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# *BRUSHING*

## **Staff**

Laurie Adams  
Larry Brown  
Cindy Cotton  
Steven Ganthner  
Tobin Hinkle  
Carol Lightbourn, editor  
Scott Sindelar  
Donna Stein

Submissions of poetry are welcome from anyone, anywhere.  
Continuing exchange with other magazines is invited.

Brushing Editor  
Rollins College  
Winter Park  
Florida 32789

**Cover by Carol Edwards**

Marching with uncertain steps  
    across the vernal field  
he felt  
    sharp bursts of spring jets  
batter at his  
    random resolution,  
but to no effect.  
Erect he cut a stiff (though crooked)  
path  
    through long, lean, leaning grass  
that mocked his brittle stance by  
    dancing light responsive answer  
to the touch of  
    rhythmic breezes.

night prayer

raincloud darker than the stars  
drifting through a moonless sky  
  
who knows the whispered indian words  
to make this one return our tears

*armour*

*the next time i sit smoking in your kitchen  
choking on syllables  
embellishing bullets to be fired at your skull  
please remind me of my body  
the next time you take my pants off  
take my books off too  
and throw sartre and mcluhan  
on the floor  
with fruit-of-the-loom  
and playtex dying  
and the other chain mail*

*living in the suburbs*

*i am a victim  
of your red composer hair  
your manhattan movements  
your gangster rasp  
your ethnic nose and cheekbones.  
imagine that.  
murder in the rue levine.  
you can only plead guilty.*

*ambitious*

*we first brought kindling to each other  
from our condemned affairs  
wood from other leveled houses  
erecting our mansion against fierce storms of fear and solitude  
but natural disasters always win.*

*humble then,*

*we save what wood we can  
back to drawing boards and dreams  
surveying land not quite so close to oceans or volcanoes  
the architects of grand desires  
with other hands and hope to help  
we construct new castles on yesterday's foundations  
future victims too of wind and our mistakes*

*as if we need some monument to show  
for all the time-between—  
when bricks and love weep for employment,  
restless in our separate deserts  
where sand sinks every pyramid and prayer  
—we try to beat the elements  
ignorant of forecasts  
playing games with history and weather.*

child i called you  
i am a lonely weaver  
i called you

because of the sordid pavements  
you imagine my needle a crucifix  
you imagine my loom a temple  
my threads are not commandments  
my threads are prayers

your lance tests my flesh  
expecting water mixed with blood  
you look for scars  
in my palms  
in my soles  
in all the wrong places

you love me  
there is no miracle in that  
the parting of the waters is not moises  
it is me  
i am not immaculate

you draft shrines for me  
your scraps of dreams are slaughtered sheep at my feet  
you construct a cathedral  
and light candles in the chapel  
while i am sharing sacraments with satan  
behind the colonnade

it is only the city  
which makes my bed your altar  
it is only the city  
child  
and we are mourners at the wake

we made love on a bad day.

we both knew it.

in the morning i told a friend  
who i thought would like to be with me  
while i waited to bleed.

i might never have thought about it  
if you hadn't mentioned our child's name—  
and i hate you for that,  
even though i must have loved you once  
for a few minutes

riding on a train

or lying limp in a blue light.

that was all before i had begun my vigil.

last week i ran out of ink  
practising how i would tell you  
that i wasn't bleeding.

i made calendars,

counted days,

looked at pictures of fetuses.

at times i didn't want to bleed,  
hoping that you would be there  
to hold my hand

when i was green and ugly

(like Pauline)

when it was all over.

but knowing that another Pauline  
might ask for you in another ward,  
i again kept watch.

yesterday i wrote a letter

to the judge in the city

who wants women to stop bleeding,

who wants our child to be born.

what does he care if our child is born?

i am paying for it already

in cigarettes and sweat.

yesterday i read my horoscope

but it didn't say

when i would start bleeding.

i wrote poems

i drank beer

and wondered if you too

were waiting for me to bleed.

or maybe you were busy making someone else  
drink beer

and wait.

now it's late.

i'm somewhere,

somewhere in a pile of garbage near the drugstore  
please find me.

it is the 33rd day

and i am still

waiting to bleed . . . .



### GOOMBAY

A subtle pulse of rhythm sways a glossy fisherman  
chopping conchs in the harbormarket.  
Unnoticed now by the crowd he writhes  
a touch of caress into the slimy creature.  
His senses quicken under a voodoo charm.  
As his keen ear feels a hollow drum echo,  
slowly, a tribal dancer, he revolves.  
His eye is on a graybeard seaman  
who tests tones on his sheepskin drum  
over a straw fire on the sloop deck  
among the chickens he is harbored to sell.  
Their eyes ponder just a pause:  
the old man raises a slow arm over the drum.  
Drops it.  
The fisherman doesn't flinch, he waits.  
Ashore, bargaining okras and tamarind and soursop,  
a supple youth draws from under the fruit  
maraccas, haitian, with a tempo of rattlers  
beating with the drum a taut rhythm.  
Two small boys sleeping curled up in a box  
like abandoned puppies, wake blinking,  
naked but for whistles on chains around their necks  
which they clutch and blow, shrill and sharp  
noticed now by the crowd — close now —  
swaying shoulders, shuffling feet beating time  
to the sheepskin drum, maraccas, and the whistles.  
Market women selling hats, swinging skirts,  
finding cowbells, clanging, stomping to the drum.  
Native goombay, drum and bell, cast a spell,  
a rushing, throbbing, infective splurge of motion,  
a party for each sense, a hex of passion,  
stops.  
The graybeard seaman blows into his hands, rubs his arms.  
Stamping out the fire on their way his bare feet  
shuffle to the mast: he heaves creaking ropes  
to unfurl gently to the breeze his handsewn canvas.  
Listing slightly as she fills, the sloop motions forward,  
her captain raises a hand. He doesn't look back.  
The boy selling fruit drops a maracca;  
the crowd shuffles,  
and the glossy fisherman raises the machete above his head  
and cracks the shell of a new conch.  
Two little boys with silent whistles hide in the skirts  
of their market mothers, faded and hushed.

## PROCESS

1. Sixteen cigarette ends in a dish  
one sleeping on the edge,  
always the delicious intake of hot air  
to fill with fire a fresh line.  
One inch of cold coffee, cold cup  
can't fill it up  
while there are lines at the foot of the page.  
Paper, so much blank paper  
and then the one with words in margins,  
words in words,  
a doodle displaying character  
and eight pens.
2. Sometimes it hits  
(more secret and satisfying  
than Portnoy's socks)  
the body in a swell of flavour.  
The words taste before they become.  
Not meaning but being a birth:  
so push harder till it moves  
and pulls through the heat  
pours slowly slides  
backwards out in a rush of force  
and the sweat tastes sweet.  
It has become.

summerhill

turn first off  
the main traffic  
wrestle face slapping  
limbs climbing  
up to sea down  
flatrock down  
into pulsing waves  
vessels splintering  
mighty into limestone  
caves and granite cliffs  
have to lie flat  
the wind pushes  
across south land  
other wise dive  
clench whole body  
into fist rooted  
to trees that cannot jump

turn second off  
sky close height  
feet first  
landsliding  
breath holding  
on with frightened  
fingers hanging  
knees first flat  
to flatten body  
on flatrock breathing  
splintered salt spraying  
up to summerhill  
to sky sharp high  
wave stopping precipice  
loosen body dive  
into cushion sea float  
cannot jump, cannot jump

## PORTRAIT OF RAMONA

Take her by what she says  
aloud not on paper  
and what she does with days  
and then thinks of later  
on paper and when the house is dim.

If you presume then I speak of the schizoid two  
think now of what she would do  
were she to see from a beach  
a thunderstorm with radiance on the rim  
of dense clouds she felt would later  
teach her some kind of symbol  
to express perhaps her anxiety.

Like the lawn this morning, a little damp from last night;  
a pattern  
the gardener had driven mown circles  
starting from the outside inside.  
Yours is to question what he did then with the mower.  
It was gone but the style was undisturbed by paths.

Just as the words of the poet  
a pattern, a circle, a question,  
starting from the outside inside  
but the mower is gone;  
lifted up into the sky perhaps?

Or is it that the creator must always become invisible:  
hiding or hidden behind the strong barbed will of his outcome.

And Ramona worries about twos.  
Whether they are one and one  
or really one wound around itself.  
Like the gardener she has lost the mower  
thinking maybe it is her pen which is two  
and she the one wound around itself  
and turned inside in  
on the rim of the thunderstorm.

### A NEED TO DIE

Silhouetted against a grey sky  
Secure on his lofty perch  
A Hawk scans the brown sage  
From the crown of a dead tree.

The bird tilts his head questionably.  
The crescent beak and crystal clear eyes  
Reflect the confidence of a tried foe,  
Haughty, yet noble, in sophisticated insolence.

He can spot a field mouse from a thousand feet —  
Swiftly descend on whispering wings  
From the sun with his shadow leaping  
Capriciously over ridges and terraces.

A hood of innocent brown  
covers the noble magnificence of aloof features  
And winter coat of camouflage brown,  
Blends with soft underbelly  
And feather like down —  
That lead downward to yellow stocking  
Then to powerful feet with talons  
That grip the limb with innocent fierceness.

Two limbs more stolid than the rest  
Stand like arms on the tree's chest.  
What a beautiful sight to inspire  
A depiction by nature that man cannot acquire.

Freedom of spirit to soar on high  
Reserved to wings of eagle and hawk  
While beyond is the great infinity  
Where moon, sun, and stars stalk  
The heavens on lighted stilts.

Freedom of spirit like the butterfly,  
Freedom of spirit —  
Why, Why?  
The cross hairs wavered —  
Then steadied  
The finger trembled —  
Then steadied,

And squeezed.

Five hundred yards  
It sped  
The coat exploded,  
Exploded  
And a king is dead,  
Even as his feathers float  
Downward on the hushed air.

The pickup that had paused  
Starts and unceremoniously rumbles  
On down the dusty road.

acirema

with the lifeless weight of a retrieving lover  
you straddle the words of poets  
driving them nowhere  
but to windows and bridges—  
you are our green mistress  
our poor backward lover  
that milks eager thought  
from tired limbs—  
you've never known sheets  
to be a sultan's tent  
or an austrian snowscape  
but just a place of coming back—  
have you no sense of time  
or is it everyone excusing you  
for your age—  
how long are you young  
to shut your ears from prophesy  
and prostitute Art  
like science, love, and apple pie

acirema for bobby

president wasn't easy for me to say either  
though 1st grade must be more fun now  
than when i was six—  
the rebels were the bad guys  
and the news is saying that the indians  
are at wounded knee  
with cowboys still doing circles round themselves—  
you like history and dates  
lincoln, abraham 1809 to 1865—  
in the head first  
the bass hits the worm  
we must let him run with it  
swallow the hook and  
that swastika you keep drawing backwards  
(i think all kids do that)  
did you know it was Greek, American Indian  
and then hitler's—  
i don't know if i believe that  
about your dad's submarine  
and taking it all the way to hawaii  
on one tank of gas  
or looking through your microscope  
and seeing mars move all around  
but i'd like to—  
i know you're sad batman isn't  
on t.v. any more  
but when you asked me which hand  
was my right  
and shook it  
i hoped some day it would give you more  
than printed circuits and disney worlds

the acrostic art is dying

soon, my eager son  
under the  
illusion of great  
contempt for  
idleness will  
devour time's  
easy way of passing on—

in autumn, he will  
shuffle leaves

between the long  
even fingers of a rake—  
stacking  
their greenless bodies

in a pyre-bound  
nestle for early birds and worms—

soon, he will not father me with  
prayer or  
reach me with his  
insomnious dream of winter—  
growing



**DEATH OF THE PHYSICIAN**

FOR SALE:  
(NEVER BEEN USED)

“ILLUSTRATED ANATOMY AND PHYSIOLOGY  
OF EARTH”

&

“PHARMACOLOGY AND TOXICOLOGY  
OF POLLUTED SYSTEMS:  
A GUIDE TO PREVENTION AND CURE”

## **EPOCH**

from the bonds of earth  
a prisoner escapes, free, at last,  
speeding to an unknown destiny  
amid the jewels of the night.  
a crime? no. little does he know  
of his license plate, an etched fate  
from the dreams of man's desire.  
a thought speeds to the open door,  
an exit for a rendezvous with the past.  
GOOD MORNING ALDEBARAN!!! ALDEBARAN???

## **TO PLEIADES**

Who would believe me anyway . . .  
Smiling, here at the edge of the Milky Way?

**DOWNTOWN AFTER DARK      CALABRITTO**

You are beating your donkey, bundled  
with sticks, because he will  
not move into the open sun.

A crowd gathers, and at first  
they watch. Then they become  
angered, and begin beating  
you with your own sticks.

So you say to your donkey,  
because now he is your  
only friend:

Pardon me, jackass of mine.  
I didn't know you  
had so many relatives  
in Naples.

**HELICOPTER TRAFFIC REPORT**

Good morning you  
sad bastards.  
Progress is slow on  
all your major arteries.

months and weeks go by so quickly now —  
rustling like small dried leaves  
that distinctly, crisply crackle  
in the wind of passings.

i smiled — did i smile?  
it all depends —  
do grapes smile when it's their turn  
to be pressed?

after the pressing it is one  
homogeneous unity  
fellow grape, we are closer now.  
we aren't even

“you”  
and  
“i”

any more.

i wonder how they handle all  
that unity,  
the former self-serving prigs  
now in the blend.

perhaps they're the ones  
who begin the roiling ferment;  
what other reason for their being?

in the ferment  
time seems lost.  
is it coming?  
has it gone?

seemingly suspended  
as we  
blended  
and  
boiled.

after timeless  
weeks - or - months  
of waiting in  
the huge musky  
barrels,  
through the froth's whispers  
faintly  
we heard the rattling rustle  
of leaves.

fellow grape,  
it is time to decant.  
be prepared.

lifeboat

turbid.  
the current  
turgid  
slowtorturously  
confused wanders  
from one misread  
signal to  
the next  
many vagaries thus  
created  
not my fault  
entirely: you  
!  
lightmen  
raise your wicks  
flares  
through that  
subtle ominous  
fog  
'ware shoal!  
oh me smallboats many  
lost

garden fragment

blunt and bloody as a peony  
you burst into the open long enough  
to show some misgivings on your part  
as failures on mine; and i was no flower,  
i could say nothing, thinking my words  
could not possibly fit your ears.

for R. L. H.

door ajar

you lid yourself in under my uncertain  
my calm yet piercing look hard as a zen stone.  
fold up the you, my pig, my fox;  
you no less than a rock may dwell in caves  
and no one shall see, and no one understand.

i do not seek to eat you, all i want  
is to devour your hungers with my own.  
belly to belly a breakfast does not change  
the coming day: the time of waking  
may yet come a time of wordless reaching-out  
no one can hear, no one will know;  
where is your silence, then, when i hear  
your body clearly strongly with my own?

reach out, here you grasp another piece of silence,  
hands hungry as winter wolves, you wordless.

now i give you my silence, in its kernel  
a chambered nautilus, a spiral nebula: portraits.  
and i see and never escape feeling the somehow  
of our being convoluted, inward, so deep inward,  
that it turns us each to the other, bright and sentient,  
an ocean, or a grain of its beaches' sand.

thunderstorms belonging to no one, changes  
are governed solely by the thrust and churn of seasons.  
i smelt the sea in an inland field and knew it  
to be you; an invasion as forceful and welcome  
as the surging power of salt waves.

i swim through the numberless small completions  
the salt is sticky our flesh is warm.  
where is your silence in a sea of suchness?  
too free — too free — — —  
for you to need what you'd meant to be.

being (sh. shy)

& also interested

@ effect: { you. touch. mymind; }  
the thing is,

i

dont know you  
. . . want to

and am in general

confused/fascinated

. . . and ready to runlikehell

collage

the pastille the  
gouache, flat as deft paint  
your caught features

look, the brush is still  
wet, maybe we can fix  
it, but no

color of lifespilt  
blood too intense  
fragmented photo  
lights glared you  
into washout at emerg.  
rm. door #3  
no parking ambulances  
only

you the vehicle.  
she crackup.

## THE GREENING OF OLIVAR DAHL

around a small table with various wine bottles  
standing in pools  
sat four or five card players  
a couple of fools  
had laid down their cards  
and dreamed of holidays and whores  
and haggling in the market place over green peppers  
under the awnings which bloomed at five a.m.

face down one stared at Cupid on his high bicycle

God sat on a lamp above and grinned  
His teeth flashing like mirrors in the heavens  
of the two who still held their cards  
anxiety and imperativeness  
played games on their faces  
as each peeked at his cards and then at the other  
He looked down at the game and  
laughed out loud.

they both stirred and bowed like cats' backs  
they both stretched  
even their toes and noses  
they stared so intently at the center of the table  
that you'd think it would get up and walk away  
mortified  
one raised a dollar or two

a pregnant woman, red haired  
stood off to the side, patting her belly  
tapping her foot  
and her mind ran over the wheat fields  
to the stream, to the ocean  
following the crayfish  
to the beach where fiddler crabs scuttle  
and jelly-fish lie on the sand  
where two old men cast lots for a woman  
while others lie sleeping around them  
they had seen the woman  
and she is dry  
the cat poking in the feathers and dead fish  
found a crab and she chased it into a wave  
she came back wet and soon  
beneath the pilings gave  
birth to four grey, wet kittens



behind the dunes where the terns  
with black faces and yellow bills  
perched on the pilings  
suddenly exasperated  
with the blowing sand and feathers — meow  
one of the men looked irritated, swore  
and threw down his cards  
and went out looking for the prostitute  
on the corner of 45th and Broadway  
a yaller dog padded after him  
grinned God's grin  
the clicking of his heels  
was cicadas in the summer

Olivar Dahl picked up his money  
the green came off on his hands  
the woman smiled, a cat on a beach yawned  
and he stood up, angry and confused  
touching her cheeks and the tip of her nose  
with his green finger  
Olivar filled her head with grass green  
and a cocaine dream of daisies in the sky  
surrounding the white faced old man  
and of three children  
catching grasshoppers in a field of sagebrush  
and roses (for noses)  
the woman sat in the old Ford  
waiting for the rain and the children  
to tumble into the backseat

Olivar, bemused  
absently wiped his hands on his pants  
and turned and walked out, humming  
the green of his fingers was on the seat of his pants  
and on the door knob, smeared  
a long streak down the hall  
where He ran His fingers.

**ON STARING IN A MIRROR**

I.

Theories of men past fade away, creating  
The present — a wanderer; unicorns to horses,  
Life to unlife, forms to faces,  
Staring into space for answers.

This child takes on life but you  
Cannot carry him beyond all  
His eyes devour, all his ears  
Consume, beyond those lying smiles.

Words of meaning ring on, while  
Eyes stare with lustful gleams.  
To the observed, one's body is a shadow  
In morning sun, retracing the path ahead.

Sibyl of Cumae, guide us to worlds  
Of awareness of those passing figures.  
Stupid fools who stand and glare  
At empty images of you and me.

a.

Child! Never doubt the trial of experience  
That forces you to be witness to  
That shadow. For if the court takes  
No pity, there is no second glance.

## FOR REAL

I do not normally deal with fantasy  
For that takes a forward looking mind,  
Not being blessed, I revise the past  
Putting into words that which needn't be said.

I have never versed a fable in thought or word  
And would not like to try my hand at the  
Formation of stories that on being remembered  
Would fall on distorted ears of the future.

You do not try your hand at poker, the stakes  
May be too high. And I wonder if the gun to my  
Head is set to kill. It just never does and  
I would like to ask you to a poker game.

The chairs will be empty, no card table here  
For that game of chance is left for those who  
Hold real guns to their heads.

There are no imaginary images wandering on  
This page, nor do I care how good "their" hearing is  
For I have turned the tide to roasted nuts  
Cold water and a bed to dream on.

**MINUTES AFTER MISUNDERSTANDING**

Hefty night, hoist  
to the board, to this old agenda  
it's time to round again Hark  
you plunder, play  
your gimmick crave cuss I  
come to your Haie! Haie! anon

quiet honk the  
wild goose low at the  
lake ruffling the grey  
handfed gaggle beneath the  
window, graceless,  
too slowheft to lift  
the fading deep at this  
invitation's hour

unthatched  
plotless  
hellheat for home ready  
for wind and  
casual of wing

is the perilous  
dip  
of the petrel

Slow as jasmine  
sleep the madigral adjourned  
morning hauled  
heft again, flat the lake and  
empty of fowl  
to the surfacing directives

fern spackles the shoreline

It is day  
for this:  
gathered  
waited

A thousand streets had bade me turn  
A thousand bade me speak to learn  
                of inner things  
long speeding cross deciding ways  
the poet chants but the poet stays  
                on an unimpeded course  
all chance is left coincidence  
proclaimed to be thus i present  
                it upon this stage  
to star in roles of poetry  
that tempt and tease eternity  
                which still stands guard  
to halt me as i thrust my sword  
in that direction that must be towards  
                the heart of truth  
but slapped down to the arid earth  
alas i turn my eyes to mirth  
                and toast the chance that was

stolen minutes in unwanted time  
a foreign pen or pencil  
with paper undersized but for a note or two  
writing on my knee, propped against another chair

a public place  
or enclave on drafted impulse

IN SHE STANDS

upsetting  
apprehension at my unexpected posture

gathered once again determined not to lose this thought  
for a hideously odd chance, continuing

unrushed and patient with myself  
each word comes unstuttered  
this one part of me caught in silhouette  
treasured, put into a pocket to be saved.



STILL. SCENE

The picture strictly seen  
stands still  
protruding flat  
without depth, side or back  
yet the contours continue  
going back  
into and over  
breathing despite the fact.

MESSAGE

Bring me  
lake lilies  
    rain swept  
and water  
lapped  
    tie them  
to dinghy bows  
and send them  
down stream  
to me  
    I will be  
waiting at  
the landing  
    heart hung  
like snowed  
pine limbs  
    bending in  
weather  
    wanting your  
gifts.  
    Buy me  
buckets of blue  
well water to  
wet willow roots  
with  
    I will render  
you roof rain.







Wanda Sert



