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BRUSHING



FALL 1974

*Brushing is published in Fall and Spring by the
Student Association and printed by Rollins College,
Winter Park, Florida 32789.*

Cover by Ellen Cox

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Autumn Morning

Diane Spalding

Before Dawn

That light before dawn
Is brighter
(by contrast to the gray
and indistinct horizon)
Than dawn itself.

Waking;
Rolling across
The Kansas plain
In a January morning sharp
With brittle tumbleweed,

Behind the earth's edge
Lies the
Looming orange
Band, looming
Orange;

So within itself
That it hurt to see
Because I saw
Too much
Alone.

Robert Lemon

The Sediments Came Drifting

The sediments
came drifting. I
was a shell, lifeless, around me
just water, salt
and water.

I turned on my stomach; the
sediments came
drifting. They covered me;
where my back was
a hump
the sediment began a hill.
The Universe will be warped!

Ames McDaniel

I Look Into One of Your Eyes and See an Image Altered

How am I contained in your eye?
An eye that is green (and mine is blue).

An eye that is drawn
To a shock of white birch
In late autumn, when all I see
Is the blackness of another year past.

That eye enjoys the resolution and symmetry
Of a shoelace just tied.
I see a network of taut, bound nerves
Across a stifled tongue.

What happens in that green eye
That causes it to be drawn to my face
Whose own eye is framed by scars
Because I have enforced a vision on others?

I turn my eye in on itself
To try to discover what yours can see.
I am blind with twisted chords,
Exposed muscle, and nerve tips.

Then, unguarded in my sleep, I look to see in
On myself, and turn in the bed, restless.
When I awake the dream has wandered
Into the comfort of forgetfulness.

How am I contained in your eye?
An eye green (and mine is blue).

Robert Lemon

Euripides Reduced

Euripides retells the tragic tale
Of how the chaste Hippolytus would wail
Through woodlands, hot in chase of hound and deer,
Yet spurn the race of women at his rear.
A beautiful but scornful youth he was,
For only Artemis claimed his applause
In celebrations cold, austere, and pure,
Devoid of Dionysian rapture and allure.
He reigned his stolid passions as he checked
His chariot steeds and trained them to respect
His bark, their bits, the sharp stings from his whip,
And never let his heart nor horses slip.
Great Aphrodite, miffed at being ignored,
Despised this haughty boy and had him gored
By Neptune's bull upon the Athenian strand,
Which goes to show that if you choose to stand
For Chastity, spurn women, be a prude —
Watch out: instead of screwing, you'll get screwed.

Alan Nordstrom

frustration
 or
 relief
words carrying painted images
different for each who reads them
many meanings
 not always intended
 to be there
sometimes rhyming
 forever climbing
to express emotions or thoughts
the poet must be an expert at
freeing himself from the concrete/
reaching the precision of his art,
he spins an intricate web
 of ambiguous reality
not in order to trap,
 but rather for
 the beauty
 of the web itself.

Pat Forte

Sun Spider

Spider splendor spun; grasping gossamer glistening
 caught drifting
into this masticated mesmerizing mesh . . .
 no life lust lost.
This nightswept morn
 I have found my pathway to the sun.
He came to seek me out on dewdropped chariot
 and shone on my spinning spider
weaving me into this web of wonder . . .
Smitten under beams of honeydust
 the grass fingers danced rhapsodically
and the scintillating sands turned silver.
Yet no one saw but the sun, the spider, and I.
Together we sang simple spider sonnets
 to the oceans
And dreamed of honeysuckle smiles.

Nancye Ausbon



Country Porch.

Larry Pence

On Reminiscing at Intermission

Country roads still smell of my tadpoled youth
and I no longer shrink
from melted chocolate on faded backseat vinyl
or that Daddy smelled of rubbing alcohol
as I hid behind the old cedar chest
munching the last of the blackberries
from a brown paper bag.

. . but the curtain falls on final bows
and through dimmed eyes

I am halfconscious of rearview mirror reflections;
fading streetlights form a vague,

but merciless "V" in roads behind me.

It is closing night on one more performance;
the mutilated wing healed with popsicle sticks
. . and a few foolish tears.

Nancye Ausbon

The Actor

I'm going to learn my lines.
You see, I'm in the school play,
 and
I want them to be proud of me.
I'm the dead man;
I've got a lot to say.

Jack took his wife Sue
To a doctor he knew
And complained that she
 kept getting thinner.
When told she was dead,
Jack smiled and said,
"I thought she was quiet at dinner."

Some think that none shall ever see
a poem lovely as a tree.
But if that tree be gnarled or dead,
a poem might possibly come out ahead.

Paul Malluk

Willow Tree

They played beneath the willow tree, all the afternoon
Idling with their lives; bartering tin spoons.
Shopping for a victim of specific shape and size,

People went in charity for the sake of their souls
Tossing down nickels, pocketing goals —
Smiling that children still worked for a prize.

They rolled down the awning in heated haste
rooting their tongues with ready lies
desperate to squander mysteries.
Plucking with lust at every bone.

Mary Koral

F.S.T. Vibes

triumphant changing
your form a whispering
metamorphosis: a fire
dancer dancing
tongue of flame you speak
the center of your mind
the only constant in a
fluid uncontained.
a color abstraction
hot wax a dye
in molecular motion
through water that is
air that is a solid
that has no binding force

Eileen Craddock

Micklejohn

I swear I had nothing to do with it. Really. Absolutely nothin' You have to believe me. You see, I don't know what happened. When it started, I was takin' my usual at Harry's, samplin' the froth and consumin' the food, when all of a sudden this character straight out of a movie strolls in. He was dressed real fancy for these parts (and especially for a place like Harry's, which wasn't anythin' ritzy, if you take my meanin'), but if that wasn't enough, he had this . . . thing with him. It was about three feet high, and I guess the closest description I could give would be of a fat, greenish squirrel. Except no squirrel I ever saw was three feet tall or green. It looked downright unnatural, and somebody in the place said so.

"Good Lord, it's one of the Devil's own critters!"

Now, Sticksville's always been a Godfearin' town, and we hold pretty definite views on the works of Old Nick, but I'm not sure that it was wise of old Tim Reagan to insinuate that that critter was . . . well, you know, a demon or somethin' like that. The funny-lookin' gent's eyes slid over in Tim's direction, and the room felt a mite chilly for a minute. Then the stranger seemed to relax, and he wandered up to the bar.

"What's the house special, good barkeeper?"

I tell you, he sure talked funny. Harry just stared; I'm not sure which puzzled him more, the intimation that there was a "house special" or bein' called "good barkeeper." Harry's not exactly good-natured.

"Beer. That's it, mister."

Like I said, Harry's not 'specially outgoing'.

The stranger didn't even blink. "Two, please."

After takin' a good snort, he nodded and handed the other mug to the critter. Old Harry's eyes bugged out and he started to splutter.

"Now, wait a minute, I'm not licensed to serve critters.—As a matter of fact, that critter shouldn't even be in here. It's against the law!"

The stranger took it calmly. "I believe that law applies only to harmful animals. You aren't suggesting that Micklejohn here is a harmful animal, are you?"

Harry blurted, "How should I know? It don't look like any natural critter I've ever seen!"

The stranger shrugged. "I suppose I'll have to prove it to you.—Micklejohn!"

The critter took its nose, sticky with froth, out of the mug, and wandered over to its pal. It made a soft noise, which sounded like a cross between a Jew's-harp and a kazoo, if you can imagine such a combination. The stranger whispered somethin' in its ear, and the critter buzzed back to him.

All of a sudden, that crazy critter just blurred and melted into itself, and all kinds of beautiful colors and music . . . appeared. How, I'm not sure. It was just . . . there. But it was grand.

Old Tim Reagan jumped up, knockin' over his chair. "It's the Devil's work! Get thee gone, Satan!"

The stranger just smiled a condescendin' smile. "Yes, of course; I had almost forgotten. The primitive tendency to attribute any unknown quantity or occurrence to the forces of

evil." He stepped forward and bowed. "I apologise if I am disappointing you, but I am not the Devil. I am merely a weary traveler."

I spoke up, havin' finally pulled myself together. "I know what you are! You're one of them space travelers from another planet, right?"

The regulars started laughin'. "Don't pay any attention to Sam there," Dick Trent chocked. "He's so wrapped up in them crazy flyin'-saucer stories, he can't think of anythin' else!"

Well, the stranger just kept quiet, but I saw him look at them and then at me real sharplike. Then he turned to them again. "Well, gentlemen? Would you care for another demonstration of Micklejohn's talents?"

They all murmured amongst themselves, and I got kind of scared that the stranger would leave. I did want to see those colors and hear that music again.

Well, I just blurted, "Yes!" and the guys all laughed some more; but the stranger just nodded and said, "Micklejohn, oblige the gentleman."

It was beautiful. The colors were everywhere, all shades of the rainbow, and I somehow could even hear and feel 'em. The music made all sorts of shivers run down my spine, and it was carryin' me along, just softly swayin' through soft billows of cushiony air. From the murmurs of astonishment and contentment, I gathered the regulars were feelin' the same thing. I tell you, I don't know what that crazy critter was doin', but I sure enjoyed it.

After a while, it stopped, and there was that greenish squirrel again, stickin' its nose into the beer mug.

"Well, gentlemen?" the stranger asked again. "Do you think Micklejohn here is dangerous?"

Heads shook furiously; I doubt anyone disagreed.

I did notice, though, a speculative look in Harry's eye, and I could just see the cogs goin' round in his mind. If he could buy the critter, he could triple his business and make a mint. I have to admit that the idea made sense; that critter would be one dilly of an attraction. Soon the whole town would be drinkin' beer all day, every day, just to go through that experience.

"Mister," Harry asked, "how much are you sellin' that critter for?"

The stranger's eyebrows flew up. "I am not selling Micklejohn. Even if I were in a position to do so, I would not dream of doing such a thing."

"He's yours, ain't he?"

I could see the stranger was annoyed. "Micklejohn does not 'belong' to me. He is temporarily my ward, and I am responsible for his welfare."

Harry shrugged. "Hell, that's the same thing. Come on, how much will you take for him? Ten bucks? Twenty?"

The stranger shook his head. "Micklejohn is not for sale."

Harry had a nasty glint in his eye. "Hey, Mick. How'd you like to work for me?"

The critter backed away a couple of steps. I didn't blame it. Harry's beer might be tolerable, but his disposition isn't.

Harry got miffed and came out from behind the bar. "You know," he said to nobody in particular, "it'd be nice if Mick there stayed in town."

The others muttered agreement, and everybody started towards the critter. It retreated hastily and found itself in a corner. I could feel the fear oozin' out of it.

Suddenly the colors and music were back, but this time they were violent and threatenin', loomin' over us like to suffocate us fit to kill. Apparently the critter sort of telegraphed its emotions, and it was scared silly. There wasn't anythin' I could do, though, except hold tight to my nerves and ride the thing out.

I guess Harry was still tryin' to grab the critter, because all of a sudden, chairs and tables started flyin' through the air, smashin' against the bar and sendin' bottles and mugs crashin' to the floor. I just threw myself to the floor and put my arms over my head to protect myself.

By and by, things started calmin' down, and when the dust cleared, I raised my head and sneaked a look around. The place was a shambles. Broken glass and bits of wood were everywhere, swimmin' in pools of suds of ale. The regulars on the whole had followed my example; some were a bit cut up from flyin' glass, but most of us were just beer-soaked. The stranger and Micklejohn had disappeared.

Well, it's been a while since then. Harry's fixed up his establishment, and most of us helped him. After about a week, the uproar died down, and everybody apparently agreed not to talk about that day's goin's-on. That is, everybody but me. I don't know why, but I kind of liked those two characters. Maybe they were from outer space; maybe they weren't. All I know is, it's been mighty dull in Sticksville ever since.

Gerry Wolfson

Did You Miss Me

did you miss me?
by this i mean
was there anything lacking
because i was not there
and i must ask myself
was there anything missing
because you were not here
whatever the answer
they give indication of
just what kind of relationship
is there between us.

it is the woman you want
and not what i am.

Eileen Craddock

Antipodes

I wonder sometimes
How it is my feet
And my hands move
In one direction,
As I walk, let's say.
Is it because
They work the same
As sand and sea
Or white and black?
Given the choice,
They could not do
The very same things
If their digits
Depended on it.
And how does a glove
Resemble a stocking?
When was the last time
I wore a ruby ring
On my little toe?
Can anyone ever see me
Tie my shoelaces
With my feet so that
Brown boy scout oxfords
Cover my hands,
Then walk to the store
Upside down for milk
And with the extra change
Buy myself a moon pie.

Robert Lemon

Father of the Dead

His silvermetal finger
slides
skillfully
along the neck,
while his feet
dance rhythmically
on the
pedals of steel.
He plays nature's
mellow
music,
full of 'tastes
no tongue
can know',
and joys
no hand
can hold:
notes from
alligator scales
beneath
blossoming magnolias.
He smiles from
behind his
bushy beard
in raptured delight
as he drives
that train
high into the night.

Skip Masland

The Night Lyre

Crickets chirp exhilaration through
this insipid web of thought;
country-night sounds
sail in the window on
the windswept breath
of darkness.

The room expands, affording
the air space to breathe
and buzz with mosquito
concertos as Zeus bares his
thunderous baton in electric
sparks of entertainment.

Alive with pure energy,
Night honors Creation
with its existence:
cricket lyres celebrate the
stag's noble death aside
the fawn's birth;

All take part in this
tribute, these eternal
rites of Nature's natives.
As Dawn converges,
feathered sentries signal
the ceremony's end, and

Creatures wistfully retreat
to await the return
of Night's immortal song.

Skip Masland

I was not feigning prophesy
as I stood on the
mountain top,
only fighting for
stability.
But once again I find
myself deep
in the abyss of
the dark search
for
each
day –
my dreams covered
with fear
and my breath,
as distant
as tomorrow.

Susan Shadwell

Winter Came This Morning

with the rain
tinsel strands
that scratched the window pane,
chilled clutching hands
that plucked at autumn's gown.

By noon
the barren sky shivered!
and wrapping a cloak of grey
silk clouds about her shoulders
winter settled slowly to
fast,
to sleep
till spring.

And evening's frozen moon
breathed frost
on autumn's ghost.

Anne Lynch



The Old Man

Bill Knoll

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