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All unsolicited manuscripts and art work should be accompanied by a stamped, self-addressed envelope. While care will be exercised in the handling of these materials, the editorial staff cannot assume responsibility for them in the event of damage or loss. Submissions will be accepted for consideration during fall and winter quarters for publication each spring. Submit all materials to Sally Russell, Humanities Division, Gainesville Junior College, Box 1358, Gainesville, Georgia 30503.

Cover: Jeff Dulaney

Dedication
This issue of Perceptions is dedicated to our friend, colleague, and teacher
EARL PAYNE
on his retirement from Gainesville Junior College
PERCEPTIONS

GAINESVILLE JUNIOR COLLEGE
A UNIT OF THE UNIVERSITY SYSTEM OF GEORGIA

"If the doors of perception were cleansed every thing would appear to man as it is, infinite."

William Blake

HUMANITIES DIVISION
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On a lazy night near summer's end, a seagull and a snowbird met. Time allowed them little, but they shared a very rare magic that touched both their lives immensely.

The snowbird talked of snowy nights that winter was to bring, and how peaceful life was in the wise old forest. The seagull spoke of his home far to the south, where the moonlight lies soft on the age-old sea. The snowbird longed to show him the way the moonlight danced across the shimmering ice, as the seagull wanted her to see the mystic beauty of his world.

But alas, fate in a whisper, swept him back to the sea. and time went on for the two—each in their own world, living their own lives to the fullest, but never forgetting the other.

After many, many sunsets, the snowbird took flight to the south in search of the memory of the seagull. She had refused to lose sight of her hope for the magic to still be between them.

On the shore of an isle they came together again. The rare magic they both had so long remembered was brought back and the same feelings were still between them. For the few sunsets they shared on the island, all they felt existed was each other.

Again, the same whisper that had swept the seagull away so long ago, swept the snowbird back to her winter homeland in the north.

Sometimes the snowbird would gaze to the south and think of the seagull and hope deep in her heart that maybe he sometimes looked to the north.

Lee McClure  
BRENDA LEHETT - Ink wash
On the Streets

In the slums
With the cold
The hunger
And the crime
The loneliness
Come death and defeat.
The tears
The shame
The humiliation
Need
They struggle
For survival
Their wants are refused.

In the Backyard of our Nation
In quiet despair
They feed on strife and
Live on what?
Watching and waiting
Wanting what's ours
Denied at a glance
They listen and wonder....

The homeless
The poor
The unfortunate

Brenda M. Lehett

SABRINA DILLS - Ink
Living My Life Through His Eyes

Most little girls grow up with playmates or at least a cat or dog; not this little one. She had no one except her parents as a result of being born an Army brat.

Christmas of her second year, we came into each other's lives to grow and learn as only friends can. We became very close from the beginning. She was a loner, unable to fit in with the few children she came into contact with, since the Army officials were always transferring her family from one state to another. She felt there was no real point in making other friends.

When the little girl turned five, her life began to settle down. Her dad decided not to re-enlist in the Armed Forces, so that should have meant a somewhat "normal" life, yet the little girl still could not fit in with the other children. Every day the two of us would escape to the far end of the playground during recess for our tea parties and talks. We went everywhere together and she cried if I wasn't allowed to go along.

Older people began to notice her ability to write a child's story or poem. Her writing was always sweet and innocent like herself. At this time she was six years old and seemed to need nothing more than pencils, paper, and of course, ME. I, myself, was five years old and yet didn't look a day over a year. Yes, she had taken good care of me and in my own way I had returned that care.

Then one lazy summer day things changed drastically for both of us. She charged through the door locking it behind her, something she had been forbidden to do. She was shaking and obviously terrified of something or someone. I felt her small hands reach for me, bite into the flesh beneath my fur. Together we went to our secret place--The Closet. She told me the whole horrid story while crying her little heart out.

There in the dark I could see the images she was describing--A large man...Someone she knew...taking her into a nice bearhug which turned into a nightmare. His face drew close and his mouth opened to reveal a worm trying to force its way into her own mouth. The embrace tightened and her screams were murdered by his violent kiss. Her young body burned with shame where his hands had searched. When she dared to look at him a scream caught in her throat. Instead of the man she knew--and dearly loved--there stood a monster.

She began to fight for her life, innocently kicking a place which awarded freedom. She had run, not daring to stop until she was safely behind the locked bedroom door.

She held me close and whispered softly as if I had been the one who had been hurt. Anger for the perverted man burned within me, but there was nothing I could do or say. The only thing I could do was to comfort her and try to show how much I cared. I knew I would be the only one she would tell, and as we sat there holding onto each other in the dark my tears mixed with hers.

Time went by and she began to grow up fast and full of hatred as a result of the attack. She avoided all males and showed her distrust openly, which no one could understand. Her writing became her suicide; she used it to kill herself over and over. I could only watch and cry my silent tears.

Now I am an old and lonely teddybear named Mister Paws. Marie doesn't need me as much as she used to, but there is still a lot of love and need for each other between us. The emotional scars will be forever present, but I am satisfied with the knowledge that I helped her push it to the back of her mind. Now no one can see those scars. No one will ever know the tears we cried, the pain we felt, for the past has been buried and almost forgotten.

Marie Owens
The Cable Freak

I'll turn the dial, watch Dr. Ruth for a while
And think, if I'm still able,
Of everything that's brought to me
Through this piece of copper cable.

ESPN, TNN,
PTL, and MTV,
As long as I pay fifteen bucks a month
I'll get all that's important to me.

They hooked this cable thing to my house
Back in '77,
So I could dwell inside my hell
And gaze into someone's heaven.

From channel two through thirty-six
I'll watch the only world I know.
For I've been sitting here for nearly ten years,
Switching from show to show.

Slim Whitman's albums? I own them all.
I even bought a Ginsu Knife.
I said hello to a Bamboo Steamer
And said good-bye to my wife.

"Gilligan's Island"? I've seen every one,
Even "The Beaver" and "Scooby Doo."
But don't ask me about the weather outside;
I haven't stepped out since '82.

Do I watch the news? I rarely do.
I'd rather watch the "Brady Bunch."
All the dying on the news I see
Does nothing but spoil my lunch.

Who needs to know what goes on outside?
It doesn't bother me in here.
If everyone died, I wouldn't care
As long as the cable came in clear.

*One day a man in a white lab coat
Stands over a stainless steel table.
He reads the tag on the corpse's toe,
"Cause of death: A disconnected cable"

Gene Moody
Terror in the Night

One night I woke up so scared I hid under the bed until I thought for sure the monster would be gone. Cautiously I peered out from under the bed and screamed bloody murder at the image reflected upon the wall of my bedroom, and dove under again. What could the monster in my room be with full golden moons for eyes and a grin like that of a chainsaw? I could hear the huge and furry beast coming for me as the papers littered around on the floor crunched beneath the weight of the hideous creature. The skirt around my bed moved, and as I crawled into a corner, I shut my eyes. I knew it was under the bed with me, and I wondered how it would be to die. My life flashed in front of my closed eyelids.

"Please, don't hurt me, please!" I prayed aloud. I opened my eyes to see my big tomcat staring at me as if I had lost my mind!

Marie Owens

THE DREAMER'S CURSE

In his thoughts he could fly, Fly to a world far away. He spent away the hours And the longing of each day.

His father used to say, What a lazy boy you are; You waste away the night Simply reaching for a star.

His mother would worry endlessly About her "tiny, little one" Who dreamt away the years, Barely getting little done.

His grandfather often said, Oh! Just let him be. There is nothing he can't do Or a vision he won't see.

You see he is a dreamer, One fearless and so true, In love with all of life And all that's left to do.

God made the dream Not only for those who sleep; For the ones with heart, He gave them images to keep.

We must dream the dreams inspired, Valued and precious from the start. Your goal should be its fulfillment. It is a gift from within your heart.

Terri Osborne
ERNEST BOETZ - FELT-TIP PEN
The Writer

It is a common misconception that men write poems. In actuality, or rather, punctuality, it is the other way around. Poems write men and poems write themselves.

Many people do not think or believe that poems develop inside the author's head like a chick in an egg and come out when they are good and ready and not before. The trouble is that many poems decide to "hatch" at very inconvenient moments, such as just when you get comfortable or ready to go to sleep; while you are in the shower, shaving, washing dishes; or at a time when you find that what you can't find is your parchment and quill.

Then, other poems are like fine wines; if you let them sit long enough in the cool darkness of the bottle and keep out all air (and impatience), they romance the tongue and flatter the educated palate.

Though asked many times, the only vintage date that I can give for good poetry is whenever it lets you know the time is right, no matter how inopportune.

Paul Masson "will sell no wine before its time." Why should the birth of a poem be any different?

Melissa Tweedell
Along the banks of a mighty river,
Below the land down under.
An old duckbill sat by his wife
And aloud he began to wonder.

"Since I was never the strongest one,
Nor had the most handsome bill,
Then why, oh why, did you marry me?
Was it not of your own free will?"

"You silly man," she did reply.
"Of course I did agree.
To be your bride was what I wanted,
But what do you see in me?"

"My flippers? Too wide.
My tall? Too slim.
My fur? Not the sleakest coat...
Of the prettier ones who have swam by
I noticed you have taken note."

"Sol I'm a dirty old man? Is that what you think?
Who doesn't have a beautiful wife?
I haven't heard such kangaroo poop
In all of my natural-born life."

So he swam off in a fit of rage,
His tall slapping water behind.
A pretty young bride who appreciates him
Is something he wanted to find.

She screamed and she cursed his vanishing form
As he high-tailed it on downstream.
She pounded her flippers and grinded her bill,
Attempting to let off some steam.

Days later she sits with her middle-aged friends,
Pondering her new life style.
"I think I will stay in tonight
And clean out the den for a while."

"Excuses, excuses, you silly old girl,"
A friend of hers replied.
"You've got freedom in the prime of your life.
It's not as if you died."

"It's the eighties you're in,
Not the old middle ages.
A girl can go work,
raise a family, earn wages."

So there she stood,
And soon began weeping.
"This nightmare will end
If I can only stop sleeping.
I never had a job
At all in my life
My only credential
Is being a wife."

Her old, divorced friends,
They left all at once.
"She really has lost it..."
"My God, she's a dunce."

"Who needs friends like that?"
She thought to herself.
"To get through my life
I only need health."

"Those young, healthy boys,
They all want to play,
But when the egg-laying comes,
They're gone, on their way."

This furry old fella
In his bachelor pad,
Thought, "I should be really happy,
But why am I sad?"

"I got my own place,
And I work out a lot.
A good mile swim
To burn off my pot."

But the girls think I'm old
And run out of the water,
Saying, "You dirty old man!
I could be your daughter."

"My buddies know I'm lonely
And say 'Go back to your wife.
You're just not cut out
For the swinging singles life.'

"I know they are right,
The place Is a dump.
The dishes are dirty,
Clothes piled in a hump.

"But I don't miss her laundring,
And I don't miss her cleaning,
I think I am sad
For a much deeper meaning.

"My folks? They were married
For sixty-two years.
I know they had problems
I know they had fears,
"But they always came through them
By talking it out.
They said nothing gets solved
With a scream or a shout."

Then it suddenly hit him
Like a brick on his head.
"I've got to get home
Before my marriage is dead!"
Then he ran out the door, leaving his stuff behind. Getting downriver was first in his mind.

Around the bend, he saw the door. "Please, Lord, don't tell me she's gone to the store."

As he got closer still, he could see she was home. Through the window he saw her as she cried all alone.

He ran up the bank and he picked a bouquet. He knocked on the door. She said, "Go away!"

Please let me inside, let's try to amend the wrongs we have done, let's not let this end."

"The wrongs we have done? It was you that ran out. The fact it was you, I have no doubt."

"Okay, I'll admit I acted in haste, but let's not debate fault for the time it will waste."

So they talked and they talked until all was forgiven. They declared, "We have fought, now it's time for some livin'."

And, so it goes. They lived happily ever after. The shouts were replaced by rejoicing and laughter.

Along the banks of a mighty river, below the land down under, an old duckbill sat by his wife and aloud he began to wonder.

"Since I am an old, decrepit man, with arthritis inside my right knee, why do you still want to be my wife, with all of these problems you see?"

"You silly old fool," came back her reply, as her bill twisted up in a grin. "These faults you speak of, I cannot see, for I'm blinded by the light from within."

ANDY PARTON - WATERCOLOR

Gene Moody
AND A LITTLE CHILD SHALL LEAD THEM ...

In the winter of my tenth year, on the very day of my birth, God sent to my family a present— a “birth” day present— her name was Anna. On that joyful afternoon when Anna came into our lives, the icy stinging of December winds through bleak skeletons of isolated trees became tropical breezes through shady palms. Her smile lifted each of us to soar in wonder at the earth as we danced on clouds and shared the view of soaring birds, and in those blissful moments, that little hole in her little heart seemed like a little problem in a big beautiful world. But it was far from little and the world would seem a lot less beautiful (in a sense) in the months to come before it was time to give our little Angel back to God.

In the spring and summer of my tenth year, along with the singing of May birds, and the budding of new leaves, came many questions, many fears, and not many answers. In addition to what the doctors had called Tetrology of Fallot, or a heart murmur condition, they had detected an eye condition call congenital colobomatas of the retina— meaning that, at best she would only have peripheral vision— and congenital hydrocephalus, or water on the brain. For the heart defect, and the hydrocephalus, there were operations and for the peripheral sight, there would probably be no change, but for all, there was only time, and only time would reveal the outcome of each.

Over a period of 9 months, Anna underwent surgery for a head shunt, to drain water from the surface of the brain into the stomach where it could be disposed of through natural processes, a heart shunt, to aid the heart in circulation of blood, and two cardiac catheterizations, one of which almost led to the loss of a leg due to a main artery collapsing. (These were to check operation of the heart shunt using dye.) And somewhere in those 9 months (my memory fails me as to exactly where) but somewhere prayers were lifted and answered and Anna began picking threads off mother’s shirt and reaching to grasp sunbeams as she played in her crib —her vision was healed.

Our hopes were rekindled and we were all smugly elated at the mountain that had crumbled in defeat, but in the distance loomed yet another and this one much larger than the seeming “footills” that had come before. As soon as she was strong enough, she was to undergo open heart surgery, her most difficult, but hopefully her last, operation.

She stayed at the hospital most of the time; the nurses and doctors were wonderful friends, and obviously very dedicated. We visited often, and each time seemed to be more special than the time before as Anna seemed to learn a new expression or smile a sweeter smile than the one before during the periods between our coming together as a family. Strange, it seemed to me, that one so young could look so wise, and that eyes so blue and innocent could laugh with such sincerity and pleasure amidst such an unusual start in life and one that, I'm sure, must have been painful and confusing to one so new to the world. I think she must have known all along that she had only a short time to love us here on earth, and to make up for it, she poured a lifetime of love and total devotion into 11 months each time her little arms reached out to be held in the time we shared together.

In the Autumn of my tenth year, a month before our birthdays, Anna was determined strong enough for open heart surgery and she went in on November the eighth. Afterwards, as she rested in Intensive Care, with tubes and wires connecting her frail body to support machines that seemed to enhance her fragileness, doctors informed us that she had died once during surgery and that she was very weak. They also told us that her blood pressure was very low — into the teens which for an adult would mean death but babies, having experienced little fear in their first year of life, don't know that all of the tubes and wires have a critical meaning, and that without a respirator, their next breath may be their last; therefore, babies don’t know when to quit. Her heartbeat was weak but she was determined to hold onto her life.

Following surgery, her blood pressure remained in the teens, only rising when mother or father came into her room for brief periods of time. Doctors asked that they stand back from her in the room because the sound of their voices or the touch of their hands excited her too much and they feared she would dislodge her tubes.

Two days later, on November tenth, 1979, after tremendous emotional conflict and turmoil, my parents, tears streaming down their worn faces, prayed and asked God to take her home if she couldn’t live a life without suffering and pain. Only minutes later, the “death” alarm, as the doctors had so named it, sounded in her room and the nurses and doctors who had become so close to our family during the times we had come to the hospital, came out in tears and Mom and Dad knew that she had gone. Their unsellish act of release was all that she had been waiting for and Anna had known that she could go home — her mission here was finished. They had given her back with love to Him who had sent her. And on that day, gray and rainy, Anna was home once more. She had come for a birthday and gone for a “birth” day — her birthday into the kingdom of God.

I think the thing I remember most about Anna was her seeming fascination with light. No matter where we were, she always searched for the light whether outside or in, as if there were some sort of recognition or similar resemblance to a light she had seen before. She looked to the light and reached out to it, looking and laughing to us with those knowing blue eyes as if to say, “One day, you will seek the light and reach out to it like I do ... and a Little Child Shall Lead You ...”

Angie Sullivan
Next !!!

He told me a story
About a couple in love.
Cupid's wondrous arrow
Gave each heart a shove.

The many weeks together
Were endlessly sweet.
The fact they were in love
Appeared to be quite a feat.

The time went by quickly,
Then a girl caught his eye.
He lacked what it took
To just say good-bye.

Her young love received
A severe shock from it all.
Her heart was shattered pieces,
It was broken in the fall.

She used many of her tears
To wash away the dreams.
She had seen her plans
Ripped away at the seams.

Her father, he held her
Through a long tearful night.
He told her he loved her
And she seemed a sad sight.

The young man lacked worth
For all the tears that were shed.
And he soon would suffer
The way his heart had been led.

His former young sweetheart
Had a heart filled with love,
A soul which was blessed
By the One from above.

Her father assured her
A knight would come along.
The man of her future
Is where her thoughts now belong.

He taught her a lesson
Not found in any text.
The easiest way to go on
Is simply say – Next!!!

— Terri Osborne
The Vintage Chevrolet

You can insult me, but don’t insult my car.

This was my feeling of outrage when some people I knew walked me to my car. They erupted (it means an explosion of hot air) in laughter when they saw my car for the first time. It’s an ancient four-door Bel Air Chevrolet, vintage 1965. Of course it has a name. When the family requests, I hide it behind the barn. They call it “The Puerto Rican Taxi.”

Most mechanics who believe in voodoo refuse to work on it because I have a perfectly preserved dead frog lounging on the dash. I found it done by the sun in the Everglades.

This old car and I met around the time of the Bay of Pigs (the invasion of Cuba) in Miami. It had 5,000 miles on it and I bought it from a little old retired school teacher from Texas. It still was in its youth and had all its pristine beauty. It was baby blue with a cream hard top. It had two chrome exhaust pipes protruding from the rear end. This proclaimed to the following cars it was a sports model and a modern-day hot rod, especially as I spun my wheels taking off from red lights. It has all the extras. Air conditioning, heat, a rear-window defroster, different speeds for the windshield wipers—slow and fast. It has vent windows in front and we jokingly call it our 4-60 air conditioning—windows open and going 60 miles per hour. It can comfortably seat eight people, four in front and four in back. It has a great trunk. It can accommodate all the luggage for a long cruise; it can carry a family with 11 kids (four in the trunk, lid up), or 12 bushels of corn.

This has been an emotional attachment. We have been together so long there is a dependency I can’t deny. We have traveled down the highway of life together—to weddings, to funerals, to graduations, and, most of all, grocery shopping. We went to the hospital to bring home a brand new baby. We went through two killer hurricanes; we survived the spraying for fruit flies, mosquitoes, and living in the pathway of jets that spewed excess fuel in tiny droplets every time they passed over. We went to the beach; we moved to Georgia from Florida together, pulling a U-haul.

We have not had a major catastrophe. No real dents other than a front bumper that someone else did. I believe my driving record is intact because they see us coming and avoid us. Strangers wave, not because they know me personally, but they know the car.

We have grown old gracefully together. I must admit it has aged faster than I have. It was an emotionally-packed moment when, with a car full of people and we were right on Biscayne Boulevard, on our way to Dodge Island where the cruise ships dock, the speedometer turned over from 100,000 miles to ZERO. I was a blubbering idiot trying to explain what it meant to me. This experience probably would never happen again in my lifetime. The passengers were less than impressed, but I shall always remember it fondly. It was a bright and sunny day.

Of course it can’t help but show some aging. It has a few rust holes that hurt to look at, like having skin cancer. The tail pipes aren’t chrome anymore. I’ve had mechanical work done on it. I have personally patched the windscreen with leak-proofing glue. The turn signal is operated manually. The most embarrassing show of aging was when a kid wailed from the back seat while we were driving in the rain. “Grandma, my feet are getting wet!” I yelled back, “You must have kicked that tin thing that covered the hole. Replace it immediately.”

I wearied of replacing gas caps, and it has been replaced by a potato that is now ossified, hard as a rock, but without threads to screw it on. The license plate holds it in place, nicely. Gas attendants shake their heads when I remind them. “Don’t forget my potato!”

When, as a last resort (when all the modern cars in the driveway are busted) and I must take the kids to school, their mother warns me in no uncertain terms, “Mother, see that the seat belts are fastened, and Mother, don’t you dare use the passing gear.”

Recently, old friends visited me from Florida and exclaimed, “I can’t believe you’re still driving that old clunker!” I replied with pride, “Believe it, believe it! It’s insured by Lloyd’s of London!” What my friends don’t know won’t hurt them. No one in this country was eager to risk it.

Ruby Davis
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Towards a Sunset

As birds fly in the sky,  
I look and wonder where they go.  
It seems they fly straight upward.  
Yet a glimpse shows me that  
They are flying to a destination,  
A fleeting horizon.  
I walk beneath them envying  
Their wings gliding on air  
Unimpeded.  
I look upon each bird and see  
Within the eye of each bird  
A ruby gleams within  
The dying sunset.

Doug Amis

Wind Chimes and Wildflowers

She left us wind chimes  
and wildflowers  
before she went away  
to chase the rainbow  
only she could see.

We did not think to notice  
the hurting face  
she wore, deep down  
inside her, in the  
place where she lived.

She always donned a proper  
mask to wear for  
every day, as she  
walked in places that  
were bleak and bare.

We completely overlooked  
the wounded place  
inside, when outside  
there was brittleness  
garbed in proper clothes.

The right facade covered it,  
as she went from day  
to day; we only heard  
the gaiety that she  
offered in her laugh.

We didn't even see  
the sorrow in her eyes,  
and the longing for  
another world beyond  
the place she lived.

There was just a gentle  
hint in the gifts she  
gave to us, like wind  
chimes and wildflowers  
before she went away.

Betty Maine
THE CREATION

In the beginning there was darkness—for the forces of evil were prevalent over those of good. There were continuous battles between the two forces that kept the Universe in constant chaos. At the climax of the last of these battles, the dark lord, evil Darkon, captured and held prisoner the Good Force, the Brillevians. The evil lord Darkon was all that is dark while the beautiful Brillevians were all that is good.

The Brillevians were a tiny, female race, with an even smaller population of three. Their names were Redina, Bluekeevla, and Yellowvlette. These feminine forces, by banding together, used all of their strength against the male lord Darkon.

Darkon, in his anger against this attack, swooped up the three princesses in his great expanse. He being cruelly evil, forcefully had his way with them, causing many of his seed to be planted within each of the Brillevians.

The Brillevians assembled together a second time to defeat Darkon, and most importantly, to keep the quickly growing seeds within them away from the evil grasp of the Dark Lord. After much battling between the Brillevians and Darkon, the seeds, having the bright coloration of the Brillevians, broke free from their motherly keepers and set themselves to spiralling throughout the Dark Realm of Darkon.

Being neither good nor evil, the spirals of color were not bothered by Darkon; neither were they swayed by the good of the Brillevians. Instead, they enjoyed spiralling aimlessly throughout their father’s darkness, and playfully making lovely shapes of vibrant pastels with their tiny bodies.

The Brillevians, unable to bear watching their seeds frolic in evil darkness instead of good, banded together a final time to destroy Darkon. First, they circled around each other, then gaining strength and speed, they spun faster and faster. They began to spin so fast that they became a lodestone that pulled the young spiraling colors into their magnetic sphere. Soon the magnet was so strong that even Darkon was sucked into the violently turning circle. As their velocity increased, the colors became blurred, and some were fused together. The Dark Lord’s power began to crumble, causing his dark expanse to split and merge with the colors and the Brillevians.

Suddenly there was a great explosion and many of the colors and splitting pieces of Darkness converged to make a great globe of matter. Most of the remaining flecks of color and darkness fell like a mighty shower upon the sphere and formed various interesting shapes.

The considerably weakened Brillevians acknowledged the possibility of further battles, so they demanded a meeting with the Dark Lord, whose power was also failing. The meeting was held to decide who would rule the sphere they named E-ARTH. Since the two forces were in no condition to fight each other for ruling power, they decided to create two beings to rule the planet. The Brillevians created a being they called woman, and Darkon created man.

These beings were neither good nor evil, neither were they neutral, like the other forms and shapes created by the spirals. The man and woman were asked to name each of these shapes whatever they wished.

The Brillevians and Darkon also created various other creatures that the man and woman named animals. When all things were named upon E-ARTH, Darkon retired to the heavens and remained there to rule the night. The Brillevians also retired to the heavens as rulers of the day; man named the Brillevians sun, while woman preferred to call them Brilliant. The flecks of color still remaining in the heavens were called stars and meteors, and these were also beautiful.

Man and woman remained on E-ARTH and gave every shape, form, and creature a name even down to the smallest grain of sand beside the vast blue ocean. Man and woman were fruitful and caused their race to multiply and replenish E-ARTH—even as men and women multiply and replenish the earth today.
COLAS DE DRAGONES Y MONTAÑAS DE ORUGAS

He vivido bajo tu protección,
he escapado de cruces lluvias,
del mundo he sido protegida
por muchos años ya.

Mi turno ha llegado,
quiero tirar con fuerza dragonesa
pero... aún siento tú
mano extendida palpitar.

Me cuentas de las ardus montañas
que has tenido que escalar;
me dices donde afirmarme,
me señales donde evitar.

...he aprendido las arduas lecciones de la vida,
...he aprendido las TUYAS y la MÍAS.

Y ahora? Ahora tengo que subir sola,
a paso de oruga si es preciso.
Quiero descubrir el infinito,
descubrir lo que se me espera
en la cima de la montaña.

No desesperes, madre.
Tus consejos vibraran en mi mente
al compas de mi lenta marcha;
tiempos cambian y es fácil la caída.

No desesperes por mi regreso,
tu amor y sabiduría
siempre me traeran junto a ti
MADRE MÍA

Melissa Tweedell

DRAGONS' TAILS AND CATERPILLAR MOUNTAINS

I've lived under your wing
and been safe from the rain
and the world for so many years now.

My time has come to pull
the dragon's tail but you hold
me back.

You tell me stories of the mountains
you have climbed; where to hold on,
which ledges are safe and which are not.

I have learned from all the
lessons that life has taught us both.

Now I must ascend my own
caterpillar mountain to find
what awaits me at the top.

Your advice echoes in my mind as
I climb; times have changed and
safe holds crumble, new ones must
be found to take their places.

Do not fear for my safe return,
your love and wisdom will always
bring me back to you, my mother.

Melissa Tweedell
Mike had often pictured himself in the arms of a beautiful woman, like the ones he often saw on those health club commercials. However, for a sixteen-year-old in Oak Bluff, Missouri, this was nothing more than a dream.

Most of the girls that were considered cute at Oak Bluff High had frizzy blonde hair and wore braces. Their faces were covered with a few inches of make-up and they always seemed to have names that ended in the letter "L." Mike was considered cute by most of them, but his lack of self-confidence kept him from dating.

That summer, he and his family went to visit his grandmother on Sanibel Island, Florida.

Grandmother was the typical Florida retiree. She lived in a house that was a part of the pink stucco genre which seemed to dominate that part of the state. He thought the house was ugly and found the only redeeming value of the dock behind the house. The Grandfather's she kept after he died.

The main problem Mike had with the trip was that at sixteen, he now regarded excess time spent with his family to be more of a handicap than a source of enjoyment. He was able to tolerate this embarrassment because his parents now considered him old enough to take the ten-minute walk to the beach by himself. He would spend every afternoon there watching, but never approaching, the well-tanned sirens that were sunning themselves around him. As he would swim in the surf, he would imagine himself in various situations with one of them, such as pulling a drowning debutante from the water, reviving her, and recreating the famous beach scene in "From Here to Eternity."

After a week of being alone at the beach, Mike's behavior began to worry Grandmother. She mistook his enjoyment of solitude for boredom and decided he needed a friend. She talked to one of her senior citizen friends and they jointly agreed on a plan. Her friend had a "bored" granddaughter and the two ladies decided the kids should get together for an afternoon at the beach.

"Mike, you look unhappy. All you do is sulk and lay around. You need to meet some of the nice young people I know around here," Grandmother said as the two sat alone in the den.

Mike recalled the time the obnoxious Jewish boy from Philadelphia broke his favorite mask and snorkel, and the young child prodigy that did nothing but recall every "Star Trek" episode and blow up hermit crabs with firecrackers.

His mother, who had just walked in from the kitchen, added her two cents. "Your grandmother's right. You never date or do anything with other people. You're a handsome young man, just like your dad. Being anti-social is unhealthy."

"But MOM!" he pleaded, making "MOM" a three-syllable word. "I'm happy, so why can't you guys leave me alone? It's my vacation, too, you know." "Mike," she said, ignoring his plea, "a friend of your grandmother's wants you to take her granddaughter to the beach tomorrow."

Mike rolled his eyes in embarrassment and disgust. "She's probably fat and ugly, or has a bunch of oozy zits all over her body."

"MIKE! Don't say that in front of your grandmother. She has been nice enough to let us visit her home, so the least you can do is sacrifice one day out of your selfish life and do something for someone else."

Mike stared at the T.V. "Well?" Mom asked.

Feeling the pressure of an impending double-female guilt trip, Mike mumbled, "Okay."

Grandmother tried to comfort his uneasiness. "I haven't seen her, but I hear her mother was a model in California."

"Oh wow." He thought to himself. "I bet she modeled underwear for Woolworth's or K-Mart."

"She's just here for a few more days until she has to go back to San Diego and she's very lonely."

"Sure, Grandmother, whatever you say."

Zero hour for the dreaded meeting was the next day at two o'clock.

That night, he tossed and turned on the sofa-bed, thinking about the bovine/human hybrid he would have to be seen in public with.

The day of infamy had arrived. His dad had gone fishing in the boat, so at least he could be humiliated in smaller company.

Five minutes after zero hour, the doorbell rang. He sat in the den, staring at the T.V. as a swarm of butterflies attacked his stomach.

From the living room, he could hear Grandmother open the door and give a friendly greeting. The reply he heard sounded very pleasant, though he knew ugly people had to overcompensate for their appearance by having a nice voice.

He then heard Grandmother say, "Mike, come and meet your new friend." He rolled his eyes, got up from the Lazy Boy and walked into the living room.

"Lisa Miller, I'd like you to meet Mike Brewer."

"Hi!"

"Nice to meet you."
"Hey," he thought to himself, "she's not bad at all."
She was a tall, dishwater blonde. Her hair hung down to her shoulders in natural waves, she wore no braces, nor any make-up (She didn't need any). He knew she was his age, though she looked five years older. He could tell she had a nice figure, even though it was covered by a baggy, Hawaiian-print blouse and a big wrap-around skirt. Mike thought she would look good in a granola commercial.

They went to the den, where Mom, with wild-eyed excitement, happily greeted her. The three girls made small talk, while Mike sat next to Lisa and tried to appear interested.

The time had come for them to leave. As Mike escorted her to the station wagon (Mom insisted that he should drive), he could sense two smiling faces behind him.

During the short drive to the beach, they talked about Florida weather, California, Missouri, and the strange behavior of people over thirty-five. He was thinking how friendly she was and how this wasn't so bad, after all.

After parking the car, he politely took her beach bag and towel and led her down a sand spur-mined path to the beach.

Mike laid their towels out on the beach, took off his t-shirt, adjusted the waistband on his baggy swim trunks, and sprinted into the surf.

After immersing himself in the water, he stood up, wiped the water from his eyes and looked back at Lisa, just as she was removing her blouse and skirt.

"Oh my God!" He thought to himself.
Underneath that baggy clothing was a body that he had only seen on T.V. or the occasional Playboy. She was now wearing a baby-blue micro-bikini that did little but cover her most strategic parts.

Here before him stood his fantasy girl, someone you would never see in Oak Bluff, Missouri. He was on a date that even his high school's quarterback would be envious of.

She waded out towards him.
All of a sudden, his mind went blank. He quietly panicked because he could think of absolutely nothing to say.

She stood up next to him.
"This water's really warm."
"Uh huh." He tried to speak normally, but he could only babble like an idiot, "I-uh-Like the beach."
"That's nice."

She turned and dove for deep water.
As she was underwater, he frantically searched his mind for something to say.

She resurfaced.

"What should I do?" He had no answer; his vocal chords were paralyzed.

"Let's get out of the water," she suggested.

He followed her, staring at the birds, the waves, seaweed, other people, etc. He couldn't bring himself to look at her, let alone speak to her.

His hands were trembling and he was convinced he would have a heart attack any minute. "I hope I don't have one, that would be real embarrassing." He never felt more miserable in his life.

He could sense the local beach studs checking her out, and then looking at him, trying to figure out this odd couple.

The rest of the date was spent in silence. He sat there staring at his feet, while she gave up hope trying to talk to him.

About an hour after they arrived, she said, "It's getting late, I need to go home for dinner."

"Uh huh."

The drive to her house was spent in silence, except for her giving directions to her grandmother's house in a rather angry voice.

When he dropped her off at her grandmother's house, she angrily got out and slammed the door.

He mumbled "Goodbye."

As Mike drove off, he pounded the dash in frustration and humiliation. Here was a dream-come-true-girl and he totally fell apart. Later on that night, he lay in the dark den and stared up at the ceiling. "Why wasn't it like I thought it would be? I never thought being with a beautiful woman could be so awful. I'm not gay, or anything. I'm a healthy man, I shouldn't have this problem."

He tossed and turned, realizing that sofa-beds were made for convenience, rather than comfort.

"Maybe dreams aren't supposed to come true, after all."

Gene Moody
STALE CIGARETTE SMOKE

That's the smell of my Father
Although I don't notice it much—
Until after I've been to the house.
It happens when I've returned
To wherever it is I've come from...
And gone back to.
When I'm unpacking my clothes,
They reek of smoke!
But not the menthol kind or
Ones with perfumes, so to speak—But
Regular cigarettes—
The ones without the filters
And the funny names
And Oh! How I loathe the smell....

A product of World War II,
My father is
When L.S.M.F.T. was the only thing
Written on the side of his cigarette pack.
He probably read it the first time
He had one
So why look it over any more?

I often wonder...When the day comes,
And my Dad isn't around to listen
To anyone, and
I pull an old sweater of mine
From a drawer,...And I smell that smoky smell
Will I
Cry because He's gone?
Or will I
Inhale the fragrance of that sweater until
It smells only of sachet and mothballs?

Brenda M. Lehett
Mid-Life Crisis

A fragile strand of the Web of Success
Waves gently
in the soft Winds of Fate,
Within grasp,
perhaps,
for the last time
in this life.

Hoyt LeCroy
Conversation On a Front Porch On a Lazy Afternoon

Kill them! Kill them all!

But why should you have to be the one to take care of them? Besides, they're not bothering anybody.

Yes, they are, they're bothering me!

Why? They're perfectly harmless.

Yes, maybe, but give them time and they'll take over the place.

They won't do much to harm you.

They'll run all over my whole property!

Naw—look! Aren't they magnificent! So organized and hardworking!

Yeah, just like union leaders at a factory.

Don't worry about it, they aren't anywhere near your place.

They're close enough to cause me problems.

What kind of problems?

They'll infiltrate my whole existence! I'll have nightmares all the time thinking about what they're doing!

You're overreacting.

Would you be acting the way you are now if they were outside your door and all the way along your sidewalk?

Of course not! But I'd do something besides complaining.

Oh yeah? What would you do?

I'd call an exterminator.

Damn ants.

Brenda M. Lehett
The Real Revenge of the Nerd

Lori was a prom queen, Johnny was a nerd. She drove a "Beemer," he peddled his bike. Johnny loved her, she thought he was absurd. She had boyfriends beat him for her delight. She went to Bama, Johnny to Harvard. While she dropped out to marry a rich man, Poor little Johnny graduated third, With a successful career in his plans. Lori was untrue to her dear husband. "I'll divorce him and take all that he has." She squealed with delight at her cruel plan. When they went to court, she showed little class. She smiled at the judge; he said, "Hey, honey." She cried in shock, "Oh my God! It's Johnny!"

Huff Moody

Hail to the Chiefs

Oh gosh, they shot Jack!
Let's get Lindy to do it!
He'll be a fearless leader.
He likes war too much.
Show him the door!
Dick's our man!
He'll get us out of this mess.
He's a crook.
Throw him out!
Gerry will do the job right!
We need his calmness.
He's boring and clumsy.
Get rid of him!
Jimmy's a breath of fresh air!
A kind heart for tough times.
He's a wimp.
Send him back to the nut farm!
Thank God for Ronny!
He's a true Patriot.
He gives guns to the enemy
Put him in a rest home!
Next, please.

Huff Moody
Frank woke up in a jail cell, his head was cut open and his hair stuck to the dried blood, and he had just learned that he was wanted for the murder of the police officer, Charles P. Lindsey.

Years after Frank had been sentenced, he was still wild. He felt uneasy and restless, he didn't care about anyone or anything. He spat at the guards as they passed, picked fights with the inmates. He even set his mattress on fire twice, and hung from the bars like a monkey while screaming at all hours of the night. He had been put in solitary confinement so often that the guards just made that his new home for four years rather than having to keep moving him back and forth.

After about ten years in prison something happened to Frank. He no longer called attention to himself.

It was early in the morning and all the other inmates were out in the courtyard. Frank was in solitary confinement again. From across the hall he heard loud and vicious screams. Guards were running everywhere trying to subdue the inmate. Frank smiled to himself, "Sounds like me over there." The noise was growing and coming closer down the hall.

"I hope you all burn in Hell," the voice screamed; "You just wait, I'll show you--I'll clog up the toilet, flood the halls, scream until you can't stand it no more."

Frank stuck his mirror out of the bars to get a look at the guy causing all the commotion. Frank froze, a wave of panic caught him off guard. The man that was causing the ruckus wasn't just an ordinary guy. He was that old man that had been the talk of the jail since Frank had gotten there. In all that time the old man was still causing trouble. He would never be paroled because of it. The old man let his own anger and frustration cause him to be in prison both physically and mentally. Frank saw himself as the old man's mirror image and that scared him.

"Hey Frank!" Carl yelled across the hall years ago, "Why don't you set your mattress on fire again so we can have some excitement around here."

"No, Carl, I haven't got time; I grew out of that."

The guards' footsteps and clanking keys could be heard coming down the hall. They stopped at Frank's cell.

"Well Davis, this is it--we're sure going to miss you--the wife won't be getting anymore of those pretty water color pictures you used to draw. What are you going to do with yourself, Davis?"

"I thought I might buy myself a shrimp boat, and go into business for myself--don't know if anyone would hire me--got to do it on my own."

"Well good luck to you. Come on."

"Write to us!" Carl shouted.

"Yeah" Jake said in a whisper

"See you little man," Bobby screamed, "hop the wind don't mess up your hair!"

Frank turned towards the young man and said to no one In particular, "He'll grow out of it, he'll grow out of it soon enough."

He turned back around and walked down the corridor with the guard.

Jennifer Cogolla
Betty Hollens

Have you heard, my fellow wight?
Betty Hollens died tonight.
On her neck, perceive the bite
That drained her youthful blood.

See her laid upon her bed--
Flesh so cold she must be dead.
Fraternal Death did come to wed
And drink her youthful blood.

Through the wood, she took a stroll
To calm the tumult of her soul
And never saw the eyes of coal
That lusted for her blood . . .

When dropped the Night her ebon pall
Upon the forest, trees and all,
Betty Hollens heard the call
Which froze her youthful blood.

She sought to hide within the brush
And tried her gasping breath to hush
But pricked her neck upon a bush
Which let her youthful blood.

Then came he, our father old,
Baring fangs so keen--so cold,
Seeking out the scent so bold
Of Betty’s youthful blood.

Fast he fell upon her nape,
Tearing through her silken cape.
Betty never saw the shape
Which drank her youthful blood.

Shortly then her kinsmen came
And found her body neatly lain
’Neath a tree in naked shame
And stained with youthful blood.

They bore her home, lamenting loud,
And draped her carcass with a shroud,
They left her room with sorrow bowed
And dreamt of youthful blood . . .

But see her, brother, slowly rise,
A sister born of sweet demise.
She opens wide her coal-black eyes
And yearns for youthful blood.

Robbie J. Spriggs
The Quetzals

The sky above canopies the wet land,  
And the Quetzals fly fast through cool air,  
And overrise where thick, green shady palms stand,  
Then return as day ends - where beaches lie bare.  
With one effortless leap they glide through space;  
And then I saw - till then I had but only felt  
The way the wind blows upward past my face,  
Content in front of the sea I knelt.  
I heard cries of lamentation rise and spill,  
Pausing, they studied me with cautioned glances  
In all that beauty and peacefulness I stood still  
Watching their colors mix in frantic dances.  
With tiny heads bent looking past the sea,  
They turned with opened wings and lifted me.

Jennifer Cogelia
MEDITATION ON A FADING NEW DAWN
(Stigmata Martyr)

As we stand in the haze of thick early morning dew, our attention falls upon two figures in the far distance. The blunt, cold light of the sun etches its path around the foggy silhouettes of the two beings, asking us to notice their movement. The passage of time is marked by the morbid, steady cadence of boots thrust upon the ground as they march. As the two walk slowly from the footlights of dawn, from out of the haze we see the two singular men. Except for their dress and their walk, we are left to assume that the two men are identical. Are they brothers? Are they perhaps a father and son?

The rising sun gives the man on the right a cue to turn off his path and take a stance at our right. We now see this man is white and wears military khakis, long hair, and a beard. A small cap is sitting low upon his head. Facing us, the man allows us to see his chiseled features. This man looks American, or German, or Scandinavian. His rugged visage and sharp eyes allow us to see his reality. He is probably in his forties; forty or so years of hard work and determination and the old way have brought him to us. Lifting his cap tightly to sweep back a shock of hair that fell into his face, the man turns to spit tobacco juice on the ground. His cold, hateful eyes are upon us once again. We feel alienated by this mindless child of habit. Decisely, this man's way is the best way, and anyone in his way or opposing his way is doomed with fear. This man has security, a fear of God, and probably a ninth-grade education. Having lived, and therefore experienced it all, the man proudly works to support his family, in a non-complicated world, with easy-going and simple people just like himself. He is content.

We now realize that the man on the left has continued advancing toward us. The sun, ever-increasingly bright now, sheds its light upon this man's black face. We notice the warmth of his eyes, the coolness of his spirit. He wears dark clothing, also of a military nature, and is clean-shaven. He wears no cap. In his well-formed face we see happiness and contentment. Etched in his face are the painful reminders of hatred, of slavery, and of an age of his people long passed. As a young man, he went to Sunday School every week with his grandmother and probably helped his father in the fields. Growing older, the man learned appreciation for education, and, even though this nation was planted by the seeds of white men, he knew he had been invited to use his country, as well as to be at the service of his country when his education had appropriately earned him a college degree. He was probably married, or would be when the time was right for him. His children would be ingrained with the same appreciation for life, his country, and all people. Now, the man slowly turns to take a stance at the left.

Now fading into the thick columns of clouds, the sun dims its light upon the two men. No longer do they walk together. They stand, facing, about two feet apart or a world apart. As fog encroaches the two men once more, the distinctions between the two are diluted. Once again the two men fade into shapes, casting shadows in opposite directions to different ends of the universe.

Yet they are one.

Bert Smith
Old House.

Chambers is thy name
In the late 1800's you reigned
You were quite a lady
With your green shutters and trellis porches

Cotton was King in your day
And in your spacious beauty, all did gather
On any occasion to celebrate:
Weddings, birthdays, Saturday nights

Generations of Chambers came and went
One by one they left
And soon they were all gone
Gone like King Cotton

You were left with only Time
And Time demanded a toll—
Rusted tin blowing in the wind,
Crumbling chimneys,
Falling porches

How sad
From years of neglect
You call to me from the past
I stand and stare in silence among the narcissus
With chimney sweepers weaving in and out of your rooms,
I catch glimpses of people and times long past:
Children,
Grandparents laughing,
Mulberry trees,
Sad times, happy times

With an ache in my throat
From tears unshed
I stand and listen to your stillness
Hoping for something—I don't know
Perhaps a memory in your rotting wood

And as I watch you slowly die to time
Your beauty beyond repair
I grieve for the blindness
That did not realize your beauty
And worth in time.

Barbara T.
REVELATIONS
or
GOD REALLY MAKES ME MAD SOMETIMES

I
I visited the Mulberry
one Sunday in February
It was a different river then
From the one I remembered
in years past.
Yet I could still hear the echoes
over the distant dragon’s roar,
of the children who played there,
cooling hot feet in cold waters
and wiggling toes in cool sands
on hot summer days.
And though I no longer saw him,
I heard the beating of the heron’s wings
like the beating of a heart
longing for a home
that’s long been destroyed.
I was happy.

II
I visited the Mulberry
one Sunday in July.
It was a different river then
From the one I remembered
in February.
The man-made dragons of steel
Drowned out the echoes with angry bellows
And stole the cool sands
away
From hot feet and wiggling toes.
The only beating I heard
Was that of progress
beating back
My childhood havens
and dreams.
I was sad.

III
I don’t visit the Mulberry
on Sundays anymore.
It makes me mad at God
and they say that’s a sin,
but
I don’t visit the Mulberry at all
anymore.

Jessica Jackson
The battle lines are drawn. The opponents get ready for the upcoming confrontation. Neither expects to win the war; they only seek the satisfaction of a temporary victory. The impetus behind this encounter is control of the land. Possession has changed almost daily.

On one side of the opposing forces stands a mechanical marvel, designed as the perfect fighting machine. It generates enough power to strike fear in the heart of every opponent. There are many types of the mechanized warrior. Modern versions are self-propelled and manned. Their sleek and colorful exteriors can be deceiving and misleading for their purpose is one of destruction. With motor roaring and blades thrashing, this ruthless savage dissects enemy lines with the precision of a skilled surgeon. Adding insult to injury and showing no respect for the fallen, it removes the defeated warriors from the premises until the remains can be dumped elsewhere.

It would appear that such a perfectly designed apparatus would increase the odds for victory so dramatically that even the most conservative gambler would gladly put his money down. But the machine's opponent does not try to match power with power. Finesse and perseverance are the weapons of defense.

As insurmountable as the mechanical warrior may seem, it does have a formidable opponent. This army is not as dramatic or obvious as the powerful machine. Its tactic is to yield, almost in a docile manner to the aggressor. The high casualty rate is irrelevant and expected. All losses will be replaced within days. This army has strength in numbers.

These natural warriors consist of many types. Fescue, rye, and bermuda are prevalent in this area. Population statistics cannot be verified, but growth rates are tremendous. This aspect is crucial to the success of the natural army. It is estimated that three billion grass blades perish in one yard each week.

During war, each time the machine attacks, the natural army falls. But the realization that this is only a minor setback keeps the conflict in proper perspective. Each time the machine is ready to claim victory, nature moves in again.

After close observation, it would appear that nature has the upper hand, not the machine. In order for the machine to remain dominant it must attack often. This liability places the pressure of the conflict on the machine. Nature, on the other hand, waits. If the machine attacks too often, it is subject to mechanical failure. This state of disaster is comparable to a heart attack in humans. If the machine attacks too infrequently, it could end its dominance forever.

Most people are unaware of this major struggle. It is important to note that cutting the grass in the yard is not merely a performance of a duty. It represents machine against nature. It is destruction in its most primitive form. It is war, and war is hell! "Land's the only thing worth fight'n for, Scarlet!"

Rick Duncan
Beloved Sons Now Grown to Manhood

The life seed, the longing
Was planted
Deep in my heart,
Nourished by love
And expectation.
You came forth
From another's womb
Into my waiting arms,
Not of my blood
But part of all my being.
Some say with pride,
"This is my child –
this is my son."
I can say
With pride and joy,
"This is our child –
this is our son."
We who gave you birth
And we who nurtured you
Send you into life.
Sons of both womb and waiting
Walk proud and strong
Knowing you are loved.

Betty Maine

KAREN CORN - Scratchboard
THE CHILL

The dark alleys of the big city are flooded by many police spotlights. A cop shines a spotlight into the blackest of all alleys. The vapors dance within the light as if they were on stage. Black water falls from the rooftops of the alley's tenements to become a dark stream that flows outward like blood. Yet, on this night, the alley is bleeding with the blood from the body of a man that has been shot.

The cops within the car become squeamish as their spotlight touches the corpse. The driver grabs for his mike and calls in to headquarters. "20 Mary 40 to base, 20 Mary 40 to base. Over." The radio squelches for a few seconds, and then comes a reply.

"Base to 20 Mary 40. Over"

"I...uh...seems we have an attempted mugging at 4th and Sycamore on the Southside. Request back-up and a body bag. Over."

"Do not proceed without back-up." A hesitation comes over the radio. "Negatory. Negatory, bodies seem to be piling up tonight. No back-up on stand-by. Coroner may take awhile. Just keep the body under surveillance until an inspector gets there. Hold for a second while I check who's left." Another hesitation, "Inspector...Jenkins will arrive on scene in 15. Over."

"Copy. Over and out." The driver sets the mike back in its holder and turns to his partner. "Well, Charley, looks like we get to watch a body bleed."

Charley, a rather well-endowed blonde female, looks at her partner, a grayer and much older member of the police force, with newly-found hatred. "That man might still be alive, or even possibly, the mugger might still be around." Her eyes seek some kind of compensation in her partner's eyes. Yet, in his eyes, she sees more experience in this kind of thing, and very little optimism.

"Listen Rookie, I've been on the force long enough to know that whoever did this split a long time ago." He lets out a sigh that seems to mean he has lost many criminals.

"And, even if we did catch him he'd probably only spend one night in jail. And about the question of the body. Look at it. Looks like he's been shot in the head and chest at very close range. No fuckin way he's still kickin'. Anyway it's nice and warm in this car. We'll just wait for the Inspector. Body ain't going anywhere, anyway."

The partners sit for awhile scarcely speaking, occasionally stealing misunderstanding glances at each other. From behind, a car's headlights fill their patrol car with new-found daylight. They turn to see who it is. A tall brown-haired giant steps out of the car and starts towards the black and white. He steps in front of the driver side window and taps on the glass. The driver rolls down the window.

"How ya doin', Max?" The Inspector asks.

"Pretty good, Inspector Jenkins." The sleepy driver replies.

"Well, why don't you two get out? It's a nice night for a stroll." The Inspector steps back to let him get out. "Stay here for a second. I forgot my bag in my trunk." The Inspector starts back towards his car. He goes around back to the trunk and opens it. He sloshes around for a few seconds within his trunk and turns up with a suitcase which has a sticker on it that says "Open in a case of murder, only". As he goes back to the black and white he recognizes Max's partner. "Hello, Charley."

The blonde turns towards the Inspector. "Hi, John."

"When did you get your badge?"

"Yesterday."

"Well you're in for a crash course in biology."

They all start towards the body. The Inspector sets his suitcase atop a nearby garbage can and opens it while Charley and Max go to the body. Charley kneels down beside the still-bleeding corpse. She reaches out to feel the wound.

"Don't touch the body!" exclaims the Inspector. Charley jerks back in stance with the look of a child that has just been slapped on the wrist. She steps back to let the Inspector take his snapshots. She stares at the chest of the corpse with awe and intrigue. She wonders what kind of weapon caused such damage to a human. As the flash goes off, a gleam of light off to her left catches her eye.
Hammers are pulled back on each gun. The laughing stops. The figure looks towards the woman with the lungs.

"Nice-looking cop."

"Shut up and kick the gun away from you." Charley yells. The figure's right leg comes out from underneath his arm and kicks the gun towards the body. The gun stops underneath the head of the corpse. "O.K., now stand up, slowly. Move too quickly and you're a dead man."

"Already am," the figure says in a voice that seems to taunt. The figure pushes his body up against the back wall and stands.

"Now step back," Charley says in a calmer voice.

"Can't." The figure slaps the back wall.

"Now put your hands over your head, nice and slowly." The figure just stands there. "Do it!" she screams.

The figure points towards the body. "He ain't dead!" the figure says in a matter-of-fact tone.

"What?" Max asks.

"The human pin cushion. He ain't dead." The figure just stands there as the three take in what he has just said. "He'll never live again, but he won't die either. Tried to mock my old man. So, I took his gun and I shot him. He'll never meet Death, but he'll never know Life."

"Check it out, Max," the Inspector says. Max starts towards the body.

"Uh-oh," the figure says. The figure's eyes begin to stray all over the dark alley. The three turn their attention back to him. "Daddy's coming."

"Daddy?" asks Charley in a confused tone.

The figure looks at her. "Yeah, Daddy. Sorry I got to go," the figure says in a boyish manner.

"You move and you're dead," Charley says as she points her gun back at him.

"As I said once already, I am dead." The figure lifts his head to the sky. Droplets of rain kiss his still bloody face trying to clean it off. "Daddy's here."

A freezing wind comes out from the back wall as if a big fan had suddenly been turned on. As the wind cuts through all three of them, making them hug themselves for warmth, the spotlight from the car goes out. The darkness lasts for only a second, then the light returns to show them the figure has vanished.

Charley turns towards the Inspector, "I thought I heard neighing from a horse."

The Inspector just stares at the now empty back wall of the alley. "I heard hooves."

Max kneels down beside the body and touches its hand. "He's still warm." Max checks the body's pulse. "He's barely alive."
The Lonely Darkness

The lonely sky is haunting and black, so immense and vast, Darkness surrounds the moon, and stars fade out fast. A cold blowing wind predicts such gloom and despair, Winds cannot touch the hearts of those who don't care.

Broken hearts hurt deeply now under the blackened sky, Their owners petition the sky and stars, and ask why. The dying embers within those hearts start to flame, Again they cry out in anguish and try to place blame.

The mind cannot reason with the ways of the heart, One wants freedom, the other a slave, and they split apart. Back and forth do they argue as each tries to reason, And so the agony continues with each passing season.

A tormented being encourages such an attention as this, The cold looks, and hard stares, and the tongues that hiss. None can understand except that one, none do try, To venture into the lonely web woven by those who cry.

The object of their attention had fled far beyond reach, Angry and longful prayers both offered to God, who they beseech. Seeing no end to the misery, a wall is built to ward off strife, Grief shall follow the lonely one all the days of her life.

Sandra Farrer
10 A. M. MYTHOLOGY

She's paid to teach me;
I've paid to learn,
but I can't help not giving a durn.

Why should I care what Homer said
When 2000 years has he been dead?

Oops, I think she saw me yawn,
but I've been up since the crack of dawn!

"That's no excuse," Dr. Kline would have said. "What time last night did you go to bed?"

I must pass the class sooner or later,
after all it is a part of my major.

So, I'll just sit here and listen to her,
It'll pay off one day, I'm sure.

Sammy Lott
WORM'S EYE VIEW

I don't understand
all the things I do;
All I have
is a worm's eye view.

They lock me up
and throw away the key,
Because I know the things
that they cannot see.
They think I am crazy,
They call me insane;
They give me shock treatments
to feather my brain;

So that I can't think
about things anymore; then
they bar all the windows
and padlock the door.

And I'm staring up
at the sky, at the blue;
Looking up at my world,
it's a worm's-eye view.

They destroy each other
with their lies and their threats,
But at least they haven't
blown the world apart - yet.
So many problems,
so much rage;
They're crazy like me, they belong in a cage.

Looking at them,
I know that it's true;
All anyone has
is a worm's-eye view.

They've blown the world up,
torn it to shreds;
I feel like everyone
except for me is dead.
I'm free to go now
and do as I please,
with no more flowers
and no summer breeze.

I guess I can't blame them,
what else could they do?
All they had
was a worm's-eye view.

Stacey Alexander

LEECHES

They've attached themselves to me
sucking my life blood away.
Hanging on to gain their life
while taking mine.
I feel I am dying.
Shaking, shuddering, I try
to brush them off.
They've dug in deep and cling.
Frantic I yank them off frustrated
beyond belief.
Bloody, bruised and battered
I pry them off
one by one.
Feeling revives.
I'm alive.
Determined to survive
Leeches.

Robbie Lathem
A FINAL GOOD-BYE

The old man looks up
With love in his eyes
And a certain distaste
For the bed in which he lies

And he calls me son
Though grandson am I
As I cling so dearly
To a final good-bye.

Ricky C. Shaw.

SILENTLY

To see you,
silently I hurt
Not to see you,
silently I hurt
To cease unspoken thoughts,
silently I hurt
To cease stolen glances,
silently I hurt
To cease semblances of communication,
silently I hurt
To know that love for someone caused you pain,
silently I hurt
To end a dream,
silently I hurt.

Barbara T.
Sonnet

Whenever shall we all as one abide?
Brothers are we who share a common ground,
And in this life to common goals are bound.
Yet we behind a wall of colors hide
And with our own most haughtily we side.
What union do we have that pigments change
The nature of our love and make it strange?
How can we say that we to all are kin
And our greatest strengths come from deep within?
We hypocrites heeding not the inner part
Measure worth of men by blind sight—not heart.
How sad, though we are brothers deep within,
Superficial station leads foolish men
To judge man's worth by color of his skin.

Angie Sullivan

ON DYING

Lord God, let me die
With praise on my lips
Rejoicing my God in Thee.
For death is but an open door
To where I'll live eternally.
Whether I go in a blaze of glory
Or quietly hid from view.
May You be glorified
By the way that I die
And many learn to know you.

Robbie Lathem
Upon a Windowpane

They found their eyes looking into glass
To find a truth in everlasting life.
Tired, they let everything just pass
Into Oblivion where there is no strife.
Turning away from even themselves,
They find out where they actually stand.
They stand upon stones locked in shelves.
They cannot climb them, they cannot understand
Themselves or others they truly love.
Down the finite abyss, upon the ground, in the middle
Of the stones upon a windowpane, a dove
Bleeds to death and writhes like a dying cripple.
Yet, they turn their backs upon the bird
Noticing only their own lives so absurd.

Doug Amis

YOU

I can sense you lurking
on the periphery just behind a smile—
waiting to attack.
You come
when I am least prepared
when my defenses are nil.
You take many forms and many pathways,
but you are always omnipresent and deadly accurate.
Sometimes you come in the midnight hour
and stay until dawn.
Oftentimes you come on a clear, sunshiny day.
I know when you have arrived
and I can sometimes name you.
I can sometimes even explain you,
but I can never correct the havoc that you reap,
or can I ever regain the toll that you exact.

Barbara T.
The Touching Point

Brought into being, we take
from the source
The nurture to feed our need.
From all of earth's bounty
The bread is baked,
Sustaining the body's want.
To cover the form, we weave
the cloth,
Threading the color
To make the design.
From the clay of the ground
The bowl is shaped
And cathedrals rise
From the soul's deep longing.
Out of the passion
We fashion the art,
From the depth of our being,
the song.
Life's sorrows and joys
Create the dance
And truth's fleeting vision,
the verse.
Creator and creature
We touch in the dance
And make sacred all of life.

Betty Maine

Soldier with Child

Child of one year
clutched white against my chest
you reach out from me
fearing the long ride
into worlds where white
is forever blasted
and where the place
you long to be
is so far away
even memory is a black wall
touched with red.

Thelma R. Hall
GREEN-EYED MARTIAN

Green-eyed Martian
Is this how we're parting?
Not even a tear
In your eye
to say
that you know
that we tried?
We couldn't save
the thousands
that died . . .
I couldn't dry
tears that you
never cried . . .

Green-eyed Martian
What do you say
as you gaze
on a playground
where dead children play (?)
with broken guns
under red-setting suns (?)
Flying flags
as they run . . .
They're only
the ghosts of everyone's sons . . .

Stacey Alexander
Plight of a Pantheress

A Pantheress waits
Beside the Gate of Hell
By Hecate's light
She casts her spell
In hopes of summoning
To the Echoless Hall
Her pensive Prince--Loup Du Mal.
By sleepless night she walks
Stealthily there
Her eyes smouldering an icy fire
Solemnly stark.
In spiraling turmoil
Carefully kept fear
Of the Wicked Winds of Satan
Drawing near
Forevermore . . . Nevermore
She will await
A Secret Love
By the Iron Gates
And weep a sad
Mournful song
Of woe for a love
Lost to her in wrong
And sometimes
In the deepest night
One can hear
And freeze in fright,
The soul-less weeping
Of the Pantheress
By the Gothic Gate--
An eerie test,
Casting somber spells
Of fire and ice
Summoning her Lover

Purple Wyrm Manifesto: Introduction

To the Pantheress
Porphyrogene

When fiery red and icy blue converge,
When blood and ink by chance are somehow mixed,
When setting sun and sky, in marriage, merge
And copulate with mankind caught betwixt,
When azure tears and mortal wounds embrace
And pain and pleasure seem to be the same,
When Hecate dares to show her sanguine face
And singe the bluish night with lunar flame,
When rainy Armageddon pelts the Earth
And mortal blood has stained the sapphire sea,
The ancient Wyrms will writhe in morbid glee
And in their death, to spirits shall give birth.
Then Heaven shall unearth both you and me
And seal our souls fore'er in Porphyry.

Robby J. Spriggs

Keena Redding
THE FROZEN CHOSEN  
(Meditations from the pew)

Stiff
Withdrawn
Wailed about
Don't bother me they seem to shout
I'm private property, keep out!

Cold Hard
In a box
With a starched, stiff, calloused heart
The message is depart, depart!

Silent
Empty
Bound up tight
In concrete prison without light
Walking dead men living in night.

Frigid
Aloof
An iceberg machine
Living submerged unseen
Always in winter wearing sterile screen.

Plastic
Metal
Mechanical robots
Self-propelled they march and strut
In rigid, deep, predictable ruts.

Molded
Marble
Etched in stone
Spoken in soundless cries, wordless groans
Leave me, leave me, leave me alone!

LORD
Help
Have mercy
How do I get through?
Show me, please, before I'm frozen, too.

LORD
They may
Never thaw
If this choice of state they make
Help me to live with them with grace.

Robbie Lathem