks behind the bruising darkness,  
Red tears inch down your face.  
Icy metal slices through your dusty bones.

Fear and uncertainty choke reality.  
Fight it! Capture the quiet invitation to contemplate  
The game of war you're playing.

*Jill Galloway*

# Churchgoing

The room is open, moving. The books are open; they connect. Green Medicine, The Sun Also Rises, Fundamentals of Chemistry, a taste of physical reality,—yes, reality is good. Piaget, who's that? He looks like a doctor of physics or something like that—physics, oh yea, the science of abstraction in motion. They're all open, even though some haven't been pulled out yet, and the open side is not exposed. The encyclopedias are unshelved and carpet the floor with countless ideas and places and binders, well, connectors. The one in front of me has holes from the darts me and my sister tossed at the books, their binders. We figured the binders were tough. This one is; I can feel it thick in my hand. But the top edge, where it is thin is torn; it was delicate, delicate like some of the ideas.

He is entering the room with a sharp pace. A sudden stop and he leans over to stare at a few items, eyes cocked forward, a wind of thoughts reading from his eyes. His attention roams around the scenery a few seconds. He turns around to face me squarely. "What ya looking at son?"

"Son" sounds glib. I'll be glib. "Albert Einstein and the Theory of Relativity," rings out glib.

"Uh-huh" slips edgeways out the side of his mouth.

"Hey, did you know Al was quoted on philosophy?" My sentence rises excited at the latter end.

A "No" just barley makes it past; there must be a day's load of thoughts.

"Right after this stuff on the fourth dimension, he says he believes..."

"No," he pops in again, out of a deep dream, "I don't believe I knew that."

Thoughts are running out of my head. "uh, uh, he uh, believes that —or, no—he envisions, or believes in, or likes to think about and talks about a community where everybody just thinks clearly and there's no regular things to do. Everybody is just a scientist of their own life and an adventurer of ideas, or at least like truth. They could work for each other to get food, so they wouldn't use money."

"Uh-huh" puffs out Dad's mouth, underneath a mixture of raised eyebrows and a thin smile.

"The Greeks did it, I think. They had common places in the middle of town where people could come at any time and talk about ideas. Oh, and uh, I



believe uh, whatsizname, uh, Al was a Christian too.”

“How do you know all that?” His eyes are aimed sharp at my head. My mouths starts to return logic but is topped by his, which is a step louder. “Son, I don’t know where you get your ideas from sometimes but you’ve always got these ideas that sound more like they’re out of nowhere” *I’m starting to trip over his words. My hand is no longer sitting on the table but is slipping through it.* “Are you listening?” His voice is cold and smooth, not harsh. “Where did you get his idea about religion?”

I draw a breath; it snaps me back to his gaze. “I-I-it said that he believed everybody should follow what they think about, uh, Being. Yea, that’s the word it used, Being. He meant God. He just thinks that God is so big and kind-of far away, not far away but hidden, or no uh, uh, mysterious—my voice rises like a question—that maybe that is the best name for Him. Well, its not the best name, but it kind of thoughtful, or like he was really thinking when he said that.” His face tightens up some more and rolls down toward his chin in his psychologist stare. I’ve said too much; I probably sound dumb. “Well, I just thought it was interesting.”

He is rolling his head around in a mush of thought. After one complete rotation, the words ooze out of his heavy forehead. “It is interesting to think about.” His eyes show the analyst again. “But its not real. That book I did that paper on about handwriting analysis isn’t real either. A few people got together and decided they wanted or they wished that personalties would fit into a nice neat package and show up on the analyst’s worksheet. Sounds good but people are not simple. Now those horses out there, they’re pretty simple—his tone is smartish. They wake up in the morning and graze; and carrying the water out to them, that’s not reecal—he sticks in a little country drawl along with a smile—complicated behavior either; but when I git out with people sometimes...” He’s running about at the mouth, mixing up his unusual flavor of country folkism and behaviorism. I’m not sure how long it has been , but he has just taken a deep breath, his lecture is sufficient. His eyes roll with the breath and he exhales into a cough. The cough is sharp, serious. Its echoing in my head. I wish it weren’t so serious. It’s like he knew it would come out at just the time his speech was finished.

*We’re sitting down. I don’t remember when we sat down. The ceiling is bulging. It pops and Dad hops up. Water is coming out of the walls and the table. IT forms a*

*pool and stops. We're laughing. He's laughing.*

Dad is staring again. His eyes are solid, fixed on an unknown point on the wall. He looks like he is staring speechless at the people while Mom is talking about God. *Her face is full of white and the folks are listening. But where is Dad?* "Daddy, why don't you go to church with me and Mom. They always miss you. We all used to sit together on the second row. I figured now that I'm not bored at church that I could ask what you thought about the message."

He inhales and turns a sideways frown. "Honey"—his voice is whiny—"I can't go if I have a headache."

You always have a headache." I start to draw back. His mouth is a sympathetic frown. I decide to push. "Could you go just this Sunday and try it out. I've started listening to the preacher and he says some interesting things too." A pause. "Why don't you come once? I'll help get you up."

His stare gradually fades into a smile. "I'm glad you enjoy church now. When I was your age my mom made me go to church. I hated it so much that whenever I could I would pretend I was sick or that I was going to walk with someone else to church. And now that your getting interested in serious things like that, I think that's a very honorable characteristic in a person."

"What about you? Don't you not want to be honorable?" My voice drops. Eyes quickly glance at the floor.

"You enjoy church. You and your mom both like being around people. Different people have all different ways of making themselves happy. Mom goes because it makes her happy. She has told me that. Is that not why you go? Do you not go because it makes you happy?"

"No, I go because it's right," I feel like I ought to back away. I stepped too hard. "And it makes God happy."

"Well, you feel that way, and it's honorable that you do."

"Do you not want to make God happy?" I step faster. HE rolls his lips and eyes back into the critical stare. He sits for a minute.

"I think God—his words are detached, logical—is happy with me right where I am, right here at home. After all, the Bible doesn't say where to worship Him on Sunday. If you were here at home would you not worship Him right here?"

I am glancing around. I guess I would. I let a "yea" slip out. What did Mom say about that? "You should worship with other people, other Christians."

"Son, don't be fooled by all those church members. Lots of those people you run into every Sunday go just because they always have and their parents took

them. That's one reason I don't go there any more. You look around next time you're in the service and see how many people are really listening to the preacher."

"Well, they ought to." That sounded unintelligent. "I mean he would be real interesting to them if they did. Don't you think so?"

He speaks really slow. "Uh, when I listen to that preacher, sometimes I just get the feeling that I've heard some of those words before somewhere, --eyes raise with a crack of a smile-- like maybe out of his mouth the Sunday before. And, well, after a while I just start to feel kinda drowsy"--his mouth is beginning to crack a smile again--"and before you know it I ask myself why I ended up in this service in the first place."

"You mean you get bored?" I never would have suspected it.

"Uh, uh, well, deadened to the world is more like it --his smile is deepening-- which is exactly how I'm beginning to feel about his topic of conversation. Surely you could find a better one than this. When I get through with this Pepsi I'm going to bed. You've got that long to come up with something a little more, uh," --his voice is rising into gleeful glib-- "stimulating to uh, talk about, uh." A few more seconds and the Pepsi disappears with a burp. A rush of silence and I can hear the books chatter alone once again.

The first day of the week is crisp, bright, but to some it is slow. The people, the clothes, are sitting in rowed seats which all face forward, some with heads leaned sideways. Why do they always sit like that. I lean mine sideways; it feels comfortable, and kind of adult. Too adult, too regular; I pop my head back up, I'd rather be thoughtful, that's too regular. The preacher rises. "Good morning. If you're glad to be in the house of the Lord, say Amen..." The people's heads shift and some sway back to where they started.

*A wind creeps across from the holes in the wall, catching, puffing at the sides of the heads. They roll off, one by one and thump and keep rolling, around the aisles. The bodies sway and fall over; they're not dead, they're just kind of switched off for a while. The heads keep rolling around trying to find the bodies. They're bumping into each other and saying hello. Some are playing movies with each other, or hiding under the pews. Finally, they get back onto the bodies. But, they got the wrong ones. Everybody (ha ha) is sitting up straight with the wrong heads on. They are all turning around yacking to each other like Britishers. The preacher is telling them how to find*

*the right head.*

They're sitting straight, heads leaned to the side, watching, listening. They begin to open the Bibles. They nod heads back up. The preacher's eyes reach across the room. His hands are stretched out from his ears, like large ears, and they're listening. The room is kind of white under the light; well, actually yellow, but the ceiling is white. And the holes in the ceiling can swallow extra sounds. Yes, its all right to speak; the ceiling is not watching, ready to zap. The men are speaking, words much like the preacher's. They're standing; the one standing now has a comfortable red and blue shirt, like the one Daddy wears in the woods. Daddy is not in there right now, but he would have on a brown suit. The man is wearing boots and nice jeans. "Preacher, I jus' like to say I wudn't be here if it wern't for the Lawrd. He's jus' been su'good to me..."

The ones in expensive clothes are staring straight ahead, eyes bland. A hand moves and I glance around. A mom is pulling at the kid to get him to sit up straight and not talk.

28 The next one stands up. He has a beard, a tall corduroy suit and glasses. His face is wide with the brightness of the ceiling. His eyes are kind of forward, kind of up. His voice is slow and deep and beautiful with a crisp edge, like the preacher. "Preacher, I'd just like to say that the Lord He's been good to me and if there's anybody here that don't know it, they need to git right with the Lord, because He loves you. And I know sometimes its hard to just believe; you've got your back to the wall and it just seems like God isn't there, but He's there and preacher I've just come to understand that sometimes He waits for us to take the first step of faith before He steps in."

Tear-streamed eyes wander up for a place in the front. Mom is playing a quiet hymn on the piano. Her face reaches toward the front of the aisle. It is bright, like the preacher's. The preacher is down in the aisle, arms stretched out like big ears. Some of the men with suits are kneeling with the others with their eyes closed. I don't know if I should close mine, because its been a long time and the invitation is still going.

People and clothes are filing out. Soon I'll be able to put on jeans. Those women never change clothes. They've always got on those skirts. Lori walks out. She's a kid; maybe she'll put on jeans soon. "Hey, Lori, are you going to

put on jeans when you get home?"

"No, we're going to eat in Lenoir."

More dresses and ties file out with blank expressions. Little men are climbing on the rock walls. One swings all the way around to the door and lands smack on the deacon's glasses. He doesn't notice. *Phewwwwwww!* "Hey, Jack, let's check this thing out," little man class over to the others. "It looks like the strangest rock formation I've seen." He climbs inside the deacon's head and makes his way to the eyes. The deacon begins to scratch his head. The climber bumps back and forth trying to hold himself in. He falls. I grab him and put him in my pocket just as the deacon looks this way. I turn to the rail. Someone just jumped and is sliding down the rail; I wish I could. I jump hard and land steady on the beam. With one twist of the feet, I am sliding down the rail. It is smooth, my feet are like steel on ice. With one hop I soar through the air down to the grass, and land with a thump on the other side of the rail. I roll quickly around the corner to the rest of the steps which wrap around the front of the rock building to hide behind the front of the steps. I don't want anyone to mother me; I feel fine, just scratched; I'd rather play a movie and get hurt and die tragically, or have to invent some new way to fix myself, like in science fiction, and not be mothered. People are walking right past. I didn't know people walked straight down the front of the steps. The sides lead to the cars. They are staring at me. So I'll run over and hide behind the sign, and let the little man back out onto the rocks over there.

Everyone is driving away; all the stuffy clothes are leaving. The sun is yellow, not white, and everybody's face is red. They're going to go eat or watch TV or play football. Nobody plays movies or talks about encyclopedias. Maybe daddy is over his headache and we can talk about something and invent something. Maybe we can play a movie on horses or design the horseback watergun tank.

The car is hot; it weighs on my head like lead, now plinking at my sleepbox. I dream the Devil is leading an army of aliens after us, and Daddy is driving, and we're hoping we can witness to the aliens.

Todd Estes

Mixed like blood's faith  
Brooding thoughts of life's felt intentions —  
    confined to chambers in mind's dark indifference  
    we turn eager ears to reverberations  
    grasping at echoes resound  
    we believe to inward lie.

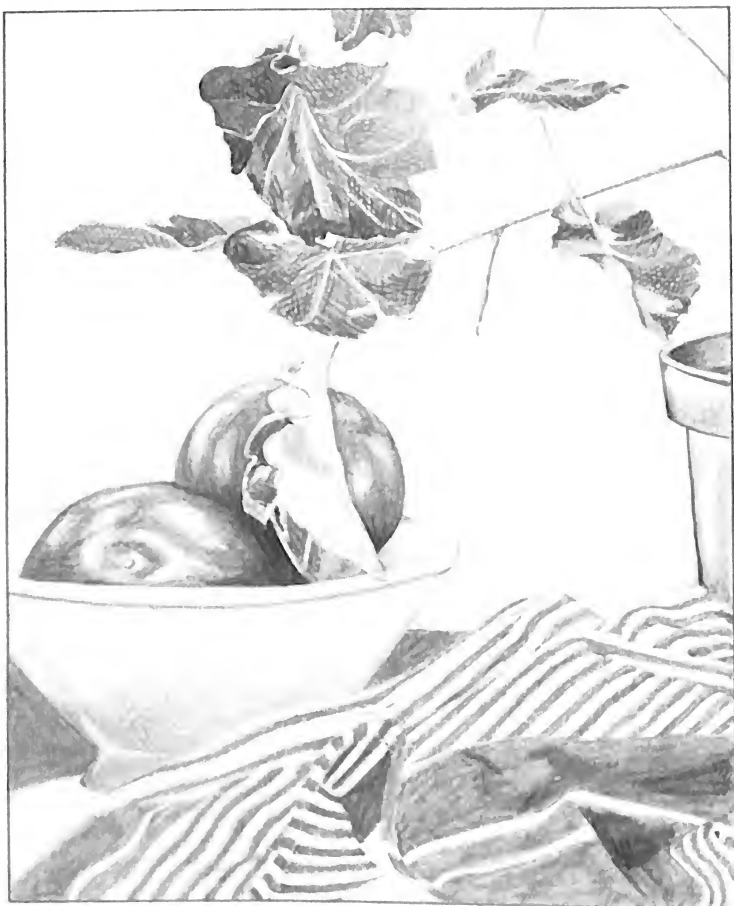
Drooling like hungry stubborn rooks.  
We seek freedom in bounded books  
Two eyes stare in exactness looks  
Into sameness snagged conforming hooks  
    and two souls sigh  
    to float alone  
    we dare to be different  
    we set to stone  
    and cast away foreign stares  
    from souls confined

We find tired sighs  
Leave salty drops  
To days amassed and  
Left behind in blocks  
Of cold remembrance  
    we paint in recalling colors  
    upon our growing canvas  
    the streaks (fat ones and thin ones)  
    of felt's dictate  
    we find in blindness living sight.

With every breath and  
Taken step beyond  
Ivy-stricken walls  
We live anew and paint  
The depths of solace.

## The Intruder

Without invitation                      Without license  
You plod incessantly into my territory  
    Begging  
    Cajoling  
    Teasing  
    Tempting  
And on occasion              Demanding  
  
Sow-like you root your ideas into my subconscious  
    Tearing at my leisure  
    Buy American  
    No more mush-mouth  
    Sale ends Monday  
    Gripper zipper  
    Quaker Oats — The Right Thing To Do!  
Without invitation      Without license  
    And still you come.



**Stillife Stripes**  
*Sabrina Barnes*



Peace—  
and people wearing expensive tie-dyes.

Children of the sun,  
wearing belled anklets  
and pseudo gypsy skirts  
too expensive to truly be hippy—  
a throwback style,  
too neo-american to be anything at all.

A white,  
                    middle-class,  
                            rich child movement  
toward free thinking  
and earth consciousness—  
as long as it doesn't interfere  
with  
earning power and owning a cellular phone by age twenty-five.

## A STRUGGLE

We cut down that old grove of  
Trees in the back yard today.  
Honeysuckle vines had wound  
Themselves around the trees until  
The lifeblood appeared to have  
Been virtually choked out.  
But enough had gotten through  
The skinny strangulated limbs  
Allowing beautiful green foliage  
To grow on the branch extremities.

34

I know this struggle for survival,  
It is not unlike human life.  
Evil is present in forms of beauty.  
It wraps around us strangling,  
Choking us until death  
Appears inevitable. But enough  
Life gets through our strangulated  
Bodies allowing glimmers of  
Beauty, light and hope.  
With beauty light, with light  
Hope and a strengthened faith.  
I will survive, even with  
this choking evil.

*L. Keeter*

Kindred Spirits  
Susan Bell



## The Marionette Collection

Thin, skillfully braided ropes  
Adorn the prize possessions.

Puppets frolic,  
On a fabricated stage  
Of motley glitter and of mire.  
They smile and dance,  
Beneath a dim spotlight,  
While their outstripped veins saturate  
With the blood from another man's hand.

They twist,  
                    turn,  
                    shake,  
                    jump,  
                    and fall.

After the show, the puppets sit still;  
Nearly broken, beside their contemporaries,  
On a dry and dusty shelf.  
They smile in the dark,  
Adorned, yet entangled  
Within the dancing ropes  
That bind them to their master.

*Mick Ayala*

# These days

the bird is strayed  
far, far  
from the fluttering of wings  
and the flock  
he knew.

These days  
he tries, belied and drowning,  
singing cries  
maintain the gaze  
that once was hardly  
cold.

No longer  
an eager wing,  
atrophy and the salt of tears  
sting him with  
every damned  
dawn.

No longer  
the world below  
and the ground seems with  
grasping hands,  
holding cold.

But I alone have witnessed  
the sublimity, the arching wings  
of a nobler bird  
and so I look toward  
the horizon.

I  
await his return  
and all the while, gather  
feathers for his  
store.

# SHELLEY

I have lived in the mountains,  
I have visited the sea,  
Through woods I have walked,  
Across meadows I have made my way.

Across meadows;  
I have made my way.

Some offered snow in which to play,  
Others offered flowers in which to breathe.  
But snow quickly melts,  
And the sharp aroma of the flowers flees.

Taking my strength;  
Weary, worn, and torn at heart.

38 I went on: into the desert I stumbled.  
Weaker and weaker. Until ... I could no longer walk.  
After many miles, my journey was no more,  
And then, another began.

A man who knows the desert well;  
A man who knows me well.

Took me in his arms and carried me. He  
Lay me down in an emerald green meadow.  
I awake to this meadow. Here my thirst is  
Quenched. My tummy is filled. My strength returns.  
And my heart is healed.

In this meadow of peace;  
In this peaceful meadow:

In this Shelley.

# The lost chord

is laughing at me

the tall trees would sympathize  
but nobody believes in tall trees anymore

people of grace  
soar overhead  
expecting brown leaves to just  
catch wings and fly  
they flap on past with their  
endless gawking  
eyes perched high and beaks forward

Below the brook Beavers  
batter their brains  
to build  
thump clunk  
each one a note  
never noticing

39

The score sweeps across my vision.  
Will I buzz and fly to  
kiss the flowers  
scurry to build  
rumble the trail  
converge to hunt  
spring build grasp a niche in the circle  
whirl the notes in reams of fiery melodies  
  
never noticing?

## ponderances on a swing

cool breeze

gentle creaking  
in rhythm

soft ringing  
of the binds  
that hold a great symbol

buildings  
with great walls  
large windows  
but no one sees out

large icons  
of life  
great majestic powerful  
outstretched limbs in vain  
nothing to hold

people  
feverishly milling about  
busy to achieve to obtain  
but why what does it matter  
achievement is fleeting  
ultimately no gain made

a rarity passes by  
a meaning amidst the meninglessness  
an outstretched hand of hope  
and embracement and understanding  
capability to bring  
a difference in the now

idle self consciousness  
returns  
bringing the wastefulness  
of striving for false rewards  
the ignorance  
abounds



mindless  
adherence to society  
ultimate in conformist  
trying desperately not to be  
clinging to religion

loudness  
boastfull self assurance  
clinging to some hope  
of fitting in somewhere

pendulum  
swing to and back  
unable to break the rhythm of sound

gentle clouds pale  
the man made

rolling in the cool breeze

*Mike Edwards*

## A VIDEO CAMERA

(while pondering the Rodney King verdict)

41

in the mist of a  
night stick,  
blue suits,  
and a  
hurricane?  
it was

the microphone  
for all the  
lead colored  
figurines  
and yet it  
was a  
whisper  
from  
Jupiter.

*Johnny Morris*

All the world is frozen  
into small circles called  
my space and your space and their space.  
Too monumental to touch  
or be touched—  
preferring to be stone than flesh and blood.  
Still, hearts beat with no discernable rhythm—  
tandems of impossibilities.  
Unable to run parallel  
and still unwilling to cross paths  
so all things become spirals—  
twisting and being twisted,  
and emotional emotionless  
turning inside-out,  
with no blood and less pain.

42 Personal demons chase wind wraiths down darkened hall-  
ways as if  
the play were about to end.  
But the play never ends,  
not until we are all spun out and tangled despite our  
protests.  
And in the knots lie remnants of lives—  
tell-tale signs of lovers and losses,  
of dreams and unopened gifts.  
So that our strivings barely cover the inarticulate prayer we  
all whisper—  
to be woven into some intricate tapestry so that we are not  
each separate but made whole.

*Markell Lynch*

## Morning With Mother

Silence

Black

Silence so quiet it screams

Black so dark it's colorful

The alarm blares

Again

Again

The covers rustle

And soon a cigarette will burn

in a clear glass ashtray

The coffee brews And hangers screech against the wooden pole  
from which they hang

The iron spits and sighs

And the faint smell of hot rollers, too hot,  
floats in the cold morning air

Soon, the hinge of my door will creek

Her cheery voice will end my peace

Her morning kiss so often my alarm

A new day has begun

I know I am at home

## WINTER IN THE COUNTRY

February began cold and grey  
Nudged with occasional drizzling rain.  
Late one afternoon  
Big, fluffy snowflakes began to fall  
They came thicker and faster  
Until darkness engulfed them.

Sunrise revealed a world transformed.  
A layer of white  
Covered the hills and hollers.  
The sun's glare so bright it scrunched the eyes.  
Trees glistened like polished crystal  
Roof tops looked like squares of white velvet  
A striking contrast to red barn and brown silo.

44

The air was crisp and still, except  
For the sound of frozen trees  
Cracking like rifle shots.  
The fluffy blanket of snow on the road was unbroken  
Neither neighbor nor friend was to be seen.  
The farmer eased his car to the road and back  
Just to be sure he could get out, you understand.

No school or work today  
Inside, the house is cozy and warm  
A perfect day for reading  
                    dreaming  
                    planning  
                    serendipity.

*Marie Wellmon*

# Portrait

I see you  
Plaster Saint  
Your smile belongs to the dying trees  
Wilted  
by pollution

You think that you're  
a mighty warrior  
but your sword is merely paper  
and your shield is merely foam

Yeah, you've got them fooled.  
They see gold in your eyes:  
Pyrite

Blinded  
with your black flame

45

Nothing more than common  
If even that

You seem to be soaring,  
but you're losing elevation  
You're not the deceiver  
but you might as well be  
When you hit the ground  
You will crumble.

Now is the testing time  
Eventually, you are humble,  
you are poor, you are broken.

## To Smile (while pondering suicide)

your polished bronze bust remained  
in the center of  
our luminous  
circular  
room.

i wore my shoulder pads and helmet  
just like you said because it  
was customary

and i brought my huge gold unicorn  
(because everyone likes her.)

She is pro-choice yuppie blond  
chauvinistic republican gay  
hostess

she is laughter and green  
striped lollipops!

i wanted to ride her and spit on the  
bust but you said that that  
wasn't customary.

so

when you told me to smile and say  
cheese as you took our picture

i did.

