

1998

## Reflections 1998

Matthew Miller

Jennifer Carlile

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# Reflections '98

*Reflections '98*

A Literary Journal of Gardner-Webb University

# Reflections

Volume 30  
1998

## Editor

Matthew Miller

## Staff

Jason Allen  
Ary Bottoms  
Mary Gettys  
Mark Harrison  
Jayme Helmick  
James Tippins  
Haley Tyner

## Faculty Advisor

Jennifer Carlile

## Special Thanks to:

Susan Carlisle Bell  
Nancy O'Dell Keim  
Ted Vaughan

Steve Varley and Kathy Martin, Graphic Design Artists.

Reflections is a publication of the Department of English at  
Gardner-Webb University in Boiling Springs, North Carolina.

Dear readers,

When I became editor of *Reflections* last semester, I could not wait to put my touch on this magazine and make it an even better journal than it had been in the past. I have worked hard to edit a number of fine poetry and fiction pieces. I believe that this year's magazine is one of the best ever in part because it includes such diversity of work from the student body. We have some traditional poems, some traditional and some local motifs in several poems, and some free verse poems that provide variety and fun. We also included three pieces of fiction: an inner-city experience, a quirky interpretation, and a Christian anecdote. I am very proud of this year's journal, and for the diversity and abundance of work in it. I would like to thank all the people who submitted work and congratulate the students who made it in this year. I encourage everyone to submit next year to improve on an already great *Reflections*. Thank you all for your effort. Now for the reader, thank you for taking the time to read my page and I hope you enjoy this year's *Reflections*!

Your editor,

Matthew Miller

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# POETRY CONTEST

Each year, the English Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors a poetry contest for the undergraduate students in conjunction with the publication of Reflections. This year, awards were given to three students whose collection of work was judged excellent. All works were judged anonymously. This year's judges were Joyce Brown, David Parker, and Jennifer Carlile.

## Poetry Awards

First Place:	Emily Johnson
Second Place:	Matt Norman
Third Place:	Jenny Rogers
Honorable Mention:	Shannon Spencer

# ART CONTEST

Each year, the Art Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors an art contest for undergraduate students who have submitted work to be included in Reflections. The art judges were Susan Carlisle Bell, Nancy O'Dell Keim, and Jennifer Carlile.

## Art Awards

First Place:	<i>Self-Portrait</i>	Joelle Cheung
Second Place:	<i>Marbles</i>	Jodi Baughn
	<i>Old Couple</i>	Jodi Baughn
Third Place:	<i>Self-Portrait</i>	Efrem Tekie
Fourth Place:	<i>The Secret</i>	Takiya Patrick

## Honorable Mention:

<i>Romans 12:6</i>	Tim Lee
<i>Untitled</i>	Joelle Cheung

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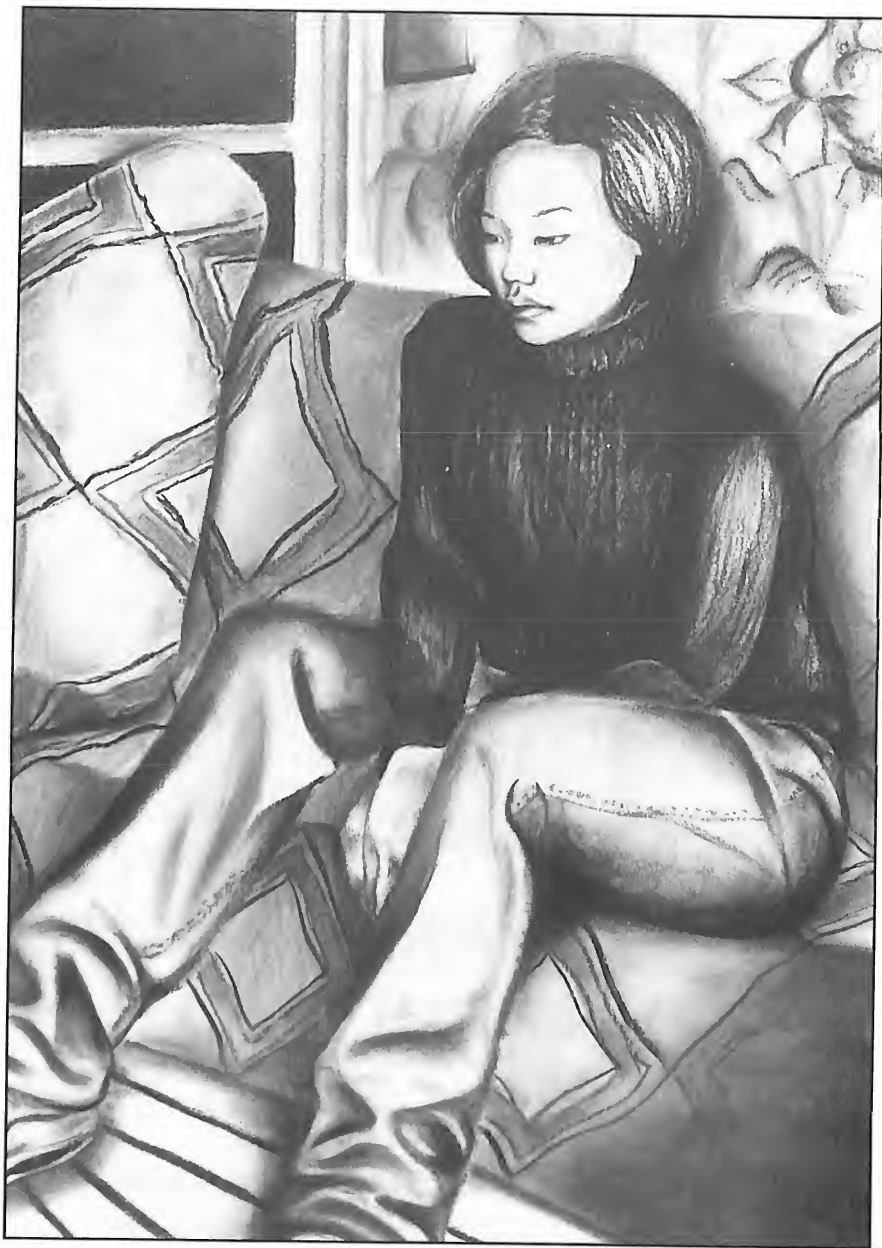
## PHOTOGRAPHY CONTEST:

First Place:	<i>Untitled</i>	Jodi Baughn
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## Honorable Mention:

<i>Untitled</i>	James Julian
<i>Untitled</i>	James Julian
<i>Morning Mist</i>	Pamie Y. Peay

First Place  
*Self-Portrait*



*Joelle Cheung*



## Gray

You told me the truth  
over Sesame Chicken and fried rice...  
Three years after you said  
You loved me.

You held me tightly to  
the promise of me in a wedding dress  
on a Saturday afternoon in September  
while I held the hand of  
another.

You told me I was the  
only girl you could ever love,  
making me think twice about the  
youthful promises I made.  
How could I, out of  
all the women  
in the world,  
have been  
the only  
one  
to  
love?

I knew you before  
you were trying  
so hard to  
fill your  
empty glass  
with wines  
of passion.  
How could you  
be born  
that way  
if you  
loved  
me?

Now you're drinking  
Guinness in bars with  
men whose lives  
are as empty  
as yours.

Two thirsty  
people  
unable  
to  
satisfy  
the  
human  
desire for  
love.

Gray,  
Why  
are  
you  
so  
beautiful

now?

*-Emily Johnson*

## Untitled

Left by the door,  
Grandpa's old boots.  
Worn out. Torn.  
Stories clinging  
to them like the  
mud on their  
souls.

*-Emily Johnson*

## The Sax-man Played

On nights when moods were high, pockets full  
The doors would open,  
they would come.

Women sitting, a gleam in their eyes,  
music, caressing

People  
at the bar  
drinks in hand,

A smoky stage  
dim blue light,  
sweat pouring

eyes shut,  
cheeks full,  
becoming music,

The sax-man played.

Reflecting life's passion,  
sax became flesh  
a translation of notes in the air

bursting from the smoky room  
to bums on sidewalks  
drinking screw top wine,

lovers parking beneath the moon  
tangled in lust,  
contorted in fiery pleasure.

The sax-man played.

*-Matt Norman*

The absence of the whooping crane cries  
spoke to me,  
To all of us.

Little grey monkeys that usually play in the trees were  
carefully, quietly, observing from their nests.  
The hair on my neck was standing.

At 7:45 the echoes of AK47's greeted our ears. By 8:00 the village  
had gathered, fear had crept from the jungle, to the home.

We were told to take our belongings and scatter, "to the bush"  
they said, "we have no time, save yourself."  
I could not go.

Heavy artillery landed near a hut where two children had been  
standing.  
The last look on their faces was one of uncertainty, questioning,  
staring at their mother.

8:15, the last family was running, carrying their lives in their  
hands, on their backs, on their heads. They were scattered like  
antelope sensing the lion.

I could not go. My husband is blind.  
He has no chance. We could not flee, he is not able. We stayed.

The breeze that usually swept lightly around our village was  
dead. My hands were shaking, my husband sat.  
He could hear them before I could, he is blessed with smell, and  
hearing. He need not see this world. I need not see this world.

"They are here," he said then started praying. Tears blinded my  
eyes, we tangled our arms and legs together, holding, praying.

Who can separate me from God!

They took our food.  
They took our belongings.  
They took our clothes.  
They beat me and my husband, pissed on us and laughed!  
But who can separate me from my God!

And I have walked with a rag from the trash around my body for  
three days to tell you.  
No one can take my God away!  
God is so good.

*-Matt Norman*

## When I Woke

When I woke,  
my mind still swirling,  
a stale taste of alcohol, cigarettes, sex  
unfamiliar bedding,

she lay still, dreaming  
her arm, twisted behind her.

Whose soul had I taken,  
played with, spun around my head  
stepped upon?

The eyes in this mirror look dead.  
And I have killed her, too.

*-Matt Norman*

## Christmas Shopping

Last night, by chance

I walked the same grey street we used to travel  
so long ago,  
it seems.

How cutting the cold wind was  
and how empty the winter sidewalks,  
like the withered flowers  
shriveled brown  
in their barren pots.

Every festive bit of color  
hung out to herald the coming season  
laughed in spite  
and mocked my brooding  
with brilliant smiles.

And once, to my surprise,

I swore I saw your reflection in the glass  
next to mine.

The glow on our faces,

the warmth of your hand,

so close that I could almost taste our love.

The giddy joy falling from the white sky like snowflakes,

those perfect pieces of lace

so cold and sweet,

the kind I caught in my younger years

on a pink tongue.

They vanished in a second

like a dream.

And, as I blinked at the glass,

your happy face melted from my view

like a snowflake in my mouth.

I saw the red and green, and the lights,

and my reflection

standing alone

as the streetlight shone down on my desolation.

-Jenny Rogers



## Pale

A morsel of kindness  
is all I ask,  
my friend.  
I stretch my hungry hands  
to your windowsill  
and peer longingly  
through the  
pale and frosty pane,  
And again  
you turn me away  
unanswered.

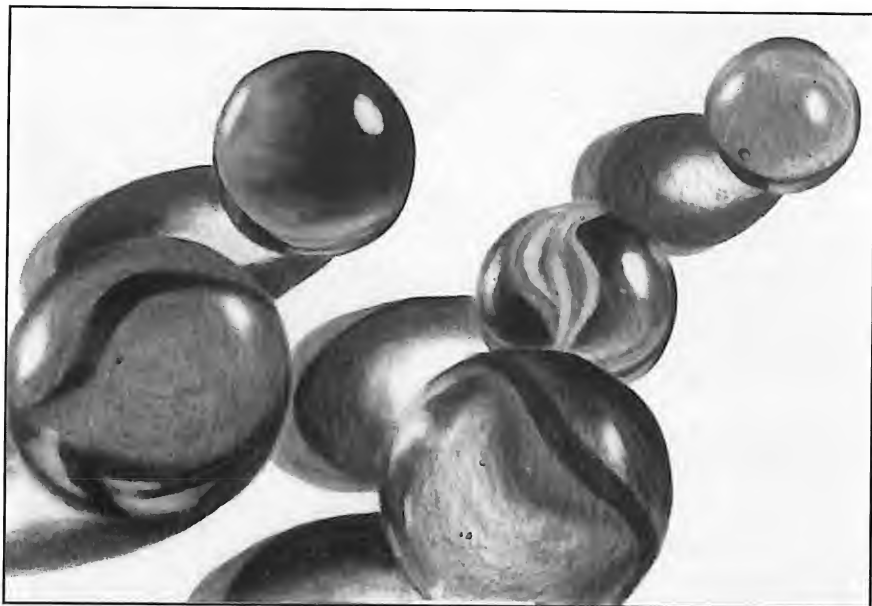
Jenny Rogers

## New Riches

The star on her finger  
makes the full moon shine.

*-Shannon Spencer*

## Second Place *Marbles*



*Jodi Baughn*

## Judas' Song

Look at me.  
Can you see me?  
Of course you can.  
A rotting shell.  
Can you see inside?  
Void, Emptiness.  
I am here, but I am not.  
Gone since that day,  
when I sold my soul  
away to the highest bidder;  
sold it away to slavery in Hell.  
I strike out with all my being  
at that demon which took it away.  
I go now to join it where it writhes,  
where my soul writhes in agony.  
I strike out!  
My eyes are going dim,  
the ground comes nearer  
Blackness, Darkness, I am dead,  
I am whole again!

Hello God.

*-Ary Bottoms*

## Elliptical Carnage

...Nothing like a well lit tomb  
Or a neon yellow snake  
coiled in the mind's dense underbrush,  
dripping purple venom  
from rust-colored fangs.  
...And he said "Choose your path with care."  
And I laughed in ignorant derision  
never suspecting...  
just how thin human blood could be.

*-Justin Stacy*

## My Woman

The definition of my WOMAN:  
sent to me one summer ago,  
her eyes devastated me  
her smile glittered,  
swept away  
I was.

The definition of my LOVE:  
a warm passionate grip,  
she has faith in Jesus  
she has faith in me,  
in love  
I am.

The definition of my HAPPINESS:  
to care for my woman,  
she is magnetic  
she is radiant,  
marry her  
I will.

*-James Tippins*

First Place  
*Untitled*



*Jodi Baughn*

i

i touch her hair  
her fingers  
her toes

i realize her life  
is fragile  
is precious

i made her life  
she is mine  
she is all mine

i see her  
only in my dreams  
only in my nightmares

i let her go  
to heaven  
forever

*-Melissa Courtney Smith*

I heard once that home is where the heart is  
not where I lay my head at night.  
But I still wander lost in a sea of people,  
All alone yet completely enveloped.

They keep asking me where I'm from.  
The land of the misplaced is all I can mumble.  
I sink lower and lower, the way driftwood  
falls to its dark, cold grave.  
My only wish is to be a solid oak standing on the bank.

Yet my desires to settle and live in calm  
are defeated as I attempt to join them.  
My downfall is contained in my own decision,  
and again my fleeting feet take me away.

My life as a wanderer, self imposed  
trying hard to outrun the disappointment in her eyes.  
Can I find peace at exit Eight?  
Or maybe while swimming through ten thousand lakes?  
Haven't I paid my dues? I only see more bills.

What can I do right? I ask.  
Her reply: what can't you do wrong?

*-Chad Delzell*

## Freedom

No more broken glass  
or empty picture frames.  
No more sleepless nights  
or black and white dreams.  
No more blank lines  
or plain colored lenses.  
No more spoken songs  
or black window hangings.  
No more snowy screens  
or silent melodies.  
No more smiling masks  
or chilly glances.  
No more simply getting by,  
but taking all the chances.

-Mary F. Collins



## Society

You run, You cry, You shudder with Fear

Because You know  
Society's near.

You cover Your eyes, You look away,

You hide under the sheets... for what will  
Society say?

You've been beaten and bruised, cut at the knees,

But who cares because these are  
Society's needs.  
But wait...

You're a Strong Black Woman, You've taken it all

Been raped, kicked, but most of all  
You looked Society straight in the face  
and said

"I will not fall to Drugs, to Crime. I'm Beautiful, I'm Strong, I'm Black"

"And I refuse to go back to times a lot harder than these;"

"I will move forward, I will succeed"

"With or without my Strong Black Man."

"I've decided to take things into My own hands!"

"So step aside for here I Am, so pure and so strong, the Black Woman!"

Will there ever be a time when We

Get off our knees and wake up and see  
that Society is a part of You and Me?

We can clean it up, but not alone

For We have delved into something deeper than we know  
How far will You let

Society  
go?

*-Latashia N. Mosely*

You've gone but your shirt  
lies lifeless on the bed, an empty shell  
of where you once lay.  
I barely heard you slip it off on your way  
out the door,  
but I breathed in your familiar  
Tommy Hilfiger breeze, and tasted  
the salty residue of yesterday's work  
in the air as you walked out.  
And I'm wearing it because  
it's the only gentle comfort I am left with.

*-Karen Brower*

## Survival

Sitsuyana ayana, sitsuyana ayana  
is the song we sing.  
We tell of the crafty coyote  
who took part in the creation of the world.  
Our women work with pestle and stone  
crushing the acorns to make the mush.  
Bitterness is strained out so the mush  
is tasty on our tongues and soft in our stomachs.

Acorn mush, eaten at least once a day,  
is good, but at times the deer calls my name.  
I shape a spear from a straight branch and  
harden it in fire. With a stone, I break off a  
chunk of obsidian; and with an antler  
of a buck eaten in the past,  
I shape this chunk of earth's glass into a head for my spear.

In the forest I wander covered in the skins of a coyote.  
Is that a deer's ear?  
Yes and there's the body too!  
I crouch down low and creep like the coyote  
ready to pounce. The deer eats as I sneak upon  
her. With right arm drawn back, I throw the spear.  
The doe falls.

For a moment I am sad for killing,  
yet without her we would starve.  
I lift her limp head  
and trickle water  
into her lifeless mouth,  
thank her and the earth for food.  
Tonight we will have a feast in the village.  
Tomorrow my wife will start a deer skin coat,  
and we'll sing sitsuyana ayana, sitsuyana ayana.

-Rich Cox

Honorable Mention  
*Untitled*



Joelle Cheung

I try to offer all that I am,  
knowing she will still like me  
after glimpsing my skeletons.  
I seem to try harder each time,  
only befuddled by my own thoughts.

My thoughts race faster and faster,  
outrunning passion and leaving reality,  
For once I am not running away,  
just trying not to run too fast.

Scared my momentum will overheat  
worse than Christmas Eve, I wait.  
I hesitate;  
For once can't I balance the two?

Must I swim through the moat  
to capture the treasure buried in her heart?  
Why can't I be that guy in five years,  
happily eloped after one week of bliss?

Even as I ask, I understand all too well.  
Only blood is thicker than water.  
The replacement of nutrients in tilled soil  
is and has always been harder than moving the roots.

Life includes family,  
always has, always will, the bridges now respected,  
the bond becomes understood.  
Passion is no justification for pain and loss.

I see our past as the key to our future,  
as the light spills onto secluded bones.  
Only in time and proper lighting shall we see  
our happiness blessed by the second trinity,  
her family, my family, and God's family.

*-Chad Delzell*

## Choir Tour

Israel:

the Muslim call to prayer,  
a seventy-dollar phone bill to the States,  
spilling crackers on my roommate's boyfriend,  
vendors trailing me like lost dogs.

Egypt:

a Coptic Christian church,  
a feisty sixteen-year-old camel driver pulling me  
on a camel next to the largest pyramids in the world.  
Smokers blow sweetly everywhere.

*-Mary E. Gettys*

## April Ninth

My cement heart  
protests as each heavy step  
draws me closer  
to my fateful destination.

Hard to believe  
that in a few years time,  
hair that was soot  
is now as white as  
this flag I must hold.

Forced to admit defeat,  
my men are exhausted, starving, dying.  
The Rebel Yell has been hushed into  
a pain-stricken yelp.  
Southern pride remains,  
but it is housed in broken bodies.

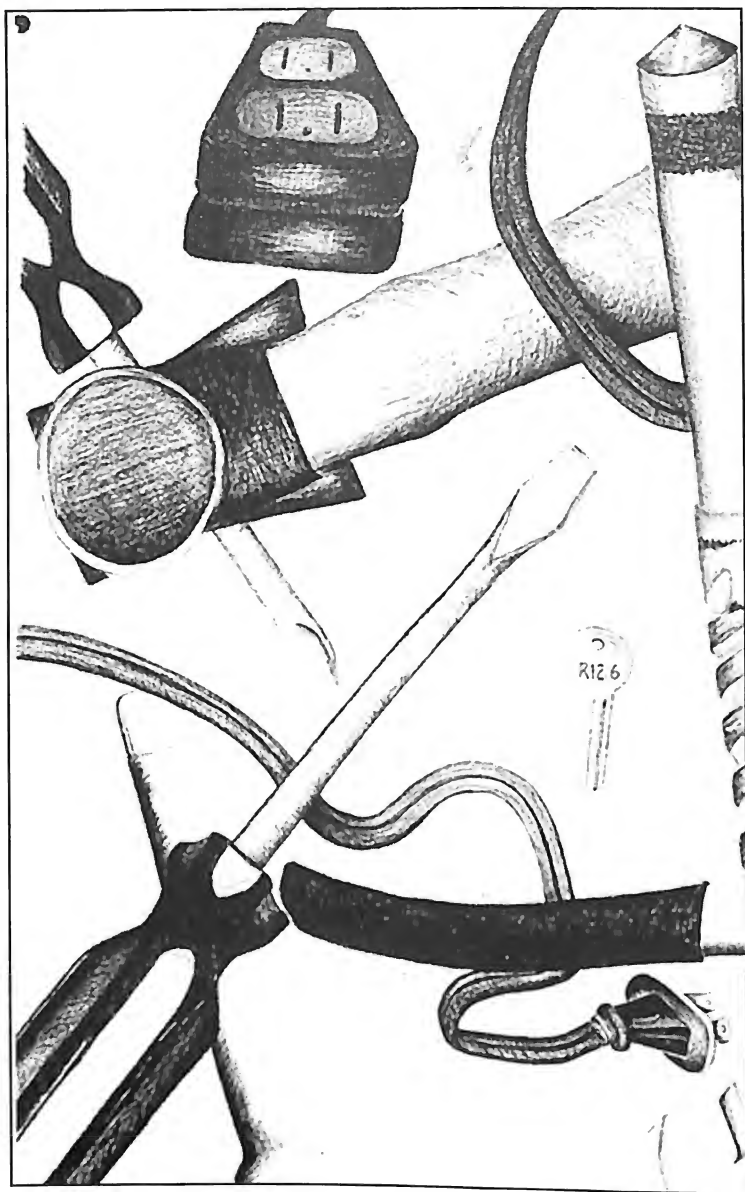
I have seen the horror  
of young men shrieking in agony  
as the saw's teeth tore through  
gray rags, into tender useless limbs.

Dysentery ran rampant  
with no worthy medicine  
to hinder its path.  
Victims silent about ailments  
for fear of the doctors' treatments.

We met our match in '64  
by the name of Grant.  
Crushed by the march of Sherman,  
all hope was lost.  
Today I go  
to Appomattox,  
and Johnny will finally march home.

*-Jamie Taylor*

Honorable Mention  
*Romans 12:6*



*Tim Lee*



## Mujer

Tan Amorosa,  
Amor Calentosa.

Con su voz amable,  
Me llena con amor interminable.

Pequeña en estatura,  
Amor grande, como montaña en su altura.

Me da las ganas de sonreír,  
Y en su boca, se sitúa la razón por vivir.

He querido a otras,  
Y otras me han querido.

Pero en ella, no es difícil de encontrar,  
Un amor tan dulce, fácil de alcanzar.

En esta vida, es una lástima no tener,  
Un abrazo, un beso, que guarda una mujer.

Translation:

## Woman

So loving,  
Love, Her love is warm.

With her lovable voice,  
She fills me with unending love.

Small in stature,  
But her love is big, like the height of a mountain.

She gives me the desire to smile,  
And in her voice is the reason for living.

I have wanted others,  
And others have wanted me.

But in her, it is not difficult to find,  
A love so sweet, easy to reach.

In this life it's a shame not to have,  
An embrace, a kiss, that a woman guards.

*-Jason Allen*

## The Desert in North Carolina

How does a feeling take you somewhere?  
As I walked home one night,  
It seemed as though I walked much farther than a half a mile.  
The feel of the air was sharp, and I  
could feel a breeze on my face.  
The night was clear, the stars bright.  
It took me to a far away place.  
I started to smell the sagebrush and cow dung.  
Looking down at the scraggly grass,  
it really seemed as though I were in the Nevada desert.  
Here the dirt was red instead of an alkali brown,  
but the lack of rain had given it a dusty, desert-like appearance.  
The desert was for a short time in North Carolina.

-Rich Cox

Honorable Mention  
*Morning Mist*



*Pamie Y. Peay*

## A True Mexican's Heart

I know where I come from.

I know who I am.

I have no regrets, no shame in my heart,

I take pride in my culture, my country, my past,  
what made me, what today I am.

I have inside me the Aztecs' blood, the blood they shed, fighting for land.

Also inside me is other warriors' blood, their defeats, their triumphs,  
their victorious cries.

So how can I try to hide such privilege as mine,

How can I take it as an insult, when they call me Mexican?

I represent my country, my ancestors, their fights.

I represent the honor that made us one.

Their struggle, their courage, their spirit, their lives.

It may not seem like it, but they are who I am.

I live one day at a time, I grow stronger with time,

because if they survived, then I shall.

I do not listen to people who tell me, "You can't."

I listen to my heart, which tells me, "You must."

My name is Miriam Oviedo. I am a Mexican.

And no matter what you say, you are no better than I,

and no matter what you do, you can't take my pride.

It is something that lives forever, in a true Mexican's heart.

*-Miriam N. Oviedo*

## ¿Que Tendré Que Hacer?

¿Y qué tendré que hacer yo para ser hombre?

¿Tendré que ser fuerte como bestia?

¿Tendré que escupir con poder y distancia y hacer otras desgracias en público?

¿Tendré que tener músculos para exhibir la intensidad de mi fuerza?

¿Tendré que crecer una barba de un hombre con bigotes llenos para describir mi virilidad?

¿Tendré que hablar en una voz profunda que tiembla las paredes?

¿Tendré que tener un corazón insensible que no reacciona a las ocasiones tristes y divertidas sino a las ocasiones de odio y furia?

¿Tendré que tener una mujer en mi cama cada noche de la semana para mi propia satisfacción sexual y después decirle a otros de mis triunfos orgásmicos?

Para la sociedad de este día y época, ¿qué tendré que hacer para ser hombre?

Translation:

## What Would I Have To Do?

And what would I have to do to be a man?

Would I have to be as strong as a beast?

Would I have to spit with power and distance or do any other nasty act in public?

Would I have to have muscles to show off the intensity of my strength?

Would I have to grow a manly beard with a full mustache to show my virility?

Would I have to speak in a deep voice that trembles the walls?

Would I have to have an insensitive heart that doesn't react to occasions of sadness or felicity but to occasions of hate and anger?

Would I have to have a woman in my bed every night of the week for my own sexual satisfaction and then tell others of my orgasmic triumphs?

For the society of this day and age what would I have to do to be a man?

-Neil Enrique Velez

Second Place  
*Old Couple*



*Jodi Baughn*

## Fall at Stillhouse

Light, waves of afternoon light  
sweep the ridge, coming to me  
washing fall in slow motion.  
Shadows rolling bright to dim

bathing gold, red and yellow  
transforming waves, gray to light,  
green veins on red cling to warm  
and wave light against the blue.

A summer's work now finished,  
multitudes throw back the sun,  
mist and breezes pull at their grip  
in a splendid spectrum of death.

Let go and sleep on green moss  
till once again I will watch  
and count the years in brilliance,  
softening the certainty.

*-Les Brown*



## Mind Storm

Memories storm into the open  
window of my mind.  
Unconfessed sins and untold dreams  
flash randomly across  
the screen of an  
internal projector.

Slide by slide,  
images flood inside me.  
Trusts that I have betrayed,  
cheating that no one saw,  
lies that have no merit.

I can't stand this.  
Turn it off!

I feel naked.  
Exposed to the elements,  
as if  
everyone can see the hypocrite  
that I am.

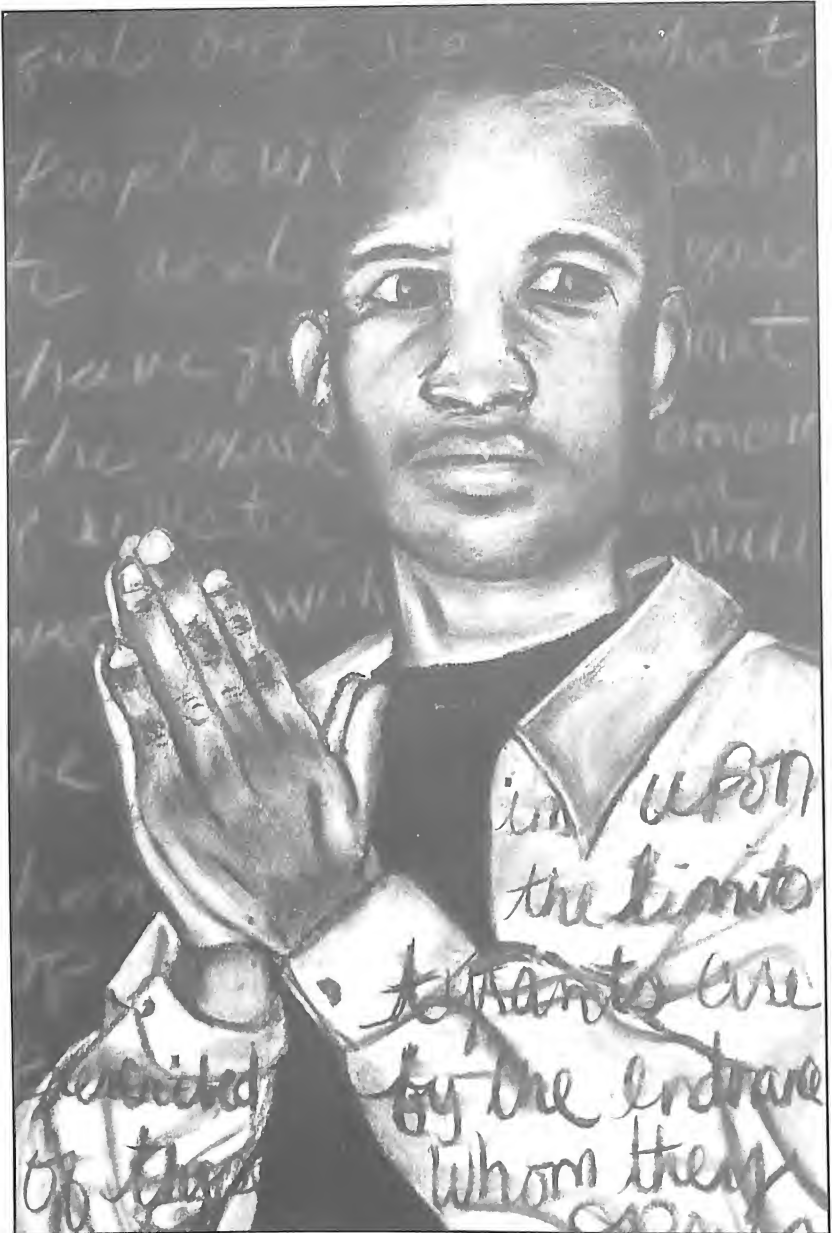
Slam the window shut!  
It's thundering and lightning memories.  
Rain falls down my cheeks,  
forming puddles upon this page.

I cannot allow it,  
I will not allow it.  
Breathe...breathe...  
breathe...  
sigh.

Curtains close,  
my fears subside.  
Yet my pain is unresolved,  
the storm will come  
once again.

*-Jamie Taylor*

Fourth Place  
*The Secret*



Takiya Patrick

## Jump Ball

Here, in the streets of Chicago, everyone loves the game of basketball. Frank is trying to make a jump from the playgrounds to center court with the Chicago Bulls. His friends are encouraging and supportive. Could he make the "Jump Ball"?

In Chicago, Illinois. Here in the city, middle class workers work everyday to make a living. Frank is a friendly kind of guy. He is twenty two years old, and he loves to dress sporty and casual. Frank has been working at the mall for a few years. Now he is saving up for his big break. Frank has two good friends: Tony and Jake. Tony is a family man. He has two kids: a girl who is three years old and a boy who is one and a half. Tony is a true father to his kids and a good boyfriend to his girlfriend. He works at a meat packaging plant packing ham. Jake is a street pharmacist (drug dealer). He also does scalping and other side jobs. Jake is a cool fellow, but sometimes has that "I don't care attitude" that his friends despise. He always dresses in the best and latest fashions.

It is Saturday afternoon, the day that the boys usually hang out. Frank is home alone. The telephone rings and Tony is on the other end of the line. Tony asks Frank, "Do you want ta sling the rock at the playground today?"

"Let's do dat, dog! Get all the G.'s together and I'll meet ya'll homies about 1:30 p.m."

Everybody is at the park playing basketball. Games played on the street courts are intense. Frank drives to the hoop and lays the ball in with a soft touch. Tony looks at Frank as he struts back down the court and asks, "When you goin' to the NBA camp?" Frank replies, "I ain't got a damn clue. You know I'm still tryin' to save all the benjamins I can so I can pay that lame entry fee."

"Hey dog, that's cool. At least you're not givin' up on your dream."

Tony begins to sing in a screeching, unattractive voice, "I believe I can fly..."

Frank replies to Tony's unbearable singing, "Yeah, that's my dream: to become the 'hoop dream' that this slum needs, so that I can make as much green as I can and give some of it back to the streets that raised me. You feel me dog?"

As Frank finishes asking his question, Jake steps on to the court out of the shadows of a nearby alley.

"How ya do dat there?" Frank shouts to Jake.

"What's goin' on young bloods? You off in dream land again 'wings'?" Jake asks in a sarcastic voice. Jake had nicknamed Frank "wings" for his ability to fly to the rim.

"Step off, Jake!" Frank snapped back, "You know I got more skills than

half those scrubs in the league."

"I know you can, podna. I'm just givin' you a hard time."

BEEP! BEEP! BEEP! BEEP!

"That's my pager," Jake says, "I gotta dip fella's. One of those damn crackheads must be fiendin' somethin' fierce! I'll catch ya'll on the flip side."

Jake left the park and let the real ballers resume their game. "Yo, Tony, we need to help him get his life straight. Get him to find Jesus, somethin'."

"Yeah, I feel you dog," Tony tells Frank, "But that's the only life that lost fool knows. He was raised by a junky, hung out with the junkies, what else could any of us have expected? Let's finish these last two games and then we'll dip into that burger joint on 33rd and Booker Street and grub on some vittles."

Frank and Tony stopped at J.'s Barbeque and ate some ribs and hot wings. Frank tells Tony that five hundred dollars are due in one week in order for him to play in the NBA camp.

Frank says, "I need five of the big bills before next Saturday, dog. Where does a brother find those kinda bills? I'll get a pay check on Friday, but I'll still need to scrape up two hundred George Washingtons in order to make it."

Tony responds by saying, "You know I would help you if I could podna. Hell, I'd sell one of my own little runts if I knew I could get more than five dollars for either one of them. I wish I could help a brother fulfill his dream."

They both laugh at the humorous remark, but they quickly remember Frank's drama of not having enough money to go to the camp.

Frank goes home and begins to call everyone he knows to try to get the rest of the money. He really does not want to call Jake for the money. Frank is a very religious man and would feel guilty if he paid his way into the camp with drug money.

Friday finally comes around. He still does not have the last two hundred dollars he needs to enter the basketball camp. He now debates on calling Jake to get the money, but his conscience and beliefs will not allow him to do so.

Saturday is here. Frank is still thinking of different ways to obtain the money without calling Jake. But Frank has no other choice. He gets down on his knees next to his bed and says a quick prayer. "Father, forgive me for what I am about to do. Please forgive me for who I am about to ask the money from. Amen."

He calls Jake and asks him to come over to his house. Jake arrives within the next hour.

"Jake, you know that you're my dog and all, and I would do anything

**Third Place**  
***Self-Portrait***



*Efrem Tekie*

for you, right? Well, I have a huge favor to ask of you podna. Can you float me a few bills? I need it to enter the NBA camp. I need about two hundred dollars, dog. I will pay you back next Friday, I swear to you dog!"

Jake says, "Are you crazy, fool? Most people want to borrow a quarter or some eggs. You want to borrow two hundred bones? What kinda' crap is that? I don't know bro. I mean, we boys and all...hell, you know I got you covered, son. But there's one condition."

"What," Frank says, "I'll do whatever you want."

"I want you to take your basketball out there and make your boys, your family proud!"

Frank thanks him for the money and hurries to the camp. He pays the entry fee and fills out some forms. They tell him he has an hour before they start, so he can stretch and warm up if he would like. As he scans the competition, he sees many familiar faces. Teams are selected and given thirty minutes to warm up and shoot around.

They start with the jump ball. Frank gets the ball off the tip and races down the court and finishes with a powerful dunk. He continues to play exactly how he started, with authority. Three pointer after dunk after blocked shot after jump shot after steal after dunk and all over again. BZZZZZZZZ! The game is over. Frank is recognized as the MVP of the camp and has many offers from several NBA teams. All, in fact, except for his favorite team, the Chicago Bulls. He is brokenhearted, but picks the Milwaukee Bucks since they are the next closest team. He calls all his friends from the gym to tell them. He calls Jake last to give him a special thanks for the money, but Tony answers the phone.

"Tony, whatcha doin' at Jake's tilt?"

"Jake is in the big house, Frank. He got busted earlier this afternoon, right after he left your crib. The cops stung him in the middle of a drug deal. They say he'll do hard time up state because it is his third frickin' offense," Tony explains.

Frank drops the phone and walks away. His high spirits are broken in the matter of two seconds. The whole reason Frank even got his chance was because Jake lent him the money. Now the man who made his dream come true two hours ago would spend the next several years in jail.

*-Tremayne Booker*

## Zachary's Castle

I was feeling sorry for myself. Feelings of dejection and loneliness swamped over me as I sat on the swing facing our picturesque quad, the sun already dipping low and insects buzzing around me. I felt that the entire world had betrayed me, ostracized me, and left me stark naked and cold. Poor me.

Then a family of three walked by my swing, a mother, a father, and a little boy. Before they had passed me the little boy turned, and I saw that the whole right side of his cheek and temple were bruised with an imprint of what looked like a shoe. He looked me in the eyes and his face looked so wretched as he said, "We want to swing."

I slowly came out of my self pity. "What?" I asked blankly. He mumbled something incoherent about a swing, and I said, "Oh, you want to swing?" He nodded his red speckled, scraped and bruised head.

"Zachary!" his mother admonished, but I gladly gave my seat to Zachary and his mother. She held an ice bag with an old shirt wrapped around it to his cheek. I learned that Zachary had indeed been kicked in the face by his two-year-old brother Benjamin, who was now staying with Grandma for the evening as a result. I tried to hold a conversation with the little boy, telling him my name when his father prompted him to ask. But like most four-year-olds he wasn't big on superfluous conversation.

Instead he jumped down from the swing when his mother got up and started playing in the dirt. "Are you going to give her the swing back?" his mother asked. "No," Zachary replied nonchalantly. "I'm going to build her a castle." His little hands scraped together a pile of dirt right in the path of swinging feet as he thanked me for letting him swing. He then skipped across the quad, leaving his mother and father to follow as best they could.

I sat on my swing for just a few moments longer. My eyes once again filled with tears, but for a different reason...God had sent Zachary to teach me a valuable lesson. You're going to get hurt in life; your loved ones may even kick you in the face when you're down. But God gave you the freedom and the choice to get back up and not to be a victim, express your hurt with childlike honesty, then make someone else's day a little brighter by building them a castle.

It really made me feel like a princess.

*-Jayme Helmick*

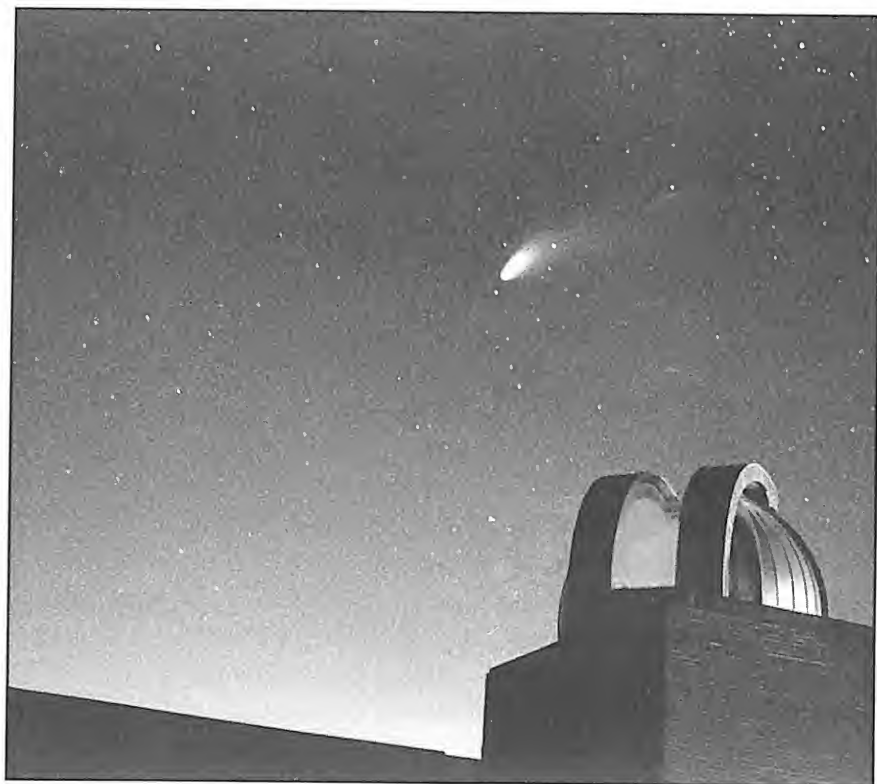
Honorable Mention  
*Untitled*



*James Julian*



Honorable Mention  
*Untitled*



*James Julian*

## Vast Possibilities

Galaxies, solar systems, stars, and planets can all be said to have a certain relationship to one another. Molecules, atoms, protons, neutrons, and electrons are also all related to each other. We know that stars and planets make up solar systems, and solar systems make up galaxies, just as protons, neutrons, and electrons make up atoms and atoms make up molecules. The point is, in the universe, certain parallels exist between objects. Every thing has a smaller and bigger part. All things have their place and make up larger things. For instance, letters make words, which make sentences, which make paragraphs, etc. We have defined the smallest things that make up every thing—protons, neutrons, and electrons—and have concluded that there is nothing smaller than these. These things make up the entire universe.

We have also said that a galaxy makes up the largest thing in the universe. What if the smallest really was not the smallest, and the largest really was not the largest? In many ways, galaxies are just like molecules. What if our galaxy, like a molecule, made up something even bigger? What if our galaxy makes up a large body of something that is alive, as molecules make humans? What if protons, neutrons, and electrons are made of something even smaller? What if these smaller things make life on these atomic components just as the smaller components of the earth make up humans?

What if the larger life form made up of galaxies is peering down on us, not even realizing that there is a smaller life form than it, just as we inspect atoms using an electron microscope, unaware of anything living that is that small. The smaller life forms could be gazing out into their galaxy, not realizing that they make up even larger life forms, just as we explore our universe unaware that we too could be a part of something much greater. Even so, one of those smaller or larger life forms could be sitting down at its computer at two o'clock pondering the same ideas I have just introduced. Does this seem impossible? Vast possibilities exist when the cycle continues for eternity.

*-Ray Mackod*