Ann Arbor in Retrospect

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Ann Arbor in Retrospect

by

E.W. Oldenburg

My mythic city slides
coy from the drawing boards
of the map-makers:
she exists in no objective way.
Her drawers, like Caddy's,
muddied in the shallow Huron
will fall for every callow
freshman's private vision,
and she's made and remade
by every casual comer's
particular subjectiveness.
All the whorls of the bawdy world's
thumbprint are on her ivory tit.
My Ann Arbor, every man's Ann Arbor,
and still she smells like trees.

We sat on a night in May, my love and I,
High in the old stands above Ferry Field
Drinking Schlitz and the Ann Arbor spring;
We smooched and petted undisturbed
By Yost's ghostly warriors doing
Stately calisthenics there below
While visions of single-wing ballet
Flickered behind my moon-struck eyes--
Fullbacks pirouetted: a wingback reverse
Uncoiled in slow parabola of grace.
I squeezed, transported, my own true love.

A zany acquaintance
once confided his ambition;
he wanted, he said,
to lay his girl
on the forty yard line
of the stadium turf
on the very spot
they put the ball
for kickoff.
Then, he said,
with maniacal cackle,
he'd gloat to himself
on a Saturday,
come kickoff time:
"a hundred thousand
people are gazing at
the spot where I overcame.
Two hundred thousand eyes
fixed on those very blades of grass."

But those blades of grass and every leaf
And bush and bough and bloom that grows
In Ann Arbor is certain doom to all
Romantic fools who clutch at them
For immortality: Arthur Miller
Owns these no more than the sad freshman
Who flunked out yesterday.
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