

# Ossian City

*by* Bill Yarrow

I can still hear  
    the shriek  
of the Laughing Lady,  
    the crash  
of a bucket of dimes,  
    the waves  
against the jetty at noon  
    I can still see the boardwalk  
    empty with cyclists at 8 am,  
at noon  
    clogged with seagulls,  
at midnight  
    crowded with the ghosts  
of sleeping old people  
    I can still hear  
    the whir of rusted tackle  
on a new marlin boat,  
    the drip of cherry syrup  
onto a cone of crushed ice,  
    the scream of teens  
dizzy for foam dice  
    I can still smell the greed  
    of the hard sell,  
fresh cigar ash in the sea,  
    the mildewed freezer  
in the dirty pool hall,  
    the vinegar stink  
of peanut-oil fries  
    I can still hear  
    the sinister click  
of Zippo lighters,

the Chesterfield voices  
of the Pokerino widows,  
the oily patter  
of pock-faced shills  
I can still taste the flounder chowder  
served by hairnet waitresses  
to foul-mouthed barbers  
at City Lunch  
while in the alley  
black men carted ice  
on their naked backs with tongs  
But most on sun-starved nights  
I smell the foaming  
German shepherds  
locked in cages  
under the pier  
and the unworldly perfume  
of the pony-tailed girl  
who played alone with darts

