1973

Reflections, 1973

Gainesville Junior College Humanities Division

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Reflections
Gainesville Junior College 1973

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REALIZATION
Living is painted over shiny and bright
   Just as a wall is.
The wall is painted over
   So that no one can really see
   How rough and drab the real wall is.
   But no one seems to realize
   That the rough, drab, ugly wood
   Is what is holding up the wall,
   Not the paint.

Karen Williams

TODAY
Today with the briskness of early winter
   and the warmth of fading leaves
   and the wind on the hill
   the anticipation of change
Today with the smiles of people who
   are near to me
   and dear to me
Today with the pain I face
   the unknown I face
   the wonder I face
Today with its beauty in every moment
   joy in every tear
Today I wonder about death
   for no world can be more beautiful
   than this one.

E. A. O'Quinn
Baldwin the Badger

Contemplation #1

One warm sudden summer's day there was an old badger who had lived a long time in the world, and this badger found himself to be walking along an old rotten log across a stream. This log which he was on was, to be sure, quite rotten. Nevertheless, the log would have supported quite easily, I am sure, the weight of at least two badgers. And so the reader will find it no surprise when I point out that the log did not break when the badger found himself confronted by a boll weevil.

"Ho!" cried the weevil, "don't step on me!"

The badger looked down, and on perceiving the boll weevil he wished him a good afternoon. "And where are you off to?" asked the badger.

"I," replied the boll weevil, "am seeking a good government."

After a moment's contemplation the badger spat into the creek. "Forget it," he replied.

"But I'm going to find a good and responsible government, and when I do I'll give the plan for it freely to the peoples of the world," said the boll weevil as he scratched his head with his hind legs.

"I, too, was young once. When I was a little badger I thought I could find a good government, so I started to look for one. Last week I gave up looking, as I realized that one does not exist."

"No responsible government?"

"None."

"But, but—" The poor little weevil was in tears. He was, after all, very young and idealistic.

The old badger was not without a touch of sympathy, and decided to explain. "A government, you see, consists of people in the offices and people in the streets. The difference between them is that those not on the street have been elected off it into office. The similarity is that they are all selfish, greedy, incredibly stupid, and don't give a damn for one another's welfare. One cannot draw a good government out of bad people."

A soberer but sadder boll weevil crawled off between the badger's legs to ponder what had been expounded during this brief episode.

The badger himself continued on across the log.

Reuben L. Claxton
EXCUSES, EXCUSES

The reason I can’t write a structured poem
Is because I don’t think structured thoughts
And so for a poem, which is nice and coined
I’m at a structured loss.

Understanding the assignment is no trouble at all
Actually I comprehend it quite well
It’s when I pick up my pen that I begin to stall
For to me, writing with limited structure is hell.

For not doing my homework, I suppose I’ll receive
an F
For being effortless, (if you’ll please pardon the pun)
But in my head there seems to be no idea left.
At least I certainly can’t seem to find one.

Without ideas, then certainly meter is out
And imagery, symbolism, and rhyme
All my thoughts seem to have petered out
And I simply can’t think of a line.

Karen Williams

FOR MOTHER

Along
I walk along the misty and quiet border of my
mind
And think
Of you and the memories of the moments we’ve had
together.
And as I probe this delicate rim I recall our days
Of happiness
Of pain
Of loneliness
Of joy
And I wonder
If we are only to live for today,
Now,
Forget tomorrow,
I wonder;
Why is This tomorrow filled only with these memories,
Now, that you are gone.

Bobbe Whitfield
NO ONE OTHER THAN THIS WORLD

Over and above the outside
    my mind wanders fast . . .
What being is there out there?
How can they say someone knows me?

No one other than this world
And these things here that make you insane.
There are hollows within my soul . . .
Hollows howling . . .

If all of me can go out that far,
Why am I still on this earth?

Barry Storey

four pale walls around me
i'm lying on the bed
Denver on the radio
and LBJ is dead.

thirty more days of mourning i suppose
yes, thirty more days with mornings
thirty more empty days
another month of mourning.

peace at hand in china
jesus, what about peace here
what about peace within
jesus, peace must be near.

traffic deaths and murder
pollution in the air
the london flu, fires, and train wrecks
jesus, my soul is bare.

Denver on the radio
the seven o'clock news
i'm lying on the bed
sweet Lord, i got the blues.

E. A. O'Quinn

4
ONE MAN'S ANSWER
A MASTERPIECE OF BROKEN FEELING
CRACKED, NO MORE AS ONE
BUT CLINGING TO THE CEILING.

THE PAST AND PRESENT SEASON
SHOWS THE MARK OF MAN'S
SEARCHING FOR THE REASON.

PUZZLES OF OMNIPOTENT WISDOM
NO PLACE FOR AN ANSWER
TO THE CRY FOR FREEDOM.

Jean Scanlin
The first thing that I thought during those first days was that the ship had been delayed by some small technical problem—you know how space-time warps really foul up schedules at this end of the galaxy. The interstellar radio had not worked since our second day on this planet, but there had been no cause for alarm. We knew when and where they would pick us up.

“Well,” I told Wulf on the morning of the tenth day that the ship was overdue, “we may be in for a little wait. Any minor problem would have been cleared up by now.”

He seemed less than happy at my observation. “You tell me why we had to survey this planet in the first place,” he complained. “Lord knows, there is nothing here but vegetation and predators. I thought we were looking for intelligent life in this solar system. The nearest thing to intelligence on this planet are those gibbering hairy creatures with the long arms that spend most of their time pulling bugs from one another.”

“Well, at least that’s cooperation,” I said. “And that’s more than we are getting from S. E. headquarters right now!”

About that time Ikono and Cheena, the tall, handsome, dark-skinned couple from Isisis, the only habitable planet in the Astar es system, walked up to the shelter.

“Hi Wulf, Hi Isaac,” said Cheena. “Do you think they have forgotten us?” she asked half jokingly.

“Of course not,” I assured her. “It’s too expensive to train four explorer teams to just forget where they parked us.”

By this time Chi and his wife had parked their surface rover and were walking hurriedly toward the group. They were a small, very attractive couple with the characteristic dark hair and eyes and the smooth, yellow-gold skin of all Osirians.

“I’ve checked all of the possible landing sites within the northern quarter but there is no sign of them,” Chi said. He seemed more than a little shaken. “Kim thinks that they could have sun-spotted out of our mini-radar, but I don’t think so. They’re not here, and I don’t like it!”

Ikono chimed in. “I remember the rumors about the Alpha crew. Deviational Time Continuum malfunction they called it. They just plain lost them is what happened. They put too many of us in too many places, and they just don’t keep up with us. Boy I tell you, I’m going straight back to Isisis when this hitch is done, and you won’t get me out of my solar system again.”

I thought I ought to shift the subject, so I suggested that we
wake Helga, who had had the mid-watch, and go for a swim before lunch. Two rivers emptied into one of the small seas of this planet near our campsite, and their broad valleys were lush with growth. We had been living off the land for most of our stay here, and I had to admit that for edible vegetation this planet beat any that I had visited. If intelligent life ever began on this planet, this would be the place for it. The variation in foods was endless and was especially refreshing to us after the carbo-protein synthetics of home. Primitive planets have their advantages. In addition to plenteous fruits and vegetables, we had managed to coax milk from the small herd of cloven footed animals that we had corralled for study. Our carbo-protein food sensors even detected for us a delicious edible substance manufactured by colonies of a certain kind of flying insect. Wonder of wonders! Of course most of the animals on this planet prefer to eat each other—a sure sign of lack of intelligence.

Helga grumbled at being awakened but was glad to have something to do on getting up other than wonder why we had not been picked up. After our swim and lunch and a rather anxious afternoon, we decided to build a fire, more to lift our spirits than for any other reason, although it was effective in keeping predators at bay so that we need not waste our now-diminishing supply of fuel on protective screens.

Kim tossed another dead limb on the dwindling blaze and poked at it thoughtfully for a while. Then as she relaxed against Chi’s shoulder, she asked, “Why do you suppose they always send husband and wife teams on these exploring trips? And why is it that all four teams are from different planets? Come to think of it, why is it that none of us has real field experience? You would think that they would want at least one team with previous experience along.”

That started it.

“You know, most of the data that they ask for is irrelevant anyway,” Wulf said. “They were nearly one hundred percent sure this planet was uninhabited when they sent us here.”

“And why all of these ‘compatibility’ tests the eight of us were subjected to,” asked Cheena, “if we are only going to be here a short time?”

Ruth dropped the pad she had been sketching on and looked slowly around the group. “They are not coming for us,” she said flatly. “We had better face that fact! None of us has ever talked to a returned explorer because none have returned. They’re seeding the Galaxy with us!”

She looked levelly at me and after a moment said, “Isaac, I’m going to have your child . . . and for better or worse, it will grow up and die on this planet . . . the third planet from that strange sun.”

Eight months later, counting by the phases of the single moon of this strange and beautiful planet, our daughter was born. We call her Eve.

A. J. Kline
FOUR TWENTY-ONE
As I sit here all alone—
a little sad, but not lonely—
watching the star's
distant tune—
a single hope that you
may sit and watch the same star
brings us together again—
like this morning as I was with you,
as I paused for a moment of prayer.

E. A. O'Quinn

ONE ALONE
The cold, dim light of an early dawn
Finds one alone.
Wounded conscience—clean-cut, bone
Deep—argues with logic.
And hope, sorely defeated, gives way
To regret, and the cold grey
Of an early dawn, alone.

Jane Ferguson
NURSING HOME

She sits and pats the doll and croons.
She sits and stares
Pats and rocks
And pats.

Tick, tick, tick,
Tock,
Tick, tock.

The daily round begins.
Bad men fight and good ones win
Through secret storms the world turns
On some Peyton sin.

"Pay her no mind. She doesn’t hear.
She doesn’t know. She always sits and croons just so."
Ah, yes, just so.

Oh God, dear God
Let me die tonight
Tonight, please let me die.

The naked doll’s head bobs.

Barbara Webster
POLITICKLE PARODY

Hey, mr. big man
sittin' up there in your chair,
do you remember us,
the babies you used to kiss on the hair?
And all you big politickles
up there in washington, d.c.,
we're eighteen and over now,
so don't come kissin' on me.
We done got us a vote
and we're startin' after your chair.
So, you better start listenin' to us,
cause kissin' ain't gonna get you nowhere.
except of course, for that sexpot
good old henry k.,
I agree with all them hollywood beauties,
that he can come kiss on me anyday.
And old tricky dick,
he's as smart as can be,
but to tell you the truth,
i don't even want to bring him up, see.
Let's speak of his vice
president, that is, a good old boy
mr. spiral, he's real sharp,
picks his words with great choice
"effite snobs" and many others.
Makes it sound like it's off the top of his hat
if only he wore one, but he knew, boy,
that dale carnegie's course was where it's at.
Can't just pick on one side though,
that's not even kind
let's look at the other side
where the blind lead the blind.

There's george m. (for mc'govern)
not cohen, I hope you know,
and teddy kennedy, of course,
who right now is movin' slow.
He's a pretty nice man,
really very charmin'
just needs to move faster, like stoner would
if he went through harlem.
I guess i'm not being very kind
to these poor old men,
if they'd just straighten up and listen,
and stop just strokin' their chin.

Karen Williams
The Fetal Pig

who is the little animal who is born but does not live;

who takes nothing from anyone but all he does is give?

His life is taken by science and education,

In hopes to further the knowledge of our nation.

That helpless little animal who represents man,
Ready for studying in the dissecting pan.

His body has caused many girls to hide,

Filling the lab with the smell of Formaldehyde.

Why does his life end so grim and blue??

So Dr. Michaels can Teach Biology 102!

By: Tam Holder
A PRODIGAL’S PRAYER

O Lord,
I walk my dirty self-made road
Carrying a heavy self-made load.
I’ve sown my seed by what I’ve done
And by this no reward I’ve won.

Down life’s broadest roads I travel,
Seeking gold but finding gravel;
I’ve squandered all you’ve given me
And made my waves in human sea.

I’ve searched so long, or so it seems,
For inner peace of poet’s dreams.
And in my weakness, I call to Thee,
Dear God, deliver me from me.

Doug Irby

Carefully my legs carry me
those twenty steps or so,

Eyes of others scorch my back,
but I care not save one

Under whose gaze,
I humbly submit,

Pondering how it could be possible
for him to love me,

I, who have slammed the door,
so many times,

Yet he always answers my knock.
“Dear Lord,”

And I kneel,
“Make me willing . . . to be willing.”

Deborah Reynolds
AMERICA?

*America, Land of the Free and Home of the Brave.*
Land where we’ll put all those “Niggers” in their grave.

*America, Land where man was created equal,*
Land where men’s hearts are strong,
where I only request that someone tell God that something is wrong.

*America, Land where people are fully fed,*
Land where people have something good to eat,
A place where there’s room to sleep,
Let me show you what I call a bed.

*America, country with a future, prosperous,*
in industrialized, fair, mechanized, computerized,
tall buildings, and men in space—
Amid all these beautiful things,
Why do we find a neglected Human

*Race?*

Joe Norman

---

LITTLE BOYS

Little boys,
Across the street,
Aim . . . Fire their guns,
Then lose their feet.

But, little boys,
Across the years,
Have played this game
With guns or spears.

Theirs game of death
Is all in fun;
Pride in “dying”
Is with a gun.

Heyward Gnann
NO FOOL

If I had not seen it with my own two eyes, I would not have believed it could be. My long time neighbor, Homer Martin had told me what it was like but I still didn’t believe it until I saw it first hand. I have lived here in the country all my life and had never seen any need of getting on what they call a freeway before. If you ask me, they are just a waste of cement that could be used in better ways, like building a dam for a good fish pond. I’ll admit, that pictures of them in magazines look purty good but they just ain’t for me to drive on.

Lord knows, I didn’t want to get on that big road but as I see it, I didn’t have much of a choice. I had told Zeke Colbert that I’d pick up some cows for him and get them back in time for the sale, so since I was running late I figured this might be a shortcut and save me near to five miles. No sooner had I come down that little cement road and hit that big highway, than I was surrounded by about a half dozen or so of them roaring, smoking monsters. You can call them automobiles or vehicles if you want to but I’ll call them what they are, and that is “pure demon infested monsters.”

When that first one passed me up, I could tell by the way people in it looked over at me that I was a marked man. Why else would they look my way like they did? I can say for a fact and without bragging, that I don’t look no weirder than anybody else I know. I keep my old pickup in pretty good shape, except I’ll admit the sideboards do shake and rattle some and my hood don’t shut as tight as it could. I was driving a good thirty-five miles per hour, which I don’t think was fast enough to attract attention.

I saw two or three of them long haired hitch-hikers but I wouldn’t pick them up because I hear on the radio how they shoot you or strangle you and make off with your car and money. As soon as I would get close enough for them to get a good look at me and my truck they would take their thumbs back in, I guess they could tell I wouldn’t be no easy mark.

It didn’t take me long to figure out that all these people just didn’t like pickup trucks, farmers, or both. There was no doubt in
my mind at all but what they was out after me. They was using all kinds of new gadgets that I had been seeing advertised on television, like that gas that don’t let your motor ping so as they can slip up on you from behind, and them new tires that cut corners real sharp so that they can pull back in right quick and run you off the road. I made up my mind that if I got off this big road in one piece, that I was going to take the long way back to the sale barn with them cows. I didn’t know what they had against farming, but I figured that if they hated cows as much as they did farmers and pickup trucks then I wouldn’t stand a chance.

The longer I drove on that big highway, the more uneasy I was. I felt about as much out of place as a fly in a glass of buttermilk. Some people would come flying by and try to look innocent, but I had done figured out their game by now. Even a secret C.I.A. man couldn’t keep a straighter face than some of them did, but I guess they didn’t know that I now knew what they knowed.

It seems like the last ten minutes on that road was the longest of my life, but I made up my mind that I wouldn’t show how shook up I was. Zeke had told me to get off this big road at exit number sixteen, and that is where I was going to get off at and not before. I had some good chances to escape up little roads numbered ten through fifteen, but I kept on till I made it to number sixteen like Zeke told me to.

Just to show you how fast them crazy people drive, they was over fifty cars passed me no longer than I was on that road. I know, cause every time one would pass me I made a mark in the dust on the dash of my truck and when I got home I counted at least fifty marks.

I know my tax money helped to build that road but I ain’t gonna use it no more. I figure I’m going to try and die a natural death like the good Lord intended us to do and not get myself killed by one of these man-made projectiles. Yes sir, I guess you can see my mama didn’t raise no fool.

Francis Cato
REBIRTH

The setting rays of an evening sun
Cast ominous shadows upon the earth.
Dark, morose, foreboding hues of colour
Cause doubt of another rebirth.

Alone the placid morning gently enters
To light a tepid candle in the gloom;
And dawn seeps through
Like the silken fibers of a spinner’s loom.

Unforgettable in the mind of the beholder
Is the feeling of repose and calm.
Which enters the soul
To comfort one, as the words of a psalm.

Joanne Scanlin
MEMORIES

YESTERDAY

how free and loving
the two of us had been.

we laughed and cried together
through good times
through bad.

we understood one another
yet misunderstood our hearts.

then we fell apart
Now Only Memories.

TODAY

my life is torn apart
this head is all awry.

I see no happy moments here
only time to cry
for you again.

we should be together now
but this is all a dream.

now another day’s gone by
We Have Only Memories.

TOMORROW

we’ll be together.
we’ll laugh and play like old.

our hearts will be whole and loving,
the love so warm,
our words so sweet.

we’ll dwell as one,
if but for a single day

we can love to the fullest
With Our Hearts Open Wide.

MEMORIES DON’T DIE
THEY ONLY LIVE ON AND ON
MEMORIES ARE THE FUEL
THAT ALONENESS TENDS TO BURN UPON
AND LOVE IS THE SUBSTANCE
THAT LIFE TENDS TO THRIVE UPON.
MEMORIES NEVER DIE.

Gail Peeples
19
I saw Ernest Hemingway's face in the moon last night. And watched some horses riding across the sky, Some stars fell too.

Dear God,
This masterpiece is by the person on the fourth floor balcony.
Karen Williams
ENCOUNTERS

We were headed home. Our troopship was now three days out from port. Those of us who were novices at sea were beginning to make limited adjustments to the unknown abundance around us. No longer did we listen to the cadence of sounds escaping from the creases of the ship’s structure as we did on our first nights at sea. No longer were our ears like stethoscopes magnifying the spray of vaporous ripples into sinuety waves slapping the steel plates. Those of us who thought we had mastered the sea by spending a few nights on its surface assumed a superiority which was blasphemy to the sovereignty of the sea.

We had boarded the ship unthinkingly, as though we were being swallowed by a whale. All we cared was that its destination was our destination. Familiar rituals learned from the military’s SOP’s accustomed us to accepting another pause in a series of pauses, a pillow, blanket, mess card and bunk that we were assigned. Some of the compartments that contained the bunks which honeycombed the belly of the ship were barracks-like, but our compartment was a small wedge in the bow of the ship. Its symmetry was as disenheartening as the wedge-shaped chevrons of the sergeant who too had demonstrated a counterfeit sea-worthiness as he had checked us off the master roster when we had crossed the gang plank. But two years of military life helped to dull the impact of sudden, unexplained changes.

Whether in a barracks or in a ship compartment, bunks are bunks. Sleeping in one of the lower bunks was always the same upon awakening on the first morning: who was the stranger this time who caused the webbing of knitted wires to dip in suspension above you? But, faces were masks and bodies were lumps, so you accepted, and the ship was a whale, so you imagined, not anxious to know us or to absorb us, but to cough us up.

Card games and conversation which masquerade as constructive time-killing can break the inertia of monotony for some and reading and sleeping provide an exile from military togetherness for others. The quiet one in our compartment occupied the top bunk of the tier one over to my right. Noticeably quiet from the first day, he effectively had fenced in his solitude. We had not offered our friendship
nor had he offered his. His bout with sea sickness had not endeared him to the members of our small compartment, and it seemed that his state of exile was both self-imposed as was it the result of a deliberate quarantine imposed by us.

After a windy and chilly day had kept most of us below, the weather warmed and the clusters who had huddled below broke up and formed new conglomerates topside where they still huddled from habit or from the discomfort of the still brisk sea breezes. I had finished eating and had decided to go up and walk the decks. I saw the quiet one leaning on the rail staring out at the horizon. I walked up to his side and spoke to him. He responded with a small, contrived grin which acknowledged that he knew I was a fellow compartment mate and not just another of the multitude on the ship. We talked about the ship and the sea, about our recently concluded duty stations and he relaxed in the comfort of our both being Southerners. I asked, “I guess that you are looking forward to getting home and returning to civilian life again? Have your folks planned a big homecoming for you?” Awkwardly he started, unsure whether to extend a thread which would allow me to unravel the ball of words and thoughts that he carried in his solitude.

“Well... I guess my old man is gonna look at me get off th’ bus, kinda grin, maybe shake my han’ with a good firm grip... and maybe even give me a good hug. He’s not real emotional—and I don’t reckon I want him t’ be. But I don’t reckon Mama will be so slow t’ cry ‘little. I’m the youngest of three boys and she’ll be glad all the military goin’s and comin’s is over. She’s been thinkin’ ’bout me comin’ back since I left for overseas almost two years ago.”

He paused for a moment and added, “My brothers and their wives prob’ly will be along and they’ll be grinnin’ and slappin’ me on the back.” I somewhat anticipated that he might ask how my reception at home would be, but he did not ask. Instead, he changed the direction of his thoughts and continued to allow the momentum of his initiative to explore the contours of his inner feelings. I listened while he projected most of his conversation away from me toward the blank horizon. His mannerisms seemed a combination of shyness and a trace of embarrassment resulting from his sudden divulgence of long-captive thoughts now escaping in the presence of a stranger.

He turned and asked, “Have you ever lived on a farm?”
"No," I replied, "but would living in a county seat in an agricultural part of the state be satisfactory?" He smiled and seemed to get some slight assurance from my effort to relate to his newly revealed identity. Turning again toward the horizon, he reflected, "These days on this boat shore do get mighty long, don't they? Kinda like those long summer days back home. I've been seasick and I came up here hopin' to breathe some fresh air—thought I might get t' feelin' better. I think my worst is over . . . Have you been seasick yet?"

Sheepishly I smiled when I said, "A little." I felt that he was aware that his seasickness had made him an outcast in our compartment and I tried to ease his burden. "That second night when the ship's bow rose and fell so much was my worst," I answered, "but I escaped without any real nausea." Still unsatisfied, I continued, "I had expected to get seasick because this is my first time at sea and I just knew I would get seasick right off the bat." Again I paused, then added, "I was lucky the first time—I flew over from the States, but my luck ran out on the return trip."

He shook his head a little. "At least you got t' fly over. There ain't no damn justice like that for me. I've had a boat ride both ways and both times I got seasick. I thought I'd make it this time—but I didn't," he sighed. "I think it's the ship. Would you believe this is th' same damn ship I came over on? . . . I reckon it was meant for me t' have this ship and ocean messin' my stomach up. I don't think I'll be ridin' any more ships—never!"

I interrupted, "Have you always wanted to be a farmer or will you try something else?"

"I always wanted to farm," he answered quickly. "I'll be on the home place. It's the place where I was born. It'll take some time for me t' save up enough money to make a down payment on a loan t' start my own place. My old man prob'ly will help me get started—might let me rent from him for 'while. One of my brothers has my Mama's old place that my Grandpa left t' her. My older brother got too much education and decided he didn't want t' farm. But not me. When I was growin' up I went every where with my old man. It's funny how you can learn so much and not really know you are learnin' it at th' time. I remember I could hardly wait t' learn t' drive a tractor and do my first plowin'. My old man kept the three of us busy doin' 'lot of chores and takin' part in running the whole
place. Seems I always enjoyed doin’ what had t’ be done—so I’ll be glad to get out of the army and get back t’ bein’ my own boss for a change.”

Realizing that perhaps he was becoming too reminiscient, he asserted, “You won’t be too far from us in Hyattsville—you’ll have to come over and see th’ place we got. We got plenty o’ room at the house . . . why we might even let you slop the hogs, or somethin’!” We both smiled when he said “slop the hogs” for he knew I was vulnerable. He knew I had no intimacy with farm life, much less feeding hogs.

“I’ll have to take you up on your invitation,” I replied. “I wouldn’t be much help, I admit. You farmers have too much versatility and I don’t believe that I would have the kind of patience needed to get through a season if I were a farmer. There seems to be too many uncertainties, but I guess that goes for anything one tries to do.” He had let me rattle on, let me make my excuses. I had expected an attitude of “well, let me tell you ‘bout that” to be his response, a form of chiding me for my ignorance. But his thoughts were running in a different channel.

“Ain’t it funny,” he began, “that it took man s’ long t’ figur’ out how t’ scratch a hole in the groun’ and drop a seed in it and watch it grow. A farmer does ‘lot of waitin’. I bet that first farmer had his patience tried more than once, waitin’ on them first seeds t’ sprout up . . . Why I guess a farmer’s got more patience than a preacher try’n to get all his sinners t’ quit sinnin’. My old man goes out and walks in his fields as if he was somethin’ special to them seeds, sorta like a preacher does when he visits his congregation members. Takes ‘lot o’ patience for a preacher t’ lis’n t’ all them excuses he hears. Sometimes, Mama and my old man will drive out in th’ pick-up t’ some of th’ fields. They’ll look at th’ crops and they’ll of’en walk together in the fields in the late afternoon, after its done cooled off. He’s told her earlier that he wants her t’ see how th’ crops is doing—kinda like she does when she wants t’ show off her cannin’ in th’ pantry. But . . . my old man won’t say much, if anything, while they walk together in the fields. I know he can hear them seeds growin’ . . . some of ‘em givin’ excuses for bein’ s’slow, s’runty. He don’t want no talk outta me, Mama, nobody, when he walks up them field rows. He prob’ly might mumble t’ himself, but he’s waitin’ on them seeds, sizin’ ‘em up. He don’t shave ever mornin’ . . . he’ll just rub his whiskers and I know he’s ponderin’ ’bout what he’s seein’ ’fore his eyes.”
He paused, then pointed to the mass of water beyond the ship’s rail. “Take all that water out there. My old man’s never even seen the ocean. He prob’ly wouldn’t even go swimmin’, but he’d think t’ himself: ‘what a waste—all that water out there and it full o’ salt!’ Sometimes, durin’ a real dry spell, when we need some rain, we’ll look up at th’ sky day after day and try t’ pray a cloud and hope for some rain. ‘Lot o’ times it’ll rain all round us, but we stay dry as a bone. When it really gets dry, Mama gets concerned ’cause she knows my old man’s gettin’ worried by now. She’ll ask him how th’ crops are lookin’ and he’ll say, ‘shore would like t’ get a good rain ’fore ever thing burns up.’ That seems to answer her question, ’cause she won’t bother him with no more small talk ’bout the drought unless she tells him how it’s burnin’ up her little vegetable garden and flowers. She knows his mind is somewhere out there in them fields with all them seeds . . . Mama kinda gives my old man a temporary divorce durin’ the summer. She knows he’s done gone back t’ his first love. He don’t ever say so out loud t’ anybody, but he’s in love with that dirt. It ain’t just ordinary dirt to him—it’s real precious. Mama ain’t jealous or nothin’ . . . she’s just learned t’ get ’long with her competition.” In an afterthought, he concluded, “She’s got ’lot o’ patience, too, come t’ think ’bout it.”

The ship’s loudspeaker blared the last call for mess. The quiet one asked if I had eaten yet. “Yes,” I replied. Then he said that since he was beginning to feel like trying to eat, he ought to take advantage of this last call. He turned to go. “Be seein’ you,” he waved, and he disappeared down the steps of a stair-well.

There was a smile of relaxation on his face as he left. The furrow of tension between his eyebrows had almost disappeared and the drawn muscles that had highlighted his somewhat boney face relaxed into softer contours. I guessed that it was a combination of his feeling better from his bout with the ship and the sea, their being alien to all he had known and endured by living on a farm. The mysteries of the sea had provoked his respect, but not his affection. The smell of salt air and the throb of the too abundant sea created uncertainties which knew no resolution as when rain ended a drought, as when a seed became stalk and leaf under the sun. Yet, in jousting with the vagaries of the ship, the sea, the military experience he had crossed the diameter of a new endurance. He knew, as we all knew, that the whale was about to cough us up.

Heyward Gnann

25
Negatives of brass, carved saints.
A moment caught in dark light, obscure whiteness.
Did the craftsman at the first intend
some chimerical pun
On future bendings of the rays of time?
Here stands a statement of negatives, a question
Based upon Plotinus’ sum of things
relative.

Negatives become a thousand genuflections
to the sun, to time.

Sandra Hanner
A reflection is an illusion,
An image seen on a surface.
With no substance, no reality;
Only the illusion of reality.

We can never know real things,
Only the illusion of things.
Illusion is a metaphor;
There is no reality in a metaphor.

Reflection is a metaphor,
Literature is a metaphor,
A pretty girl's face in a mirror
Is a metaphor for the real thing.

John Bailey
NOTES ON BREVITY

It's a lovely but very short
Trip you take
This thing called life
With blue skies and green
Pastures that smell so
Sweet and alive—
With sunsets setting fire
To the face of the sea.
It's really short but
There is something that
Would be ruined should
Life be any longer
Than it turns out to be.
You would not know
the lessons
Men learn by being
Aware of hours slipping by.
One day as a child you stand
by a white yard fence and
without your knowing it
days go by and
You are a man and in the clouds
you see orchestras playing,
Lovely symphonies for free,
And people stand around
Listening with their hearts,
Looking up into the ever
Deepening blue.
They're in love with this
World from this beautiful view.
But look, sad things
crowd the eye too,
Ten million dead in our lifetime
without hailing the beauty of spring.
Millions of voices never to sing,
Thousands of girls who never love,
Generations of boy-children covered
blood.
While others dance on the puppet string
in life-long sadness.

But for the ones
who can never be,
I'll love the time I have,
aware of,
but unsaddened,
by brevity.

Bobbe Whitfield
HOUSEHOLD DREAMS

Barby and Ken have set the date,
And she lies dreaming of
A flower bed in the kitchen window
And yellow curtains with daisy borders
And cookbooks and tabasco sauce,
And Kenny.

But is she ready to trade her life
For these household dreams,
And "As the World Turns" while ironing shirts
And a pound of ground beef and butter
And a spice rack over the sink?

Becky Gravitte
IF FOR FRIENDS
If our words were always kind ones,
And our conversations always right,
If we never had a quarrel,
And our smiles were always bright,
We’d not be the two good friends
That we are today;
For it takes both the sun and rain
To make a rainbow, they say.
E. A. O’Quinn

CHATTER
Stick with the crowd, don’t move on your own,
Don’t raise your voice or become unstrung.
Talk, talk with unknowing authority,
Stay with the conversation,
Unless you speak boringly.
Gary Anderson

Carelessly spoken words
words meaning nothing becoming tiny unseen darts,
darts thrown without aim
once airborne must
strike something.
The target was not the purpose, only the result.
Beth Gagnon
HEY, LITTLE BOY

Hey, Little Boy!
Will you run through clover meadows?
Will you hear the Robin sing?

Will you know the twilight shadows
That a summer evening brings?
Will your lips taste cool sweet
Water of a mountain rippling stream?

Will you pick fresh summer berries
That grow near the pasture gate?
Will you climb the Apple tree
Just to get a stomach ache?

Will you swim in Indian waters that
Mighty warriors once called home?
Will you kiss your sweet mommy
When from play you come home?

Will you kneel by your bed each night
Your head bowed, eyes closed real tight,
And say a prayer to God above
For giving you so much to love?

All these memories of my childhood
I would now bequeath to you.
All these simple joys and pleasures
I would pass along to you.

Take them now, I give them gladly,
They are just for children’s use.
And when you feel that you’ve outgrown
Them, give them to another youth.

Narcissy Carolyne Karr
LONELINESS

People all around me,
Voices everywhere,
But all I feel is loneliness,
Its presence always there.

Like a blanket spreading
O'er me,
Like a prison with no doors,
In the darkness without hope
of light,
On a sea that has no shores.

A war that lasts forever
And peace the silenced drum.
I don't know where it all
began
Or if an end will come.

God save the souls of others
From a fate of life like mine.
To be among the living dead
Is like a hell Unsung.

Narcissy Carolyne Karr

A BROKEN HEART

A heart is such a little thing
But so easily it breaks
And then so very difficult
To mend together and remake.

It takes only one harsh word
To break a loving heart,
And then a lot of tender love
To repair the broken parts.

Death so often breaks the heart,
And sorrow fills the gaps
While years of tender loving care
Seldom fills the gaps.

So if you have a broken heart,
Remember what I say.
It's as easy to break another heart
As it is to have one break.

Maxey Ladd

35
Where is the Stillness of Peace
My Son?
Where is the Stillness of Peace?
Does it come at the close of the battle day?
Does it come when the battles all cease?

Where is the Stillness of Peace
My Girls?
Where is the Stillness of Peace?
Does it come at the sound of your happy voice?
Does it come with your sorrow's cease?

Where is the Stillness of Peace
My Love?
Where is the Stillness of Peace?
Does it come with your eager footstep?
Does it come with your love's increase?

Where is the Stillness of Peace
For Me?
Where is the Stillness of Peace?
It is here in the house with those I love.
It is here in the midst of these.

Martha Hatcher

FRIENDS

They're gone, no one around,
Sadness, neglect. Once on the
Pedestal, now on the floor.
Not with it anymore.
They move, they go, they have their affairs.
The disease, watch it spread, they laugh but
Inside they dread.
Sadness, neglect, the mitt of age,
We'll just turn the page.

Gary Anderson
SALUTE TO A DEAD PRESIDENT

There's a twinkle
Of lights
On the snow;
A ribbon
Of moonbeams
On the river.

Around the tall shaft
The flags
Are all flying
Dipping and tossing
Halfway up each staff.

There's a sparkle
Of Christmas
In the circle;
A frosting
Of silver
On white columns.

Around the tall shaft
The flags
Are all flying
Bowing and curtseying
Halfway up each staff.

There's a fondness
Of remembrance
In the papers;
A slowing of traffic
On the streets.

Around the tall shaft
The flags
Are all flying
Saluting and waving
Halfway up each staff.

There's a feeling
Of sadness
For old friends;
A sharing
Of memories
Under the dome.

Around the tall shaft
The flags
Are all flying
Sober and respectful
Halfway up each staff.

Martha Hatcher

37
quickly you hang up the phone
putting it up and in,
knowing it takes fifteen minutes to get there
but hoping it'll only take ten.
quickly you ask him the questions
how much, what of, and when.
he’s lying there screaming his ass off.
jesus, will this nightmare ever end.
i’m right here man, i’m with you
kneeling here by your side.
you try to stay cool with what’s happenin’
you’ve already had one friend who died.
he’s saying i’ve got stomach cramps
and very bad pains in my head.
sweet jesus, make him stop saying
that he knows, he’s sure he’s dead.
quickly you call the clinic
for a very fast ambulance car
’cause talking him down ain’t workin’
the flip-out’s gone too far.
now you’re ridin’ in with the siren,
please, jesus, don’t let it be.
you keep talkin’ to your friend, man,
but you’re scared it’s a bad o.d.
white walls, white walls all around you
this is such a bad bum.
please, please let me have him,
let me have him and i’ll take him home.
down the hall they’re pushing his stretcher,
my god, there’s a sheet on his head.
at first it doesn’t hit you
then you think, jesus god, he’s really dead.
to keep the tears inside you
you really have to try,
then anger comes forth when a nurse says
there but for the grace of god, go i.

Karen Williams
UNE PERQUISTION POUR L’AMOUR

All of my life I have been searching
for something
A search of frustration and wonder
for I did not know what I sought.

Then I found beauty
in a smile,
in a bird in flight,
in a delicate blossom,
in the twinkle of a star.

Then I found peace
in the pain of my own tears,
in the pain of your tears,
in being alone,
and feeling empty—

Then I found happiness
in walking,
in talking,
in thinking,
in being—

And then I knew love
in beauty,
in peace,
in happiness,
in You.

And each day of searching
seems wonderful
and worthwhile—

For now I have you and we can search,
dream,
and love
together.

E. A. O'Quinn

39
Hand in hand through the world they go.
Lips to lips, a love that glows.
Tomorrow's future is yesterday's unseen past.
The unanswered question—will this love last?

Marcheta Ballew
I know a man,
who laughs with me.
Never at me.

I know a man
who does his best
always.
Yesterday, today, tomorrow.

I know a man
who lives for people.
The joy he can bring
The wounds he can heal.

I know a man
who is strong,
in his thoughts,
and actions,
and beliefs.

I know a man,
who knows how to love.
Who is tender
with those he loves.

I know a man,
And I Love him.

Bobbe Whitfield
LOVE STORY

I found a little Inch-Worm
So "Inches" was his name.
His fancy was a Lady Bug
Who loved him just the same.

I've never met a couple
Nor seen a happier pair,
Than my friend the Inch-Worm
And his lady fair.

I put them in a paper cup
And they came crawling up the side.
My friend the Inch-Worm
And his little bride.

Across my hand and up my arm
Crawled the loving pair.
My friend the Inch-Worm
And his lady fair.

Over my shoulder and on my neck
Just to whisper in my ear,
Came the little Inch-Worm
And his Lady Bug dear.

Now what he said is a secret
That I can never tell to thee,
But there'll never be a sweeter story
In all of history.

E. A. O'Quinn
Once when my world was gray and dying,
Someone stepped in; a bright star shining
with words endearing, took away my
fearing.
The fearing, the years, the soul killing
tears,
All brought on by unfamiliar jeers.
The wants, the needs, the emotions we
shared
Lost in a moment, and no one who
cared.
Darkness came.
Once again I was alone.
Alone with my world all gray and dying
No one stepped in; no bright stars
shining.

Marcheta Ballew

I GOT THE BLUES

icy windows
naked trees
half opened curtains
a few falling leaves
I got the Blues
that nothing will please

listenin’ to Dylan
ain’t nothing fair
feelin’ my feelings
and a draft of old air
I got the Blues
and my soul is laid bare

startin’ to rain
life’s a joke
sometimes I wonder
if dead bodies float

Karen Williams

43
God needs us
If we didn't exist
Who would believe in God?
“Remembrance and reflection how allied!  
What thin partitions sense from thought divide!”

—Alexander Pope
REFLECTIONS