

Rufous City Review

Where Industry Encounters Raw Earth
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Rufous City Review

Masthead

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Introduction

Take heed: this issue of RCR is rank with doubt, which somehow manages to be simultaneously anxiety inducing and exciting. The poems you will find here are not the typical residents of Rufous City; they are the awkward and uncomfortable results of editorial uncertainty.

I've been asking myself questions like, "Why did I start this project?" "How much longer can I afford to pay for all this out of my own pocket?" "What gives me the right to tell someone their hard work isn't good enough?" "When did I get so wary of the direction of this journal?"

I don't have enough answers.

At this point, it feels like I might not have any answers at all.

What I do have is a prevailing sense that people should have access to writing – poetry especially. I realize that there are poetry sites and journals and blogs oh my and the sheer number of places willing to shelter creative writing should tarnish some of the original grandeur that accompanied uploading the first .pdf of Rufous City Review with the hope that *somebody might read this*.

And yet.

Please find within these pages the act of functioning outside the comfort zone. Find a nervous toeing of the tide. Find a bit of dancing on the boundaries between here and there. It is slightly distressing to be in this liminal space, but the work has, as always, found a home here. Enjoy your stay.

Danielle Ariano

The True and False of Love, Lies & Audiotape

A.

He shot the boy.
Of that,
there is no question.
There cannot be,
for the boy is dead.

Seventeen
and baby-faced
and now dead.

Shot by a man.

On the night the boy is shot,
call after call
streams into 911.

On the recordings
men and women
speak in scared,
worried tones
as they peek
out the windows
of their suburban homes,
relaying things they see.

On the recordings,
a man's voice reports
a suspicious teenager,
walking
through the neighborhood,
reaching
into the waistband of his pants.

They always get away, the man says to the operator,

then he mumbles a phrase that sets the country on fire:

fuckin coons or *fuckin punks*,
only the man can say for sure
which one it is,
but all across the nation
people listen to the tape,

the same tape,

and hear different things.

B.

I love you, the one says to the other.
I love you too, the other says to the one,
and with that,
the one goes to bed
and the other
finally stops pretending.

The one has chosen the pretending
over truth
and now it threatens everything.

In the cabinet, the other reaches for a bottle.
Shot after shot slides down into the other
until it all blurs,
until the black and white of truth
bleeds into grey.

A. & B.

In the basement where the sisters played as children,
water seeps through the walls when it rains,
and the father,
who long ago had his black hair turn grey,
tries to keep the space dry
with a long bristled brush
and a bucket full of solution
that he applies
year after year,
believing, still, that it makes a difference.

A.

On the recordings,
a voice can be heard
screaming for help.

When the boy's mother
listens to the recordings,
she runs from the room,
certain that the voice
belongs to her son.

B.

Is it *in* and *with* or is it just love?
It is an important distinction.
When it is not *in* and not *with*,
it does not last because prepositions
create relationships.

A.

*Not so, the man says,
the voice is mine,
crying out to the neighbors
after the boy attacked me.*

B.

Sometimes when people ask the other what happened,
she wishes she could simply say
I lost the in and with
and that people would understand
that without the in and with,
there wasn't enough.
But sometimes
she wonders whether she should have stayed,
whether she surrendered too easily to these two
tiny words,
whether in and with are just states of being that
come and go,
rising and falling
like the tides,

like the moon,

cyclical, imminent.

Sometimes she wonders
whether so much should depend upon
the presence
or absence of two words.

A. B. & C.

What became of the boy who cried wolf?
Did he grow into an honorable man?

The fable shows him crying at the end,
after he has lost all the sheep.

“Why didn’t anyone come?” the boy asks.
And the man has to explain
that no one believes a liar,
even when he is telling the truth.

The boy has made his own bed,
but weeps
when the time comes
for him to lie in it.

A.

At work my colleague asks,
“Wasn’t the guy who shot him Hispanic?”
He asks because he can’t see how race could be an issue
if the guy who shot him was Hispanic,
because if the guy who shot him was Hispanic,
he wasn’t white
and if he wasn’t white, he couldn’t be racist.

B.

*When the in and with disappear,
where do they go,* she wonders.

She thinks that maybe she could track them down,

wrestle them to the ground,
chisel them in stone,
insert them back into the sentence.

It should be simple.
She works with words,
and when she doesn't work with words,
she works with her hands
so it should be simple.

They are, after all, just words.

Arlene Zide

HE WAS DYING

He was
dying
too slowly
though there was no real pleasure in it.
She did, after all,
care
in a Monday morning blue kind of way
Weighed down after so many too long Sundays
hoary with heavy-branched snow.

The cold was normal
after a winter of
trompe-l'oeil rain
after weeks of muddied late-
spring buds, crocuses in their unknowing
death blossoms
fooled into a frail yellow.

She conjures up
beaches, the trickle of warm sand
through the toes of her sun —
dreaming,
but wakes — too early
to the dappled slate
of bare
trees — tricked
into an
imagined
spring.

Andrew Joron

Q BED

1.

Of the doomed love between the sphere and the cube: One who is radiance; one who is a section of night. One who is sole & whole; one who wears multiple, self-divisive faces. One as wide as the globe; the other collected into planar states. One whose spin brings peace; one whose spin violates space. One who speaks from a center; one who whispers in corners. One who is present to itself; one alien to its own aspects. All permission is round; all discipline demands a cutting. One a womb; the other a tomb.

2.

The earth is the only planet that is shaped like a cube. Why is this? We surmise its shape resulted from the actions of complex sociobiological processes on its surface, although no life exists there today. Moreover, its six faces are covered with cubes of various dimensions, from mountain-sized to pebble-sized. The planet's transformation into a cube--which seems to have been sudden--perturbed the orbit of its large moon, causing this moon to eventually fall into the sun. Earth's own spin has become erratic: it tumbles through space alone, its facets glinting as if signaling a message.

Chris Suda

The Always Eager Night

The always
eager night

stumbles drunk
until it finds

me. Pitches
of air bar-

gain with my
chest's rise and

fall until
a light lifts

its tired eye.

Jamie Grefe

CUTLERY. ECSTASY. VINEGAR. BROKEN CHINA.

The smoldering of tangled wires. A mutilated fish or delayed loops. Pierce. Tubes piled on a table. The odd angles. Knob. Pedals. Cable to tongue to scream.

Locked in the bathroom with a fan. They emerged smeared and weeping. Later, we ate fried liver. He spoke of the non-necessity of study, of having mastered himself, to the obliteration of limits.

Sewn into gums, stuffed under eyes, pincers pry teeth: wire tight the frontal lobe, a cute slit in the neck. The wounded mixer, plugged shut, spills over in noise. Blinking dots. Groans. A shrill drone or shriek.

Oinari, the fox god of prosperity. His sterile bedroom. A recording from Taiwan. Alone in the dark with all the dried oils, brushes, three tubs of female vomit tubbed in the closet.

A sine wave generator, a saw sine, sine as triangle, sines can be squares. Licking modulation. Pucker sound, deliver fingerings of glitch, static wink on this the eve of our incision. Perform the whipping blur. The softest hair, he said.

One seventy minute track: cuts, sandpaper scrapes, snippets of pitch-shifted yelps, and empty spaces. The silence, unnerving. I began dropping objects in the basement. I began dropping objects to hear how they sounded to him.

We need only find objects, and become our own concrete actionists. Contact microphones are affixed between olive teeth and gums. We have asked them to listen to breath. Pitch shift. Cutlery. Ecstasy. Vinegar. Broken china.

An obscene photo collection. Prints of meat affixed to his body, her body, roped faceless in pigtails, limbs like tentacles, brown piles, deep greys in sterile rooms, a funeral, the clack of wooden canes on skin.

Slash piano wires, wrap them around necks and push until the blood leaks white streaks of love, raw slices laid over ears, spread over faces until smiles collapse in awe. In wonder. In disease. In awe.

He is chewing entrails, letting mouth touch something beyond reason, and Side A, our collaborative side, is the edited collage of an abandoned occult ritual soundtrack. I

choose to keep them, force myself beyond limitations like the ways we end up shaping our idols.