

## Gästhaus

Wooden tables rest in the embrace  
of the fire's open warmth. Old men  
pour wine from a bottle and sip on  
memories of vintage years in pasts  
now story-booked in their distant eyes.

The younger men raise their mugs in song,  
preparing a chorus of frozen moments  
against the maybe-hours of future age.

Whispering couples in darkened corners  
steal furtive touches of reassurance,  
blending with the bubbly smiles  
offered by the almost pretty bar maid  
whose thick thighs tease maybe  
beneath her short, rustling skirt.

We all have private homes, easily reached  
by short walks through the snow-crisp winter air;  
but to leave would be unthinkable; to leave  
would be an act of wanton destruction;  
for here, we are one—as a family,  
kin to the forest outside to which  
the falling white clings, even as we cling to  
each other against the cold and empty night.

—*Tony Marconi*