

## 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.