

2001

## Reflections 2001

Jason Whisnant

Jennifer Carlile

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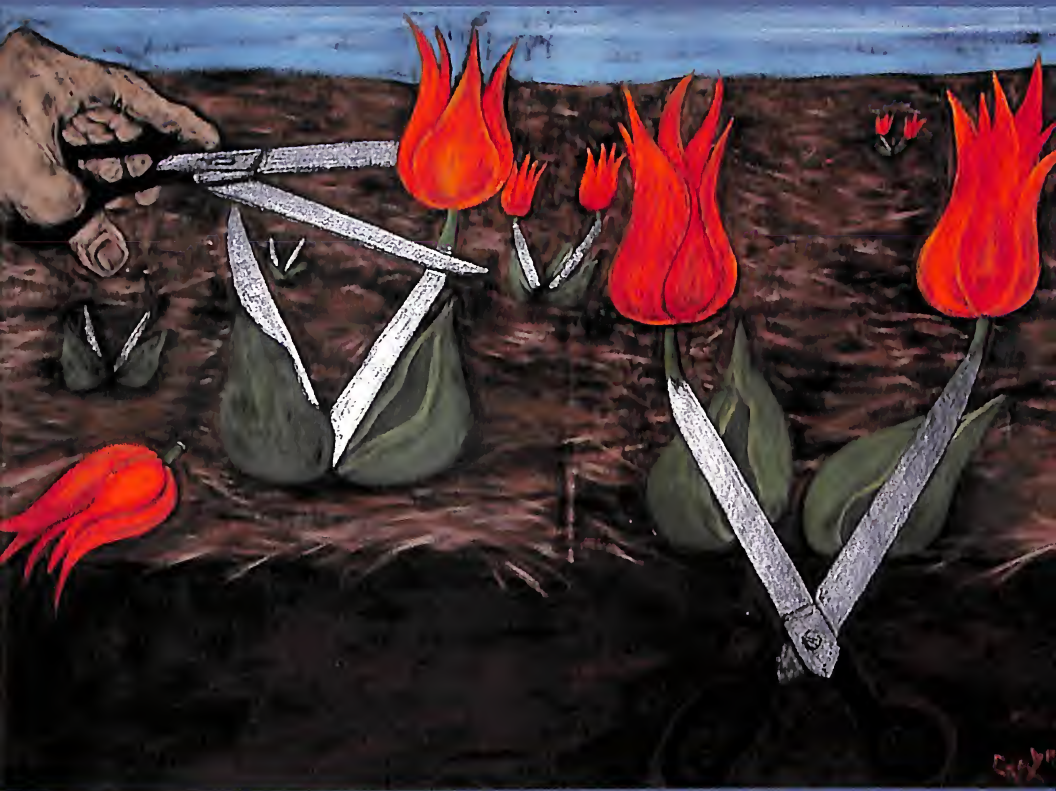
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# reflections 2001



*A Literary Journal of  
Gardner-Webb University*

# *Reflections*

Volume 33  
2001

**Editor**  
Jason Whisnant

**Assistant Editors**  
Kelly Harrison  
Haley Tycer Julian  
Abby Wolford

**Faculty Advisor**  
Jennifer Carlile

**Special thanks to:**  
Kathy Martin, Graphic Design Artist,  
and Noel T. Manning II, Public Relations.

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

Dear readers,

Self Expression is the evocation of the person into action, and, in the case of issuance into the public, expression is a portrait of the individual. Here, in Reflections, with our peers, we are able to communicate our intentions, dreams, inspirations, hopes, and fears. The utterance of these things creates a type of lesser self, minute pieces of the complete person which then, when read by others, are owned by them as they fit those pieces into themselves. This becomes an imperfect type of unity in which individuals minutely stretch themselves beyond their limitations to accept and interpret pieces from others.

I ask you to read and participate in an active way, taking from each piece something, whether good or bad, to scrutinize and to examine. Whether you're creating it or absorbing it, the purpose of art is to make you think and wonder about the conditions and reasons of life. In this year's volume many themes have been illuminated: loss, love, nostalgia, pain and insightful interpretations of life and nature. I hope you enjoy them all.

For me, this editorship has been great fun and a wonderful learning experience. I extend my gratitude to Jennifer Carlile for making me the editor and for supporting me when no one else would. Also, I thank all of those who submitted and those who helped in the production of this magazine. Lastly, I thank you, the reader, for your participation in enjoying these works.

Your editor,

Jason H. Whisnant

## Poetry Contest

Each year, the English Department of Gardner-Webb University sponsors a poetry contest for students in conjunction with the publication of *Reflections*. This year's judges were Nancy Bottoms, Miranda Holiday, and Janet Land.

### Poetry Awards

First Place:	Kelly Harrison, "Untitled"
Second Place:	Sarah Donaldson, "DOA"
Third Place:	Abby Wolford, "When He Plays Piano on the Beach"

## 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*.

### Art Awards:

Denise Azzopardi	"Gesture Drawing"
James Colwell	"Transformation Drawing"
Gabriel Donaldson	"Live to Die"
	(Cover Painting)
Erik Wince	"Changing Times"

### Photography:

Kelly Harrison	"Carcass"
Anna Marie Martin	"Ladder"

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**Blue Light Special***Abby Wolford*

In the midst of the trees  
bold as a blackberry  
bound by thorns

just out of reach

of the voice of the mother  
whose kids whirl by  
wanting a lick of blackberry pie

that she can't provide  
because the blackberry  
is just out of reach



## Untitled

*Miriam Ovieda*

I saw a tear fall from heaven,  
through the eyes of an angel's stare

I saw two stars followed by darkness  
when I caressed his soft face

He shed a tear of sadness  
and I caught it in my hand

It penetrated my skin  
and I died right away

**Pretty***Diane Barr*

You never said I was pretty  
You never gave it a thought  
That two little words  
Could really mean a lot

You never said I was pretty  
You probably never knew  
Simple words I was longing for  
Were turning my heart blue

You never said I was pretty  
I didn't know it was true  
You never noticed my eyes  
Were sparkling sapphire blue

You never said I was pretty  
I couldn't bear to ask  
I wouldn't know if it was out of pity  
I felt you might have just laughed

You never said I was pretty  
You never gave me a glance  
I think I must be ugly  
You gave every other girl a chance

You never said I was pretty  
As you walked away  
Two simple words I was longing for  
Never said to me that day

## Brooke's Eyes

*Mike Overholt*

Mesmerized, I long to step into those deep green eyes  
I'm hypnotized, actions flow and come at no surprise.  
So where do I step into my dreams and realize  
That shadows merge within the mirrors facing me?  
It's in those eyes, I see the children of a princess rise to life  
To simplify, their color is the hue spring signifies  
And I identify with where their luster lies  
I will forever find a love that satisfies --  
That's when I look up to the One who's glorified  
Within the merging conflicts of devoted lives.  
We testify that nothing in this twisted realm of earth denies  
That credit lies within the Calloused Hands  
creating "I" of two lives  
It's in your eyes, the treasure off the ocean floor begins to rise  
I swim to greet it like a bird greeting the sunrise  
I breathe the life radiating in the flowers set inside  
And know that I will find their strength to last until I die.

## **The Breath of December**

*Jonathon Allen*

The breath of December swept into June,  
hollering into houses, breaking glass;  
freezing the sunflowers way too soon.  
Dead petals fall on unhealthy grass.

The breath of December swept into June,  
while the sunny season was still at play.  
Wide halos relentlessly hug the moon  
in a grim tableau where the stars shone grey.

The breath of December swept into June,  
a cold tumor grows deep within the sun.  
The windmills unwind a nightmarish tune  
on frostbitten fields where animals run.

The breath of December swept into June --  
a sour stench, repulsive with disease --  
forcing men with their books to wail and croon  
cantatas of misery on their knees.

When the clouds waltz in a perfect blue sky...  
When crickets whistle a sweet lullaby...  
When caterpillars first learn how to fly...

December teaches the world how to sigh.



*Anna Marie Martin*



*Kelly Harrison*

**DOA***Sarah Donaldson*

I was achieving rigormortis by the time  
I was 12  
You may ask how Death got a hold of me  
At such a young age  
I will tell you I'm not sure  
Perhaps any number of reasons but  
I was growing cold to the touch by the time  
I was 15  
Although he still touched me  
And touched me and I wondered how  
He didn't draw back from me  
And shiver from the chill  
In my very bones  
I thought about breaking off one of his fingers  
Once  
I figured it was frozen for  
I was nearly completely hard by the year  
I was 18  
It was the year I watched him embed a bullet  
In his skull after threatening  
Mine  
And it didn't shatter like I expected it to—frozen  
Just kind-of exploded  
I thought perhaps my flesh would soften  
like warm margarine and  
My temperature would rise so finally my  
blood would  
Flow instead of freezing up in my pipes  
But  
I was stiff—legs unbending, spine stuck straight  
I was still 18

When I pushed that little thing right into the light  
It cried and I know how it felt—at least  
It did not come out dead  
Like he said it would  
I almost killed it myself  
But perhaps  
rigormortis will not reach it  
Until it is old  
Enough to  
Fight back



## **Emmaus**

*Abby Welford*

One moment  
of peace, of joy  
A place where I was  
welcomed and loved

Candles illuminating  
the faces of the saints  
The touch of friends  
I did not yet know

Redemption

Why must it end?

I must leave this place,  
no longer fearing the future.  
I must continue walking...

until the time comes  
when the candles  
will once again be real.

## Love and Meditation

*Vincent Cheng*

“Enlightenment is a state of nonduality, when there is no conflict between the self and the other (that is not a part of the self).” This, I was told by my teacher (at the ashram), can be achieved through either love or meditation.

Meditation is a search for the self, a journey within. Love happens when we go out of ourselves and fall in love.

In both love and meditation, effort is made to drop the ego. When we are meditative, we watch ourselves with such an alertness that all our ideas and opinions we have gathered about ourselves are burned in the flame of awareness, and we are left with our egoless nature. On the other hand, when we have fully understood love, when love for us has become an act of giving, rather than a need, then in those selfless moments, we become egoless.

Meditation is an effort to achieve silence. When we have become a perfectly clear sky; when the never-ending chatting of the mind has stopped, and the clouds that have been obstructing our vision of ourselves have become clear, then we become enlightened. On the other hand, when we become totally loving, when there is no distance between “you” and “me,” then silence comes as a result.

Meditation is the path taken by the Buddha, the path of negation. In it, we keep sorting out all the untruths from the truth, till all that we are left with is the truth. On the other hand, the path of love is the path of innocence and trust. It is a shorter path but is only for those who are willing to take the risk of losing the self. It is for those whose trust in life is so complete that they are willing to give everything they have to every moment of their lives. For them life is an affirmative, a dance of Zorba.

These two ways, love and meditation, are the only two ways, we were told, we could reach enlightenment. Either we have to be totally meditative or we have to be totally loving. We have to find our way, and choose the one that is in accordance with our nature.

After hearing this, I sat there pondering, indecisive of the path I should take. As I was reflecting on my life, trying to figure out my way, I remembered a question, years ago, one of my friends had asked me. It was, "If it were the last moment of your life, how would you like to die?" This question has a tremendous significance for me, as it meant to me the sum total of what I've learned in my life, and moreover it answered the question I was finding it so difficult to answer; which way should I take? My answer to the question is, "If I've been able to live a life of sharing and loving, and I feel that I have been a part of somebody, then in the last moment of my life, I'd like to die in the presence of the people whom I'd been a part of, otherwise, I'd go deep into the solitude of the jungle and die in meditative silence."

**Untitled***Kelly Harrison*

odd, comfort found in prayer  
to a god dead the  
swirl of a brush stroke  
before Adam blinked a dry eye.  
the line of your back  
before Moses bloodied blue water  
of bones dried beautiful  
like lilacs laughing, tied at their tales  
in some king's gardened glory.  
crevices in an arched instep  
before some radiant son  
soaked up madness like a tick  
puffed with blood, popped,  
covered a yellow wafer in red  
like backs of eyelids,  
watchful of prayers  
falling on ears like those who  
lie in wait looking east.  
name signed long ago.

## Peer Pressure

*Latashia N. Moseley*

Did I do what I wanted to?  
Say all the things I wanted to say?  
Hear those things that I wanted to hear?  
Dream my own dreams?

No....

I just....

Did what was asked of me  
Spoke when I was spoken to  
Listened, but was never heard  
Dreamt the dreams that were meant for you!

I'm so tired (so scared) of all these lies,  
That my tears are what I look forward to at night!  
But why, they're just nightmares; who cares, right?  
Is somebody out there? I could use some advice....

So I did it....

Followed all of your cockamamie schemes,  
But look at what it got me....  
The American Dream!? (All for you and none for me)

So what? Am I supposed to be proud now?  
Be gracious to you? Smile and bow down?  
Is that what you want me to do?  
On second thought, I'll have to think things  
through!

## **The Preacher**

*Miriam Ovieda*

The thrill of a roller coaster. The pounding of a  
tambourine. Confusion in the mists of  
brightness. The rope  
of a trapeze.  
The piercing voice of the piano. Thunder hits water.  
Rain! Falling outside my window screen.  
His words touched my body.  
Shi-ver-ring,  
he left me. Strong like Samson, smart like Solomon.  
That man. He preached and  
preached.

## On the Porch

*Debbie Crone-Blevins*

“Come set a spell,” she urges me, and pats the empty space beside her. As I settle next to her, she nudges the railing with her foot, and we squeak into the past. Back and forth, back and forth. The cat springs lightly into my lap, folds one white paw beneath his chest and angles his head into my hand, rumbling gently, eyes slitted. Next to me, Granny shifts her bulk to fill the swing more completely, smooths sweat and white, wispy hair off her forehead, and folds burly arms over her ample breast. My cheeks tingle at remembering the times they have rested there. “Honey,” she drawls with a smile. “I ever tolt you ‘bout my daddy’s daddy? He was jus’ an ol’country doctor, din’t have no real doctor schoolin’, but he jus’ loved to help people if’n he could.” Her gaze passes over Shingle Knob, touches the new four-lane off in the distance, moves on to the dirt road winding up toward us, and finally comes to rest on the long-off mountain, the big, blue one that talks to her. Her face takes on that faraway look that bodes of warm stories to come. I squinch my backside down deeper into the swing.

As her gravelly voice eases me into her memories, a fat bumblebee hums and dips into the honeysuckle at the edge of the porch. I look across the railing to the muddy pond where the three ducks that used to be four till the fox got one paddle aimlessly and call to each other in low tones. The ripples from their strokes glide in slow motion over the water until the first one kisses the bank where the cattails stand. Beyond the pond, the big bay horse ambles toward the barn and two more begin to follow, their hooves scuffing up plumes of dust as they shuffle over the dirt track. The gray stays behind, sidles up to the fence post, and rubs his rump against it, stretching his neck,

closing his eyes, curling his upper lip. Pure ecstasy.

A bead of sweat snakes slowly down between my breasts, in tandem with the drone of her voice. As it rolls to the side over my ribs and slips away, I feel Granny reach up again to wipe her face; my nose wrinkles at the familiar odors of sour milk, home-cured sausage, the wrong end of a cow, a day's work. To and fro, to and fro. She's at the part where she always speaks louder and swings faster, the part about her granddaddy's horse coming home in the driving rain without him and how she and all seven of her brothers and sisters lit out after him in the dead of night from this very house and how they finally found him deep down in the holler where the blackberries grow. She pauses, closes her eyes, then sighs heavily. "Mama said he jus' plumb wore out from all them miles of ridin' to get to sick people, till he finally jus' fell off his horse a-comin' home that night. It took us nigh unto mornin' to find him, an' he was all wet an' cold an' stiff when I touched him." Fleeting, shivers grip me even as the air sizzles off the heat-soaked pasture. I pluck at the stickiness of my shirt.

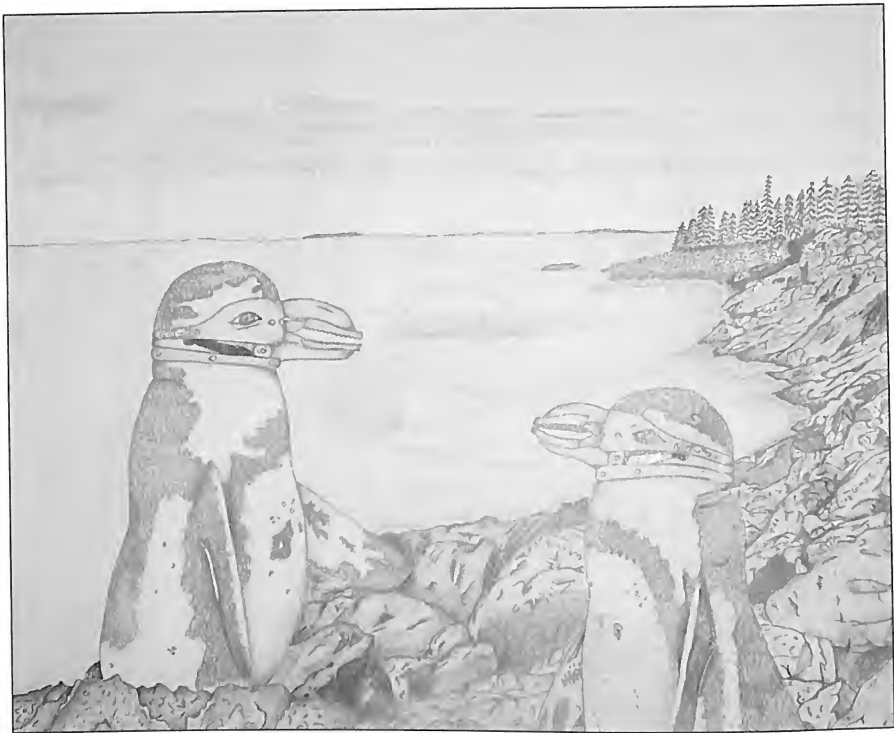
She sighs again, and abruptly stops the movement of the swing. Then she heaves herself to her feet, pushes a hand into her back, and lumbers away. The cat stands and slowly stretches first one paw and then the other before easing off my lap. He saunters to the railing, swishes his tail high once, twice, then sits and curls it around his legs, blinking at the bee's buzzing dance. The screen door slams. I gaze at the big, blue mountain, but hear only the low drone of trucks' engines in the distance.



**the love affair**

*Jason Whisnant*

to yearn for the close scars of love  
and learn the light hair snuggled  
neat on her neck.  
to desire and to be desired under  
the stars' yoke of beauty  
and to allow the terrible fire to burn  
and scorch its way to the brain,  
following the paths of the fields  
of nerves laid  
within that delicate frame.  
The touch is where our love is made  
and where this affair forgets its name.



*James Colwell*

## Salt

*Jonathon Allen*

One dark blot remains permanently here;  
clear salt from my eyes can't camouflage black,  
but slips down quivering flesh to the cracked  
thirsty lips hoping salvation is near.

I doubt the sincerity of my tears  
though they have power that my poor heart lacks!  
If I could save the good from drying tracks  
I'd kneel to praise instead of calming fears.

My eyes are opened when humble tears fall.  
When dry, I remember nothing at all.

**Untitled***Kathryn R. Phillips*

Sharp and prickly, my father's words pierce my soul  
I close my eyes and climb the spindles to the sky  
My mother waits, arrayed in petals of gold, pink,  
and crimson  
I kneel, ingesting the Sun's rays with delight,  
Thirsting no more as I gather the light of life from her  
The withered leaves from my father's stinging words  
slowly break away  
And I am free, a petal dancing to the ground,  
Ready to face all things again.

## The Poem

*P. Scott Henson*

In the bowels of sorrow, beauty is born;  
The bastard child is reared in a world  
devoid of love,  
And gaping wounds release blood that feeds the  
growing youth.  
As he comes to maturity,  
my nakedness and disclosure are more prevalent.  
I stand before you naked,  
as the poem is complete.



*Denise Azzopardi*

*Erik Wince*

## **When He Plays Piano on the Beach**

*Abby Wolford*

long, gentle  
fingertips on  
ivory skeletons

dancing adagios  
cavorting keys  
skipping scales

F  
to B-flat  
to D  
back to F

Wolfgang's waves  
revivingly rhythmic  
merrily moaning

when he plays  
piano on the beach

**Untitled***Kelly Harrison*

unbelievably bible-school  
cut short.  
one more going to a sweet bed  
with all the others forces  
abandon of childhymns and  
pledges of allegiance.  
one nation, under god,  
invisible. why is my  
sister saying indivisible?  
words in an old chorus foreign  
to red-rovered ears are falling coins  
on a carpeted dish swallowed  
like hoppers into green blithe blades.

dressed in night, once again wobbling  
on my stems, sweaty hands kissing  
at my back, a different chorus clangs  
its newly old message, but even  
I, legs raw from scraping mosquito's  
naggings and pink panther panties  
rebellling under a sunday dress,  
know better. know like snakes shedding  
stifling skin his heaven wasn't the one  
the loud man preached about.  
it was malt milkshakes in a sleeping  
mill-house after second shift and  
beating rhythm to "Living on Tulsa Time"  
with a silver tack wedged in work boots  
clicking on a floor that crackles with  
every stirring of life.



why are they playing  
safe in the arms of god?  
why am I surrounded by  
people praising resurrected ghosts  
their unseeing eyes gazing  
false forest. unlike you, who made love to  
something I feel, even now,  
streaming down my face  
like chords on an electric guitar

**An ode to Mother Russia  
(for A.S.)**

*Jason Whisnant*

the stars' freckled surface  
upon liquid-heaven's canopy  
from a slight breath of the earth  
where cotton faeries fly and skim  
the broken pavement  
of too many cold wars.  
Shod feet tumble across the way as  
shy glances curve their paths  
from the sun's smooth eye.  
The water moves in Russia.  
The wind dances upon it, the ripples  
shimmer across the silken mirror,  
and my lady Russia shivers  
at the warmth of my words,  
for my mourning has come.

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JONATHON ALLEN  
DENISE AZZOPARDI  
DIANE BARR  
VINCENT CHENG  
JAMES COLWELL  
DEBBIE CRONE-BLEVINS  
SARAH DONALDSON  
KELLY HARRISON  
P. SCOTT HENSON  
ANNA MARIE MARTIN  
LATASHIA N. MOSELEY  
MIKE OVERHOLT  
MIRIAM OVIEDA  
KATHRYN R. PHILLIPS  
JASON WHISNANT  
ERIK WINCE  
ABBY WOLFORD

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