POLHEIM, DEC. 17, 1911

*This is the date Roald Amundsen reached*

*the South Pole. And the name he gave*

*his camp. It wasn't that easy to prove he had gotten there...*

In the lone place

where a man could

stand and track

his shadow's near

circle in the snow,

Amundsen frets

(of cologned scoffers),

and so they stay

another day, shoot

the sun in six

hour shifts; Amundsen

dreams in his furs,

of black men huddled

like sheep on a rock,

the moon there, in

the Antarctic

night, diamonds strung

in the sky. There's

no sextant to tell

these men where they

are; one who looks

like his father,

tears a burning

branch from the fire

(the moon dances

in the heat) and

the man, smiling

in his small power,

throws the torch

to the sky where

a trail of sparks

pierces stars, in

the sound one's breath

makes in the arctic

as ice crystals form

and fall. Amundsen

wakes, it is time

to plant a flag,

stun and slaughter

the uncommonly good-

natured Helge,

who is portioned

to the sixteen

other dogs. They leave

Helge's teeth, and

the tuft at the

end of his tail

for the next man

to reach Polheim.