

# Smell

©2004 Jessica B. Burstrem

I love the way  
the smell here is  
tangible

It sits on the earth  
like the veil of heat  
that muffles motion  
and sound

that stills the sabal palms  
until they look plastic  
like children's toys  
placed by some large hand

that draws down  
the hairy green vines  
that cover the live oaks  
like so many incarnations  
of Lady Godiva

as though they were  
shards of metal  
drawn to the magnet  
at the center of the earth

The smell and the heat  
are interwoven

indistinguishable  
where one begins  
and the other ends

They must generate  
each other

still be generating  
as though in some kind of  
eternal symbiotic relationship

The smell is  
organic  
still  
invisibly alive

It seems to have  
spawned  
the huge dragonflies –

hovering irrationally  
on their fragile  
transparent wings –

from somewhere within  
itself

as though that large hand  
had plucked them from the veil  
like the little knobs of lint  
that form at the place  
of a snag

The dragonflies have come  
through that snag in our veil  
from another world

Their bodies follow  
different rules

and our air  
is the placenta –  
their afterbirth –

It is the dragonflies' mother I smell