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Rufous City Review



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Where Industry Encounters Raw Earth
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Rufous City Review

Masthead

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Introduction

Contained within these twenty anxiously anticipated pages you will find a great deal of hard work, a few birds (count them!), a pair of knees, pretty Arab midgets, and “nothing so perfect that it needed fixing” which became the mantra of this sticky and slow moving summer. Did we misplace our sanity between the humidity and heat index? Probably. Do we mind? Of course not. With our obsessions close at hand, a few optimistic ideas, and an immense amount of help we have built you a language metropolis; grandiloquent of us perhaps, but we like the view. Whether you find an escape or a new home or you pass right through and you never look back, welcome to Rufous City. Enjoy your stay.

Want to be here? Rufous City Review accepts original poetry and poetic prose which blends genres, balances truth, and breaks boundaries unique to each author or artist...we also have an apparent soft spot for alliteration. Send us your free verse confessions, your experimental love sonnets, and your grammatical excursions into the polluted human condition. Surprise us. Unsettle us. Excite us. Twist our expectations and remind us what it means to be obsessed with language. Find our submission guidelines at www.rufouscityreview.com

Jeannine Hall Gailey

Girl with No Hands

She sits at a shrine, waiting for you
to reappear and claim her baby as your own,
no matter what lies you were told
about it being a monster.

Monster or demon, you told the messenger,
take good care of it until my return. You didn't know
what messages were interrupted, what lies
would tempt your mother to cast out

your wife and child, to a restless wilderness, she unable
to grasp fruit and berries in the woods,
unable to cradle your child. A flashback
to her fifteenth year, when her stepmother

persuaded her father to leave her on a mountain—
sleeping, handless, in a pool of blood. How you found her.
She weeps now, no father, no mother, no husband:
just the sound of the fountain and the coins

sleeping in the shade of a stone deity,
praying that, once more, she will be given
the snatch and grab, the fist, the noiseless fingertips.
You will rejoin her, embrace her, but she can only win

new precious hands in the sacred pool, her baby
slipping into the water as quietly as a stone.

Troy Urquhart

Poem in Three Parts for Johnathan Ross at Age 14, Who in Three Years, One Month, and Eighteen Days Will Be Identified as a Person of Interest in the Shooting.

1.

a clay road:

gravel and orange clay
the budding scrub beneath an orange grove
neighborhood houses empty
beside the ripening oranges
dirt
trees
trail
the sky in late afternoon
a single bird

2.

feet treading beside me
pace kept even
questions unanswered
steady breathing

pasted hair a spike:

a black vest
imagined guns
future military imagination
elbows bent, each shoulder

carrying scrap metal

red spray paint
silver tape
taut face

homemade weapons:

a boy
sword drawn

3.

unread signs ignored
rejection or
solitude

every question spoken with temerity
unknown or
withheld anxiety

a childlike wonder and
knowledge of horrible things
kept quiet by parents
and loneliness

in a silent home:
silence
innocence
luck

Michelle Lin

After He Hangs Up

What she couldn't tell him is that she has sores
in her mouth from lack of sleep and
sores on her body from lying in bed; she is afraid
to shower because she will see herself
in the mirror, her chest looking too much like river water
on his postcards. In the bathroom light, her knees are turned
cups and she almost feels herself spilling through them. She doesn't
know which is better, this half-staying or how it will look
from her car with all those red eyes blinking stop
stop stop

Burgess Needle

EVOLUTION

[Medical research indicates the hippocampus is responsible for having a sense of place; that is, knowing where you are in relation to some place else. Anecdotal evidence suggests babies born during difficult deliveries involving the use of forceps often have a damaged hippocampus –therefore, a poor sense of direction]

My head resembled a dropped grapefruit
when I was born

yellow and bruised from forceps.

Was that the reason I grew up
permanently lost?

Parking lots become black holes
littered with bicycles cars
and angry girlfriends.

I envied birds that could navigate
naturally by sun, stars
and the earth's magnetic field.

Even sparrows have tiny grains
of magnetite just above their nostrils

They never doubt the direction
their shadow faces.

I promised the old testament God
I'd return to having faith if only....
Then, one morning, feathers emerged
over my face.

My shoulder blades
bulged out and by morning
grew powerful wings.

Grains of magnetite grew
in my nose allowing
me to always know true north

Just *know* it

Now I cannot help turning
as the sun arcs in the sky

I'm as familiar with Polaris
as the feathery palm of my hands

Don't believe me? Have faith!

Just be cautious asking me for directions
because you will have to go
wherever I say

As often as not it will be due north.

Dress warm.

Bill Gainer

In the Moment I Said...

Tell me a secret kid.
I just need to know
you have one.

Her lips moved,
quiet,
I think she said,
"I love you."

Red Enameled Lips

I found a pair
of red enameled
lips
on my nightstand
this morning.
Put them in a jar
for
safekeeping.
If you lost them
call me.
Then again,
if they are
yours
I might want
to keep them...

Hello, Goodbye...

I much prefer -
hello,
how you been,
I've missed you...

Goodbye -
I'm always the last
to turn away,

maybe
you haven't
noticed...

Patric Nuttall

the chair is broken without her

Granny's back always curved to the left. As a child she fell
off a plow horse she had asked to ride every birthday
until her father said yes. Without that she was nothing.
Or, she said, nothing so perfect that it needed fixing.
I didn't know what that meant, but could see the sparks
off kilter on a quilt she had made for Christmas: white pinpoints
in the sky a broken down manger a large star that stretched
down to the roof. It wasn't silver but threaded with blue and red,
a lattice that the baby king could climb up, to safety, and live.
But Granny said no one could climb stars. Light was only white
or orange. And no Christ child was going to get himself up any ladder
without some help.

L. Ward Abel

Saturday Afternoon

"Yes, given half a chance. Yes"
Raymond Carver

The little creek rolls
covers the rocks
encases them.

Contour lines spread out
deep narrows fold
the mountains into walls.

I reach a point and ask
why should I count
the countless

stars. Infinity
has a purpose. Winds
pick up

and breathe first slow
then fast. Treetops
bristle in the sun.

It's then that I turn to you.
There is something to say.
I can hear water

Marilyn Kallet

Let the Phantoms Go

Our lives packed with phantoms, noisy ones,
clowns, braggards, bastards,
and friendly guys. Or else
our lives are riddled with pheasants.

Can't quite grasp the sense of this
article in *Le Monde*.
Whatever, they are ferocious and persistent.
Hard to feed them in this economy.

We writers host tragic phantoms,
or pheasants, who eat us out of house,
or they are mediocre electricians,
elevated by history. I'm not quite sure.

The stern bakery lady refused to put the tartelette
in a box. Why? Because I said, "le" and not "la"?
"Ah, no!" she groaned. And then she did.
She was rushed perhaps by phantoms,

busy ones, envious, premeditated,
or by pheasants who eat her grain at night.
Soaked in "*syrope d'Arabel*" whatever that is.
It's like caramel, the lady at the next table said,

made by pretty Arab midgets,
seductive and powerful as ravens, errant souls.

Lucia Galloway

Love's Supper

After the first line of Neruda's Sonnet XXIII

The fire for light, the rancorous moon for bread:
there is a window, lattice of small panes
that mirrors our bone-picked supped, fractured
in indigo, branch-cluttered night.

Birds find their roosts: from flight, uneasy rest.
Leaves curl on flagstones, mute contorted fists
that cannot say, O Love, what is your wish?
We've half again as much to say as we have said.

Set down the goblet and the carmine wine
sheets down its sides to pool in the bowl.
Let's drink our words instead of hoarding them.

Ourselves, we are the bitter Eucharist –
crumbs of dry loaves, the orts and crusts
that must be consumed or scattered on the wind.

Millicent Borges Accardi

His Hand on her Black Pants

Because they were not parents
Yet, and it was one of their evenings
Out before the last Mother's Day
She was not a mother, he pictured what
Their lives would soon become, the calm
Before the storm, and she was herself
For one of the last times, holding on
To his fingers in a kind way because
He was named for Chopin and because
He had agreed to go to this concert. Her
Black pants and uncrossed legs
Against his white fingers were all
She could see of the piano keys.

Peggy Landsman

Ars Poetica

Not only words

There must be
Music

All god's chillun
Got rhythm

Except me

I'm nobody's child

I never write
Nothin'

I don't have to

Contributors

Jeannine Hall Gailey is the author of *Becoming the Villainess* (Steel Toe Books, 2006) and the upcoming *She Returns to the Floating World* (Kitsune Books, 2011.) Her poems have appeared on Verse Daily, on NPR's *The Writer's Almanac*, and in 2007's *The Year's Best Fantasy and Horror*, as well as in literary magazines like *The Iowa Review*, *Ninth Letter*, and *The Beloit Poetry Journal*. She volunteers as an editorial consultant for *Crab Creek Review* and teaches part-time for National University's MFA program. **Michelle Lin** is a creative writing student at University of California, Riverside. Despite her family's tendency to produce doctors, pharmacists, accountants, and bankers, she fell in love with poetry at a young age and pursued it ever since. Michelle is the 2010-2011 editor of the art and literary journal *Mosaic*. Her work has been published or is forthcoming in other literary journals such as *Every Day Poets*, *Breadcrumb Scabs*, *Calliope Nerve*, and *Fogged Clarity*. When she is not writing poetry, she is geocaching. She lives in Torrance with her betta fish, Handsome Rob. **Burgess Needle** is a Tucson poet whose work has most recently appeared in *Quill & Parchment*, *Pig In a Poke*, *Flutter*, *Under the Radar* (UK), *Decanto*(UK), *Brittle Star* (UK), *Blackbox Manifold* (UK), *Concho River Review*, *Raving Dove*, *Centrifugal Eye*, *Iodine*, *Full of Crow*, *Kritya* (India) and *Red Fez*. Diminuendo Press has published his first collection of poetry: *EVERY CROW IN THE BLUE SKY*. See: www.everycrowinthebluesky.com **Bill Gainer** is known for the openness of his confessional poetry and is recognized as one the founding contributors to the modern movement of "After Hours Poetry." He has contributed to the literary scene as a writer, editor, promoter, publicist, publisher and poet. Gainer has a long standing love of the short poem, but is often more recognized for his longer pieces. He continues to read and work with a wide range of poems and writers, including readings on KUSF radio, S.F. with Punk-Rocker Patti Smith and performances with California's Poet Laureate, Al Young. Gainer is nationally published and remains a sought after reader. He can be reached at billgainer.com **Patric Nuttall** is a recent Graduate from Western Michigan University, having achieved his Bachelor's Degree in Creative Writing and Practical Ethics. He is a resident of Kalamazoo, Michigan but hopes to travel elsewhere to attend graduate school for Library Science in the fall. Poet, composer of music, lawyer, aspiring teacher and spoken-word performer, **L. Ward Abel** lives in rural Georgia, and has been published at *The Reader*, *The Yale Anglers' Journal*, *Versal*, *The Pedestal*, *Pale House*, *Kritya*, *Ditch*, *Open Wide*, *Moloch*, *Legal Studies Forum*, and hundreds of others. Abel has recently been nominated for "Best of the Web" by *Dead Mule* and *The Northville Review*. He is the author of *Peach Box and Verge* (Little Poem Press, 2003), *Jonesing For Byzantium* (UK Authors Press, 2006), *The Heat of Blooming* (Pudding House Press, 2008), and the forthcoming *American Bruise* (Parallel Press). **Marilyn Kallet** is the author of 14 books, including *Packing Light: New and Selected Poems*, Black Widow Press, 2009. She directs the creative writing program at the University of Tennessee, where she is Lindsay Young Professor of English. **Lucia Galloway** is the author of *Venus and Other Losses* (Plain View Press, 2010) and *Playing Outside* (Finishing Line, 2005) and the recipient of several awards, including a Pushcart

Nomination. Recent work appears in *The Lyric, Poemeleon, Her Mark 2009, Redheaded Stepchild, Foundling Review, and Tilt-a-Whirl*. Galloway co-hosts a poetry reading series in Claremont, California. **Millicent Borges Accardi** has received literary fellowships from the National Endowment for the arts (NEA), the California Arts Council, the Barbara Deming Foundation, and Formby Special Collections at Texas Tech. Her work has appeared in over 50 publications including *Nimrod, Tampa Review, New Letters* and *Wallace Stevens Journal* as well as in *Boomer Girls* (Iowa Press) and *Chopin with Cherries* (Moonrise Press) anthologies. Residencies include Yaddo, Jentel, Vermont Studio, Fundación Valparaíso in Mojacar and Milkwood in Cesky Krumlov. Her chapbook, *Woman on a Shaky Bridge* is with Finishing Line Press. Two full-length collections are forthcoming: *Injuring Eternity* (Mischievous Muse) winter 2010, and *Only More So* (Salmon Poetry Ireland), spring 2012. **Peggy Landsman's** work has been published in many online and print literary journals and anthologies. She has two books out—a poetry chapbook, *To-wit To-woo* (FootHills Publishing), and, under the pen name Samantha Rhodes, a contemporary romance novel, *Passion's Professor* (Midnight Showcase). She lives in South Florida where she swims in the warm Atlantic Ocean every chance she gets. You can visit her website at <http://peggylandsman.com>.