

Peter Mladinic

George and the Dobermans

George's Majestic Lounge
was more tempestuous than majestic.
George's hobby was yelling.
As waitresses
swung through doors in and out the kitchen,
their arms stacked with plates,
he couldn't help rush them. Schaeffer,
there days, part-time,
liked finding silver when he cleaned
under the bar. With him
George was terse but not hysterical.
A disgruntled 5'9, salt and pepper hair,
wire rim glasses, he yelled
so it was a wonder the waitresses,
for the most, kept cool.
No waiters worked there.
Schaeffer guessed the majestic part
happened at night.
Early one Saturday Schaeffer
walked George and his wife's two ancient
Dobermans down a dark alley
behind the Majestic.
Their rickety legs creaked over ice,
their snouts sniffed cold asphalt.
Schaeffer felt uneasy. What if something
were to happen?
George was always looking for a fight.

Heart's Desire

I marvel how such a beautiful song
came from such an ugly place.
I'm thinking of the Avalons who sang
and recorded this iconic R&B ballad
some call Doo-wop, and Newport News
where the Avalons came from.
I stayed there briefly. It was rows of
dark wood rooming houses, movie
houses with triple X marquees, a police
station. One late Saturday night, one
of two shore patrol, I saw a drunk white
guy tear up his fingerprints,
his bloody face and head after white

cops clubbed him. My Newport News
clashes with this song. You've
likely heard "soul on fire" in some song.
When the Avalons sing it in "Heart's Desire"
I feel it down to my toenails.

If

If, upon returning to the mainland from the island,
you don't go and knock on their door
you'll always be here, as if on the island,
adrift between island and mainland shore,
always outside their closed door.

If you don't go where they are and knock
they'll go on with their lives.
Should some sight or sound remind them of you
it will be you don't care, you never loved them.

You tell yourself approaching that shore
I love, loved and will love them. They are better
left alone, going on as they have been
since the morning I set out from the mainland.
I had to. That much was clear.

If, upon returning to the mainland, you don't knock
on their door they'll go on, no thoughts of you,
except sight or sound remind them.
Their faces clear in memory. The ones you love.

Side View Mirror

You're thinking about Spencer's *The Faerie Queene*
and how, twenty years ago at a reading
an academic poet, who taught Spencer in university
classes, said Spencer had a lot of trouble
with reality. You're in a Ford dealership
for a new sideview mirror for your 150 pickup. Weather
people on TV report conditions across the country.
It would be easier thinking about Spencer
sipping a diet coke in a fast food restaurant. Easier
in a city park or while waiting to speak with a loan officer
at a bank. Maybe the people giving the weather,
one or two of them, have read *The Faerie Queene*.
Maybe the academic poet still teaches Spencer.

Maybe *The Faerie Queene* is as fresh and vital to her
today as it was when she herself first read it.
Maybe, since that reading night twenty
years ago, she's found new meaning in it.
Maybe she's read Spencer in Cincinnati
and in Detroit. You yourself must look into it.

About the Poet

Peter Mladinic's poems have appeared in Neologism, The Mark, Bluepepper, The BeZine, Ariel Chart, 433 and other online journals. He lives in Hobbs, New Mexico.