

1979

## Reflections 1979

Randy Waters

Michele Barale

Joyce Compton Brown

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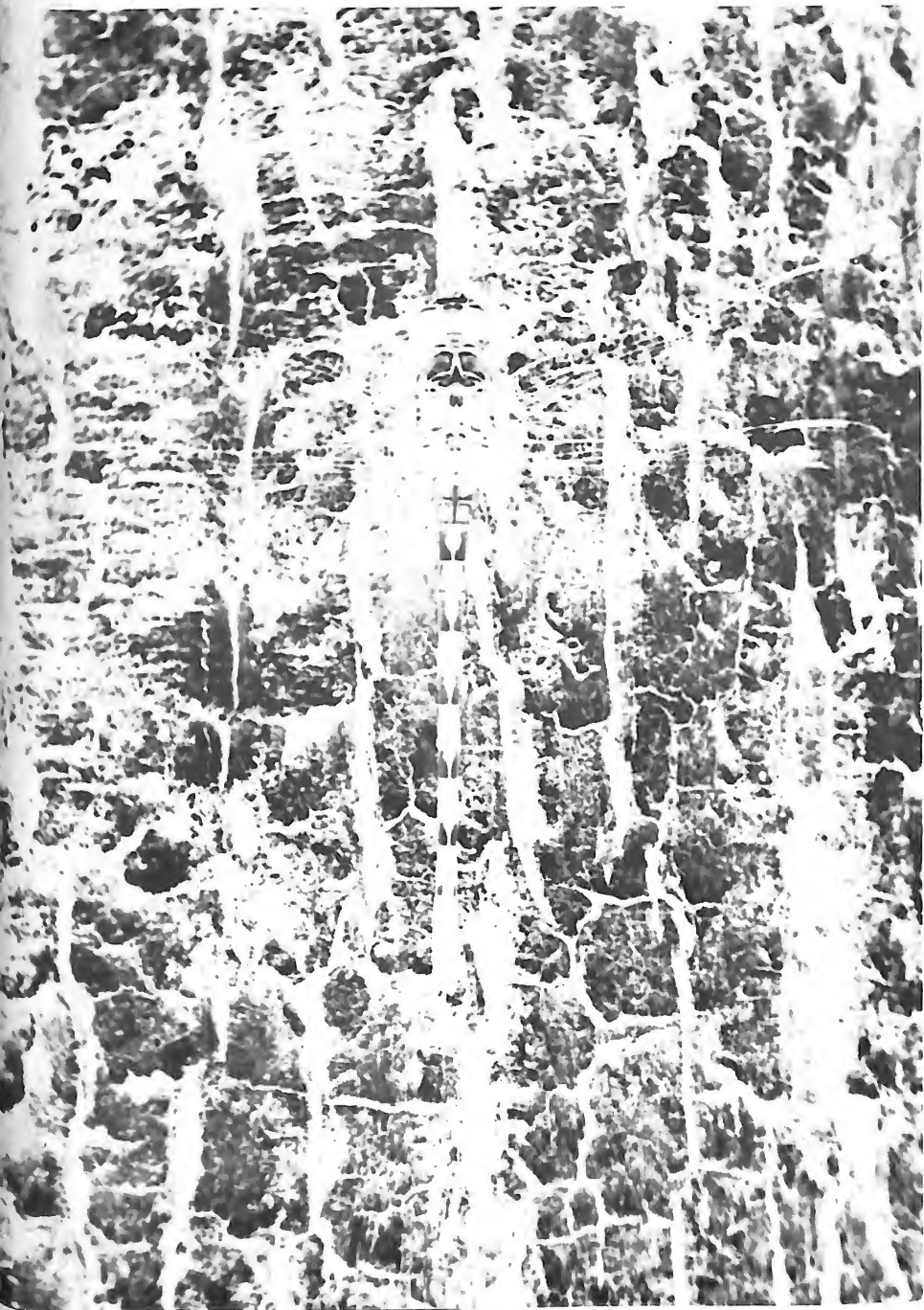
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REFLECTIONS 79



# REFLECTIONS

Volume 11

1979

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## FEBRUARY SNOW

Patches of snow  
Welcomed if a harbinger  
Despised when a remnant.

Patches of snow  
Reminder of cold, wet fury  
Lingering like phantom pain.

Patches of snow  
Impervious to warmth  
Startling tenacity  
On a red bank  
Under tall trees  
Curbed, piled, pushed aside  
Dirty  
Useless patches of snow.

Habits of mind  
Valued for their humaneness  
Raucous as a falsehood.

Habits of mind  
Evidence of wild, blind doubt  
Faltering as fountain spray.

Habits of mind  
Oblivious to change  
Frightful stridency  
In a young priest  
Around loud seers  
Dated, false, proven empty  
Stifling  
Wasted habits of mind.

John R. Drayer



## A Yellow Apple

A yellow apple  
lying in a bronze bowl  
looks larger  
and larger  
until it fills the  
bowl  
then the room  
the house, the block  
the city  
the implacable  
process of the perfect apple  
becoming itself  
covering the continent  
and filling the seas  
a mild yellow apple  
that outgrows the earth  
out-circumferances the orbits  
of the planets  
passes the sun and distant suns  
the limits of the galaxy  
and reaching  
for the dark edges  
of the universe  
becomes that universe:  
a yellow apple  
lying in a bronze bowl.

Jeff Rollins

## COSTUME JEWELRY

I recognized my mother today.

She was wearing her mother

who is seven years dead.

It was a good makeup job though.

Only the eyes gave her away.

I suppose someday I, in turn,

will put my mother on,

fastening her carefully behind my neck,

arranging the cheek-folds to fall gracefully

before my ears.

My brother tells me that for many years now

he has worn my father

evenly distributed upon his shoulders and back.

Michele Barale

## from the dead

back and forth  
locked on hinge  
such a life  
anyhow  
functions well  
holds together  
provides passage  
anyhow  
bright-eyed jollies  
learn the trick  
throughout time  
crawl then  
walk then  
run then  
throughout time  
dull-eyed jewels  
prime passage  
back and forth  
locked on hinge  
such a life  
anyhow

Teresa Yingling

## THE MIMEOGRAPH MACHINE

Type a stencil  
and run a few copies  
for practice.  
Now count  
your paper.

Occasionally  
you'll see  
a smudge  
a fold  
or even a tear

But

Usually  
each copy  
will look  
the same  
the same  
the same.

Lynne Becker

## SHOPPING CART WOMAN

The bent old woman  
    pulled the wire-shopping cart  
        down the street,  
while the cool breeze made colorful  
    leaves dance about her  
        feet,  
Her support hose clung loosely to  
    her weary legs,  
    she wore red tennis shoes  
        that grabbed quickly at  
        your eyes,  
    a brown hat sat formally  
        atop her head,  
Her face never made any gesture  
    of friendliness,  
    time seems to have  
        erased her smiles,  
        replacing them with  
        wrinkles.

Cathey Dobbins

## CHANGE

Once  
    --- Only  
Just once,  
I wish  
I could  
See clearly  
Enough  
To be seen.

Benjamin Lewis Crowther

## ROOMMATE

Ups and downs  
We tend to turn around  
You to the west  
Me to the east  
You to your own mind, mine to my own  
I spoke it  
You did it.  
I used it  
You fixed it.  
I soiled it  
You cleaned it.  
I neglected  
You patiently picked it up and put it away.  
So many times I've "worn you down"  
My own stubbornness contributes to a fullness  
of uneasiness  
put up emotions  
wrapped in aluminum foil  
put in a hot oven  
yet . . . to grow hotter.  
Yes, absolutely what I call  
cooked . . .  
to the core.

Yet amazingly I have to admit it is opened  
tenderly, sparingly  
to be placed into the open  
steaming  
fresh,  
hot and buttered  
ready to eat . . .

Sometimes it is hard to stand me-  
I'm weird at times.  
Yet I'm learning the hard way  
to cope with people so much like myself.  
I want to get into the other person's steps  
to see myself the way they see me-  
Yet my longing remains fruitless . . .  
I must be patient and wait . . .  
The time will come  
When my hunger and thirst will be satisfied  
In fullness . . .  
Overflowing . . .

Daniel C. Johnson, Jr.

## Temporary Concealment

A radiant beam lights his face  
As he strolls and cavorts down the aisle;  
The antics and invitations of a routine day  
Draw eager children to his open arms.

To those who are only spectators  
His seems the happy, glamorous life;  
This should be the life of contentment-but  
To the one who is the participant . . .

Reality can only be temporarily concealed:

Take off the mask

see the broken man

whose dreams have oozed through his fingers like sand.

see the scared man

who runs from his fears

see the feeling man

whose friends deride his tears

see the condemned man

sentenced by laws of a cruel land.

Take off the mask

Oh, if only it were possible

to remove the makeup

without being frightened

by the clown

who

is a man

underneath.

Melissa Frazier

## There are birds

who like us have been denied  
wings Their tracks are long

scars where repeated attempts  
at flight have failed ending

in deep depressions  
the feathered feet standing

firm giving up staring  
helpless before the sky

Scott Patrick Sanders

## Sabbath

In Johnstown Colorado on Sunday  
birds gather for a concert

in the shadow of the grain silo  
behind the elementary school

They call notes from the tight air  
with their laughter and ease

Across the road corn sits smug  
in silk never dreaming of harvest

People sit at table and decide  
today they will put down their work

Maybe go to a concert of birds

Scott Patrick Sanders



## A CHARGE TO KEEP, I HAVE

As the pungent smell infiltrates the room,  
I and my senses are summoned  
for the Duty which lies before us.

Numbly climbing out of bed,  
a sense of exigency overpowers me  
as I head for the Child.

As I grasp for the fledgling,  
striving urgently to beat the inferno,  
fear and trembling pierce my body.

Quickly! to find the aperture.  
Gasping, we thrust ourselves out  
separating on impact.

Anxiously, desperately, I search for the Child  
while mounting terror and alarm  
clutch at my soul ever-tighter.

Travelling along the slough of Despair,  
I pursue my vigil for the Child.  
Ever-searching, never finding.

Diane Smith

## How to Have a Roman Picnic

Follow the crowd. They will find a palazzo  
with trampled brown grass and a sky so blue  
it falls on your head and shoulders. Sit  
on your sweater. Do not be concerned if Venus,  
Caesar, and even San Pietro decay around you.  
They are not hungry. Eat. Sniff sausage.  
Cut cheese. Drink, then  
pass the wine around. (It is red and heavy and will make you  
dizzy when the sun grows hotter, bleaching the sky white.  
Drink more anyway.) Stroll the garden paths with care for  
lovers in bushes. Buy lupini to bite daintily at the cleft,  
slipping the smooth pulp onto your tongue,  
littering the ground with their sleeves. Return  
with a kick and shout all soccer balls. Talk  
to every stranger. You will know to leave when the crowd,  
sweaters tied about their necks,  
husbands arm and arm at the rear, drifts  
toward the yellow sun of Rome, the light grown heavy  
on their heads and time  
molten in their slow speech. Dally then, into evening with them.  
They will show the way to half-bright rooms where love  
can be made until only one restaurant remains open.  
Eat again.

Michele Barale

## THOUGHTS

Thoughts,  
clouded with wax  
the night before,

Melt  
in the reflection  
of the sun's  
image—

Serene,  
Smooth,  
Clear,  
Unbroken.

I'm amazed,  
at the splendor  
of patchwork  
interwoven.

Benjamin Barr, Jr.

## GRANDMA'S HOUSE?

On a hot summer afternoon I entered a crowded house—no, an unmistakeable *home*—up the metal steps and through that old familiar back door. There were many known and unknown faces, some busy fixing dinner, others chattering away about some bygone memory.

I passed through the kitchen into the den whereupon I first recognized—again, familiarly—grandpa sitting in his recliner. Even in this seemingly populous atmosphere, I greeted him with the usual handshake and “hello grandpa.” Strangely enough, I couldn’t really detect any contrast from the ordinary in his wrinkled face of stone.

In the front room, I shook hands with relatives and supposed-to-be-relatives where they were sitting in orderly fashion around the room. Finally, I approached the front porch . . . for a breather, I thought. But, no, this was to be found crowded also. And one could hear the laughing and screaming of the kids outside, so there was no sense in trying for escape there. Hesitantly, I unfolded an old wooden funeral chair and sat in it, pondering whether there *was* any escape from all these people.

Soon, someone came and said that it was time for dinner. Everyone ate and enjoyed—perhaps somewhat greedily—and afterwards thanked the ‘friends of the family’ who had unselfishly prepared it. I headed for the front porch once more, this time to let it all settle.

There was a certain unnerving repetiveness about all of this: the children playing outside, and the elders inside groping over the loss. Sure, I remember . . . grandma’s death was just like this!

Eventually, I could no longer bear the austere nature of the situation. Nor could I bear the haunting thoughts of a possible suicide by an oft-neglected uncle. So I left the scene to see my sister’s baby at grandma and grandpa’s house.

Benjamin Lewis Crowther

## River's Lullaby

A raindrop falls,  
becomes part of a river,  
and begins  
singing a lullaby  
of peace and rest  
to those who stop to listen.  
Whispering secrets,  
Ringing of joy,  
Washing away hurt  
with soft healing words  
and a motherly kiss,  
Holding safely  
Close to its breast  
a part of life,  
Embracing,  
Nourishing,  
Rocking gently.  
The raindrops hums in river's lullaby  
To those who stop to listen.

Melissa Frazier

## A Contact Lens Considered

Revering nature, you can  
take to your feet, head up the canyons,  
leave, for some new-known meadow  
the solid world behind you.  
You can sleep in a hollow, eat bulbs and berries,  
but when days tip toward winter  
you may find the living sparse;  
and should yet preserve some clothing,  
save some matches, trust a knife.  
If you lurk in bear-den snow caves,  
and have owl cunning, you will get by.  
But if nature wants you closer,  
if a jacket seems too much,  
you must admit that, jungle-molded,  
you were not born for cold.  
Head at once for the equator, shed encumbrance  
as you go. You may be surprised  
to find your hands poor tools for digging,  
too soft for claws; but fruits hang for the picking.  
They do suffice. Now you can blend among the vines at last.  
Except your eyes still bear a trace too human,  
lenses over lenses, and you find  
that you cannot be naked, unless blind.  
In the blur of your raw freedom, you become  
the straggler behind the herd, the sick, unwary.  
In the long grass, unseen, is a tawny hide,  
an unsheathed claw, a watchful eye.  
Do not try to grow back thick fur, do not try  
like a weed to be wild.  
You are too many steps from the cave life.  
There are no wolves, no birds  
with a plastic eye.

Lynn Merrill



## RUNNING AWAY TO CALIFORNIA

Walking head down  
Measuring distance  
Between        ties

Eyeing grit and gristle  
From weather-cracked ribs  
Of hapless old cattle  
Once buried  
In linear rows now  
Protruding

Sucking small pebbles  
Stalling thirst  
Between        towns

Scratching blood-drunk fleas  
Feeding since the last  
Westbound freight

Forgetting all faith  
Ever placed  
In gold rushes.

Randy Waters



## Order upon the Green

The stone swan sits  
beside the silver globe  
in the shadow  
of Cupid's stagnant pedestal.

Marigolds nudge its cracked beak.  
Peeling feathers hang from its arched white neck  
Pansy roots pierce the concrete back  
And grey pocks pit enamel sides.  
Its wings shelter snails.

Leda is quite safe.

Joyce Compton Brown

## NOVA

Trust the inexplicable; believe  
that when great mysteries announce,  
it may not be  
in terms your present mind can grasp.  
We've made mistakes before:  
flat earth, whole geocentric march  
of sun and constellations;  
we piece together bit by bit,  
we stumble into learning.  
Should cataclysm intrude upon  
your warm familiar life,  
make note, then stand mute,  
and in the tremor of your marvelling  
neglect to speculate.  
Just, as did the Sung Chinese,  
record the supernova.  
"Suddenly in this morning sky,  
a star of great beauty,  
illuminating daylight."

Lynn Merrill

## TOUCHING THROUGH BARRIERS

Small county-seat towns boast  
of barriers tall and strong,  
laid on foundations ancient,  
of custom and tradition,  
cemented with old ugly prejudice.

But stubborn souls behind both sides  
found places to breach the walls  
with mutual reach,  
like the courthouse square where late I lingered  
far past parental curfew,  
listening to the shoeshine boys  
strum their battered guitars  
and sing the blues,  
and the ribald songs about their dusky girls,  
phenomenal lovers who could always  
shake that thing.

In days bright light we walked a separate path  
to school and eating place as law required,  
but when the movie marquee lights went out  
and the cafe doors were locked,  
and the streets were empty of all  
but the lonely night policeman—

Then we huddled in a knot  
on the courthouse steps, cool and dark,  
beyond the grown-ups barriers  
and learned something on our own  
about each other.

T.M. Linnens

## A SUNBATHER

She shivers  
In the early time,  
Before the  
Sun  
Attempts to warm  
The newspapers.

In the  
Glare  
Of Neon-Yellow,  
She burns . . .  
Yet,  
Bathed in heat,  
She reads aloud—  
Oblivious.

Clouds at twilight . . .  
Deceive  
The mountain climber—  
The sun hides from  
Crickets—  
And,  
She shivers.

Debbie Drayer

## The Boy Upstairs

In his parents' house the boy had the only upstairs room, a small area fashioned by his father as a nursery and used ever since for the boy despite its diminutive proportions. The child often sat by his lone window and gazed at the scenes below, yet listened intently at the same time at his mother's sounds below in the kitchen as she cooked apple tarts for him. She always made him apple tarts on Thursday because he had liked them so much from the time he was barely old enough to be fed such a treat. He would eat them now but not without resentment that his mother would be so regular about it and take his partiality for granted.

Sometimes his mother would disappear into her room and read while lying in bed, closing the door if the boy ventured curiously by. Not that his mother lacked affection, but in her way she preferred a world excluding the boy from those concerns she deemed private. His Aunt Rachel used to tell him what a much-loved boy he was, being an only child. And he wanted to believe that and sought frequent assurances that somehow never seemed satisfactorily given. But Aunt Rachel said he was, and he was supposed to believe it as fact since she was older and knew.

When he came home from school one day, his mother was in the kitchen, ironing her slip. He had seen her do this before and was embarrassed, for she usually stood in an old dress and sweated profusely from the heat of the steam and from the portable electric heater she kept in the kitchen during winter. Stevie Reems was with him and had to cover his mouth against giggles and run upstairs. Stevie said nobody ironed slips, just wore them as they were since it didn't matter. The boy wondered why she did such a thing but knew this was one of those private matters about which he had no right to inquire.

His mother was like that. Odd. Twelve years ago, not long after he was born, she had put up a cloth calendar with Home Sweet Home printed at the top and had left it there ever since. When one of his friends had seen it and laughed, he had made a new one and given it to her for Christmas. But she had put it away somewhere and he had never seen it again. Soon, he began to avoid having friends visit since they might see his mother do something strange and blame it on him.

He disliked school. His teacher was Mr. Naumann, a graying German immigrant who had a reputation for boxing the ears of students for misbehavior both real and imagined. Old Naumann loved spelling drills. Often he would have two a day, calling out the words in a thick accent that caused titters in the room. But the boy was never amused. When they were not doing their drills, they had to listen to his lectures on the

old country and its people, who were to him strong, disciplined individuals with gifts for science and math. He always told them that before making them work problems. The children dreaded failure, for the old German sent the frightened students to the board to put up the problems. Those whose answers were incorrect were assailed with stern admonitions and sent in disgrace to their seats. The boy was one of few to escape such humiliation, for he had no trouble with the math although he burned to speak forbidden words against his mentor. Unconsciously, he fought with intellect what he could not fight with emotion.

Elizabeth Plummer, who sat next to him, was seldom so fortunate. A frail defenseless creature with tiny, evasive eyes, she had no head for math and no emotional defense against Naumann's rebukes. The boy hurt each time she returned from the board and sought ways to comfort her. But the words never came, for he was incapable of understanding even his own feelings. So, in secret, he cast himself as her saviour or her knight but knew he lacked the conviction or the courage to be either. He once dreamed that he loved her, confusing, perhaps, love with pity. One time she had borrowed paper from him, and the boy had treasured the moment and refused reimbursement as if it would desecrate the relationship. Despite his age, he knew that such thoughts were mere fantasy yet continued to intensify his fantasies as if they might miraculously become real.

Thus it was that the children savored those days when Mr. Naumann was absent, for his substitute was Mrs. Carroll, who reminded the boy of neither his teacher nor his mother. The students had learned that the malleable old lady could easily be persuaded to depart from Naumann's lesson plans and tell fascinating stories. She knew Homer and the Greek myths, Melville's early sea adventures, Poe, and Saki. Each time she related the same tales; but they never complained since repetition was preferable to the burden of their normal routine.

The boy had read many of these stories and knew some by heart. When she spoke he only half listened, inventing his own worlds and people. He was seldom given to extravagance but typically envisioned a home life in which his mother was forever beautiful and always smiled at him. And his father would be there, not in some distant place selling merchandise out of his car and returning only long enough to sleep over the weekend and depart once more. His dreams beat savagely against the truth and always won; but he never felt content. When old Naumann returned, the boy punished himself by gloating over the misery he and his classmates suffered when the teacher found out they had not done their drills.

His father normally left on Monday and came home on Friday. When he returned, the boy seldom knew how to respond. The man was deferential to his son, seeming, in kind, to be perplexed by this quiet boy who stayed in his room until called down by his mother. His father liked to bring gifts—candy, chewing gum, perhaps a toy of some kind—but these the boy had tired of. He considered them peace offerings, even a guilt response he imagined his father must feel for the absences. That the man thought of them as love tokens never occurred to the boy, although he could not bring himself to despise the benefactor. Rather, he felt an ineffable longing tinged with sadness and regret over something deep and sacred and mysterious that he ought to understand but could not. While his parents talked, he often secreted himself at the top of the stairs as if by listening he might in their conversation find a clue to his relationship with them.

Sometimes when his father was home they would drive out in the car, mainly to see relatives. On such occasions he had to sit still while they conversed incessantly about mundane affairs, and if he grew restless his mother would warn him with a frigid stare. One day, however, his parents had to shop near an indoor ice skating rink and allowed him for the first time to watch the skaters until the shopping was done. He leaned against the rail and shivered pleasantly in the chill as figures blurred by. He absorbed the laughter, the screams, the raucous calls and taunts. Soon, waltz music caressed his ears and couples began their circle of the rink. They were like dancers springing from a music box and gracefully executing pirouettes. He felt as Shelley who, in the presence of beauty, shrieked and clasped his hands in ecstasy. Then his father came and the boy departed reluctantly, begging to stay. When his mother met them at the car and noticed his flushed face, he mumbled about being cold and sank into a corner of the back seat.

The next week his father returned from a trip and entered the house in a jovial mood. This time he called for the boy himself, and when the child came down his father had a new gift. "It's a book I want to give you," he said "You haven't been liking the things I've been bringing, so maybe you'll read the book." The boy, mystified, took it without comment and stared at the man. He knew he was expected to say something but had no words. It was like receiving a gift from a stranger and not knowing whether to be thankful or be suspicious of some ulterior motive. He didn't really know this man, his father, yet he recognized in the act a new kind of peace offering cognizant of his advancing maturity.

"I got it at a shop while on my trip," he continued. "The woman said it was full of good stories and that it would help you get through the

winter. I'd read them myself if I had time." Finally, the boy uttered his gratitude and, clutching the book to his chest, found his way to his room, leaving his father, if not dismayed, indeed perplexed. His wife, who had viewed this episode from the kitchen door, returned silently to her cooking, and he followed her when the boy's footsteps became inaudible.

In his room, the boy placed the book on the chest by his bed and lay down in the dusky light to await his mother's call to supper. When that time came, he made a perfunctory appearance at the table, eating little and choosing to spend the evening by himself upstairs. When his parents began talking in the earnest tones he knew well, the boy moved to his place and listened.

His father's voice was unusually sober and reflective. "I've been noticing how much apart from us the boy seems. When I come in he doesn't seem to care whether I'm home or not. You saw him take the book and not even properly thank me for it. Maybe I'm not his father and maybe he's not my son. You see him every day and never tell me anything. Don't you think he's behaving strange?"

"I don't know," his mother replied. "He's just been like that lately. He doesn't cause me any trouble while you're gone. Stays to himself and reads, so I know he appreciates the book. If you were here more you wouldn't be so concerned."

"But I got a relationship to establish with him," he persisted. "It's my duty. You're too close to understand the changes that have come over him, and he might go wrong and we'd never know until it was too late." He left her to poke the fire and then turned back. "I been thinking. When I get home next weekend I might just spend some time with him. He took a fancy to that ice skating, so I'm going to take him down there and stay a few hours. Even let him skate if he wants to."

"I tried to get him to take the bus down there by himself," she added. "But he wouldn't go. Said he had school work, as if he hadn't already done it before coming home."

When they turned to other matters, the boy went back to his room, careful not to betray his presence. He tried to make sense of his father's peculiar shift in attitude toward him and was almost afraid to interpret what it all meant. But he would like to see the skaters again, although he preferred watching to skating. It would be good to go, to recapture that magic moment. He hadn't wanted to ride down on the bus because he hated to smell the fumes and see the old men nodding in their seats.

During the ensuing days, his mother was careful to keep the "secret," but she insisted that he make no plans for Saturday. His father was due home Friday night and would want to see him, she said. On Friday after-



noon the weather abruptly turned colder and he stayed in his room, sitting by the frosted window pane and gazing out into the yard below. Through the translucent surface he saw a distorted shape he assumed to be Mrs. Stepson next door, taking firewood in. He perceived several other shapes: children fleeing the icy wind, homeless dogs regretting their freedom, and cars, their engines muted to him, laboring in the bitter chill. With his finger he traced ghostly frost figures turning the rink on silent skates and heard the waltz music summon gaily clad couples. He felt rapturous, disembodied, and suddenly wished for someone to whom he could express the emotion that strained against his breast. He took the book and read a strange and enchanting story of a boy in Ireland and the girl whose sensual body awakened in him the spirit of beauty. The ending was sad but this he ignored lest it shatter his ideal.

Abruptly his reverie was interrupted by his mother's voice, announcing supper. At the table she looked at him and tried to make conversation. He was more talkative than usual and even spoke of something Mr. Naumann had done that day.

Finally, she leaned slightly toward him and spoke. "Your father won't be coming in until next week. He was supposed to be here tonight same as ever, but Dobbins got sick and your father had to finish his route. You know how long that takes. He should be home Wednesday."

The boy felt a sudden sensation like sweet sickly roses. As his mother sat amazed, he rushed from the kitchen and dashed up the stairs to his room. He wanted to cry out at the injustice but found expression only in self-pity and despair. He sat once more by the window where his figures had faded, and stared at the dark. Remembering the story, he turned again to the ending, and the words tore at him, wrenching him violently and unremorsefully: "I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and despair."

The boy cast aside the book and, seizing his tablet, began to write: I am a boy, the son of my parents, living in this cold winter month in a house that has become my prison. I have sought the good and the beautiful and wanted them for my companions. But life is cruel and I am sad and alone. Someday you will find this note, long after I have left here for a better world. As you read this remember one who suffered greatly and know that you will suffer too. I do not know anyone and no one knows me. Nor do I care.

He folded the note and placed it in a crack between the boards of his slant-ceilinged closet. Downstairs, his mother cleared the table and wondered if the boy's father hadn't been right.

Jim Taylor

## To Matt

A blue ballon's not much  
to get excited about  
if you're over thirty.

In fact, even a red one  
has certain limitations.

But, if you've just managed to move  
from crawl to walk,  
to stuff peas into your own ear,  
by yourself,  
then a blue ballon's a real trip.  
Enough to get symbolic about.

"Ball," you said, "Ball," and looked around  
for some expert to verify it.

The expert, over thirty,  
abandoning science,  
fell over the hassock,  
suddenly excited about a blue ball,  
to heck with the details about  
significant differences between  
balls and balloons.

Bill Stowe

## The Gentle Preacher

The Preacher's theme was Love.  
He was very eloquent in his presentation of it  
And the people complimented him for it.  
He felt surely though that the people did not grasp his  
    high concept of Love.  
At home he felt comfortable and secure,  
As he ate the chicken fried and crisp.  
After lunch he carefully removed the bone from  
    a piece of meat  
Which he took out in the yard to feed to his  
    prize Bulldog.  
Then he tacked up the fallen sign that said  
    "Beware of Dog."  
  
Like Chaucer's gentle nun he would have been upset terribly  
    if anything bad had happened to that dog.

E.M. Blankenship

## GOOD NEIGHBOR

Bourbon and Buxtehude at four  
in the afternoon  
a *fin-de-siecle* print on the wall  
or a *Christ In His Majesty*  
it doesn't mean anything at all  
does it, Joey?

At the bar last night  
you were transparent, completely  
out of sight  
clear as vodka in a glass  
you watched all the  
lovers pass  
waiting for a Barbra Streisand kind of life  
on the rocks.

You know you were, Joey  
So Liberal and Artsy  
In love with life and death and that  
peculiar type of boredom which is your personality.  
Inebriate of *ennui* are you  
Master of the existential glint-of-eye

You see your reflection  
in your drink  
and lose yourself in your  
own eyes  
which appear the friendliest  
you have ever seen

You never invite yourself to  
your own party, Joey  
You're an unfertilized egg  
but you're a good neighbor  
and once in a while  
we have a fine drunk  
together don't we?

Jeff Rollins

## Lament

Oh that I had never lived  
by the sea,  
forever and again she  
haunts me.

the misty mornings with  
salt tang in the air,  
the walks at sunset on  
eternal sands.

Oh that I had never felt her  
moods,  
angry and lashing,  
playful and rolling,  
calm and smooth.

She ever calls me,  
now I am away.  
The tug of the tides pulls  
me still.

Susan Shields

The waves of the sea  
Are reaching for the mainland.  
They glide to the shore  
Going as far as they can,  
Before having to return.

Debbie Lynn



## SWEEPING THE FLOOR

What was that

Laying aside my broom I look  
Beneath the bed covered  
In darkness  
For costly coin or base bauble  
Misplaced  
During crack of dawn  
Dash of socks shirts  
And sundry items  
Not willing to put my hand  
Into that somber spider's home

I stand and sweep the rest  
Of the house  
With a fox-and-grapes smile

Next week  
I tell myself  
Next week.

Randy Waters

## For D.B.

You were a foot-ballish Long-Island Jew  
and I a skinny blond Southern boy

Once when the rain  
fell like adolescent music  
I tried to kiss you

you declined  
and the rain still fell  
but had a different sound.

Jeff Rollins

## Reflections

In general all of my past and all of my future  
Are hazy until brought into clear focus by reflection.  
Give me the worst that you have or the best  
Either of which could muddle the uninitiated  
Unless appropriately brought into useful perspective.  
The routine of events from day to day  
no matter how exciting could muzzle one's mind  
If the events could not be enervated meaningfully  
through reflection.

Call me Narcissus if you choose,  
But if I do not see myself I do not exist.  
I reflect; *ergo sum*.

I ever reflect upon my reflections,  
and this sets me apart.

The secret is to keep a proper balance at the edge of the pool.

E.M. Blankenship



## Why I Don't Climb

In summer they are tourist mountains.  
But last June two boys died in a sudden snow and  
every year a mountain man who should know better  
falls through ice that looks like ground and in a sudden  
act of final respect, drowns cold, beard and all.  
I never venture up. I claim that teacups and tomatoes  
are my *metier* and my lettuce needs daily watering.  
I'm no fool. I've watched them, even in gentle seasons,  
crowd up close to town, scowl purple on everything, and darken the day  
for a week. Climb them? Why  
they walk on me then! And in September  
when I'm busy canning and the kitchen is heavy  
and red with beets, the garden two weeks overdue  
for picking and nearly walking to my door, I've seen  
the mountains just plain disappear. Not gradual. Sudden.  
When there's only sky from wherever the sun might be  
to autumn ground. And then I pull still-green tomatoes  
from their stems and grab the last of the geraniums.  
Marigolds will last through that first snow.  
But I don't go out. Mountains mean business  
when they get that secretive. Have your August hikes.  
I don't trust anything that steps on me or hides from me,  
no matter how pretty those mountain flowers that die in a day.

Michele Barale

## REMEMBERING

Pushed into a world you did not know  
Coming from a place that told you so.  
You wish to return, to be again  
A part of what you once have been.

You see the ones that follow you  
And know that they will turn back, too.  
To this place that they, themselves began.  
Here, at this spot, that you now stand.

Sadly, but sweetly, you understand  
Why this place has put so deep a brand  
Upon your being, upon your everything.  
It is the Rock from which you cling.

It is this place, this Home of ours  
That sends us into the world with powers  
To return again, to be again  
A part of what we once have been.

Melinda Campbell

## TALL TALE

Let me tell you about one of my habits  
Of hunting squirrel and shootin rabbits  
It was late in the day this past December  
When back to a place that I remember  
Where I'd seen one the day before  
So I thought I'd get me a couple more  
Had an old four-ten with number eight shot  
Kenw that wouldn't kill a whole lot  
But them squirrel and rabbits were just  
Tiny little creatures  
And that old four-ten had some really good features  
I was sittin there perched on top of a log  
It was real nice and quiet except for a frog  
Heard him croaking down by the creek  
So I thought I'd go down and take a peek  
Sat on a bank and ate a moon pie  
Watched that frog catch him a fly  
But that got to where it wasn't much fun  
So I started back to where I'd been sittin  
The sight I saw just sent me flippin  
Sitting on top of that old pine tree  
was a six foot rabbit aiming at me  
"Hold your horses" I said to myself  
Mess with that rabbit and you'll ruin your health  
While I was figuring on what to do  
That rabbit said "boy I've been looking for you"  
Now a six foot rabbit'll scare ya bad  
But when he goes to talking you know ya been had  
There wasn't much sense in running away  
So I hung around to see what he had to say  
He said "I'm gonna eat in just a minute  
Havin a stew and you're gonna be in it"  
Well I had to think of something right then  
'Cause I didn't really want to get ate by him

I said "look rabbit you ought to know by now  
If you're gonna skin me ya gotta know how  
So lay down that gun and I'll pull out my blade  
And show you how a people stew is made"  
Well he scratched his head for a moment or two  
Then said "ok show me what to do"  
Well when he laid down the gun  
I jumped for his head  
But he threw me back down so I just played dead  
Just as quick as that rabbit turned his back  
I came up from behind and gave him a whack  
Well that knock kinda put him out for a spell  
So I quickly commenced to skinnin his tail  
By the time that rabbit had come around  
Most all his fur was on the ground  
I figured that rabbit'd had enough  
But that old bunny was just startin to get rough  
I knew he could run about a hundred and ten  
And there wasn't no way I'd outrun him  
So I swung at him with a balled up fist  
And he pulled up a tree as big around as his wrist  
Well he swung that thing with all his might  
But that six foot rabbit didn't aim just right  
So while that rabbit was trying to unwind  
I stuck my knife in his behind  
Well that rabbit forgot all about his stew  
And started hoppin around like a kangaroo  
About this time I got away  
I'd get me a rabbit some other day  
Some folks believe me some of em won't  
Don't matter to me if they do or don't  
But next time I go a huntin hare  
I'll carry me something that could kill a bear.

Phil Potter

## A Flower Bloomed On A River Bank

A flower bloomed on a river bank,  
fair and hearty in early birth,  
Sheltered from the frosts of fate  
by fronds of fern in fecund earth.

A fragile flower that wasn't dainty,  
the crimson boldy spoke from green,  
Ignoring the fertile river's murmur,  
a flower proud within its cloak.

Days and yet only moments flowed  
past fronds of fern and flower fair,  
The crimson lost its brilliant blare,  
and listened to the humble murmur.

Fred Allen

## Man As An Insatiable Animal

If reality is worse than the most horrible dream one  
ever had  
How can one be happy when nature takes its course?  
Some seeking religion have not understood anything  
they have found.  
Some have found God and have put him  
conveniently away,  
While others flagrantly rattle him about  
to frighten old people and little children.  
They put him away again when they are through  
playing.  
But they love so much to play  
That they will thus be entertained  
until they learn the outcome.

E.M. Blankenship

Merry-go-rounds were such fun  
    when she was eight.  
The up-and-down, round and round  
    excited her.  
She'd never tire of the merry-go-round, never.

At thirteen, merry-go-rounds became more fun—  
    boys entered into her life.  
The ride went faster; she switched  
    horses more frequently;  
The sun shone in a cloudless sky.

Now at eighteen, merry-go-rounds  
    aren't quite what they used to be.  
Up and down is frustrating and  
    round and round is confusing.  
After so long, things begin to blur.

Stop the ride—  
    it's time to get off.  
Looking through a blur only  
    makes it harder to see.  
It's time to start seeing again.

Diane Smith

## Steps for a Dance at Midnight

The chaperone smiles  
when I open my dance card.  
When the panic leaves, where does it go?

Here is a riddle, she says.  
The violin bow is missing something.  
What is it? The rest of the horse.  
Music creeps out.

Look, she says. These are real.  
Then she touches me.

I remember her now.  
She is the dark man's daughter.  
As patient as a bus stop.

We go outside. She says  
every penny was shiny once.  
Why are my hands so dull?

I point to the only star in the sky.  
No, she says. That is a planet.

Oh, come on. Surely  
you've lost something.

There is no moon tonight.

OK. That will do. Let's dance.

Music goes so far.  
After that we fight for ourselves.

Scott Patrick Sanders



Forces mounted,  
you're off on your private battlefield,  
firing at questionable enemies,  
and aiming in at least the direction  
of certain targets,  
wondering all the while  
what caused the war.

Remembering the winning tactic  
is always the surprise attack  
you keep your strategy secret  
and heavily guarded,  
lest someone unknowingly  
stumble into your arsenal.

I'm not in the war at all this time.  
If I'm battling with anything  
it's my proximity to the danger zone.  
For the time  
I'm wandering along the borders,  
decidedly not crossing any territorial lines,  
but staying within firing range,  
wondering if I did enter combat  
who's side you would put me on—  
the Allies' or the Targets'.

Teresa Tippett

Oh God,  
I've been away so very long,  
My bones are cracked and dry  
From the hot blistering sun.

Yet, your presence  
Brings the welcomed shade,  
A sigh of relief,  
A cool clear stream.

I am refreshed.

Benjamin Barr, Jr.

## SPRINGTIME

Robin in a tree—

Looking for a nesting place,

Pecking at a branch . . .

A worm dangles from her beak—

The branches bounce back, empty.

Debbie Drayer

## TOO PRESENT PAST

Life continues to murmur refrains of the past.  
Wails of reality shatter childhood enchantment,  
yet the boogie man continually looms in  
a mature mind's distant corners.  
His shape serves as a reminder of old times  
in which the stage was costumed  
for child-like fantasies  
acted, however, in adult responsibilities.  
No, never a child . . . some never are.

Past is past though.  
Affluence is achieved.

A worker with scattered trinkets,  
years late in their arrival,  
short-lived in their symbolic value,  
A backward progression of toys for post-tot.  
Such a life continues to murmur refrains  
of its partaker's past.

Teresa Yingling

## why keep trash

One hopelessly torn snuggles is held tightly,  
a tear-stained paper rests in a sweet-smelling  
something of cardboard, an empty bottle,  
a kind of trash.

why keep trash

Hey you with the freehand get rid of this  
such emtionalism  
mindless fool  
should rather cling to reason

One abandoned something of a people,  
all empty-faced,  
a kind of jew.

why keep jews

Hey you with the mustache get rid of this  
such reason  
mindless fool  
should rather cling to

Teresa Yingling

## LIFE ON THE LINE

A child's jacket  
Hangs  
On the clothesline.  
The life inside the sleeves.  
As the coat sways  
Gently,  
Is more than mere breeze-  
It is the essence of the  
Owner.  
Somersaults and flips,  
A gay hop now and  
Then,  
Sometimes twisted and tangled-  
The very restlessness of the boy  
Captured  
Between two clothespins . . .  
A jacket brought to life  
By the wind.

Debbie Drayer



## UNSYNCED

You really missed my mood that day  
when I had waited long and sick  
through dragging morning hours till noon,  
waiting for the comfort of your arms,  
and you mistook my running toward you  
for a game of run and tag,  
and you dodged and ran into the house  
and latched the door behind you.

The fury hot ran from my heart  
down through my little arms  
and through the swinging hammer,  
leaving three deep, ugly scars  
in the smooth beauty of the door.

The shock upon your face  
at the anger you saw in mine  
brought no words of strong reproach,  
but quiet understanding  
as you held me in your arms  
and stilled the storm within my soul.

When you were seventy-five and feeble  
from the surgeon's vain attempt  
to cut the cancer from your gut,  
we made the trek to the home place  
for our last time,  
and walked across the porch and through that door.  
I fastened my eyes upon your face  
but you never glanced at the three deep scars,  
but as you passed, behind your back  
I ran my fingers down into  
the wounded wood.

T.M. Linnens

## CONTEST RESULTS

The Gardner-Webb English Department sponsored a contest for the poetry and short stories chosen for publication in the 1979 REFLECTIONS. Judging was conducted by professors E.M. Blankenship, Thirlen Osborne, William B. Stowe, and Jim Taylor. All works were submitted anonymously to the judges. Faculty and non-student contributions were not eligible for the contest.

## AWARDS

1st place	Sweeping the Floor Running Away to California	Randy Waters Randy Waters
2nd place	A Sunbather	Debbie Drayer
3rd place	Lament	Susan Shields
Honorable Mention	Thoughts "Merry-go-rounds were such fun . . ." why keep trash The Mimeograph Machine	Benjamin Barr, Jr. Diane Smith Teresa Yingling Lynne Becker



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