

Perilous Joy

by Mathew Paust

If I could see his smile I would see its difference
from the one that brightens his face
when his claws through the frozen ground
reach the pecan he'd buried in fall

I would see its difference from his smirk
inches from the snapping jaws of the pit bull
at the end of its chain

I would see its contrast from his poker face
as, clinging to bark, he circumvents the tree
keeping just out of sight of the boy
chasing him 'round and 'round

I imagine the triumph radiating now as he sits
equidistant from the ends of the wire over the street
bush tail beside him his closest comfort next to the genes
that gave him the fearless balance permitting the *joi de vivre*

He flashes at me through the windshield
passing beneath

