

Poetry Series

Lynn W. Petty
- poems -

Publication Date:
2017

Publisher:
Poemhunter.com - The World's Poetry Archive

Lynn W. Petty(3/29/28)

A Better Man Of Me

I vowed to you my love, my trust;
Protect you with my life, if be;
Provide you with the things I must,
Which makes a better man of me.

Lynn W. Petty

A Bon Vivant

A Bon Vivant

In one's lifetime, one meets another whose meeting □

Leaves such an impression, the reward of that meeting lasts

For the remainder of one's life.

With the fondest of recollections, and the deepest of remembrances, I met such a person, 'A Bon Vivant', born of this century, but not of this age.

A man of the old school, whose movements and words are gestures

Of chivalry and gentility; a grace of gallantry of an era gone by. He is one of those calm, undemonstrative men, whom we love and admire, without asking for a reason why.

He is a poet, who has not written poetry, but who has acted it.

He is a man of the Shakespearean stage, whose career was interrupted by World War II.

Not to be deterred, his mind grew, his judgment deepened,

His artistic sense honed itself to a sharper edge. □

Leaving the theater for higher achievements, he turned to molding molten minds of youth, sculpting them with the wisdom of old writers and times.

He brought them to a height beyond themselves.

He opened vistas of imagination through the introduction of past lore.

He left in the subsoil of their thinking an appreciation of the arts, nourished in the depths Of their subconscious, to bloom into flower fields of past legends and traditions.

There is a greatness that surrounds this man, a nobility of thought and purpose.

As children reach their appreciative state of adulthood, they will realize a perfect soul has Left its seal upon their Thoughts, sentiments and persuasions.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

A Cat Named 'jake'

The neighborhood has lost a special friend,
A rogue of undetermined pedigree.
But, he cared not. He never did pretend
That he was other than what one did see.
He answered to the name of 'Jake, ' if he
Would deign to answer one at all. A path
Of freedom, no accountability,
An easy personality, no wrath
Against his fate, he just took life 'as is.'
Now Jake was not a great 'sophisticat, '
His intellect was not a feline whiz,
Yet, he was not just called an alley cat.
He never heard the sound of silver spoon
Against a crystal glass. Nor did he place
His faith in feral instincts. Just as soon
As hunger struck, he turned about, to trace
His steps to his adopted household, who
Would feed him from an opened cat food can.
But, food was food to Jake, no ballyhoo
Of how the food was served; crystal, saucepan,
Dish or can. It mattered not. Quantity
Was his concern, not quality of dish.
Upon my first encounter, amity
Was not upon his mind. I say, churlish
Was more his disposition. Dispossessed
From former family by a Chinese lout,
A loose-skinned mutt named Mattie, had transgressed
The line of feline dignity. Forced out,
Jake wandered through the neighborhood, his fur
Disheveled, dull, its luster gone; his mien,
Revealed his inner state of mind. Rancor
Was the least of his ill will. He would preen
Himself, a foot or so, beyond the span
Of Mattie's leash, and take an attitude
Of disregard that she was there. His plan,
As anyone could see, revealed how shrewd
Jake was. His course of action was to drive
The dog to madness. Just outside her reach,
Jake calmly washed his face. The dog would strive

To break her leash by force, but Jake, with each
Neck-breaking lunge the dog would make, would inch
His way a little closer. By the time
Jake found it all a bore, he drew the cinch
Around the mind of Mattie, then the climb
To Shar-Pei lunacy was just a short
Self-gratifying ride. Dear Mattie threw
Herself upon the ground and with a snort
She howled like werewolves at full moon. Jake knew
What he had done. As Mattie wailed her long
And plaintive barking sounds, Jake walked away,
His tail held high, while Mattie sang her song.
Jake gave his own rendition, with a sway,
More like a pompous strut, of what a
Full, and round and lucent moon should be. I
Had wrongly judged Jake's intellect. A way
We humans have. We disaffirm, deny
That other creatures think. But, Jake had thought,
If not had reasoned, just exactly what
Reprisal he would measure out. He taught
Poor Mattie what becomes of a despot.

My next-door neighbor lost his cat, and Jake
Seemed able to perceive his loss. It's strange
What cats can sense. They apprehend, betake
A person's sorrow; mystical the change
In personality, they're less aloof.
Our neighbor Fred, and Jake our hero, were
Distraught. Poor Jake was homeless, had no roof
Above his head but, this did not deter
His ultimate intent. Fred's anxious heart
Was broken when his cat, his furry friend,
Had disappeared. Right from the very start
Jake played it very coy. He would pretend
To disregard a pat or touch and walk
Away, return again, then walk away.
A tease? not Jake, for he would never balk
At someone's food or love. To his dismay
He was replaced, so he displayed some care,
Of not-too-close-too-soon. With caution, Fred
Reached out and took Jake in his arms, aware
That Jake might bolt, but Fred was way ahead,

And knew that Jake just needed love. As soon
As Jake was lifted up, he fell into
A limp and flaccid state, almost a swoon,
For through Fred's hands, Jake felt his love, and knew
That he had found a home where he was loved.
It was a miracle how Jake began
To change, as he so long had been just shoved
Aside, ignored, a vagabond who ran
The streets. His fur began to take on sheen
From special foods and supplements that gave
Support to Jake's return to health. Between
A home, the food, the love, what more to crave?

Jake had it all. His life became a breeze.
He visited the neighbors, house to house,
Not asking for a handout but to please
His social penchant. Never did he grouse
Or grumble after his adoption, he
Just wanted to enjoy the company
Of others. There were times I found him three
Long blocks away from home. Amazingly,
He never strayed into the street, except
When Mattie was at leash, out in her yard.
Then, Jake would hide beneath the curb. He crept
Along unseen, as if a feline bard,
He popped right up in front of that poor dog.
Cat poetry in motion. Mattie howled,
Until she was reprov'd. It was prologue
To verse in action and in deed. Befouled
Of senses, Mattie acted strange, bizarre,
Not acting like herself, as if confused,
Sometimes befuddled, like she saw things far
Away. No longer was our Jake amused,
He seemed to have controlled our canine friend.

More social now, he sat upon our fence,
Or lie upon our chaise where he would spend
The early part of morning. One could sense
That he was unconcerned with anything
Canid. To him they all were just alike.
Each morning Jake met me with welcoming.
He had perceived, I thought, that he could psych

All dog-like creatures out, he lay around
Somewhat relaxed, and far too much at ease.
As garrulous a cat as could be found,
We talked, though I do not speak feline,
Communication was achieved. A pat,
A belly rub, a scratch behind the ear,
With mutual respect, and love, we sat
Together in a bonding atmosphere.

Behind our house, a quarter mile or so,
Lies undisturbed, a thousand acres, left
In its most pristine state, a cameo
Of nature's unmolested beauty, cleft
By stream and bay that runs out to the sea.
A sanctuary for the paw and wing.
Within this refuge lives the coyote,
A relative of dogs, a wily thing,
That forages food at night. Its then he preys
Upon the unsuspecting animals
Within the fields or neighborhoods. His ways
Are sly and cunning, he has no rivals
For evils we believe he may have done.
But, how can we reproach him, he is just
Performing that to which his nature's prone?
A coyote is not something to trust,
Or can he be controlled. He hunts and kills
For his survival as all mammals do.
Domestication has deprived the skills
Of combat and survival cats once knew,

Unmindful to what roams within the raw
And dangerous environment of night.
There is no knowing what it was Jake saw,
But, there was evidence of one grand fight.
The fur of both combatants had been found.
We must presume that Jake had lost his life,
For he had not been heard or seen around
The house or neighborhood since that night's strife.

Surprising how his loss has caused a void
Within our hearts. We all have stories we
Could tell about his feats. We all enjoyed

His temperament, we certainly agree,
If Jake did die, he died most gallantly.

Lynn W. Petty

A Father

I looked into the face of this new life,
I thought of what a father had to be;
Provider for his family, all its needs;
A strong example for his child to see;
Protector, when the lights have been turned out;
A teacher teaching values, all their worth;
A leader in a world of clouded doubt;
A friend when all her 'friends' had disappeared;
A gentle man to wipe away her tears,
When hurts seem more than little souls can bear.
All these and, more, is what I vowed to be.
Together, hand in hand, my wife and I
Gazed in that crib of pink and feather-down.
In prayer, we asked for guidance in the care
And rearing of our child; for courage in
The years that lie ahead; for strength to face
The tasks as they appear. Retired to
The sanctity of bed, we lay within
Each other's arms, she said, 'Our strength will come
From love we have to give. Our courage from
The growth of all our years. Our guidance from
The answered prayers when we should ask.' Alert
To noises from the baby's room, we slept
Upon the twilight edge of wake, immersed
Within the passion of our parenthood.

Lynn W. Petty

A Father's Regret

Who can endure, from day to day,
the spectacle of an unveiled human heart
with all its vanities, and all its weaknesses,
desires, pain and regrets; the pain
of that regret in not having gained that deep
relationship; the privilege of knowing who
that person is I call my son?
Somehow, there seems to be a gulf between
our lives. I tried to know, I thought,
but he had left before I learned.
This inmost loss between a father and son is spiritual privation,
wrenching soul almost beyond remedy.
What value is gained when, through desires and
selfish purposes, one may lose that intimate rapport
between oneself and one's own child. How hard
to bridge across that emptiness of forfeited time.
We still attempt to fill that void by talk, but not the deep philosophies
of life. Our calls are full of idle chatter:
"And, how are you? "
"Just fine, and you? "
"You Are? "
"Not much to tell."
"The same for me."
"Well, give my love to all."
"O.K. Good-bye, "
and, hang the phone upon its hook to wait and hope
another day for dialogue containing more profound
expression; one's more deeper thoughts.
Oh, well, this day has passed. I wait to share
with him a laugh, a tear; perhaps a time...another time,
when he and I...

'The phone? '
"Hello? ' and so on,
"Yes, I will. Good-bye."

Lynn W. Petty

A Friend

If one could find a friend in one's lifetime,
A confidant, with whom one could express
One's heart; to ease one from the arctic clime,
Those frigid blasts of mental loneliness;
To walk the shaded stream banks of the mind;
To tramp the verdurous hills of spacious thought;
To soar within the cosmos, unconfined,
Of theory, concept, reason, truth, all sought
Through interchange of speech between two friends.
How vacuous is life without someone,
Someone who understands, who comprehends,
What constitutes a friendship once begun.
When first the waking heart becomes aware
It feels the void within; it feels the chill
Of solitude, the depth of one's despair
One single, lonely hour brings until
A kindred spirit has been found with whom
One shares, in retrospect, the eras past
Gone by. Remembering the times of gloom;
The times of youth we thought would always last.
Remembering with someone we hold dear,
With whom we can identify and sip
The sherry of old age before the cheer
Of hearth; the warmth of good companionship.
It gives a purpose for one's life to share
In joyous moments, sorrow, grief, should they
Occur. To laugh at nonsense; weep if there
Should be regrets. To have a silent day.
Not speak one word, perhaps, but know that when
Together "Meaning" speaks with louder cause.
To love a friend for what he is, and then,
To love again for what you are because
Of him. Enjoying comfort, feeling safe
That one may say what comes to mind without
The fear of ridicule; without the chafe
That chiding brings; without the falling out
Of faithful friends. There is no template made
To manufacture friends. They are a gift
Who weave with golden threads a rich brocade

Upon this burlap we call life. We drift
Upon the current of our consciousness,
Like ghost ships on a calm and windless sea.
We search each haunted port for happiness;
Condemned to sail this futile odyssey,
Until we understand where friendship lies.
In we, not they, one's friendship lives or dies.

Lynn W. Petty

A Front Fence Gate

I wonder if a front fence gate reveals
The attitude of he who dwells therein,
Or is it just a pretense that conceals
The inner truth of tendency within?

Remembering when I was young, I'd go
From home to school, return the self same way
At school's day end, so many years ago.
I recognized each gate as my display,
A measured distance from my house to 'there.'
But, through that recognition, they took on
A character, a quality, an air,
A personality, a face upon
A blank and seemingly benign fence gate.
Through childhood fantasy, as I would walk
The curbless road to home, or navigate
Around or through the puddles, gates would talk
To me in silent comprehension. They
Conveyed a warmth or warning with their style.
That wrought iron gate with bars like pikes would say,
With deep foreboding frowns and shadowed smile,
The countenance of Satan, its design,
'Beware, for reasons of your soul's despair! '
I saw his face, too shaded to define,
But certain of that awful grin, from where
I stood, while peeking through those iron gray bars.
I saw the visage of our hamlet's rich
Old recluse, Thaddeus Von Eldergars.
My heart would skip a beat; migrating twitch
Of trepidation coursed my spine and burst
Upon my brain, exploding energy
To churn my legs to motion. I was cursed,
I knew, by Beelzebub. All lethargy
Had disappeared, as speed was my intent.
I passed all other gates without address,
As reach and range was more expedient.
And then, my gate, a visual caress
That cleared the fear from my fear-clouded sight.
I ran beneath the arch-like trellis dome,

And threw the latch and bolt. Displacing fright,
I felt a surge of valor, I was home.
But, what about the question first above
As asked? Are gates symbolic of the man,
Or was our Thaddeus a creature of
Our mind? Did life collapse upon his plan?
Was avarice his only enterprise?

When I became adult I sought to solve
The question of his being; analyze,
Examine all I found that might involve
A man whose cynicism knew no bounds.
At his demise, I purchased, sight unseen,
His personal estate, which still dumbfounds,
Bewilders those so eager to demean.
For what I had astonished me. In awe
I read his soulful journal with a sad
And mournful heart. Not wishing to withdraw
But, living made it so, his loss forbade
His interest when his grief replaced his wife.
Maintaining social consciousness, aware
Of fiscal maintenance, our hamlet's strife,
He formed a special banker's trust to care
For children who excelled to higher grades;
To further their desires, foster their
Careers. His generosity pervades
The very substance of our village life.
Even I, a beneficiary.
Meticulous, his register was rife
With names of those he helped. Legionary
By their count; anonymously done from
Behind that dark and ominous front gate.
Within his will he spoke an axiom,
A covenant, bequeathing his estate
To those who would appreciate his best.
To all the children he bestowed his ground,
His property, for which he made behest
Upon the elders of this town. He bound
Them to a promise that they raze his old
Brick house, eradicating memories
Too doleful to exist. 'This land, ' he told
Them from his will, 'Must have amenities

That cause the laughter, joy and, cheer that spring
From children hard at play. This acreage will
Become a park, a playground, garlanding
The name of my demised young wife, Joanille.'

Before the razing of the premises,
I bought the gate at auction for my own.
Installed, it hardly looked the nemesis
That I remember when so young. Unknown
To those who walk the walkway to my door,
It is a gate without identity.
To him, a camouflage, that heretofore
Gave cover to his liberality.
To me, a screen to hide the soul of truth;
A veil of iron to cloak his silent grace;
To guard an altruist, who lived without a face.

Lynn W. Petty

A Furor Of Friendly Fire

Leyte Bay, Philippines, 1944

The eye of day was closing.
It was dusk at Leyte Bay.
Twenty ships lay at anchor.
A low marine layer covered
The entire bay.
It was that time of evening
When it is difficult to discern
The difference between a wolf
And a dog, as the French say.
A Zero broke through;
Pulled back, up and out,
Before any ship's guns could fire.
All gunner crews were taut
And tense. Waiting.
Then, through the cover came
Another plane. This time,
A furor of fire broke loose.
It was dusk at Leyte Bay.
It was that time of evening
When it is difficult to discern
The difference between a Japanese
Zero and an American
Torpedo Bomber.
Death shut the eye of day.

Lynn W. Petty

A Gallent Fight

I met her one day at the chemo lab.
She was having her one-hundredth treatment,
I was having my tenth. She said she played
Golf on her sixty-fifth birthday. She played
Sixty-five holes with her husband, to prove
She had the stamina to play, even with
Her illness. They had stayed at the golf club
For seven days and played each day, until
She had reached the sixty-fifth hole, in spite
Of her frailty of frame. She said she
Had won the battle of golf; that she stared
Cancer's malice directly in the face,
Despite the low whisperings in her ear
That her time was brief. The cancer had spread
Into her lungs. She fought on, with contempt,
Against the very meaning of cancer.
What a gallant fight. There was a somber
Feeling upon all our hearts when the news
Came that she had prevailed in her battle,
Yes, but, she had lost the war.

Lynn W. Petty

A Glint Of Gold

Manila Bay, Philippines 1944.

'Object in the water dead
Ahead, Sir, ' came the bow-watch
Report.
'Right rudder one degree.'
'Right rudder one degree, aye, Sir.'
'Stop all engines.'
'All engines stopped, Captain.'

By momentum, we glided
Past the object to our portside.
Floating, faceless,
Dressed in navy dungarees,
His torn body drifted by.□

I had seen death before.
I gave little wonder
Until, between the fish feeding
On his flesh,
I saw a glint of gold
Reflecting from his wedding
Ring.
'All engines ahead two.'
'All engines ahead two, aye, Sir.'

I wonder now,
Does she still wonder
Too?

Lynn W. Petty

A Graduation Against All Odds

There is an emanation one can see,
A cast of mellow light about her face,
Like moonbeams dancing on a sheath of gold,
That seems to come from deep within her soul.
One sees it in her eyes, her bearing speaks
Of something done, some great accomplishment,
That she alone made happen. Her success,
Against all odds, is shown within her pride.
Not arrogance but, pride of having done
What she set out to do; a confidence
That rendered beauty, grace and charm into
The splendor of her womanhood.

Lynn W. Petty

A Madonna In Pain

Did you see her expression, this Madonna in pain,
With face upturned in divine beauty?
Did you see her eyes overflowing with anguish?
So fragile was her expression, I was moved to grieve her grief.
Did you see her folded hands in supplication?
An appeal to a higher eminence that was as reverent, pure, and serene
As the light of dawn shining through the dusk of morning.
As I drifted far into her dreamy depths I had the feeling
All around me of religious tranquility.
There was in her a substance so solemn and striking
Yet, more brilliant than any words could dare to express.
There was a beauty of holiness, an aureole, that transfixed her;
A majesty of suffering virtue, a radiance of her religious convictions
That quickened my ardent faith in the future of our nation.
My soul sighed and found its rest.

Lynn W. Petty

A Mental Abyss

There is no measurement for the depth of grief
That one endures to watch the decline
Of a loved one, watching her slip into
That quicksand of dementia.
Day after day, deeper and deeper down
That person sinks into that vacuous
Sinkhole of darkness and, I am helpless
In my ability to rescue her.
I stand on the perimeter of that
Mental quagmire reaching for her hand she,
Though I am her husband, declines afraid
To take the hand of a stranger. In my
Denial, I see some hope for there are days
That she is cognizant, or so it seems.
Then, she slides deeper into that yawning,
Cavernous, bottomless, abyss of night
Wherein she disappears.

Lynn W. Petty

A Question Of My Own Mortality

Time seemed interminable.

A curious and inexplicable apprehension came over me,
As I sat in an elderly care home waiting to visit a friend.

The atmosphere was heavy with quiet confusion.

People wandered about searching and shifting in a
Sort of stolid acquiescence. Their lives recalled as flashes in memory, projecting
film images on their thick, gray screen of dementia.

Across from me sat an elderly gentleman whose gaze was a glassy
Expression of inattention. I could see the declinations of his skull
Beneath his facial features. A victim of the grievous calamities
Of time, vaguely aware of his own frailty.

A harassing anxiety overcame me. Is it death or is it the lingering
Before my death I find discomposing?

No, it is not the naked fact of death I fear, it is the prison
Of my own being; that time from competence to incontinence;
Between enclosure to final closure.

Why was I so disrupted? Perhaps, it was a solemn foreshadowing,
Dimly seen on the distant reaches of my destiny,
In that, I had witnessed my own fragile mortality.

Lynn W. Petty

A River

A flowing river
Resolves itself to the sea,
Losing name and form.
The wise resolve to Reason,
Lost unto the deeps of Truth.

Lynn W. Petty

A Sign

War, atrocities, corruption, crime,
Hatred, murder.
Where can I go to escape
This pall?
God, show me a sign that there is still hope.
I find no virtue living in a world devoid
Of beauty.
Then, consciousness lifting me
Above my despondency,
I saw a hummingbird bathe in the dew-filled cup
Of a blooming yellow petaled
Rose they call
Peace.

Lynn W. Petty

A Song In A Plaintive Minor Key

A Song in a Plaintive Minor Key

To Catherine Spear

Upon hearing her recite her "Getting to Know You";

Gathering in a dimly-lighted coffee house,

In old Newport Beach,

Poets and, we would-be poets, assembled to hear

Guest troubadours recite their work.

We listened, and when they finished, we courteously applauded.

Despite their aspirations, they lacked glowing word-tints

Or the delicacies of pigmentation to paint their images in luxuriant colors.

The host asked Catherine if she would recite.

She stood, this daughter of Amphion, and sang her song in a plaintive minor key.

This lily full in bloom, in a waste of desert sands, opened the portals of my breast, filled the hollows of my heart, like cloisonné, with golden threads of thought.

She impressed my mind with wonderful and mysterious imagery, something too beautiful to be lost.

Word by word as if brick by brick, the symbols of her words changed the architecture of our surroundings.

Lifted on the thermal of her vision, high on the dome of Hagia Sophia, Free from the phenomena of time and space, I swam the unsounded sea Of soul; soared the cosmos of her mind, that plumbless steep of her creative self.

Mingling her melody into the mosaic of celestial harmonies, immersed in the mist of her music, I commingled with the hierarchy of angels, and breathed the floral fragrance of heaven.

She sought her own completion by investing in another's soul the accumulated treasures of her own, and to that avail:

"The desert sands drifted down and settled at my feet."

Lynn W. Petty

A Strong Weaving

Some lives are made with burlap string,
Some lives are spun with silken thread,
But you wove mine a strong weaving,
From strands of pounded gold instead.

Lynn W. Petty

A Touch Of Heart

I saw something today that touched my heart,
And filled my soul with gratefulness and joy.
While waiting for my tee time at the course,
Just ahead of me, a threesome made up
Of a young boy and his grandparents, who
Together, were to play the front nine holes.
At most, he was perhaps just twelve, and they
Were well within the sojourn of their years.
I thought of all the memories that would last
Within that boy. Disclosures of the past,
The knowledge gained from his grandparent's life,
His heritage, the knowing who he is
By virtue of their age and their memories.
They give to him the fundamental core
Of living. Seeing how they live gives him
A model worthy of his copying.
There was no love denied for that young boy.
There was respect and patience, and a sense
Of having a foundation of what life
Could be. There was a spiritual response
Approaching reverence, a knowing that
Grandparenting is a gift of God's Grace.
They knew that therein lies a privilege,
A grant of time, extending life to love,
In return, be loved by their own grandchild.

Lynn W. Petty

A Writer's Block

With pen poised over the blank white sheet,
Waiting to receive writings, inspirational or automatic,
Through some sphere of psychic channeling,
My mind remains still.

Bleak snow-covered tundra in an arctic freeze,
The whiteness of the paper blinds the eye of my imagination.
Feeling the chill breath of solitude sweeping
Across the barren flats of reflection,
I cap my pen and swear to never write again.

Then, faintly seen, upon a distant slope of thought,
A vague impression, a word, a sentence
Lights this winter sky; line by line
Trails of creative expression mysteriously appear
Across that stark, and frozen plain.
Like some great river's ice broken up
At first breath of spring, a poem is freed to float.

Lynn W. Petty

A-10-Simonides

With Quintus of Tageda I concur.
What prospers us to fight to save these lands?
For some Athenian I should incur
The wrath of fate and die by Persian hands?
While my blood flows he rests behind the lines?
I rather face the Furies than allow
A coward to escape my rage. He whines
About the terrors he must face. I vow
If I should live I shall seek out and kill
Those facial images that scorch my mind.
My anger fills my heart, effects my skill
At arms. Revenge has caused my thoughts to blind
My reason. Now, we die that he be spared
To trample on our bones, that he enjoys
What we have bled to save? We Spartans erred.
I say we leave before this horde destroys
Us all, so I may turn my hate against
A weak and ineffective ally we call Greeks.

Lynn W. Petty

A-11-Postscript

Betrayed! The Spartan troops had been betrayed!
Encamped at Malian Trachis, the King
Of Persia, Xerxes, had his troops arrayed
To fight. Leonidas could hear the ring
Of war; the clamor of a million men
Resound across the countryside; could smell
Death's stench upon the air. Xerxes' spearmen
Led the frontal charge. Bowmen's arrows fell
Like locusts on a field of ripened grain.
The Spartans feigned retreat, pretending fear,
Then turned and struck the Persians down. The slain,
Three thousand men within three days. Each tier
Of men would fall until the sea was red
With blood. The pass was blocked with death and still
The column came. They trampled over dead
And dying pushed by those beyond the hill.
Behind the scarp, along a small crevasse,
A Malian, Ephialtes, revealed
The ridge Anopea, the sole bypass,
Which led behind the Spartan force. Concealed
The Persian troops attacked at break of dawn.
Surrounded now, the Spartans fought until
Their weapons were destroyed. With hands and brawn
They battled till their deaths. The conflict still,
The Persians mutilated Sparta's dead.
Leonidas was slain, his head impaled
Upon a pole, reminding those with dread,
Resistance to the Persian march had failed.
But, had it failed, defeat was their disgrace?
Disgrace lies in betrayal, perhaps his gain,
For on his polished, marble statue base
The words recite, and to this day remain:
"Stranger, go tell the Spartans that here
We lie, obedient to their commands."

Lynn W. Petty

A-2-Leonidas King Of Sparta

For those who have no knowledge of the past,
I cite to you the history of our State.
Before the moon, our people in this vast
Arena we call Greece, by grace and fate,
Existed as a country. Then, they formed,
In solidarity of thought, through which
We now exist, a people who transformed
A loose coalition to a state of rich
Productive laws that bind us all as one.
The City-State of Sparta had been born,
With all its fighting force as its bastion,
Esteem was won despite the foreigner's scorn.
Beneath the aegis of our father Zeus,
A dream arose of Grecian unity.
When all the separate warlords formed a truce,
And all the Grecian monarchies, City-
States, resolved to form a governance based
Upon a tri-form rule that neutralized
Their great excesses. Sparta had embraced
A constitution, which had centralized
The three existing forms of government,
The monarchy, with aristocracy;
Democracy through the empowerment
Of the assembly. All autocracy
Had ceased, except for the barbarian.
We fight, perhaps, we die, but what is death?
Eternal peace, the grand custodian
Of all our toil and pain. The very breath,
The essence, of our Grecian life shall be,
Extinguished, should we flee. The liberty
To think, the liberty to audibly
Express our thoughts without authority,
The liberty to be, to do, to ask,
Shall be surrendered, with our souls, upon
Our cowardly retreat. We have a task,
A charge that we protect what they had won.
Beneath our feet, perhaps there lie the bones
Of he who worked, who loved, who lived his life,
Who fought and died for us, whose ghost bemoans

The thought that he had died in vain. This strife
We fight, is not for soil, we give our lives,
If Fate so deems, for those unborn to come.
That they experience what freedom gives
The stimulus to live, not in thralldom,
To some despotic superstition, but
The stimulus of freedom, the given
Right to live a life of reason. Rebut
This argument if so inclined. Driven
Were our forefathers, driven by the gods,
To frame the language, which extols the worth
Of every individual, which lauds
The citizen, entitled to, by birth,
Through his protection, under law, to vote.
Bequeathed, were we, this land. Cherished founders
Gave to us this sacred realm, those who wrote
The language. They, our ancient forbearers,
Who gave their noblest stock to die in war,
For the descendants of this soil. For they
Fought close against the enemy. Abhor,
Did they, who feared the fight, who ran away,
As our allies have done. They were ashamed,
That their descent, their line of ancestry,
Did not spring from this sacred ground. They claimed
Their birth from noble men whose pedigree
Defies reproach. Need I call out the roll
Of names who fought those ancient wars? Must I
Remind you of the battles fought; the toll
Of Grecian lives, of those who chose to die,
From Troy to Marathon, for freedom won?
Our state shall never be destroyed by hands
Of hostile nations. Sparta shall not shun
Her duty to her nation state. She stands
Where we are posted. Now, I tell you this,
All other battles, struggles, strivings, pain,
Were fitful flashes lighting the abyss
Of time. Not in our history, since the reign
Of Eurysthenes and his twin Procles,
At the return of Heraclids, that time
Of Peloponnesus when Cresphontes
Had won Messina by deceit, the prime
Of lands, and Tememus then drew Argos,

Has Greece been faced with such a pestilence
Of war. I hear the Persian army grows
A million strong. It is with deference,
Uncertain as it is, that I accept
The rumor of their count. But, what have we
To fear from Persian slaves? Had we not swept
Their fathers from this soil before? When free
Men fight they face the challenge with a deep
Obedient, and sudden urge, a fierce
Impulse to save their freedom from the sweep
Of rabble who have scourged their land; to pierce
Their hearts with fear. It is profoundly true
That brute force driven by the lash cannot
Be trusted. Fealty is a virtue
When gained by confident belief and not
By whip. With loyalty of heart and mind,
To the establishment of common law,
And not the rule of one despot, aligned
We stand, as one, as our forbearers saw.
The principals of social equity
Is why we fight, what we protect, the life
Of common people, their equality.
Now, let us speak of the impending strife.
Oh, sons of Sparta, men of Greece,
Decision is at hand. The distant shore
Grows dark with their encampment. I shall cease
To speak, except to ask you this: What more
Have you if you take flight? An exile lost
To wander foreign lands? Expatriate?
A soldier's shield for hire? Is that the cost
Of life? I find it more appropriate
To die a hero's death, or worse, a slave
To Xerxes' wrath. Now, I take leave of you,
You must decide. It matters not how brave
The man, if taken captive, I will view
His skin displayed in front of Xerxes' tent.
I need not tell you how to fight, engage
Yourself in battle, nor will I prevent
Your leave, nor calm your urgent fears, assuage
Your grief, your thoughts of home, but I can say
To you, most honored men, I am your King,
And you my champions. It is today

We face the horde. Stand toe-to-toe, let ring
The swords in noisy clamor let the spear
Points take their toll. With shield to shield and breast
To breast, hold fast your ranks, expunge your fear,
Let loose your hair, hold high the Spartan crest,
They march when sunlight fills the eastern sky.
What better way to die, than die for one's
Own state? What greater honor than to die
In battle forging Greece's fate at dawn's
Illumined light? Remember only this:
Shame is to survive defeat.

Lynn W. Petty

A-3-Arellius Fuscus

What is the question asked, remain or flee?
Are our picked ranks made up of raw recruits;
Our Spirits likely to be cowed; are we
To shrink from unaccustomed steel? Our roots
Are those of Greece. Shall I bestow that name
On Spartans or Eleans? What? Must I
Rehearse the countless battles, the acclaim
Of ancestors, the cities sacked? Supply
The names of nations spoiled? Do not men dare
To boast our temples need no walls to guard
Them? Shamed am I by our conduct. From where
Come thoughts that entertain such flight? Regard,
Indeed, that Xerxes comes with countless hosts.
Oh, Spartans! Who is better matched for such
Barbarians? Pay homage to the ghosts
Of your grandsires, venerate your sires, clutch
The honor of their deeds, it is from they
Whose stern example Spartan's souls have learned
To gather thoughts of lofty measure. Yea,
Though I am loath to offer such unearned
Expostulations, for those battles fought,
I speak, exhorting now, you Spartans. Look,
Around us, we are safe. What if he brought
With him the whole of East, we overlook
The sea, which spreads its vast expanse before
Us. We are pressed in narrow scope, beset
By treacherous straits which, around this gore,
Will scarce admit a single rowboat. Set
Beneath the chopping swells, are shallows; wedged
Between the deeper bottoms, rough with sharp
And cutting rocks that rend with double-edged
Abrasive grating and of this sharp scarp
Protecting us from flank attack. All this
Will mock a sailor's prayer. I am ashamed
that Spartans, standing on this precipice,
Should ask their vulnerability. Claimed
Have I, before the battle, Persian spoils.
Shall I not carry home the sacked? The least,
I shall relieve the Persians of their toils,

And they shall know that we fear not the East.
Now, we have yet three hundred men who thus
Have scorned to flee; who thus do mean to fall.
I ask you, think of this: though perilous,
Have we not trained to answer such a call?
Perhaps we can prevail and conquer. Doomed
To death, I do not say you are — to you
Whom I address these words; but, if assumed
You are, and think that death be feared, then through
Your thinking you have greatly erred. No thing
That lives does nature give unending life.
On day of birth had death not fixed its sting?
From weak materials, alloyed with strife,
Has heaven wrought our frames. With slightest stroke
We yield, unwarned by fate. Do not all youth
And children lie beneath that selfsame yoke,
That same inexorable law? In truth,
We long for death, so perfect is the rest,
From struggles born with life but, glory claims
No limits. They who fall, like we, are blessed
To rise the nearest to the gods. Who blames
The person choosing death, is not that road
The road that leads to glory? Need we speak
About Lycurgus? Time cannot erode
The fame of those as handed down by Greek
Account; those heroes whom no peril could
Appall. Enough examples would awake
The spirits of the sleeping gods, which would
Be more than good enough for our own sake.

Lynn W. Petty

A-4-Porcus Latre

So this is what the wait has been, that we
Collect a band of runaways? We flee
From whisperings? Let us at least agree,
What sort they are. Dishonor is for we
Who stay, as well as those who flee the field.
Disgrace will not be wiped away despite
A victory. To rumors we will yield?
No matter how we stand and bravely fight,
Or as successful as we Spartans be,
Already much of our renown is lost.
For here we stand debating whether we
Take flight or stay and fight? What now the cost
Since these discussions? Oh, that we may die!
The only thing I have to fear is my
Return to home. These rumors make a lie
Of Spartan arms. Old woman's tales defy
The truth and cause alarm and fright to shake
Our weapons from our hands. Now, let us stand,
Now, let us fight! Within us, though we quake,
Our valor may lie hidden. Take command,
The rest have fled. In my opinion, which
I utter for the honor and the sake
Of all of us, and Greece, they did not switch
Allegiance or desert us or forsake
Us here. They chose us as their champions.

Lynn W. Petty

A-5-Marillu

Was this the reason for remaining here,
That we may not be hidden in the crowd
Of fugitives? The army left in fear
And made excuse for bad conduct. How proud
Am I that they would leave Thermopylae
Protected by these trusted Spartan hands.

Lynn W. Petty

A-6-Pompeius Silo

The rumor is that Xerxes leads a great
And multitudinous force of might and sway.
Thermopylae has closed its Spartan gate!
The pass can hold but few, and we are they.
Are we the timid of the brave, slowest
Of ignoble cowards? No matter how
Great nations of the East invade, infest
Our hemisphere with vermin, it is now,
As it has been with every foreign force,
A passage to the heart of Greece. Now, this
Invading scourge has found its way. The course
To plunder Greece's soul. Is Greece amiss
That she has not built gates of sturdy might?
I comprehend the Spartan pride, that we
Reside behind our army's strength. The plight
Is now, again that we, at Athens' plea,
Have found ourselves to be her living wall,
Protecting her from those that she offends.
But, now the question is what might befall
We Spartans, since the whole of Greece depends
Upon the merit of our actions. I
Assure you this, before the nightfall of
Our lives, a gate shall have been built as high
As Persian flesh will pile, I swear above,
To all the gods, my pledge. The time is now
To ask since we, alone, defend this post,
How many men will this defile allow
To pass abreast at once? To make the most
Of this high ground we need to calculate
Their numbers and their spread, so we may form
Our own defensive line. Let us abate
This argument to stay or leave. Perform
Our Spartan duty, as you know we will,
And plan our strategy of how to build
A buttress of the Persian dung we kill.
This question begs an answer to be filled.

Lynn W. Petty

A-7-Cornelius Hispanus

Cornelius Hispanus'

We came for Sparta, let us stay for Greece.
Let us defeat our foe and win this war.
Just we three hundred stand-alone. Release
The fury and the rage of Spartan lore,
And let these arrogant barbarians
Discern that nothing is so difficult,
For Medes, Ionian Greeks or Persians,
Than trying to cut a Spartan down. Consult
The ancient records of our sire's deeds.
We are the flower of our heritage,
The consequence of our forefathers' seeds,
Who left King Darius steeped in carnage
Of his own defeat at Marathon. I
Am glad the rest have gone. They left to us
Thermopylae. Now, no one can deny,
Compare or mingle with our valor. Thus,
No Spartan will be hidden in the crowd.
Wherever Xerxes looks there will be we,
None other, just we Spartans, who have vowed
That we be true to our renown.

Lynn W. Petty

A-8-Quintus Of Tagea

It is a great disgrace to Greece, our State,
That Xerxes sees no Greeks before he sees
We Spartans on the field. I must relate
My thoughts concerning what the cruelties
Of fate may be, for who will witness our
Great valor? What account of us will be
Believed? For this could be our greatest hour
And, no one but the enemy to see.
Though he will feel the sting of death, would those
Who may survive relate our fearless pride?
No, their account would be believed. Oppose
This madness. Let us leave before the tide,
The overflowing Persian numbers, drown
Us in a sea of our own blood. If one
Convinces differently, then I step down
And silently accept the word as done.

Lynn W. Petty

A-9-Blandis

Shall I remind you of your mother's rule?
"Its either with your shield or on it." Yet,
If we return without our arms and mewl,
That we were forced to flee, while under threat,
Would it seem less than base if we had fled
While under arms? Shall I remind you what
The captive said, his words, with arms outspread,
Before my sword had made the final cut?
"Then kill me, I shall never be your slave."
Like he, I choose my death as my escape.
To die in battle, lie within my grave,
Than serve Xerxes. Take note of our landscape,
Think not of Persian terrors. We heard all
When we were first sent out. Let Xerxes see
That we three hundred Spartans will not crawl
Upon the field of battle. We proudly
Die before accepting his demand for
Our obeisance. Let him learn the rate
Of value placed upon this war. Our corps
Must give consideration, calculate
The numbers of our men this place will hold.
Respond as messengers? Not we Spartans. We
Return when we have won this fight. Be bold,
Be glad the others left we Spartans free
To face the act assigned to us. We serve
A moral obligation, custom, law.
Waste not your breath and energy. Conserve
Your strength. Speak not again that we withdraw
Our force and flee the Eastern hosts. Who fled
Our ranks I do not know but I, for one,
Am glad to fight with men whose fathers bled
At Marathon. Weak is your persuasion
That we will die. Are we not Spartans all?
Retreat is blasphemy. Be glad that they
Have left us here to answer Greece's call.
Our purpose now at this chokepoint; delay
And stall the Persian force, to dull the edge
Of their advance. Be thankful that our host
Has fled; too narrow is the pass to wedge

So many men. Now I can make the most
Of this small space. I can now maneuver.

Lynn W. Petty

Aa-1-Forward

It was four hundred eighty BCE, before
The birth of Christ, that Greece had faced
A mass invasion and a Persian war.
The second such incursion, which had placed
A horde of Persian troops on Grecian soil,
A million men or more invaded Greece.
The purpose of the Spartans was to foil
The Persian's forward march, to blunt and cease
The route of their advancement at the pass,
So named Thermopylae. The only gate
Way over land to reach the Greek landmass.
The Grecian army fled their posts thus, Fate
Became the Spartan ally in that fight.

□

Leonidas, The King of Sparta spoke,
Presenting to his men the argument:
Should they retreat from battle, lift the yoke
Of Spartan law, to live in banishment,
Co-hived in exile sharing crumbs of food
With Sorrow and her demon sister Fear,
Whose tireless appetites are for slow blood?
Or hold the field, perhaps to feel the sear
Of death and face with Spartan pride, their fate,
Upholding, as prescribed, the army's rule?
He reasoned separation from one's State
Was more severe. To die was far less cruel.
The King gave ample reason to withdraw
But, doing so would break the rule of law.
The law? 'Shame is to survive defeat.'

Lynn W. Petty

After

How empty after holiday,
When children leave our house for home.
Their absences after their away,
Has left our house a catacomb.

Lynn W. Petty

Age

To Gloria Hoffman, my sister, on her birthday

It is not gray hair that is indicative of age
But, rather, the age of heart, nor, does age ossify the body.
What is to be feared is the ossification of mind.
I ask you, would an older, thinking person wish to be younger?
Age is not the decaying of mind, body and soul,
It is the bursting from that old husk, allowing the blooming
Of a new and fresh approach to those wonderful years
To come. It is a gift, for the alternative, at this time,
Is not acceptable.
At our age one should think of the life span ahead of him,
Not the span of life behind him. Think of gray hair as the soft
Light of the moon silvering over the evening of life;
And, never refer to, or think of age, when it is wiser
To ignore it.

Lynn W. Petty

An Abyss Of Faith

I leapt from the precipice of reason into the supernal abyss of faith.
Uprising on the winds of mystical contemplation,
Discharging all senses and actions of thought,
I came into a darkness, a darkness that is beyond light,
Without seeing and without knowing, to see and to know
That which is beyond sight and wisdom.
Through the abstraction of the essence of all perception,
I rose into a void of nothingness, the quintessential darkness,
That outshines and obliterates the light of all rational things.
A darkness, not caused by the absence of lumination,
But, caused by a profusion of light that blinds
And dazzles the spirit with super radiance.
Unaware of ego and self, I was beyond boundaries
And limitations, free of physical obstruction.
I was veiled in an obscurity of permeating and profound
Secret silence. In the eternal calm, I realized the Divine Principle
By which all living things exist. I found myself,
The I Am of the He Is.

Lynn W. Petty

An Old Bookstore

There is an old bookstore, on the other side of town.
The owner, a man of gentle disposition and kindly mold,
Changed an empty, cold, commercial store into a warm
And friendly shop. With faith, hope and trust, he stirred
A pound of old Americana with a cup of European flare.
Then, he added good old Texas charm to complement the mix.
The symmetry of shelves gives one a feeling of congenial cordiality.
Their polished woods, mahogany and oak, colored by the hand of age,
Exposes one to welcome warmth and shades of soothing calm.
It is a grand repository holding silent urns of moldered learning,
Side by side, with tomes of modern thought.
So, come, indulge yourself and spend a guiltless hour seeking
Out a seldom-read old book found back in some secluded niche.
Imbibe the long, settled wine of knowledge poured from ancient
Literary ewers, filled with vintage scholarship.
Walk the paths of knowing, knowing they were walked
Before by half-remembered authors, with half-forgotten names.
Allow the spirit of the hour to pass unfettered through the mind,
Where re-awakened literature supplies the substance of the past
And gives insight unto the future.
Rise to the superior society of your own thoughts, where memory turns
To gaze on time gone by, illuminated by the flame of future's dawn.

Lynn W. Petty

An Old Man's Prayer, Who Asks Why Not He.

Her eyes were bluish gray, like mist at break
Of day upon the sea.
She sat before me, tears traced down her face.
In fear, she thought that she had lost love's grace.
"How long, Oh, God, in silence must I be,
Before my tongue will speak the words for me? "

To love and have a love respond in kind,
Her ardent soul's appeal.
This lily full in bloom in desert sands;
Her prayer, be lifted by his gentle hands.
"How long, Oh, God, before I can reveal
The force of pain my silence must conceal? "

Across this vacant land an infidel
Had heard her passioned plea,
Her haunting song on wind through dreary waste.
He rent the petals from this flower chaste.

"How long, Oh, God, will love be blind, not see
It chains my heart, where love should set it free."

Oh, woeful fate,

this carnal cur, this dog,
Would violate this saint.

His every fetid kiss a blasphemy!
His groping hands, like paws, oh, infamy!

"How long, Oh, God, before my love can paint
The landscape of my soul without restraint?

He ravished her for vanity, a cruel

Impious, violent crime.
He left her in the torment of despair.
Ah, lily-white, my maiden, lady fair.
"How long, Oh, God, what heights am I to climb?

Are lofty dreams all lost to theft of time? "

A chapel I would build if I were he,
To consecrate our love.
Her countenance, Madonna in stained glass.
Her voice, a choral call to holy mass.
How long, Oh, God? Bear witness from above,
That love is borne on wings of trembling dove.

I'd genuflect before her form and take
Communion from her smile,
Ascending through the gateway of her eyes;
Immersed in truth and all that love implies.
"How long, Oh, God, must I endure denial?
How long will destiny mislead, beguile? "

All Satan's hell becomes cathedral in
The presence of her light.
No chiseled image from cold stone is she.
This goddess is the soul that lives in me.
"How long, Oh, God, will life accuse, indict?
I plead remission, not revenge, requite."

Entranced in prayer, her vision came to me,
Illumined reason spoke.
Prophetic in its speech, its meaning clear.
"Platonic" is the word I have to fear.
"How long, Oh, God? Has Providence fore-spoke?
Is age my crime? Has time become my yoke?

Oh, Majesty of Floral Grace, forgive
My sin that I... that we...
An old man's prayers are script for Grecian stage.
His words are chorus from this tragic age.
"I know, Oh, God, the reason why not me.
How long? Oh God! For all eternity."

Lynn W. Petty

And, The Nurses Smile

They come to work in pastel uniforms
And, greet their patients with their brightest smile.
They meet, and know, each patient by his name
And, bring to this most cheerless place a warmth
Of friendliness, despite the bone-cold fear
That floods the room.

Reclining chairs surround the space where patients sit
as Chemo drips through needle-fangs from snake like tubes
That wind around the tree stand by their sides.
And, yet, despite the anger, pain and fright displayed
Upon the faces of the patients, young
And old, the nurses smile while consciously
Aware that Death stands shadow-dim behind
Each chair, as cancer does its devil-dance,
While Hope and Faith stand ever by.

Lynn W. Petty

Appalled

I gasped at what I held in my two hands.
My son had handed me the leather whip,
A bullwhip, five feet long, a master used
To subjugate his slaves unto his will.
And then, he handed me the branding irons,
Which heated to a red-hot glow were used
To brand a human as a master's own.
I felt disgust, appalled, to think they scorched
A person's brow, or seared a woman's breast
To indicate a master's ownership
Of human beings. Slaves were classified
As lower than the cattle in the field,
Who lived in quarters, a degree above,
What masters would provide for their prize pigs.
Slave girls were tagged as 'breeders, ' bred like dogs,
To bind in servitude their newborn child.
A slave was valued by his 'use, ' not by
His human value. He was bought and sold
Upon an auction block, with heifers, hogs
And brooder mares, like chattel on a farm.
Denied all self-respect and dignity,
Through burning indignation, slaves maintained
An inner purpose which prevailed despite
The efforts to debase them less than swine.
What was the mastic causing them to live
When death was far their better choice than life?
An old black man advised me of the cause.
'There was a bond of faith they found within
Their gospel, where they heard the Word of God,
Both sung and spoken from the church lectern.
A basic trust that God would elevate
Them from their desperate depravation. They
Endured because of those who were to come,
The future generations, whom they hoped
Could rise above the level, which the slaves
Themselves then lived. Belief blazed up like fire
Through their religion. An awakening,
Had lighted the dark caves of their deep grief,
Ignited from the embers of their dreams.'

Lynn W. Petty

Aunt Larura's Tin Abode

Amazing how we feel when on the road,
Returning from Aunt Laura's tin abode.
All buoyed up to face what'er we might,
A new approach, philosophy, insight.
A fine and lasting peace to fill the mind,
Not churchy, still religious, do we find.
No hell, or damn or brimstone fits her mold,
Just how she lived her life, that's how it's told.
How practical, how simple, when you hear
She had the same old problems that we fear.
She casts away all worries and all doubt,
"Your thoughts are things, your faith will give them rout.
Persistence in your thinking you will bring
The clarity of mind to everything."
I wave my hand in logical reproach,
But, there I was, in church, within her coach.
She's like a saint, a tapestry of old.
Her words are like a single thread of gold.
They weave within, without and round about,
They capture heart and soul and build redoubt.
But, why go on and tell you all of this?
You'll only understand this mental bliss
When you can drive or ride the same old road,
Returning from Aunt Laura's tin abode.

Lynn W. Petty

Ballad Of Bodie

Great were my hopes when we set for Bodie,
Mary and Amy both sat beside me.
Spring of the year we all said our farewell,
Seeking our fortune, it all seemed so well.

Folks stood by crying, both waving goodbye,
Hoping to see us before they should die.
Home in the distance, we turned a last look,
Over the hill was a right turn we took.

Right turn to Bodie, was "Bodie or Bust";
High was my fever, my blood was gold dust.
Mary said nothing with tears in her eyes,
Clutching the baby she sobbed heavy sighs.

Yaaa! I cried out to our old faithful horse,
Satan, our guide, headed west as our course.
Days into weeks, into months time had turned,
Hardships endured for the gold that I yearned.

Asked a lone rider who came from Mono.
"Far to ol' Bodie?" "Just ten miles to go."
Last of the trip seemed the hardest of all,
Amy was sick and the season was fall.

There was ol' Bodie, a jewel on the hill
Luring me onward, new dreams to fulfill.
She like a siren kept calling my name.
That moment on it was never the same.

Noise and the clamor of man and machine,
Bar after bar in a row could be seen.
Asked of my Mary, "Now, what do you say?"
Reaching her bible she said, "Our doom's day."

Went to the livery, I asked for the way,

Place to bed down for the night and some hay.
Asked of the man how I stake my own claim.
Looked at me strange like, not asking my name.

Slept in the wagon, the night air was cold.
Fear had gripped Mary, I saw only gold.
Amy was coughing, she kept us awake,
"Help us, " prayed Mary, "for Amy's sweet sake."

Asked for a job and a cabin to stay.
Gave me a shack and a miner's poor pay.
Down the dark shaft everyday I would climb,
Dreaming of riches but earning a dime.

Out of the north screamed the winter's cold air.
Mary, my wife, then fell deep in despair.
Took to the drink and the barroom's delight,
Spending my wage in a brothel each night.

Hell is a place for the evil that die.
Bodie's that place under winter's cruel sky.
Temperature dropped down to forty below.
Freeze in your tracks by the wind's cutting blow.

Baby turned worse, our dear Amy did die.
Mary said nothing, not even to cry.
Hatred for Bodie was deep in her heart,
Farther and farther it drove us apart.

Climbed the low hill and put Amy to rest,
There in the graveyard on Bodie's southwest.
Church bells did ring for each year of her life,
Ringing three times, which then ended her strife.

Deep from her bosom, did Mary cry out.
"Damn you, your gold and this place, " she did shout.
Fell to my knees and I begged she forgive.
"How can I right what I've done or relive? "

In the small chair by the window she'd stare,
Out towards the graveyard through winter's cold glare.
Spring was upon us and still she was there.

Color was paler with gray in her hair.

"Blast it all, woman, " I cried in disgust.
"Amy is dead but our life is a must."
Rose from her chair her brown eyes were ablaze,
"Murdered by girl." I had turned from her gaze.

Fell to the floor, she was trembly and white.
Lifted her up and pulled down the lamplight.
Head in my arms she did say this to me,
"Curse you, God keep you, from leaving Bodie."

Into a pine box we placed my Mary.
Bell in the steeple then struck twenty-three.
Up in the graveyard now under the sod,
She is with Amy and both are with God.

Tried and I tried but I failed to leave town.
Once took a stage but was forced to step down.
Needed my job just to pay for my sin,
Needed my wage for my bottle of gin.

Hard were the years that that curse worked on me.
Ten by the count till I passed in ought three.
Victim of winter its cold frigid hand.
Froze in my bed, was too drunken to stand.

Came here with nothing and nothing to leave.
No one to care, not a person to grieve.
Death was to Bodie just part of life's way.
Who was to care with a killing each day?

Up to the graveyard the team drew my hearse.
"Hurry up, Preacher, say only one verse."
Driver was freezing and damning the snow.
"Bless him, Dear Jesus, forgive him. Let's go! "

Life is now over, it's done and it's spent.
Wooden gravemarker, is that all it meant?
Sorrows, my joys, and my tears are they lost?
Being forgotten is that what it cost?

Who's to remember that I was a man,
Lived and I loved just like everyone can?
All that is gone, now, the way of the night
All that is left is my nameless gravesite.

Once I felt cheated by death and my fate,
Doomed to be taken not quite thirty-eight.
What does it matter what life can demand?
What does it matter? I lie where you stand.

Lynn W. Petty

Beauty

In a world devoid of beauty,
a hummingbird bathed
in a curled rose leaf.

Lynn W. Petty

Before It Becomes Too Late

Death, be not unkind.
Do not hold her long in your embrace.
Do not cause more pain by her unwanted continuance of this life.
I know that transition is inevitable, though I grieve
to think of her departure.
Suffering in the vacuum of her absence,
I shall not mourn, lest my mourning hinder the flight of her soul.
But, hold just a while that I may talk with her.
That I may say the things I should have said:
of her courage;
of the void she has filled in my life;
of my love for her.
Why do we wait to say the things we should
have said.
What? I have said those things before, you say?
Surely not. Surely, not enough times.
I fear she does not know.
You say I delay conclusion? Yes, if I could.
Reluctantly, I let go of her soul that it may fly
like a fragment of dawn, reflecting upon the face
of the Waters.
As an impassioned phrase from some familiar
line of verse that touches one's heart, a majestic
quiescence moves across her face.
Deep sleep.
Closure of this sojourn is now complete.

Lynn W. Petty

Beneath A 2000 Year Old Mississippi Oak Tree

Beneath a 2000 Year Old Mississippi Oak Tree

Beneath the luxuriant foliage of this venerable oak tree,
whose branches shut out the noon day sun;
whose roots drew the nurturing juices from earth
before the Spanish, French or English took possession of this land,
I sit listening to the softly, breathing music of the wind
through its leaves. Rendering more pliant, the fabric and temperament
of my mind, I hearken to a choir of migrating birds
who take rest from the breezes that wearied
their wings, filling this mansion of greenery with a harmony
of rich sound.
Looking up to the roof of its boughs, I am in wonder
of its height; its girth of trunk; its lichen-crustled limbs
draped with Spanish moss.
Here, I am given the sense of security knowing there is some
stability, almost permanence in this world of clouded doubt,
through this noble tree, whose life began before the death
of Augustus Caesar.

Lynn W. Petty

Beyond The Haunt Of Memory

While browsing through an old bookstore,
I found a worn and tattered manuscript of verse.
Inscribed upon the flyleaf:
'Somewhere on the wagon trail, 1872.'
The appealing thoughts were the innermost dreams
And expectations of an older teen-age girl.
All the magic of youth and joy were there despite
The hardships of which she wrote.
I thumbed the pages, let them fall, my eye discerned
A poem so profound my ear found pause to linger
In her symmetry of words.
The author's name unknown; her grave beyond our memory,
But she is not forgotten.
She is remembered for her remarkable fusion
Of the sweet, the sad, the earnest, and the frightened
Into youthful fancy, morality and rhyme;
For her soft complaining of unfulfilled love;
For her translation of life into thought:

'The day gave way to a soothing solitude that sinks quietly into the soul.'

'The morning air was fragrant with expectancy and power.'

'The decay of our sorrows is the humus of our hope.'

'I would melt, like a creature of light into his arms.'

Did she achieve the lofty ends of her destiny?
Did she accomplish her desires before her life's end?
We are left to surmise, her writings do not tell us so.

Lynn W. Petty

Brass Rings

The house was filled with kitchen cooking smells,
Of turkey basted to a golden brown;
Potatoes, sweet and mashed, with candied yams;
Debilitating smells, of baking bread;
Hot pies of pumpkin, apple, raisin, mince,
All mingled, aromatically, like myrrh,
Transporting mystically one to their source.
I went about my designated chores;
The table set according to their age;
The little ones by Grandma, to be sure,
And I at table's head where Grandpas sit.
We heard the sounds of family on the porch.
With eager grasp, the door was opened wide.
Amid the handshakes, kisses, hugs and tears,
The children rushed to fill their Grandma's arms.
Magnolia blossom faces, open, pure,
With petal lips all puckered for a kiss,
What love so deep as grand-parental love?
Adults conversed I listened to their words.
A carousel is all life is, I thought,
How strange to hear them speak, I heard myself.
Their visions, hopes and dreams, were my brass rings,
Now theirs to chase upon a painted horse,
Around, around a predetermined course.

Lynn W. Petty

But For A Child's Smile

A drunk, pale and grave,
Sat on the curb,
Destitute and homeless,
Destined for self-destruction.
People stepped around him,
With a look of scorn, leaving
Him to his own ruin.

A mother, pushing a child
In a stroller, stopped to speak
With a Priest.
The child, being on the same eye
Level as the drunk,
Looked deep into his eyes,
Smiled without disapproval, accusation
Judgment or fear.

The drunk, aware of the terrible vitality
Of his error,
Stood erect, brushed himself
Off and walked into the
Church.

Lynn W. Petty

Cancer's Enmity For Mankind

Speak not to me of somnolent embrace,
Your enmity infuses man's goodwill.
Speak not to me of your compelling grace.

So subtle is your stealth that you replace
Resolve with yielding to your voiceless still.
Speak not to me of somnolent embrace.

Man's armory, a broadblade and a mace,
To war against contagion's cunning skill.
Speak not to me of your compelling grace.

You tantalize with hope, then, end the chase,
To grind him on the wheel of death's gristmill.
Speak not to me of somnolent embrace.

You flail his flesh, deforce his worth, abase
His pride to feed your passion for the kill.
Speak not to me of your compelling grace.

He leaves his body bondage to its place,
The elements of earth, the grave's harsh chill.
Speak not to me of somnolent embrace.
Speak not to me of your compelling grace.

A Villanelle

Lynn W. Petty

Carrion

Her children were segregating her belongings
Into two heaps, 'Litter' and 'Cash.'
She had died two days before, and they were tearing
At the carrion of her being.
From a stack of papers in her son's hands,
Several pages had blown into the shrubs.
He had not bothered to pick them up.
Unable to lift himself higher than his character could arouse,
He threw her collection of old love letters, verse and journals,
Into the trash bin. As he discarded the treasure of her thoughts,
I gathered three poems from beneath the bush.
Reading the last lines from one:

'Forget, if you can
All the dreams we began,
I really had a lovely time.'

And, the lid slammed shut.

Lynn W. Petty

Childhood

Changing of diapers; their crawling, then walk;
Running and skipping; their first day of school;
Answering questions; insatiable 'whys; "
Breathlessly rushing from this place to that;
Her music, dancing; his baseball and scouts;
Chicken pox; measles; a fever; the mumps;
Christmas day; Santa; their presents; the tree;
Joy of our seeing enchantment, delight;
Junior high over then, senior high school;
Frustrating; baffling; turbulent times;
Contesting home rule; encouraged by peers;
With blemished faces; smiling through braces;
Angular; awkward; ungraceful; raw-boned;
Marching bands; football; untidy in dress;
Hair askew; first date; worrisome; out late.

Living was fitful, no meter to life.
Suddenly over, the strife of their youth;
Twenty-five years had escaped, so it seemed.
Children were grown, both married and gone,
Heavy the silence that hung in their place.
Sitting together, alone by the fire,
She reminiscing, while I rapt in thought,
Lingering memories dance in the flames,
Faces of children that flash in the glow.
Childhood, how blessed those early young years.

Lynn W. Petty

Creation

When all supply was in the hands of Cause,
Effect was molten primal chaos, held
Within a universal cauldron, rest
Was given to consider what the blend
Would yield. What distillation might there come
When left to steep upon the flame of time?

What essence to be poured or spooned, when time
Had separated dross and grime; when Cause
Congealed Effect as form? What shape would come?
Omniscience knew the liquid luster held
Within an orbed mold to cool, would blend
A tear so pure, that Genesis could rest.

An orb within the plumbless steep, no rest
Was had as crystal creep began. In time,
A metamorphic stress; a grinding blend
Of blasting heaves had splayed the plates to cause
The core to spill its viscous blaze. Not held,
A spew and fall of flaming rock had come.

As fluid land had ceased to flow, then come
Awaking, as purpose changed the rest
Of earth's most fragile face. Creation held
Expressive mind as conscious force, with time,
Embraced the law of Cosmic Will to cause
The 'Seeds of Season' to sprout forth and blend.

Profound, pristine, profusion was its blend
Of manifest raw beauty. Light had come,
Divine desire had found dimension. Cause
Became the tangible of thought. The rest
Of thought, the fractured Self of God, in time,
As souls, would pierce the veil of flesh then held.

□

Within the folded fist of night dawn held
Ignited eastern skies until the blend
Of feathered morning light, with time,

Through Holy Emulation, life could come.
As reasoning pushed out, first breath, then rest,
Effect emerged as man, awakened Cause.

Creative Reason held the souls to come.
His Law, combined with Will, would blend the rest
Of mortal clay with time, to temple Cause.

Lynn W. Petty

Creativity

Creativity,
By your mind's intensity,
Forms reality.

Lynn W. Petty

Eight Long Years

Eight long years my spirit has been flamed
To understand, to know. I've blamed
The gods, whatever they may be, for such
Demands upon my time. I asked they touch
My soul; to feel the 'click'; to hear the still
Small voice from deep within. I'm losing will!
For eight long years is long enough to read,
To search, to ask for some response. To plead
For something seemingly beyond my reach,
I have the right to claim. I feel the breach
Of time and I demand to know. If not,
I'll close my books; consider it a plot
To just confound the mortal mind of man.
I will! ! Regardless of it all, I can!

Then, swelled the voice of all eternity.
'A measurement in anonymity
Is eight long years. The clouds, the wind the stars
Have sought to teach thee truth. Aye, even Mars,
Uranus, Venus, Saturn, Pluto, Earth,
Which hang suspended in the cosmos' girth;
With Jupiter, and Neptune, Mercury and,
The billion, trillion stars He spread like sand.
And, thou, in 'eight long years' demand to know
What God may be, without the clearing of the din
Of mind; without thee turning to within? '
So spake the mighty voice of deep low tone.

'Thou asketh where the spirit may have flown?
Then, hear thou this, and well: That thou be stilled,
And turn therein, for there thou art fulfilled!
Whose path is that but thine alone to walk?
Thy goal is reached by step by step, not talk.
Thy faith and hope are compounds of thine urge.
His presence is too great to feel his surge.
Desire, patience, living, love all pave
Thy way; removing bramble bush to save
Thy foot soles from the thorny wounds of life.
Whoever said, 'to seek' was without strife?

Thy way is not a freeway eight lanes wide;
'Tis but a path with naught a soul beside.'
Listen! Hark! 'Enough to know is given!
Trust in Him, Thy only way to heaven! '

Lynn W. Petty

Embraced By Conscious Force

Above the cliffside looking down its sheer,
The sea was undulating molten jade.
Foaming billows broke white across its face,
As drifted snow upon a vein of turquoise green.
Against the seawall, waves swelled to deeper power,
Filling the air with rolling peals of surging thunder.

Aloft, white gulls hung upon sustaining breezes.
Submitting to the will of opposing winds, they banked,
And let the currents choose their course.

A child ran wildly down the sandy shore.
Her screams of pure delight were heard
Above the sea-sounds as she, with childish piety,
Had summoned up her soul to worship
In the open air; giving thanks for freedom of her spirit,
And her limbs, through joyous antics of her surfside play.

All this appealed to my immortal strain.
It roused the essence of my source to stand
Within the depths of my divine desire to view
The tangibility of Cause, the physiography of God.

Lynn W. Petty

Every Day A New Mourning

Considered once a creative man, whose mind
Was charged with life and learning, now at 86,
He sits and looks away in fleeting recollection.
Each day, like a dark shade of mildew,
This thief of memory covers more
The brilliance of his mind.

Unaware of yesterday, oblivious of tomorrow,
He sits in limbo, lost in the night of dementia,
That obscure land between the extinction of his faculties,
And the significance of his existence,
He asks again, the question asked before.

"Where is my brother? "
"He is gone, " she said, "He is dead."
Each time, in grief, he is momentarily satisfied,
Until the drift of mind recurs again, and asks
The same as asked before. With moaning spirit,
He is left to weep and grieve anew.
Seeking a somewhere out of nowhere,
He enters into the gaping jaws of nothingness,
And disappears.

Lynn W. Petty

Fear Not My Dear

Fear not, my dear, I'm here with you,
As I will be through all the years,
As I have been our whole life through,
To love you, hold you, calm your fears,
And, with the fabric of my soul
I'll wipe away your hurts and tears.

Lynn W. Petty

From A Painting Of A Spanish Gypsy Girl

Her wind-combed hair surrounds her face
With tumultuous, unrestrained swirls
Of cascading molten midnight for its shade.
Her eyes, deep and dark,
Eternally veiling the window
Of my perceived image of her spiritual being.
Her slightly parted lips, pouting, full, passionately swollen,
Like velvet pillows of Spanish Gypsy Red,
Were meant for kiss not for speech.
The blending of her heritage merges
Imperceptibly, as dawn into daylight,
Of the Saracen on frothing mounts,
With scimitars held high;
Of Castilian pride as ancient as the Vasco-Celts.
A mystery, everlastingly impenetrable,
Forever shading the essence of her spirit.
Her countenance whispers a shadow of melancholy,
As if deep melodies wander through her soul.
She lives in a world to come, intangible
As a dream hidden in the depth
Of her ancestral decent.

Lynn W. Petty

Frozen In Summertime

A petulant old fool is Father Time.
He speeds the interval between events
That have no relevant importance,
And then, impedes the happenings of those
Occurrences that are so dear to us.
Interminable is the wait from summertime
To summertime.
We have our twin grandchildren
Seven days and try to fill
The week with all year long.
A brood of mixed emotions roil around
Within my mind. Elation, rancor, joy and ire,
Become a gauzy drift of gray vexation,
That we are forced to wedge one year into a week.
While gathering my scattered thoughts,
I mused awhile about those weeks that we have had,
Reliving frozen fun from photographs,
And I forgave old Father Time,
For I have lived to have those weeks,
Observing there are those who
Never know the jubilation of just one day
Of grand-parental time.

Lynn W. Petty

Frustration Personified This Thing Called Golf

I have concluded golf is but a whore.
One day she will embrace me for a fee.
The next, she will rebuff me without thought
Of what my love for her may mean to us.
And, still she takes my money even though
Consistency is far from her cruel mind.
She is the solace in my restive days,
I show her so by my fidelity.
She teases me with faith of better times,
Then, leaves me in the state of my lost hope.
I find that I am gripped within her will.
Unable to extract myself from her
Beguiling charm, though I am much aware
Of her abuse, I cannot seem to leave.
I try, but I return to her each day,
Trapped in the web of her adulterous self.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

Grieve Not

Grieve Not

Grieve not for me that I*have stepped outside the pale.
Man's death is not a void*a thick congeal of night.
The ground whereon I stand*is just beyond the veil;
A firmament of soul*illuminated by the Light.
Grieve not for me that I*transcend this human dream,
For I ascend above*the tumult, din and blare.
Come visit my gravesite*as often as you deem,
You'll visit my remains*but I will be elsewhere.
Death is disunion, a spiritual flight, of soul from sense.

Lynn W. Petty

Health

A Little Prose or A Little Lecture, not sure.

Of all man's miseries and catastrophes, through his history in time,
None have been so severe that he has not been able to overcome,
Recover or rebuild from them. If his house is destroyed, he replaces
It. If he loses his money, he regains it or lives less extravagantly.
If his loss is by death, he bereaves, but recovers with time.
These calamities do not have an effect on his physical self.
It is his own personal illness that affects the very essence of his being.
When his malady is accompanied with pain, which wears upon his mind
Body and soul, defeating his ability to perceive pleasures such as taste,
Movement, thought or love, he is without possession of his greatest gift,
His health. Health is the spirit that animates his pleasures in life.
It is without conscious value until it is lost. Man's true capital wealth
Is health. The return on his investment is his freedom from disease
And abnormality, living his life in the soundness of optimal well-being.
How we take for granted that which is so tenuous.! !

Lynn W. Petty

Her Hands

Have you seen her hands, gnarled and crooked with age;
Translucent skin accenting blue-black veins,
Contrasting tendon cords of white through spots
Of brown upon the backs of her old hands?

Those hands were once the strength of our household.
They fashioned us into a family core.
They bound us with the mastic of their love.
Without apparent weariness they cooked,
And cleaned, and washed, performing endless tasks.
No motion lost in their resolve, they spoke
In silent speech. Articulate, when truth
Involved; eloquent, on matters of the heart;
Convincingly, when we had misbehaved.
On rocking lap, their touch would calm my troubled sleep;
Medicinal was their caress on fevered brow.

Restive age has slowed the winging of those birdlike hands.
Now, trembling with fatigue they struggle
To maintain their height, afraid to fall, too weak to fly,
They watch the flock on wing, its passing south across
The winter's sky.
They wait.

Lynn W. Petty

Her Name Is Poetry

Who is this sprite, this nymph that haunts my inner self,
That dances on the fringes of the shadows of my mind?
What spirit penetrates beneath the surface of my being,
That makes me pledge my heart, implore her love
And then, with flippant air, will pawn my soul
For our brief written intercourse?
She teases me with our encounters,
Leaving me at her capricious whim to stand
Within the palest speculation of my thoughts.
She is the light within the mellow gloom
Of my reflective imperfection. A diva with the range of voice
That shames all heaven's choir;
A vixen, with an angel's grace who wears the habit of a nun,
Who speaks her lines with eloquence,
Or with a sailor's tongue.
I would give my all for what is never to belong to me,
The joy of her everlasting embrace,
For then I could write melodies that would ascend
Into the rhythm of eternal time
Leaving to the newborn
A thousand beauties of thought
And style.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

His Crossing

He is dead. It is over.
Did you see his face before death came;
The cancer deepened furrows
Of his brow; the medicated dilation
Of his unfocused eyes;
His almost unintelligible pleadings
For relief from pain?
Yet, at the threshold of his crossing,
A placid recognition moved
Across his face, as if a Splendor
Approached his bed.
He seemed to see, he knew.
Was that the death his faith had taught?
Would he have embraced
With ecstatic expression a skeletal form,
Robed in cloak and cowl,
Surrounded with shadowy dread,
Chilling the hearts
Of the sick and dying?
Who would have smoothed his brow?
Who would have released
His pain or caused a smile,
Except a loving friend?
There was a sweetness at his passing.
What he saw remains the eternal
Mystery; a vision, for which
He had no fear.
I think the Angel of Death
Has been much maligned.

Lynn W. Petty

How Beautiful Is Woman Full With Child

I studied her from far across the room.
Her depth of beauty deepened day by day.
A calm transcendent goodness showing through,
As though her inner source of self were found.

How beautiful is woman full with child.
I rose and gently took her in my arms,
In awe I felt the motion through her side,
The joyous, not so gentle, kick of babe,
A confirmation of our deepest faith.

All life is marked by some event in time,
The miracle of birth, then we were three.
With pride I stared, with humble prayer, gave thanks,
And laid the infant in her cradled arms.
I watched it nursing from her brimming breast;
Sweet drops of nectar running down its chin.
Contented sounds of Mother's cooing words.

The amber lamp's illuminating glow
Had cast the room in tones of warming light.
An aura of resplendence covered them.
They lay, suspended, in a timeless still,
Like statuary in a holy shrine.

Transfixed, an ageless mystery was revealed.
I saw love's purpose in this ancient scene.
Maturity was part of that new birth,
Emerging from the boy, I stood a man.

Lynn W. Petty

How Deep Our Memories Lie

How deep our memories lie,
Beneath the silt and sediment of mind,
Deposited by the turbid stream of life.
Each succeeding springtime thaw swells
The stream of living, burying deeper still
That memory matter of past forgotten years.
Quietly it lies beneath the strata of time.
It is only when we reach an age of questionable duration
That it seems to rise with haunting recollection, caused
By some stimulation to our senses,
Flooding our apprehending mind with remembrances.
Sound, smell, taste, touch, sight prompts
Those somethings long lost in the still deeps of thought,
Overwhelming us in a deluge of emotional reminiscences.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

I Bid Farewell To Night

Above the cliffside looking down its shear,
I wavered on the edge of my resolve.
The ache of heart had plumbed the depths of pain.
A storm approached, its bands of clouds had screened,
With opal mist, the early morning blue.
The distant thunderheads seemed held aloft by colonnades of rain.
The pounding surf was pillaging the shore with surge and swell of sea.
Resounding hard against the break-wall, its thunder broke the solitude with sound.
In vain, veiled streams of sunlight strove to lift the brooding loom of nature's
broiling mood. Enveloped in the heave and thrust of shift and change,
I saw dynamic push and shove as cosmic evolution. Having lifted
Me to heights beyond the ego of myself, I knew that I, yes, I
Was part of that Great Magnitude of Force.
No longer would I cease to be; No longer forced to stand upon
The brink of darkened doubt. My chains removed, my sight regained,
With vision clear, I gazed across the interval of mind
To View illumined immortality. All this appealed to my immortal strain;
All this was cause to fling aside the stress of piercing sorrow buried deep
Within The chambers of my spirit core. It roused the essence of my source
To lift the spell, the shadow of my grief of soul, to stand within the
Wider powers of my God. Inside the vortex of His conscious might,
That circle which is everywhere, without circumference anywhere,
That Causal 'I, " made manifest expression from Divine Imagination.
Through Omniscient Thought, as through a prism, came the vibrant tints
Of sound vibration, spilling from the streams of sweeping winds; cascading
Harmonies, as tonal lingerings; the visual harmonies from the chords of
Nature's song; dimension as the physical of Self.
The pulse of our beginnings was the heart of all creation.
Comprehending I was part of that celestial time; that beat
That rhythmic pound; that solar clock, I stepped across the line
Of my despair to view the marvel of a new born dawn.
For dark had spoke its sorrows. Day had broken clear.
I bid farewell to night.

Lynn W. Petty

I Had A Vision

I dreamed a dream, a vision came to me.
Lost youth imploring, "God, we beg of Thee!";
With lined and aged face, though, they were young,
They plead for mercy, silence had no tongue.

At flooding shore, they stretched for higher ground.
Earth slipped beneath them, cries their only sound.
Extending them my hand, they could not reach.
In tides of sorrow, eyes their only speech.

Debauchery engulfed them, steeped in brine.
Their temple housed an hedonistic shrine.
They struggled for the surface, death their fate.
Akashic records were the scrivener's slate.

Past hope, their childhood blossomed all too soon.
Depraved, they thought that life would not impugn.
Within the deep, I entered in their mind,
So many broken promises, so blind.

The sadness is: The waste of all those years.
The irony is: The sea was their own tears.

Lynn W. Petty

I Know, I Know, I Know

For a young friend who asked me
To write a poem for him, who was in love
But, unable to express it.

'I know, I know, I know, ' you softly say.
But, how can I be sure you understand
My depth of love? From you, what will convey
Assurances to me, that when we stand
Alone, we two; I whisper in your ear
Equivalent soft-spoken words, I'll know
That you will comprehend that what you hear
Is uttered from my soul? Not just a flow
Of idle praise but, solemn words that mean
That unrelenting, pounding, lonely heart
Of this, perhaps, most foolish man; unseen
Behind a mask of practiced calm, that part
Of me that dies a little more each day
By longing for you kiss on lip and brow,
Has had to speak or break; has had to say
What lies so heavily therein. The vow
So long withheld from you, of silent love,
Is broken, breached, confessed, oh, yes, its true.
My penance paid, now truth, and God above,
Forgive my sin, my sin of loving you.
I speak without reproof, deceit, or guilt.
My burden of existence is no more.
My wounds, unhealed from long held silence built
The weakened structure of this man. To shore
My mental framework, give me peace of mind,
I plead you this, my dear, please hear my prayer.
If love's response to me is disinclined,
And, I have lost love's grace, I won't despair,
Denied your love from me, if you can find
Naught else but this, I pray you please be kind.

Lynn W. Petty

I Think Well Of Her

It was years ago when I first met her.
She was the siren of Laguna Beach,
Well endowed, a body to be envied
By all women and, licentiously desired by all men.
She walked like a cat; mysterious, behind her large, darkly
Tinted glasses, causing people to turn and watch
As she silently passed them by.
She was not pretentious, she was herself,
As she was born to be. She was not young
But, at that time of life when all was an intoxicating
Awareness of love and beauty, wrapped in a fervor
For life, living it to its maximum.
I saw her again, many years later.
Confined to a home-care facility,
Mobile to the limits of a wheelchair.
The shadows of time deepened,
As the flickering dance of advancing days
Hovered about her face.
I remember her, once glorious in her youthful beauty,
A blaze of eloquent passion.
Now, she seems a dying ember,
In the gray, slow-fire ash of old age.
I think well of her, as I had thought well
Of her, with all kindness and tenderness,
Just as a man remembers, through the scroll
Of decades past, those places and people
He enjoyed and loved the most.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

I Walked The Walk

□

I walked my morning walk, and met an old
And bearded black man who was sitting on
The sidewalk, leaning back against a wall.
Attempting to step over his outstretched,
Impeding limbs, he said to me in clear
And lucid voice, 'Are we not all the same?
Are we not all the same?' he asked again.
A little startled by his inquiry,
I said, that we are not the same, that we
Are very different, from fingertips
To faces, different religions let
Alone our races. No, I said, that we
Are not the same, so why do you persist?
'To make you understand. Does not the same
Quintessence course my veins as courses yours?
Do not all souls speak with the same grammar
And syntax of one spiritual mind?
Is not each soul a fragment of this whole
Stupendous Universe? Would not all souls,
Combined, reflect the face of God? Does not
The Angel Death put on our life the sting
Of death at birth? Are we not all the same? '
Responding with a No! I saw him smile
A slight all-knowing smile and, then he asked,
'Just what do you possess in this wide world? '
I confidently said, I have my life,
And all the things therein that I possess.
'Insatiable the vanity of man.
He comes into this world with only his
Corporeal originality;
He lives, he dies, he leaves it all behind,
Including his corporeal remains,
Departing this journey with less than that
With which he entered in this life, despite
His rage, petitions, pageantry and wealth.
Dissolving in the furnace flame of death,
He leaves his shrinking ego seen within

The mist of his evaporating self.
Thus, man must pass away, his name is gone;
He perishes from record and from mind;
All future generations have no thought
Nor recollection of his pomp and might.
Each age is but a volume to be cast
Aside. All monuments to him are gone;
His life a tale one takes from history books
Which lie upon the dusty shelves of time.
Why, you do not possess your next pulse beat.
Now, tell me, once again, what you possess! '
Profound, I said, with weakened argument.
But, logic still prevails. Look at our skin,
Therein is where my reasoning exists.
Is not your color black and I am white?
There is dissimilarity between
Us all. I ended with an air of pride.
He looked at me disdainfully and said,
'Our souls are woven from the self-same thread,
From different dye lots, that is true but, are
Our souls not woven on the same life skein?
Regardless of the hue are they not from
The same lamb's wool, the cotton plant? The source
Of fiber of our souls is just the same.
Look past this manifest illusion, flesh
And tell me if the truth be seen or not.'
I saw and, what I saw confounded me.
I saw the textile of the weave of soul.
'Now tell me, are we not the same? ' he asked.

Lynn W. Petty

Independence, California (Fishing!)

To Jimmy Reina and Earl Meade,
Who introduced me to fishing.

A man must be alone with friends, his kind.
Escaping traffic, phones, the stress of mind.
Dispelling corporate pomp, to dream, to think,
Returning back to touch his primal link.

There is a place just off three ninety-five.
A fishing spot where men can breath, revive.
Where worth is based upon the catch per day.
Not measured counting holdings, status, pay.

Where from the desert sands the mountains rise,
Contrasting granite with the azure skies.
Where prayer is silent, inner, whole, complete,
Within the closet of one's self, God's seat.

Enclosed in speechless splendor, nature's shrine,
Its altar, lowered boughs of sugar pine.
One hears the distant voice of poetry,
The song of birds, of stream, of life, carefree.

With true, unswerving friends, who build redoubt,
Around one's battered fort, against self-doubt.
Who rise to feel the bite of morning air,
With coffee, bacon, eggs, their morning fare.

Who heat their backs against the campsite blaze,
Awaiting sunrise with its warming rays.
With breakfast over, poles all rigged to start,
It's upstream, downstream, each his way, they part.

They fish in ripple, pothole, quiet pool,
To take the limit, five is now the rule.
Fatigue is more the case than limit brought,
Exaggerations (lies) are what they caught.

If all were in the creel that 'Got away, '

Consider hunger in this world 'passé'.
Like stragglers from a lost patrol, they come,
Disheveled, rumped, somewhat pained and numb.

Dismayed, they find excuses for their plight,
They question how the fish became so bright.
All gathered then to speak of what their cost,
The numbers of the 'Big ones' that were lost.

No water body, even in their dreams,
Could hold the fish they 'Saw' within these streams.
Around the campground, after their return,
Their dinner seemed to be their main concern.

What fish there were (Not leaving food to fate)
Potatoes, steak and corn, had filled each plate.
Late noonday turned to nightfall, sun had set.
The burning logs had not died out quite yet.

We spoke of tales we all had heard before,
Some minor variations, not much more.
With embers out, our hearts were still aglow,
A calm, within, had reached a new plateau.

The lucent, vivid sky was one vast star,
Descriptions far beyond vernacular.
With sleep upon us, fresh the evening air,
Uplifted spirits in complete repair.

As time devours itself, tomorrow soon
Becomes today, and at the stroke of noon,
As all good things must finally do, they end.
With friendship, fishing, food, the perfect blend,
The combination for a grand weekend.

Lynn W. Petty

Introspectives Of A 93 Year Old Lady

From thoughts expressed and, sayings said
By Anne Reina, our mother, who died at 93 years
Of age.

Who is that mirrored image gazing back at me?
Gray hair, wrinkled countenance,
Is it possible I am she? How could
Life escape me so? How could time collapse
About my being with such ferocity?
What ravages have happened?
I cannot seem to recognize that face.
Is this the yield of my ninety-three years?
Yet, I know it is. Where has time delivered me?
Where is my awareness of its passing?
Yes, I remember the joys of living, the tears of life.
I remember laughter, successes, failures, and heartbreaks.
I remember births, timely and untimely deaths
Of loved ones; my marriage, childbirth,
Grandchildren, even great-grandchildren.
It all seems an endless blur. A merging of all
Of those incidents into one continuous screening
Of life, according to my ability, well lived.
Well lived? Yes. Purposefully lived,
Advisedly directed.
Some say willed, even controlled.

They say that a person of my age has no future.
They say that we dwell only upon the past.
My body does not respond as it did, that is true.
But, I am still young in mind. I am still interested
In the world around me. I still think.
I must have value, for all these years could
Not have been for naught.
Yet, why do I feel so alone?

I guess God is good to we older people,
We linger around in old age for a short time,
Lamenting our wrinkles and our arbitrary old bodies,
Trying to keep out of the way; asking ourselves

What we could have done differently,
If given the opportunity to relive certain
Aspects of life.
Would we do it differently? I suppose not.
At the time we thought the way we did things was correct.

Eventually, we are called. We leave. We leave for an unknown
Destination; unzipping this albatross, we call ourselves,
To the elements from which it was made.
We keep, I am told, that ingredient of
Self identification; that effervescent constituent
That caused this mortal framework to function.
The merging itself into an action of timelessness,
Lost in a cathedral of empurpled oblivion.

Life, as we call it, is oblivion, created to correct
Our spiritual defects.
I wonder, sometimes, how we acquired defects if we are
A perfect expression of Himself.
I wonder why, He would need to express Himself through us.
I wonder why, if He is eternally perfect, what aroused
Within Him the necessity to create and
In particular, such imperfections as are we?

Actuality comes after death, I am sure. We are here
Such a short period of time. They claim that we will live
In eternal felicity, forever.
It seems an uneven trade, 'Forever' for this short life.
Then, therefore, this must be the illusion.
Living, as we call it, does nothing more than create
Patina on the soul.

Lynn W. Petty

Is The Doctor In?

For Dr. Granzella, The Last of The Few,
Who refused to succumb to the corporate
Dictum of 'Profit before the patient.'

What happened to our world of medicine?
What happened to that miracle of trust,
That wonderful relationship between
Oneself and one's own doctor? One's belief
That cure commenced upon the doctor's touch,
That touch of imminent recovery.
What happened to those men, who made a life,
Not just a living, from the treatment of
Disease? Those gentle men whose purpose was
To cure the sick, assuage the dying of
The fear of death, who knew his biggest job
Was to encourage, to the maximum,
The patient's will to live, by faithfully
Adhering to the dictum of his skill,
To 'Do No Harm.'
The art of medicine
Has lost its human touch, defamed by thirst
For profit and the corporate bottom line,
Depriving doctors of their self-esteem,
Reducing them to educated clerks.
Depersonalization, therein lies
The tragedy. Compassion, warmth, concern
Have been exchanged for cold, insensitive
Technology. Big business has replaced
The friendly disposition found between
Physician and his patient. In the quest
For gain, a life equates to corporate yield.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

Is There A Greater Fear?

Is there a greater fear than one's own child
Preceding him in death?
Leaving the church, I thought about the service,
Its hymns, homilies and effusions, written
Honoring the deceased; the deep tone of the ringing
Bell announcing the departure of the deceased's soul;
The high mass making straight his way to the gates of heaven.
All very ceremonial, all very symbolical, all very liturgical.
When have the results been satisfactory
To mind, heart, soul or sense of the parents?
What alleviation for their sorrows, their tears?
What recriminations? What self-reprovals
Must have flooded their minds haunting their inner life?
Can there be a deeper grief than the grief that cannot speak?
With utter depression of soul, they slowly left behind
The coffin wherein lay silent their deepest hope.
What lessons are to be learned from this young
Person's passing?
Unable to answer these ponderous questions,
The lines from an old poem, once read, came:

'God wills it so, and so it is, to death we're all resigned.
May he not be happier still than those he left behind? '

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

It Was Only Yesterday

In Memory of our Mother, Anne Reina

I remember her lying there, my Mother,
In her convalescent bed.
She lay in the fetal position like an unborn child
Floating in the waters of the womb;
Afraid Of the unknown, knowing the inevitable
Could not be stayed.

How courageous, yet childlike she was,
Unable to care for herself, fearful of the dark,
Dreading that mysterious moment when she would walk alone
On the solemn, silent shore of a spiritual sea.
Her will, her grace, her worth delaminated like peeled veneer,
Exposing the calamity of age;
Her beauty defoliating by sheaths before her eyes,
Not recognizing the person in the mirror as herself;
The encroaching time, having left her without a link to the future,
Only a past; her baptism in the stream of life's twilight,
Held within the somnolent embrace of the minister of death.

She had said she knew it would come someday, but not so soon.
"Where has time delivered me? " she asked.
"It was only yesterday, I was a little girl."

Lynn W. Petty

Life Is The Soil

Thoughts we create are the seeds that will grow.
Mind is the plot we prepare to receive.
Life is the soil into which we must sow.

Physical force was once mental tableau.
Manifest power of what we achieve.
Thoughts we create are the seeds that will grow.

Matter is spirit in motion and flow,
Building expression by what we believe.
Life is the soil into which we must sow.

Depth of belief is the phosphate we hoe,
Reaping the product of what we conceive.
Thoughts we create are the seeds that will grow.

Thought, as the moving influence will show.
Self-aggrandizement is what we must cleave.
Life is the soil into which we must sow.

Destine our growth by our thinking and know,
Man by his thoughts, from himself does he thief.
Thoughts we create are the seeds that will grow.
Life is the soil into which we must sow.

Lynn W. Petty

Lunch With A Poet

□

I had lunch with a poet, just the other day.
A poet who has written fine and lofty verse,
Conveying his experiences, emotions and his ideas, in
Vivid, imaginative ways, condensed in simple language,
Choosing words for sound and power,
Rather than impressing readers with poetic adulterations.
Almost apologetically, he said he uses 'nickel words'
To write his inner thoughts. It was as if he were at fault,
As though he thought those simple sounds
Had lessened the intent of his poetic worth.
I emphasized how wrong he was, and tried
To make clear, a poet writes in sympathy with his reader,
Overleaping the barriers of understanding by the simplicity
Of his language, and of his words.
To write with words of misty meaning does not make
A mystic.
To write with vulgar words does not lift up the poem
On wings of song, it only floats as high as the poet's
Commonality who, mistaking flatulence for inspiration, becomes
Enmeshed in a literary byproduct of the foulest of excretion and smells.
My friend failed to intellectually understand, but spiritually accepts, as his
writings reveal,
That clarity of thought and mind is the poet's highest point
Of the poet's integrity.

Lynn W. Petty

Madonna On The Amtrak

Taking my seat, I noticed across from me a young
Mother with her child.
The soft-shawl like waves of her long brown hair
Delicately framed her face as it swept over her ears,
Spilling onto the plateau of her shoulders,
Streaming down her neck, ending like a gentle waterfall
Blown to a mist by the wind.
The serenity of her countenance was stirring.
Lost in heavenly musing, she gazed with adoration
Into the face of her sleeping boy.
Through the windows, prised ribbons of light
Were cast upon her features, accentuating her quietude.
Mysterious, tender, quiet, deep.
A subtle vapor of something divine enveloped them.
I sat silently, listening to the murmuring sounds of a mother
As she nestled her son in the cradle of her arms.
A peaceful touch was laid upon my soul.
Held in a timeless still, I saw a living picture
As old as the genesis of life.
If one had reason for doubt or despair
It would have vanished, dissolved
Within the illumination of life,
Love and joy.

Lynn W. Petty

My Bookcase

There is a friendship in my books,
Each a confidant that fits the vagaries
Of my mood.
Alone, sitting in my study, surrounded
By my bookshelf friends,
I find consolation sharing conversation
With Dante, Goethe, Homer.
I find comfort knowing
Their knowledge has sustained the test
Of time and censure.
What solace to walk along the stream
Banks of the mind;
To tramp the hills of thoughtful expectation,
Through an interchange of learning.
My relationship is special.
They ask for nothing but, give their all.
They commit but, never ask for commitment.
They are never clinging, pressuring or reprimanding.
As select intelligence, never failing;
They aspire only to my intellectual needs.
They light my loneliness through
The illumination of my mind;
Giving substance to the images of my brain,
Leading me to the phantasmal embrace
Of Juliet, Beatrice, Miranda,
Or the battlefields
Of King Arthur, Roland or El Cid.
They are the voices from the past, guiding
Me through the fields of discovery;
Filling my soul with understanding.
As shadows descend upon the evening of my life,
They grant me strength.

Lynn W. Petty

My Last Icon

□

▣ Memory of Dan Rogers

During those formidable years of youth, when neither boy nor man,
I patterned my life after the generation that preceded me
as role models of purpose and perseverance, believing
them to be omnipotent and immortal.

Now, one by one, my Icons are falling.
Seeing them die, these redoubtable practitioners
of fortitude and resolution,
made me realize, with reluctant awareness,
they were not gods.

They were human beings who tested
living through their successes and failures,
endeavoring as men and women to endure.

My last Icon lies now, before me, weak and infirmed;
who, in the face of adversity, stood bold and martial
against his aggressors.

Despite his frailty of frame,
I see through the spell-shadow
of his imminent death,
an aura of serious dignity.

A man of simple values, who lived those standards
before I comprehended them as truth:

'To live by the rules and,
that a man's word is his bond.'

How is a man's lifetime to be measured,
except by his contribution to the betterment
of his fellowman?

He has lighted the darkness
Of living by his being here, leaving
a better place than that which was left
to him.

He has won his acclaim.

Lynn W. Petty

My Privileges In Life

I have had a few privileges in life.
My marriage; the birth of my two children;
To have embraced my grandchildren,
Contribute to their growth;
To have lived sufficient time to witness
The new lives of my four great-grandchildren.
Then, I was introduced to a new life,
Which was so like a dream made visible
I felt as if the universe had poured
The melody of life within my soul.
She lay within her mother's arms, flooding
The room with the colors of hope and faith.
Divinely delicate, it seemed my touch
Would have profaned this exquisite beauty
Of mother and child.
In glancing back upon my range of years,
I gave thanks to God for the privilege
Of my longevity, that I was given time
To see, and meet, my new and fifth great-grandchild.
Bathed in the rainbow colors of expectation
She was born and, given the name of
Miss Abigail Marie Hutton.

Lynn W. Petty

My Son

The father of a daughter, now a son;
Black hair, with ruddy color, see him there?
The nurse held up my child for me to see,
And then, reminded me that I was one
Of many fathers who had had a son,
And not to rap so hard upon the glass.
'Intensive care is just a floor below.'
I saw within that hardened front, a smile
That seemed to know, to understand, the love
And pride that lay within my heart and soul.
She held me in a visual embrace,
Then said, 'The tender way you looked upon
That boy, you looked upon your girl the same
Kind way. The countless faces looking through
That glass have lacked the depth that swept across
Your eyes revealed your heart, your soul
Was seen.' I kissed her hand and turned to look
Again. Bathed in the element of love,
Lost in the depth of smiling gratitude, I asked,
My son, my son, what does your fate portend?
What is your place within this worldly scene?
Now, standing in the morning of your life,
I pledge to you, as love stands here with me,
I promise you, whatever that I may,
All things that make a strong and loving man.

Lynn W. Petty

My Wife, In Love And Caring

□

□

Those deep etched lines upon her face
Have been incised by love and caring.
I touch her cheek, my fingers trace
Those deep etched lines upon her face,
Which manifest her selfless grace;
Her gift of years. I stand declaring,
Those deep etched lines upon her face
Have been incised by love and caring.

Lynn W. Petty

No Monarch, She

No monarch she, though regal does she lie.
The pillows tucked beneath her silvered hair.
Her wrinkled face indicative of life
Well lived, who met the challenge of the years.
Her countenance a sculpture worn by time.
Through age, her youth-like beauty could be seen,
The child of yesterday, impatient with her
Aged frame, restricted by its use,
Afraid to cut the cord of this sojourn.
I passed before her. Now, her time had come.
I stood behind the screen of life and death,
That veil that separates all time and space,
Life's dream, from spiritual reality.
I stepped to elbow's side, and kissed her brow.
Her breathing, slowed by age and her decease.
She lifted up her palsied arm and laid
Her youthful hand in mine. She leapt into
My firm embrace, we crossed the span of Now.
Her human cloak, of flesh and blood, lay still.
Past-darkened shades of memory we saw,
Revealed, our purpose in this sacred scheme.
The setting sun had haloed her dark hair.
Tender loving warmth had filled her eyes,
 "Alone, my own, alone for rest of time."

Lynn W. Petty

On Being A Grandfather

□

For Ryan, My Grandson.

My first encounter with him was when we were left alone in the same room. There he sat, on the floor, plump and fleshy, a blob of protoplasm, with large dancing eyes.

Carefully, distantly, I circled him, ensuring that I was not drawn into the magnetism of his being.

I was not to be fooled by his beguiling mannerisms.

He was being cute, making funny faces and sounds, attempting to enchant me into picking him up.

No, no, no, not I! !

How dare he enter my life, changing the image of myself, creating an unwanted persona, which I was unprepared to act, and unwilling to accept.

I maintained a somewhat removed and distant relationship, cordial, but I kept some space between us.

As time continued, he was beginning to say a few words.

Our relationship became less distant, and I actually looked forward to the weekends, without expressing aloud any anticipation of his arrival.

He and I would walk together, just the two of us.

We would walk along meandering pathways, past fountains and duck-filled ponds, enjoying the day.

That was the day he, in his trickery, feigned fatigue, extended his arms for me to lift him up, which I, falling into his trap, did.

I looked into his face and could see he was trying to say something, but his mouth was unable to formulate his thought.

As he struggled to enunciate the word,

that lay mute upon his lip and tongue, he laid his head upon my shoulder and into my ear

he uttered the most glorious word ever spoken:

“Bampa! !”

Rich, deep, mellow, full, the word filled my brain

like a pealing church bell fills the country-side,

as it echoes and re-echoes off the shoulders of the empurpled hills at vesper time.

I staggered in sweet intoxication, having drunk the elixir of its sound.
Half choked by a rising tremor of love, I,
in all its spiritual, physical and literal meaning,
had become a Grandfather.

Lynn W. Petty

Our Fifty Years

Well, they said that we would never last yet, here
We are two relics from the past. We out-survived
The sceptics who had said our marriage would be doomed,
If not misled. But, fifty years have passed
And, we have proved, that we together, heart to heart,
Improved our lives with each successive year.
We have endured the substance of living.
The salve of love has healed the wounds of life.
You, by your sweet constancy, lifted up and drew
From me my best and, I the more did grow.
How happy those fond days, how fast they go.
Often, I would travel back along the old
And traveled track, as when we were so young,
Those early days when I, so serious, attempted
To apply myself to jobs of meager worth,
So proud of my supply to family gain.
We, together, shaped the spirit of our future.
We draped ourselves in living veils of feeling,
Breathing the fire of life into the embryo of hope.
How rife were we with expectation. Now, in the
Contentment of our age, our arena is our own,
Through which we meet the future, without fear
And with strong hearts, still together, facing the splendor,
As revealed upon the physiognomy of dusk.

Lynn W. Petty

Our Purpose

What is our purpose? It's learning
That life is not at variance.
We are spiritual, living
A human life experience.

Lynn W. Petty

Our Thirtieth Year

To Mary Louise, My Beloved,
On Our Thirtieth Anniversary

I love the way your hand fits into mine,
As though it had been sculptured just for me.
With palms to palms our fingers intertwine,
Like hasps, they lock two hands as one, as we,
Ascend, yet hand in hand, our third plateau.
We stand upon this prominence we view
The interval of thirty years and know
The best was done that could be done by two,
Whose only asset was their faith that they
Could scale that steep incline to reach this height.
Our life has been a mountain climb. Each day
One helped the other, when the other might
Have slipped and stumbled from the rake of slope.
When obstacles would seem to block our way,
Your gentle hand would guide me, give me hope,
Encourage me to firmly stand and stay.
For what would seem impossible to scale
Would often be the shadow of the real.
Discerning this, your insight did prevail.
You knew to pass through shadows would reveal
The valley, and its splendor of our years.
Our past is past the future is unlived,
It lies ahead for him who perseveres.
All we possess of time is now. Short lived,
The 'nows' will form the hills of our spent hours,
Creating landscapes that are less severe.
The georamas that we build are ours,
Green knolls and glens will be our new frontier.
The crags, the scarps, the stony steep inclines
Are buried memories, beneath the drift
Of mind. A gradual ascent defines
The second half of our sojourn. Our gift
For having paid the price; for having met
Those challenges that only we could meet.
So, come, my dear, there is no further threat,
No danger, no extraordinary feat

Need be accomplished. We have earned our right
To quaff the fragrance of the summer's bloom;
Or sit within the starlit still of night
To gaze upon the Milky Way, a plume
Of feathered light, to do what we may choose
To do, however idle it may seem.
Our world is our creation, ours to use
Until we drop this cloak, this human dream.
Now, let us walk the meadows of our time,
Or pick the flowers of our age. And when
We step upon our last plateau, the climb
Complete, still holding hands, as now, as then,
We'll view the screen of life and understand,
That this was one of many lives and climbs
That we have made together, hand in hand,
As it has been since first there were lifetimes.

Lynn W. Petty

Our Twin Granddaughters

Chelsea and Ashley Who Live in New York

From horizon to horizon, across the vast opaque of our lives,
Two living meteorites have ignited our life with the flame of affection.
Not yet adult, no longer infants, they live within that delicious
And mysterious realm of youthful fancy.
How I miss the nonsensical of the moment,
That uncontrollable childhood delight, their laughter.
Ahh, that infectious laughter of a weightless concern,
Free from the apprehension of scarcity and desire.
They leave a profound and melancholy impression by their absences,
Like an illuminated perception lost in the shadowy, nothing of night.
As loved ones far away, there is a sweetness in my memory,
And a sadness in my soul. The sweetness in the sadness prevails,
The sadness makes sweeter still the thought of their return.

Lynn W. Petty

Pleading Of A Dead Poet

Oh, Muse, release the locks that dam the flow
Of verse and song from my distended heart.
Find passion for my soul that I have lost poetic speech.
Let flow the streams of ardency to seek their source
Within the infinite, harmonious, consistency of words.
Embrace me, Muse,
Allow the fountains of my mind
To fill the empty pools of solitude
With thoughts and sounds of dreamy visions
Worthily expressed.
Awaken to my reverence,
Breathe forth that harmony to which my soul was filled.
I stand in this anhydrous waste, in dread
My ever-present being shall be made invisible to life.

And she replied:

'Be silent fool, and listen
For the still soft whispers of your inner Self.
Harken to the Counsel of your bosom,
Through which Creation passes.
Then you write.'

Lynn W. Petty

Rows Of Dodder Gray

I walked along the corridor passing the gathered,
Who sat within their wheelchairs, waiting.
Their faces were devoid of any thought.
They had that vague and blank Alzheimer's stare.
I found her sitting there, my friend, among the rows
Of dodder gray, she took my hand.
Through stroke-impaired speech, she strove
To formulate her thoughts into a spoken sound.
I read into the fear and pleadings in her eyes
The thoughts I thought she might have said,
Could she but speak:

'Is this the victory of the battle we call life?
Is this the prize of living, having lived
Those struggles, depressions, wars, and tears,
The heartbreaks we are forced to bear?
Is this my compensation for good that I have done,
The family I have raised? Is this the gift of living
By His Word? '

She felt betrayed, by God, that she must bear
The embarrassment of needing someone's help,
With the most elemental of her physical needs.
She stared at me, expecting some profound response.
I failed. Embracing her, we melded into one.
We together sat and wept.

Lynn W. Petty

Sara's Garden

Fashioned out of a parkish setting is a small, □
commemorative garden, dedicated in memoriam
to the short-lived life of a beloved child.

A retreat, created by her parents who believe
it is a fair and beautiful image of her youth,
an island filled with mystical dimensions.

In its center, on a slightly raised mound of earth,
stands an ash-tree, softly green, symbolizing
the everlasting permanence of the spiritual experience,
representing the elevated central life of her soul.

Around its roots, a saturation of floral colors,
a spectrum of her spirit, in a whirlpool of intense color.

From the shelter of its branches, one is immersed
in bird sounds, as their song descends and lingers
upon the ear.

Establishing the curtilage of this sanctuary,
warm wooden benches are placed on sandstone squares,
bringing into harmony the day's discordant
thoughts, through the balancing power of the perfect square.
Bordered by yellow day lilies, yellow, the symbol
of love, constancy, dignity and wisdom, this little refuge fills
one's soul with a quiet abundance of peace and joy.

Through the vale of death, in the plenty of their sorrow,
her parents' tears shed warmth and moisture upon that little
cultivation, where flowers appeared, binding her memory,
as a living painting, which shall not fade.

Lynn W. Petty

Silence

Immersed
In the mist of unknowing;
An unknowing of that which I know,
Empty of all thought,
I am aware of the all of nothingness.
The abyss of my being fills with
Sacred silence.
Enveloped in the darkness of light;
Reposing in its marvel,
I Am.

Lynn W. Petty

So Angie Left For Home At Christmas Time

Our package was returned.
Harsh words were scrawled across its front:
'This person is deceased.'
It's not as though we were surprised to read
This notice on the wrapping of her gift,
It was the way in which we were informed.
Impassive, cold, detached as though the dead
Was nothing more than just a mark across
A clipboard page that hung upon their bed.

She was prepared to leave this world. She would
Not speak a word about her pain, despite
The ache with every coughing breath.
Each step would register distress upon her face.
For ninety-six accomplished years, a grand,
Fulfilled and beneficial life, she taught
What she had loved the most, the principles
Of life, through music's voice. As time approached
Her journey's end, she seemed to understand
Conclusion was at hand. She must have passed
From natural slumber to that from which
There is no waking. The nurse had turned
Her back and Angie slipped her human form
Without the slightest stir.

Lynn W. Petty

So Long Ago

Upon the fly-leaf of this tiny book,
She had inscribed:

“To thee, who lost a love as I,
Allow this little book of living song
To bring thee solace, and the comfort
That is thine, to know thou livist not alone,
To bear a burden such as mine.
Addie Marketier, 1853.”

As if it were a live, hot coal
That seared my heart,
I held this little book of love sonnets
That she had held so long ago.
I turned the pages she had turned. I touched
The teardrop stains on lines of verse
That she had underscored,
And left the pressed rosebud
Where it had lain a century or more.

I thought of what the past had wrought
With images of her soul-grief.
I seemed to feel her presence, as a being
Without shape or form.
A disquieting sensation sat upon my heart,
That she had lived in solitude
Within the shadow of the shatter
Of her dreams.

There is no separation between the soul
And its deep pain, except the grand sweep
Of passing time, which does not erase
But, only softens sorrow.

Lynn W. Petty

Speaking Low

In Memory of Cynthia Westfal

Across the luncheon table, speaking low,
we spoke objectively about such things
as laughter, sorrow, joy and tears. The flow
of words was philosophical. Full swings
from metaphysical to rational
approaches that would constitute a life
well lived. Her voice was hushed, an interval
of time, as though remembering some strife
within her past, her eyes grew moist and dim.
A chord was struck so deep within her soul
I felt its resonance through every limb.
She slipped outside the physical. She stole
away from here and now. I sat alone
but, not alone. I waited her return.
As if a tranquil, wafting peace had blown
from off the sea toward land, I could discern
upon her lifted face, an ecstasy;
a quiet as a nun who's filled with awe
and ardent adoration. Turning, she
began to speak as though she had to draw
from language unfamiliar to my ear;
as though she spoke another tongue. Her words
were halting as she told me what was near.
'Whatever it may mean, it undergirds
belief, ' she said, 'that there is more of me
than just this body bondage carried hence,
through this sojourn as flesh and blood, you see.
An inexpressible experience.
I rise aloft, I hear such harmony;
a blending of all virtue into sound;
like purity of prayer; a euphony
of freedom and integrity unbound.
How vacuous are words, how to explain
The timbre of her voice was rich and real
combining mystery, passion, love and pain,
like middle tones of cello one would feel
if cellist were to bow on golden strings.

'Perhaps, ' she said, ' it could be preperational,
a revelation of some promising.
A proof that life is not divisional
for those of us who may depart this scene
before our time, while still within our prime.
But, who am I to question the unseen?
I live by faith, a constant uphill climb.
So, dry your eyes and think of me as cured,
for thoughts are things, the strength of which is lost
unless directed with design. Secured
with knowledge, when the threshold has been crossed,
my life was lived with dignity and aim.
No fears have I, when breathing my last breath,
I shall be judged with honor not by shame.'
Her words, a balm of hope and power, death
cannot make still, whose echoing will haunt
the glens of thought, abiding through the hills
of mind, like sounds of nightingales, that taunt
the dusky dark of doubt. They warmed the chills
of foggy reason, questioned intellect.
They cause far reaching arms of memory
to lift across the eye of introspect,
to question: is it all illusory?
For what I thought was truth is now suspect,
and, what was once suspect is now prospect.

Lynn W. Petty

Speechless Sorrow

I have read in Legends of Monastic Orders,
The Great Saints found ecstasy in the pain endured
For the love of their spiritual convictions.
I found no ecstasy in my pain.
I found only irredeemable gloom hanging over the entire air terminal.
I observed an emotional hurt so deep it spilled over,
Flooding the hearts of all who witnessed its debilitating affect.
Our son, the father of our grandchildren, wept with a faint, melancholy,
rueful, passionate weeping, so painful to see,
It was like the stabbing of an already lacerated heart.
Hugging his children, he, with heart full of speechless sorrow,
Released his girls to the stewardess, and with a sort of mental depletion, wiped
his tears and sighed in liquid grief.
The children's sobs were so deep their souls seemed to break
Loose from their bodies and leak, with overflowing, through their eyes.
Quaking with repressed anguish, for our son and grandchildren,
Their grandmother and I stood in silence as if in deep bereavement.
Upon the departure of the girls, we three stood together in a small group, looking
out the window, like Christians huddled on the Coliseum floor.
We watched as the plane disappeared from our view, feeling
We had been eviscerated by the hunger-maddened lions
Of divorce.

Lynn W. Petty

Splendor

Its leafy splendor
Spreads, cathedral-like, its dome.
I sit in worship,
Steeped in the Spirit of One,
Soul-bound to this old oak tree.

Tanka

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

The Annals Of Assur-Nasir-Pal

Oh, Ninip, god of gods, great hero, chief
And forceful Lord, a god who gives relief,
To those who serve him, from his wrath and ire.
A king in mighty battle who breaths fire
Against insurgents who oppose his rule;
Against his enemies he smites with cruel,
Unyielding force, destroying them that hate
Him, lifting them who love and consecrate
His name, whose name within the speech of gods
No god has disregarded. He who lauds
His name shall vanquish all opponents. I,
Assur-nasir-pal, speak these words, hold high
His praises, chant his name in song and hymn,
Fall down upon my knees to worship him.
Oh, Ninip, first-born son of Nukimmut,
Mother of all gods, the immaculate,
In heaven and the earth, I plead thou hear
My prayer. I stand within the dark nadir
Of grace beseeching thee. I, King of all
Assyria, ask what is to befall
My empire. War, again, is close at hand.
I, the son of Tuklat-Adar, command
The great armed forces of the four countries,
Who trampled down our foes and enemies,
And built a lofty shrine in thy behalf.
I sacrificed an unblemished white calf,
An offering unto the holy one,
Exalted Anu, with adoration.
Recall, Great One, when I, the King of Kings,
Had marched against the rebel uprisings,
Cut off like grass all those who had rebelled
Against my royal authority; had quelled
The turbulence fomenting in those lands,
And forced their leaders to accept commands
As I had then proclaimed. For those who fled
My royal decree, I captured them and fed
Their flesh, alive, unto the savage wild
That roams at night. For those that had defiled
My throne I had impaled upon a pole

And left to die, reminding all the toll
Of their defiance. By thy own decree,
Oh, Ninip, thou had forged my destiny.
My aspirations, to the gods had flown
Unto their ears, steadfastly had they shown
The wishes of my heart. Uplifting my
Most princely hand was Istar, Queen on High,
Exalted Lady, who has favored me
And my intentions, who almightily,
Applied her heart to my conduct in wars,
Across these lands, beyond the Tigris shores.
When, in those days, when I was Prince, for those
Who, in the future, read my sacred scrolls,
Shall know that I, Assur-nasir-pal, first
Born grandson of Bin-nirari, traversed
The foreign lands and found an equal there
Was not. It was my first campaign. In prayer,
The Sun god, guider of the lands, did throw
His light of grace upon me; to bestow
His good beneficent protection on
The sovereign throne of my dominion.
Into my hand, the dread of man, they placed
The great scepter. Now King, they kneeled, embraced
My knees and swore their fealty to me,
Their noble Prince. Deep lies my enmity
For those who disregard established laws;
Who cease to pay their tribute. They are cause
For the destruction of their lands. I came
As guardian of peace, I overcame
Oppression. Woe unto the rebels who
Opposed my rule. The wrath of god Anu
Had favored reason, lifting up my sword
Against mine enemies, whose sole reward
Was to be scattered in the dust of death.
As if it were a living thing, the breath
Of war hung heavily upon the air.
Collecting a vast force, I brought to bear
Upon our enemies a great distress.
With chariots and bowmen did I press
Against the limits of their lands. I slew
Their fighting men. Their King I overthrew
And took possession of their wealth as spoil.

Their cities I consumed, and scorched the soil.
I stacked their dead against the city wall
Like trash, reminding them what will befall
Those who resist allegiance to my crown,
Resistance to my rule had been cut down.
Conscripting all that I allowed to live,
I added hundreds more, who swore to give
Their lives, as soldiers to their conquering King.
I warned them what their arrogance would bring.
Thus, the northern kingdom of Nairi,
Fell. I turned and took the lands of Kirruri,
Taking tribute of the territory
Of Khalau, Zimira and Gilhi.
Bitani I had passed but Arardi
I seized and occupied. To pacify
My wrath, my countenance they made in stone.
A gesture they had thought would sure atone
Their crimes. The force of my disdain came down
Upon them fierce as flames. I burned their town,
Their temples I destroyed, their land I left
As dry as desert sand. Their heads I cleft
And piled in heaps that fronts the city gates,
The royal reward for he who vacillates.
Bubua, son of the Prefect, I found.
Alive, I staked him full upon the ground,
In honor of Istar his skin I flayed.
It was with my own sword, the holy blade
Of Dagan, god of fire, did I commit
This gift unto the gods. So it is writ
Upon this stone, that I did stretch his skin
Upon the wall, a cause to show chagrin
And my contempt. A Viceroy I had set
To rule the land since I had foiled their threat
Of insurrection. North I wheeled the might
Of my armed forces. Quaking at its sight,
In their discouragement, they chose retreat
And with a thousand chariots I beat
Them to submission. Atkum, Nithu and
Pilazi burned before my arms. In grand
Succession I had captured twenty towns
In their environs. Kingdoms fell, their crowns
Surrendered for their lives. From lands below

Pazate and Nipur I withdrew. In slow
Procession, I had moved five thousand men
To Commagene, across the Tigris, when
They brought to me intelligence. Suri,
In Bit-Khalope, had revolted. I
Had learned the people of Hamath had slain
Their governor, whom I had placed, to reign
In my behalf. Ahiyababa, son
Of Lamamana, they throned as king. None
Of my appointments had they left alive.
Not one who had betrayed me would survive.
To feed an army of this magnitude,
It must live off the land. With gratitude,
I know that Assur and our god named Yav
Provided tributes, gifts and spoils; who have
Supplied abundant sheep and oxen; who
Aggrandized my rich royalty; who knew
That by their help I could sustain and feed
That host at arms. By grace, I did proceed
Across the banks of Chaboras. I crossed
A thousand chariots, not one was lost.
Five thousand men of bow of spear and blade
Had crossed the river. All had been arrayed
In orderly arrangement to begin
The march against the coarsest rabble in
That lost, unholy city of Hamath.
As I drew near they realized what my wrath
Would bring. In fear, the multitudes had kneeled,
Submitting to my yoke. They had appealed
For mercy. Assur, Lord of earth subdued
Them, while my soldier had pursued
Their former masters. Soldiers, rebels, all
Were taken prisoners. I had made them crawl
To reach my feet. Some slain, some sightless, some
Left tongueless had I made. To my bosom
I pressed the wives of nobles who had failed
Allegiance to my crown. The nobles flailed
Their arms in grief as I had daughters sent
To fill my harems. Wives and daughters went
To marriage markets, sold as slaves, whose birth
Was from the multitudes, the crude, whose worth
Was only to have served, I sent away.

With one swift cut, to make them further pay,
Their sons were sent to guard my harems. I,
With loathing in my heart, did crucify
The rebels of Hamath. The city sacked,
Their temples toppled, burned, the bodies stacked
Four cubits high, their population lost,
What gains a man, reflecting what this cost,
To throw an arrow, that in flight, returns
Against the man who held the bow? What earns
A King's respect is victory not defeat.
Their king, I captured, who was heard to bleat
As he was dragged feet-first before my throne.
My foot, I placed upon his neck, his groan
And pleadings were to no avail. I need
Not tell thee, oh, great Ninip, I decreed
His death, to die a slow and painful end.
How long before my subjects comprehend,
That death is what they face when they rebel?
Fatigued am I that I again must quell
An uprising within the sovereignty
Of my own kingdom. I seek amity
Within the states of the Assyrian
Confederation. The barbarian,
Who live along the fringes of my realm,
Known as Aramaeans, overwhelm
The smaller settlements, which I must send
Contingents of my army to defend.
This bleeds the strength of my resolve to hold
The countries of my conquest in the mold
Which I and my forefathers held to be
Assyrian accountability.
Assur, the father of the gods, gave me
The power to make broad the boundary
Of the Assyrian domain. I cause
Great slaughter, cutting throats like sheep. The jaws
Of death are not the teeth of swords but steeds,
With prancing hoofs, that plunge into, and kneads
The welling blood of rebels with their own
Bespattered filth. Now, I and I alone
Have confiscated silver, gold with all
Their treasures I had caused to send. A pall
Of doom and dread I bring to those who rise

Against Assur-nasir-pal. They arise,
And I put down. I burn, destroy, I kill
And yet my subjects still maintain the will
For freedom from the yoke of my domain.
Exhausted are my troops. We seem to gain
Control in Sidon when rebellion shows
Itself in Babylon. Great Ninip, foes
Are many in my land. And, now I must
Prepare for yet another war. To thrust
Myself into the conflict. Will it end,
Or must I fight until my death? I spend
My years in long extended absences from
Nineveh. Body sore, my mind is numb.
I seek divine direction. I seek rest.
My sovereignty has been one in the quest
Of peace. I tire of war but, yet, once more
I fall full force, as I have done before,
Upon those fools who choose to lift the yoke
Of my most sovereign rule. I will evoke
Upon their minds the cruelty of past
Engagements. What my rule, across this vast,
Extensive Fertile Crescent land will bring.
I wait, oh, great Ninip. I wait to sing
Thy praises in this house of worship or
Upon the field of battle. I implore
Thee Ninip, all my prayers do not ignore.

Lynn W. Petty

The Bitter-Sweet Of Christmas

A pervading warmth wraps the heart at Christmas time.
It comes a messenger of peace; a recall of home;
The evidence of forgotten joys;
Recalling memories of those old friends
Gone from us and, loved ones far away.
The most tender of mysteries, it permeates society, displaying
An underlying oneness for all human kind.
A time when labor turns to love, fatigue evolves to festivity.
There are weeks involved in making ready for a single day's event:
Decorating the house; selecting the tree; shopping for gifts and food;
Setting the table with silver and china;
The house warmed by fireplace flames; the laughter of children;
The exchanging of gifts by the tree; dinner.
Suddenly over, family departed, the house becomes a vacuum,
An echo of tomorrow's emptiness.
The day, added to the yesterdays of all our years,
Is recorded in memory as a genial recollection.
There is no measurement that weighs the hours of preparation
For the approaching holidays. There is no holiday that leaves
One with such a glow of nostalgic reflections as does Christmas Day.

Lynn W. Petty

The Bridal Chamber Of Thought

From where do the words of poetry come?
Where, in the bridal chamber of the brain,
Is poetic thought conceived?
Could it be that concept is impregnated
By a positive, receptive, attitude of a word,
Resulting in a creative impression then, a unit of meaning,
Becoming recognized in its emergent form?
We do not know.

Where, in the belly of the brain, is the dilatable
Expanse for thematic gestation?
What are the propelling elements that add
To the progressive embryonic change of conception,
From implantation through the rudimentary of imagery,
Unto the weeks or months of development?
That, perhaps, we do know.

Sentiment, truth, love, beauty, grace, power, tragedies,
All manifold struggles, aspirations, and passions of modern life
Become the thought-fetus, shaping a viable structure into a body
Of language, carried and born through the author's
Labor-pains of Creativity.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

The Creation Of A Single Composition

It has been said; poetry is nothing more than placing
The proper word in its proper place.
How simply stated for the effort of a single composition!
Beneath the primeval of our subconscious mind
Lies the clay-material of all creation,
The strata of spiritual sedimentation,
Laid down before our birth.
From this wet plastic matter comes the substance
Of our imagination, the foundation
For the architecture of our reflections.
Sculpting images by the vocabulary used,
The writer casts, molds and shapes
The verbs and nouns into their final stage
Of fluid acquiescence.
Then, the poet, by placing each word
Into its proper place, gives power, vision and speech
To every inanimate object,
Translating the infinite invisible,
Into sacred symbols,
From the potter's mud of thought.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

The Dark Of My Remembrances

What draws us back to our childhood when we
Have been assured that we cannot return?
Yet, by some force, it pulled me constantly,
Much like the spawning fish which swim and churn
The river rapids to the primal of
Their hatching place. For years I thought of that
Old house; its musty smell and gabled roof.
Its only access was a single flat
Pathway that crooked and curved through bush and trees;
Where treetops bent together shadowing
My way. It was a humid day, no breeze
To cool my face as I, perspiring,
From fear and dread reluctantly stood on
The threshold of those woods. I took a step,
Then two, then three, by then it was foregone
My destiny was cast, my heart had leapt
Into my throat, my mind was cloaked in fear.
It seemed, I could not see, as though my fright
Had blinded me. I thought that I could hear
A voice, confusion reigned within my plight.
I lost my way, as I had done before
When I was just a child. Surrounded by
The forest murk, enveloped to the core
With fright not knowing if I'd live or die,
I kept on going though, I had no choice,
That force kept pulling me, I could not stop.
Again, I heard that sound, it was a voice,
A child's voice calling me, I stood atop
An old tree stump to have a better view.
I thought I saw a figure there behind
A hanging branch. Not able to see through
The sheath of leaves, I felt the more inclined
To dart ahead but, dimly through the gloom
I saw an arm, it beckoned me to come
In its direction, barely had I room
To move, I moved with anxious care, though numb
Of mind, I thought Beware! Who's there? Who's there?
I cried aloud. As I approached where I
Had thought the child had stood, he ran elsewhere,

Or so it seemed. Transfixed! Much like a fly
Caught in a web, I feared to move. From deep
Within the dark of my remembrances,
A flood of memories began to sweep
Across my mind, leaving no allowances
For rationality of reason let
Alone of any thought. The forest floor,
The ceiling branches of the trees were set
In frantic motion, leaving me a door
To see that most alarming, dreaded thing.
All foliage expanded with such speed,
Away from me, it left me there to swing,
Upon a mental thread, in desperate need
To find my sense of gravity. Just like
That fly ensnared within that spider's web,
I hung in space, afraid that it would strike,
I made no motion, waiting till the ebb,
Of my confused and terror stricken mind,
To open up my eyes to see upon
The near yet, distant hill, that clear defined
Profile of that huge spider house. Thereon,
In silent wait, upon the hill, there sat
That house, just waiting for my slightest move.
Its bulging roof protruded over flat
Unblinking windowed eyes, all held above
By legs of colonnades, in readiness
For any smallest move, that might alert
That thing to action. In my helplessness
I knew I must regain my strength, exert
My mental powers, overcome my pain,
When, once again, I heard him call to me.
I felt my aching muscles pull and strain,
The sweat was pouring down, I could not see
From where he beckoned me. I burst my bonds,
Adrenaline had flamed my fears, I freed
Myself to crash and stumble over grounds
Of stubble weed, of branch and bush, with speed
I had not known. Like a hunted deer,
In sightless frenzy, caused by mortal wounds,
I ran, like it would run, from what was near,
Its fatal destiny. His voice resounds
Within my ear, as though I heard its sound

Before. The smell of rotting forest burned
My lungs and nostrils. As I reached that mound
Where he was standing, I collapsed and turned
From want of air, exhausted at his feet.
The forest was as still as stone. I touched
What I had thought would be his hand. A sheet
Of anger covered me for I had clutched
A quaking branch that I had thought was he.
I lay upon my stomach, clasped within
The grasp of disbelief. Beneath that tree,
I cursed that boy for my complete chagrin.
I cursed him once again and, this day too.
I twisted round, upon the ground and leaned
Against that white birch tree. Shall I pursue
This senseless enterprise? What have I gleaned
From this emotional distress? What shall
I do? Do I go on? Do I return?
Return? I knew, against all rationale,
I had no voice. It lifted me with stern,
Unyielding strength and pushed me up the trail.
My physical and mental state undone,
Not knowing what my journey would entail,
I knew that I was with something, someone.
I trudged along reluctantly until
I reached the bottom of the hill. How hard
The climb. Despite the heat I felt a chill
Run down my spine. I must be on my guard
For what may come. I felt my heartbeat pound
And pound, how still, how still. As I came near
The stairs onto the porch, the door swung round
And opened, swinging wide, he sat as clear,
As are my memories of this old place.
You, there! Stop right there! Stop! I cried aloud.
That's strange, I thought I recognized his face.
I would not let my memory becloud
The reason of my being there. What sway
Of force had caused me to return to what
I hated most? I knew this house, the way
To all the rooms, he could not hide or shut
Me out. The smell of dampness filled the rooms,
Discoloration stained the walls from years
Of seeping rain. The air so strong with fumes

Of rotting wood decay, the reek brought tears.
He bolted from the room and disappeared.
Before I knew, I too was well inside.
I ran across the front room rug, I cleared
The kitchen door and through the window wide
I saw him standing, with his dog, below
The old oak tree, where I had stood like he.
My brain was spinning. Staggering, as though
A drunk, I wavered, moved unsteadily.
I staggered toward the entry door, and there,
As it had swung wide open, it swung closed.
My fear had bowed to panic, more aware
Of sounds and noises, feeling more exposed
I tread more carefully where I might go.
While contemplating my next watchful move,
I saw a toy, I made so long ago.
A paper boat I pushed along the groove,
Between the rug and floor. The color blue,
Dyed in the rug, had been my bounty main.
I clipped together paperclips and drew
Them like a train or made them like a chain.
My loneliness had been my childhood's bane.
When I had entered the front door I saw
The boy at play. A world of his domain.
I played with these same toys. What do I draw
From this? I thought. Awakened from my daze,
I heard a jolting noise from up above.
I sprinted up the staircase, through a maze
Of cobwebs, down the hall to the alcove,
Into the bedroom of my childhood days.
I hated every aspect of this place.
I hated all my childhood, just as well.
I pulled the shade down from the window case
To give me light, the room seemed like a cell.
I raised the window for some air, how warm,
How stuffy, not a breath to breathe. I blamed
My mother for my wrath, my mind a storm
Of fierce anxieties which had inflamed
My childish mind to conjure up all those
Imaginings that haunted me when young.
She left me by myself. What to suppose,
Alone inside that spider house? It wrung

The life from me to know that she was gone.
What could I do, for I was only five.
My bedroom window faced the front yard lawn
I thought what evil could he now contrive?
The air was still and close, how faint I felt.
I closed my eyes and prayed for some relief.
Humidity was high, I thought I'd melt
When suddenly, what seemed beyond belief,
A Shadow of some hidden power touched
The very seat of my most inner self.
I sensed a presence. Terrified, I clutched
The headboard of the bed. I felt myself
Immersed in haunting memories. Dark clouds
Of apprehension surged about my brain.
Immobilized, anchored to the floor, shrouds,
Of fear and dread spread over me, no grain
Of strength remained. It was as if I died,
As though my soul had lived another life,
And looked upon its own gravesite. I tried
To turn, and turning, saw a face so rife
With sadness yet, beneath it there was glee;
His arms outstretched; his tears were streaming down
His cheeks; his countenance, a spirit free;
He leapt into my arms, two spirits thrown
Together, spinning back through soundless space,
Two spirits of the same embrace, two lives
Retraced; our childhood intertwined, through grace,
Our childhood interlaced. The force that drives
Existence drove the two of us as one.
'Love me don't hate me, ' he cried in despair.
Before he spoke, before he had begun,
I felt my wounded heart was in repair.
'Open your heart that I might abide there.'
He pleaded tearfully that I might see,
To love, forgive, to recognize, to care,
To know that he is me and I am he.
I do, I will! I said with sobbing voice.
I do, I will! I said again. Then, through
My tears I asked his name, with great rejoice,
'My name is your name; I thought that you knew, '
He said while smiling. 'I am that childhood
You hate and revile.' I cupped my hands around

His face and deeply gazed into the good
Of his compassionate eyes. There, I found,
Upon the screen of time, an image, yes,
A vision of my mother's face. An air
Of sadness filled her eyes, as if distress
Had overcome her, leaving her to bear
The guilt I placed upon her blameless soul.
I saw that she had left me, true; that she
Had worked those hours, too. Then, on that scroll
Of endless time, that separates, what we
Call life and death, I saw a brighter light
Beyond her smile and, knew we understood.
I sat upon the bed and, thought what might
This whole thing mean, forgetting that he stood
Before me. When I looked into my two
Cupped hands, my hands were cupped with nothingness.
Was it a fantasy? Could it be true?
Yet, I remember his last words; express
His meaning by his gestures; heard him speak.
His words were fused into my willing heart:
The whole experience had left me weak.
Remembering his words, which still impart
The balm to my old wounds and infant years.
'Hold no deep hatred, not even disdain.'
Which pierced my soul and brought a flood of tears,
'Love those who hurt you, release the past pain.'
I opened up the kitchen door and stepped
Into my present life, to walk the road
Of expectation and belief, accept
My childhood's past for what it was and, strode
That lonely pathway, through that little stand
Of trees and bush that I had dreaded so.
'Did you enjoy revisiting your grand
Old house, upon that hill? That old 'chateau, '
That terrorized your dreams? 'Oh, yes I did, '
Responding to the question from my wife.
It opened up my eyes. I saw amid
My anxious fears the 'truth' which, banished strife,
And all the infantile conflicts of mind.
We talked until we reached the car. I glanced
Back toward the house and saw him smile his kind
And fresh-faced smile. From down the road I chanced

Upon an old farmhand who happened by.
He asked me why I stopped by this old farm.
Explaining what my reasons were, and why,
He said, 'A shame that you should come, No harm
I guess, to break the news to you but, son,
That house burned down in nineteen eighty one.'

Lynn W. Petty

The Dark Side Of Love

There is a dark side of love,
Love that suffocates with
Twisting vines of petaled tendrils,
Twining round the one who's loved
Until he gasps for breath to breathe.

Where are the reasons that we love
The one we love?
The bold and reckless flights
Of youthful fancy,
The rebuke of dress decorum,
The revolt against the mold
Of social edicts and establishment,
And, all the other things combined
With which we fell in love?
Are these enwrapped
Beneath the vining weight
Of leafy love?

Love expands the heart,
Gives one space to reach.
Love energizes hope,
Extends one's dreams.
Love is freedom of the soul
To soar on winged imagination,
To attain one's own.
If love endeavors to restrain,
Remold, the character of the beloved,
Then love has lost its vital force.
It lies entombed
In thick entangled weaves
Of creeping domination
And control.

Lynn W. Petty

The Evolution Of Belief

When I was just a child
I knelt and prayed, without a question,
To a god as distant and, as meaningless
To me as any far-off star.

When I was young,
There was no need for God,
Since I thought I was undefeatable.
I held within my grasp the world,
And challenged life.

As I grew older, toward middle-age,
I saw in almost everything,
A Reality, an inexplicable Correctness,
The essence of all being as One.

When I became an elder, it was then
I recognized the essence of Reality,
And Correctness, as nothing else but
God.

Lynn W. Petty

The Force Of His Words

South Pacific, 1944

The skeletal fingers of dawn folded back the
cover of darkness revealing the machinery of war.
Battlewagons, Destroyers, Troop-transports,
Supply and Hospital ships blackened the lagoon.
Sixteen inch gun shells split the sky, with the sound
of tearing canvas, as projectiles passed overhead.
As if in agony the earth writhed and collapsed
as the explosives ripped into the sub-strata,
exposing its connective tissue.
In desolation, the island lay scourged as the sea soothed
its torment by filling its wounds with water and sand
through the action of the healing waves.
Landing craft hugged the sides of the ship as the 81st Army
Division disembarked. Clinging to the bulkhead nets, they
climbed cautiously down into the open maw of the small
craft beneath them.
As a young lieutenant swung his legs over the side,
I heard him say:

'I hope the war lasts one more year.
By then, I'll have paid off my farm.'

Men were falling from enemy fire as the first wave of boats
emptied their human cargo.
We picked up the wounded.
The lieutenant had a large hole in his chest,
he had been shot from behind.
His words, like bullets fired, could not be recalled.
His GI insurance paid off the farm
he would never see again.

Lynn W. Petty

The Front Fence Gate

I wonder if a front fence gate reveals
The attitude of he who dwells therein,
Or is it just a pretense that conceals
The inner truth of tendency within?

Remembering when I was young, I'd go
From home to school, return the self same way
At school's day end, so many years ago.
I recognized each gate as my display,
a measured distance from my house to 'there.'
But, through that recognition, they took on
A character, a quality, an air,
A personality, a face upon
A blank and seemingly benign fence gate.
Through childhood fantasy, as I would walk
The curbless road to home, or navigate
Around or through the puddles, gates would talk
To me in silent comprehension. They
Coveyed a warmth or warning with their style.
That wrought iron gate with bars like pikes would say,
With deep foreboding frowns and shadowed smile,
The countenance of Satan, its design,
'Beware, for reasons of your soul's despair! '
I saw his face, too shaded to define,
But certain of that awful grin, from where
I stood, while peeking through those iron gray bars.
I saw the visage of our hamlet's rich
Old recluse, Thaddeus Von Eldergars.
My heart would skip a beat; migrating twitch
of trepidation coursed my spine and burst
upon my brain, exploding energy
To churn my legs to motion. I was cursed,
I knew, by Beelzebub. All lethargy
Had disappeared as speed was my intent.
I passed all other gates without address,
As reach and range was more expedient.
And then, my gate, a visual caress
That cleared the fear from my fear-clouded sight.
I ran beneath the arch-like trellis dome,

And threw the latch and bolt. Displacing fright,
I felt a surge of valor, I was home.
But, what about the question first above
As asked? Are gates symbolic of the man,
Or was our Thaddeus a creature of
Our mind? Did life collapse upon his plan?
Was avarice his only enterprise?

When I became adult I sought to solve
The question of his being; analyze,
Examine all I found that might involve
A man whose cynicism knew no bounds.
At his demise, I purchased, sight unseen,
His personal estate, which still dumbfounds,
Bewilders those so eager to demean.
For what I had astonished me. In awe
I read his soulful journal with a sad
and mournful heart. Not wishing to withdraw
But, living made it so, his loss forbade
His interest when his grief replaced his wife.
Maintaining social consciousness, aware
Of fiscal maintenance, our hamlet's strife,
He formed a special banker's trust to care
For children who excelled to higher grades;
To further their desires, foster their
Careers. His generosity pervades
The very substance of our village life.
Even I, a beneficiary.
Meticulous, his register was rife
With names of those he helped. Legionary
By their count; anonymously done from
Behind that dark and ominous front gate.
Within his will he spoke an axiom,
A covenant, bequeathing his estate
To those who would appreciate his best.
To all the children he bestowed his ground,
His property, for which he made behest
upon the elders of this town. He bound
them to a promise that they raze his old
Brick house, eradicating memories
Too doleful to exist. 'This land, ' he told
Them from his will, 'Must have amenities

That cause the laughter, joy and, cheer that spring
From children hard at play. This acreage will
Become a park, a playground, garlanding
The name of my demised young wife, Joanille.'

Before the razing of the premises,
I moved the gate, installed it for my own.
In place, it hardly looked the nemesis
That I remember when so young. Unknown
To those who walk the walkway to my door,
It is a gate without identity.
To him, a camouflage, that heretofore
gave cover to his liberality.
To me, a screen to hide the soul of truth;
A veil of iron to cloak his silent grace;
To guard an altruist, who lived without a face.

Lynn W. Petty

The Goal

What is the goal of poetry?
To wake man and society,
That power narrows man's concern.
Words light the way, as man's lantern.

Lynn W. Petty

The Grand Scheme Of Things

How important I feel, indomitable, invincible.
Then, I read they found a nebula; a white illuminate;
An interfuse of gaseous light, hung from the galactic ceiling.

Deep within the deepest dark of darkest night is the forming
Of a new star, seven thousand light years away,
Its gas-cloud formation towering six trillion miles.
I, with an average weight of one-hundred-seventy-five pounds;
Standing five feet ten and one-half inches tall; a life span
Approximately, seventy-five years, have suddenly been struck
With the realization of how supercilious I am in the grand scheme
Of things.

Lynn W. Petty

The Honeymoon

We stepped across the threshold, she and I,
Her body seemed so weightless pressed to mine.
The setting sun had haloed her dark hair,
A tender, loving warmth had filled her eyes.
Her words had rhapsodized within my mind,
'Alone, my own, alone for all of time.'
Sweet sounds of marriage filled those vacant rooms,
Our joy reverberated wall to wall.
Life's visions, hopes, its promises fulfilled
Through expectations of our youthful dreams.
The day had passed, now evening turned to dark,
She wore a black and lacy negligee.
I lifted her, I held her to my chest,
Her yielding body trembled with assent.

Holding each other that reverent night,
Smell of fresh linen, soft patter of rain.
Merging of flesh, indissolubly one,
Piercing the veil to the sanctum of life.
Soaring to heights on a thermal of love,
Spatial dimensions unmeasured by time.

A vast, sweet rush of silence covered us,
Enveloped, intertwining souls rose up
Ascending on a silver cord of bliss.
The night had spoken, dawn had broken clear,
Expectancy had filled the sunlit sky.

Lynn W. Petty

The Language Of Love

It was a courageous beginning. A celebration
Of two young lives whose hearts spoke
With clarity of voice, overspeaking creed bound
Conceits intent to inveigh against their marriage.
Holding hands, reciting vows, attuning
All their passion into harmony itself, they rose
Above the swamps and quagmire of provincialism.
She is Jewish, he Italian.
Between them the Moloch of traditional credulity
And doctrinal statements merged into a single vital
Principal: Love, in its intrinsic nature, has no potential
For cultural clashes.
God speaks the language of love.
Religion (beyond the confines of one's own closet)
Culture and Creed are the vernacular of man,
For which God has neither tongue nor ear.

Lynn W. Petty

The Last Abencerrage

The Last Abencerrage

It was an age that writers call "Of yore."
When honor, truth and chivalry were core
Ingredients of men of gallantry,
Whose oath reflected his integrity.
Surrounded by insignias of grand
And legendary regal sway, demand
Was placed upon them for their fealty,
Without regard they swore their loyalty,
Their duty and allegiance, by their sword,
Their blood and, by the merit of their word.

It was within those semi-brutal days,
When Spain fell captive to the Crescent ways,
This story of romance and trust begins.
Each knight of honor had his disciplines
Pertaining to his conduct, whether tilt
And tourney or at war, his actions built
The faith and admiration of his friends,
As well as enemies. Renown extends
Beyond one's own community by deeds
And acts of probity, which then precedes
The man and, so it was with these. Two creeds,
Two doctrines, both of which contained the seeds
Of bravery, justice, courtesy and firm
Reliance on integrity. A term
Not taken lightly by a man of worth,
A man of virtue and of higher birth.
A well-tried Christian warrior whose command,
As military governor, was stand
And hold the frontier post of Antiquera,
From within the castle of Allora.
Rodrigo de Narvaez, the Alcayde.
With fifty well trained men, a small cadre,
Whose charge was to maintain the peace along
The warlike kingdom of Granada. Long
Their adversaries were the cavaliers
Of Abencerrage who had for years

Devised heroic enterprises to
Harass the Christian garrison, who knew
The prominence of their opposing force.
The house of Abencerrage was source
Of pride and honor in the Moslem world.
With banners waving, Crescent flags unfurled,
Arrayed in noble splendor, Arab sons
Of Islam passed in proud parade. Legions
Of young would emulate their gallant grace,
Their art and skill of horsemanship, embrace
Their valor, both at combat and at games,
Pretend that they were knights and don their names.

It was a balmy, breezeless evening when
Rodrigo formed a small patrol of ten
Well-armed, well-mounted men who rode
With him along the by-ways and the road
Most traveled by the Moorish scouts. They kept
To the ravines and hollow ways. Adept
Were they at cautious silence, plus the moon
Revealed the glitter of their armor. Soon
They came upon the fork at roadway's end.
Rodrigo's orders were to split and send
Two groups of five to ride each branch. If they
Were set upon by hostile force, relay
Their danger by a signal, which would warn
The other with a loud blast from their horn.
Rodrigo and his four men rode the main
Branch, while the other group was to maintain
Surveillance from the shadows of a grove.
Not long in their concealment, where they strove
To hide themselves, they heard a murmured
Voice in song. Unto themselves they whispered,
"What fool is this who rides without affright
In such defiant times? " Then, in the light
Of the full moon, as he advanced, in awe,
Upon a dapple-gray, the Christians saw
A cavalier, a Moor, of gracious air
And poise. He wore a tunic with a flare
Of gold, an outer wrap of damask red,
And to his side a scimitar, the dread
Of every Spanish Christian knight who fought

The Moor since Roderick the Goth. Light caught
The shield upon his arm, the two pronged lance,
Held loosely at the ready, not a glance,
And still in song, he dropped the reins across
The horse's neck to drink at ease. The loss
Of lunar light, within the grove, had hid
The Christian group from view. The stream, amid
The rocks, had formed a pool from which to drink.
The Christians gave the Moor no time to think,
And thought by rushing him, by their surprise,
Surround him, they could take him as their prize.
No men were more mistaken in their act.
In seconds he was ready to react.
He gathered up the reins and wheeled his steed,
His buckler braced, he couched his lance, and freed
Himself from all obstructions, there he sat,
In fixed position ready for combat.
He bristled like a castle on his horse,
Awaiting them to take their fatal course.
With care they circled him; were loath to come
To an affray, or cause a great maelstrom,
Which might prove fatal to their treasured catch.
The Moor now spoke, "Not five of you are match
For me but, just to make it fair, if you
Are lurkers of the road you may review
Your situation and disperse yourselves,
Or come you all at once. For he who delves
In robbery shall die a robber's death.
Or if you are true knights and breathe a breath
Of honesty, who seek your fame, singly
I shall meet you in succession." Warily,
The cavaliers communed and then advanced.
One said, "I find that I am most entranced
By such excessive words of boast and pride,
When fairly in our power, if applied,
By virtue of our numbers, we could take
You in our custody. We undertake
To grant, as courtesy, and not refuse
Your right to your defense. Your boasts amuse
Us. So, I say, oh, valiant Moor, defend
Yourself." His scowl, like dark clouds that portend
Disaster, froze upon his face. He wheeled

And took his distance, couched his lance. The field,
Again, was lighted by the moon to see
The horse and outline of his enemy.
He put the spur unto his steed and made
Straight at his challenger. With buckler splayed,
The Christian fell, the Moor wheeled round and called
Out for another. Young, unbridled, galled
By what he saw, the younger of the troop
Rode forth to meet this brazen Moor. The group
Decried his youthful pride, as foolishness.
Determined to display his dauntlessness,
The lad cried out his challenge and his curse.
The answer to the youth was short and terse.
"Then, die, " the Moor replied, and leapt ahead
In full gallop, then veered to sweep, instead,
The boy from his own saddle. "Three are left! "
With injured pride, his mocking words had cleft
The hearts of those remaining. "Damn you, Moor."
He heard from in the shadows, "Be you sure,
That you shall not escape." From out the dark,
The Christian charged the Moor full on. An arc
Of light reflected from his unsheathed blade.
The Moor stood firm his ground. The Christian made
His first pass-by and missed the Moor by far.
The Moor swung round and, with his scimitar,
He met the knight in mid career. The clang,
The awful noise, of steel on steel that rang,
Throughout the grove and field, continued till
The Christian fell. The Christian knight lay still.

The two remaining of the five forgot
Their courtesy compact. They sought to plot
The Moor's demise by rushing him by two.
Both charged at once upon the Moor. He drew
Them in for close contact. He parried first,
The thrust of one, with buckler he dispersed
The lunges of the thirsty lance for blood.
Within the tight confusion he withstood
A wound inflicted by the other knight.
In shock he dropped his lance. Pretending flight,
He left the scene of battle. Hotly pressed,
He lured the two some distance. In their quest

To capture or to kill, they whipped their horse
To fullest stride. As if a single force,
The Moor and dapple-gray wheeled short about,
An act the Moorish horsemen called "rollout";
The gray rose up on two hind legs and turned
To face the other way. Before the two had learned
The Moor's intent, or time to turn around,
The Moor swung down, and lifted from the ground
His lance. He calmly took his stance and faced
The two. They realized they, not he, were chased,
Although they were behind him. Not to test
The unforeseen, they wisely thought it best
To sound a warning from the horn before
Their next encounter. Charging to the fore,
His knowing what the blast of horn would mean,
Engaged the knights. Arriving on the scene,
Rodrigo saw three men stretched out upon
The ground. The other two, committed on
The Moor's destruction. Stunned, in disbelief,
And struck with admiration, he held brief
Their confrontation, called upon his men
To cease combat, and asked that only when
The Moor recovered breath and strength that he
Accept a contest with the Alcayde.
The Moor accepted the more equal match,
And set upon his rival with dispatch.
Rodrigo's life, at times, was in some doubt.
The Moor kept up the challenge all throughout
The trial of battle. Calling on his skill
And strength the Moor raised up to make his kill,
But faltered in his saddle. Weary from
His past occurring fights, his body numb,
Impaired from loss of blood, he made his last
Assault, a violent thrust of lance, which passed
Through the Alcayde's shield. The lance and shield
Dropped to the ground. The Moor refused to yield.
With simple wield of blade the Captain caused
A wound upon the Moor's forearm. He paused
Just long enough to seize him by his arm
And dragged him from his saddle. To disarm
Him they, together, fell to earth. His knee
Upon his breast, the Captain made him see

Resistance was in vain, "The choice is yours,
To live or be a victim of these wars.
My dagger point is at your throat, your life
Is in my hands, submit, and end this strife,
For you are now my prisoner." " Rather I
Should lose my life than liberty. To die
Is far less grievous, " was the Moor's reply.
"Less grievous, yes, if you were captured by
Another, other than a man as I."
With clemency, the Captain bound his thigh
Wound, tied his arm with leather strap, upraised
Him to his saddle. Weak, fatigued, and dazed,
The Moor had acquiesced, without protest.
Riding side by side, riding two abreast,
The Captain braced the Moor upright. Impressed
Still with his fearlessness, the Captain dressed
His injuries with balm and fresh cut gauze.
Days passed, the Captain asked, "What might be cause
For such profound dejection. Judged are you
A friend, not as my captive. I must view
Your sad demeanor as an injury
To spirit and your heart. The luxury
To roam the castle grounds at your free will
Has not yet lifted you from gloom. Yet, still,
I think your loss of vigor could be grief
That preys upon your soul. You find relief
When you confide your secret in a friend.
You have no cause to fear, I will defend
What you disclose, and promise you my word,
Upon my faith, your words shall not be heard
By other than myself." "I shall disclose
What vexes me and of my fear that grows
The more with every night and day, " the Moor replied.
"My wounds are slight. Your kindness to provide
Me with all comforts, as an honored guest,
Denies the meaning of the word depressed,
And robs my heart and mind of all the gloom
Of my defeat and capture. I presume
That your civility is not alone,
Respect. It goes beyond what foes are known
To do to captive enemies. Before
I tell you more, I seek that we explore

What causes such gentility and why
It should apply to me." "Yes, to deny
My gratitude is to deny my son, "
The Captain said. "Recall, will you, the one
Who cursed and challenged you that fateful night?
You could have killed him by your skill and might,
The field of contact was so close and tight,
You could have pierced him with your lance, or smite
Him with your scimitar, instead, you swept
Him from his saddle. May I ask, what kept
You from completing his destruction? " "By
The timbre of his voice, I knew the lie
Of his bravado, just a youthful tongue.
What glory in the death of one so young? "
The Moor explained. "So, that is why you treat
Me as a guest? " he asked. "No. I entreat
You, noble Moor, believe me when I say,
My admiration goes beyond what may
Appear as gratefulness. Your chivalry,
Your daring, and of course your bravery,
Demands respect from me, as well, as all
My men. However, my dear friend, I call
Upon you to continue with your tale,
For I am curious. It seems, I fail
To understand your state of petulance,
Or your melancholy state of silence.
Your countenance tells me what you're about.
I ask you, please, that you do not leave out
A single word of it, " the Captain said.
"My state of mind is not because I dread
My obvious captivity. I seek
To make that clear. If I appear as weak,
It is because of what is in my heart.
I hardly know precisely where to start.
But, start I will with what lies in my soul.
To see my bride, Xarisa, was my goal.
Oh, that my blood were water, she athirst
How would I shed it gladly, if but first
It touched her lips, before it reached the sand,
If she and I were in some desert land.
Throughout these sleepless watches, when I lay
So wakeful, through those hours, dusk to day,

Desiring, only what I may not see,
In this one thing, Fate would be kind to me.
I shall commence when I was just a child.
Granada was where I was domiciled.
My name, Abendaraez. My family name,
Of noble but unfortunate acclaim,
Abencerrage. You doubtless heard the feigned
Indictment charged against my race. Arraigned,
But, ultimately proved to be untrue.
They nonetheless beheaded thirty, who,
By blood were all my kinship." Then, in tears
The Moor had dropped his head. " The years
Have not erased that terrible day from mind,
Though innocent, our name had been maligned.
Our plea for amnesty had been declined.
My father and my uncle were resigned
To banishment, for treasonable acts
Against the realm, regardless of the facts.
Assuring that his son was out of harm,
Dispatching me with haste beyond the arm
Of his political antagonist,
My father asked a friend that he assist
In my protection, raise me as his own.
Because he had no children, I was shown

All kindness and affection, treating me
As if I were his own, to the degree,
I grew up thinking he was really such.
I had a proper education, much
Of which was horsemanship and use of arms,
The classical, and all its subtle charms.
He was the Alcayde of Cartama,
A great warrior, whose name was Al-Kama.
It was a few years after I arrived
They had a child, who had survived
The hardships of a fortress life. I grew
Up thinking of her as a sister. Through
The years I watched her bloom unfolding, leaf
By leaf, protecting her from any thief
Of her affections. Like the morning rose,
The dew has kissed, each moment would disclose
A fresh naivety. I had never thought

The growing passion that I felt was fraught
With more than fondness or fraternal care.
Remember, as an infant, not aware
That I was not Al-Kama's son, I could
Not understand my sentiments. How should
I know, since we grew up to think that we
Were siblings? Then, one day, while secretly
In conversation, inadvertently,
I learned that I, that we, were joyfully,
Not of the same parental lineage.
The Alcayde had said the privilege
Of my continued residence must end,
That he would hope that I would comprehend
When he apprised me of the truth, as loath
As he would be to break his promised oath.
He spoke these words to his most trusted aid,
That I could not forever hide, evade
The fact of my proscribed, unlucky race.
At any other time, I could not face
The devastation he conveyed. But, now
The thought that we were not related, how
Like magic, were his words. With winged feet
I flew to find Xarisa. We would meet
Beneath the recess of the jasmine tree.
I ran to her with all alacrity,
For in an instant ardent love replaced
The brotherly affection I embraced
For her so many years. Now, all made sense.
No longer living under false pretense,
My heart was throbbing almost to excess,
I sought her in the garden to confess
The conversation I had heard. I found
Her waiting by the fountain side. The sound
Of one's own name as spoken through the lips
Of one's own love makes all of life's hardships
Seem frivolous. 'Abendaraez, ' her voice,
Was sweetly soft. I had no other choice
But, sweep her in my arms. She responded
With a sisterly embrace, then chided
Me for my leaving her to sit alone.
In haste, I told her what I heard. Her tone
Of voice had changed. 'Alas, ' she cried aloud,

'Our happiness is at an end! ' A cloud
Of desperation overcame my soul.
Because we can no longer play the roll
Of brother, sister you will cease to have
A love for me? Her words were like a salve
To my already wounded heart. 'Dear
Abendaraez, I too have been unclear
Of my affections.' Gently, she withdrew
From my embrace, 'But, what if people knew
Of our new found relationship? It would
Be misconceived and not be understood,
No longer could we be permitted thus
To be together.' 'Just the two of us
Now know, ' I said. 'Your father's aid was sworn
To silence; words sufficient to forewarn
Him of the consequence of his wrong deed,
Should he disclose a word of it.' Indeed,
The fact remains there was a change of lives,
Our lives. When we did meet we hid ourselves
Beneath the hanging jasmine vines, for fear
A touch or smile to someone might appear
Beyond the limits of a sibling's love.
If I would sit beside her she would move
Away becoming silent and withdrawn.
My heart became a prey to doubts, all drawn
From fears attending all true love. Regret
Was what I had for telling her. The threat
Of losing her entirely would be worse
Than living as we were, and yet, adverse,
As it may seem, I would not make it true.
It seemed that matters would continue through
Between us, as they were, her father learned,
From orders from the king, that he had earned
Command of the great fort of Coyn, which lies
Along the Christian front; to analyze
The Christian army's strength, and to advise
The king; remove his family, and to mobilize
His troops with all dispatch. He signified
That I was to remain but I decried
His judgment. 'Dare you question my resolve? ' 'In
anger he demanded. 'You involve
Yourself in my decisions? ' I declared,

That I should not be left behind. He stared
At me, ferocious was his glare. "Concealed
Have I the secret of your birth. To shield
You from potential death, your father asked
Me for protection, as a friend I masked
Your true identity." "I know the truth, "
I said. "But know you too that since my youth
I loved Xarisa. Leaving me will not
Diminish my emotion. What you wrought
Is of your own conduct. Our hearts entwined
Themselves with our maturity. What kind
Of father would impede his daughter's joy? "
"Precisely, that is what I would destroy, "
He said, "by leaving you behind at this
Location I would cause her to dismiss
Her ill-considered thinking. I have been
Remiss, I will agree, I had not seen
These signs before. Not now, not ever
Will I allow you to be seen with her,
Nor to allow her to become enthralled
By one whose father's name will be recalled,
Throughout all time, as traitor. I have warned
You! " with his hand upon his sword, his eyes
Were slits and shown with hate. "I would advise
You not to follow, do you understand?
We leave within the week and I demand
That you refrain from further intercourse
With me or with my household. To enforce
This, I will stand a guard at your room's door."
"I understand your words, but I implore
You, fill your heart with kindness, do not tear
Our hearts asunder, have indeed no fear,
Of my respect or love for you. I plead
With you, " I said. "I speak no more, take heed, "
He said. Before he called the guard to post,
I slipped away to find Xerisa. Lost
In my depression, anguished, I revealed
This blow to her. "Our destiny is sealed,
We part forever. I shall never see
You more. His guards will guard you rigidly.
Your beauty and his wealth will soon attract
Some happy rival, I will be, in fact,

Forgotten." She reproached my want of trust
And pledged eternal constancy. "You must
Believe, " she said. "Between my doubting pain,
My hopelessness, not able to contain
My fears, Xarisa, moved by my despair,
Agreed to have a secret union. Dare
We do this, never entered in my mind.
With our espousals made, I was to find,
By warning of a trusted aid, the guards
Were ordered to my door. Love has rewards."
Returning undetected, to my room,
It soon became a stony silent tomb.
Our last departing words became a vow,
That should her father leave, and still avow
That I am yet unwelcome, she would write
Me word from Coyn and send it overnight
By messenger, so no one would suspect.
Her only thought to shield me and protect
Me from her father's wrath. The very day
That followed our espousals, an array
Of servants, footmen, aids and knights, began
Assembling in a line to caravan
Across the hostile frontier lines to Coyn.
Al-Kama's words were to my guards to join
The caravan when it was far beyond
Their view. What could I do, how to respond?
Remaining at Cartama, pacified
In spirit by our secret bond, denied
The presence of Xarisa, aimlessly,
I wandered through her chambers, anxiously
Awaiting word. I visited the well
In which we had delighted. With the smell
Of jasmine wafting through the air, it filled
My heart and soul with mournfulness. I willed
Myself to live and not lose hope. At length,
Before I lost control and all the strength
Of my resolve, Xarisa sent an aid,
In whom she had all confidence, who laid
Her letter in my hand. Then, like a ghost
He slipped out in the night, with utmost
Care. The note described a secret gate where,
I could find admittance. I should prepare

To leave at once. If ever you have loved,
You know. It was as if I were absolved
Of all my guilt and sins. I ran to dress
Myself appropriately. I profess,
I was beyond elation. I arrayed
Myself in gallant garments, while I played
The bold, the brave, courageous knight, to pay
Due honors to my bride. Then, to allay
My fears against some casual attack,
I armed myself, and left within the black
Of night. I rode the night and all next day,
Until I met your men, in that foray.
You know the rest, and by the tides of war,
I find that I am not a bridegroom, far
Away within the nuptial bower of
The castle Coyn but, prisoner hereof,
A vanquished, wounded prisoner within
Allora's walls. Xarisa wrote that in
Five days from her delivered note, his term
Of absence would conclude. I must affirm,
Two days of five I could not ride. Just three
More days and he returns. By his decree,
Our meeting will no longer be allowed.
I ask that you be judge, since I had vowed
To meet her, whether I have grief, without
A cause, or whether I may be about
The showing of impatience, under rule
Of your confinement. Life, at times, is cruel."
Rodrigo de Narvaez was greatly moved
By this recital for, though more, he proved
Himself in rugged war than scenes of deep
And amorous affection, he could weep
For those who hurt, for he was of a kind
And generous nature. "Abendaraez, I find
Your story grieves me so because, my wife
Was lost to me when we were young in life.
I did not seek your trust to gratify
An idle curiosity, or pry.
It grieves me much that my good fortune, which
Delivered you into my hands, could switch
And mar so fair an enterprise. I pose
A question, much of which I presuppose.

Give me your faith, as a true knight, return
To me within three days and I, in turn,
Will grant permission to accomplish your
Observance of your nuptials. To assure
That you return I call upon my knights.
Now, raise your right hand, Moor, recite the rites
Of all good cavaliers. You solemnly
Exclaim your promise and to openly
Commit your word. You hereby do declare,
That as a paladin of God, aware
Of all the consequences of a breach
Of promise, three days hence, to be in reach
Of the drawbridge by night of the third day.
Before my knights and me, you swear! What say
You? " Overwhelmed with gratitude, he swore
A promise to return and to restore
Himself as prisoner. "Then go, and may
Good fortune be your guide. Let it convey
You safely to the side of your new bride.
With armor and your steed, prepare to ride.
If you require safeguards, I will send
Along a few companions to attend
To you." "Attendants I shall never need."
The Moor replied. "Then go, I say, Godspeed."
The shades of night had fallen, when the tramp
Of hooves resounded on the drawbridge ramp.
Forthwith, there came the clatter of the light
Noise of the hooves along the road. Despite
The dark, the sound bespoke the fleeting pace
With which the youthful lover made his race,
Defying time, to see his bride again.
The Moor arrived at midnight at the main
Moat gate. He silently and guardedly
Had paced his panting steed, while ardently
He sought the secret portal in the wall,
Almost completing the circumference, all
Had seemed a loss, when in the shadows there
It was, as represented by the fair
Xerisa. Quietly he rapped three raps,
Observing he had not been seen. A lapse
Of time occurred, when timidly the gate
Was opened by Xerisa's duenna. "Wait, "

She said, "until I see if all is clear.
Alas, Senor, " said she, "the grand emir
Shall soon return, my lady has been sick
At heart with doubt and fear, almost frantic
With worry and concern." The pageboy led
The horse to food and drink. The duenna said,
"You hang your armor in the stairwell where
No one can see, now follow me." The air
Was like a golden vapor, fragrant with
The scented bloom of love. What is this myth
That man can live apart? Before him lay
The heart of his most whole of being. Clay
Is the material of man yet, love,
Like ether, bathed his soul, from God above,
With that most holy principle by which
He now exists. Through love he found that rich
Eternal calm, he found himself. The shade
Obscured their movement. He removed and laid
His lance, his shield and scimitar upon
The ground and climbed the winding staircase. Dawn
Was near upon them when he entered her
Unguarded door. Surrendering, eager,
Her arms outstretched, she yielded to his firm
Embrace. They nestled closely to affirm,
With lips of love and balmy breath, her soul
Shall never cease to worship him. The whole
Of love for him came formless through the air,
His fingers twined her perfumed, sable hair.
Ascending through the gateway of her eyes,
Immersed in love and all that truth implies,
His kisses fell upon her neck and head.
Together, they lay on her welcome bed.
Beneath her touch a thrill of wild desire,
Until his blood seemed more like molten fire.
Most sacred is that person love has kissed,
And joyful is that man whose soul is blessed.
The time flew swiftly by, the Moor had near
Forgotten he had made a promise. "Hear,
Xarisa, what I have to say." She saw
His altered look, and watched him try to draw
The courage to inform her of his plight.
She heard his story with alarm and fright,

Until she heard the cause and, then she smiled
And said, "Let not your spirit be defiled
By such a promise," throwing her white arms
Around him. "There can be no pledge that harms
True love. In my possession are the keys
To our salvation. Treasures can appease
A man's demand, his warranty of word.
He is an unenlightened, cruel warlord,
Whose gratification is served by gold.
I have the keys to father's wealth, I hold
Them in my hands, behold, enough to free
You from your promise. Pay a ransom flee
His grasp, remain forever here with me."
"I have no choice," he said to her. "You see,
A knight who swears his word of honor must
Fulfill his promised oath. It is a trust
That bears respect regardless of his creed.
The Alcaide Narvaez gave me, no freed
Me, for these past three days to have your kiss.
Without my word, I would not know such bliss.
I must return in person." "Then," said she,
"We go with hand in hand. Confidently,
Together, we shall face the consequence
Of our return. Let us depart now whence
You came. You shall not be in custody,
And I remain alone, at liberty."
Transported to new heights by this event
Of her devotion, speedily he went
About the preparation for their leave
From castle Coyn. "Before tomorrow's eve
We must be at Allora's gates. We ride
At break of day," he said. The two astride
The dapple-gray, they left the castle walls,
Nor did they pause until they reached the halls
Of the main house of de Narvaez. "You see,
My valiant knight," said he, "The way that we
Abencerrages keep our word? I gave
My promise to return. I am no knave,
Who lacks the moral principles of his
Own knightly word and trust. It is with this
I bring my wife, whose honor I confide
Unto your hands. Behold, my lovely bride

And judge if I had reason to be grieved."
He lifted up her veils, "Have I deceived
You, Alcayde? Now, we together, rest
Our lives within the fortunes of conquest
And you may do with us as you may please."
Rodrigo de Narvaez, said, "Be at ease,
My friends. My castle is much graced, indeed,
And very honored by your presence. Proceed
To live within these walls, as if they were
Your own. You are my guests, and I prefer
That you consider me your host as long
As you deign to reside with me. Along
With you, enjoy your newfound love and let
Life pass in peace." "What measure of my debt
To you, could I, in this lifetime, repay?
My obligation seems to grow each day, "
So said the Moor, retiring to their suite.
For several days they stayed alone, complete
In their felicity, and in the friendship found
In de Narvaez. But, in the meantime, bound
By his deep admiration and esteem
For the intrepid Moor, and to redeem
The glory of Abendaraez's name,
Rodrigo wrote the Moorish king to claim
The innocence of the young Moor. He told
The king the whole event, and of his bold,
Courageous fight, extolled his strength, his acts
Of will, his strong resolve to learn the facts
Of his disparaged name. He asked the king,
On the behalf of the young Moor, granting
This noble youth a royal audience,
And craved for him the king's good countenance.
The king was stirred by this account, and pleased
By such an opportunity. He seized
Upon this happening to bring some peace
By these two warring factions, even cease
This senseless war, by his attention to
The wish of such a gallant warrior, who
Had often caused the king to undergo
The punishment of his prowess. To show
His admiration for this valiant knight,
He called the Alcayde of Coyn, the night

Before his act of leaving, to peruse
The content of the letter. "He continues
To disregard authority, my laws,
That I had set before him. He is cause
Of my outrage, " he trembled in his rage.
"Restrain your anger, " said the king. "Engage
Yourself in gratitude. Are not your young
Alive? Who else would honor them, among
The Christians, give protection, asking my
Forgiveness for Abencerrage. Apply
Compassion to the circumstance. It was
A mercy that no child was killed. Give pause,
And thank Rodrigo de Narvaez. What gain
Is there in anger when one may regain
His children, both in body and in love?
What has he asked of me that is above
My royal capacity to grant? Go seek
Your children at Allora. I shall speak
To this Abencerrage, when I command
Him to my court. Of this I do demand,
Take both your children home, and I shall grant
Great benefits upon you all. Supplant
Your anger with your pardon, leave at once." "His
kindled ire appeased, his audience
Complete, the Alcayde of Coyn made haste
To the stronghold of de Narvaez. He faced
His children with his love, and folded them
Unto his bosom, never to condemn
Them for their past behavior, but instead,
Suggested that when they return, they wed
According to the rites of their belief.
The Alcayde of Coyn, to his relief,
Assembled his two children and returned
To castle Coyn, upon arrival turned
The fortress and surrounding town into
A grand arena, to observe anew
Their nuptials with festivity and joy.
Rodrigo de Narvaez thought to employ
A small-armed group that rode with them to give
Defense against those highwaymen who live
By robbing travelers on the road. When all
Festivities were done, Rodrigo and his small

Cadre of troops returned to their own fort.
The Alcayde of Coyn gave his support
To the request of the young Moor to pay
A ransom to Rodrigo to convey
His gratitude for his release and for
His moral treatment of his bride. "Before
You both, I now declare, into your hands
I now confide my settlement of lands
And all my wealth, " their father said with pride.
"I charge you this, " he said, "You must decide,
Rodrigo de Narvaez will not accept
Your gold. It is, of course, my own precept,
That he would willingly receive a gift
Of six of our most beautiful and swift
Arabians, caparisoned in rich
And ornamental finery to enrich
Your friendship, which is all he asked from you.
But pay you must, to pay him his just due.
For magnanimity, one does not pay
In tangibles. You pay in kind. That day
Will come, " the father said. "Moreover, treat
His friendship as you would a gift, replete
With all its worth, as if he were your kin,
Though of a different faith. It is therein
That peace will find our doors." Abendaraez
Thanked him for his proposals. In all ways
They were accorded with his own true wish.
He chose his six Arabians, lavish
Their trappings. Saddles, shields, were all embossed
With gold. Six lances, eight feet long, crisscrossed
With points of silver and of gold, inlaid
With finest jewels. They, of course, displayed
His friendship, not for combat in the field.
Xarisa wrote a letter, which revealed
Her gratitude and friendship, it was sealed
Within a box of fragrant cypress-wood,
Containing linen of the best that could
Be found for his own person. In his way,
The Alcayde disposed of the array
Of gifts by sharing them with his own men,
Who had accompanied him that night when ten
Of his most worthy men had met the Moor.

He kept the cypress-wood, you may be sure,
And had the linen tailored for his needs.
His magnanimity had spread the seeds
Of peace and deep respect among the Moors.
Unto this day his gallantry mirrors
The quality of virtue found in those
Who stood for truth and verity, who chose
A higher level of morality.

From that day forward, all adversity
Had ceased between the offices of the
Two castles found in Spanish history.

Lynn W. Petty

The Last Summer

I passed them while they were picnicking
On a bench overlooking the sea,
These two lovers.
She was dressed in a yellow dress.
Her straw hat, halo-like,
Was tied with a lace bow beneath her chin.
He was in white linen pants,
A striped blue on white shirt, and white shoes.
They sat very close.
Their small wicker basket was on his lap.
She held her cup between her trembling
Hands; he helped her to drink.
With little bites, she would chew the crustless
Finger sandwiches he held to her mouth.
He looked deep within her face,
As if etching her likeness on his memory,
Never to forget the beauty of her countenance
As all things virtuous.
Lovingly, she looked into his eyes
With an expression of adoration and gratitude.
Together, they were loving to the end,
Those short delectable days of relived youth,
Where their passion began, not forsaking them in old age,
But a passion of a different kind.
It was as if they took comfort from the sorrow
Of departure through the joy of a remembered image
Of the other, from another time.
What other emotion, than love, is worth
This bittersweet pain?

Lynn W. Petty

The Magic Of Our Swing

□

I bought an old Victorian swing, with latticework atop,
All made with lath, and painted white.
The facing benches are connected with a foot platform,
Which cause the seats to swing in tandem.

It is amazing how we spend our evenings now.
We sit for several hours in the patio, talking
About our sixty-plus years of marriage,
And what has transpired over time.

The intimacy of conversation, the closeness of ourselves
To each other has, though we thought it impossible,
Increased with each hour.
Sitting on the edge of night, we speak of those forgotten
Times of youth, first loves, romance, our love and all the
Intervening things that make up living.
We speak of age, that tender defoliation of life,
And the "what and when" of the inevitable.

The swing creates a train of combustible feelings, which light
Our souls with tenderness and passion. We speak volumes
Of what might never have been said, as if there were a dawning
On the smoldering gray ashes of our lives.

The flickering world of our autumn awakens with the bloom of each Other. The
swing has restored our flagging sense of rest, found in the Eternal Truth, of life,
love and the eloquence of living.

Lynn W. Petty

The Mount Is You

It seems I see you less and less,
Our lives so filled with busyness.
I miss our friendly, gentle talks
O'er paths we strode on verbal walks.
Do you remember where they led?
By bramble patch and desert dead,
From verdured hills to heights beyond.
We sat beside a thinking pond,
Beneath a shady mental tree.
We spoke of life, its mystery.
We spoke of love and its refrain,
Its dying embers, all its pain.
I counseled you and kissed your tears,
The benefit of all my years.
We crossed the gap of your duress,
We sought the range of happiness.
Beyond the pass there vaguely seen,
Through mindless mist, man's hapless screen,
Did lie the peaks we hoped to find,
The mountain tops, your peace of mind.
Since then, I see you less and less.
I tell you this with hopefulness,
That you will take this one last gift,
All else is chaff that you must sift,
It's only when you learn "Forgive";
That they become definitive.
It's only when you learn to "Love";
You forge the summit high above
The endless waste of search and strife,
It's then you see your purpose, "Life."
If you could look internally,
It's there they stand majestically,
Where they have stood for all to see,
Have always been, will always be.
It's been the same since birth of time,
The mount is you that you must climb.

Lynn W. Petty

The Purpose

What is the purpose of our being here?
Our joys are far and few between the tears.
With all the prayers that man has said, his fears
Have not decreased, no matter how sincere
His supplication. Something has been lost.
A realization of himself, first cause?
His tribulations should have given pause.
Communication with the source, the cost?

Shakespearean Sonnet

Lynn W. Petty

The Question Of Someone In Blue

I held an antique bayonet and wavered
At its feel.
Mute death caressed my palms; seduction lay
In its black steel.
Pock marks upon its blade from rust, marked years
Upon the ground.
Its scabbard gone, in naked silence, truth
Annealed, lay bound.
In evil sometimes beauty lies, as war
Contains much pride.
I held this implement of slaughter when,
From deep inside,
A kindle of some ancient call from life's
Inaugurate day;
A primal flash of sensory, charged thrill,
Of war's melee.
That irreligious charm, that Tophet knife,
Contained a spell.
Not one redeeming feature, still, some men
Are drawn to hell.
Within its forge there was some grace, its line,
Its upward curve,
I think the fascination was the function
It did serve.
We wondered who the person was who clipped
It to his gun.
We wondered if he fell before his battle-
Charge was run.
Or, had he fired his one last shot then used
It as a lance,
To slash a breach into their ranks to stop
The South's advance.
Or did he die on some rampart against
Opposing force?
We wondered if his single death had changed
The Nation's course.
A maze of speculation filled that room,
Of how or who.
But, all we can acclaim; it issued to

Someone in blue,
Since time obscured his name.

Lynn W. Petty

The Shadows Of Thought

I stand In the shadows of thought,
Devoid of the art of thinking;
Assembling meaningless words
In rows of senseless creation.
Non-sequiturs written on paper;
Fragments of flowery language
In solecistic bunches.
Visualizing bouquets of wild flowers,
My writings are fields of ragweeds.
Beauty confused with untruths.

I, a poet? I, a poet?
A dream of a consummate youth,
When altruism coursed through my veins;
Blood was the spillage of cause.
Life was the serving of purpose; purpose
The singing of life.
Under the incubus of false hope,
Poetry is fata Morgana,
Radiant in isolated light,
A mirage. The Morgan le Fay
Of my mind.

Lynn W. Petty

The Smile Of Earth

What's that you say? You say, "There is no God? "
Have you considered what a miracle
Is just the human eye? Reflect on this:
One's sight begins when light waves flood into
The Cornea, passing through the Pupil
To the Lens behind the Iris. There the
Retina, with its Photoreceptors,
Responds to that light converting those waves
Into Electrochemical signals.
These signals move along the Optic Nerve
To reach the Brain. There, they are translated
As vision in the Visual Cortex.
Seven million cells called Cones, provide
Color Information and the sharpness
Of one's view. One hundred twenty million
Cells called Rods, detect white light providing
Chemically, night sight. The brain converts
These signals from the eye, that reconstructs
A pixel map which prints upon the brain,
The image one has set his sight upon.
All this in less time than it takes to blink.
And, through the gateway of one's eyes one sees,
By Grace of God, the physiognomy
Of this globe, her changing moods, her wild grandeur,
Her light, her shaded mellow gloom, as He
Prepares the darkest night for crimson dawn
For you to see the smile of earth, and yet,
I hear you say, "There is no God! ?

Lynn W. Petty

The Song Of Nature

Immersed in a color-wheel of ever-changing,
Undulating light from the setting sun,
I sit silent and motionless upon a footstool hill
At the feet of the great rock-ribbed granite Sierras.
Held firm within this vast panorama of undisturbed geological
Evolution, my eye is led from the valley floor, past dappled
Terrestrial hues and tones of green, gray and brown,
To saw-toothed peaks etched upon a background of gracious,
Deepening empurpled evening sky.
Surrounding me, the cry of the hawk;
The caw of the crow; the lazy hum of bees;
The panpipe song of the birds;
The soft-voiced spatter and splash of the creek;
The gentle brush of breeze, wafting with the scent of sage,
Whispering through the boughs of pines, rustling the trembling
Aspen leaves, all filling the solitude with sound,
Each contributing to the constant, yet never the same,
Gladdening mirth of nature's song.
As an audience of one, in the open theater
Of Being, through sight, sound and smell
I witness the ineffable splendor of nature's
Dance of life.

Lynn W. Petty

The Sounds Of Poetry

What's that you say? You say there is no God?
Have you considered what a miracle
Is speech; to turn a thought into a sound?
Consider, if you will, the physical
Mechanics just to formulate a word.
Within a nanosecond, thought powers
Apply pressure upon the lungs that drive
The air into the organ of the voice.
This oscillates the vocal cords to sounds
And noises, gurgles, hissings, snorts and grunts.
Within that same moment, the jaw, the tongue,
The lips are processing those sounds into
A word. From incoherent utterances
Are formed the vowels and consonants of what
We call a comprehensible language.
From the fountains of the brain, exhaling
Thoughts through the luxury of imagery
Came, out of the marvel of diction; words,
Then, clauses, sentences, and paragraphs,
Whereupon man found poetry at hand.
Within, there are to be found God's finest
Descriptions; His most characteristic
Portraits, His most beautiful creations.
And, yet, I hear you say, "There is no God"?

Lynn W. Petty

The Sparrow

A young Latino schoolboy watched,
Like a fidgety bird
Hearing the distant screech
Of the sparrow hawk.
Subduing his fear,
He made the sign of the cross.
He closed his apartment door
And stepped into the sunlight of day.
With unrealized dreams
Packed on his back,
He looked up and down
The street with flitting glances,
Alert to the red claws
Of drive-by death.
Stepping into the street,
He disappeared
Within the crowd of his classmates.
That evening, I saw a sparrow flying
On wings of fear.
Behind it, a hawk was closing
The span of its tiny life.
In an instant, it was impaled
On the talons of death.

Lynn W. Petty

The Tea Cup Mystery

While sitting at the table sipping tea,
I had the thought that though my teacup has
But just a singular intent, its state
Of being is a two-part form. There is
An inside and an outside wall which shapes
The clay into a useful, hollow mold.
Was it devised in two connecting parts?
Through glazing did the two-parts fuse as one?
What if there were no outside wall, could there
Be still an inside wall, or are the two
The same? The answer seems to be, to me,
Without the outside wall there could be no
Internal wall, for though it seems, there are
The two, the two are really one. Is that
Not the relationship existing in
The spiritual life of man? Is he not
A living vessel, a hollowed lump of clay,
Who, through the gift of will, can pull the cork
Of mind, and fill his emptiness, to his
Capacity, by being consciously
Aware of the reality of God?

Lynn W. Petty

The Thoughts Of An Aging Parent

I watched her as she gazed out the window,
Trying to imagine what memory was busy in her heart.
Love hovered in her thoughts, as the lights and shadows
Of reviving recollections crossed her face.

I imagined the words she may have said:
'Conceived, you came to us upon an hidden stream
Of spiritual source, whose birth I bore with pain
That only mother's love endures.
Nurtured with the milk of our rejoicing hearts,
We fed you with the bread of our own lack,
And loved you all the more for our deprivation.
We gave you all we could afford, protecting
You from ever knowing want, from ever having need.

Now, that I am left alone, confined
Behind these gates of what they call
An 'Elder-Care, ' I ask myself to what extent
Is my affront; what parental breach; what crime
Did I commit to cause such scorn that I am cast
Aside within these walls?
Has my fatigued and faded life become a burden
On the lives of those I love? Is that my wrong? '

Then, quivering with restrained grief, as though a thought
Had pierced her soul, I heard her say aloud,

'Is that my crime that I have grown old? '□

Lynn W. Petty

The Thoughts Of 'then'

To My Friend, Brad Wilson

Do you remember when...when we were boys? We lived out in the country on a farm. You were living on the flat and even Texas plains, and I lived deep within the huddled hills of Michigan, our lives were very much the same; two farmer boys who had their work to do, who lived their lives with unencumbered cares, unburdened by concerns of worldly things.

In this, my later life, I find my mind returning to the thoughts of 'then', when I was young. The reel of recollection rewinds time, projecting on the screen of memory those images of past, forgotten years. I sit before the hearth and sip the wine of age, and fan the dying coals of youth into a friendly-flame, remembering with warmth, those years of innocence.

Recall, will you, the musty smell of soil at rain's first fall; the breath of earth just turned by plow's sharp pointed edge? And, spring the child of season, born from winter's womb, exploding into bud and bloom, to waft its fresh and sweet perfume onto a lazy drift of soundless, midnight air.

There is no moon so full as is a country moon that crests the hilly ridges, full and bright to bathe the meadow grasses with its liquid light. Or, on a winter's night, its moony glow refracts like frozen fire without flame, to flood the stainless fields of snow with icy hues of chilling, lambent, heatless heat.

But, what cared I, all bundled up with scarf and muffs, protected from the numbing chill, as I would glide across the skating pond, alone, through tintured veils of solitude, cleaved only by the cutting sound of skater's blades on ice.

I recall those sunsets of my boyhood summertime, when all the work and chores were done, I sat upon the porch and watched the bubble-sun sink silently behind the sloping hills.

The gentle shadows stealthy creep would turn the atmosphere into a pensive blush of plum and rose. Drenched in summer's silence, when evening's calm hung mute upon the ear, broken only by the mellow-throated larks, whose song sounds circled through the air like ripples on a still and placid lake did we, in all humility, take the day from God and praise Him for His perfect gift, a rich, abundant, fragrant land.

Lynn W. Petty

The Threads Of Love

Let me remind you, love Is blind.
Its fate not heavenly direction,
That forges two in deed and mind.
Let me remind you, love is blind;
To challenge chance, be not inclined,
The threads of fancy spin deception.
Let me remind you, love is blind,
Its fate not heavenly direction.

Lynn W. Petty

The Unbidden Guest, That Miser Age

The Unbidden Guest, That Miser Age

Have you seen her hands, knurled and crooked with age?
Translucent skin accenting blue-black veins;
White tendon cords contrasting through the spots
Of dark-brown on the backs of her old hands?
They had been once the strength of our household.
They molded us into a family core.

The mastic of their love had bound that core,
Performing endless tasks, when young of age.
Without apparent weariness, household
Concerns were done, while only shadowed veins
Conveyed fatigue beneath her eyes. Her hands,
Saw all the dabs and daubs, all dirty spots.

They dusted, swept and scrubbed unwanted spots.
No motion lost in their intent when core
Of principle involved. Persuasive hands
In their resolve. Yet, in my tender age
Of childhood ills, before those blue-black veins,
Their touch appeased and stilled the whole household.

The home was left, no thought for such household
Labor, when fever, with those itching spots,
Had pulsed with heated flow, throughout my veins.
Medicinal was their caress, the core
Of youthful convalescence. Restive age
Has slowed the winging of those birdlike hands.

They lack the strength, but not desire. Those hands,
Were like swift eagle wings throughout household
Routines. She sits immersed in her old age,
She waits, while passing flocks, as distant spots,
Take migratory flight away. Her core
Is not a legacy of ebbing veins,

But golden recollections from deep veins
Of unmined memories, as holding hands

Exposed the ore of our familial core.
How vacuous. Now, barren, our household.
As Time had hoarded coin of youth, those spots
Revealed that Time is but, that miser Age.

A woman's hands can consecrate the core
Of meanest household tasks. She tithes her life,
Exchanged for blue-black veins and spots of age.

Lynn W. Petty

The Wheel Of Recurrence

I read her book of poetry, more pamphlet than a book,
But, what I found was more profound
Than Tasso's tome of verse.
Her works, a cultivated islet, bordered on all sides
By harsh, discordant fields of bramble-verse and tangle-rhyme.
Precise as to her choice of plants, to permeate the mind.
Exact, as to variety, portrayed in vivid tints.
She critically placed stepping-stones to stroll
The spectrum of her visual design.

Immersed within the golden haze of autumn's pensive light,
She wrote the smothered passions of her restive, anxious soul.
It was an Indian summer, but frost had filled the air,
For one could feel the winter in the climate of her words.
Dormant lies the garden patch, fallow are the fields,
Seasons in succession pass, as nature turns on wheels.
In regulated measure, bound by springtime's pulse,
Assuring continuity to worlds of living things,
The earth rotates to spring once more,
And flowers bloom again.

The hurt and pain of summers past, like stubble, stalks, and straws of grass,
Immersed in winter's rain and snow,
Become the humus of our grief, through which the seedlings
Of new hope may grow. Within the murmuring meadow sounds,
The white sun bees, laden with the pollen of her thoughts,
Add their lazy hum, and all September's sorrows soften
In the sweep of passing time. Upon the wheel of endless dawns,
The old is ever new, for in this mystic cycle, creation knows no loss, As with the
child who wrote this book,
Her beauty knows no end.

By: Lynn W. Petty

Lynn W. Petty

Thinking

Man stands upon his skull
A self-imposed Golgotha
His mind upon the cross.

Lynn W. Petty

This Noble Child

In memory of my sister, Eleanor

What consecrated thought; divine intent
Was there, to cause this noble child to die?
To what avail to take what heaven sent;
This gift, how could the gods so justify?

Why probe the cosmic sea of mystery,
When answers to such questions are not found?
Seek, rather, what she left to memory,
All else is just conjecture to confound.

Her work accomplished on this conscious plane,
Fulfilling destiny, her purpose, life.
The knot was cleaved in two, this human skein,
She saw upon the dawn relief from strife.

She was to us as spirit weaves with mind,
As Self is earth and heaven intertwined.

Lynn W. Petty

Tiger Time

Feline, Tiger Time,
Passes by on padded paw,
Stalking, never seen.

Lynn W. Petty

Time Is A Feline

Feline,
A carnivore
Is red-fanged Tiger Time.
Sated beast, feasting on my years,
My age.

Lynn W. Petty

To Learn, To Know, To Heal, To Grow

I'm often asked, 'What caused you to collect
Slave artifacts, and take them on the road,
Displaying them in cases, raw and real? '
My answer is a simple one, 'To heal.'
'To heal? ' they ask. 'What is there to be healed? '
I answer with paternal patience, as
I would a child. Then, I commence my tale.
It was not long ago two ladies stood
Together at a showing on my tour,
An African American and a
Caucasian. One to seek her heritage,
The other to find satisfaction that
Hyperbole was the foundation for
The stories of the hardships slaves endured.
Within my cases lies reality.
The sight of whips and branding irons had chilled
The heart and soul of the Caucasian, tears
Began to fill her eyes and, unabashed, she wept
Aloud in disbelief at what she saw.
'All lies. What I have read and learned are lies.'
The African American embraced
Her, and together, openly as one,
They wept. That moment was perfumed with hope
And strength. It was as if I had been bathed
In silence, with an element of love;
A fluid mist, which overflowed with life
And sweetness, flooding out hostilities.
There was a recognition as to man's
Inhuman acts of cruelty to man.
There was a glow of light and life. I saw
Magnificence within that scene. I saw
Within that tiny aspect 'Truth.' I saw
The dawn of reason shine upon the dust of years.

Lynn W. Petty

To Ponder

I wonder what my life would be,
Without you and our memories.
I have not the ability
To ponder such absurdities.

Lynn W. Petty

To 'saint' Mary Anne, Our Daughter

How do you quantify one's depth of soul?
How does one measure one's goodness of heart?
How much self-sacrificing does one do,
For the benefit of others,
Before One's own diminished health
Becomes a threat?
The measurement is not by feet and yards,
And, not by height and breadth but, by one's love;
That intangible something that lifts one
Above all other souls, to stand amongst
The stars, within the bosom of the deep,
Shining like a lamp in the dark of space.

And we, standing in the glow of her light,
Are blessed.

Lynn W. Petty

To The Patriarch Of Our Family, James J. Reina, My Father-In-Law

There lived a man of gentle heart and soul,
Who lead a life of modest wants and cares.
There seemed to be a commonality
With all of human kind but, deep beneath
That unity there lay a virtue that
Would constitute his character; a man
Of principle, a gentleman, a man
With tender core that set him far apart
From those of generality. Candid,
And unsuspecting, he possessed a clean
And unpretentious frankness of a pure
And humble nature; wisdom deeper than
It seemed; so simple, practical and clear,
As to its relevance which, bore the fruits
Of his integrity. Reliable
As husband, father, and provider,
Who gave to us, and life, his very best.
Well may posterity be grateful for
His memory; as he left a legacy,
An inheritance, of goodness, insight
And judgment, for all of us to emulate.

Lynn W. Petty

Two Gifts Has Man

Beneath this old oak tree, I pondered why
The primal gloom of pain on faces passed.
What is the answer to the question asked?
'It is within, ' came chilling words nearby.
It was the Angel Death who made reply.
'It's soul asleep that causes man his caste.
The image of himself has held him fast.
To say the fault is his he will deny.'

'Two gifts has man; a shaft of golden light,
A two-edged sword that cuts the bonds of mind.
The other gift, the knowledge that 'I AM'.
Identity holds man within his plight,
Forgetting his creation, he is blind.
It's man who daily crucifies the Lamb.'

Lynn W. Petty

Unknown

Looking

Back across my span of life,
I ask myself,
What has my purpose been?
No great accomplishments,
No lofty rhymes,
No teachings, great or small,
Held in prestigious moment.
No profound or lasting thoughts.
I leave nothing, legacy or gift;
No one thing,
To lift my soul above
That crushing deep-sea weight
Of human anonymity.□

Lynn W. Petty

Valor

The dictionary describes "Valor" as:

Qualities of a hero or heroine; exceptional courage

When facing danger; facing the unknown with boldness

And gallantry. But, valor comes in many different forms.

I have seen valor on the battlefield as soldiers disembarked

From boat to beach.

I have read of those who gave their lives to save

Their buddies from the wrath of war.

Yet, there is another valor, a silent valor, shown on the faces

Of those who are not in physical combat, soldier against soldier,

But, who have just as much a life threatening struggle.

There is no noise, clash of weapons, shield against shield,

Or screams of pain, just silence, cold, weary silence;

Battle fatigue, as shown by the posture of those who

Return from the front; veterans of that silent war

Of personal combat.

Wave after wave of seasoned combatants pass me by as I,

A new inductee with them, wage our own personal battle

Against our common enemy,

Cancer.

Lynn W. Petty

Verses Of The Sikh Gurus

I closed the cover of a book, just read;
A book of poetry, whose thoughts had touched
The sanctum sanctorum of my being.
I sat in silence pondering the depth
To which the sense of my awareness had
Been moved. I weighed the immemorial
Message of each word, whose meanings had been
Divinely etched upon the copper plate
Of thought. I floated in a dim of light
And shade, that tideless flood of nothingness,
Seeking a gleam of illumination.
While strolling through such words my mind drank deep
The inspiration found therein, which made
Intensely sensible the beauty and
The power and the majesty of its
Eternal truths. I found each leaf an age
Within the Granth of life, the text itself
Eternity.

Lynn W. Petty

Wake Within Your Dreams

Wake within your dreams
For there lies reality.
Living the unlived
Makes real your aspirations.
All things are dreams beginning.

Lynn W. Petty

What Is A Poet?

What is a poet?

A translator of Nature
Into thought and form,
Putting eyes and tongue into
Inarticulate matter.

Lynn W. Petty

What Love So Deep As Grandparental Love?

To Our Beloved Grandchildren Ashley and Chelsea

There is the privilege of contribution to a child's
Development that only grandparents can provide.
There is the rounding out of old age, the last shaping of life,
That only grandchildren can sculpt.
There is a love of deeper meaning that expands between
Grandparents and grandchildren.

When my son spoke "divorce" the word hissed
Like a striking snake.
I could feel the venom of its meaning course my veins:
Fear, anger, pain of separation, taking with her the intimacy
Of being, by the distance of domicile.

No kitchen cooking smells on holidays.
No sound of family on the front porch.
No magnolia blossom faces open, pure, with petal lips
All puckered for a kiss.
From where we sit, each at table's end, vacancy
Of soul fills empty chairs where children would have gathered
On holidays.
We, the grandparents, sit alone,
Enveloped in the heavy sound of silence.

Lynn W. Petty

What Would I Say?

What Would I Say?

What would I say to someone diagnosed
With cancer? I was asked by my Doctor.
What words of satisfaction would I speak?
Some pithy aphorism would I say;
Some passage from the Bible? I think not.

But, what I say must reach the inner man,
That place that goes beyond the ego depth;
Beyond the realm of consciousness. Deep down
Below where the foundation of one's
Existence lies; that power of man's healing self..

The physical and soul-mind then resolve
Themselves into a forceful strength, both work
Together now as one creative force,
Which manifests, through one's inspired thoughts;
An image of one's body in repair.

There is a strong reliance held between
The mind and the corporeal. They form
That picture of oneself completely healed.
One lives as though it were a fact, a truth.
We know, we feel, we see, therefore it is.

The builder is the mind, the physical
Becomes the outcome. The awaking
Of one's creative power is a blend;
A merging of the physical with mind;
A prompting of the Will, to heal, takes place.

One must exclude all things that constitute
The negative; all fears, all anxious thoughts,
Which interfere and block the soul-mind's act
Of creativity. They will destroy
The vision of one's fitness and good health.

One must maintain one's might to fight this scourge.

One eats to live, despite one's lack of taste.
Maintain the strength to concentrate through food,
For undernourishment is cancer's friend,
And malnutrition overwhelms one's goal.

Depending on the power of belief,
The force of one's conviction, will create
The actuality of one's good health.
The embryo of all existing things
Was but a thought and, then reality.

Lynn W. Petty

What's A Father For?

Despite my being foolish,
Please come by so that
We can share a simple wish
Or some chit-ter-chat.
I, you see, am buoyed up
By your hopes and dreams.
I'll be there to bolster up,
Even through it seems,
Life is but a battleground
Full of cries and woe.
I will blow the victory sound,
Never let you know
Trembling hands do clutch that horn
Filled with your same fear.
You will think that I was born
Caesar or his peer.
I will guide you through the maze,
Through the battle smoke,
Through the wasteland, through the haze,
Covered by my cloak.
I will trumpet a new song
Just for you to sing.
I will grapple with the throng,
Shield you from life's sting.
I will be there to console,
Help you understand,
I will play the father role,
Lending you my hand.
I can be no more to you
Other what I am.
Take the strength that I give you,
Wear it like a gem.
That's all I have to offer,
There can be no more.
Now, that depletes my coffer,
What's a father for?

Lynn W. Petty

What's That You Say?

What's that you say? You say there is no God?
Have you considered where we're standing now?
We stand upon the surface of a globe,
A sphere spun out into a vast abyss.
We're held down by a force called gravity,
Alone within the universe of stars.
We spin around in measured speed to give
Us night and day, while floating 'round the sun,
In season's time, we glide in mystic flight.

Located far enough that we don't burn;
Placed close enough that we don't freeze; the sun
Gives warmth and light upon the endless flow
Of life. Our world is placed within the void,
Where least amount of cosmic dust will fall,
Protecting us from tons that drift in space.

We breathe the air provided by the sea
And trees, while they absorb what we exhale.
The moon, in regulated frames of time,
Completes its cycles of infinitude,
While burning with an unconsuming fire
Of creamy light. The clouds in clusters shed
Their rain that falls upon the softly green
Hill-pastures, dells and plains, where flowers grow.
I mention just a few of His Graces,
And still, I hear you say: 'There is no God? '

Lynn W. Petty

When We Were Young

Do you remember when, when we were young?
We had no doubt, our lives would never change.
We held "forever" in our hands. We wrung
All pleasures from each day. There was no range
Of view or thought denied. We had no truck
With time. "What ever was, what ever is, is mine."
I stand in disbelief, I'm wonderstruck,
To think we thought the world our concubine.
The older set, whom now, we hold so dear,
Advised that such conceit and arrogance
Were preludes to our fall. We had no ear
For words as these; old age and petulance,
Conditions of their era. So, we lived
Our self-indulgent ways. Oblivious
To those who loved us most, mores outlived
We thought. What else but being envious
Of youth; of freedoms that we took from life?
"But, what one takes from living one repays, "
They warned. Now, they are gone, their words were rife
With truths; forewarning of those years and days,
The struggle to maintain, to just remain
At balance with the challenges we face.
But, if I heard them say those words again,
Would I accept their value with the grace
Of understanding that respect demands?
Oh, yes, they only tried to save us from
Ourselves, the bludgeoning that life commands.
And, now, I too recite each axiom
That they have left. "You are as you will think."
"The greatest sin of all is waste of time."
'The path is straight and narrow." We would wink
And let them go, as though unheard. Like rhyme,
They meter in my mind, returning when
I try protecting those I love, who seem,
Like I, resentful of intrusions. Then,
Their living is their own; their path; their dream,
With all the altercations there within.
How hard to see their bloody brow,
The two-by-four of living 'cross the shin.

Why don't they ask advise of "what or how?"
Maturity dictates, its theirs to learn.

And, now, we are the older set who watch,
As we were watched when we were next at turn.
We pray that they will choose the way, not blotch
The color of their life at choice's "Y",
That junction on the dusty road of chance,
That point of choice; decisions, "nay or aye."
We must release and let them go. Advance
Their learning by the cutting of the tie,
Accepting their behavior as a friend.
They dance a different dance than you or I,
As we had danced our dance to comprehend.
Release parental fetters, hold your tongue!
Do you remember when, when we were young?

Lynn W. Petty

Within My Heart

Within my heart there is a place,
Where you, a living memory,
Reside with all your pleasing grace,
And shall throughout eternity.

Lynn W. Petty

You Ask?

You ask how deep does my love lie for you.
There is no human measurement to test.
An inch, a foot, a yard, a mile? It grew
To depths, to heights, too vast to be assessed.

□

Lynn W. Petty

Youth Vs. Age

What is the difference between youth and age?

I would imagine there are a thousand different answers.

But, let me suggest just a few. Youth is not just red cheeks,
Ruby lips and, a supple body that responds to one's commands.

Youth is a freshness of life; a zest for living;

An inherent desire for exploration; the love of wonder.

It is courage over timidity; Daring over ease;

Conviction over doubt.

It is the making of one's imagination into reality.

Age is chronological, yes, resulting in wrinkles but,

That is not the age of which I speak.

I speak of the abandonment of ideals; the giving up of enthusiasm;

The retreat from those adventures given to one during his lifetime;

One's blindness to the gifts of life that surround him.

It is the loss of appetite for the journey of what may come next.

It is the loss of faith, self-confidence, hope, resulting in the

Loss of the joys of life.

Young or old, we are the result of those conditions discussed.

Either we accept the positive and, remain young or we deny them.

In denying, regardless of age, we become old, living in a pool of
Self-pity, pessimism and cynicism.

Dear God, at eighty-eight, do not allow me to lose my youth.

Lynn W. Petty