

# 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

