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The Tiny Museums by Carolyn Abbs

Chromatic by Paul Munden

The Criminal Re-Register by Ross Gibson

Fingertip of the Tongue

Sarah Rice

Sarah Rice is a Canberra-based art-theory lecturer, visual artist, and writer. She has a PhD in Philosophy and a Graduate Diploma in Visual Art. She is an honorary associate at the Australian National University and has lectured there for many years at the School of Art and Design. She won the inaugural 2014 Ron Pretty poetry award, the 2014 Bruce Dawe poetry prize, co-won the 2013 Writing Ventures International Competition, and 2011 Gwen Harwood poetry prize; and has been shortlisted in numerous national and international awards including the Montreal, Fish, Tom Howard, Yeats, Axel Clark, Michael Thwaites, New Millennium, Jean Cecily Drake-Brockman, C J Dennis, University of Canberra Health, and Philip Bacon poetry prizes. Her limited-edition art-book of poetry *Those Who Travel* (prints by Patsy Payne, Ampersand Duck, 2010) is held in the permanent collection of the National Gallery of Australia and other institutions. Additional publications include the *Global Poetry Anthology*, *Award Winning Australian Writing*, *Best Australian Poetry*, *The House is Not Quiet and the World is Not Calm: Poetry from Canberra*, *Island*, *Southerly*, *The New Guard*, *Aesthetica*, *Verity La*, *ABR*, and *Australian Poetry Journal*.

Sarah Rice
**Fingertip
of the Tongue**

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For my father Allan Edward Rice (1934-2012)
who made sure poetry was always within reach

Internal compass (for my mother)

*When, in my reeling doubt
I turn and turn again
free-wheeling on my axis
hovering, hesitant
My fragile face turned to you
my thin hand raised in question
quivering, wavering
Which way?
The needle-point begins to sway*

*Leaning, I feel the slow shift
push and pulse
of you, mother-magnet
my motor, my meter
Your spirit-metal
guides my body-earth
Beyond hand
before voice
you whispered north into me.*

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Speaking bluntly

If words had a weave we would feel when our lover spoke
to us in hessian when we needed satin taffeta, and more subtle
vocal fibres, the inflection of cashmere over merino or mohair.
Or perhaps better, if words spoken could be felt like Braille,

a sensitive perception of the digits, under the fingertips, six
dots raised, pin-pricks really but the pattern is all. If the sound
of the letter felt inside the cheek could have its sharpness tested
by tongue and teeth, before the utterance leaked out, before lips parted

company, we could test the word for bitterness, the way we test a grape,
sucking on the sour fruit in the dark fist of the mouth, holding it
against the light to examine its translucence. Clarity and obscurity
are measurements of density, the length of a word's shadow, its resistance

to light, how sure-footed it is in the dark. Sometimes it seems impossible
that speech is spoken by the likes of tongue and lips, those bodily blood-
filled servants to flesh and heart, hatred and dreams. If words were guests
only in the mouth, surely we would send them forth full and warm,

and perhaps they would carry our message with more care. Words stick
in our teeth like peppercorns. We are so very aware of the rough
edges of the apple core against our mouth's sore corner, of the tough
leather bay leaf left in by mistake, or the softness of silken tofu.

Our lips know for certain the thick ceramic mug and the thin porcelain rim.
We are so good at discerning too stale, too salty, too dry, or too hard.
If we could ink up our words like a thumb-print, analyse the friction
ridges, pick up the underlying interface of the epidermis, the better to transmit

signals, the evidence would present not the word itself but its pressure, and through impression – intention, weight. Words put their hands on us and press. Speech leaves its imprint, a smoky graphite smudge with its map of thin white lines where the fine print lies.

Mid-point

Today they shot 8 people
while I slept

The killing shots were perfect
it was said

Think each walked out
 were carried in

The boxes stacked

Who let the cells know
as they digested?

Pushing proteins to the gut
The liver silting toxins

Blood mid-point on its round journey

A thought begins to rise
A word shakes itself loose

The next breath gets in line
Ready to be taken

Trampolining

It was more that the air sucked me up
drew me like a giant breath
as if the sky were bellows
not the power of my knees and feet at all
pushing against the black netting
and springing lithe into the live nothing
I didn't feel it at all
the push and bend
recoil release
no effort of foot-fall at all
as daylight also fell
fell away and behind
and the blackness below me
grew out around me
in an enlarging embrace
I was weather-creator
wind-chaser
cloud-racer
bringer-on of dusk
and night falling
falling away
and every down fuelled my up
and brought about my down
in an easy to and fro
a pendulum a battery
some exercise in Newtonian physics
My body all motion
all pounce
all downbeat

a conductor and baton both
waving music into air
with flailing arms and flying
I was the universe
breathing in and out
and later in bed
in the same pyjamas
my face still red
and my heart
keeping its *scherzo* metronome
eyes now closed
my body still reeled
in the stars.

*f*ishing tackle

words are hooks
for fishing with
and if the barb
is sharp enough
and pointed
you'll catch an ugly
struggling carp
pulled from the dark
heavy and resisting
it'll bend the line
like a bow

or if not barb
then bribe
a tasty morsel
snail or worm
to bait them with
a whole school
will come to you
a flood of slippery
minnows strung
along your line
and you'll catch them all
if you have worms enough
throw them in a bucket
and watch the flapping
layers thicken

ah
but then
there's the fly
a live sapphire faceted
canary on a string
a tiger lily floating
on its own tangled nest
an orchid spray alighting
a rhinestone rainbow lorikeet
a jesus on the water
whirling dervish
feathers flashing emerald
a thought in gold ignited
it is a word a-courting
and it dances on the sea
and tickles fish's fancy
and kisses them
so rainbow trout
come leaping