

# RCR

Rufous City Review



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Where Industry Encounters Raw Earth  
Issue 8 2012

Rufous City Review

# Masthead

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# Introduction

Welcome to the eighth issue of RCR which owes its girth to the Submission Bombers, a group of writers saturated with encouragement and support for their fellows. In parts inspiring and overwhelming, the Submission Bombers were gathered together via Laura E. Davis, the editor of Weave, with the intention of “taking large scale action” by submitting en masse to publications in want of diverse voices.

Thus, dear reader, you will find in these pages the marginalized, the sick and scared, the small-voiced and the slightly deranged. Yet, make no mistake; the poems aren't solely afflicted with loneliness and despair. There is hope here too, however quiet, however hidden, and it is worth the search. Enjoy your stay.

Jill Khoury

# Brain on TV

Today will be the second MRI  
to illuminate my brain and the space  
behind my eye sockets,

called *orbits*.

I ask, *can we have an anniversary party?*  
The tech says there will be no sedation.  
*Lie very still. Try not to move your eyes.*

My head is strapped.

Already nerves in my neck  
fire electric, *pop pop pop*.

The light knocking begins and soon  
that other noise:

the one like a saw,  
a mill, a drill, boring through the skull's  
center to take a sample.

My eyeballs convulse  
beneath their lids. They conduct their own  
private rave

while ghost hunters  
with night vision cameras  
try to catch it on video.

*Nystagmus, involuntary quiver  
that happens only from hard drugs  
or damage to the cerebro-vestibular  
labyrinth*

*lathe*

*that turns*

*your body in space*

No one told me this. I had to look it up  
myself. As a child I was exhorted to

*quit flicking your eyes*

(slapped)

I took all these facts and dreamt on them.  
Tiny planets. Ungentle orbits.

The most recent doctor  
said

*We have new technologies.  
surgery*

I backed farther into the chair.  
The room went dim.

I said

*It's too late  
to look like the other kids.*

Later in the car, I text Katherine.

*This time  
I have my brain  
on DVD.*

She writes back.

*Maybe we can  
watch your brain  
on the projector,  
throw popcorn.*

Donna Vorreyer

# Exit Interview

When I first heard *terminal*, I could only think of airports, of how journeys begin, of crowds who rush forward with their baggage, eager to reach final destinations.

How to describe the transition - a flow, no, more like a faucet's slow drip needing the grip of a wrench to stem its little losses. I forget my body more each day.

I tell you, it is not things that I miss. When I see something blue in the far corner of my vision - a bird, a vagabond piece of sky - I think it is his eyes. It never is.

Joy Ladin

# Evening

Sunset flashes through tobacco barn slats,  
fireflies through unmown grass.

Bowed black mass, a horse's neck.  
In a pool of incandescence, a woman with shock-white hair

bends to a task on patio flags.  
Dim stars thicken above her head.

Kristin LaTour

# This Long Winter

what she meant when she said *hurt*  
was the wind was screaming through her branches

and when he said *quiet*  
he meant the silence that lives between lathe and plaster

the snow falling on the pines  
and the nest left bare and dangling

her lips stained with wine  
his hand clenching the fork

what she meant by *feed*  
what he meant by *full*

the darkness sliding over the table  
candles not lit and the light burned out

her muffled breath  
his pursed lips

Meg Cowen

# To Love the Lion Tamer

is so easy, you'd recoil  
from chair legs, balance feet  
and palms raw atop a scaffold  
pyramid just so his eyes  
could command your cells  
to be still; so you could numb  
your limbs and lips dreaming  
the scar dripping down  
his ribs is the *Huallaga* River  
in Peru.

Unfortunately for you  
such a man requires  
the acrobat, with her chalked  
starfish hands,  
her corseted body  
that can hold a man's weight  
mid-air.

Do not tell him you were traded  
for four good horses. That your arms  
tanned faster in the fields  
than the men's did.

The first time you shaved  
the flesh peeled right off your jaw

as if your face were  
an over-ripe plum.

And still, it grew back.  
Patience. Persistence. Penance.  
One of these is permanent  
as a slap  
best left to grow wild.

Paul David Adkins

# Christianne Balk and I Discuss Snipe Hunting while Reading Her Book *Bindweed*

It's one of those talks that go nowhere,  
a goose chase of a talk  
so late at night the stars have drifted  
beyond the light of their lanterns.

I never knew a snipe existed, though you swear  
your poem is proof --  
    *snipe-punctured mud shoals . . .*  
you wrote.

"I've seen them,"  
you insist.

That's not proof.

You draw me a bird on a napkin,  
a fat sandpiper  
or maybe a hunchbacked crow.

I snuck new kids at night  
to hunt snipe in the woods  
deep as the center of a tootsie pop.

*Back in ten minutes*, I promised,  
snickered, disappeared.

They returned next morning  
scratched as cat-raked pigeons,  
swearing.

They had to break through  
the black brush like bulls.  
They had to listen for cars.

We don't even talk about loss tonight,

though that's what your book is about.

We don't want to touch  
on your dead husband,  
my sick wife lying  
two oceans away  
on a hospital gurney.

What can we say?  
There's enough grief on any night  
to lose ourselves in,

enough nights to wander  
through bindweed and chiggers,

snipes above us on the dark branches  
clucking like hens in their sleep.

Chauna Craig

# Open Range

Under this sky, faded and frayed, bleached by a long, rainless stretch, my seams unravel. The meadowlark's trill is distant, mere hum. This sky is no blanket, and it cannot smother the persistent wind that starts somewhere before horizon and ends nowhere I can see.

Atoms from space move through us, carve us from us.

Can you rip a hole in a hole? How else is anti-matter born? I name this *empty*. And *without*.

Wind-rubbed grasses battle. Hawks loop aloft, their hollow feathers rising. Flimsy and unanchored, nothing stakes a claim here.

You are gone and I want – now – only this: a scouring wind and the fringe of seeding grass teasing my fingers, like the ends of your hair I once squeezed in my palm. Softly splitting.

A BLACK C



No  
code

6cc-7  
**GREAT STUFF!**

*Subject*

*Date*

*Event*



**MBI**  
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TABSES.

EXHIBIT

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Love,



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**Each Additional Word at  
15¢ Each Beyond This Point**

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31

Leah Sewell

# Fast Turn

At fifteen  
with no warning  
still dressed  
in my school uniform  
I turned

fell drunk on Water Street

It was right there  
It was the drugs

I dry-wept into the cracked  
mirror in an empty warehouse  
on South Main  
cheeks like my mother's  
and father's stern brow

Swam in the filthy  
river during the festival

fireworks  
domineered  
bled and furrowed  
from my extremities

Boys roared  
and whistled  
from cars

Under the inside-out  
flag tented over  
his bed, the soldier  
held my thighs

Smoke treaded August air

I fell and bit  
ballast in a train yard

tried to ride blind

hoped for El Paso

I pivoted all too  
suddenly  
I fell  
into the campfire  
laughing

like a tree  
I cracked  
sideways and fell  
in the woods and rolled

and I flew over the edge  
into a dry crick

Breathless  
I looked up

The stars steadied  
a meadowlark trilled

I was ready  
and covered in silt

Alexandra Smyth

# Splash Time

The whistle blows at fifteen past the hour  
signaling fifteen minutes of paradise.

Six Adonises in red standard-issue swimming trunks line up,  
young bucks offering sacrifice to the god of Safety.

They breathe in chlorine and h<sub>2</sub>h, exhale SPF 15.  
One by one sunbaked bodies ascend the ladder

the blessings of youth on display: all angle and plane.  
I like the one with the chipped front tooth best.

Knobby knees take their turn swaggering down the plank,  
board buckling slightly under their weight.

They bounce once, twice, then slice the air,  
the body tucks itself into a fist.

The descent is silence.

The fist punches the water. The deep end atomizes.  
He emerges, shaking droplets from invisible antlers.

Aaron Counts

# Caterpillar Love

Life has handed her an ass-pocket full of ugly,  
and she's ready for change, so she pours  
next month's water bill into the small of her back  
in the shape of an insect. She smiles as psychedelic  
wings peek out of her denim waistband,  
and flutter beautiful, beautiful, beautiful  
in tattooed ink while she walks. She's tired  
of crawling, and hopes to float pretty for a while—  
It's easy to love pretty, she thinks,  
but Easy and Love are strangers chasing  
different dreams, and who she is holds her heels  
like a shadow.

I want to cradle a caterpillar  
in my palm and let it inch its way up my wrist;  
I want to feel the cool tickle of its fuzz  
in the crook of my elbow. I want to crawl inside  
its chrysalis and whisper in its ear,  
I love your cocoon.

Gemma Cooper-Novack

# Anaconda Sunrise

Hours of driftwood lattice the beach where rocks  
once trembled and waves hissed at our thighs, diamonds  
on their backs flickering in the moonlight. Lowhanging mist burns  
off the sand, crackles in midair. Our muscles snapped, exposed throats pulsing  
ready to swallow, whimpers glistening in the buoy-light  
a few sharkspans away. My bare feet brand the coastline, scraps  
of china and cutlery bulge dormant in the sand. The whitecaps  
flicked their tongues and you were coiled up against me,  
and I could scale the years between in a single bound.

Ellen McGrath Smith

# The Lotus as Absinthe

*"Yes," said the girl. "Everything tastes of licorice. Especially all the things you've waited so long for, like absinthe." – Ernest Hemingway, "Hills Like White Elephants"*

To have waited so long for an  
Afternoon Death

\*

To have never ingested true wormwood

\*

To have sat at the edge of a  
precipice watching the sun  
slide down all the while holding on  
to your very own crumbling horizon

\*

To have swallowed your tongue 'til tomorrow

\*

To have longed for a so-long to macerate into  
hello-I-have-missed-you-more-than-I-can-say

\*

To have stayed in one place inside bliss-bower-green  
inside clouds that were portents of nothing

\*

To eat symbolist flowers plucked  
from their evil surroundings

\*

To see stars fill the sky  
like the bowl of a spoon  
full of holes from your breathing  
to heaven from earth

\*

To give birth to the breath  
of the moment each moment  
while tasting what only the lonely  
who love their aloneness can taste.

Alexandra Quintanilla

# Crisis

Pour me a cup  
of your happiness—  
the one from the other  
day that steamed and smelled  
of cinnamon and laughter.

I feel as if I'm falling  
through a Viking's beard.  
That is to say I'm having  
a hard time. I keep  
getting stuck. I go  
nowhere and it is dark.

I long for what I can't have,  
for the person I will never  
be like the red carnation  
dying in a wine bottle  
striving to be a meaningful rose.

Remember that kaleidoscope  
I won at the fair?  
The shards of glass danced  
together and away and revealed  
these dark fragments of myself.  
The ones you always knew were there.

Karen Locascio

# Our Lady of Implosion

I'm gravity  
universe my uterus  
eggs of stars

I'm the wingless sky  
barren as a house

I'm a river of poison  
falling clear  
from your cloud-beard

I'm alchemy  
lungs drowning in a jar

I'm a meat scrap  
uneaten

Kathleen Kirk

# Glimpse of Red

If I fell down and the pony stepped on my chest –  
breaking me open – what would fly out?

I'd call it a bird – this release of my best  
self, rubied & winged, unpinioned by doubt

or the rude cage of bone, tent of flesh.  
Let it be glimpsed & counted in the birder's

book, as cardinal or tanager, or one humming...  
& let those who thought they saw think they heard.

That's how I'd hide in the world  
this next red incarnation – as a familiar

animal, of intricate nest. Still  
who would hear the lyrical call –

water or laughter? And who'd see the helix  
twisting, rusted, Audenesque.

Oshinn Reid

# Letters to My Mother

1.

Today I want to say to the world:  
I write to my mother, but she is dead.  
I carry the secret like a pregnancy.  
I walk through the city, the evidence  
hidden in a handbag.  
But I am not in the city today. And in  
the empty forests, I can say the inadmissible.  
While the scent rises from the evergreens  
in the sun, as it would  
from a woman's body, I tell the passing branches:  
my mother is not dead to me.

And this, so close  
to what was our *Montana house*;  
the neighboring asphalt plant  
is now a houseless subdivision, smoothly paved,  
but empty. Where the entrance was  
there is a Baptist church. Smoothly paved.

Looking out over the ridge, soil rich  
and rocky, sandblasted grass grey from dust,  
velvet mullein and St. John's wort a yellow smear  
one pause by one, I think of other summers.  
I was just as hungry, but it was a different hunger.  
When you are young and do not know the answers  
for the questions you are asking, why-  
you are hungry for the answers. But when the time  
has come when you have learned the all, why-  
you are hungry for the ignorance. I, today, am hungry  
for the child who prowled these same woods  
cold in the dark,  
listening for her mother  
calling her home.

2.

I like to think of you as a young girl  
because the fact remains, you were a very good girl.  
In photos, your ribbons and cat's-eye glasses  
do not match the woman who has raised me.

I suppose it was this girl you drank to get away from  
because when you sobered up, she was no longer there.

I used to look at my grandmother, look at you look at her,  
and think how it must feel to see your mother old,  
muted, underneath a starched white bib.

3.

MOTHER--

It is my father's side of the family what had the longevity,  
Auntie Bea only gave her mind up at 90, and lived a good five years  
after that. You did not outlive your mother.

On the roof of your house, which was your mother's house, I walked up  
and looked at the tiles. It was a moment of a sun  
between rains, and on the tiles, the moss was clinging-  
lime and saffron, fur upon the red sandpaper.

No law counsel for your house. I am squatting in it,  
really. I have closed your door.

Before I did I took the vodka that you thought you were hiding  
from behind the armchair and I dumped it, with the mixers,  
in the drain, and the smell was of laboratories  
and dissection, cheap perfume and cutting words.

4.

Dear mother,

I met a boy yesterday who had never been photographed  
in the face. I did. He has an Irish smile,  
Irish laugh lines, and I captured them,  
and gave them to him.

He has told me he misses my eyes,  
(which were closed, most of the time).  
I do not show him my poems. He is too kind;  
he saw my scarred arms and could not guess what happened.

What a brazen loneliness you left me here  
to kill. I sought to fill it with his kisses  
and succeeded,  
for a while.

5.

Mother,

Today, while on my bicycle,

I saw an old man

pruning roses.

Castoff petals made a pink skirt

at his feet.

His shirt was untucked

and the tails hugged the strap

of his suspenders.

I saw these things because they were new.

I had never seen an old man

pruning roses.

At your house, the transplants

from your cousins in Alberta

bloom and bloom, but the blossoms

never last.

When it storms, the rain tears at them,

mercilessly.

Angele Ellis

# Tristes Tropiques

*While I complain of being able to glimpse  
no more than the shadow of the past,  
I may be insensitive to reality  
as it is taking shape at this very moment...*

Claude Levi-Strauss, *Tristes Tropiques*

1.

At my doorstep, an insect impersonates a brown leaf.  
One feeler, like a comb's lost tooth, gives him away.  
I look again. Glossed folded wings ringed like bark,  
or a striated shell from the darkening beach.  
Hiding in plain sight on the concrete, he's out of time.  
He can teach me patience in these *tristes tropiques*.

On the veranda, poles of polished banana wood shoulder  
thatched roof like bronzed caryatids. A ceremonial mask  
crowned with parrots scowls in profile. Its beaked disdain  
reminds me of my father in a mood. When *les Arabes*  
were clever, they traveled everywhere. I need an astrolabe—  
my flashlight can't navigate these smeared southern stars.

2.

Porto de Cortez is lost, landlocked in poverty.  
The highway that took seventeen years to unwind  
left Cortez behind—treeless square languid with dust,  
yellowed frame hotel ringed by pre-Aztec spheres  
too heavy with heat and history to steal again.  
*In situ*, they aligned with stars in the changeless sky.

Utter flatness of storefronts, half-boarded  
like an Old West town, rode hard and hung up wet.  
Fifty-pound sacks of rice wheeled to the *mercado*,  
brushing like bloated bugs past a beggar, babbling and high.  
A cashier, white belt slung low on her jeans,  
confers with a security guard, holster at his side.

Only at the sevicehe stand do I feel at home,  
back to roadside stands of childhood (*FRESH TOMATOES*,

CORN, GOAT MILK FUDGE). The bored pretty teenager serving in tank top and cutoffs, wishing for someone cute to come along. I say *por favor, gracias*, clutch two cups of lime-cured fish, swimming in Styrofoam as if alive.

3.

In Sunday's paper, the before and after of earthquake:  
scenic and forensic shots spread side by side.  
A road through forest vanished, a hotel collapsed,  
a hill divided into canyon. A school reborn as morgue,  
carefully matched shoes of the dead cobbled together.  
*Los zapatos de los muertos*, mute as a monument in bronze.

I was writing the word *earthquake* at my pasteboard desk  
when shockwaves rattled my chair. One-twenty, CST.  
The ninth day of January. Recalling how my Nonna  
on an ordinary morning watched a terracotta field split open  
like the lip of a rubber change purse, then snap shut,  
burying the hapless moans of a spotted Italian cow.

Danny, reading English at the bar – serving break –  
looked up to decipher the weirdly vibrating palms.  
His bones remembered. Limon, Costa Rica, 1991:  
as a boy of three, he saw his familiar street heave  
like a sea serpent, stone crabs scuttle inside cracked houses.  
Animal panic seizing everything, even the rock-solid adults.

Valerie Loveland

# Cedar Water

I pulled an ancient tombstone out of a lake.  
It was a double stone but only his name  
was carved in.

Did she find someone else she'd rather be buried with?  
I set it on the ground and lay down like it was mine. It loomed  
above my head like an idea.

I'd been warned against touching water,  
but now it coated both arms,  
the side of my cheek, my neck near the jugular.  
Someone once asked me what tannin means. I told them  
it means, "ruined."  
I looked like something enormous licked me  
with its tobacco-stained tongue.

Brown water warps eyesight. I only see the edges  
of objects underneath. I could build a complete gruesome town  
with its contents, a cursed purchase.  
A pillow embroidered with a stillborn baby's name.  
A yearbook whose owner marked the date  
that each classmate died.

The local museum dredges the lake to stock its exhibits.  
They forged records, so people won't think it is unlucky  
to visit. The name plates lie.

The lake bed pebbles mixed with pennies. Coins for travelers' eyes, stones  
for their boots, pockets, mouths.

Years later, the museum director saw the tombstone photos  
on my camera, scolded me  
for stealing. I betrayed myself  
when I reached in. Am I the saddest artifact? That water  
painted the rest of my life.

# Silent Movie Dating Tips For Ladies

Accept only wilted or rumpled flowers.  
Pies and banana peels are aphrodisiacs.

No matter what you actually answer, the intertitles will read "No" the first time he proposes, and then "Yes" at the end of the movie.

When he gets arrested to get your attention, admire his name in large print in the newspaper.

Anarchists assume the role of Cupid: tossing bombs instead of arrows.

Check fence knotholes for love notes.

Wear bobbed hair under your ample ringleted wig.  
Beneath your flounces and petticoats wear a straight dress that flattens you out.

It doesn't matter  
what shade of lipstick you both wear,  
it all looks black on the movie screen.

When you both put on sailor suits, pick  
the more feminine white one with the traditional hat.  
Let him have the navy suit  
with the collar that can flip onto his head when he pratfalls.

Forgive him if he falls for  
an evil sexy robot disguised as you.

Keep a house that is a car that is a boat, but beware:  
each will crumble in a dramatic fashion.

During a dangerous rescue attempt, suggest  
he save a dummy  
dressed just like you.

Don't bother learning to untie ropes.  
That's his responsibility.

He will save you. He  
will save you. He  
will save you.

Mary Stone Dockery

# How to Erase the Dead

Grab the cracked whiskey bottle,  
let its contents leak, sweet, into  
your palm. Lick the drops,  
warm on your tongue. Use  
this same tongue to describe  
the roads back home as gravel-spun,  
as rising, as flesh-like whispers,  
dust. Palms and broken glass,  
windshields shattered  
before dawn. The roads  
are the same color as your tongue –  
pomegranate and honey,  
a swirl of fog and mirage, dewy  
with the breath of maps.  
Trace the squiggly lines, the cut-off  
borders with your tongue, bleed  
purple-red stain into corners  
of wrinkled and aging paper  
your smooth palm skin.  
Hold the whole place inside  
your mouth, shift it around,  
wetting it like a small stone.  
Here is the gloss: the smear  
of your mother's shoulder  
lost in folds of paper,  
silhouette of a small child  
vinegar soaked, fading colors.  
Taste the rust and tarnish.  
Your tongue numbs itself  
beneath the whiskey, scratches  
against edge of glass in hurried  
cuts, a dried leaf tongue,  
just to cut, to empty,  
dehydrate. Reach for the map  
key and its symbols, for  
north or south, looking for faces  
whiskey-spun and splotched  
far beyond the center.  
You will find it, somehow after  
erasing it, sealing in a scent  
of violets, tombstone, and ash.

Claire Zoghb

# DEVOTION

It's not that his lips crave the earthy texture  
of Grecian wood, the scent of pigment

or broad expanses of crinkled gold leaf.  
It's more that he's forgotten how

to touch his wife.  
She lies in bed, stripped of her paint

and guilt, holds her breath  
while he performs his daily devotions:

each morning and before retiring  
he finds it simpler to kiss the image

of his patron saint – those fearsome wings,  
the severed head in crook of arm. She knows

he'll never sprout a radiant halo despite  
his faithful reverence of icons written

by holy men clustered on Mt. Athos  
as she awaits the miracle of his kiss,

the nights, the years, growing  
like splinters beneath her nails.

# COLUMBUS DAY, 2009

Crouching at water's edge  
to drag in the garbage bag  
cast off by fishermen, my mother  
makes out a belt, some sort of vest --  
and legs.

*Walter, it's a body,*  
she calls to my father,  
waiting at the tide line.

Once a cool-headed ER nurse,  
my mother doesn't cry  
until later that night  
when she tells me how  
he'd been missing for three days,  
was believed to be in his late seventies.  
She doesn't say  
*the same age as your father.*

Weeks later,  
she tells us about  
a dark island discovered  
on the shores of my father's left lung.

She doesn't cry  
even as the tide rises,  
rocks us all toward  
the lip of some terrible  
new world.

## Contributors

**Leonard Kogan** was born in former Soviet bloc from where he moved to Israel and then to the United States. Currently, he lives and works in New York. The hybrid, the incomplete and the fragmentary are conceived as underlying principles of Leonard's visual representations. These ideas are conceptualized via portrayal of sequence-images, imperfectly clonal repetitions, rebus and moments of exuberant melancholy. **Jill Khoury** earned her Masters of Fine Arts from The Ohio State University. Her poems have appeared or are forthcoming in numerous journals, including *Sentence*, *Prick of the Spindle*, *Menacing Hedge*, and *Harpur Palate*. She has been nominated for the Pushcart Prize twice by *Breath and Shadow: A Journal of Disability Culture and Literature*, and has a chapbook, *Borrowed Bodies* (Pudding House Press). **Donna Vorreyer's** work has appeared most recently in *Sweet*, *Linebreak*, *Rhino*, *THIS*, and *Caesura*. Her chapbooks include *Womb/Seed/Fruit* (Finishing Line Press), *Come Out, Virginia* (Naked Mannekin Press), and *Ordering the Hours* (Maverick Duck Press). **Joy Ladin**, Gottesman Professor of English at Yeshiva University, is the author six books of poetry, including just-published *The Definition of Joy*, Forward Fives award winner *Coming to Life*, and Lambda Literary Award finalist *Transmigration*, and a memoir, *Through the Door of Life: A Jewish Journey Between Genders*. **Kristin LaTour's** poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Fifth Wednesday*, *Cider Press Review*, *The Adroit Journal*, *dirtcakes*, and *qarrtsiluni*, among others. She has two chapbooks available through her website, [www.kristinlatour.com](http://www.kristinlatour.com). **Meg Cowen's** chapbook, "When Surrounded By Fire," is forthcoming from Dancing Girl Press. She has been awarded the Elizabeth Curry Poetry Prize and has recent work in *The Pinch*, *Barely South*, *A Cappella Zoo* and *Weave*. She received a teaching fellowship from Southern Connecticut State University, where she edits *Noctua Review*. **Paul David Adkins** grew up in South Florida and lives in New York. **Chauna Craig's** stories and essays have appeared in *Prairie Schooner*, *Fourth Genre*, and *CALYX* and the anthologies *Sudden Stories* (Mammoth Press) and *You Have Time for This* (Ooligan Press). Her work has been recognized by Best American Essays and the Pushcart Prize anthology, and she's won fellowships to Virginia Center for the Creative Arts and Vermont Studio Center. **Richard Leach** is a poet and self-taught collage artist from northeastern Pennsylvania. After making art for himself for many years, he began in 2009 to share his work online. Since then he has had pieces in group shows in Stockholm, Tehran, Cannon Beach, and Portland, Oregon. Find him online at [richardleach.deviantART.com](http://richardleach.deviantART.com). **Leah Sewell** is a Chicago native living in Topeka, Kansas. She's an MFA candidate at the University of Nebraska and an editor, book designer and poet with two small kids. Her work has appeared or is expected in *Weave Magazine*, *Midwestern Gothic* and *PANK*. **Alexandra Smyth** lives in Brooklyn, NY where she is a receptionist by day and a MFA in Creative Writing candidate at the City College of New York by night. Her work has appeared or is forthcoming in *The Alarmist*, *Eclectica Magazine*, *Neon Literary Journal*, *The Smoking Poet*, and *Specter Magazine*. **Aaron Counts** is the co-author of the non-fiction text *Reclaiming Black*

*Manhood*, and his poetry and prose have appeared in *ego trip's Big Book of Racism*, *ColorsNW*, *The Seattle Times*, *Specter*, *In the Distance* Podcast and *Bestiary Magazine*. He is the winner of the 2011 Nazim Hikmet Poetry Competition and holds an MFA from the University of British Columbia. **Gemma Cooper-Novack** is a writer, playwright, theater teacher, and writing coach living in Boston. Her work has appeared in *Hanging Loose*, *The Saint Ann's Review*, *Aubade*, and *Euphony*, as well as on the Chicago podcast *The Callback*. Her play *Blindside* was produced in Chicago in 2008, as was *Chicago Chronicle No. 1*, a piece she wrote collaboratively with six other playwrights. **Ellen McGrath Smith** teaches at the University of Pittsburgh and in the Carlow University Madwomen in the Attic program. Poems have appeared or are forthcoming in *Now Culture*, *Sententia*, *The American Poetry Review*, *Cerise*, *The Same*, *Kestrel*, *Oranges & Sardines*, *Diner*, *5 a.m.*, *Oxford Magazine*, *The Prose Poem*, *Southern Poetry Review*, *Descant* (Canada), and others. She has been the recipient of a Pennsylvania Council on the Arts fellowship for poetry and a Rainmaker Award from *Zone 3* magazine. **Alexandra Quintanilla** has a B.A. in English from Rice University. She has just returned from teaching English in western Spain and starts medical school in fall 2012. **Karen Locascio** is an MFA candidate in poetry at UMass Boston. Her first published poems appeared in *Amethyst Arsenic*. She always thought writing these little bios would be a lot more fun than it actually is. **Kathleen Kirk** is the author of four poetry chapbooks, most recently *Nocturnes* (Hyacinth Girl Press, 2012), and the poetry editor for *Escape Into Life*. Her work appears in a variety of print and online journals, including *Blood Lotus*, *Lake Effect*, *Menacing Hedge*, *Poetry East*, and *Umbrella*. **Oshinn Reid** is 28-year-old folk musician who lives in Montana and wishes people still wrote letters. She has work in *Four and Twenty* and *Breadcrumb Scabs*. **Angele Ellis's** poetry has appeared on a theater marquee (after winning Pittsburgh Filmmakers' 2009 G-20 Haiku Contest). The author of *Spared* (Main Street Rag), a 2011 Editors' Choice Chapbook Selection, and *Arab on Radar* (Six Gallery), Angele was a 2008 recipient of a poetry fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts. **Valerie Loveland** is the author of *Reanimated, Somehow* (Scrambler Books, 2009). Her poems have been featured in *Dzanc Book's* anthology *Best of the Web 2008* and the Massachusetts Poetry Festival. She works as an optician in Action, Massachusetts. **Mary Stone Dockery's** first collection of poetry, *Mythology of Touch*, was released by Woodley Press in 2012. She has two chapbooks forthcoming from *Dancing Girl Press* and *Kattywompus Press*. Her poetry and prose has appeared or is forthcoming in *Gargoyle*, *South Dakota Review*, *Mid-American Review*, *Arts & Letters* and other fine journals. **Claire Zoghb's** first collection, *Small House Breathing*, won the 2008 Quercus Review Poetry Series Annual Book Award. Her chapbook, *Dispatches from Everest*, is forthcoming. Her work has appeared in, among others, *Connecticut Review*, *CALYX*, *Crab Creek Review*, *Mizna: Prose, Poetry and Art Exploring Arab America*, and *Natural Bridge*, and online at *Assisi Online Journal* and *Mezzo Cammin*.