The Worn Coat  
Jon Harrison

Two coats in my closet they're,  
And, regretfully, I choose but one.  
Upon which standard shall I compare?  
Which standard does society judge fair?

The Left was not a little young;  
Wear humbled what once was bold.  
Elderly respect was where my opinion hung,  
Yet no metabolically challenged maiden had sung.  
Humility was reason to be sold.

Sold, old, blah! 'Tis a buyers and sellers marketplace.  
Out with the faded old and in with the new.  
Want now. Waste now. Trends lead the chase.  
Style, popularity, commoditized value taken at face;  
Contentedness and Serenity are sold to few.

The Right was flawless, smooth, sweet.  
Fashion deemed this covering debonair.  
Seeing eyes met with smiles, ear to ear complete;  
Compliments fell at my pompous feet;  
Cloaked would I be in worldly concern and care.

So my choice was made. options considered well.  
Covered shoulder to shoulder I went as an honorable gent.  
Of the inner struggle at the closet, this world can not tell:  
Humility versus Vanity, Utility verses Conceit, Heaven versus Hell.  
And into the society from which I came, I went.

Thirteenth Birthday  
Suzanne Rivecca

I walk through the woods  
in my plaid flannel dress,  
fiercely going on, going on.  
As shattered and stark as I was that night:  
out of my mother, upside down  
Thick white resin coating me like candle wax  
and bloody, wailing, outraged  
as they lopped off the cord.  
They tried, they tried  
They tied it back on  
And I plodded through years  
dragging this withered placenta behind me  
like a bum leg.  
dead weight.  
And tonight, thirteen, I cut it myself.  
No sterile bright-silver instruments this time:  
I used my teeth gnawing like a fox in a trap.  
The sky is with me, rioting  
Phosphorescent veins of lightning  
rejoicing in my choice.  
And I think I can live here, in the woods.  
Apprentice myself to a hermit,  
or join a pack of wolves...  
But I was never good at camouflage.  
They'll sniff me out like dogs with fat black-marble eyes  
and noses to the ground – happy birthday to you.  
They'll sniff out.  
They always do.  
But I will say, “This is my Emancipation Day.  
This is war.”  
And I will burn that severed cord.  
Watch them shrink on the ground as I rise,  
Thirteen candles blazing in my eyes.