

COLLINGWOOD

*Peter Miller**1. The Crusade*

Sunday at dawn
white we ride
buffeting along highways saltencrusted
icepaved winterdusted,
cantering beside
the stiff saracenic brigade
of jackpines, drawn
roadlong as for imperial parade.
Ski-inspired, this course is mystic, a crusade.

On a marshmallow slope
the surface tastes sweet
as our january jerusalem is won;
a place not heathen, but overrun
by hickoried feet
enchasing blue shadows on the height.
. . . And she whom a rope
lures smiling upward towards the light
by a string leaves earth and me who fly her, my kite.

Adazzle, free
she swings down, twirling
a necklace of motion on the hill's pale breast.
Around her, caracole from the crest
a squadron, unfurling
their colours in the sun; snowflake

or fleur-de-lis
 armouring their chests of wool: all ache
 left powdered adrift, as they skim the trail to the lake.

A tasselled toque
 helmets Jill's skull;
 Jack's cheeks, a bolivian stockinged mask
 covers, all but the eyes, like a casque.
 . . . Seaward gull
 swooping to a watery kill,
 your plunges provoke
 no salter cry at sparkle and skill
 from my throat than do theirs, who spiral this holy hill.

II. *The Summit*

The pause at the top

Out there, distant, wan,
 the lighthouse points:
 a finger of the lake, warning of limits

Dimly beyond, a grain elevator
 surfaces, leviathan, above the tidal mist

Land, lake, all seem, are, low, wide, far . . .

Here, only the pines are sure of their stance.
 The skiers (their trolls)
 pull away from the tow, adjust harness, straps,
 fathom the slope;
 switch a silent shrill on their siren nerves
 and . . . down the hill, goodbye

Midway, their red blobs and blue
 skid in spasms:
 dragonflies skating on a pond of snow

III. Noon

Capped with the bright crests
and shod with the membrane of strange waterbirds
we alight, at noon, by the barn.

A hedge of skis, planted askew,
borders the doorbound pathway
sprouting afresh into the trees that once
they, in Tyrol, or in Norway, were.
In these woods, we shall sing.

Here stands the crop
of winter harvest:
ski-poles, their stalks upspringing
steely from a field of snow:
some bare, unladen;
others ripe, topped each by a mitt,
their tasselled ear.
We shall peck among this grain.

In an hour
from this frosted aviary
the sun will recall us
to glide, to fall, to glide again,
to swerve, to flutter; and to flash
under the gold, our scarlet.