

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 whirl 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

