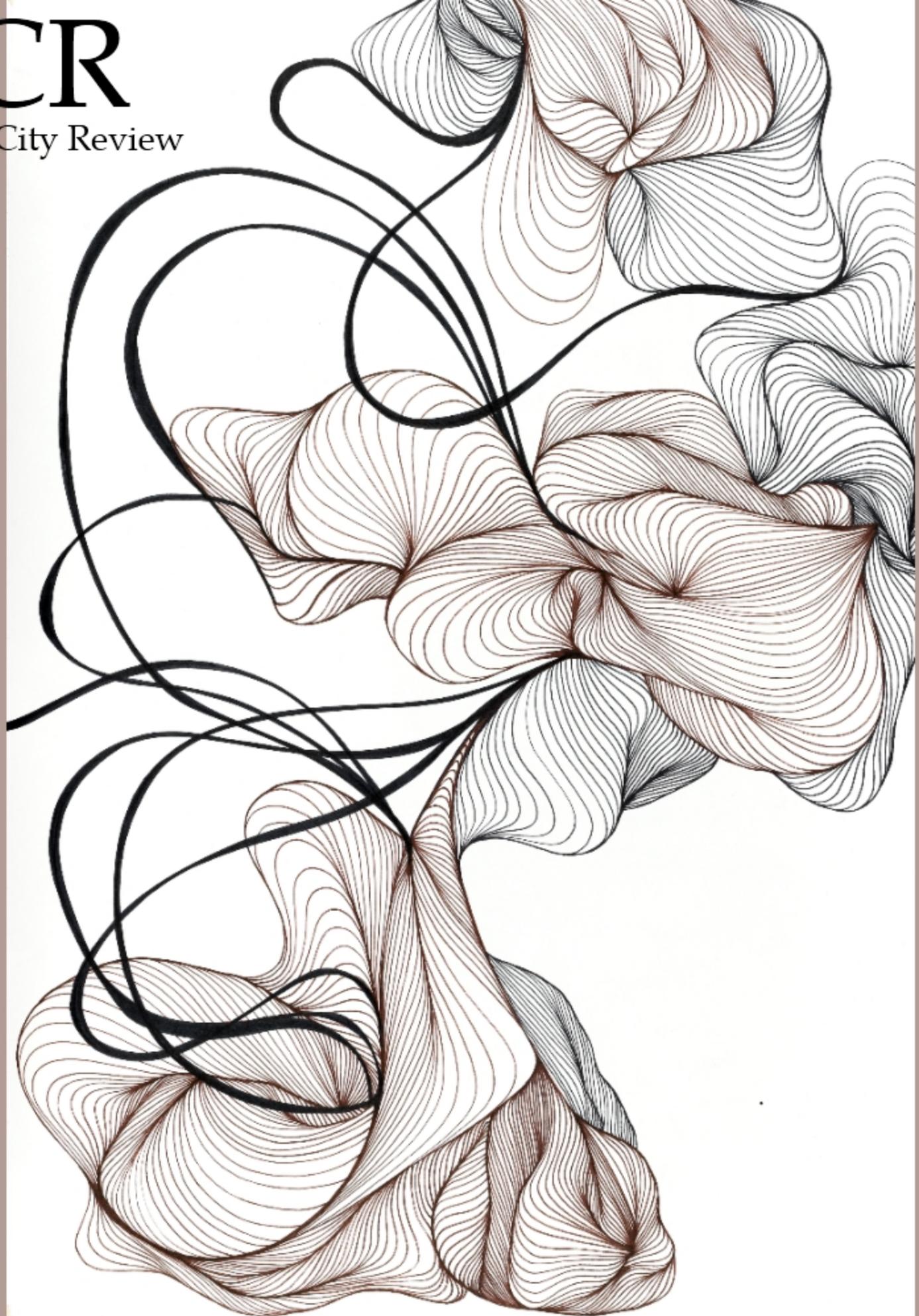


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Rufous City Review



Rufous City Review

Where Industry Encounters Raw Earth
Issue 3 2011

Rufous City Review

Masthead

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Rufous City Review

Introduction

Here you will find the third installment of Rufous City Review, filled with smoke and sand, and at least a few birds between. Finding the right poems for these pages was a struggle, but slowly these winter months proved to provide some of the most wonderful examples of the music language can inspire. Whether you are being seduced or sacrificed, enjoy your stay.

Mary Mackey

The Kama Sutra of Kindness: Position Number 4

you claim that you long for me the way
a drowning man longs to breathe

poised above me tortured as a saint
you pause then descend speaking
with a tongue that tastes of honey
and salt

reason be damned

look
even the light around has
changed

The Kama Sutra of Kindness: Position Number 5

in the flame
of a single candle entire cities
are appearing
and disappearing

my hands tremble on you
my fingers pass through you
your tongue tastes like apples
your flesh is fog

above our roof the jealous moon
has torn a hole in the sky

Tom Sheehan

When Blue Fails

1.

Your dress over the arm
of a chair. Dinner waiting.

2.

A cup your father gave you.
on the back of a shelf.

3.

Sheer petals between paddock
and palaver, booked forever.

4.

My nail.
Your shawl.

5.

Wallpaper in a friend's hallway,
where no light happens.

6.

This forearm vein a doctor
tries, calls it anfractuous.

7.

My paint pants, three times
in the trash. Recollected.

8.

A moment lost in air.
When I was cold, and six.

9.

A pal's pet pigeon on Dec-
ember eave, stilled.

10.

May fog under streetlight,
my brother sea-bound in '42.

11.

A song in a back room, the words
I cannot remember.

12.

The sky, the last time
you let go,

how it sifts itself out,
filling other places, other eyes,
falling all the way into poems.

Janet A. Baker

White Sage

When it crumbles and puckers its way
down the slopes of Southern California,

have you seen bumblebees fight their way into it?
deserts gentle and overspread with it?

have you seen it change
from its form in this world into smoke?

did you wash your soul with it?
have you seen it bind to your sadness

and carry it away?

Amy MacLennan

Smoking With the Window Open

Just like her father, she smokes on long drives,
needs more than the radio, peeling billboards,
neon signs.

With him (a hardpack always
on the dash), she pressed the lighter. When it
snapped out, his saffron fingers brought
the cigarette to life, smoked gently,
no harsh streams, just a cloud,
sprinkler steam on August cement.

Once, the cherry flipped out the window,
but he didn't care. She had dreams after that,
of sparks in roadside grass, of brushfires
flaring up and eating the road, following their car
until they ran out of gas.

Her own hands,
tobacco-stained now, use the ashtray.
Only once did she forget. Her ring gave a dull clink
on the window, and she jerked the cigarette back,
crushed it out, tried not to think of fire
smoldering in the weeds to rise
in the night as she drove farther from home.

Matt Kolbet

Proxy

My German student tells me that ersatz
means something else in her language.
All this time the word implied false to me,
the letter y playing at being a vowel,
not extra. After her query in class —
or is it a correction? — I feel as though
another dimension has been added to life.
When I walk home, I understand that
shadows can be wet, not just dark.
Dinner alone isn't an epilogue.
I think about growing older, that I'll be
eligible to run for president when the next
election arrives; suddenly the future,
which was an Aspirin white dawn,
is liberating. I remember the morning
my wife called to tell me she was dying,
and how free we both felt at the time.
We ate ice cream until we were sick.
To this day my stomach turns at the smell
of chocolate, especially in graveyards.

Howie Good

Helping Verbs

1

I wish I were a tree,
so my branches would shake,

birds scattering in alarm
and then returning.

Sun pours into
the woodpecker's

eyes.

2

One arrow points left,
the other, right,

toward a mother
fleeing with her baby.

3

My wife had
an Uncle Bugsy
who went
to the chair.

Many fires
are classified
as accidents.

People kill
for the same
reasons

bridges fail.

Alixia Doom

SWANMIGRATION

Easter Sunday

Finally the spring sun rolls back
winter's huge stone while swans drift
between broken stalks of last year's corn crop
with the stillness of white roses.
Surely the swan knows beauty is never wasted –
not on the stalks, nor the stone, nor myself
passing by on a country road for no good reason.

Each year on their flight to the far north they stop
here where there is no one to meet them,
dip black beaks and sip muddy water
like a fine wine.
More and more arrive until dark water
reflects nearly one hundred pairs of them.

Their cries to each other petal the air.
Arcs of white necks exchanging places,
they drift from shore to shore,
bearing the body
as if it were the soul.

J. P. Dancing Bear

The Mirrored Narcissus

“I can barely touch my own self – how can I touch someone else?” –David Byrne

We watched him drop his face
to the water again – a statue
of his former life. The water
makes everything look better,
and then he was gone again.
Touching his reflection as though
something would feel it back.

He may have fallen
asleep.

We laugh and muse of his issues; while
over square fields, scattering us
as wildling flowers seeds
of the unshared visions of ourselves.

Who last reached for his shoulder?
All this false concern! – is it really
jealousy? Did he become a golden idol
in the sunset? We bloom clinical labels
as though we know explanations,
as though we know him.

In this stretch of shadows
the feral dogs have turned to rocks.
Small landmarks along the undiscovered
borders.
He might be
dreaming of a storm strong enough
to cleanse the imprints.

Someone like one of us, grinds
a worry stone about the delicate cycle
of self-esteem; at the edge of obsession
everything blurs into impressions
. . . into art.

He made one last attempt to speak:

I was naked once –
long before my own statue
flowered its first crack.

A woman in our crowd turns
to plaster, near her a man's shadow
paints itself into the rut of a road.
I turn my eyes to the rest
and we go on together
forgetting their names.

Bruce Lack

David Gomez: El Paso, Texas

We stood at ease, ate their food,
and told only the good stories,
while he rested in the parlor
wearing Blues we dressed him in.
I spoke for our platoon, although
I'd never seen Mexican grief –
the stony faces of his men,
the tearing of his mother's breast.
I told the truth as well I could:
you do not get the same son back.
A knife, sharpened for violent work
is less knife than when it started.
He'd been broken some, to get him right,
so he could do what we all did
and the life he'd held so hard with us
he'd taken from himself.
We carried him out when it was time,
and we burnt him like Achilles,
saying how fitting and proper it was
to leave nothing behind.

Beau Boudreaux

Celeste

Sometimes I would not speak
a word of French for almost a year.
Stendhal

Tuesday night, a high-lit evening
she speaks fluent French in a long passage

over the stretch of the mahogany bar
like wash over a hint of beach –

the west coast of France, Rennes,
surfing beaches of La Rochelle

must order another hi-ball

just in that moment she may have saved
me a trip across the Atlantic –

two wanton weeks of Paris...mint in her
perfume as she speaks with her hands,

she could be a muse or guide
dancing can can with finger tambourines

but when she spoke again
the melancholy divorcee emerges

selling Louisiana real estate
someone temporary

like a pond
where you shouldn't eat the fish.

Terry Brix

Improving the Silence

The river is low water mumbling,
slurred vowels, harsh consonants gone,
nothing but the soft current tongue rolls.

The moon scrapes against the clouds.
Pieces of light dollop off tufting down
silently through the trees like cotton candy.

Breeze so soft it doesn't have a direction,
mazing around limbs, trunks slowly in puffs,
the sound of cool night thick calm.

I use my tongue to talk to your body,
trace and outline your curves,
circle a mile on your breasts alone.

Fingertips trail across your back,
your peach fuzz goose pimple purrs,
all this improving the silence.

You breathe in softly tidal volume silent,
diaphragm extending breast heaving.
You come further improving the silence.

Contributors

Justine Ashbee's work can be found at <http://justineashbee.com>. **Mary Mackey** graduated *magna cum laude* from Harvard and received her Ph.D. in Comparative Literature from the University of Michigan. Her published works include five collections of poetry, including *Breaking The Fever* (Marsh Hawk Press, 2006). She is also the author of twelve novels including *The Widow's War* (Berkley Books, 2009). At present she is working on a series of poems inspired by the works of Brazilian poets and novelists. Combining Portuguese and English, she creates poems that use Portuguese as incantation to evoke the lyrical space that lies at the conjunction between Portuguese and English. More of her work can be found at www.marymackey.com. **Tom Sheehan** is into his 83rd year, 14th book, 5th or 6th novel, 510th short story or essay, 1000th poem. He has appeared in *Rosebud* (3), *Ocean Magazine* (7), *Neon*, *Lady Jane's Miscellany*, etc. **Janet A. Baker** grew up in the Iowa farm country and now lives in Encinitas, California. Her poems have recently appeared in *Briar Cliff Review*, *Cider Press Review*, *Wild Goose Poetry Review*, *Lilliput Review*, and *Room of One's Own*. Janet is a professor at National University, San Diego. **Amy MacLennan** has been published in *Hayden's Ferry Review*, *River Styx*, *Linebreak*, *Cimarron Review*, *Folio* and *Rattle*. Her poems have appeared in the anthologies *Not a Muse* from Haven Books and *Eating Her Wedding Dress: A Collection of Clothing Poems* from Ragged Sky Press. One of her poems is available as a downloadable broadside from *Broadsided Press*, and she has an article appearing in the 2011 *Poet's Market*. **Matt Kolbet** teaches and writes near Portland, Oregon. **Howie Good** is the author of the full-length poetry collections *Lovesick* (Press Americana, 2009), *Heart With a Dirty Windshield* (BeWrite Books, 2010), and *Everything Reminds Me of Me* (Desperanto, 2011), as well as 23 print and digital poetry chapbooks. **Alixia Doom** has published in numerous magazines, and some of her poems have also been published in anthologies. Her chapbook manuscript, titled "Cedar Crossings" was awarded the 2009 Blue Light Poetry Prize and published in the spring of 2010. She has a home in Le Sueur, Minnesota and commutes with her partner between there and his residence on Manhattan's Upper West Side. **J. P. Dancing Bear** is the author ten collections of poetry, most recently, *Family of Marsupial Centaurs* (Iris Press, 2011) and *Inner Cities of Gulls* (2010, Salmon Poetry). He is editor for the *American Poetry Journal* and *Dream Horse Press*. Bear also hosts the weekly hour-long poetry show, *Out of Our Minds*, on public station, KKUP. **Bruce Lack** was born and raised in Mid-Michigan. He spent two years at Alma College before serving with the United States Marine Corps from 2003-2007, twenty-one months of which he spent deployed to Fallujah, Iraq. He made it home intact, and is currently in the final year of his undergraduate studies at Western Michigan University, where he is an intern with *Third Coast Magazine*. His poetry has been awarded Second Place in the 2010 *Winning Writers War Poetry Contest*. He is a founding member of the *Onomatopoeia Writing Society*, dedicated to fostering the community of undergraduate creative writers at WMU. He lives in Kalamazoo, Michigan with his fiancé and a cat named *Vendetta*. **Beau Boudreaux** teaches English in Continuing Studies at Tulane University in New Orleans. His poems have recently appeared in *Antioch Review*, *Cream City Review*, and *Margie*. **Terry Brix**, a "green" chemical engineer, divides his time among Blue River, Oregon; Bozeman, Montana; Scandinavia; South Africa; and China. Inspired by his travels, a collection of his poetry *Chiseled from the Heart* was published in 2000 by Vigeland Museum, Norway. His poetry has appeared in, among others, *The Evansville Review*, *Fireweed*, *Curbside Review*, *Rattlesnake Review*, *Small Brushes*, *Blueline*, *Liberty Hill Poetry Review*, *Main Channel Voices*, and *The Antioch Review*. His poetry will soon appear in *Falling Star Magazine* and the *Chiron Review*. © 2011 Rufous City Review.