

# Chambered Nautilus

by Barbara Carson

Only rarely as when an oyster forms a lustrous sphere  
Do the frigid waters seep into the deepest crevice of my brain  
And rime the very edges of my heart.  
Then I coil my body tightly and command my nails to grow  
And join and spiral round me  
And I become a Chambered Nautilus.  
I juggle buoyancy and ballast within the chambers of my shell.  
As artful as any aerial balloonist at his trade.  
I catch an ocean river to a tropic coral reef  
And cavort among the Mermaid hair and fern.  
I dance with harlequin and clown fish.  
I whirl about in my logarithmic spiral of a shell  
And celebrate this Mardi Gras of life in turquoise hue.  
If a predator appears, I feel no fear  
For I am safe within my vault of sunset pink  
And if another of my species floats within my view  
I do not discriminate, I join with it  
And if no lover nears yet hormones course within my cells  
Then I become hermaphrodite to satisfy my needs.  
In this Eden of the sea, I do not need your love or you  
And feel no fear that you might die.