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Metro

by Jane Linders

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Letter from the Editors

Happy fall! As the leaves begin to turn, we the editors thought a travel-themed issue chronicling the adventures of the most talented of this reading period's submitters would be an appropriate way to say bon voyage to summer. In these pages, you'll find lovely photography—vintage-esque Polaroid transfers of old Paris and rural America by **Jane Linders** and crisp, colorful snapshots of Italian landmarks by **Terry Price**—earmarking the sections of poetry, fiction, and creative nonfiction that we've selected for your enjoyment.

How else does travel in a post-post-modern America begin but with an airport security hassle? **Terry Brix's** poem "Search for Loneliness" thus appropriately opens this issue with wry moodiness. Two poems by **Richard C. Freed** follow, first the nostalgic "The Return," then "Tickling the Ivories," in which the piano music of "a small suited man...play[ing] from memory" becomes the soundtrack for the speaker's recollection of a strange and historic event. From Buddhist Thailand to a Buddhist story, **Yun Wang's** "The Poet and the Monkey" weaves a straightforward narrative of a womanizing poet with ancient mythology. **Steven Tarlow's** "Dawn in Mea Shearim" is a sprawling observation of a Jerusalem marketplace's early day goings-on. **Davide Trame**, with his metaphysical conceits, is the next stop: "Next Stop 'Venezia Mestre,'" in which a simple glance out the window of a train rolling through Italy becomes a larger metaphor for "the firmness of thresholds," precedes "The Bat," where the uninvited presence of this commonly feared animal speaks to life's "unavoidable lurch[es]." Back to America for **Rich Murphy's** "In River City" and **Steve Klepetar's** "Minnesota Winter, Travelling North," followed by **Mercedes Lawry's** "Gobble," a poem that ponders what it will take to save the world, and concludes: "That sort of traveling requires / muscle." **Bridget Gage-Dixon's** poem "In Deference to Your Certainty" chronicles travel of a different kind—that of a doubt-ridden speaker coerced into attending church by a well-meaning friend. Finally, we come full circle to end up "next door" with **Donna Vorreyer's** "Girl, Next Door," a poem which defies the editors' personal distrust of "prose poems" (what is a poem without line breaks??); we concede that the wrap-around lines are completely appropriate for conveying the boxed-up objectification of the speaker's infatuation with her older next door neighbor and the ideal femininity she seems to represent to an adolescent female.

For creative nonfiction, we first present the tongue-in-cheek-titled "The Chivalrous Thing to Do," **Matt Urmy's** humorous account of how he and a companion made the long Iowa leg of a road trip a lot more interesting. **Chris Kelly** takes us on a different journey in his piece "The Fat Man and the 14ers," an essay that is also funny, but more for its dry

self-deprecation. Kelly's piece ends with a breath of fresh mountain air because this author's tale is one of personal triumph. Enjoy the accompanying photograph!

The fiction section of this issue serves up two pieces which touch on the theme of travel in more psychological ways. "Little Ivan," a short story by **Justin Vicari**, is told from the point of view of a young man whose new girlfriend is transferring her maternal instincts—emotional AND physical—onto a pet dog after the loss of her infant son. **Mike Hampton**'s "A Long Line of Liars" is less a personal narrative and more of a family portrait—the sardonic tone the speaker employs as he shares details about his family's scandalous entrepreneurial skills culminates in the very short story's last sentence, so that when he says "This left only me to share their story," readers will wonder whether or not they can believe anything they just read.

Speaking of sharing stories, **Rane Arroyo**, our resident music reviewer, offers this issue's music column, "Telling Stories, Singing Stories," and reviews artists Scott Free, Eric Allaman, and yes, even Jennifer Lopez! Lest we forget Arroyo is first and foremost a masterful poet (read *The Buried Sea: New & Selected Poems*, forthcoming soon from the University of Arizona Press!), this review channels poets Emily Dickinson, Dylan Thomas, and Francis Thompson...but also Bravo's *Project Runway*, *The Wizard of Oz*, and a drag queen uncle. We're all full of stories!

And on that note, we hope you enjoy all the stories in #10, and that you deem them as "worth the trip" as we do.

All best,

The Editors

#10 Poems



Illumination
St. Peter's Basilica, The Vatican, Italy

by Terry Price

SEARCH FOR LONELINESS

Airport security asks for passport, ticket,
then boarding pass. I'm headed to another country
Where I don't know a soul. They search my bags,
ask about sharp objects. I don't tell them about you.
They don't ask about razor sharp words,
land mines of divorce, old trip-wired habits.
I'm pulled aside and a guard scans me with a wand.
No slugs embedded, anal capsules, firearms,
Shoes inspected as though I were a warhorse
In the air cavalry instead of a hobbling plow horse.

He's searching for contraband, probes for dangerous
objects, watches for suspicious behavior.
I ask him seriously if he found any loneliness.

THE RETURN

there are places we go
where we have been before

just over the crest of that hill
on a spare landscape

you have been there
haven't you like a cat

scuttling into the round night

TICKLING THE IVORIES

—"Trumpeting Elephants Saved a Dozen Tourists," Reuters, Jan. 2, 2005.

I am in Buddhist Thailand at the JW Marriott in the City of Angels.
A week earlier and an inch below on the map
eight inconsolable elephants lumbered up a jungle hill

as frightened tourists clung aboard
their families sleeping in vacation rentals
or building castles at the shore.

After a mile they stopped and turned as
wave after wave wiped everything clean.
It is 6:00 pm and I am on the mezzanine.

Below, the cabs pull up and pull away, the tourists arrive
and leave, the businessmen take their meetings—
the Germans, the Yanks, the Japanese.

Head bowed, a small suited man plays
"I Got It Bad (and That Ain't Good)," "How Deep
Is the Ocean?" "It's Too Late Now."

He plays from memory. He modulates
and double-times. When his hour's finished
he will sit erectly by the window as the cars

on Sumhivit Road move endlessly behind him
lighting the vendors hawking mung beans
and watermelon, and then play again.

He will be there again tomorrow, and tomorrow again,
playing the same old tunes, but never the same,
and never the same again, and always like tonight.

THE POET AND THE MONKEY

His wife, a plum tree denying his touch.
He could not bear the glow
of crimson blossoms against a blue sky

above a sea more blue than he thought possible.
*Buddha said to the monkey, if you can
traverse my palm in a single somersault*

I will set you free.
He loved women so much
gave up his own son for adoption

because the boy was not a girl.
*The monkey could cross whole continents
in the flicker of an eyelash. A waterfall concealed*

the entrance to his kingdom.
His wife helped him bring from China
a female fan of his poetry. Beneath shadows

of moonlit pines, he slipped into her bed.
His dream of ancient scholarship came true:
plum tree and nightingale, wife and concubine.

He was complete. Poems flooded. Parades
of beetles. Translucent dreams of hyacinths.
Storms that revived primeval armies

slicing the world with liquid swords.
Death, the ultimate flower
blazed scarlet in a black river.

*The monkey found himself in a desert
with a solitary pink obelisk.*
The plum tree read the mind

of the nightingale, told her to escape.
The poet loved the pensive bird more than his life.
The monkey shouted for Buddha, the desert

Yun Wang

vanished. Buddha held a finger before the monkey.
The poet hacked his wife with an ax,
then hung himself from a pine tree.

DAWN IN MEA SHEARIM

It is morning on the Street of the Prophets.
I stand amidst last night's leftovers,
the shelled nuts, chicken bones, empty
seltzer bottles. Four white egg crates
huddle on the barber shop steps.
The barber looks at me carefully.
He asks if I want eggs. I can't answer
his simple question so I nod to him instead.
I am drawn to the young voices,
so fervent and irreconcilable, pouring
through the window slats of the Orphan's Yeshiva.
Their contending gives strength
to the tawdry brown herbs
and the skeletal cat which crouches
beneath the herbs. The cat purses its lips
at me, frowning, ready to erupt.
The cool wind ruffles its meager hair.
On the washline next to the orphanage
a moss-covered rug shivers and I shiver with it.
The women in their grey turbans
gather at the washline. Their necks are lined still
from sleep. Their lips are pursed. Their hands move
like starved birds. We read together
the latest placard on the orphanage wall.
It warns against the new water park outside
the city, exhorts us not to enter,
for the water slide there is an "obstacle,
a terrible spiritual obstacle". I take each reprimand
to heart, each word. When the wind stops
I can hear the doors struggle briefly
against the door jambs. "Unclean,
unclean", they seem to hiss at each other.
I must not pay attention to them.
I turn my back on the wall of placards,
on the hairless women and the cat
whose thin hair now stands
on end. Through the underwear
and sacred tablecloths, spread
from balcony to porch, I glimpse what may be
the first raincloud of the season.
It passes behind the laundry and reappears —
fuller somehow and even darker —

Steven Tarlow

though we are still many days
from a good rain.

NEXT STOP "VENEZIA-MESTRE"

The train has just crossed the lagoon, morning starts,
I sit on the still empty carriage
texting a friend, fingers fumble
while eyes scan and skim
the egrets' stillness in the shallows
and the length of the same stretch of mud
for another railroad,
then the first tall building towering after the brambles,
with on its top red numbers giving time and temperature;
I stretch on my seat, rub my eyes,
open the bag for a book without looking, still gazing outside—
the human engine, its daily gestures,
adjustments, sights.—
Then on the right the quiet
ugliness of a scrap yard,
metal sheets, lumps, in brown-red,
rust blurring shapes
while above my head
in the throb and gristle of a loudspeaker
a far, soothing voice announces
the next station, the stop
before any other destination,
what you always have to pass through.

Ineluctable signposts,
firmness of thresholds, while you cross them
you sense the stare of ghost irises,
the rhythm of shadows;
the train clanks on the railroad's knots,
iron and breath, your passage
granted once more by a flicker, a nod,
almost a tap on your shoulder
during this transit,
the rehearsal we know.

THE BAT

It got in. Your greatest fear.
We said it could happen once in a million times
but once happened I felt as if it just had to.
This flutter in life's tapestry.
Because you said you hadn't seen it
and it had been only a flutter what you had heard
or sensed rather, and had no doubt.
You left with only a tiny scream
asking for help and dashed into the bedroom
and locked yourself in.
Your scared voice trembling, thin and far,
an infinitesimal heart
pierced by an infinitesimal needle.
And we in the hall trying hard to chase it out,
the big balcony window open wide
to the swarming evening.
It seemed like life out of spite,
as we managed to push it to the window
it turned round towards us
brushing the ceiling, the library, our heads,
stopping with a squeak on the bedroom doorstep,
then on the doorframe, a dark brown patch
like a tiny stretched cloth that jumped then
among the books, part now
of a world of hidden breaths.
And we saw it again at last,
it was flattened and well camouflaged
with the very wood of the shelf,
a still wave mirroring our still
staring selves.
And your voice from the bedroom now
still too. Waiting.
Not even the needle of it.
A lurch and we trapped it in a bowl
and threw it into the night
from which he had come
falling into the heater's pipe,
rattling and scraping till dawn.
Now it's gone but you are gazing
at its flash, its whiff still
hovering in the hall, or a patch
stamped mute in an inside corner.

The flash of the fluttering kernel of the world
interrupting a routine day of hopes and worries,
an astonished and astonishing wave,
the force of the present storming in
with an unavoidable lurch.

IN RIVER CITY

As the sky falls, you don't notice
your deeper breath, nor your head
more often in a cloud watching birds
with a star in your eye. Even

the whistling is not the velocity
of anything concrete but your
wisdom showing up for work
another day. Your new blue hat

cocked to the side placing all blame
where it belongs looks spiffy to
the nihilist. You greet other circus
tent poles going about the business

of human beings, even though
the silver lining causes the collapse
of knees and then the ring masters.
With no place for ticker tape, the solar

system meets, billiards in motion on cue,
you and your progeny stir in the dream
of a droplet on the brow of a lucky
asteroid with nickel in a pocket.

MINNESOTA WINTER, TRAVELLING NORTH

“If I had a brain in my head,” she told me
“I’d turn this car around, head south until
I ran out of country.” Maybe it was just
the cold, eating its way down into our bones
or ginger cats fighting, flinging their snarling
stink in the back seat, or maybe

the time of day, not yet five and already
long shadows swelling across the two-lane,
and in the sky a hint of blue-black night.

It could have been her fingers twirling
like angry spiders or salt and ice smearing
our windshield chalk dust white, trucks
hurtling down the dark alley of trees, who

knows, or bloody news seeping from her
radio, twenty-one down, shooter dead
and who in their right mind left to count the votes?

GOBBLE

Does pity wander in our blood?
What bleak stories cause us
to catch our breath, consider
drastic action before the door closes
and we return to a familiar glare?
We cannot be saints, each of us,
and what does that say
about the make-up of a soul?

Let ethicists ponder as we scramble,
sure we're doing the best we can,
piling our children with things
that click and bleep, plugging
them into this new world, hardly
brave at all, but thin.

The valley between hunger and ease
may be wider than the earth itself.
That sort of traveling requires
muscle. No figuratives for genocide.
No requiems remove demons.
Such feasting under a barren sky.

WITH DEFERENCE TO YOUR CERTAINTY

Because you suppose that I am salvageable,
you've led me to your church, trusting
that in the shadow of a crucifix
your faith will seep in through my skin.
Some part of me must've hoped you were right
but the preacher's voice coils inside me like a brier
as he hurls his homily out into the nave,
calls to the congregants 'Praise God'.
His words scrape stained glass
and are plucked from out of the air
by a lone voice calling back, 'Amen'.

I look to the family in front of me
sure these parents have filed their children
into pews hoping they can cross and kneel
and pray themselves to safety.
Their teenage daughter, blonde hair twisted
into a braid slithering down her back,
rolls her eyes as the stout black woman beside her
stands with hoisted arms,
the last hymn still twitching through
the thin bones of her wrists up into the bowed
fingers she is tightening like talons around
the ankles of her god.

I cannot help but raise my own eyes to the rafters
as if I might find some spirit crawling toward me
along a cornice, but hanging there I find
only the dusty blades of ceiling fans
circling just above me, waiting to wrench
that spirit away, should I decide to reach my hands up
and try to seize him.

GIRL, NEXT DOOR

Susan wore bandannas and flowers in her black hair that hung to her waist. Shaggy boys in beat-up cars swarmed to compliment her eyes, to pick her up for parties. When she babysat, she held me on her lap, her scent earthy and intoxicating. After she tucked me into bed, the ghostly hum of her laughter on the telephone was like a lullaby. One time she took me shopping. We pushed through a beaded doorway into a boutique full of loud music, wide bellbottoms and the pungent sting of incense. She disappeared like a magician behind a red curtain, emerged in new outfits, each one more beautiful than the last. The boy at the register noticed. He tousled my pixie hair, asked Susan who I was, an excuse to speak to her. *My friend*, she answered, winking. I beamed as the secret realm of older girls creaked open like a heavy door. I got older, and Susan left for college, stopped coming home at all. For a while, the boys still drove by as if they could sense her in that house, hoping she would return if only they wished hard enough. Sometimes I would catch their eyes and stare. I wanted that, that yearning, as I watched from my bedroom window, then turned from the street to the mirror, checking my reflection, wondering if anyone would ever ache for me that way, if anyone would ever swing wide that mystery, linger outside my door, tell me that I had pretty eyes.

#10 Creative Nonfiction



Motel Downtowner

by Jane Linders

THE CHIVALROUS THING TO DO

We were on a nonstop drive from Santa Fe to Creston, Iowa, to see a college friend and his fiancé. It was after 3am in early October, and we had been driving since 5:30 that morning. (When you're 23 you think that kind of thing is cool). We didn't care about being tired, that was the nature of the ride, two kids on the road for as long as we could make it last, in a world that three and half weeks ago had turned sideways on the fulcrum of two buildings in Manhattan.

We were still sun burned from Joshua Tree, our first destination out of San Diego, where our trip began. We had coffee, music, cigarettes, and most importantly we had total freedom: no jobs, no schoolwork, no rules, no expectations...and a few thousand bucks to burn. We used her car and my money, that was the deal. We were on fire...an all day and night drive to Iowa was nothing.

Like I said, it was after 3am, and I was beginning to get heavy. I had been driving for hours, she had gotten tired, and it seemed like the *chivalrous* thing to do...at least, that's what I thought then, and maybe, at times, I still think like that— Anyway, I was tired, but we couldn't stop, we were already in Iowa, some state road I don't remember, nothing around for miles but black land, the occasional tree, and the stars overhead. It was not a place I was willing to just throw out a tent for the night. I let out a chorus of yawns and flipped over the tape—

She had leaned over and kissed my neck, then, pulled her hand up my leg and unbuttoned my jeans. The tense part didn't last long, but the not knowing how to respond part stuck around. So, I didn't respond, well...or, that is to say, I didn't say anything. What could I have said? I was 23, free, on the road with an inspiring young woman, a photographer, it was the middle of the night on a country road, and I was realizing as she put her head in my lap that what was about to happen was something that had never happened before—something, that even now, looking back, was more than I had conceived, up to that point in my life, of hoping for.

The little bit of embarrassment, or uneasiness I was feeling faded with each dotted line that disappeared beneath the hood of the jeep. I drove for as long as I could, then, decelerating quickly, pulled over to the side of the road. She felt what was happening, leaned back into her seat and started pulling off her jeans. She rose onto her knees exposing the tan line on her upper thighs, and I slid into the center of the console. As I moved she pulled the armrest back, and I paused when I saw the hand brake sitting there between the seats. "What?" she asked, "Fuck it," I thought, and rested myself down. She threw a thigh over my legs and led me further and further away from feeling tired.

It was happening fast, all of it, our bodies, the rising temperature of the car...there were no thoughts of condemns, or anything else safe...the doors could have been unlocked for all I know.

I closed my eyes, we moved heavier and faster, we were sweating, and the rush was coming on.

I opened my eyes for a moment...darkness...closed my eyes, "goddamn," I said, she laughed and threw her hair out of her face. My eyes were fluttering, and it began to seem brighter. The heat was on us now, so much that the handbrake had stopped bothering me. As the climax hit, my eyes were blinking, black, then white light, black, white light, white light then blue...my eyelids fluttered shut... "shit" I heard her say, and I let out a small laugh, felt her weight leave my body, "put your pants on," she said. "huh?" I said a little sluggishly. "Matt," her hand was pushing me, "put your pants on...shit!"

tink tink tink

Shit.

I looked at her a little panicked, her eyes were steamed, and she had that, "don't ask me!" smile that I loved, blazing across her face.

TINK TINK TINK

I took a breath, and rolled down the window...Silence.

Only the angels know what I must have looked like, sitting there, sweaty, out of breath, fear mixing with the fading effects of an orgasm, squinting into the blinding light of a flashlight. The officer said nothing, then the light moved across the car to her. I followed it. She was sitting calmly, bare feet up on the dashboard, already smoking an American Spirit.

"You alright ma'am?" came the deep, but gentle voice.

And then, in the most Tennessee way I've ever heard, she said, "Yes sir, I'm just fine."

He held the light on her face for a moment, and then turned it back to me. He lowered the flashlight, and I saw his face for the first time. He was mid to late fifties easy, hair half gray, skin thick, body like a man with a long marriage to a great county cook. It was when I looked in his eyes it occurred to me that he had probably been nervous, probably already radioed in to the station—I mean, how often at 3am on a weeknight does he pull up to a red jeep Cherokee, mud and sand up to the doors, with Tennessee plates, pulled into the grass off the highway with its headlights on and the engine running. I noticed he was standing sideways, gun on the side farthest from the car. I saw concern in his face more than anything else, and this made me feel safe, and very stupid.

I couldn't take the ensuing seconds of silence so I blurted, "We're headed to Creston, to stay with one of our college friends, he writes for the paper up there."

He looked at me, looked back to her, it was obvious he was more embarrassed than us now, and I could tell he wanted to get as far away from our car as he could. “You’re almost there. You kids go on, now. And drive safe.” I watched in the rear view mirror as he walked back to the patrol, the window fog was gone now, October was in the car. I looked at her as she busted out laughing, raised my hand, she passed me what was left of the cigarette, I took a drag, blew it out, muscles still shaking a bit. I pulled back on to the road, she threw a new tape into the stereo, and we flew on through Iowa, chain smoking, laughing, listening to the Cowboy Junkies, wide awake.

THE FAT MAN AND THE 14ERS

Handies Peak

Sneering, smirking hikers cast doubtful looks in my direction as they filed past me on their descent as I clumsily stumbled my way up the mountainside. I was a lumbering, hulking, sweaty mass of hypoxic hyperventilation. Actually, *sweaty* is putting it too mildly—I was enveloped in a sticky, salty deluge—nay, a tsunami of perspiration. I was on the edge of sniveling as well and trying to keep my usual chipper mood while clambering my way toward the summit. If I am truthful to myself, I guess no one on that mountain could be blamed for any doubts they had concerning my sad, exhausted appearance. But these skinny bastards were only pigeonholing me because of the unrealistic standards our society has set, and they thought that no one my size had any business whatsoever climbing one of Colorado's highest peaks.

Colorado has always been known first and foremost for its mountains. The state has a higher average elevation than any other in the contiguous United States, and 53 of those peaks are 14ers, or mountains soaring into the atmosphere that reach an altitude of over fourteen thousand feet. A lot of adventurous souls have the notion that these peaks must be climbed, lest their lives be incomplete, and for some reason, I too have had that particular affliction infiltrate my mind until I answered the siren song and began my quest to climb one or more of these monsters. There's only one problem with me doing this...

I am a big guy—somewhere in the neighborhood of three hundred pounds, and this obesity problem has plagued me for most of my life. It's quite intimidating to live in this state, looking like I do, with all of the world-class athletes that are in abundant supply, prancing energetically around wherever you look. It hurts, especially when I am on less ambitious hikes, heaving my heft up these mountainsides, gasping for breath as these mountain jocks that would have most certainly picked me last on any middle school athletic team bound past me effortlessly.

So I have been walking, or, if you will, training, to do some serious hikes. Signal Peak is practically in my front yard here in Gunnison, and I have been walking my Siberian husky up there almost every day. I can't say that there is an incredible difference in my outward appearance since my endeavor began, but my outlook and endurance have improved. I grew up in the mountains, too, but not ones like these. My frame of reference was in the more gently graded hills of East Tennessee, and I played in those hills on a daily basis, climbed those mountains without risk of cardiac failure. Now, I wanted to climb a *real* Mountain, do some *real* hiking.

I don't know what I was setting out to prove, or to who, but one day while working at Clark's Market, my friend Pat Strahl gave me the idea to try to climb a 14er. It didn't matter that I hadn't climbed a 13er first, or a 12er or even a 10er—I decided to go for it. What a great idea—it's not even half the height of Everest, so how could it be that tough?

He suggested Handies Peak near Lake City to begin with and said that it shouldn't be too hard for me to bag that summit, as the trail is not terribly long or steep. So, one morning soon after the idea had been implanted in my not-too-realistic head, my wife, Tonya, and I headed out to climb Handies Peak.

We got a late start and the clouds were already starting to build when we got to Lake City, but we headed up that washboard-laden road anyway—we were going to climb that mountain, weather willing. When we finally got to the American Basin turnoff, it was around noon, but plenty of people were heading up the trail toward the summit.

The American Basin sported an extensive and impressive blanket of wildflowers: Indian Paintbrush, Lupines and Columbines were in gargantuan supply and the monolithic granite formations were breathtaking. Dainty rivulets of crystal clear water tumbled happily down the slopes while marmots and chipmunks played and scampered over the rocks. The trailhead began at a generous 11,600 feet, so how hard could it be to get to 14,048? Tonya and I headed up the trail that was at first at a very gentle grade. I was doing great that day. No one that started behind me was threatening to overtake me, and I was not even too short of breath. Soon though, as we approached 13,000 feet, the combined effects of the thin air, and the now-treacherously steep trail had this gorgeous basin becoming in my eyes, a god-forsaken hellhole.

My heart was pounding, my head was throbbing, and sweat was running off me everywhere in Class 5 rapids. I guess I forgot that someone of my build would need a little more oxygen than your skinny athlete that was blissfully hop scotching up this tortuous creation of mother nature.

Some skinny bastards were approaching . . .

"You're only a few hundred yards from a beee-utiful lake!" a girl exclaimed.

"It's just around the corner," another said.

The corner? Well, in actuality, I'm sure that we only walked a few hundred yards, if that far, but it seemed like a trek across the Mongolian Desert to me, and I thought that lake would never materialize. But I pushed on bravely, and kept grinding higher and higher, through my agony until we reached that turquoise glacial lake that looked as if it had dropped into our journey straight out of a Tolkien story. We half expected to be pursued by Orcs at any moment.

The lake was impressive all right, and the surrounding scenery reminded me of something that might be spotted in the Himalayas, but in my hypoxic state it was difficult for me to enjoy. When Tonya and I got another few hundred yards above the lake, I was stopping about every ten feet to catch my breath, and then things went from horrible to unthinkable. Thunder rumbled and crashed violently and, over my right shoulder, I saw a bolt of lightning strike viciously out of the blackened sky. We turned and actually *ran* down the trail. Lightening flicked its wicked tongue every few seconds as we neared the lake again, and, rounding a bend in the trail, we saw a couple of people crouched in the rocks.

“Mind if we joined you?” I asked.

“Not at all,” the man said, smiling.

They were a father and daughter team, we learned, from Dallas. The man was a Psychologist and I’m sure he found me crazy for trying to climb at that altitude in the physical shape I am in. There we were—defeated by the weather and the mountain, huddled against some rocks in the company of gracious strangers with a storm raging through the basin. Hail, snow, and rain pelted us and then stopped abruptly. Tonya and I said goodbye to our friends. They headed up to the lake and we headed down the trail. Defeated and broken, I got into our Nissan, and we began sloshing our way back home on the muddy road. Tonya slept on the way, waking only to tell me that she wanted some potato soup because a tooth had begun to hurt her during our hike, and she thought that would be about all she could stomach.

Mt. Sherman

A few weeks later, we both felt better—Tonya with a freshly extracted abscessed tooth, and my wounded, overweight ego back in check, I told Tonya of Pat Strahl’s idea to try Mount Sherman on for size.

“It’s just a road,” he assured me. “Not too bad at all.”

“You think I can make it?” I cautiously asked.

“Yeah, easy.” Pat grinned.

A little about Pat: a Colorado University biology graduate, and as outdoorsy things go, he has done it all. He’s hunted and killed deer, elk and bear, climbed all but nine of Colorado’s 14ers and has trekked above 17,000 feet in Ecuador. Pat has done technical rock climbing as well, been a cross-country runner, fly-fishing guide and all-around obsessive outdoorsman. He also rides his mountain bike about 30 miles a day, and not to mention, Pat was born and raised here in Colorado and may be a bit more acclimated to this soul-robbing lack of oxygen than me.

We set a date for Tuesday, July 25th. Pat would pick Tonya and I up at 4:30 AM on that fateful day. I woke from a fretful, stressful sleep at about 2:30 and worried about what the day would bring. As I promised, I got up at 3:30 and made a Tennessee hillbilly breakfast of biscuits, sausage and gravy for our much-needed energy to conquer this mountain, and we finally headed out at about 5:00 AM.

Nervousness and adrenaline kept me from being groggy on the way to our destination. Pat fueled himself with Mountain Dew while Tonya slept on the backseat of his Dodge Durango. I chatted endlessly about anything and everything all the way to the base of Mount Sherman. Just outside of Fairplay, Pat turned up a gravel road, drove us to the trailhead and, from the moment we started, I was out of breath. It was not going to be a good day for me to try this.

But I slogged, trudged and dragged upward while every breath and heartbeat reverberated through me painfully. Nobody—and I mean *nobody*—walking in these elevations looked like me. There wasn't a single molecule of cellulite around. Up, up and up, I followed Pat and Tonya, both ahead of me and talking to each other with what seemed to be little effort as I lumbered and staggered behind.

We passed weather-beaten mining ruins and the wind grew stronger and colder with each passing minute. Every little while, they would stop and let me catch up, get some water and my breath, and up toward the summit we would continue. More Skinny bastards (not that I'm bitter) with trekking poles overtook us and smiled as they passed. An old man wearing a t-shirt that advertised some marathon that he had obviously participated in smiled as he passed me. We finally reached the knife-edge ridge that began the single-track to the top and Tonya grew very apprehensive about the narrowing trail and the climb that was growing steeper and steeper. I noticed that coming down the ridge were some pretty, athletic girls that were looking at me dubiously, like they couldn't fathom why I was up there.

"Its just a little further," a girl said as she made her way down.

"Have fun!" squealed another.

Ahead of me, Pat was walking up the trail like a mountain goat. He would even come back down a few feet to check on me, then turn and trudge back up the ridge toward the peak. He looked the part, too. He had all the right gear and clothing, and could have easily been mistaken for someone that did this professionally. Like an Everest Sherpa, he climbed fluently and never seemed to be at a loss of oxygen.

To my surprise, Tonya gave out, having a cramp in her thigh that she couldn't shake. She sat down about two hundred yards away from the summit and told us to go for it. She would wait on that rock until we came down. Pat and I pulled ourselves up to the peak one step at a time and hand over hand on the rocky trail that led to the top. I was stopping

every five minutes or so to regain my courage and breath. I sloppily made my way to the looming peak that kept getting further and further away. After many embarrassing stops, chokes and gags, we made it to the summit and signed in on the guest list that was inside the 14ers.com PVC tube. I got down on my hands and knees and put my head down on my folded arms and dreaded the walk down, trying to recover and regain my senses. Off to our west was Leadville, and the two highest mountains in the state: Mt. Elbert and Mt. Massive. I was really too exhausted to really take pleasure in, or even comprehend the unbelievable view, but I had made it to the top—14,036 feet.

On the way down, we picked up Tonya and found that her leg was feeling some-what better. She hugged me and said, “I am so proud of you.”

My insole became separated in my right boot and my big toe was being chewed into hamburger in the crevasse that had been created inside my shoe. Hurting in every way, I dragged ass down to Pat’s Durango, and practically hugged it when I finally got to the passenger door. Pat stopped at a convenient store in Fairplay for more Mountain Dew and then we headed back to Gunnison. I fell asleep almost immediately and dreamed that mountains were pursuing me and I was too tired to run.

So, now what? I’ve climbed a 14er, which may not be that big of a deal to the average person, but it was a huge accomplishment for me. Now, I guess I’ll have to climb more and keep up this new fascination with altitude. Maybe this fall or next summer I’ll try Handies Peak again, or go after another one. All I know is that I made it up to that mythical height, and now I want to do it again. And as Pat said, “It’s like Lay’s potato chips—you can’t climb just one.”

Chris Kelly



(author Chris Kelly and friend atop Mt. Sherman near Fairplay, CO)

#10 Fiction



Sentry at Twilight
Vernazza, Cinque Terre, Italy

by Terry Price

LITTLE IVAN

I am driving in the countryside with Rachel. The beautiful turning leaves are bliss, and I'm soaking it up, like a movie I am editing in my mind, but Rachel is missing everything, preoccupied as usual with Ivan. "Rachel," I point, "look at that red and yellow tree, quick." She glances up and says, "Watch the road," then goes back to breast-feeding.

"Do you have to do that right now?"

She holds Ivan in her arms as if he were a baby and watches him lap at her nipple with his panting red tongue. "Of course I do."

This is meant as a reproach to me, reducing me to being jealous of a Pekingese. And she is ruining my attempt to get away from the city and relax for a few hours. How can I confront her? I don't want to play into her hand, giving her the satisfaction of telling me I am only being silly. Then I will feel doubly humiliated.

I love Rachel, that's the problem, I just don't love the nonstop flow of breast milk that's been coming out of her ever since her infant son died mid-weaning, crib death, the source of great sorrow. She had to be institutionalized for a while. Eventually her mind was more or less right again, but her breasts never stopped producing their phantom milk. "In heaven," she sometimes says, "he will know me by my milk."

This was while she was still married to her ex, before she met me. She went to some specialists, most of whom told her the condition was inconvenient but probably harmless. One told her the milk was psychosomatic and she nearly threw her purse at him. "How can real milk be psychosomatic?" Another one said, "Potentially pre-cancerous." She never lets me forget this. "I'm probably dying," she says, "and you ask me if everything I do is necessary."

Call me a leg man but I've just never been able to keep up with her flow. I have dutifully stayed up half the night sucking her dry, I have left what appeared to be permanent hickeys around her areola, only to find the next day that all traces of my work had vanished and she was full again. When I'm feeding I feel like I'm choking, like I need air. My lips go numb. My jaw gets sore. Not Ivan. Anywhere we are -- even right here in the car -- he's ready to go to town. The fur around his mouth is shiny and a little stiff with the milk dripping all over his face. The soft roundness of her swollen breast is almost bigger than the dog, but he hangs in there like a champ. And I even notice his pizzle leaking some milk of its own, all over her other breast, which is also exposed.

"Okay, but why do you have to have both exposed?"

"Because I'm going to switch sides soon. Any other questions?" She lowers her face to Ivan's and talks to him closely, her mouth nearly touching his. He licks the words from her lips. "That's right, Ivan likes

mommy's milk. Harold over there behind the wheel, he's wrong. He's got bad ideas. You just go ahead, Ivan, go right ahead . . ."

I know, she needs understanding, and maybe this did begin innocently, but by now she's given so much to that dog, her cycles are attuned to the canine species. We were in a nice restaurant one evening, and there was a rich-lady-actress-type at one of the next tables, with a little Chihuahua in the crook of her arm. At one point the Chihuahua arfed at something, and Rachel looked down at her chest in horror: a huge dark grease spot seeped across the front of her satin blouse. "This is all your fault," she said to me, tucking the napkin into her open collar in a strange-looking way.

What can I say? To Rachel, my reluctance to drink her milk constitutes betrayal. And maybe she has a point.

We are in the kitchen, doing dishes. Ivan sniffs around his food bowl. He looks up at Rachel with his head cocked to one side. "Careful, careful how you rinse them," Rachel tells me, "you're leaving soap." But his majesty Ivan doesn't have to roll up his sleeves and get his arms all wet and wrinkled, he just has to lay on his mistress' teat and lick and suck. No conversation, no anniversaries, no mutual funds, no migraines.

"Does it matter if you're going to dry them anyway?" I ask.

"Yes. I might not get all the soap and then they'll make the food taste soapy."

I rinse the plate again and again, smearing it with my fingers until it squeals.

I take Ivan out for a walk, and in the hallway I bump into Dr. Pemberton, our neighbor -- quiet guy, seldom home, usually on call at the hospital. "Cute dog. You like him?"

People are always asking me if I like my own things. Rachel and I gave a party where a woman asked me that about everything. As soon as she walked into the apartment she said, "What a beautiful place, do you like it? And this view, do you love it?" Would it be mine if I didn't?

"Not especially," I say.

"I'd love to own a dog. My schedule is so rough, though."

"Really? Well, Ivan here practically takes care of himself. He even finds his own food. Sort of."

"You mean you're looking to get rid of him?"

"I might be, yes." Just saying this feels good. I could get some semblance of normalcy again. I wait outside for Ivan to poop. All that milk tends to go right through him. Sometimes, when I lift him up,

liquid runs right out of his butt, all over my sweater. Can I really give away Rachel's pet? I look into his moist black eyes, like spun black marbles skidding to a stop in a child's game. He yawns, farts, sneezes, then looks up at me for approval. His breath smells like Rachel's breasts, like her warm yeasty body. I should do it before I change my mind.

Before going home I knock on Dr. Pemberton's door. No answer. He probably went back to the hospital already, another extended shift. Poor guy. A dog will do him good, give him something to look forward when he's off duty.

I am about to tiptoe away and chalk the whole thing up to fate and bad timing, when he suddenly opens the door and greets Ivan by name. "Hello again, Ivan." An encouraging sign. I set the dog down inside his vestibule. He runs right inside the doctor's apartment, his paws tacking on the hardwood floor. Gregorian chant comes from Dr. Pemberton's stereo. We chat about New Age music, which I pretend to like and be somewhat informed about. Recorded in churches as old as Stonehenge, don't I know it. Then, to seal the deal, I say something genial—"Ivan seems to like it here already, look at him, just like home"—before turning to leave.

I feel ten pounds lighter. Rachel is searching for Ivan room by room. There is another wet spot on her blouse, and as she bends to look underneath our bed, it spreads wider.

I clasp her hands. "Come on," I murmur, "I'll take your mind off things."

"But where can he be?"

"He'll turn up."

I pull her down on the bed. I undress her and run my hands over her naked body. She gives herself to me, but looks away distractedly, sighing and rubbing her forehead. I avoid her breasts, as if they still belonged to him. Given the underhanded way I've gotten rid of my rival it doesn't seem fair to reclaim them just yet. Anyway, they are sloppy-sticky with milk. I almost wish he was back, almost wish to see him climb up manfully on the bed and do his part to take care of all that milk that's making me slightly nauseous, leaving its greasy residue on me, making me nearly lose my erection. This isn't going exactly as planned. I have to concentrate. I look into her face, closed as a clamshell, and my fucking takes on an insistent angry rhythm, which at least stirs some life in poor confounded Rachel, who grabs handfuls of my back, as much as she can squeeze between her fists.

Suddenly she bucks and throws me off, pleading that she needs to use the bathroom. I suspect she's looking for Ivan in there. Playing the

cruel stud, nursing my vengeful hard-on, I call to her, "Maybe he went down the drain. Fell in and got flushed."

"That's not funny," she says, appearing in the doorway.

"You never find anything funny anymore. Maybe you're just a bad judge of humor."

"Kiss my ass."

Days go by and she grows more and more sullen. I refuse to admit it, but I might have been wrong. So this is what it's like to try to satisfy one person entirely by myself, minus the one thing she cares about the most. I had hoped her feelings for me would blossom in the absence of distractions, like love on a desert island, swaying in a hammock with a cask of rum. Instead all we get are monsoons and cannibal drums and Friday dropping by in a Charles Manson mask . . .

I think about just knocking on the doctor's door and asking for Ivan back. But he's probably already gotten attached, and anyway, how could I explain to Rachel where I found the dog? She would certainly grill me for answers, and sooner or later I would break down and confess. I am capable of many things, but lying is not one of them.

One night she looks up from her knitting and says, "I should jump out of that window right now."

"Come on. Of course you shouldn't do that."

"This is just like when I lost my Philip. He was only a baby. I couldn't protect him. And now little Ivan's gone too. Who knows where? Who knows what he's doing, what he's eating. My god, he could be lying dead in some gutter."

"I'm sure he's fine." She hurls her knitting needles across the room. "Come on now, don't start throwing sharp metal."

She gives me a look and goes to the kitchen. I figure I'll give her some cooling off time. She's in there awhile. I hear rattling sounds, then breaking glass. I sit up, wondering if I should investigate. But it's quiet again, so I sit back. In a moment she appears in the doorway, her face twisted in a sad scowl. Then I notice the blood dripping down her arm.

So now I'm visiting my girlfriend in the psych ward. I end up parking on the roof, which makes me worry about pigeons. I buy a little stuffed dog in the lobby gift shop. In the elevator, I'm trying to think of what I should say to Rachel when the doors open and there is Dr. Pemberton. It's that surprise of seeing someone out of context; for a second I think I am in my apartment building, going to the incinerator to dump the trash.

He steps inside. "What brings you to the hospital?"

“My girlfriend’s here, I’m visiting her.”

“Sorry to hear that. Is she all right?”

“She’s doing a little better now, I think.”

“Where is she?”

“On ten.”

“Ten? That’s psych.”

“Yes,” I say, “she had a little episode, a nervous episode with some glass.”

He places his hand on my shoulder. “I am making rounds on eight right now, but I promise I will go and see her later. I’ll talk to her.”

I realize the mistake I’ve made. “You don’t have to do that, really. You’re busy.”

“No trouble,” he says. “I know what I’ll do. I’ll tell her all about Ivan, and how well he’s doing. That might be just the thing to cheer her up.”

I shake my head helplessly.

“You’ll see,” he says, “I’ll take care of everything.”

He leaves, the steel doors close, and I ride up the rest of the way alone.

A LONG LINE OF LIARS

My Grandpa Jake worked at a gospel station outside of Wichita where half-asleep, three days a week, he broadcast sermons across the plains which proclaimed angels walking among men. It was this experience that made him qualified as a radio man when he was drafted into the U.S. Navy and cast out onto the Pacific.

The Second World War was gathering steam back then and, with the understanding that most radio men ended up on overloaded bombers, he transferred with forged papers and became a ship photographer on a monolith of an aircraft carrier headed for the sunny shores of Waikiki.

As a ship's photographer, Jake passed his time with pineapple juice and cigarettes enjoying the rolling lull of ocean beneath his feet. The only break in this peaceful mediation came on Tuesdays, which were meant for ship's maintenance regardless of one's charge. To solve the problem of honest work, Jake stole a monkey wrench and twenty feet of rope which he kept hidden in his foot locker under his dirty shirts. When Tuesday rolled around he carried both up and down the decks from morning to night, saying "Have to go to deck three" to junior officers who needed him, or "Ordered to deck nine" to friends asking for a helping hand. Then in his rack at night he read magazines articles about how any man could strike it rich with the right idea.

When his carrier finally arrived on the sands of Hawaii, Jake went AWOL and flirted with Tiki girls at the local bars. He met my grandmother Pearl one night when the MPs were rounding up stragglers. She had a room above the bar for lost souls, as angels often do.

With the camera gear he stole from the ship, Jake and Pearl set up shop by the bar in under a week. He grew his beard out and took to wearing loud shirts covered with palm trees. She borrowed a grass skirt and a coconut bra from a friend. Together they fleeced young men from flat lands who were desperate to have a picture of their arms around a real hula girl to show the boys back home. This was the first step of their plan.

The next step was to pool their money together and buy a modest home in a respectable neighborhood overlooking the ocean. Once they had the house, Pearl told all the neighbors about her room over the bar with details I won't repeat here. This worried the housewives surrounding them to tears, and they cried until their respectable husbands bought the house from my grandparents at twice what they paid. Three streets over, they did it again. The cycle had a way of repeating itself until the hatred in the world died down.

Mike Hampton

Once back in the states, they bought eighty acres of land and became millionaires by selling real estate courses through the mail. They had seven genius children who went on to preach the Gospel in baseball stadiums, and open a nationwide chain of subdivisions for well-moraled families. The rest of their days passed without drama or earthquakes until they both died heroes rescuing children from a bus fire. This left only me to share their story.

Three Musicians Reviewed by Rane Arroyo

Scott Free, *The Pink Album*

“This is a rock opera that is also half soap opera; it is the personal replacing the talking heads’ and politico-zombies’ versions of (imaginary) suburban reality; it is a well-produced CD that moves from ballads to dance music to mighty calls to prayer.”

Eric Allaman, soundtrack to *Dante’s Cove*

“This album, with its combination of sophisticated but honest music, leaves me thinking about the power of language, tone, the power of seeing.”

Jennifer Lopez, *Brave*

Jennifer insists that she “is never going to give up on love.”

TELLING STORIES, SINGING STORIES
SCOTT FREE, ERIC ALLAMAN AND JENNIFER LOPEZ

Human beings love stories: soap operas, novels, gossip, sequences and “concept” CDs. Emily Dickinson begins a well-known poem with these words: “One need not be a chamber—to be Haunted—/ One need not be a house (#670).” What an adventure it can be to turn a story into art. This thought comes to mind as I listen to Scott Free’s *The Pink Album*, a narrative of growing up as a young gay man towards self-acceptance and the demand for cultural respect. The past refuses to be released from us.

Instead of couching these insights within political discourses, Scott tells us stories: being accused of throwing like a girl, of being God’s enemy, of expecting a lonely life without the theatricality of Parisian existentialism. There is mockery, danger and self-doubt in these stories/songs. In “Alone,” Scott confesses that he walks “the dark rows of darkened theaters” and that he loiters in stairways and corridors / until he goes back home.” He seeks a sexual partner, a love match, a friend who can share the burden of his “secret.” The voice is plaintive a la Piaf but with a muscularity to it, as demonstrated in “Meet Mister Right.” Here, Scott admits that “they gave me unconditional hate” but he is not about to accept being a victim as natural.

There are forces trying to shut this man down—from the church to his family—and Scott sings in the AIDS-inspired “Death Toll,” that each name he throws back at our collective enemies is a magic word: “he was a beautiful man / the day that he died.” Despite it all, we gay men, we marginalized women and people of color, we who are unloved because of weight or mixed-race backgrounds etc., we know that beauty has power. In “Side Effect,” Scott wails that there is talk about losing one’s memory. But *The Pink Album* won’t allow that to happen. This is a rock opera that is also half soap opera; it is the personal replacing the talking heads’ and politico-zombies’ versions of (imaginary) suburban reality; it is a well-produced CD that moves from ballads to dance music to mighty calls to prayer. I love the openness as it mixes with sound that weaves and weaves until we arrive at a new world; think *The Wizard of Oz*’s black-and-white Kansas yielding to the nation of the rainbow flag. Visit his website at: <http://www.myspace.com/mrscottfree2>.

Stories are amazing because they’re a human invention against forgetting, against the Void that threatens to consume all of creation. Some stories are fictional and yet have the power to evoke what hides within us. Rather than confess on a personal level, Eric Allaman’s soundtrack to *Dante’s Cove* is an amazing experience to me as I think about my own life and as I write my poems. Radio won’t play soundtracks (too classical music for the open-minded?). In “Minimalist

The beat, Jennifer's voice, the pop lyrics all evoke for me times when my Puerto Rican family would gather and we'd push furniture aside to dance. Abuela yelling, un paso, un paso. This is a story. The song evokes Puerto Rico in a list with NYC and LA—so we're not invisible. My drag queen Uncle Rachel grabs my 13-year old hand and we're dancing in circles and circles. This is a story. Hey, Dylan Thomas, no sitting around in my house: "O may my heart's truth / Still be sung / On this high hill in a year's turning" ("Poem In October" 1945). Let's change that to hills. Let's change that to years'. As Scott returns the shining and also dark 1980's back to me, as Eric reveals the struggles inside me that spurred me to become a poet, as Jennifer insists that she "is never going to give up on love," I must tell my stories and continue to have adventures for future songs and poems. Hey, Miss Emily, dear friend, being haunted isn't a curse.

Contributors

Richard C. Freed is a professor in the Iowa State University English Department's program in Rhetoric and Professional Communication. As a consultant on proposal strategy and development, he has worked with clients in 23 countries on five continents. He is co-author of *The Variables of Composition*, which won the National Council of Teachers of English best book award for research in scientific and technical communication, and *Writing Winning Business Proposals*, now in its 2nd edition from McGraw-Hill. Not many years ago, he began writing poetry, and after receiving his first acceptance in about 12 minutes from an online journal, he so much liked the instant gratification that he has published only in journals that allow email submissions. Some of those journals include *2River View*; *Octavo: A Publication of the Alsop Review*; *Adirondack Review*; and *The Melic Review*.

Bridget Gage-Dixon's poems have appeared in or are forthcoming in many magazines, including *Poet Lore*, *US 1 Worksheets*, *Inkwell*, *13th Warrior*, *Cortland Review*, and *Gargoyle*. She teaches English and Humanities in New Jersey. Gage-Dixon received her MFA in creative writing at Stonecoast/USM.

Mike Hampton's work has appeared in publications such as *McSweeney's*, *The Rio Grande Review*, and *The Southeast Review*. His fiction is forthcoming in *The Pacific Review*. Currently he lives in Cincinnati, Ohio, with his wife Allison and daughter Ella.

Chris Kelly is a failed musician and freelance writer who can be found in Gunnison and Crested Butte, Colorado, often dressed as Indiana Jones. He has a wild imagination and a love for all things wild. If you see him, get the net and alert the authorities. If you have any questions, comments or hate mail please forward them to hawkeye1969@hotmail.com and he will respond accordingly.

Steve Klepetar teaches literature and writing at Saint Cloud State University in Minnesota. His work has received nominations for both the Pushcart Prize and Best of the Web.

Mercedes Lawry was born and raised in Pittsburgh, PA and has lived in Seattle almost thirty years. She's published poetry in such journals as *Poetry*, *Rhino*, *Nimrod*, *Poetry East*, *Seattle Review*, and others. Her chapbook, *There Are Crows in My Blood*, was published by Pudding House Press. She's also published some fiction as well as stories and poems for children. Among the honors she's received are awards from the Seattle Arts Commission, Hugo House, and Artist Trust. And, she's been a Jack Straw Writer and held a residency at Hedgebrook. Currently she is the Director of Communications at the Museum of History & Industry.

Jane Linders is an award-winning photographer whose prints are in numerous national and international collections. Linders has exhibited her work everywhere from her hometown in St. Louis, Missouri to the Smithsonian in Washington D.C. She is a tireless image maker, whose work can be seen in galleries, books, magazines and newspapers. After several years of traditional photography, she began to experiment with Polaroid transfers. This alternative process photography appeals to her because she likes the painterly quality of the images as well as the variation of each print. Like many artists, her time is divided between her family, her job and her art. In order to achieve some sort of balance, she photographs the places and things that catch her eye as she travels through life. She does this for fun, and of course, huge profits. You can see more of her photography by visiting her websites.

Rich Murphy's recent book *The Apple in the Monkey Tree* was published by Codhill Press. He has had three chapbooks published *Great Grandfather* by Pudding House Publications, *Family Secret* by Finishing Line Press, and *Hunting and Pecking* by Ahadada Press. His poems have appeared in *Rolling Stone*, *Poetry*, *Grand Street*, *The London Magazine*, *Confrontation*, *Segue*, *Aesthetica*, *The Argotist*, *West 47*, *foam:e*, *Creature Magazine* and many others. His most recent essay appears in *Reconfigurations: A Journal for Poetics Poetry / Literature and Culture*. He teaches writing at VCU.

Terry Price is a Springfield, Tennessee based writer and photographer, with an MFA in writing from Spalding University in Louisville and is Program Director and a mentor in The Writer's Loft creative writing program at Middle Tennessee State University (www.mtsu.edu/theloft). His work has appeared in *CCM* magazine, *Writer's Notes* magazine, *Blood Lotus*, *The Trunk*, *The Tennessee Writer* and a piece on jazz saxophonist, Rahsaan Barber, appeared in the online magazine *NewSoutherner.com*

and in their print anthology, *Best of New Southerner*, released in summer of 2006. The short story “Eminent Domain” appeared in the March 2007 issue of the *Timber Creek Review* and was nominated for a 2007 Pushcart Prize.

Steven Tarlow has published poetry (original and translated) in several journals, including *Southern Poetry Review*, *Northwest Review* and *Tikkun*. I have poems coming out soon in *The Cortland Review* and *Painted Bride Quarterly*, and have also been nominated for a Pushcart Prize.

Daive Trame is an Italian teacher of English, born and living in Venice-Italy, writing poems exclusively in English since 1993; they have been published in around four hundred literary magazines since 1999, in U.K, U.S. and elsewhere: “Poetry New Zealand” , “New Contrast” (South Africa). “Nimrod” (U.S.) and “Prague Literary Review” among them. His poetry collection as a downloadable on-line book was published by www.gattopublishing.com in 2006.

Matt Urmy is a storyteller, a poet, and a musician. He has recorded and released four independent records. He has also published one collection of poems, *Ghosts In A House*, with Finishing Line Press. This collection was published in his first term of graduate study at Spalding University in Louisville, KY. He completed his undergraduate studies of poetry at The University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is also the founder of the forthcoming not-for-profit: Global Artist's Alliance for Community Equity (globalaace.org). Matt is also a student and practitioner of the Healing Arts. He has been working and studying with Maori healers in New Zealand for nearly a decade, and continues to deepen those connections. Ever the activist, Matt is also a full member of The Alliance For Native American Indian Rights (<http://www.anairtn.org>). He is a father of one son, and lives in Tennessee.

Justin Vicari's first full-length collection of poetry, *The Professional Weepers*, won the 2007-2008 Transcontinental Poetry Award, and is due out early next year from Pavement Saw Press. He is also the author of the poetry chapbook, *Siamese Twins of the 21st Century* (West Town Press, 2008), and the translator of *Woman Bathing Light to Dark: Prose Poems of Paul Eluard* (Toad Press, 2006). His work appears in *Southern Poetry Review*, *American Poetry Review*, *Fugue*, *Phoebe*, *Rhino*, *Redactions*, *32 Poems*, *Paper Street*, *Eclipse*, *Interim*, *Poetry Salzburg*

Review, *The Modern Review*, *Disquieting Muses Quarterly*, and other journals. In 2005, he received the *Third Coast Poetry Award*, the *New Millennium Writings Poetry Award*, and the *Plan B Press Short Fiction Award*.

Donna Vorreyer lives in the Chicago area with her husband, her son, and two big dogs. She spends her days trying to teach middle schoolers that words matter. Her poems have appeared in many print and online journals including *New York Quarterly*, *After Hours*, *DMQ Review*, *Byline*, *Boxcar Poetry Review*, *Literary Mama*, *All Things Girl*, *Flashquake*, and *The Hiss Quarterly*. She has been a two-time finalist in Chicago's Guild Complex Gwendolyn Brooks Open Mic Competition and has been nominated for a Pushcart Prize. She tries not to take herself too seriously.

Yun Wang's first poetry book, titled "The Book of Jade", won the Nicholas Roerich Poetry Prize from Story Line Press and was published in 2002. Her poetry chap book, titled "The Carp", was published by Bull Thistle Press in 1994. She has published poems in numerous literary journals, including the *Kenyon Review*, *Green Mountains Review*, *International Quarterly*, *Poet Lore*, and many others.