

ADVENTURES OF AN ALASKAN BARFLY

by Natalie McNabb

Step out. Light up.

Beyond, the pale

January snow bank and moon-shimmer

melts

this darkness. Beyond, celestial pole

aligns with Polaris, the North Star—

*heart of navigation; tradition*

*by which the adventurer establishes*

*due north, finds a place*

*and way in this world*

—not far from here.

Crush it out. Step back in

to the body-mill grinding.

Here though,

heaven upon earth—

*cedar greens? fresh hay?*

—aligns himself with my shoulders.

He moves with me, and I, the ever-unfixed

Polaris, turn to him, from him,

toward him. In time though, another

will become his North Star, will

become mine, for—

*this world, imperfectly round, spins  
with variable rotation  
on axis unfixed in space;  
if our eyes become fixed, true north  
would no longer be true*

—all things heavenly move. So I leave  
him there, but he finds me again.  
I'm unsteadied by drink, in love  
with his motion, but—

*fixation leads to loss:  
of true north! of vision! of a man!  
test it on a star: stare, it disappears;  
look at others, it reappears!*

I leave him again, and there is another—

*pipe tobacco? rum? vanilla?*

—who keeps pace with me now.

Though, in looking at this one, I only see  
the other.

Step out. Light up.

Beyond, the pale

January snow bank and moon-shimmer—

*cedar greens? fresh hay?*

—melts—

*pipe tobacco? rum? vanilla?*

—this—

*cedar greens! fresh hay!*

darkness.

Crush it out. Step back in

to align my shoulders

with his limbs—

*let all things heavenly move*

—if only for a time.

~ *Gargoyle #58, Paycock Press*